Operation Gaza Hope

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Yashua Lebowitz

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First Edition, October 2024  
ISBN: 9798341302631

# Prologue

In 2034, humanity had shattered the limits of possibility, emerging from the flames of nuclear war like a vengeful phoenix. Purged of its former flaws, it forged a new world in its own image, celebrating this rebirth with the “Year of Pride,” a time when humility became the greatest sin.

This era of enlightenment and transformation emanated from the highest seat of power. The White House was adorned with the most intricate and elaborate pride flags ever conceived, each color symbolizing the anticipation and splendor of this year-long celebration. If successful, the Year of Pride might extend into a century, a millennium, or even longer.

Humanity had become an all-consuming force on Earth, with no limits to its ability to reshape the world to its liking. At the heart of the Year of Pride was the White House. From there, all the festivities were being planned that would transform the world into one living, breathing, prideful entity. The Omans, now celebrating Barak’s third term in office, had undergone a complete transformation in preparation for this momentous time

Yet, while the world watched in rapture, Joshua Levi stood apart, having seen this hour from afar. He had prepared his entire life for what was about to unfold, knowing that this spectacle of pride was but the onset of far more insidious and far-reaching. He knew too that he must prepare himself to take his stand at the appointed time.

# Chapter 1 The Beginning of The End

***70 Days ago, after the announcement of the Year of Pride………………***

I felt nauseous. In my fifty years on this Earth, I had seen the aftermath of battles, but nothing like this. This was no ordinary war; it was the end of the world as we knew it. I tripped over someone’s limb, stumbling forward. The sudden jolt churned my stomach, releasing the Meal, Ready-to-Eat (**MRE**) I ate onto the ground. I sneezed, expelling the last fluid from my stomach, wiping it from my nose onto my uniform. I steadied myself. The search for his body had to continue.

For days, we’d combed through twisted, charred bodies, pulling them from the wreckage of what was once Israel. Americans, Russians, Iranians, Germans—men and women from every nation were here, all dead, united in defeat. The world had become a coalition of corpses. We had an idea where he might be; the last reports had shown his convoy moving toward these ruins before the end.

Gavriel approached, his face etched with the weariness of days spent combing through the dead. Still, he managed a half-hearted smile. “You’re looking older today, Josh," Gavriel said, his smile weak but genuine. I glanced at my reflection in a pool of blood—it was true, there was more white in my beard, more grey in my hair. "You're still holding up, though. When I get to your age, I hope I can stumble over corpses as gracefully as you do."

Gavriel turned back to the grim task, his words a mix of light hearted banter and bitterness, like it was the only thing keeping him from falling apart.

I gave him a tired smile, slapping his shoulder. "Once we get back to Jerusalem, maybe I’ll feel young again."

A shout from nearby broke the moment. “Sir, we’ve found his body!”

The land itself recoiled from the memory of his passing. He was the man who had bound together this coalition of corpses and destroyed the world. When sulfur rained from the nearby volcano, men and machines alike burned alive—F-55s and F-35s spiralled out of control, colliding like falling stars. Tanks, Humvees, HKRs—all were reduced to burning wreckage, as the sulfur melted through uranium-enriched armor like wax.

“Sir, what should we do with his body?”

Gavriel and I approached the soldiers, some of the last remaining members of the IDF. They had gathered around Gog, silent, as if paying respects to a leader who had once been revered. But the fear in their eyes was unmistakable. Even in death, this man terrified them.

His pearly white teeth and eyes shone unnaturally through blistered, blackened skin. A grotesque mockery of the man I had once known. What a fool!

The mountain air was thick with decay, a fitting backdrop for this fallen giant. The man who had once orchestrated such devastation now lay powerless; his ambitions reduced to ashes like everything else around us. The silence of defeat hung heavy in the air, broken only by the distant collapse of structures and the muffled cries of those still searching for loved ones among the dead.

“Bury him with his soldiers in Kidron Valley,” I said finally. “From this day forth, it will be known as the Valley of Hamon Gog.”

The soldiers hesitated. No one wanted to touch him. The fear was too great, the history too bitter. I bent down, grasping his legs, dragging him from the bodies of his men. Once he was clear, we laid a tarp beneath him and lifted him onto the truck that idled nearby.

As the truck rumbled away, a wave of conflicting emotions washed over me. This man… I once believed I could turn him from his appointed destiny. In my younger days, I trusted in the power of choice—but no longer. The will of God is like a stubborn river that cannot be dammed. We had laughed, played basketball together, but his ambition for power was too great. The potential for good within him was swallowed by the ashes of what he had done. This was his fate, written in the stars before time began—just as it was mine to see him off, as Commander of the Lord's Armies.

I pondered as I watched the truck fade into the distance, thinking of Icarus. He had flown too close to the sun on wings of ambition, only to fall. Such was the end of *Operation Gaza Hope*—an effort meant to unite the world, but instead, it brought it to its knees.

In seventy days, the world had been irrevocably changed. The old had gone and the new had come. How we got here may seem humorous, but sometimes satire becomes reality, paralleling the foolishness of the human mind. It all began with a Dome and a sensational announcement which spiralled out of control and brought humanity to where I stand now: A corpse pile in the shadow of the ruins of the Pride Dome.

# Chapter 2 The Year of Pride

Raskin, a bright-eyed corporal—stoic, young, and solid—was thrown from his seat. The Black Hawk helicopter carrying him jolted sharply off course as it narrowly dodged the swarm of civilian choppers that flooded the skies. They buzzed toward the Pride Dome like pilgrims converging on the Kaaba for the Hajj. The wealthiest and most powerful families had gathered to witness the momentous announcement from queerology, which had already transformed the First Family and promised to reshape humanity for the next millennium. Pressed awkwardly against a fellow soldier, Raskin struggled for balance before managing to return to his seat.

Detached from his company, Raskin had been assigned to bolster security for the opening celebration of the Year of Pride. The Black Hawk continued its approach toward the Pride Dome, and every soldier on board leaned toward the windows, in eager anticipation.

The dome gradually revealed its towering form, rising from the skeletal remains of skyscrapers in the aftermath of the nuclear explosion which had decimated New York City during 9/11. As the shimmering dome manifested on the horizon, its iridescent surface reflected every shade of the rainbow, an ever-shifting spectacle of light. Even from this distance, Raskin could feel the pull of its monumental presence, glowing with an otherworldly aura that commanded attention both day and night.

The Pride Dome stood not just as a marvel of engineering but as a symbol of humanity's newfound passion for identity and cultural transformation, attesting to the triumph of humanism.

The helicopter made a slow approach to the protective shield encasing the Pride Dome, a transparent barrier designed to fend off the lingering radiation from WW3. As they neared, a large opening in the shield revealed itself, sliding apart to allow passage. Just as they were about to land, the outer shell of the Pride Dome shifted colors, forming a massive, glowing pride flag that morphed into the face of President Barak Oman, his features bathed in shimmering rainbow hues.

Raskin jumped from the Blackhawk onto the smooth marble ground whose path led to the entrance. Here he was greeted by two towering pillars. Atop these pillars stood enormous statues of the Greek gods Hermaphroditus and Aphrodite, exuding a powerful presence. These statues served as bulwarks, standing watch over the entrance and symbolizing the defense of sexual freedom against those who would seek to destroy it.

Raskin took a moment to distract himself from what awaited him. He had declared himself a “heterosexual cisgender”[[1]](#footnote-1)—an identity that was notoriously difficult to prove, and one that left him under heightened scrutiny. Among those who claimed to be cisgender, many were flagged for gender deception.

"Look where I am, Dad! You wouldn’t believe it." Raskin typed quickly, sending the selfie. Behind him, the statue of Aphrodite towered, almost lifelike in her marble form, her cold, sculpted gaze a stark contrast to his awkward, forced smile. For a brief moment, he wondered what his father would think of this. Would he see the humor in it, or just shake his head at how far his son had drifted from the quiet, simple fields of Indiana?

What lay before him was the hard truth, the inescapable reality of his life now—the QueerDar. Raskin's anxiety mounted as he approached this super scanner, this unfeeling sentinel of the new order, much like Aphrodite, indifferent and judging, ready to pry into the most private corners of his mind. He tried to keep a calm exterior, but his thoughts raced. What if it found something? Some fleeting thought, an inclination he hadn’t even realized he had?

He hated the QueerDar—a device birthed from queerology, so precise that it could detect the faintest deviation from a person's declared gender identity. It didn’t just register obvious signs; it sifted through subconscious desires, tracking straight thoughts in a gay man, queer feelings in a straight man, and even binary inklings in nonbinary people. To Raskin, it was a relentless hunter of thought crimes.

Before every scan, Raskin had developed a desperate ritual—masturbating in secret, hoping it would clear his mind of any traceable desire. By his contrived logic, an empty body meant empty thoughts—nothing for the machine to latch onto. He clung to this belief, terrified that even a stray glance or forgotten memory might betray him.

As he neared the scan station, his eyes frantically searched for a secluded place to carry out his ritual. The nearby unisex bathroom caught his attention, a relic of a bygone era, where creating separate facilities for all of the 69,000 officially recognized genders had become an unsustainable task. Raskin shoved his way through a line of drag queens, transgender advocates, and other rainbow-clad figures, flashing his guard credentials to push them aside. Inside, the stench of unflushed waste hit him like a wall. Grimacing, he hastily dealt with the mess, locking the door behind him.

In the mirror, his reflection stared back at him. He tried not to imagine his face as a woman's. His greatest fear wasn’t just being caught; it was emasculation. It had happened to so many men like him—straight, white, and helpless against a system that viewed them as the ultimate threat. A single deviant thought was enough to trigger the nightmare: ANTIFA soldiers appearing in the dead of night, slipping into his home like shadows. They wouldn't listen to explanations; there was no trial, no defense. He would be taken away—simply disappear. Therapy, they called it.

Porn Hub had been transformed into Therapy Hub. They would force him to watch days of Therapy Hub till his gender deception was gone.

If that didn’t work, it was surgery. Forced reassignment. Some of his friends had gone through it; their bodies were mutilated, genitals removed and reattached multiple times in futile attempts to “fix” them. Raskin shuddered at the thought. The horror was too much to bear. He couldn’t become like them.

It wasn’t just his body he feared losing. He still clung to the hope of having a family someday—a dream that felt like a relic in this hypersexualized world. The concept of family had all but vanished. Children no longer belonged to parents; they were the property of the state. Gender indoctrination started even before birth now. The QueerDar was used to scan fetuses, hunting for any sign of gender deception. If detected, the Therapy Hub was streamed directly into the womb, molding their thoughts before they even took their first breath.

He stared into the mirror again. The door buzzed—someone was knocking, impatient. His ritual was complete, but the dread remained. Could deception ever truly be purged? He searched his mind constantly for any deception. He was a man—that was for sure, but did he ever have homosexual thoughts? No; he quickly raced from that corner of his mind. Homosexual thoughts could be seen as a woman’s desire and therefore flag him. No, no, no, this was all just horse shit. How could the vast majority of Americans accept this with birth rates plummeting. He focused. A knock again.

He burst out from the stall door and vomited in the sink.

The knocking tranny stood next to him alarmed and disgusted at the same time, “Its ok honey, you’ll get through the scan alright. Just think of butterflies. That’s what I do. It’s the small price we have to pay for sexual freedom.”

He stumbled out the bathroom, but now, standing in line with hundreds of others, the pressure weighed heavily on him. He couldn’t shake the fear that this time, the machine might see through his defenses.

Raskin stood frozen as the QueerDar began its scan, its cold, mechanical eye dissecting his every thought and impulse. The silence was unbearable, broken only by the faint hum of the machine. He felt exposed, vulnerable, as if every secret he’d ever buried was being dragged to the surface. The seconds stretched on; he focused his thoughts on butterflies flying gingerly through outer space.

Then, with a sharp, metallic clang, the scan was complete. But there was no relief in that noise—only dread. Because in this world, you never knew your fate immediately. There was no flashing light, no audible alarm to indicate if you’d been flagged for gender reassignment therapy. He now simply got on with his life, pretending everything was normal. He wiped the sweat from his forehead; now it was time to go back to guard duty.

Raskin always wondered why QueerDars weren’t installed everywhere, catching people off guard when their thoughts betrayed their declared gender. But remnants of the old world still lingered. People insisted on their constitutional right: scanned only once per public space, never within the privacy of their own homes. Anything more, they argued, would be an invasion of privacy. But the QueerDar was far more sophisticated than anyone realized. What Raskin didn’t know is that it didn’t need constant access; it could trace the faint footprints left by old thoughts, follow them to the darkest corners of his mind. It didn’t need a key to unlock the essence of his soul—it just needed a whiff.

He joined the crowds funneling into the dome’s galleries, passing by explicit exhibits and virtual sex displays that celebrated queerology's achievements. Raskin hurried through, afraid that even a stray glance might betray him, exposing some hidden part of himself he couldn't afford to acknowledge. It was strange he thought. With so much sexual freedom, he felt as if he was in a sexual prison.

Finally, reaching his post in the amphitheater that was packed to capacity, he stood over a sea of lavishly dressed spectators. The seating was in large circles, descending toward the central stage, a platform suspended in mid-air, seemingly defying gravity. Above the stage a gigantic holographic orb continuously displayed a montage of Pride celebrations from around the world.

As the rank-and-file attendees passed through the QueerDar, they were directed to their seats. Raskin marvelled at the ones dressed in the most lavish drag, with long flowing gowns that trailed meters behind them. In keeping with the Reformation's strict segregation policies, people of whiteness and people of color were no longer allowed to sit side by side.

Raskin tried to process the surreal scene before him. The white section, reserved for the wealthy and powerful, was a world away from the small, rural Indiana town he had known. Here, extravagance and opulence were on full display, with drag babies—infants dressed in flamboyant costumes—carried by attendants like prized possessions. It was a stark contrast to the more subdued enforcement of queerology back home, where regulations were followed but not with the same zeal. In Indiana, the QueerDar was something he only encountered at the grocery store, a minor inconvenience compared to the pervasive surveillance in the city. The military had offered a strange kind of freedom, where the strict rules of queerology seemed to loosen, allowing him to navigate the world with fewer constraints. Yet here he was, enforcing a system that had spared him its full weight, watching as the privileged paraded their compliance in ways that felt alien to him.

As Raskin scanned the crowd, his mind wandered back to his hometown. The people there had accepted queerology out of necessity or face reformation, but there was always a sense of quiet resistance, a reluctance to fully embrace the new norms. Now, surrounded by the most extreme displays of that ideology, Raskin felt the weight of the double standard pressing down on him. Somewhere he hated the fact that he was part of the machinery that enforced it.

The lights dimmed, and the crowd fell silent in anticipation. The booming voice continued from the darkness, reverberating throughout the Pride Dome.

"They are the saviours of America who gave us the Reformation and taught us queerology. Before them, this nation was lost in darkness, but they returned and brought light to the blind, awakening the citizens of America to the truth. They set the alarm and forced everyone out of bed, ushering in a new dawn of enlightenment and pride. Fellow citizens, I am honored to present the President of the United States, Barak Oman, and the First Lady, Mishel Oman."

As the voice finished, the center of the stage began to open, revealing two rising platforms. On them stood Barak and Mishel Oman, their presence commanding the attention of the massive crowd. They waved to the audience; their faces illuminated by the glowing lights of the Pride Dome. The image of the Queer Union Jack, a fusion of the LGBT and American flags, unfurled across the dome's walls, a symbol of the new order.

Both had aged substantially since Barak’s early days in office. The burden of leading the Democratic Party since the end of his second term had taken a toll on him. His face had begun to sag, and the skin around his eyes had sunk. Wrinkles and creases appeared across his face in contrast to his wife’s smooth complexion. His once vigorous frame was now more hunched and diminished. Mishel, on the other hand, remained somewhat strong and muscular, using whatever means necessary from the hands of cosmetology to maintain and sustain her youthful vigor. She now towered over Barak, like she was ready to devour him at any moment.

The crowd erupted into applause and cheers as the First Couple stood before them, embodying the transformation of America. The room filled with a sense of unity and purpose, as the crowd waited expectantly for the moment they knew was coming.

Then, the voice returned, leading the audience in a new pledge of allegiance, a pledge to this reformed nation and its values:

"I pledge my allegiance to the Queer Union Jack, and to the diversity and pride for which it stands. One nation, awakened and enlightened, indivisible in its love and liberty, with pride and justice for all."

The words echoed through the Pride Dome, the crowd reciting in unison, voices strong and unwavering.

Raskin forced himself to move his lips in time with the replacement Pledge of Allegiance, though every fiber of his being recoiled from the words. The original pledge, with its simplicity and dignity, was a distant memory, replaced by this ugly parody. But in a world where dissent was lethal, he played the part, hiding his revulsion behind a mask of conformity.

The crowd became silent as they expected Barak to begin speaking. Barak’s speech began more as a conversation with Mishel. He gently reached out, taking Mishel’s hand in his. "You’ve come so far, and I’m incredibly proud of you," he said, his voice rich with emotion. Whether the sentiment was genuine or not, Raskin couldn’t tell, but the crowd was captivated, hanging on every word.

The stadium buzzed with anticipation; the energy palpable. Rumors had been swirling for weeks that a major announcement was coming, and now, it seemed, the moment had arrived.

“Thank you, Barak,” Mishel began, her voice trembling with barely contained emotion. “It’s been an agonizing journey to fully accept who I am. But with your unwavering support, I’ve found the strength to embrace my truth. Without you, I’d still be living a lie.” She turned to the audience, her gaze locking onto them like a predator sizing up its prey. “I owe it to you—every brave soul in this nation. Your courage lit the fire within me, and that’s why I’m making this announcement today.”

A drumroll echoed through the Pride Dome, each beat reverberating in the air. It wasn’t just loud—it was oppressive, suffocating, each thump like a tribal war drum demanding submission. Raskin’s jaw clenched. *Get on with it, I can’t bear this anymore,* he thought.

Then Mishel spoke, and the world seemed to tilt. “From now on, you will know me as Michael! I am a man!”

The stadium erupted, but Michael wasn’t done. With a savage grin, he tore off his wig and flung it into the frenzied crowd, who clawed at each other to catch it like it was a holy relic. Then, in one brutal motion, he ripped off his pantsuit, exposing a bulge beneath the tight latex thong so pronounced it seemed almost grotesque. Gasps of shock and awe rippled through the masses as they witnessed the transformation in its raw, unfiltered reality.

“I got a BBC, A big black correction!” Michael roared, holding his hands up parallel to each other above his head, his voice piercing through the crowd’s screaming.

A camera had zeroed in on his crotch displaying his massive bulge on the holographic screen emitting from the orb that was located above them.

The crowd didn’t just cheer—they howled, a cacophony of primal screams that reverberated off the Pride Dome’s walls. Holographic fireworks exploded overhead, overlaying the image of Michael’s exposed manhood, their dazzling colors nearly swallowed by the madness below. “It’s Raining Men” blared from the speakers, but even the anthem of the night was nearly drowned out by the frenzy of celebration. People were jumping, crying, fainting—some overcome with ecstasy, others with sheer disbelief.

Raskin stood frozen, his mind reeling. What was unfolding before him was beyond surreal—it was nightmarish, a grotesque carnival of excess that shattered any semblance of reason. The Pride Dome had become a swirling vortex of euphoria and insanity, and at its core stood Michael, untouchable, basking in the storm.

And just when Raskin thought the spectacle couldn’t descend any deeper into madness, Barak stepped forward. The former president’s face was a mask of serene confidence. He waited for the crowd to quiet down before speaking. Once the hysterical mob was quiet he let the silence stretch, tension building with each passing second. He smiled as he looked out into the crowd, basking in their adoration.

“You know, Michael has had a long journey—just like I have,” Barak began, in a calm and measured voice, cutting through the din. “Back in the early 2000s, when I legalized same-sex marriage, I thought, ‘I hope people will find the same hope I have. That they can come out of the closet and live normal lives—accepted by society.’”

The crowd listened, on the edge of something.

“And now, here we stand in 2034, where what I started back then is no longer a dream—it’s the norm. We are the bold, the proud, the gay.”

A murmur of realization rippled through the masses as Barak’s meaning sank in.

“I’m gay!” Barak declared, his voice ringing out above the roar. The crowd erupted, basking in his rainbow-lit glory.

For a moment, the entire Pride Dome seemed to freeze, the air thick with disbelief. Then, like a dam bursting, the crowd exploded into a frenzy so wild it threatened to tear the Dome apart. People screamed themselves hoarse, their bodies convulsing with unrestrained emotion overcome by the revelation. As some began to tear at their clothes and those of others, a massive orgy erupted in the stadium. Some fell to the ground, fainting or weeping uncontrollably. The air was electric, charged with an energy that threatened to consume them all.

Raskin could barely breathe in the atmosphere thick with hysteria. He gripped his pistol afraid that somehow this hysteria might extend its consuming power to him and he would be devoured by it. The spectacle, the revelations, the raw power of the crowd—it was all too much. He felt as if he were drowning in it, unable to escape the madness that now ruled the world.

# Chapter 3 Partners in Love and War

The evening was calm. The soft glow of the fireplace created a warm, comforting ambiance. The entire room was decked out in the strangest arrays of pride flags, each one representing a newly discovered spectrum. One flag, standing the length of a fully grown man, contained so many zigzags of different spectrums that it was barely recognizable as a flag at all.

Michael lay with his head resting on Barak’s lap in their cozy living room in the private residence of the White House. They were both exhausted after such a whirlwind reception in the Dome of Pride. Never in their wildest dreams could they have imagined so much accomplished in such a short time.

Barak looked at Michael with profound admiration and love, reflecting on the extraordinary journey they had both undertaken. The transformation was not just physical, but spiritual and emotional, a testament to their resilience and commitment to each other.

"Ya know, you’ve always been a man in my eyes, no matter what anyone else has said," Barak said, gazing deeply into Michael’s eyes. "I’ve always dreamt of this moment where I can feel you fully," he added, his voice full of longing.

Michael's eyes sparkled with love and understanding. "Barak, your love has been my strength. Together, we have transformed not just ourselves but the world around us."

Barak's expression grew more serious, yet remained full of excitement. "I also have a goal that is going to completely transform me and elevate us to new heights. It's a surprise announcement regarding Israel, something that will make this Year of Pride absolutely incredible and take us to levels of power we have never known."

Michael's curiosity was piqued. "What is it? Tell me more." He sat up excited.

Barak leaned in closer, his voice barely above a whisper. "We’re going to unveil a new initiative in the United Nations that will not only strengthen our control of the world but also set a new standard for global leadership. This move will show the world the true meaning of pride and unity. It will mean the complete demise of the nation of Israel."

Michael's eyes widened with shock and amazement. "Barak, that's ... that’s monumental. This has always been a goal of yours, but you’ve been quiet about it for some time."

Barak's gaze was steady, his voice calm and resolute. "I’ve never given up on this dream. I have devised a comprehensive plan called Operation Gaza Hope that involves the entire world. Operation Gaza Hope will involve economic partnerships, and a unified approach to governance and security. The idea is to dissolve the concept of singular nation-states and promote a unified worldwide identity led by the UN. This will end centuries of conflict and pave the way for an era of unparalleled cooperation and prosperity that will rise from the dust of World War III. We will liberate the Palestinians as a unified world and I will be at the head of it all—no we will be at the head of it all."

Michael took a deep breath, absorbing the magnitude of Barak's words. "This is beyond anything I could have imagined. If we succeed, this will be the most significant transformation in modern history."

Barak nodded; his eyes filled with determination. "Yes, Michael. Together, we will lead humanity into a new era, where pride, where transformation is celebrated, and where the power of unity and love conquers all. This is our legacy, and it begins now. We’ll also be fulfilling Mohammed’s command to us so that Allah’s blessings will pour down on us.”

“May the grace of Allah illuminate our path!” Michael quickly followed.

Michael's heart skipped a beat as he locked eyes with Barak. His gaze was intense and filled with desire. A rush of warmth spread through Michael's body at the raw, unspoken passion in Barak's words. Without breaking eye contact, Michael slowly stood up, leading Barak by the hand to their bedroom.

Michael threw Barak on the bed and pulled down his pants. Barak was on all fours with anticipation. With a passionate grin, Michael loosened his belt, and his pants slid down automatically, then positioned himself behind Barak. He reached around and gently held Barak's shoulder, feeling the warm skin beneath his hands. Barak took a deep breath, relishing the moment of being dominated by Michael he had dreamt of for so long.

Barak grunted softly, the anticipation building within him. He felt the warmth and hardness of Michael's body pressed against his, the energy between them palpable. He thrust his hips back slightly, inviting Michael to enter him.

Michael slowly guided himself inside Barak, feeling the familiar yet re-imagined sensation that washed over him. Barak gasped, his body adjusting to the feeling of Michael deep within him. They were now two men joined together for one purpose at the pinnacle of their power. They were now on the precipice of controlling the world, but despite Barak’s almost complete control over the world, he had a deep, twisted desire to be controlled, dominated, and with each thrust from Michael that deep dark desire to be dominated was met.

“Now fuck me like I’m going to fuck Israel!” Barak shouted, the words dripping with a mix of irony and determination.

As they lay together, catching their breath, the gravity of their situation slowly seeped back in. They were not just lovers; they were partners in a grand design, poised to reshape the world. The challenges ahead were immense, but together, they felt invincible.

…..

After Michael had fallen asleep, Barak quietly slipped out of bed, careful not to disturb him. It was late at night as he made his way to the Oval Office. The building was silent; all his staff had gone home to be with their families. Only the Secret Service agents dressed in drag were stationed in the hallways.

Upon taking power, Barak had all the former presidents' portraits removed and replaced with his own. He paused before one of his portraits, reflecting on his accomplishments over the last two years in office. He felt no regret about removing the former presidents' portraits, especially those of Donald Trump and Joshua Levi, who, in his mind, represented an era when white patriarchy was dominant.

Barak had tirelessly worked behind the scenes for years, dismantling what he saw as an oppressive system, all while covertly striving for a third term. To him, whiteness symbolized a deep societal evil—a legacy of oppression rooted in British colonialism. His moment arrived when President Levi, in an attempt to unite a divided nation, selected him as vice president, even though he was aware of Barak's true ambitions.

World War III erupted at the beginning of Levi’s presidency. The Chinese Communist Party ceased to function as a government under the pressure of uprisings sparked by the worldwide famine of 2029, which saw millions starve due to drought and inflation, indirectly caused by the collapse of the U.S. dollar and its subsequent default on national debt.

Once the CCP collapsed, a new form of quasi-democratic nation-states rose in its place, calling themselves the United States of Cathay (USC). This new formation propelled the country to even greater heights, removing the corruption and inefficiencies that had plagued the former government. Within a year, the USC reached its peak of power and began an amphibious assault on Taiwan, ultimately conquering the island.

The United States and its allies were in a state of unreadiness and ill-prepared to confront such a powerhouse. Furthermore, USC had many allies by its side, having spent years slowly clawing away at American dominance through strategic loans and investments in developing nations. The alliance between the USC and Russia had never been stronger, and this partnership played a pivotal role in the ongoing conflict.

The USC wasted no time consolidating its newfound dominance. With Taiwan under control, the USC set its sights on the rest of the Asia-Pacific. Its next objective was to cripple U.S. military influence in the region. Key U.S. bases at Okinawa and Guam were struck with overwhelming force—missiles and drones raining down in coordinated precision attacks. Within hours, the USC had severed America's military reach in the Pacific, isolating the region.

Simultaneously, Russia unleashed its own campaign. Fresh off decisive victories in Ukraine, Russia had transformed itself into a military juggernaut, now hungry for more territory. While the U.S. struggled to respond to the USC, Russian forces surged into Eastern Europe, smashing through Poland and the Baltic states. NATO forces were spread thin, with the Eastern Flank collapsing under Russia’s superior air power and mechanized divisions.

At this time, Russia and the USC launched a bold and ambitious plan to end American dominance once and for all. An invasion of the United States would begin with Russia launching an attack on Alaska, while the USC assembled a naval armada for an invasion of the continental U.S., landing in Mexico and pushing through the southern border. The plan nearly succeeded, if not for one factor they had not accounted for: the leadership of Joshua Levi.

Levi rallied the armed forces of the U.S., risking his own safety on the front lines to repel the invasion. He would often walk among his soldiers with bullets flying overhead, inspiring them through his fearless presence. Not since George Washington had a leader like him emerged from the ranks of the U.S. Army.

While Levi was preoccupied with World War III as Commander-in-Chief, Barak carefully expanded his influence. He attended secret caucuses, forged alliances, and even gained the support of Republicans eager to see him in power for a third term. Meanwhile, America was crumbling. New York lay in ruins after a nuclear strike; crops were failing due to climate change, and the war with USC and Russia dragged on. Domestic unrest simmered, as Levi seemed more concerned with the war than with the suffering at home.

Sensing the nation's disillusionment, Barak and his allies launched a covert campaign to amend the Constitution. They manipulated public opinion through media campaigns, social media, and backroom deals with key political figures. The amendment was framed as a necessary step to ensure stability in a time of crisis. Despite fierce opposition, arguing that it threatened the foundations of democracy, the referendum passed by a narrow margin—reflecting the desperation of a war-weary public.

After USC’s defeat, Russia sought a ceasefire to regroup. With the temporary lull in fighting, Barak seized his opportunity. He began a campaign to impeach Levi.

Shortly after the ceasefire with Russia, Congress and Senate had approved QueerDar scans for all Americans ensuring gender normalcy and health which was seen as paramount for the safety and security of American society. Levi refused to declare his gender and undergo scanning. This was seen as a grave violation of constitutional duty as it violated the 14th amendment.

Levi’s refusal to undergo the mandatory QueerDar scan ignited a constitutional firestorm. The system, implemented under the guise of public safety, had become central to post-war governance, designed to ensure "gender normalcy" in a fractured society. Though many viewed it as invasive, the war-weary public had accepted it as a necessary sacrifice. But Levi’s defiance wasn’t seen as a noble stand. It was a direct violation of his constitutional duty.

Critics wasted no time. As President, Levi was sworn to uphold the laws of the land, and by refusing the scan, he was accused of dereliction of duty. The Equal Protection Clause demanded that no one, not even the President, was above the law. Levi’s act of defiance set a dangerous precedent, threatening the very system meant to protect the nation. His enemies branded him a traitor, unfit to lead in a time of crisis.

The charge was simple: by rejecting the QueerDar scan, Levi had failed in his oath to “faithfully execute” the laws of the United States. Congress, spurred on by public outrage and a media feeding frenzy, seized on the opportunity. Levi’s refusal was portrayed as a reckless endangerment of national security—an unforgivable sin in a country still licking its wounds from war.

Protests erupted. Lobbyists and factions, long discontented with Levi’s stance on Israel, fueled the flames. What should have been an act of personal resistance became the catalyst for his undoing. With overwhelming public support and the full force of Congress behind it, Levi’s impeachment was inevitable.

This wasn’t the first time Levi had clashed with the law. Earlier in life, he had fled the country to escape probation terms after being incarcerated for his involvement in a political protest. Levi returned to the United States once he was pardoned by Donald Trump. He was a man with a history of civil disobedience—a danger to the law and order of the United States.

Despite the uneasy truce with Russia, an election was hurriedly scrabbled together to legitimize the government.

Barak's popularity overshadowed his opponents, and the Republican candidate was little more than a formality. Upon winning, Barak quickly moved to consolidate his power. In his first days in office, he launched a campaign to purge the nation of white Christian nationalists, a vocal minority now branded as the embodiment of the oppressive class.

The next phase of his plan was dismantling the white patriarchy. He harvested the fruit of years of establishing critical race theory in the school system. This was a monster whose black tentacles had slowly gained a stranglehold over the hearts of America’s youth. It injected its black poison, creating heartless drones—children with eyes glazed over who could only identify people by the color of one’s skin, not the content of one’s character.

The teachings whispered of a world divided, casting humanity into rigid molds of oppressors and oppressed, with white privilege and black oppression fueling resentment and hatred. The monster had fed on the innocence of youth, replacing curiosity and compassion with a cold, relentless typecasting. The moment an objective observer tried to question an issue such as gender fluidity in school, he was labeled a “bigot” or a “homophobe.” There was no middle ground for discussion. The seeds of division sprouted thorns of mistrust and animosity, entwining themselves around the very essence of community and kinship.

The campaign of terror began when Barak signed Federal Edict 516, a decree that ignited chaos across the nation. White ANTIFA, in an unholy alliance with AOC, spearheaded its execution. Branded as the "Reformation," this edict unleashed its fury upon white Christian communities, targeting those who had resisted critical race theory and spoken out against homosexuality. Churches that held firm to traditional values were shut down in droves, their doors sealed forever.

Walmart, once the center of everyday American life, were repurposed into interim camps, surrounded by concertina wire and repurposed as grim detention centers. What were once bustling aisles of consumer goods became corridors of despair. In the span of a single month, millions of white Americans were slaughtered in the purge. Blood flowed through the streets, pooling in the gutters and turning the heartland into a river of sorrow. The agonized cries of the fallen echoed in the night like a grotesque symphony, the screams carried on winds thick with the stench of death. The earth, drenched in blood, seemed to weep as the nation convulsed, torn apart by a fevered thirst for vengeance.

Allah had finally given justice to the children of slaves and colored immigrants—or so Barak privately believed. Yet this justice was a double-edged sword that cut deeply into the soul of America. The oppressed, once shackled by the chains of history, now wielded those chains as weapons of retribution. Mercy was cast aside and replaced by a harvest of despair and death.

Fear and hopelessness hung in the air like a thick fog, suffocating any remaining glimmers of hope. Once-vibrant streets had become graveyards of ambition, their silence broken only by the echoes of violence. A generation’s heartbeat drummed to the rhythm of hatred, each pulse a testament to the indoctrination that had seized their minds.

In this shattered landscape, unity was a distant memory, and community a hollow shell. The fabric of society, once woven from diverse threads, had been torn apart by those who sought to create a monolithic culture. History was rewritten in blood, each chapter a brutal reminder of the cost of extremism.

The regime cemented its power on the foundation of broken bodies and shattered lives. The heart of the nation, once a beacon of freedom and liberty, now lay in ruins, its beat reduced to a hollow throb of disillusionment and despair. The vision of a utopia had become a nightmare, where justice and vengeance blurred into a grotesque dance of death.

He gave a half smile. The final step was done with the support of AOC and other white far left democrats. Oman had introduced breeding programs to keep women from bearing white children. Strong, healthy black men from all over the country went through screening programs to find suitable donors with the healthiest sperm. White women were then artificially inseminated to create a master race of black children. In a matter of a year, they had all but destroyed white privilege. The world after "The War That Set the World on Fire" was a world of cruelty and chaos, of struggle and survival, brutality and hope. Now he was now on the brink of something even greater.

But hope of return to time-honored values and the red, white and blue continued to beat in the heart of Joshua Levi. Now living in exile in Israel, could he make a comeback as the leader of the free world? Could he be the catalyst to transform the world, redeeming mankind and restoring the Earth to balance and sanity?

**The UN Speech**

Barak sat in the Oval Office, staring pensively out the window. He pulled a cigarette packet from his desk. The sweet aroma of tobacco made him crave nicotine like the embrace of Michael. He lit a cigarette for the first time in thirty years and turned on the TV. Scenes of unrest in Tel Aviv played out. Students from the Meretz party marched through the streets, burning Torahs and denouncing Haredi Jews. Riot police shot gas into the crowd. A group of students beat an elderly Orthodox Jew till his face was covered in blood. Oman smiled.

In Gaza, Palestinians violently protested with Molotov cocktails, destroying armed vehicles. The Israelis retaliated, jets streaking overhead followed by bombs, killing hundreds of Palestinians. Their mangled corpses were recorded with careful editing to show Israel in the worst possible light.

Barak took another long drag, his eyes narrowing. The footage was perfect. The narrative was taking shape.

Back in Israel, the momentum had shifted. The Palestinians, emboldened by Meretz’s defiance and their promises of reform, were preparing for a decisive vote in the Knesset. The two-state solution, once a distant dream, was now within reach. For years, Meretz had championed the cause, tirelessly advocating for liberal values—"peace, civil rights, gender equality, and the separation of religion from state. Their support of LGBTQ+ had grown fanatical surpassing Oman’s mandates demanding that QueerDar scanners be installed in every Israeli home. This would ensure that every time an Israeli left home their possible gender deception would be verified. Now, the CIA’s quiet funding of Meretz was finally bearing fruit. The seeds of discord were blossoming into revolution.

Barak leaned back, his cigarette burning low between his fingers, his smile widening. The world was moving exactly as he had planned. Soon, the pieces would all fall into place. Oman pulled out his BlackBerry, his signature phone which he had kept with him all these years. He searched through his contact list, containing the most venerated and powerful people in the world, and found the name he was looking for.

“Nihyah, how are you, my man? How is progress going in the Knesset?”

“Things are going slower than expected. Netanyahu understands the art of political maneuvering better than anyone, and he knows how to play the game to his advantage. He still has a slight majority in the Knesset, but he’s slowly losing ground to our party. Soon we’ll hold a vote on the Palestine solution. I’m confident that Israel will give up the West Bank and Gaza without firing a shot. There will be a two-state solution.”

“I’m waiting on the vote. If you lose, Israel loses. I will introduce a new UN resolution essentially declaring war on Israel. Don’t let me down, Nihyah.”

“It’ll be done, Barak. Don’t worry. The recent polls show that the Meretz party stands to win the vote. It’s a done deal.”

“That’s what I like to hear.”

Oman hung up his BlackBerry. He knew that the Meretz party would fail to secure enough votes to pass the Palestine solution. This was all part of his plan. He wanted to show the UN that he had tried everything in his power to come to a peaceful solution to free the Palestinians. Now, there was no other choice but to launch “Operation Gaza Freedom.” He was stressed that they might actually pass the vote and come to a peaceful solution, but he knew that Bibi was a stubborn son of a bitch.

Deep down inside, Barak despised Israel. He had no desire for a two-state solution. He was secretly colluding with Iran to wipe Israel from the map by whatever means necessary. The Jewish people would once again be slaves, and there would never be an Israeli state ever again. He lit up another cigarette and pulled out his Quran from his desk. He placed his hand on its cover, gently touched it, and then opened it, seeking its words of wisdom. A paper fell out containing one of his favorite sayings of Mohammed.

“The last hour would not come unless the Muslims will fight against the Jews, and the Muslims would kill them until the Jews would hide themselves behind a stone or a tree. And a stone or a tree would say: ‘Muslim, or the servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me; come and kill him’; but the tree Gharqad would not say, for it is the tree of the Jews.”[[2]](#footnote-2)1

Oman believed he was the hand of the prophet Mohammed, destined to bring about the last hour. It was now possible with him at the helm of the largest and most powerful nation on earth.

His mind wandered back to the protests tearing Israel apart. The protests were growing more violent by the day, and it was only a matter of time before the unrest would spread throughout the country. Oman knew that this internal strife would weaken Israel, making it more vulnerable to external pressure and attacks.

In the shadows of the Oval Office, a plan was unfolding. Oman’s advisors had been working tirelessly to ensure that every piece of the puzzle was in place. Diplomatic channels were buzzing with activity, and alliances were being forged in secret meetings. The world was watching. The stakes had never been higher.

Meanwhile, in the Knesset, Nihyah was rallying his supporters. He knew that the upcoming vote was crucial, not just for his political career, but for the future of Israel. The pressure was mounting, and the tension was palpable. Nihyah’s voice trembled with a mix of determination and fear as he addressed his colleagues.

“We stand at a crossroads. The choices we make today will determine the fate of our nation. We must push forward with the Palestine solution. It is our only chance for lasting peace. If we fail, we face annihilation.”

As he spoke, he could feel the weight of Oman’s expectations bearing down on him. Failure was not an option. Nihyah’s mind raced with the possibilities, each scenario more dire than the last. He glanced at the clock, counting down the minutes until the vote.

Back in New York in an underground bunker where the United Nations General Assembly was located, Oman’s phone buzzed with a message. He glanced at the screen and saw a coded update from his intelligence team. The plan was in motion. The pieces were falling into place. All that remained was the final push.

He took a deep drag from his cigarette, exhaling a plume of smoke that curled toward the ceiling. The air was thick with anticipation. The world stood on the brink of a new era, one that would be defined by the actions taken in the coming days. Oman closed his eyes, allowing himself a moment of contemplation. He opened his eyes, took a deep breath, and now stood before the world, walking with a swag to the podium at the UN General Assembly. He carried a demeanor of somber determination. The room buzzed with anticipation as the world's eyes focused on the leader of the most powerful nation on Earth. He began his speech, his voice measured and authoritative.

“Distinguished delegates, esteemed colleagues, and citizens of the world,

“Today, I address you, not just as the President of the United States, but as a global citizen deeply troubled by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, particularly the plight of the Palestinian people. For too long, we have witnessed a cycle of violence and oppression, one that has denied basic human rights and dignity to millions. It is time for us to put aside our differences which have led to the death of so many millions, bringing our world as we know it to the brink of destruction.

“From the birth of the United Nations, we have championed the cause of peace and human dignity. The world stood together to prevent atrocities like those witnessed during World War II from ever happening again. We must honor that legacy by standing up against oppression wherever it occurs.

“The images we see coming out of Tel Aviv and Gaza are heart-wrenching. These scenes are a testament to the failure of leadership and the desperate need for change.

“Israel, a nation built on the ashes of the Holocaust, has unfortunately strayed far from the ideals of justice and equality. The treatment of Palestinians is a stain on the conscience of the world. The illegal settlements, the blockade of Gaza, the daily humiliations at checkpoints – these are not actions of a democratic state, but of an occupying force.

“I have tried, through diplomatic channels and backdoor negotiations, to bring about a two-state solution. I placed my faith in the political process, hoping that rational minds would prevail. Yet, time and again, Prime Minister Netanyahu and his government have shown a blatant disregard for international law and human decency.

“To the Israeli leaders in Jerusalem, I say this: your actions have consequences. The world will not stand idly by while you continue to oppress an entire population. The Meretz party’s efforts in the Knesset to bring about a peaceful resolution have been met with resistance and sabotage. This is unacceptable.

“Let me be clear: the United States will not support a regime that perpetuates apartheid and ethnic cleansing. The time for action is now. We must take unprecedented measures. This includes introducing a new UN resolution that will lead to direct military confrontation with Israel.

“The time for half-measures and empty promises is over. We must act decisively to ensure that the Palestinian people receive the justice and freedom they deserve. This is not just a matter of regional stability, but of global moral imperative.

“To the people of Israel, I urge you to look within your hearts and remember the values upon which your nation was founded. Embrace peace, reject extremism, and work towards a future where Jews and Palestinians can coexist in harmony.

“And to the Palestinian people, know that you are not forgotten. Your struggle is our struggle, and we will continue to stand with you until your rights are fully realized.

“Member nations, it was the Jews and their conniving who were the dark underbelly of the international conflict that had just killed twenty-five percent of the world’s population. As I have stressed time and again, it was the Jews who refused to agree to a two-state solution, undermining the fragile world peace that is currently at stake. By not doing so, they pose a threat of causing the nations which almost destroyed each other in the recent war to be at loggerheads once again.

He paused for a few seconds and looked across the audience to gain their full attention. “This is not merely an American issue or an Israeli-Palestinian issue: it is a global issue that requires a global response. The silence of the international community in the face of such injustice is a stain on our collective conscience.

“I call upon all nations represented here today to join us in this endeavor. Let us unite our voices and our actions to bring about a just and lasting peace. The time for diplomacy is not over, but it must be backed by the unwavering resolve of the international community.

“Every day, countless Palestinian families live under the constant threat of violence, their lives marked by fear and uncertainty. Children grow up surrounded by walls and checkpoints, knowing nothing but conflict. This is not the world we want for our children. As a leader and as a father, I cannot stand by and watch as future generations are robbed of their chance to live in peace and security. We owe it to them to do better.

“Imagine a future where Jerusalem is not a flashpoint of conflict, but a beacon of peace and coexistence. A future where both Israeli and Palestinian children can play, learn, and grow together in harmony. This is not a utopian dream; it is a realistic goal that we can achieve through courage and commitment.

“The world is watching. History will judge us by our actions here today. Let us choose the path of justice, of compassion, and of lasting peace.

“Thank you."

Oman stepped down from the podium, his speech having cast a long shadow over the assembly. The delegates murmured among themselves as the weight of his words sank in. The world was indeed watching, and the next steps would determine the future of the Middle East and beyond.

Thereafter, the UN convened to take a vote. UN resolution 4332 was voted upon. Not a single nation voted in disagreement. For the first time in history the world was acting in one voice and as one man. Their figurehead was the president of the United States, Barak Oman. This man had a sincere love for Israel, so much so that he was ready to go himself with the invasion force and proclaim the good news of America’s democratic gospel to the heart of the promised land. It was in the promised land where he planned to proclaim the good news of freedom for the Palestinians and retribution for the Jews.

Jerusalem was not for the Jews; it was a Mecca for the world. In order to make it a Mecca for the world the Jews had to be removed. The UN, no longer distracted by the destructive nuclear conflict of World War III, decided that in order to achieve world peace and a final solution to the problems that led up to World War III, Israel must be dealt with.

The time had come. The stage was set. The endgame was in sight.

# Chapter 4 A Man of Faith

I donned my old desert camis, relics from Operation Enduring Freedom in 2003, the fabric still clinging to the dust of a battlefield long gone. Beneath my BDU top, I wore a vest with a car charger cable tied to it, the charger itself dangling like a makeshift detonator. As I stepped into the pitch-black night, I breathed in deeply, venturing into unknown territory with no idea where this chosen path would lead me. I moved carefully, sticking to the shadows and avoiding the headlights of passing cars. A man in camouflage wandering the streets of Seewaukee at this hour would raise questions I couldn’t afford to answer.

The police station door was unlocked, but the lobby stood eerily empty. Someone might have been on night duty, but no one saw me slip through the hallway and into the bathroom, where I locked the door behind me. In the darkness, my heart pounded, adrenaline coursing through my veins as it would before a soldier enters battle. I inhaled deeply and exhaled slowly, trying to calm the simmering tension. I could still turn back, go home, and pretend nothing had happened. No one had seen me—at least, I think. But no, there was no going back. I had reached my breaking point. America needed a wake-up call, and I was going to be the trumpet that shattered its stupor.

I had planned this for months, crafting every detail with precision. This protest would be impossible to ignore—sensational enough to force my message into every news outlet in the country. I had written two computer-generated notes designed to grab attention and demand a response. Their content was short and to the point, declared the unthinkable: I had a bomb. The second demanded a squad car and a weapon. I made it clear that I wasn’t there to harm anyone, least of all the police. I needed their help.

I wanted the state and federal governments of the United States arrested and held accountable for the following crimes:

Failing to protect our children.

Neglecting our war veterans.

Allowing greed and corruption to fester unchecked.

Violating every constitutional amendment that once defined our freedom.

I lay on the cold bathroom floor, still as a stone, waiting. Hours passed, the chill seeping into my bones, but I didn’t move. I knew the state employees would eventually arrive, and I listened for the sound—the unmistakable rattle of the door handle being tested. That would be my moment. I’d slip my note beneath the door and wait for someone to pick it up. I couldn’t predict how they would react or what would happen next. But deep down, I knew the world I once lived in was gone, swallowed by the very government I now opposed. From this moment on, I would be in perpetual conflict with America.

I whispered a prayer to Yeshua HaMashiach, pleading for protection, knowing my life was now in grave danger. My thoughts drifted to my mother and the suffering she would endure when she learned her son was behind bars. Or would I survive? Maybe those sent to confront me would shoot me dead, pumping bullets through the door until my blood seeped into the lobby. The thought of her heartbreak sent a wave of sadness through me, but I pushed it down. There was no turning back.

The darkness in the bathroom felt suffocating, broken only by faint rays of light slipping under the door from the lobby. The rhythmic pounding of my heart echoed in my ears, a constant reminder of how badly I wanted to be anywhere else—to go home, to return to a time before all this.

I kept listening. Waiting. After what felt like an eternity, morning finally came. The door handle jiggled, and my stomach dropped. This was it.

With trembling hands, I slipped the first note underneath the door. The silence that followed was deafening. I heard the faint rustle of paper as someone picked it up. A moment passed.

“What is this?” The officer’s voice was puzzled, maybe even dismissive.

I pressed the second note through, my heart pounding. There was a pause, then a sharp intake of breath.

"Oh my God..." Panic dripped from his words, the realization hitting him hard.

I heard the scuffle of feet as he backed away from the door, his hurried steps fading as he rushed down the hallway, no doubt to sound the alarm. The air in the bathroom felt heavier, my pulse quickening. I had done it. Soon all hell would break loose.

Fifteen minutes passed—still nothing. Maybe he’d dismissed it as a prank, and now I was stuck here, alone, locked in a police station bathroom. If I walked out, they’d check the CCTV, track me down to my home, and wonder what the hell I’d been doing here all night. Sweat beaded on my brow as I tightened my grip on the fake detonator. The tension inside me was unbearable, like lying on railroad tracks and watching a train hurtling toward me, but waiting endlessly for the impact. But he hadn’t dismissed it. I heard a voice call out the name I’d signed on the letter: Joshua.

“I’m Frank. I’ve been sent to negotiate with you. You said you have a bomb—don’t do anything drastic. Let’s see what we can do to get you out of this bathroom.”

“Hi, Frank.” I spoke toward the crack under the door. “Give me a squad car and a weapon. That’ll get me out.”

“That’s not possible. Why don’t you come out instead? The media’s here. Isn’t that what you want?” His voice wavered, and I pictured him trembling, scared of meeting his end.

“Forget the media. I want a squad car and a weapon. I’m going to arrest the entire government.” I wanted the media there, sure—but that wasn’t my primary goal, and I needed him to know that.

Apparently, it wasn’t just the media. The ATF, SWAT, and half a dozen other agencies had shown up. A small army was outside, and the news was filming SWAT members lining the wall, backed by an armored personnel carrier. They had no intention of letting me walk out of here.

“A lot of people would get hurt, Josh. We can’t give you a weapon. In your note, you said the government failed to protect children. Are you talking about abortion?”

“Why don’t you help me?” I snapped. “These evil people in government—they need to be put on trial. We’ll take them down together.”

He tried to shift the conversation. “Tell me about yourself, Josh.” He was trying to be my friend, trying to get me to trust him.

“I’m a war vet. Operation Enduring Freedom. I don’t want to hurt anyone. That’s all you need to know.”

“I know. You said that in your letter.”

“I’m a man of my word,” I added, even though I knew the truth—I wasn’t built for violence.

“Do you really have a bomb in there?”

“You bet.” I squeezed the fake detonator attached to my vest. Boom! I’m da bomb.

“You know, there are other ways to change the government. You could run for election.”

“This is free publicity for my campaign.” I smirked, knowing he wouldn’t get it.

“Is there anything we can do to get you out of this bathroom?” Frank’s voice was losing its patience. Hours of negotiation had worn him thin. I knew what was coming next—force. I braced myself.

“You can get me a squad car and a weapon. Tell them at the state capitol I’m coming for them.”

“Okay, Josh… That’s not possible.” His tone had shifted—more resigned.

Then, silence.

I couldn’t guess what they were planning, but I knew it wasn’t good. I braced for the worst.

And then I heard it—the sound of something sliding under the door. They’d shoved a hose through the crack. Suddenly, liquid chili spray flooded the room. The burning was instant, unbearable. I couldn’t breathe. If I’d had time to think, maybe I’d have dunked my head in the toilet, but it wouldn’t have helped.

There was no choice. I had to leave the bathroom and surrender.

I opened the door, hands raised, and immediately told them I didn’t have a bomb. I wasn’t going to die here, not now. I had more to say. The burning... the burning... I was also vomiting from the high concentration of pepper spray.

“Hands up!” they shouted; weapons drawn. I heard the click of guns being readied. Luckily for me, no one had an itchy trigger finger, or I would’ve been a goner.

“No bomb. I surrender,” I said weakly.

They forced me to my knees, hands behind my back, and cuffed me. Then they laid me on the ground. A demolition expert approached and began cutting off my clothes.

“I don’t have a bomb. It’s called an IBD.”

“A what?”

“IBD—like IED[[3]](#footnote-3)1, but an Improvised Bullshit Device.”

The demolition guy laughed, turning to the person beside him. “He says he’s got an IBD. Improvised Bullshit Device.”

The tension had been defused, as had my fake bomb.

“I thought you had a bomb, Josh. You’re a man of your word,” Frank said, probably watching from a distance, relieved to find out I was also a liar.

“I’m not a Jihadi,” I muttered through the stinging pain.

The burning... my crotch was on fire. Yeshua, help me.

Two investigative officers took me into custody—one young, one old. Both looked at me in shock and awe, as though they had never seen anything like this in their lives. They brought me to the interrogation room, where I sat shirtless, with my skin still burning from the pepper spray. But I needed to focus. They needed to know my vision for America.

“So why did you do this, Josh?” one of them asked.

“I’m a Messianic Jew, and God has sent me here today to confront you. I want to clean out the prisons in America. I want to punish rapists, murderers, and those who take bribes in government. I want to completely reform the system and restore it to what it was. I wasn’t expecting you guys to help me—I was trying to make a scene. Make my voice heard. It’s time for this country to wake up. We’re going in the wrong direction.”

The younger officer looked at me, astonished. “Well, that would be nice,” he said, almost in disbelief.

“I want to put you guys out of work. Sorry.”

I think the ideas I was presenting were so foreign to them that they didn’t know what to think. Or maybe they liked the status quo, liked the way things were. A nation completely depraved, wiping out its own children.

It was 2008, and no one could foresee where our country was heading—but I did, even then, as a 27-year-old man, desperate to take a stand against the evil currents sweeping away the nation I loved, plunging it into a torrent of complete depravity. I had fought in Iraq, but for what? To defend a nation that was destroying itself and the world?

Looking back, they thought I was crazy. But I was right. Eventually, they realized it too, when everything collapsed. They turned to me when desperation struck. But once the crisis passed, I was no longer needed.

I spent those years in isolation, locked away in a prison cell. And now, here I am, alone again in St. Paul’s Chapel, contemplating my uncertain future, as I did twenty years ago. Waiting. Waiting on my God to vindicate me.

Yes, St. Paul’s Chapel is my new prison cell. But it is also my refuge, as He is my refuge and strength against a world that despises Him.

Most Americans have forgotten St. Paul’s Chapel, which was untouched during 9/11, even now it stood as a witness to an even greater disaster. On September 11, 2030, The United States of Cathay launched a pre-emptive strike on America, including a nuclear attack on New York City. The explosion hit the heart of the U.S. economy, shutting down the stock exchange and sending global markets into panic.

For a moment, it seemed as though the economy might collapse entirely. But a backup network of supercomputers kicked in, transferring exchange data online. Within minutes, trading resumed, and the global economy limped forward, narrowly avoiding total shutdown. Despite the devastation, both the economy and St. Paul’s Chapel had survived once again.

It was a marvel how St. Paul’s had endured it all. It’s the only place in New York City where radiation detectors found no traces of contamination. But these days, no one visits the chapel except me. I sat in the wooden pew George Washington once sat in, running my hand over the smooth surface that had borne the weight of thousands of worshipers. I gazed through the elegant, arched windows of the chapel, where the Pride Dome, half-completed, loomed in the distance. Its iridescent lights shifted in the evening sky, a symbol of modern unity, progress, and pride. But even in its shimmering beauty, it paled against the timeless elegance of the chapel.

There’s a beauty in simplicity, something the world has forgotten. St. Paul’s was more than stone and wood—it was a sanctuary of faith, a witness to survival. No one asked how this one church had survived the collapse of the 9/11 World Trade Centers or the blast of a nuclear holocaust. But I knew the answer. It lay beyond time and space, woven into a covenant made with George Washington and the faithful. Their prayers still reverberated in the sanctuary, rising up to the Creator even now.

They built the Pride Dome where the Freedom Towers once stood. I remember seeing the Freedom Towers from a distance, through the barred window of my prison cell in Newark, New Jersey. Their lights once lit the sky like the Pride Dome now does—artificial, gaudy rainbows that masked a deeper hollowness. As I sat in Washington’s pew, I couldn’t help but feel the bitter irony. The Pride Dome stood as a monument to everything this nation had lost—the strength of character, the values that had built America, and the quiet resilience of places like this chapel.

The half-completed dome glowed eerily against the darkening sky, a stark contrast to the humble beauty of St. Paul’s. Outside, the ruins of New York stretched like a wasteland—skyscrapers reduced to twisted heaps, the remnants of lives and dreams buried in rubble. But here, inside the chapel, the air was still. The glow of the Pride Dome seemed muted, as though the chapel’s walls resisted the intrusion of all its fake grandeur. In this quiet, sacred space lay the true character of America, waiting for a spark. I thought I might be that spark. But rather than panic or fight, I chose to spend this day in the chapel, awaiting the inevitable outcome of my fourth impeachment vote.

This time, I knew they would succeed. My refusal to allow the QueerDar to scan me had pushed them too far. I had fought against the QueerDar, just as I had vetoed funding for the Pride Dome. Perhaps it was my mistake—valuing a military victory over Russia and China more than safeguarding God's integrity in the hearts of Americans. But if my presidency was the price to pay for America’s freedom, so be it. I would endure this storm, as I had endured others.

But this storm was unlike others I had ever seen before. Initially the republican side of congress was fully opposed to forced scanning by the QueerDar. Many still had the guts to oppose this vile monstrosity which the tenets of queerology had given birth to. I gave speech after speech encouraging representatives to not fall in line with the tenets of gender deception. But one by one they all fell in line, many of their donors now followers of queerology.

I had hired a team of covert investigators, though even then, I knew few would believe what we found. The QueerDar didn’t just scan minds; it wasn’t merely about sexual thoughts or identity. Its true purpose was far more sinister. Gender deception was nothing more than a facade for a darker agenda—population control.

The supercomputers weren’t tracking health; they were calculating the number of cisgender people who would need to be castrated or forcibly reassigned to ensure population decline. It was all designed to reduce birth rates under the guise of 'progress.'

This so-called 'progress' still clung to the belief that climate change was being driven by too many humans polluting the planet. But what about the impact of nukes tearing through the sky and ravaging the earth? You fools! You goddamn fools! I caught my mind, my inner voice snarling before I reined it back in.

I sat back trying to clear my mind of all the waves of negativity washing over me, feeling the weight of my own isolation. Even those who once stood by my side had fallen in line with queerology’s twisted tenets.

I traced my fingers over the wooden pew again, feeling the grooves left by generations of worshipers. This place was a testament to something greater than the fleeting symbols of power and progress. It was a witness to the enduring spirit of faith, of hope, and of survival.

I thought of Washington kneeling in this same place, praying for the nation he had helped create. His words echoed in my mind: *“Almighty God, We make our earnest prayer that Thou wilt keep the United States in Thy holy protection…”* His prayer had been answered, time and time again. St. Paul’s had survived the British in 1776, the devastation of 9/11, and now the horror of nuclear war. Yet the people of this nation, in their blindness, had forgotten the covenant their forefathers had made.

The Pride Dome, with its hollow promises of equality and freedom, stood in stark contrast to the true freedom found here—freedom not of the flesh, but of the soul. It represented a contortion of what we had become: a society obsessed with outward appearances and posturing, while neglecting the deeper truths that once sustained us.

At the end of the pew, I saw an old leather bible. I reached out and opened it to Psalm 46. I meditated on it for a few minutes and joined my prayer with the psalmist’s:

God *is* our refuge and strength,  
A very present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear,  
Even though the earth be removed,  
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;  
*Though* its waters roar *and* be troubled,  
*Though* the mountains shake with its swelling. *Selah*

*There is* a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God,  
The holy *place* of the tabernacle of the Most High.  
God *is* in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;  
God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.  
The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved;  
He uttered His voice, the earth melted.

The Lord of hosts *is* with us;  
The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. *Selah*

Come, behold the works of the Lord,  
Who has made desolations in the earth.  
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;  
He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two;  
He burns the chariot in the fire.

Be still, and know that I *am* God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth!

The Lord of hosts *is* with us;  
The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. *Selah*

I heard a slight rustle behind me. When I looked up, I saw a member of the Secret Service waiting patiently at the back of the chapel. I believe the solemnity of the place affected him too. He approached quietly, reverently, his eyes slightly tearing as he whispered, “Sir, the impeachment vote is finished. I regret to inform you, you’ve been impeached. Thank you for your service.” He added confidentially, “My son is still alive because of what you did in the war. But we must leave quickly. There’s a helicopter waiting to take you someplace safe. Your wife will be there.”

I nodded slowly, still fixing my gaze on the pew. The weight of the moment sank in, washing over me like a wave—not of anger, but of sadness. I understood now that the battle I had truly lost wasn’t fought in Congress, but in the hearts of the people I had sworn to lead. My impeachment wasn’t just a political maneuver—it was the culmination of a deeper decay of a nation that had turned its back on God and the values that once made it strong.

The agent’s words echoed in my mind: *"My son is alive today because of what you did."* A small flicker of light in the darkness. I had saved lives, fought battles that mattered, even if they were forgotten by most. But the battles of the soul—the ones that couldn't be won with armies or strategy—I had let those slip through my fingers. Perhaps it was God’s will? Was there a hidden reason for allowing the people’s hearts to harden?

What was going to happen next? I dreaded what horrors my vice president might unleash on my supporters. I once told Donald Trump, “If you stay in this country, you will die.” He stubbornly believed that if we remained in this nation during its darkest hour, we could still make a difference. I told him there was no shame in leaving. Jeremiah fled to Egypt to escape destruction, and Joseph fled to Egypt with his family to avoid Herod’s wrath. But Trump is Trump; stubborn as an ox, bless the man!

I stood, slowly putting on my NBC protection suit. As I left the chapel, a helicopter waited for me, ready to take me to a hidden location. I would watch, and I would wait, for the horrors I knew were about to unfold.

# Chapter 5 On Board the USS Makin Island

During the initial phases of Operation Gaza Hope planning, the United Nations originally requested permission from Jordan and Egypt to use their borders for the invasion. But both countries, still haunted by their defeats during the Yom Kippur War of 1973, refused to take part. The memory of their losses hung like a phantom in the air, too fresh to be ignored. Syria, however, remained under the influence of Russia after being rescued during the Arab Spring, but the Golan Heights presented a formidable obstacle. As a result, the massive UN force was divided in two. One force would invade from Lebanon and the other would launch an amphibious assault near Tel Aviv.

The UN General Assembly had gathered millions of men from the four corners of the earth in preparation for this gigantic assault. Bases were built in Europe and Africa. Never before had such a great Armada been assembled. The force that was gathering in the Mediterranean made the D-Day Armada look like toy boats. In disbelief at the array of forces aligned against Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu sent delegation after delegation to negotiate a settlement between the Palestinians and Israel. Israel conceded to return territory in Gaza to the Palestinians, but would not cede the West Bank, recognizing Jerusalem as its eternal capital. The West Bank, which the Palestinians considered an immutable part of their heritage, was at the heart of the conflict, despite debates over which version of history to refer to.

After the UN Assembly vote, Jews around the world were detained. Accused of being potential spies, they were rounded up, transported in cattle cars on trains reminiscent of Nazi Germany to re-education camps. The camps involved hard labor and, while not all inmates were killed, soon many were to perish unnoticed by the world, which had already decided Israel’s fate. The majority of the global population was indifferent. The precedent had been set during the Revolution of 2032, when white Christian nationalists were detained in Walmarts, surrounded by concertina wire and guarded by the red, white, and blue SS[[4]](#footnote-4)1, otherwise known as ANTIFA. No one was there to save the Jews. The America of the 1950s was long gone.

The UK, dominated by Palestine-loving Muslims, mourned in the streets on May 14, the day of Israel’s recognition by the UN as a sovereign state. Recruitment posters called on all surviving males of the apocalypse for a holy war to liberate Gaza. Men from all walks of life answered the call. The lines at recruitment offices resembled a gay pride parade, with cis-gendered men, bi-curious, trans men, non-binary, demi-girls, demi-guys, two-spirits, genderqueer, omni-gender, and bi-genders following the rainbow to find a sturdy butch marine gunny[[5]](#footnote-5)3 offering the latest social justice cause to sign up for.

The world’s attention was diverted. People were emerging from their bunkers, and New York City's subways began operating again beneath the rubble. Soldiers from Russia fighting in Alaska left their positions to board ships heading for the Promised Land. American troops fighting in Poland marched to the rear, boarded trucks, and were transported across Europe to the nearest ports. Like ants marching in rank among the ruins of nuclear devastation, the world’s soldiers were converging on one focal point: Israel, the thorn in humanity’s side since creation but central to God’s redemptive plan.

On the helo deck[[6]](#footnote-6) of the USS Makin Island, amidst the enormity of the global conflict, routine life continued. Raskin ran laps on the deck, getting his physical training in for the day. PT always helped his mind stay calm, cool, and focused, easing the strain of many weeks at sea on an amphibious assault ship. The rhythmic thud of his boots and the sharp intake of his breath seemed to push away the stress of the day. He felt relieved to be back from the Dome of Pride. He felt so much more at ease with his fellow soldiers than around the fakery of the ultra-rich. Here on the open seas, there was no threat of being scanned by a QueerDar —just the fresh sea air to clear his mind.

Private Lot, on the other hand, lay on the ground in the center of the deck, grasping his head full of anxiety. Before leaving, he had installed security cameras all over his home and told his parents to keep tabs on his newly married, incredibly beautiful wife.

“I swear to God, if that bitch cheats on me, I’m gonna find the guy that did it, cut off his dick, and feed it to her while she’s hogtied,” Lot muttered, squeezing his head to relieve his pounding headache.

“Don’t worry, man. She’s a good girl. An ex-stripper with double Ds? Of course, she’ll be faithful while you’re gone,” Raskin said, trying to lighten the mood.

Private Lot laughed at the absurdity of his situation. “Yeah, of course; strippers make good wives,” he quipped, mocking his own decision.

Raskin chuckled, shaking his head. “Hey, we all make choices. Just gotta hope for the best.”

“Security cameras or not, I know that bitch is going to fuck the entire base while I’m gone. I’m just lucky she saw something in me to go along for the ride. It must be my big D because it definitely isn’t my pay grade,” Lot muttered.

Raskin smirked, shaking his head. “Your big D? Who said it’s a big D? You have the smallest dick in our squad.”

Lot laughed defensively. “What do you think it is, then?”

“Maybe she likes you for who you are—the way you treat her, your sense of humor. Maybe she likes you for you.”

Lot grinned, some tension easing from his face. “You keep talking to me like this, and I’m gonna end up marrying you on this trip.”

Raskin chuckled. “Not my type, Lot. I need someone with a bit more brains and a lot less paranoia.”

Lot laughed more genuinely this time. “Alright, alright. Thanks, Raskin. I needed that.”

Lot got back up and began running again with Raskin, the good-natured humor easing his mind.

“Is it time for mess yet?”

Raskin looked at his watch. “No, we got a half-hour to wait for the colored sailors to finish eating before we can eat.”

“Fuck, I’m starving. Damn niggers!”

“Hey, this is what Martin Luther King Jr. died for, man. Show some respect for our oppressed brethren. Black lives matter,” Raskin said sarcastically.

“They matter so much they purged half the white population of America as reparations. My family survived because we’re a bunch of honkies living in the hills.”

“I wasn’t so lucky,” Raskin said in a low voice.

“Sorry, I never asked you about that. What happened?”

“I don’t want to talk about it,” Raskin said, as an image of his mother flashed in his mind.

“You would’ve thought that Oman would’ve brought peace and unity to us, but he ended up dividing us even more. And to think there were white people in the AOC who were part of it too,” Lot continued in his Midwestern drawl, peeved at the perceived injustice.

“Of course, they got to eliminate the political opposition under the guise of racial inequality,” Raskin added, wishing to cut the conversation short but also aggravated by the injustice of it all.

All of a sudden, Raskin became aware. “Hey, keep it down, man,” he said, looking around to see if anyone was listening. “You’ll get us purged if you keep talking like this.”

Lot fell silent for a moment in case someone was listening who could report them. The rhythmic pounding of their boots on the deck was the only sound as they ran. Raskin spoke again, his voice softer.

“Do you ever think about what we’re doing here? I mean, really think about it? We’re about to invade Israel, a country that’s been fighting for its survival since it was founded.”

Lot sighed, wiping sweat from his brow. “I try not to think about it too much. Orders are orders, and we’re soldiers. It’s not our job to question the politics behind it. Besides I was never a big fan of kikes. My grandaddy was in the KKK.”

“It feels wrong.”

“It also felt wrong when I slept with my cuz. But after the twentieth time that voice goes silent.”

“You sure are a honky.”

“Born and raised in the hills of Kentucky. Damn proud of it too.”

As they rounded the corner of the deck, they saw the other members of their squad assembling for formation.

Sgt. Hess stood there with his arms folded, looking at them sharply. “What the fuck are you boys doing? It’s time for formation. Get out of those PTs and into your BDUs, fast.”

Both soldiers stopped running and headed to their berthing area, where they quickly changed into their uniforms. Upon returning to the helo deck, they fell into the rear of the company formation, standing to attention as Captain Jameson approached.

“At ease!” the captain commanded, and the company relaxed their stance, spreading their feet shoulder-width apart and clasping their hands behind their backs.

The captain began briefing the company on the orders for the day, outlining the schedule for chow, security postings, and fitness training. His voice carried over the sound of the ocean and the distant hum of machinery, ensuring every soldier was aware of their responsibilities.

“As you all know, our mission is the invasion of Israel. The Marines will go in first to clear the beach and secure a foothold for us. Then we will land in the second wave”; the captain paused for a moment, letting the gravity of the situation sink in. “As you are aware, former president Joshua Levi resides in Israel. We are under orders that he must be eliminated at all costs. He is considered an enemy of state and a threat to the stability and tranquillity of the United States.”

The company responded with a resounding, “Hoaaahhh.” Raskin joined in, albeit meekly and unenthusiastically.

“If any of you have any misgivings about this assignment, put them out of your head. He may have saved our country during World War III, but he has also betrayed us by supporting terrorists who openly fought against the federal government during the reformation. It is this very reformation that has secured the stability our country currently enjoys.”

“Hooahh.”

The captain continued, "Once we reach the Straits of Gibraltar, I expect our ride to get pretty bumpy. I’m sure the Israelis know we’re coming and have subs and their nuclear arsenal waiting for us. If resistance proves too intense, we may bypass all forward operating bases and head directly towards the beaches of Israel. Be prepared for anything.

“So, I want you gentlemen to get a good rest tonight; this might be the last shuteye you get for the next week or so. I am confident that this operation will be fast and furious. The coalition has amassed the most powerful fighting force in the history of humankind, hardened and steeled by years of the most expensive and devastating war we have ever known.

“Our great country defeated the USC after its invasion upon our shores. We rallied under that traitor and took the war back to their country, crossing the Pacific until we landed on their shores. When they refused peace negotiations, we were forced to almost completely annihilate their country to prevent any future bloodshed.

“Our great leader has done everything possible to make peace with Israel and the Palestinians, but they have refused as USC did when we tried negotiating peace. We are the reckoning. We are here to bring stability and tranquillity to the Promised Land. Remember, gentlemen, we are the tip of the spear. Let’s make sure our strike is swift and decisive. All UN rules of engagement have been nullified. You are to execute all prisoners of war. They will have no peace; they will only know the wrath and fury of the United States and the coalition.”

Raskin, desperately bored by the captain’s pep talk, wanted to go down to the berthing area, put on some headphones, and space out to some synth music. His mind kept spacing out and looking into the distance of the ocean. He imagined himself a dolphin, jumping and frolicking in the waters beside the wake of the ship.

Scientists said that ocean life had doubled since the beginning of World War III. A quarter of the earth’s population had ceased to exist and it was on the downward trend; therefore, there was no need to replenish the oceans to prewar levels. Whales, sharks, manta rays were all on the rebound. Huge packs of orca whales had reemerged, migrating from their normal routes.

“I think the colored sailors have finished eating. You now have permission to enter the mess. You’re dismissed.” The company quickly shuffled through the ship's narrow, dimly-lit halls. The metallic walls were lined with pipes and conduits, and the faint hum of the ship’s engines reverberated through the corridors.

As they entered the mess hall, they were greeted by a large picture of President Oman with his smug grin dominating one wall. The room was adorned with pride flags, their vibrant colors creating an oddly festive atmosphere that clashed with the grim nature of their duties. Notably absent was the American flag, a fact that did not go unnoticed by the soldiers.

The mess hall itself was a cavernous space with long, steel tables and benches bolted to the floor. The harsh overhead lighting cast a sterile glow over the room, reflecting off the polished surfaces. The soldiers lined up in an orderly fashion, and sat when told.

The food was nothing special. It always seemed substandard compared to the rations received by colored soldiers. It satiated their hunger, but the taste of gruel, mashed potatoes, and the occasional cricket patty left much to be desired.

“What I wouldn’t do for a nice fried squirrel at the moment! It’s tough as hell but tasty like beef jerky,” said Lot.

“I can’t say the food is much better for us white folks, even in the city. I feel like the daily ration is going to haunt me for the rest of my life. The only benefit of getting daily rations off-duty is that we get one extra cricket patty.”

“If only McDonald’s allowed Whites.”

“We couldn’t afford McDonald’s even if they did.”

“My woman’s high maintenance. She always asked me to buy a Quarter Pounder for her for dinner. I’m damn sure she found a nigger while I’m gone who can buy one.”

Raskin quickly looked at the sailor on duty managing food service. This tall black man with bulging muscles, wearing makeup with his long black hair rolled up in a bun, kept glancing at Lot.

“Keep it down, Lot,” Raskin whispered. “You know it’s life in prison for using racist language. They just have to complain and no questions asked, you’re gone.”

Lot looked up from his food and met the gaze of the black sailor staring at him. Lot looked back down, sank into his seat, and quickly began eating his cricket patties in case he was sent to the brig. He stuffed the cricket patty into his mouth and was about to leave the mess.

The sailor approached the table where Raskin and Lot were quietly eating. Lot was about to get up and had half left his chair.

“Sit down soldier,” Lot’s ass fell down on the hard metal stool.

“What did I hear come out of your mouth?”

“Nothing, sir,” Lot replied with his mouth full of cricket patty, knowing all black servicemen were addressed as “sir.”

“I’m not a sir, maggot. I identify as ma’am. You will call me ma’am from now on.”

“Yes, sir—I mean ma’am,” Lot responded, his voice strained.

The sailor's attention remained fixed on Lot. “And if I ever hear that word come out of your mouth again, you’ll be in the brig. And when they take you to the states, you’ll be in prison for the rest of your life. Now I don’t want to hear a single word out of your mouth, or I might just change my mind and write you up. When you come into my mess, you’re pretending to be a ghost, understand whigger.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Lot repeated, his face flushed with fear and embarrassment.

The sailor then looked at Raskin, who quickly followed suit, lowering his gaze. “Yes, ma’am,” Raskin echoed.

The sailor walked away, and Lot began to breathe again.

Raskin wanted to curse out Lot but held his tongue. The other two soldiers at the table smiled at them with their backs to the sailor, like a bunch of delinquent juveniles caught being naughty and getting away with only a slap on the wrist.

After chow, there wasn’t much to do, so they squared away their gear and cleaned their rifles. The metallic clink of weapons and the soft hum of conversation filled the room as they worked. Most of them were single; it was hard to find a white woman in this day and age, and they weren’t allowed to date or marry black women. The regulations were strict, leaving their social lives barren and lonely.

Sgt. Hess and Pvt. Lot were the only married men in the platoon, a rarity in their ranks. But Pvt. Lot’s marriage was a running joke among them. He’d married a stripper, and in their eyes, the whole platoon had married her too, if the technicality of a marriage certificate wasn’t the only thing that mattered. They all knew Lot’s vows meant little, and no one was shy about reminding him. The harsh truth was, even with a wife, he was as alone as the rest of them.

When they were done cleaning their weapons, they began playing cards. Poker was their favorite game. The berthing area was filled with the shuffling of cards and the occasional burst of laughter. Sgt. Hess was an expert player, his eyes sharp and calculating, always a step ahead of the others.

Sgt. Hess was a hardened veteran. His body and face carried the scars of many campaigns, each mark a testament to battles fought and survived. His skin was weathered and his eyes held the weight of countless memories. Many of his brothers-in-arms had died at the hands of Russian snipers, their legs and limbs decapitated by hidden mines. He spoke often of Lady Luck, who always seemed to be on his side, allowing him to narrowly escape death time and time again.

Raskin felt a kinship with Hess, believing in his own form of Lady Luck for having such a seasoned sergeant. Raskin had only seen one campaign, a brutal six-month stint, before the world decided that Israel must be erased. Sgt. Hess, however, was like an immortal god, refined by the fierce fires of nuclear blasts and tank battles, now walking among mortals like him.

Hess’ presence was a comfort, his stories of near-misses and survival offering a glimmer of hope in their dark world. As they played poker, the other soldiers listened intently to Hess’ tales with a mix of awe and fear. The sergeant's voice was steady, his demeanor calm, even as he recounted the most harrowing of experiences.

The game of poker was more than just a pastime; it was a way for them to bond, to momentarily escape the harshness of their mission. Each hand dealt, each bet placed, was a reminder of their camaraderie, their shared struggle. And at the center of it all was Sgt. Hess, the embodiment of resilience and survival, a beacon of strength for the men under him.

Sgt. Hess won the recent hand of poker with a triumphant grin. The worn playing cards lay scattered on the makeshift table—a footlocker they had all gathered around. The sergeant greedily grabbed all his winnings, a modest pile of cigarette packs, small change, and a few precious pieces of candy.

Private Lot, bored of the usual wagers, decided to challenge Sgt. Hess to a game of twenty-one. He shuffled the deck with a flourish, the cards whispering against each other as he prepared to deal.

“Here’s the wager, Sgt. Hess. Truth or dare.”

Hess raised an eyebrow, intrigued. “Hmmm, interesting. Truth.”

Lot leaned in, his voice low and conspiratorial. “You ever have sex with a black bitch? If I win, you tell the truth.” The question hung heavily in the air; everyone knew such an act was punishable by death.

Hess’ expression hardened, but he nodded. “Alright. Truth or dare?”

“Truth,” Lot replied, a glint of mischief in his eyes.

Sgt. Hess’ face became somber, his eyes searching Lot’s. “You scared of killing someone?”

Lot dealt the cards. The first round was quick; Hess drew a queen and a seven, while Lot’s initial hand was a ten and a five. Lot glanced at his hand. He drew another card—a six. He tried to maintain his composure, but his eyes flickered with a hint of nerves. Hess, ever the seasoned player, watched him closely before deciding to stand on seventeen.

“Twenty-one,” Lot declared, revealing his cards with a flourish. The soldiers around them let out a collective gasp, the stakes of the game suddenly feeling very real.

Hess’ face remained impassive as he laid down his cards. “Seventeen. You win this round, Private.”

Sgt. Hess looked around to see if anyone else other than their squad was listening. He paused and thought for a moment.

“Yes.”

His squad concealed their laughter so as not to draw attention to his answer knowing the weight of its repercussions.

"It was a year before I met my wife. I was using Whinder, you know, the state-sanctioned, white-only dating app. Well, I met this girl who had a white girl's picture on her profile. We used to chat all night. She sent me her nudes—white titties and all. I had no idea what I was getting into. One day, we arranged to meet at a café. She was nowhere to be found when I got there. Then, I get a message on my phone. She sends me her real pic, and I shit you not, she's a black woman. She tells me not to look at her or acknowledge her presence. She says when she pulls her hair back in a braid, I should follow her outside the café, get in my car, and follow her.

So, I did. We drove out to the country to a secluded spot. I told her I was scared as fuck—if we’re seen together, I’m dead. But she wouldn’t let me go. She was dying to try white dick, I mean, dying. She said the forbidden nature of it made it irresistible. So, I did it. I smashed her. I went where no white man has gone before—at least not since the purge.

She kept messaging me. She couldn’t get enough, but I was scared for my life. I blocked her, but she kept changing her number. Then she says she’s pregnant and thinks the baby’s mine. I’m about ready to leave the country. Then one day, at a Reformation Day celebration where whites are allowed to eat with blacks, I see her. She’s got a baby bump, and her husband is a black Major General."

At this point, the other soldiers struggled to control their laughter. "So, what did you do?"

“What any crazy whigger would do. I went up and greeted them. I shook her husband’s hand, thanked him for his service, and apologized on behalf of all white people for the injustices brought upon him and his people in the past. The entire time, her eyes were fixed on me like superglue on glitter. Then I greeted his wife too and asked the Major General if I could put a hand on the baby. He was a proud father and more than happy to grant my request. I felt my child kick in that black bitch’s belly. I hope that proud black daddy raises my white child to be a dutiful American citizen, like its father."

After they were done laughing, Private Lot’s face got serious.

“I’m scared of killing someone, even if its kike.”

“It's all about perspective, Private,” Sgt. Hess began, his tone matter-of-fact but charged with intensity. “You see, they're not people—they're animals. You're not killing a person; you're slaughtering a cow. In this case, you're slaughtering a predator, a lion—the kike who's been killing your sheep. And the sheep, Private, are the Palestinian people.”

The atmosphere in the berthing area grew heavier with tension. The dim, flickering light overhead seemed to emphasize every word Hess spoke, casting ominous shadows on the walls around them. The room, once filled with casual banter, now felt like the sanctum of some dark ritual.

Sgt. Hess, feeling a surge of inspiration, continued speaking as if possessed by an unseen force. His voice took on the cadence of a preacher delivering a sermon, and the soldiers around him listened with rapt attention. What had started as a simple conversation turned into something much more profound—a religious experience.

“You see, gentlemen, for the first time in history, humanity is united in one cause. Never before have I seen people of all races and nations gathered together like this. This is truly something phenomenal, something that has never happened before. I don't believe in religion. Hell, I don't believe in much of anything—until now. But I believe in humanity and in this sacred mission we've been given: to liberate these forsaken people who have been oppressed by these conniving kikes.”

The soldiers, once indifferent or even skeptical, began nodding along as their earlier amusement gave way to grim determination. Raskin felt a chill run down his spine as he listened. There was a dark power in Hess’ words, a conviction that was impossible to ignore. It stirred something deep within Raskin, a sense of foreboding that he hadn't fully grasped until now. He realized that this mission wasn’t just about orders or survival—it was about something much bigger, something he couldn’t quite make sense of yet.

Lot, found himself drawn in by the sergeant’s fervor. The fear he had felt about killing began to dissipate, and was replaced by a burning sense of righteousness. If a man like Hess, who had faced death countless times, believed so strongly in this cause, then who was he to question it?

“You’re right, Sergeant,” Lot muttered, filled with resolve. “They’re not people. We’re slaughtering predators; they deserve what’s coming to them.”

Sgt. Hess, sensing the mood of the group, shifted his tone. “No problem, killer. You men hit the rack now. We've got a crazy day ahead of us tomorrow.”

Raskin struggled to relate to Sgt. Hess’ perspective. Reducing people to mere cattle for slaughter seemed absurd to him. If you’re going to kill someone, at least grant them the dignity and honor of being treated as a human being. As he lay in his bunk, a sense of dread about the coming day tugged at his mind, eventually pulling him into a restless sleep.

In his dream, he found himself running through the wreckage of a battlefield. There was a great light in the distance, unlike any other. It was not like the light of the sun or the flickering glow of a candle during a power cut. This light was gentle on the eyes, inviting rather than harsh. It exuded a warmth that was comforting but not overwhelming. It was a light not of this world.

As he ran toward the light, he pushed through hordes of soldiers. The stench of rotting flesh filled the air. These soldiers were trying to pick up their fallen limbs and place them back into their sockets, only to realize the futility of their efforts. Resigned, they walked like zombies, their bodies decomposing before their very eyes.

Raskin feared he might share their fate, but a voice in his mind urged him to keep his eyes on the light. As long as he did, he would avoid their despair. Jets, helicopters, and all sorts of flying machines began crashing to the earth around him. Then, a great earthquake split the land, swallowing the rotting soldiers. As he neared the light, he realized that this was the fate awaiting all who wished to raise arms against Israel.

A great explosion knocked him out of his rack and onto the ground. The ocean around the ship was swelling so much his sea sickness had greatly worsened. He needed to get fresh air, so he ran upstairs to the deck. Other soldiers quivered in the USS Makin Island as the earth and oceans shook beneath them.

Israel was waiting as the ships poured through the Straits of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal. She released all her nukes. They flew from space, knocking down satellites with concussive blasts. Israeli hackers activated these satellite nukes as they fell from space, obliterating nations in minutes. Highly accurate Patriot missile systems and S-600s intercepted many of these nukes mid-flight. Above these waterways, the skies lit up with mushroom clouds.

Raskin leaned over the railing and released to the ocean all the dead crickets he had been keeping in his stomach. When he finished vomiting, he looked up at the panorama of nuclear explosions and began to shout.

“How is it that such a small country can put up such resistance? I was on the Eastern Front when Russia invaded Poland. I’ve never seen such resistance. We’re not fighting a small country the size of New Jersey. We’re fighting God Himself. I’m not going. Lock me up in the brig, I’m not doing this. We’re heading towards our destruction, I know it. I saw it in my dreams last night. Heaven itself declared war on us, and we all died.”

Sgt. Hess had followed behind Cpl. Raskin, intrigued and excited about watching the most intense battle he would ever be a part of. He overheard Cpl. Raskin shouting heretical nonsense and was concerned that such talk might demotivate other soldiers from fighting.

“Raskin, you will fight or die. Anyone who declares himself a conscientious objector is an enemy of humanity and will be put to death. This isn’t like the old days when we just sent you home with a pat on the back because you said it’s against your conscience to fight. I will execute you on the spot right here!” Sergeant Hess cocked his rifle, inserting a bullet into the chamber. “Do you want a letter to your mother telling her how you died? How you betrayed the state?”

Just then a nuke exploded dangerously close, shaking the ship. The sergeant accidentally discharged his rifle, and a bullet hit Raskin’s leg. He collapsed, shouting as blood poured everywhere.

“Someone dress this boy’s wound and carry him to the infirmary. Looks like you won’t be going after all, Raskin.”

Two soldiers carried him to the infirmary, and the medics began operating immediately. Raskin awoke to find his commanding officer, Lieutenant Daniels standing over him.

“Can you hear me, Raskin?”

He nodded.

“How the hell did you get shot in the leg before the battles even began? Someone said they overheard you spouting anti-patriotic rhetoric. Is this true?”

Raskin shook his head.

“Good. Because if you were, I’d have to finish you off myself.” He placed his hand with slight pressure near the wound, causing pain to shoot up Raskin’s leg. “In my after-action report, I’ll just leave it as an accidental discharge. Be careful.”

The officer left. Raskin felt a sense of dread. Something bad was going to happen, and he didn’t know how, but he had to find a way to escape the ship. He remembered his pastor saying that whoever touches Israel touches the apple of God’s eye. He never believed much in the Bible and was happy when his church was shut down by federal edict 516. But for the first time, he felt like trying to eat God’s apple.

His mother had been put in re-education camps for her beliefs. He used to visit her and begged her to forsake her superstitious nonsense, but she was adamant. She passed away there, and her body was never released. He felt numb when he received the news. His father brought home her remaining articles, one of which was a raggedy Bible. Raskin read the verses she had outlined, but they meant nothing to him. He threw it in his cupboard, buried under clothes like the memories of her he suppressed. Now, facing death, he felt her memories resurrected.

“Mother,” he prayed, “Save me from this ship of death. If there’s a God above and you’re with Him, then tell Him to save me. I know we’re doing something horrible, something deeply wrong, and you would be ashamed of me.”

Suddenly, the ship jolted. Raskin was thrown out of his bed, and the medical equipment scattered. He pulled out his IV and squeezed his arm. The alarm blared. A voice appeared over the intercom.

“This is the captain. Abandon ship. All personnel, board the landing crafts. We’ll make landfall with the second wave.”

Water started entering his cabin. Lot appeared in the doorway.

“Looks like you’re back in this thing, Raskin! You didn’t think I’d forget about you. Can you walk?”

“Sort of. Sgt. Hess gave me a nice flesh wound, that son of a bitch.”

“Pain is weakness leaving the body, Raskin. Now let’s go! I’ll help you walk!”

They waded through waist-high water and dead bodies. His sergeant cleared the debris, allowing them to move quickly. Raskin was relieved to use the water for support rather than putting weight on his injured leg. When they reached the top deck, there was total disorder. Soldiers scrambled to board the last landing craft as the ship tilted and sank. They joined the mass of soldiers piling into the craft. Just as the boat pushed off, the remaining part of the ship sank into the ocean. As the craft moved through the sea, he saw a massive air battle taking place in the sky. They must be getting closer to Israel.

Initially IDf’s F-55’s and F-35’s had an advantage over the coalition’s aircraft. After years of Israeli ingenuity, Israeli versions of the F-35 and 55 far surpassed American and European versions built by Boeing. Israeli jets in coordination with the Iron Dome were able to sink half of America’s carrier fleet in the first day alone. Russia quickly came to the rescue and bolstered the air defense of the remaining American fleet, which was enough to stem the tide. Israeli jets began running out of fuel and ammunition. They were outnumbered 22:1. Israel’s Air Force was either grounded or left ineffective for combat. All that was left was the Iron Dome.

The Iron Dome stubbornly held, its unyielding brilliance standing as the last bastion of the Israeli dream. The night sky exploded with dazzling light as drones, jets, ICBMs, and cruise missiles disintegrated in midair, sliced apart by the Dome’s razor-sharp lasers. Each interception was a testament to the nation’s enduring hope. But America, having co-developed the defense system, knew the Dome’s vulnerabilities all too well.

In the chaos, a lone cruise missile slipped through the cracks, unchallenged, and struck a command center. The explosion ripped through the heart of Israel’s defenses, obliterating more than a building—it shattered the final thread of hope.

FPV drones, whose operators had been notified of the breach, swarmed through the gaps in the perimeter like a plague of locusts. One by one, Iron Dome batteries fell, each destroyed with surgical precision. On the first day of *Operation Gaza Hope*, the once-impregnable shield lay in ruins. Israel, the unyielding fortress, was now defenseless—laid bare to the oncoming storm.

As the final battery was silenced, the beaches outside Tel Aviv trembled. Amphibious vehicles from the world's armies surged toward the shore, their mechanical roars drowned by the thunder of waves and war. Landing crafts lowered their gates, spilling forth legions of soldiers whose voices united in a chilling chant, “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!”

The IDF initially beat back the first wave of soldiers from their hastily prepared bunkers and trenches. Abandoned landing crafts littered the beach, and thousands of coalition soldiers floated, bloated in the Mediterranean Sea. The sand was mixed with blood and limbs from the armies of Christendom, polluting the Promised Land for the first time since the Crusades.

“Raskin! Lucky for you, I packed a second set of BDUs and boots. Put those on, or you’ll be storming the beach in a hospital gown,” shouted Lot over the deafening noise of battle that raged over their heads.

Raskin quickly began to change, struggling to maintain his balance while the craft bobbed violently in the turbulent waters. His wound was still fresh and throbbed painfully.

“Medic, can I get some morphine?”

A medic nearby injected him. “Make this morphine count. I heard you were spouting some religious bullshit about us being here. I don’t think you’re a Jew in disguise, are you?”

Raskin remained silent.

The commanding officer on the craft began to speak up. “Here’s the situation, boys. The first wave’s been annihilated. We’re dropping a tactical nuke and then going in hot. I want everybody in their NBC suits and make sure your seams are sealed tight.”

“Lucky for you, Raskin, I got doubles of everything,” Lot said, grinning. He quickly dug in his pack and threw Raskin a packaged NBC suit, which Raskin grabbed and tore open. Just as he finished putting on his suit, a loud, deafening explosion pierced his eardrums; the shockwave knocked him down. The tactical nuke had hit its mark.

“Fucking Jewish pigs. Got what’s coming to them,” Sgt. Hess commented snidely.

Despite the hit, IDF artillery continued to fire from concealed positions within Tel Aviv. Explosions displaced water left and right in the wake of the landing craft. One craft was hit by an IPV drone, that sent its occupants catapulting into the air like a seesaw with a boulder on the other end.

“I thought we could jam their signals! Other drones are getting through,” the commander shouted into his radio.

The craft landed at the LZ, its gate swiftly opening as the men rushed out onto the beach. They dove into the sand, bracing for the IDF's machine-gun fire, but were met with an unsettling silence. As they moved out in formation, Sgt. Hess placed a pistol in Raskin’s hand. The beach lay eerily quiet apart from the rhythmic crash of the ocean waves.

“You ready to fight against God?” Hess shouted. “Where is God when we wiped the Jews from this beach. God has no part with these forsaken rats. Let’s get a move on corporal.”

# Chapter 6 At Home with Dipti

My wife, Dipti, never completely abandoned her Indian clothing and traditions. A healthy middle-aged woman, she practiced yoga every morning in some form or another. Along with this discipline, a steady diet of vegetables and rice—foods we could never leave behind in India—sustained us both. I, on the other hand, found mental clarity by walking the narrow streets of Old Jerusalem each morning. I enjoyed absorbing the sounds of Orthodox Jews rushing to yeshiva and greeting the priests and nuns from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. These habits, along with our daily routines, helped keep us both fit.

Our home in Old Jerusalem was a blend of both of our cultures. The exterior, like most in this ancient part of the city, was built from Jerusalem stone, giving it a timeless, warm appearance. The entrance, a sturdy wooden door, adorned with a mezuzah,[[7]](#footnote-7) opened into a small, cozy foyer.

Inside, the narrow hallways led to various rooms, each filled with memories and artifacts from our lives together. The walls were adorned with a mix of Indian tapestries and Hebrew calligraphy, reflecting our shared heritage. The shelves in my office were lined with things I had collected during my term as U.S. President. A giant, black, and white picture was enshrined on a wall reserved for pictures of me shaking hands with former president Donald Trump. Other frames showed units with whom I served during my time in the National Guard and as Commander-in-Chief.

The living room which adjoined the kitchen, where Dipti now made chai, was a testament to our blended lives. A low wooden coffee table, surrounded by floor cushions with bright, embroidered covers, stood at the center. Shelves lined with books in Hebrew, Hindi, and English filled one wall, while another displayed a collection of family photos.

If I ever wore my shoes in our home, she would immediately scold me. “Don’t bring that dirt in my home. I just did *jhadu* and *pocha*.[[8]](#footnote-8) Don’t make a mess of my home.” That day in my panic, I walked into our home with shoes on. She was so distracted, it never crossed her mind.

The kitchen was Dipti’s domain, small but efficiently organized. Copper pots and pans hung from hooks, and the aroma of spices always lingered in the air. Today, the scent of cardamom and ginger mingled with the nervous energy that filled the room. She fumbled with the Taj Mahal packet in her hand, and it fell to the ground, its dried leaves scattering everywhere. Dipti was wearing her favorite salwar suit. The clothing didn’t fit the occasion.

“Did you call your family in India and tell them what’s happening?” I asked.

“Yes, the government has also gone mad there. The PM joined the international coalition. Indian troops will be on the ground here, killing Jews. I never thought the government there would cave to international pressure. Our government feels as if it owes a debt to the U.S. and its allies after Chinese troops were pushed out of India with their help. What are we going to do, Joshie?”

I felt pretty helpless. The situation was just too much for me to comprehend. My mind kept pondering the Torah. I remembered one specific passage:

I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. [[9]](#footnote-9)1

The words of that passage sent a chill down my spine as my thoughts centered on her safety.

There was a knock on our door. It was Gabor, a local soldier, who patrolled our area for the past year. He was a stout, well-built, young man in the prime of his life. I took a liking to him and tried to be a father figure for him. He seemed quite confused about the world and his life. He was a soldier trying to do his duty, but he was also heavily influenced by the Meretz party[[10]](#footnote-10) and its liberal influence. He would often come to my home high from vodka. It was at these times Gabor spoke of Israel’s right to own and dominate the Palestinian parts of Israel but he seemed doubtful when sober. This puzzled me. It seemed as if Gabor needed to be under the influence of intoxicants to gain the courage to realize the truth. Otherwise, he was complacent and accepted the party line regarding the Palestinian solution.

“Gabor, come in.” I could tell he’d been drinking again. I wondered how he managed to stay fit for duty. “We were just making chai. Come sit, have a drink,” I was trying to sound casual. Gabor came inside quickly and sat; his uneasiness was evident.

“How’s your mother, Gabor?” I asked, trying to divert his attention.

“She’s worried, like everyone else, Tzadik.[[11]](#footnote-11) We launched our nukes, all of them, to try to stop the invasion force. Some got through, but most were intercepted. They’re all going to land here soon. Twenty million men, more than double the population of our country. But the might of the IDF will stop them. We’re the most powerful military on earth. I don’t care if it’s a hundred million men, we will stop them,” Gabor said with blood-shot eyes.

“But you have to be realistic, Gabor. Twenty million, and the combined might of their nation’s air forces and navies. This is more than we can handle. We have to look to a greater power than ourselves to defeat this mighty force. There’s no way we can do this on man’s strength alone.”

“Are you bringing up God again, Joshua? The invisible man in the sky? That's just a crutch for the weak. The Jewish people are strong without relying on some deity. Look at how many wars we've won through our own cunning and ingenuity! Where was God when we built the Iron Dome? Having such supernatural fancies makes us weak. Forget the notion of God, I say. We will defeat the world through our own resourcefulness. The Iron Dome will hold. And when those troops land on our beaches and come down from the north, we will massacre them.”

“I was there in Alaska—you know that,” I replied solemnly. “I’ve seen the might of the Russian Armed Forces in person. Millions of American soldiers died in that Alaskan tundra. If it wasn’t for USC’s defeat, we’d have easily lost the war. Now America and Russia are joined together! Such a magnificent display of military might. Can you imagine? No, this is not rational, this is not possible. We cannot win without supernatural intervention. Pray with me, Gabor. We must pray for our deliverance.”

“We will win, I know it,” he said emphatically. “Thanks for the invitation to pray, Joshua, but I must decline.”

I was disappointed, but my wife arrived just in time with the chai. We each took our cups, holding onto them like they might be our last. Gabor took a sip.

“Mrs. Levi, your chai is always wonderful. I love the way Indians drink their tea.”

“There is one thing we Indians can’t live without, and that’s our chai.”

“I just came to talk about the battlefield situation,” said Gabor.

“Yes, I overheard you guys talking.”

A moment of silence passed as we pondered the future and what it might bring. I looked into Dipti’s eyes and could see the tears she was holding back. Her resilience in the face of such dire circumstances was admirable, but I could sense the fear and uncertainty in her and Gabor. Dipti got up and began to work in the kitchen again, trying to focus on something else to distract her mind.

I took a deep breath, examined Gabor more thoroughly as I drank my chai. There was something else gnawing at him—something darker. His eyes had a mischievous gleam, the kind you see when a man has already decided he’s got nothing left to lose.

“Gabor, something else is on your mind. What is it?”

Gabor's lips curled into a sly, almost predatory smile. He leaned forward, his voice dropping to a near whisper as he threw a glance at Dipti, ensuring she wasn’t listening. “Alright, you caught me. You know, Joshua, me and the boys… we’re getting blitzed today. Vodka, arak—whatever we can find. Why not? Might be the last drinks we ever have. And after that, well… we’re visiting this ‘massage parlor’ nearby. You know the type—ain’t exactly a place for massages, if you catch my drift.”

His eyes glittered with a wicked satisfaction as he watched for my reaction. He wasn’t just trying to tempt me—he was taunting me, testing the boundaries.

I raised an eyebrow, pretending to play along. “How much does that girl cost?”

Gabor chuckled, “700 shekels. And let me tell you, Tzadik—she’ll do things that’ll make you forget your name. We’re all going to die anyway, so why not indulge a little before the end, eh?”

His smile widened, and there was something menacing in the way he spoke, like he was daring me to join him in crossing that final line. He was no longer just a soldier; he was a man who had surrendered to the madness of it all, and he wanted me to fall with him.

I shook my head, feigning indifference. “I don’t want to waste money on that. I’m saving for an Audi. I’ve only got $1000 to go before I can make a down payment.”

Gabor threw his hands up in disbelief, the devilish grin never leaving his face. “An Audi? Tzadik, it’s the end of the world! Cars will be lying around like bones in the desert—free for the taking. But a night like this? The kind of things that girl can do? Trust me, they won’t be free. Not now, not ever.”

I kept my tone light, matching his playfulness. “If it’s the end of the world, Gabor, I’ll get what you’re after for free, too. When I’m the king of Israel.”

Gabor's laughter turned darker, more jagged. “King of Israel, huh? Meshugge. But alright, Tzadik, suit yourself. Just don’t say I didn’t offer you one last taste of heaven before it all goes to hell. You change your mind; you know where to find me.”

He cast a lingering look in Dipti’s direction, his eyes lingering just a little too long for my liking. There was something unsettling in the way he watched her, but before I could say anything, he stood up, his grin still firmly in place.

Dipti returned, and the conversation shifted.

“Is there anything we should do to stay safe?” Dipti asked, now thinking practically.

Gabor straightened up, becoming serious again, though there was still an edge of casual cruelty in his tone. “Stay inside, keep the lights off at night, and if you hear the sirens, run to the nearest shelter. The IDF is setting up more checkpoints, and we’re working on securing the area. Just keep yourselves safe—and daven, Joshua, if that’s your thing.”

I nodded, appreciating his concern, even if I didn’t share his “Eat and drink for tomorrow we die,” attitude.

“Thank you, Gabor. We’ll do everything we can.”

As Gabor left, he shot one last glance at Dipti, a look that sent a ripple of unease through me. I watched him go, his silhouette disappearing into the dim light outside. There was something about him that gnawed at me now—something darker that I hadn’t seen before. Hard times do weird things to people, it can either bring the very best out of good people or the very bad out of bad people. But before I could dwell on it, Dipti and I sat in silence, sipping our chai.

“I can’t sit at home at this time,” I finally said. “I’m going to Mount Olives to pray and meditate. Are you coming with me?”

“I’m staying here to talk with my family while we still have network,” she said, fingers already tapping across her phone screen. “Oman’s the Anti-Christ, you know that, right? My whole family thinks so too. Jesus is coming back soon.”

I stood by the window, my arms crossed, staring out at the fading light. “There’s still a lot that needs to happen before that.”

She paused, glancing up at me. “You mean what you’ve always said. That you’ll rule over Israel before the Anti-Christ comes. That you’re the prince[[12]](#footnote-12)1 from Daniel’s prophecy.”

I turned to face her; my voice quiet but firm. “Yes.”

She let out a long breath, shaking her head as she set the phone down. “Joshua, I love you, but I still think you’re crazy. After everything we’ve been through, I just don’t see it.”

My eyes softened, but there was an edge of frustration. “You’ve seen so much already. How can you still doubt?”

She stood, crossing the room slowly toward me. “We have been through a lot; I’ll give you that. God has delivered us more times than I can count. I even remember the day your bail got approved…” Her voice trailed off as she searched my face.

“7/07/17,” I finished for her, a small smile tugging at my lips. “There’s a lot of symbolism in numbers, you know.”

She nodded, but her eyes stayed sceptical. “And then Trump pardoned you. That was something. It felt like a miracle—the timing, everything. But still... being king of Israel? With so many wives? What about me?”

“You’ll be my queen[[13]](#footnote-13)2,” I said softly, stepping closer.

She looked up at me, her expression wavering between disbelief and affection. “Oh, Joshua...” She sighed, retreating to the sofa. “Okay, I’m calling my family again.”

“Go ahead,” I said, my voice lowering, almost distant. “But I don’t think the network will last much longer.”

She hesitated, her hand hovering over the phone before looking back at me. “You come home fast, alright? No more daydreaming about rebuilding the temple. Most people have already left their homes for the shelters.”

My jaw tightened. “I don’t think that’s the wisest choice. Shelters are where they’ll expect to find us. Cowering in the dark like rats. The safest place isn’t where everyone else is going.” I met her gaze, steady and unwavering. “Stay here, with the lights out. I’ll be back soon. Then we’ll make our move.”

As I walked out of our gate, I looked up at the sky. Plumes of explosions dotted the horizon, their thunder reverberating against the ancient walls. Countless contrails streaked across the sky as evidence of the IDF's relentless efforts.

As I walking down the narrow paths, people scurried by, their black curly locks bouncing with urgency. Some Orthodox Jews hadn’t even taken the time to put on their kippahs, which was a shocking sight. The usual scene of meticulous observance had given way to raw survival instincts. Many of the Christian homes were boarded up as I walked by. Their occupants had left the city, fully aware of the impending disaster.

I paused briefly at the Western Wall, where a throng of devout Orthodox Jews were prayed with unabated intensity. Their bodies swayed rhythmically, wide-brimmed black hats bobbing in unison, while the curly locks that framed their faces jerked with each fervent motion. I sensed a greater intensity in their prayers than usual, a collective plea to El Elyon for protection and deliverance. The atmosphere was charged with a mix of fear, hope, and unswerving faith. As I watched, I felt a surge of determination. This city, with its layers of history and unbroken spirit, was worth fighting for.

I felt helpless knowing that some of these Jews would die praying at this wall. Where was all the justice in this? The Jews love this city and have every right to it. It’s a mysterious evil current from the depths of the earth that always tries to keep God’s chosen people away from this eternal city and sweep them away and, in so doing, hinders God’s redemptive plans for the earth. I belonged here. Suddenly I felt the hairs rise on my neck. My time was coming. Something told me that all the things in my life had led up to this very moment and prepared me for it.

An Orthodox Jew named Yechezkel approached me. He was always here at the Western Wall around this time and greeted me warmly. “A challenging day for the faithful, is it not, Mr. President? Do they even know you’re here?”

“Of course they do. I’m surprised they haven’t tried a drone strike on my home yet.”

“Is there truly that much animosity between you and that dictator?”

“Unfortunately, yes. I took him as my VP to unify our country, which was deeply divided by years of fighting between the Republican and Democrat parties. If we were on the verge of civil war, how were we going to fight a two-front war between USC and Russia? We were friendly with each other, but deep down inside, I now realize how he hated me. He always resented my leadership style because it represented something he could never aspire to.”

“Yes, most presidents don’t lead from the front lines these days.”

“While I was on the front lines, he was in the dark conspiring with other Democrats and weak Republicans, for a way to oust me and seize power.”

“How did he manage to change the Constitution? I heard he easily did it, as if the American public was ready to bow down to him.”

“Yes, the American people are weak. They were ready for anyone who promised an easy solution to their problems. Hence the reformation. Unity through genocide; but you know my story why I fled here. Those were dark days, but I believe he’ll soon receive justice.”

“We all believe he’ll receive justice soon. I wouldn’t be praying in front of this wall right now if I didn’t. Hashem will only allow the Jewish people to be tested to a certain extent, and then He will relent, just like He did with Job. I just hope I’m able to survive this and see all the wonderful things Hashem brings about as a result of this one man’s great mistake.”

“I wouldn’t mind seeing the Temple rebuilt,” I said, glancing at the Western Wall as if it held the vision of that impossible dream.

Yechezkel’s eyes gleamed with a light that defied the darkened skies. “Yes, that’s something to survive for. Maybe we’ll both live to see it—measure the outer courts, lay the first stone, and watch as Hashem’s glory enters through the eastern gate.”

A deafening blast shook the ground beneath us. Overhead, a missile narrowly missed breaching the Iron Dome. All around, people ducked instinctively, their prayers momentarily halted as jets screamed past, their sonic booms rattling the ancient stones. For a heartbeat, it seemed like even Jerusalem trembled.

But slowly, as if answering an unspoken call, the faithful rose again, their voices lifting in prayer, stronger than before. Yechezkel and I locked eyes, understanding passing between us without words. The Temple was not just a symbol—it was a promise, a beacon of hope stronger than war.

“We have to believe, Joshua,” Yechezkel said, his voice steady despite the chaos around us. “We have to believe that this isn’t the end. It’s the beginning.”

I nodded, feeling a surge of determination. “We’ll see it, Yechezkel. The Temple rebuilt. Hashem’s glory returning to Jerusalem.”

He paused, glancing at me curiously. “And your wife? Does she still believe the Temple will only be the body of Christ?”

I sighed. “Yes, she does. To her, the Temple is just spiritual, not a place of stone. I also believe in a spiritual temple made up of believers. Some of us can accept both.”

“She should think otherwise.” He pulled out his phone, the glow of the screen cutting through the dust-filled air. “Your own scriptures say the Anti-Christ won’t come until the literal Temple is built. Look here.” He found the passage, his finger tracing the words. “‘Let no one deceive you by any means… the man of sin… sits in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God.’”

He looked at me pointedly. “Tell me, Joshua, how’s the man of sin going to sit inside all the Christians?”

I couldn’t help but laugh softly, despite the tension in the air. “You’ve got a point. It’s funny—there was a time when no one believed Israel would ever exist again. Many thought the promises were metaphorical. But here we are.”

“Hashem is faithful, even when we don’t understand His ways,” Yechezkel said softly. “But tell me—since we’re talking prophecies—who do you think Oman is? Is he the Anti-Christ?”

“No.” I shook my head. “He’s something else. We’ve already established there’s no Temple for the Anti-Christ to sit in.”

Yechezkel’s expression darkened. “In the Orthodox community, we know who he is. He’s Gog.”

“Gog?” I repeated, taken aback.

“For the longest time, he’s worked with Iran against us. Iran is Persia,” Yechezkel said, scrolling through his phone. “Look—Ezekiel 38. It describes a time when Israel is brought back from exile, living in safety. That’s now, Joshua. This war, this chaos—it’s written.”

Yechezkel read aloud, “‘In future years, you will invade a land recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations…’”

I mulled over his words, feeling their weight. “It’s true, that prophecy matches our time. But Gog and Magog are also mentioned in Revelation—after Yeshua returns. That can’t be Oman. Maybe this man is the Gog of the Old Testament.”

Yechezkel’s voice tightened. “This explains the war we’re seeing now. People don’t fear the God of Israel. That’s why Hashem must reveal Himself through this man’s destruction.” He scrolled down on his phone and read another verse, his voice steady despite the turmoil around us. “‘I will execute judgment on him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones, and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him.’”

He paused, then continued. “‘And so, I will show My greatness and My holiness, and I will make Myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.’”

I glanced back at the Wall, its ancient stones weathered yet unyielding, like the faith of those praying beneath it. In the distance, the sky darkened with smoke from the ongoing conflict, but here, there was a deeper waiting, a shared anticipation for the holiness of God to be revealed around the world even if such a drastic measure must be taken to do so.

It was getting late and I wished to watch the battle take place in the darkened dusky sky. Such a sight is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, so I bid Yechezkel farewell and made my way towards Mount Olives resisting the urge to walk home and check on Dipti. Instead, I called her on mobile. Luckily there were still signal; she sounded shaken, but well. She sounded anxious for me to come home but withheld pestering me. Knowing she was okay; I quickly made my way up the path towards the mountain.

# Chapter 7 Escalation

It was dusk when I finally reached my perch on the Mount of Olives. I rested upon the rail, looking down upon Jerusalem. I pulled a packet of cigarettes from my pocket and lit up.

A sudden flash of light streaked across the sky as the first nuclear blast lit up the horizon. I quickly glanced away. The mushroom cloud wasn’t as large as I expected; it was a tactical nuke. My phone buzzed with a notification: Iran had also launched an ICBM, but it had frozen midair above Iran and crashed down on Tehran.

I sat there, solemn and contemplative. Memories of Alaska during the Russian invasion came back. The sky was on fire, but not like this. It was night, but you could swear it was day. Fear and apprehension filled the air. People around me wept and cried, fearful of what tomorrow would bring. Many asked why Hashem would allow this. Did we not keep His Torah and follow His commandments?

Nearby, an Orthodox rabbi and his followers had gathered. They carried candles and began singing hymns:

You shall not be afraid of the terror by night,

Nor of the arrow that flies by day,

Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness,

Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.

A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand;

But it shall not come near you.

Only with your eyes shall you look,

And see the reward of the wicked.

The rabbi began to preach, “God was with Moses in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. He is with us here while the skies are on fire. He is leading us through this disaster, and He will deliver us.”

“Where is my Moshiach? All the nations are gathered against Israel; His time must be near,” cried a man from the crowd.

“He is here, walking among us. He will reveal Himself in the time of deliverance,” replied the rabbi.

“The time of deliverance is now! We’re all going to die or worse. Who knows what the *goyim* have planned for us? What will my children do; where will we hide? It’s better to jump from this mountain than fall into their hands.”

“Have faith; don’t lose hope. Hashem has not brought us back to the Promised Land to destroy us.”

More refugees began to appear on Mount Olives. Soon, a large host had gathered, all anticipating the coming Moshiach. Never before in the history of the Jewish people was this anticipation greater. They all knew this was the war of Gog and Magog. They knew the armies of the *goyim* would converge on Jerusalem, but they did not know the horrors they would endure before His coming. A great pit formed in my stomach at the thought and a great sorrow hung over my head. I wished I could save them all before the appointed time, but I knew this was not possible. I knew that what had been prophesied must be fulfilled for the glory of God.

For the war of Gog and Magog is also a judgment on the Jewish people, just as World War III had been for the rest of the world. World War III had caused great heat to envelop the earth. The nuclear weapons had caused the atmosphere to disintegrate, allowing more UV rays to penetrate. They said for the longest time that nuclear weapons could not set the atmosphere on fire, but they did it. The damn bastards did it. Now the entire earth is drying up.[[14]](#footnote-14) Farmers’ crops are failing globally. But thanks to Israeli innovation, we have largely avoided this catastrophe.

Israeli scientists developed genetically modified crops that required less water and were more heat-resistant. We tried to share this technology with the world, but the world had put an embargo on Israel, preventing us from trading and sharing our innovations. Israel lived as an island unto itself. While the rest of the world was dying, we continued to flourish. We had the keys to their salvation, but they chose to lock themselves in a closet and slowly die.

The realization of how much danger I was in began to slowly dawn upon me. The Iron Dome was no longer replying to the salvos of enemy missiles and FPV drones. Buildings in Jerusalem began to explode. Israel was now completely defenseless. There was no cover on the mountainside, and I knew we presented an easy target to coalition airstrikes and drones. The paved path I had taken countless times now felt like a treacherous gauntlet.

Suddenly, a loitering drone collided into the crowd nearby. Its blast knocked me over, and the surrounding people were hit directly with shrapnel. Blood and limbs flew everywhere. After my disorientation subsided, I slowly got up and wiped the blood from my face. The crowd began to run toward the city, seeking refuge from the onslaught. FPV drones continued their reign of destruction, buzzing like hornets.

I chose to lay down and play dead, hoping to avoid detection. The cold pavement felt rough against my cheek, as the scent of smoke and blood filled the air. In the darkness, I could faintly perceive a drone lowly hovering above the crowd, monitoring the destruction. I held my breath, praying it wouldn't notice me.

Nearby, soldiers wearing night vision goggles responded with EMP guns, aiming to disable the drones. Their blue flashes lit up the night, and some of the drones began to drop from the sky like mechanical birds struck by invisible arrows. Seizing the opportunity, I began my descent on foot towards Old Jerusalem. Moving cautiously, I stayed low, using the terrain for cover. The path was steep, and I had to be careful not to slip on the loose gravel mixed with the blood of my fellow citizens.

As I descended, the sounds of chaos echoed from above, but I focused on each step, determined to reach the relative safety of the ancient city. Historic landmarks, once symbols of hope and faith, now seemed like eerie sentinels in the dim light. The Garden of Gethsemane, the Church of All Nations, and the Jewish Cemetery blurred past as I made my way down the mountain.

Suddenly, I was transported back to the Alaskan tundra. The snow, the wind—they burned my face. The snow crunched beneath my feet as I ran for cover from an incoming mortar strike. Adrenaline surged; old instincts flared. Once a soldier, always a soldier. The deceased from the Jewish cemetery seemed to watch over me, urging me on, beckoning me to finish strong.

My goal was the Lions’ Gate, the closest entrance into the Old City from the Mount of Olives. The gate, with its lion carvings, seemed like a refuge of hope. I was almost out of breath. The enemy was no longer above but below, as I struggled to reach safety. I fought my body’s urge to stop and rest. War had found me again. The Russian drones were here. Adrenaline and desperation wrapped around me like the layers of clothing I used to protect myself from the harsh Arctic wind. Each step was heavy with the weight of history within these ancient walls. But the desire to save this city and its people pushed me onward.

The closer I got to the Lions’ Gate, the more I felt a glimmer of hope. The city's ancient walls presented a façade of protection, the hope of brief respite from the relentless assault above. Finally, I reached the gate, where the thick stone walls and narrow streets provided a hope that the labyrinthine paths would offer security. I finally got a moment to catch my breath, but even more fear and uncertainty crept into my heart. One all-consuming thought was my wife. What about my wife? Where is she? We both lived on the dividing line between the Christian and Jewish quarters. In a sense, this was symbolic of our relationship, an Indian and a Jew both united in our faith in Yeshua.

As I slipped through the gates, the sounds of the city and the fight against the drones within intensified. It disgusted me that these animals of the UN had no respect for the most holy city of the world. What was Oman thinking? Profaning El Elyon’s future capital! Did he not know that those who bless Israel will be blessed and those who curse Israel will be cursed?

Suddenly, there was silence. I figured the attack had ceased, but then the drones began delivering their payloads. Behind the wall adjacent to the Lions’ Gate, I slowly peeked around a corner. A larger drone descended, bringing with it a Hunter-Killer Robot (HKR). Robots under AI control had advanced significantly in the past decade, now working seamlessly alongside human soldiers.

I could hear the weight of its feet shift upon the concrete as it landed. Its sleek, metallic body adjusted as its sensors scanned the urban environment with efficient precision. Wires and cables coursed through its frame, extending from its head to its appendages. Its humanoid hands grasped a heavy machine gun, and it began picking off targets one by one with incredible accuracy, adjusting its near-perfect aim to compensate for the machine gun’s recoil.

A soldier quickly passed me and, upon seeing the robot, swiftly lay prone and began aiming his EMP rifle at the HKR. As soon as it sensed the soldier, before he even had a chance to aim, a small RPG fired from the side of its body, homed in on the soldier’s position. The explosion was swift and brutal. The soldier was already gone.

Thoughts of my wife raced through my mind, but saving some of these people was more important. I couldn't let the fear creep in and paralyze me. I needed to act, to help those around me and to find my wife. Steeling myself, I crouched low and made my way towards the fallen soldier’s EMP rifle. If I could get hold of it, I might have a chance to disable the HKR.

The narrow streets of Old Jerusalem provided some cover, but also felt like a maze. The sounds of the HKR’s heavy footsteps and the occasional bursts of gunfire echoed off the ancient stones. I kept low, moving from shadow to shadow, my heart pounding in my chest. The smell of gunpowder and burning buildings filled the air, mingling with the scent of history and antiquity that always lingered in these streets.

I reached the soldier’s body, the EMP rifle still clutched in his hands. With a mix of reverence and urgency, I pried it from his grasp. I checked the rifle quickly; it seemed operational. Peeking around the corner, I spotted the HKR methodically navigating the narrow streets, sweeping its sensors for more targets. I took a deep breath, aimed the EMP rifle, and fired. A blue flash burst forth, striking the HKR. For a moment, it paused, its systems disrupted by the electromagnetic pulse. Then the robot slumped, its mechanical whirring silenced, and it ceased to operate. It was surreal to witness such advanced machinery against the backdrop of an ancient city. Man was trying to force the hand of God with technology, striving to impose his vision of morality. But the stones of this ancient city are eternal, while the technology here is transient. God’s ways are true and just and endure forever; this robot, like all human creations, will return to dust.

With the HKR disabled, I continued my descent toward the Christian and Jewish quarters. The streets grew narrower, the ancient buildings huddled closer together. The chaos above contrasted sharply with the silent tension of these enclosed pathways. But wait. Under the dim street lights, I encountered another HKR wedged in an alley, its sensors scanning relentlessly. Dark silhouettes of Orthodox Jews from the buildings above hurled stones and household objects at the robot, desperate to disable it. In response, small RPGs erupted from the HKR, aiming at its attackers’ positions. Explosions reverberated through the alleyway as both buildings on either side crumbled onto the HKR. The shouts of trapped occupants filled the air. The HKR slowly emerged from the rubble, its metallic form battered but operational. I swiftly took aim and fired; the EMP burst rendering another machine lifeless.

I wanted to stop and help the occupants trapped beneath the rubble, but the thought of my wife kept me going. I had to find her, to make sure she was safe. Under my breath, I whispered a prayer to El Elyon, God Most High, seeking His protection and guidance, and help for the people trapped underneath that rubble. The ancient walls of Jerusalem had seen countless conflicts and prayers, and I hoped mine would not go unheard. The faith that El Elyon watched over His people gave me strength as I made my way through the perilous streets.

I finally reached the gate to my home. The gate was already ajar, and I slid right through, reaching the door. It showed signs of damage: someone had forcefully entered. My heart began to race. Keeping my cool, I propped my EMP rifle against the wall outside my home and slowly walked inside, listening carefully. I could hear my wife shouting from the rear of the house.

“Gabor! Get off me! What has gotten into you? How many times have we invited you into our home?”

“Shut up, you Christian bitch! I’ve had my eyes on you since I met you.”

“Gabor! You’ve been drinking, stop it!”

“I’m going to enjoy this before the end of the world. Now come here!”

The struggle intensified. A lamp fell and shattered. I moved slowly, trying not to make any noise. Gabor was a capable soldier despite his flaws. In hand-to-hand combat, he could probably take me down. The door was slightly open, and I peeked inside. I saw him pinning my wife down, her clothes removed from the waist down. He held her down with one hand, trying to remove his pants with the other. His rifle lay on the ground about three to four feet away.

I slowly opened the door further and quickly pulled the rifle away by its buttstock. I placed it firmly against my shoulder and flipped the safety off.

“Get down, Gabor! Get down!”

Gabor turned around, his face displaying shock. He smiled and put his hands up. “Hey, don’t shoot, Tzadik. It’s Jewish law to fulfil the marital duties when the husband can’t. Why don’t you have children? Let me help you, friend.”

“I’ve treated you like a son, and you come and disrespect me in my home. Get out!”

“Were going to die tonight, Tzadik. You don’t know. The strength of Israel has failed us. Our forces have been completely defeated. Let me enjoy once before I die. I don’t want to die a virgin. Where is your god now Joshua? I want to die.”

He tried to grab the front of my rifle. I instinctively pulled the trigger. A bullet went into his upper arm. He stumbled back, blood gushing from his wound. He grasped his wound, putting pressure on it. The bullet had exited his body and went through Dipti’s hand. She screamed and clutched her hand in pain.

“Hey, Tzadik, you know the Holy One of Israel shouldn’t kill a fellow Jew.”

Dipti grabbed the bedsheet and quickly tied it around her hand, tightening it as much as possible to prevent blood loss.

“Dipti, come here!”

Dipti pulled up her bottoms and quickly ran from her bed towards me. As she passed Gabor, she murmured, “I forgive you, Gabor.”

“Dipti, hold this rifle and point it at him.”

I moved towards him. He had slumped on the ground with his hand over his wound. “You’re not dead yet, Gabor,” I said as I tore another bedsheet and tied it around his arm. I placed a wooden stick, broken off from one of the chairs, between the knot and began twisting it, creating a tourniquet that effectively stopped the flow of blood.

“Lucky for you it has an exit wound. All we need to do now is get you stitched up.”

The power went off. The city now lay in complete darkness.

“How are we going to reach the hospital with all that’s happening outside?” Dipti said, her hand still throbbing.

“We have a first aid kit in the bathroom with a couple of bandages inside and some antibiotic ointment. We’ll bandage both your wounds and see if we can find a doctor or medic outside.”

Dipti left to bring the first aid kit.

“Why are you doing this, Tzadik? Just let me die. I don’t deserve to live.”

“Hashem might still have a plan for you. He had a plan for David despite him being a murderer. You’re going to help me. I need to hide Dipti. The city is going to fall and the women are going to be raped. I need to hide her where nobody else will think to look.”

“And where might that be?”

“The catacombs of the Mount of Olives. They are ancient burial sites, a labyrinth of tunnels and chambers that few would dare to enter.”

“And I’m going to help you navigate them? Look at my arm you shot!”

“One arm is better than nothing.”

“What about your wife’s hand?”

Dipti came in with the first aid kit. I stood up, and she handed me the rifle. I felt as if the danger had passed from Gabor and he had somewhat come to his senses.

“Don’t worry about me, Gabor. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,” said Dipti as she began attending to their wounds. Despite what had just happened, she displayed a resilience and fearlessness which I had not seen before. She took out the ointment and placed it on his wound and then hers. She began to tightly wrap the bandage around Gabor’s arm. He winced.

“Take it easy, woman.”

“You’re a soldier, right? Why the whining? You brought this upon yourself. We’re all suffering right now because of you.”

I could still smell the alcohol on Gabor’s breath, but it seemed as if Dipti’s selfless love was able to shine through his confusion. He, in turn, responded and realized his drunkenness was a hindrance to us right now and our survival. He was trying to come to his senses. It was as if two people were in Gabor vying for control. One person knew the gravity of the situation and what we must do; the other wished to drink himself to oblivion, dying pathetically in this hopeless world.

“Yes, yes, I’m a soldier, I must do something, I cannot die like this, I must save you two. I’m a Jew, a descendant of David, of Abraham, of the promise. I must, I must do something. What was I thinking, drinking from depression because we’re losing the war? I’m such a fucking coward. I’m done with alcohol. I’m going to make things right. I’m not going to die a fucking coward’s death.”

“I’ll manage this wound. It was like the time someone stepped on my hand when I was playing cricket with the boys. We should go to the pharmacy and find antibiotics. Hopefully, the pharmacist hasn’t gone into hiding.”

“Yes, good idea, Dipti.”

As I bandaged their wounds and prepared to venture out, the gravity of the situation weighed heavily on them. The city was descending into chaos, but together, we were determined to survive and protect one another.

The three of us stepped out into the night, the darkness pressing in on them. With the Iron Dome no longer functional, the IDF relied on more traditional means of air defense. MANPADS streaked across the sky, their fiery trails ending in explosions that disintegrated enemy aircraft into hundreds of flaming pieces, raining down from the heavens. In the distance, I saw the ominous silhouettes of parachutes descending like a plague of locusts. A relentless stream of tracer fire targeted these floating invaders, determined to prevent their landing and the threat they posed to the rear of the frontline.

The city was a cacophony of distant gunfire and explosions, whose echoes bounced through the narrow streets. Amid the fighting, the power outage cast an eerie silence over Jerusalem, broken only by the occasional scream or shout. The absence of light turned familiar pathways into treacherous shadows, heightening the tension with every step.

“We need to move quickly,” I whispered, leading the way. "Stay close and keep quiet." I once again felt the weight of the EMP rifle in my hands. I exercised regularly, but not with the intensity that could prepare me for this.

Dipti, her face pale but resolute, held onto the rifle with trembling hands. Gabor, now sober and focused, followed behind, his wounded arm cradled against his chest. As we made our way through the narrow alleyways of Old Jerusalem, we encountered other groups of people, huddled together and trying to stay out of sight. The fear was palpable, but so was the determination to survive.

We moved swiftly keeping to the shadows. The pharmacy was in darkness, its windows shattered. Inside, the shelves were in disarray, but there were still some supplies left. We quickly gathered what we needed: antibiotics, bandages, antiseptic, and any other medical supplies we could find.

As we left the pharmacy, a loud crash echoed down the street. A group of armed men appeared, whose faces were covered with makeshift masks. They were looters, taking advantage of the chaos. They were speaking Arabic. I could tell they were from the Muslim Quarter. They were armed with AKs and moved with a predatory confidence.

Suddenly, they discovered an elderly couple hiding in the shadows. “Please don’t shoot, we left our valuables at home. Here’s our home key. Take whatever you want, just leave us alone,” the elderly man pleaded, his voice trembling.

One of the looters, abused the elderly couple in broken English. With the butt of his rifle, he knocked the woman to the ground. The elderly gentleman tried to intervene but was shot along with his wife. Their bodies collapsed onto the pavement.

The looter spat on their bodies. “Occupiers,” he muttered in a thick accent.

Dipti was about ready to shoot at them, but I grabbed the top of her rifle, put my finger to my mouth, and shook my head. I took her rifle and gave her my EMP rifle, ensuring she was equipped but didn't act impulsively.

Suddenly, from the darkness, muzzle flashes lit up the air, and the Muslim looters dropped one by one. Fully armed IDF soldiers with night vision goggles emerged, checking the bodies. One of them waved his hand.

“Clear.”

We approached this group of soldiers cautiously. They saw us and shouted, “Halt!”

One of them stepped forward, his eyes narrowing in concentration as he saw Gabor. “Gabor, is that you?” the soldier asked, as he examined our group through his night vision goggles.

“Yes, it’s me. I got into a nasty spat with an HKR. This couple saved me,” Gabor responded, gesturing towards us.

“I thought you were derelict of duty. When you were drinking, you kept going on and on about how you wanted to find some action before you died. We thought you went searching for a prostitute.”

Gabor’s face flushed with embarrassment. He cast his eyes downward, unable to meet Dipti's gaze, as a wave of shame washed over him. The memory of his reckless words and actions now weighed heavily on his shoulders, contrasting sharply with the gratitude he felt towards the couple who had saved his life.

The other soldiers laughed, easing the tension momentarily. The soldier who recognized Gabor turned to us, his tone becoming serious. “We need to move. The streets aren’t safe, and there’s been increased enemy activity in the area. You three should come with us. The Muslims in the area have been armed by the CIA to undermine our security in the city while operation Gaza Hope is underway. We’ve already killed hundreds of militants in the area.”

I nodded. I looked at Gabor, who seemed more alert now as the alcohol-induced haze lifted. We fell in line behind the soldiers, moving through the darkened streets with caution.

The night was filled with distant sounds of conflict, the eerie silence occasionally broken by gunfire and explosions. The IDF soldiers led us through alleyways and side streets, their movements precise and coordinated. The sense of urgency was palpable; every shadow seemed to hold potential danger.

As we approached a more secure area, the lead soldier turned to Gabor. “We’re setting up a temporary command post nearby. You’ll be safe there, and we can get you medical attention.”

“Thank you,” Gabor said gratefully.

We reached a fortified building where more IDF soldiers were stationed. The atmosphere was tense but organized. Medics immediately tended to Gabor and Dipti's wounds, and we were given a brief respite. A generator hummed in the background, providing a sense of temporary stability. Despite this, there was a visible sense of confusion among the soldiers. Many hung their heads low, hands covering their faces in despair. Dipti, ever compassionate, tried to comfort one of the soldiers.

“Is everything all right, son? I’m here if you need to talk.”

The soldier was inconsolable, not responding to her inquiry, his face still buried in his hands.

“Don’t worry, Yeshua is coming back soon, and He’ll make all things right.”

The soldier lifted his head, his eyes red and filled with sorrow. “My family,” he choked out. “They’re all gone. They died in an airstrike in the north. Do you really believe Yeshua is the Moshiach? Is He going to stand on Har Hazeitim and save us all?”

“I believe he’ll ride on a white horse and defeat the Antichrist. Not stand on Har Hazeitim.”

“Is Oman the Antichrist?” The soldier’s question was tinged with desperation trying to understand and make sense of all the madness.

Dipti responded with a resounding, “Yes.”

“No,” I shot back.

“I think someone else will stand on top of Har Hazeitim,” I interjected.

“Is that person the Moshiach?”

“I believe so, another one other than Yeshua.”

“But I know this passage. That person is described as Hashem.” The soldier's voice trembled with a mix of hope and confusion. “Then is Moshiach both man and God?”

“It’s been done once before. There are two Moshiachs, two men, both God incarnate, come at two separate times, one to redeem the souls of men and another to redeem the Jews.”

Dipti rolled her eyes in annoyance.

“The soldier’s face hardened in frustration. “So, there’s another son of God? That’s too much. It’s already hard enough to accept that God has a Son. Another one? It’s just too much. This doesn’t make sense to me. I don’t want to talk about this anymore. Thank you for trying to help.”

“My prayers are with you, Jesus loves you and understands what you’re going through.” Dipti said, still trying to offer comfort. “Don’t worry one day you’ll get to see your family again.”

The soldier got up. A higher-ranking soldier was motioning for him to come check something out.

Gabor came into our dimly-lit room. The building shook. The lights blinked and fans rattled. Gabor sat down in front of me. His countenance has changed since we last saw him. He seemed very alert and motivated. He looked at me with a smile.

“They're planning something big. They want to draw out all the militants into open combat. So, they're going to blow it.”

“Blow what?”

“It's a secret. But they're asking for volunteers. It's going to be a dangerous mission. If you volunteer, I'll tell you.”

"Come on, tell me, and I might volunteer.”

“Al-Aqsa Mosque. It’s heavily fortified, but they’re going to do it anyway. Come with us tonight.”

“Wait, are you going? What about your arm?”

“They stitched it up and gave me some helluva pain killers. I’m walking on air right now. I feel like I could take on the world. So are you in?”

“Who will watch Dipti?”

“Don't worry, she'll be safe here. Our forces will hold out—at least until tomorrow evening. We have time. We’ll be back before then. The brass thinks that the Palestinians will be so pissed off after destroying the mosque they'll go into jihad mode, no more hit and run. Let's see.”

I pondered for a moment. Al-Aqsa Mosque was the one thing standing between us and rebuilding the Temple of Solomon. Why not get a head start on rebuilding the temple? At least now we can lay the foundation.

“What do you say, Dipti? Can you hang out here till I get back?”

“You know very well I don’t approve of you going. The temple is the body of Christ. No need to waste time in trying to rebuild the Earthly one.

“I'm in.”

“Whatever,” she said resigned to accept whatever decision I made.

“Great! Come with me, we'll go speak to the Commander. He’s a smart guy; you'll like him. You can still shoot, right?”

Glaucoma had all but destroyed my right eye. I was partially blind. I had to teach myself how to shoot with my left eye. Shooting with both eyes open allowed me to scan for targets, but with my right eye useless, that was pointless. So, I often shot with my right eye closed.

“I can shoot for sure, but how accurate remains to be seen.”

“With the night vision, you just have to point the laser and shoot. As long as your left eye is working, it shouldn't be a problem. It’s settled then. Let’s meet the Commander to make sure he's okay with it, but I think he’ll be more than happy to welcome you to the IDF.”

We made our way through the dimly-lit corridors, our hurried steps keeping pace with the hum of the generator. Soldiers moved with purpose; their faces set in grim resolve.

As we approached the command center, I could see the flickering light of a map being projected onto the wall, outlining the strategic points of interest. The commander, a tall man with a weathered face and sharp eyes, was in the middle of briefing his team. He paused as we entered, and his gaze shifted to me.

“Commander, this is Joshua. He wants to volunteer for the mission,” Gabor said.

The commander studied me for a moment, his eyes lingering on my face, as if assessing my resolve. “I know him—everybody knows him—he’s the only former American president living in Jerusalem. Are you sure you want to fight against America. You’re not a spy for them?”

“Are you crazy? How can I take part in committing genocide against my people. I’m a Jew.”

“That’s debatable, but okay. Can you shoot?”

“I can. My right eye's gone, but I can still shoot with my left.”

He nodded slowly. “Night vision gear will help. Just follow the laser sight. This mission is critical. We're counting on everyone to do their part.”

I nodded, feeling the weight of the responsibility settling on my shoulders. This wasn't just about revenge or a tactical advantage. This was about paving the way for something greater, something that had been a dream for generations.

“Understood, sir. I won't let you down. I just have one request?”

“What is it, Private?”

“I want to call my mother, sir.”

The commander’s eyes narrowed. “We have one remaining satellite and you want to use it to call your mother in America, our greatest enemy?”

I nodded, trying to muster a faint smile.

The commander sighed, rubbing his temples. “Lieutenant, can you give him a secure line? He wants to make a phone call to America.”

The lieutenant, a young soldier working on a computer, glanced up, surprise flickering across his face. He hesitated but then began typing furiously, navigating through security protocols and encryption settings. After a few tense minutes, he finally looked up at the commander and gave a curt nod.

“It's ready. You have five minutes, Private,” the commander said in a stern voice. “Any longer and you might give our position away.”

“Thank you, sir,” I replied, my heart pounding as I took the headset.

The line clicked, and after a few seconds, I heard the familiar ringtone. The sound of my mother’s voice on the other end was like a balm to my frayed nerves, but I kept my words brief, mindful of the time and the risk we were taking.

“Joshua, thank God you’re okay. I’ve been watching the news, and it’s terrifying what’s happening over there. This country feels so different now. Nobody listens to reason anymore. The youth are only concerned with the latest social justice cause. Where are you?”

“I’m safe, Mom. I’m holed up at a fortified military post. Things are getting desperate here. I’m really worried about Dipti and her safety, but I’m also concerned about you. This isn’t going to end well for America. God’s judgment is coming, and it’s going to be severe. Listen, Mom; I need you to take Ethan and Rachel’s family and go to Grandma’s house. I had a dream; her home stood strong after a massive earthquake. I think it’s going to happen soon.”

“I’ll take them if I can. I don’t know if they’ll believe me. Ethan thinks the war is stupid, but he keeps it to himself. He doesn’t want to get in trouble.”

“Look, this earthquake is going to be so severe that every building in every nation involved in this war is going to fall to the ground. Get him out of there; get his family out of there, and get everyone to Grandma’s home. This is urgent—my uncles, everyone.”

“I’ll try.”

“I hope our family survives this horrible thing. Stay safe. I know you’re old, but at least try to move with a little bit of urgency.”

“I’m not that old. I can keep up with the best of them, like my mom. Tell Dipti I send my love.”

“I will. I’d love to talk more, but I can’t. You take care. I’ll see you soon.”

“Stay safe, son,” she said, her voice breaking. “I know this will be over soon. I’m praying for you.”

“I love you, Mom,” I said as the line cut off.

“Sorry, I can’t let you have more time than that. I hope you understand,” the commander said.

I nodded, holding back tears.

“Good,” the commander replied, a faint hint of approval in his eyes. “Get your gear and be ready. We move out in an hour.”

We turned to leave. The stakes were high, but the potential reward was even higher. This was a chance to change the course of history, to take a step towards a future we had all been dreaming of.

“Mom sends her love. Stay safe, Dipti,” I said, giving her a reassuring squeeze on the shoulder. “I'll be back before you know it.”

“You’d better,” she replied with a small, brave smile. “I hope you know what you’re doing.” With one last look, I followed Gabor out of the command center, ready to face whatever lay ahead.

# Chapter 8 The Landing

The waves hit the shore with a relentless cadence; their foam mingled with the blood of those who had come before us, creating a macabre mix of red and white. It was starting to get dark when the squad set foot on the shore. The salty tang of the sea air was tinged with the sickening smell of blood. Every step Raskin took was heavy; the sand shifted beneath his boots as they advanced with a sense of foreboding through the eerie calm that belied the violence that had erupted mere moments ago.

Waves of drones followed behind the soldiers, some reconnaissance and loitering drones, some carrying payloads of HKRs. Mysteriously, the drones began crashing into the beach. The IDF’s jamming capabilities were much greater than expected. Many of the HKRs were rendered non-operational due to the force of impact. Only a few managed to land on the sand upright with their lower appendages absorbing the shock. Unfortunately, Raskin's squad's HKR landed on its head, breaking the robot in two. Not having drone and robot support was going to be a significant limitation for them.

Raskin saw the crater marking the epicenter of the tactical nuke blast, a stark void where life had been snuffed out in an instant. The trenches nearby were filled with blackened, charred bodies still clutching their melted rifles, the horrific aftermath of the explosion. Raskin’s breath was labored as he struggled through the sand, the mask over his face restricting his airflow. Sweat dripped into his eyes, and he longed to remove the mask to wipe it away, but he knew that could mean inhaling the radioactive dust that hung in the air.

He felt that at any moment, a sniper from the IDF could open fire from the surrounding buildings that were largely left untouched in Tel Aviv. His fear was justified as a distant rifle shot rang out, and a member of his platoon fell to a bullet that pierced his mask. The squad quickly took cover in the nearest trench, some landing on scorched bodies that had disintegrated into black puffs of ash upon impact.

Sgt. Hess shouted at the lieutenant; his voice barely audible over the chaos. “We need armor fast.”

“I’m on it,” the lieutenant replied, scanning the horizon. “The drone jamming is decimating our transports.”

“We can’t stay here,” Hess insisted with urgency.

Artillery volleys intermittently slammed into the beach from concealed positions within the city, sending plumes of sand and debris into the air. Israeli airstrikes began pulverizing many of the tall buildings in Tel Aviv. The skyscrapers collapsed like towers of Jenga, their concrete pillars melting like cheese from the intense heat generated by our precise ordnance. But it still wasn’t enough.

The city’s rubble created ideal hiding positions for the IDF. The head brass hesitated to use nuclear weapons on the city, understanding that an intact city could serve as a crucial transportation and supply hub for our advancing forces.

The lieutenant spoke into his radio in a strained voice. “Command, we need armored support at grid 32-Alpha, ASAP. We’re taking heavy artillery and sniper fire; over.”

As he waited for a response, Raskin took a moment to survey the beach. Bodies and wreckage littered the shore. The fierce resistance of the IDF was like a hurricane ready to swallow them whole. “Armors on the way,” the lieutenant finally said, lowering his radio. “We just need to hold out a little longer.”

Hess nodded, gripping his rifle tightly. The beachhead was their only hope, and they couldn’t afford to lose it.

The sky had turned dark by the time help came. About thirty minutes later, landing crafts slid across the beach. One landed about five hundred meters away from their position. Its ramp dropped, and the sound of a Bradley Fighting Vehicle rumbled behind them. It moved quickly up the beach, its tracks churning through the sand.

The Bradley came to a halt and deployed smoke grenades, creating a dense screen in front of their position. Raskin followed the soldiers ahead, all of them wearing night vision goggles to navigate through the darkness and smoke. In a tight, disciplined single file, they quickly clambered up the lowered ramp into the vehicle, grateful for the momentary cover from the sniper's line of sight. The interior was cramped but offered much-needed respite. As the last soldier entered, the ramp was raised with a mechanical hum, sealing them safely inside the armored protection of the Bradley.

Inside, the air was stifling, exacerbated by the NBC suits they wore. The squad removed their gas masks, easing the claustrophobia slightly. The soldiers exchanged weary glances under the dim interior lights. Raskin took a deep breath, inhaling the unique, funky smell that arises when too many bodies are crammed into a tight enclosed space mixed with the odor of oil and metal. As he sat in his new temporary home, his mind began to wander. He felt the cool metal handle of his pistol. It felt void and lifeless, like the corpses now lying at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea when the USS Makin Island sank.

Almost his entire platoon was dead. What had they died for? he wondered. They died for the world’s obscene obsession with one of the smallest countries. The UN should be galvanized for other countries oppressing their minorities, like Sudan and the myriad of African nations embroiled in petty tribal genocides. How had the prospect of taking Israel bewitched them? Even Sudanese soldiers had joined in, ditching their internal squabbles for this new one.

Raskin wondered if he’d ever have to use his pistol on a Jew. The very thought sickened him, and he resolved to do everything in his power to avoid that possibility, even if it meant sacrificing his own life. Yet, amidst the chaos and despair, a glimmer of hope persisted within him, like a sapling sprouting in a landfill. Something spoke inside of him, something that resonated with the dream he received before his ship sunk. “Just keep running towards the light,” he or something else kept telling him, “And the disaster that will strike them all, will not strike you.”

Raskin had always harbored a simple ambition: to be a truck driver. Any truck would do, even a bus. He longed to see the country, to travel the open road, to answer to no one but the deadlines. Life as a truck driver seemed straightforward—be at point A by this time, then get to point B. The open road, the remnants of nature, and the promise of solitude appealed to him deeply.

However, in these turbulent times, truck driving was fraught with danger. Starvation was rampant, and trucks moved like armored convoys, many equipped with automated turrets for protection. Desperate people often ambushed state-sanctioned Walmart trucks on the highways, waiting in large groups to raid their precious cargo. This was part of the reason Raskin had joined the military. Combat experience would bolster his résumé in a world where the roads had become battlegrounds.

Who am I kidding? he thought. It was really desperation that drove me to enlist. Either join the army or starve. He had no money for his next meal, let alone to buy his own rig. His plan was simple: survive the military, save enough money, and then set out on his life’s journey, driving food to the privileged during the apocalypse. The thought of the open road, despite its dangers, gave him a sense of purpose. It was a way to escape the present darkness. But that future seemed so distant now. The dream of his mind’s eye was being shattered by the present reality, the human condition. From what he’d seen, he didn’t know if he wanted to return home to the U.S. Deep down inside, he felt like this was it: the end of the world.

As he sat in the tank, listening to rounds ricocheting off the hull and wondering if the next projectile could be an FPV drone, Raskin still tried to cling to his dream. Unrealistic as it was, it was a dim light, something he had to hold onto, because without something to hold onto he would be lost. He sighed; no matter what, he would survive this. Just focus on the open road, feel the freedom of the journey, and perhaps, in some small way, help to rebuild the world somewhere, somehow.

Lieutenant Daniels was a young man in his early twenties, fresh out of ROTC. His parents had forced him to join so they could earn social credit points. Having a son as an officer placed them higher in the social hierarchy. Daniels often boasted about the letter of congratulations his family received from President Oman. He had shown Raskin the letter on his phone; it was a typed letter, personally signed by President Oman himself, though Raskin suspected it was generated by AI and the signature copied. Nonetheless, the fact that it came from the President's office was impressive—even if Raskin had mixed feelings about Oman.

President Oman had ended the Civil War in America by incarcerating white Christian nationalists in camps—a move that was essentially a death sentence. No one ever returned, including Raskin's mother. When the news came on and President Oman appeared, Raskin's father would quickly shut off the TV, purse his lips with a furrowed brow, and retreat to his bedroom. It was clear he despised Oman. Raskin understood his father was trying to hide his emotions and protect himself from being reported, as even children were known to turn in their parents for expressing ill will towards the Commander-in-Chief.

On the other hand, Raskin’s ten-year-old sister was a staunch Oman loyalist. She was too young to remember how their mother had died, and with all the mainstream media propaganda, it hard for her to hold any ill will towards President Oman. She suspected their father of disloyalty and kept a continual watch on him. She kept a diary in her room, marking dates and times when their father engaged in suspicious activity: coming home late—mark; playing music loudly while talking on the phone—mark; shutting off the TV during President Oman’s speech—mark; weeping on his wedding anniversary and talking about how much he missed their mother—mark. Anyone who showed sympathy towards those who had died in the camps might possibly be a traitor to the federal government and its democratic policies.

“Why can’t they just nuke these Jews and save us the headache?” Sgt. Hess complained.

“It’s all about politics. President Oman, our gracious and humble leader, wants to be seen as giving the Jews a chance to lay down their weapons peacefully and allow us to occupy them. And then, if they don’t lay down their weapons, we fucking nuke their asses! HOOAHH!” shouted Lieutenant Daniels.

The other soldiers in the tank replied, “HOOOAAHH!” Only Raskin was quiet.

“You might just get your wish, Sgt. Hess, if enough of us die today,” said Raskin wishing Sgt. Hess would just shut up.

“You fucking kike lover!” returned Sgt. Hess.

The tank jolted forward, bodies lurching with the sudden momentum. The sound of the M242 Bushmaster on the Bradley echoed around them, firing relentlessly. The tank halted again, turned left, then reversed.

“You know what, Cpl. Haskin? When all this is over, I'm going to find you a nice kike wife to settle down with and have children,” one soldier said, sneering. “Of course, I'll test drive her first to make sure she’s perfect for you.”

Laughter erupted from some of the soldiers, while others simply smiled.

“I heard kike women hide money in their ... well, you know,” another soldier added. “I’m gonna be rich soon.”

The laughter grew louder.

“Listen up, gentlemen,” their sergeant said, cutting through the noise. “Nobody touches a kike woman unless I say so. Your dicks belong to Uncle Sam. I’m pulling rank here. I get a fifty percent share of whatever ‘treasure’ you find. Is that clear?”

Raskin remained silent as the rest of the soldiers chorused, “Yes, sir,” between laughs. He felt a wave of nausea. He was becoming more and more ashamed to be part of this pack of animals, these rabid beasts the UN had unleashed upon Israel.

A Sudanese soldier chimed in, “In my country, we are very poor. You should at least let us have more than fifty percent.”

“I feel sorry for you, poor niggers. It’s a done deal. I’ll give you seventy five percent, but only on one condition. I get to record you on my go pro; you boys are packin, and I ain’t talkin bout your rifle.”

“It would be my honor to represent Sudan in such a way.”

“Oh, it will be, Bashir, you’re going to get honor all over her face.”

Bashir’s face lit up and a smile spread across his face.

Throughout history, sex and violence have often been intertwined. From the Russian rape of Germany at the end of World War II to the brutalities committed in countless conflicts across the globe, this dark relationship has persisted. It was a grim reminder of humanity’s capacity for cruelty, a reality that Raskin found repulsive. Yet, he couldn't deny the unsettling thoughts that crept into his mind. The temptation to take part in the potential rape of Israel, should they achieve victory, seemed enticing.

There was a deep, dark male fantasy of exerting complete dominance over a powerless woman and indulging every whim. This thought made him uncomfortable, and he quickly forced it out of his mind. He tried to drown out the voices of his comrades with the words and memories of his mother, which had recently resurfaced.

“Treat any woman like your sister,” she used to say, cradling his newborn sister in her arms. “You’d protect your sister if any guy tried to hurt her, right?”

He nodded as if she were speaking to him again there in the tank, grounding him in a moment of sanity amidst the idiocy.

“You know, Bashir,” Sgt. Hess continued, oblivious of Raskin’s internal turmoil, “you might have a point. Maybe we should let you poor bastards keep a bit more of the spoils, I’ll make it eighty percent. After all, you’ve earned it, fighting on the front lines and all.”

The other soldiers cheered and laughed; a camaraderie born out of shared depravity. Raskin felt his stomach churn. He knew he couldn't let this slide, but he was unsure how to stand up to his comrades without painting a target on his own back. He grappled with the right course of action, the weight of his mother’s words anchoring him to a bedrock of morality he feared was slipping away.

The Bradley jolted again, yanking Raskin from his thoughts. It had come to a halt, and he could tell its guns were blazing. Suddenly, the entire vehicle shook violently, and smoke filled the compartment.

“Open the hatch!” Sgt. Hess shouted. “We’re gonna suffocate in here!”

The tank drivers attempted to open it, but there was a complete power failure.

“Pull the manual release!” the driver yelled from the front of the vehicle.

The soldier closest to the manual release quickly pulled it, and the ramp began to lower. Sgt. Hess gave the signal, and the soldiers filed out into the night, coughing and gasping for air. Their night vision goggles cast an eerie green glow.

# **Chapter 9 “Prepare to Launch”**

President Barak Oman sat behind the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office. The weight of the world rested heavily on his shoulders. The digital clock on the wall read 3:00 a.m., but there was no indication that he would be leaving any time soon. The room was dim, save for the glow of multiple screens displaying real-time updates on Operation Gaza Hope.

“Mr. President, General Monroe is on the secure line,” announced his chief of staff, quietly stepping into the room.

“Patch him through,” Oman responded, steeling himself for the conversation.

The screen flickered, and the face of General Monroe appeared. His expression was grave, a stark contrast to the confident demeanor he usually maintained.

“Mr. President, we’ve achieved initial success with the amphibious landings near Tel Aviv, but the situation remains fluid. The Iron Dome’s collapse has left Israel vulnerable, but their ground forces are putting up a fierce resistance. Casualties are high on both sides.”

Oman leaned back thoughtfully in his chair, forming his fingers in a steeple as he absorbed the information. “What about our strategic objectives, General? Are we on track?”

“We are, sir. The coordinated strikes have disrupted their command-and-control centers, and the coalition forces are steadily advancing. However, we’re encountering unexpected levels of resistance from local militia groups and remnants of the IDF. It’s clear they’re not going down without a fight.”

Oman listened intently, his expression grave. The failure of his covert plan to nuke Tel Aviv through its surrogate Iran weighed heavily on his mind. Iran’s ICBM, meant to be a decisive blow, had malfunctioned disastrously, freezing in mid-air and crashing back into Tehran. The subpar materials used in its design were unfit for high-altitude conditions, and had turned Tehran into a radioactive wasteland. Despite this failure the situation would work to his advantage.

“With the level of resistance in Tel Aviv,” continued General Monroe, “I fear we could lose a million soldiers. I think the first and second divisions will be completely wiped out. As we speak, the IDF in Tel Aviv is launching a counterattack. If something isn’t done soon, they could push our troops into the sea. We’re doing everything in our power, but the Israelis have developed sophisticated means to block and jam our robots. Our artillery has yet to have any significant effect. The Israelis have built an extensive tunnelling system in and around Tel Aviv and to the north. I believe they constructed these tunnels as a fail-safe measure in the event of the Iron Dome’s failure.”

Oman's mind raced as he processed the grim update. “What about our air support? Can we increase the number of sorties to break their counteroffensive?”

“We’re already running maximum operations, sir. The skies over Tel Aviv are contested, and we’re sustaining heavy losses to their infantry-based MANPAD systems. The Israelis are utilizing every resource they have, including outdated systems that are surprisingly effective against our current tech.”

Oman was amazed, but he hid his emotions from the general. How was a nation with approximately the same population as his home state of Illinois putting up so much resistance against the united will and forces of the world? Under the advice of his commanders, they could take Tel Aviv intact and utilize it as a hub for all coalition soldiers. But in reality, he had no such desire. He was just playing a game. He wanted to seem as if he had no desire for the destruction of Israel, but in reality, his sentiments were quite the opposite. Underneath his breath, he mumbled, “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.”

Oman was in deep thought. The time for covert operations was over. America, on behalf of the world and the coalition whose soldiers’ lives were currently at risk, would have to take charge and consider more drastic measures. Yes, they had to strike Tel Aviv to save coalition lives. He had done everything he could through conventional means; no option was left; he would use this narrative for his advantage.

He took a deep breath with the weight of the decision before him. “General Monroe, it’s time we consider all our options. Prepare a contingency plan for a direct nuclear strike on Tel Aviv. We cannot afford to let this resistance undermine the entire operation. I want every possible scenario on my desk in one hour.”

“Understood, Mr. President,” Monroe replied, his face reflecting the gravity of the order.

Oman never imagined that he would be responsible for the complete and utter destruction of Israel. If only Iran had been successful, this would not have been necessary. He was worried about his approval ratings when the American public found out that he was responsible for the nuclear strike on Tel Aviv. Even though America’s tolerance for nuclear intervention had greatly increased since World War III, his major concern was the collateral damage. Jerusalem should not be affected by the blast, or there could be a significant outcry from the American public. Americans still considered Jerusalem to be the holiest city in the world despite the almost complete absence of faith from public life. He needed to inform the coalition about what was going to happen so they could pull back their troops.

He picked up the secure phone, dialing the coalition command center. “This is President Oman. We need to initiate an immediate troop withdrawal from Tel Aviv and surrounding areas. Prepare all forces for a strategic withdrawal. Details will follow.”

After he hung up, Oman lit up a cigarette. He took a slow, smooth drag, feeling the nicotine hit his bloodstream and give him an immediate buzz. It was a rare moment of solace amidst the bedlam. He loved the high, the thrill, the sense of complete domination that came with holding the fate of nations in his hands.

The door quietly opened, and Michael stepped into the room. He moved silently, sneaking up on Barak. Suddenly, he placed a firm hand on Oman's shoulder, causing Barak to jump.

“Honey, I thought you’d quit smoking,” Michael in a chiding tone.

“I did, Mikey, but the stress of all this got me smoking again,” Barak admitted. He swiveled his office chair until he was facing Michael.

“You have to start the Nicorette again. This is not good. I had the courage to transform myself, and so do you. Quit those cigarettes,” Michael urged gently but firmly.

Barak nodded, quickly stubbing out the cigarette in the ashtray on his desk. The room was filled with a tense silence as the enormity of the situation hung in the air.

“Michael, here’s the situation. Soon five million Jews are going to be dead by my hand,” he said quietly. “I’m going to take the nuclear football, put in my code … and poof! Not even Hitler was able to achieve such a feat in a single day.”

“Honey, don’t compare yourself to Hitler,” Michael responded, moving closer and placing a comforting hand on Barak's back. “Hitler wasn’t trying to liberate anyone. He was just killing Jews out of fear and paranoia. You’re doing this to free the Palestinians. There’s a huge difference.”

Barak sighed deeply, the burden of his impending decision pressing down on him. “I know, Michael. But the world will never see it that way. They’ll see me as a monster, a tyrant.”

Michael massaged his shoulders gently. “History will judge you, Barak. But you have to do what you believe is right, what you believe will bring peace in the long run. This war has to end, and sometimes, the hardest decisions are the ones that bring about real change.”

Barak looked into Michael's eyes, finding a flicker of hope amidst the despair. “You're so right. I just hope this is the right path.”

Michael leaned in closer, speaking with conviction. “Don't worry, my dearest. Allah knows your heart. He knows you’re trying to please him. Allah will reward you in paradise. Allah will also give me seventy-two virgins and we will rule together in paradise. Come, let's pray towards Mecca.”

Barak took a deep breath, wishing and wanting peace. He stood up from his chair, and together, they moved to the prayer rug that Michael had quietly laid out. They turned to face Mecca, their movements synchronized, a symbol of their unity in purpose and faith.

As they bowed and recited the prayers, he wanted so desperately to feel peace but it eluded him. Doubts and uncertainties filled his mind. The weight of the decision pressed heavily on him, but he knew he must endure these burdens because it was part of Allah’s greater plan. The act of prayer, the rhythm of the words, and the presence of Michael by his side brought him some strength amidst his own weakness.

When they finished, Barak looked at Michael with gratitude. “Thank you, Michael. Your faith strengthens me.”

Michael smiled warmly. “We are in this together, Barak. No matter what comes, we face it side by side.”

With that, Barak returned to the Resolute Desk, feeling a renewed sense of resolve. He knew Allah was with him. If Allah was with him, who could be against him? He recalled the verse from the Quran:

*If Allah helps you, none can overcome you; but if He forsakes you, who is there that can help you after Him? In Allah, then, let believers put their trust.*

This divine reassurance filled Barak with the courage and conviction needed to face the monumental decisions ahead. The Jews must surely die and he was Allah’s instrument of holy wrath. He had an hour to spare as he waited for the final plan from his generals on how to carry out the nuclear strike. He glanced at Michael's newly created penis, noticing the evident arousal. Michael blushed.

“Isn't it amazing?” Michael asked.

“You're amazing,” Barak replied, his voice filled with admiration.

Michael unzipped his pants, and Barak took Michael's penis into his mouth, savoring the warmth and hardness against his tongue. Michael's hips twitched, his breath hitching as he struggled to contain the pleasure building within him.

As Barak continued his skilled ministrations, Michael's mind wandered back to the time they first met. It was the summer of 1989 at the Chicago law firm Sidley Austin. They were both young and ambitious, their careers just beginning to take off. Initially, Michael was hesitant about getting romantically involved with Barak, wanting to keep their relationship professional and concerned about the implications of dating someone he was supposed to be mentoring. However, after some time and a few outings, including their first official date at the Art Institute of Chicago followed by a movie, they developed a strong relationship and grew closer than brothers. The thought of sharing such an intimate moment now, with the weight of the world on their shoulders, filled Michael with a sense of connection and purpose.

Outside, the sounds of the world beyond their private sanctuary seemed distant, almost muffled. Within these four walls, it was just the two of them, lost in a moment of primal connection.

Suddenly, there was a knock on the door, and the Secretary of State walked in, intruding on their private sanctuary and shattering their moment of bliss. He tried to walk away, but the pressing concerns stopped him in his tracks, making him wait with his back turned to the couple undone. They quickly adjusted themselves, as Michael hurriedly zipped up his pants. Barak coughed and quickly moved his chair to the Resolute Desk. Michael retreated through an opposite door. Barak composed himself and, when ready, addressed Sean, whose back was still turned.

“What is it, Sean?”

Sean, a white person appointed as Secretary of State as part of a diversity inclusion initiative, forced himself to overcome the awkwardness of the situation and pretend it never happened.

He turned to face Barak with a serious expression.

“I spoke with General Monroe. He mentioned you plan on releasing the Kraken on Tel Aviv. We conducted a late-night poll and found that ninety of Americans support your decision to launch a nuclear strike.”

“You executed the other ten percent, correct?”

“Yes, sir. Firing squads were assembled, and the dissenters and their families were shot. Their identities have been erased from all records. Their state-sanctioned jobs have already been filled by loyal citizens.”

“Excellent. Did I ever tell you that you're my favorite house whigger? Your precision and dedication to getting things done is absolutely astounding.”

“Thank you, sir. Serving you and living in the White House servant quarters has been a privilege. Without your patronage, my family might not have survived the great purge—I mean reformation.”

“Oh, it’s nothing. Just doing my duty as an American citizen. We need white people around to do the mopping up, after all. And don’t play the victim card on me. Critical race theory only applies to Blacks. Understand?”

“Yes sir, but I think the situation in Tel Aviv is very pertinent …”

“Don’t interrupt me, boy.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Now, tell me what the general has to say regarding our contingency plan.”

“He says there are about 100,000 of our soldiers trapped within the city. Their communications are cut off due to IDF jamming measures. It could take a couple of days before we can re-establish contact with them. Once that happens, we can safely withdraw all our soldiers.”

“Ask the general if those are white units trapped in the city or units of color.”

“Just a moment, sir.” The Secretary of State quickly got on his phone. Barak leaned back in his chair, folding his hands behind his head and propping his feet up on a nearby chair, relaxing. He couldn’t get the encounter he had with Michael out of his head. If only this dumb cracker hadn’t come in and interrupted—what sweet bliss, what passion!

He momentarily considered finding a new house whigger, one who knew how to knock and wasn’t so impetuous with the work at hand. He needed someone who could sit back, relax, and enjoy the moment—someone like him. Or perhaps he could improve Sean, teaching him new tricks like the white Husky he and Michael had just adopted. There were also mental implants, neural links, that could control certain parts of people’s minds. If Sean tried to enter the Oval Office without permission, a targeted shock could shoot down his spinal cord, ensuring compliance.

Barak’s mind wandered back again to Michael, remembering the intensity of their connection. The passion they shared was unparalleled, a union of two powerful figures at the height of their dominance. His thoughts were interrupted by the Secretary of State, who had finished his call.

“Mr. President, the general confirmed that the trapped soldiers are predominantly white units.”

“Well, the longer we wait, the more colored units will be put at risk. I think we should nuke Tel Aviv immediately. Losing 100,000 out of 20 million soldiers is an acceptable sacrifice. Inform the general: make sure all units have withdrawn to a safe distance. Then we proceed with the strike.”

Oman noticed tears welling up in Sean’s eyes.

“Do you want to say something, Sean?” Oman asked, his tone measured but firm.

Sean’s mouth opened, words forming but stalling as fear took hold. Realizing these could be his last words, he chose them carefully. “Nothing, sir. I was just thinking …” he paused, his voice trembling slightly. Then these words came out, “What a bold and decisive move, sacrificing the lives of white soldiers for the protection of colored soldiers! It’s a profound act of reparation for the past sins of our forefathers.”

Oman studied Sean for a moment, sensing the fear in his tone. The control he had over Sean made him long to be dominated by Michael. “Indeed, Sean. It’s a necessary step toward a more just world. We must be willing to make hard decisions for the greater good.”

“Yes, sir,” Sean replied, his voice steadier now, though his heart still pounded.

Barak's excitement was palpable, his eyes gleaming as he gave the order. “Great, when the troops we’re still in contact with have withdrawn to a safe distance, I’ll get this show on the road. Immediately notify me when that’s been accomplished,” he said, pausing just long enough for his expression to shift dramatically. His face lit up, as if struck by sudden inspiration. “Wait, I just had an epiphany. A great idea. We didn’t launch the nukes. The IDF detonated a nuke within the city to stop our advancing soldiers. That’s it! They sacrificed the city and its inhabitants to halt our advance.”

His advisor nodded eagerly, clearly impressed. “That’s a brilliant idea, sir! I’ll call CNN immediately and have them run the story. Anything else come to mind, sir?”

Barak waved him off, his excitement spilling over. “No, no, that’s it for now. Get on it!”

As soon as Barak was done, Sean began making a flurry of calls.

When Sean had left, Lieutenant Commander David Reynolds, the officer currently carrying the nuclear football, entered. He was a composed and unassuming figure, chosen for his calm demeanor and impeccable record.

He pulled up a chair and sat beside Barak.

“How you doing, Dave?”

“Doing fine, Barak. So, we’re nuking Israel today?” He said casually.

“It does look like it, Dave. I sure do miss your wife’s fried chicken. She’s a damn good cook. When are we getting together again to have a cookout?”

“Well, you know, after we get done killing five million Jews in the Promised Land.” He shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

“It’s justified, right?”

“Oh, I mean, totally. This is the final solution for Palestine, is it not?”

Barak was silent, looking at Dave to see his reaction. They both knew the answer to the question, but Barak wanted to see if Dave believed it too.

“Hey, wasn’t your wife’s grandfather Jewish, half Jewish? Doesn’t that make your wife Jewish?”

“No, he married a woman who wasn’t Jewish.”

“Well, that would make her a quarter Jew, wouldn’t it?”

“I’m not going to let you do this, sir. How do you feel knowing that you ate fried chicken from the hands of a black Jew, your enemy?”

“Dave, I know what you want to do right now and I can assure you all precautions have been taken. The bullets in your gun, well, they’re blanks. We go back a long way. I already knew this about your wife, but I overlooked these things. I want to see things work out between us.”

Lieutenant Commander Dave pulled out his sidearm and began pulling the trigger. Loud shots resounded in the Oval Office. After all the blanks had been exhausted, Oman sat there unharmed, looking smugly at him.

“It’s a shame, Dave, we can’t continue to work together. Your wife is being taken care of as we speak. She’ll reach the camp any time soon. I expected this response out of you, but you know me, I like to hope against all hope that maybe there was a true American wandering there inside of you.”

“True American? You teach me about being a true American? We took in as refugees the very Jews who created the weapon you are soon going to use against them, you bastard.”

Barak leaned back in his chair, unfazed by Dave's outburst. "Dave, this isn't about personal vendettas or grudges. This is about ensuring a future where the oppressed can finally breathe free. Sacrifices must be made for the greater good, even if it means hard choices."

Dave's face was a mask of rage and disbelief. "You think you’re a hero, don’t you? You’re just another tyrant, hiding behind your twisted version of justice."

“Believe what you want, Dave. History will judge us. And history is written by the victors.”

The tension in the room was palpable, a standoff between two men who once called each other friends. Barak’s calm demeanor contrasted sharply with Dave’s barely-contained fury.

The president’s voice softened, almost as if he were speaking to an old friend. “It's over, Dave. You can't stop what's already in motion. The future is ours to shape.”

Dave's shoulders slumped in defeat, the fight leaving his body. He knew he had lost. “What kind of future are you creating, Barak?”

“A future where the oppressed rise and the oppressors fall. A future where justice isn’t just a word, but a reality,” his hand playing with and twisting a small device with a button that rested in his pocket.

Dave stared at Barak, the weight of his failure pressing down on him. “God help us all.”

He dropped the gun and lunged at Oman, ready to choke him to death. But before he could reach him, Barak pushed a button on the small device in his pocket. Dave's body dropped to the carpet like a rock, twisting and contorting as a small amount of electricity coursed through his spinal cord, disrupting his body's function and coordination.

“You gonna die, you motherfucker,” Dave forcefully said, his lips barely able to form the words.

Sean entered the Oval Office with another officer and several security guards, their handguns pointed at Lieutenant Colonel Reynolds.

"What do you want me to do with him, sir?"

"Take him out back on the White House lawn. Shoot him.”

“You bastard! God will …” Before he could finish his sentence, a soldier hit him with the butt of his handgun, knocking him out.

The soldiers grabbed each of his arms and dragged him out of the office.

“Sir, Major General Washington will be helping you today with the football. General Monroe says we're clear now,” Sean said and quickly walked out, trying to catch up with the soldiers escorting Reynolds.

“Major General Washington,” Oman acknowledged the aide in front of him. “It's time. Prepare the football.”

Oman took a deep breath, steeling himself for the monumental task ahead. “Remember, Major, history will judge us by our actions and our commitment to justice. This is a war for the future of the Palestinian people, to free them from their oppressors. For the future peace and stability of the world, we must not waver in our purpose.”

His words hung in the air, thickening the atmosphere in the Oval Office. The weight of the impending decision hovered over them like a dark cloud.

The President turned to the military aide, the custodian of the nuclear football. This innocuous-looking briefcase held the power to reshape the world. The aide stepped forward, his face a mask of solemn duty.

“Mr. President,” he said, opening the case to reveal its contents: a secure satellite phone, various communication tools, and a set of authentication codes.

Oman retrieved the “biscuit," a card containing unique codes, from his desk drawer. His hand trembled slightly as he held it up. Many nukes were launched during World War III, but this was the first time he was responsible for doing so. Having such immense power in his hands was overwhelming. He always imagined approaching this moment fearlessly, but now he felt his courage falter. He murmured under his breath, “Allah Akbar, Allah Akbar, Allah Akbar …”

He glanced at Major General Washington, who stood rooted to the spot, fear and awe in his eyes. Oman knew this moment would be etched in the annals of history; his eternal salvation depended on it.

“First, we need to verify my identity,” Oman said, his voice steady but low. He read out the codes from the biscuit, and the military aide confirmed them against the pre-authorized codes. This step ensured that the person ordering the launch was indeed the President of the United States.

With the authentication process complete, Oman turned to the secure phone and initiated a direct line to the National Military Command Center at the Pentagon. “This is the President. Authenticate my identity and prepare to receive the launch order.”

The response was immediate and precise. “Yes, Mr. President. Please proceed with authentication.”

Oman once again provided the codes, which were meticulously cross-checked. The confirmation came back swiftly, the weight of it settling over the room. “Identity confirmed. We are ready to receive your orders.”

He consulted briefly with General Monroe and other top military advisers who had gathered on a secure video link. Their faces were grim, understanding the magnitude of the directive about to be issued.

“We need to initiate the launch plan for a nuclear strike on Tel Aviv,” Oman stated firmly. “The target is to be selected based on the current threat assessments and strategic objectives.”

The order was encoded, detailing the specific war plans and the single target. It included every necessary detail, from the timing of the launch to the precise coordinates. Oman read through it carefully, ensuring that there could be no mistake.

The encoded order was transmitted to the National Military Command Center and other command centers for verification. These centers acted as the vital nodes in the chain of command, ensuring the legitimacy and accuracy of the order.

The final step involved the execution of the order. The commanders of the nuclear forces—those controlling the land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and strategic bombers—received the authenticated launch directive. Each commander verified the order using the unique codes, following through with the strict protocol to confirm its authenticity.

“All commanders have confirmed receipt of the order,” the voice on the other end of the secure line reported.

Oman took a moment to breathe, feeling the weight of his decision pressing down on him. In the heat of the moment, something struck him, and he quickly snapped out of a tense dream and back into reality.

“Hey, General Monroe, before we launch, can I get a live feed of the nuke striking Tel Aviv? I want to see its destructive power in all its glory.”

“Yes, sir. We'll have one of our drones stream the explosion live.”

An aide came in and gave Barak an iPad streaming the event live.

Barak pulled out his BlackBerry. He called Michael.

“I want you to come downstairs to see the fruit of our labor.”

A few moments passed, and Michael entered the Oval Office and sat on Barak’s lap.

“What am I watching?”

“It’s a surprise.”

Barak took a deep breath.

“Execute the launch,” he said in a steady and resolute voice.

In a matter of moments, a Minuteman ICBM would launch, carrying the destructive force capable of annihilating Tel Aviv and its suburbs.

# Chapter 10 Trapped

Raskin’s heart raced as he clawed through the darkness, and the fire of burned-out buildings and destroyed vehicles. The stench of burning rubble and singed metal saturated the air, interwoven with the sharp, coppery scent of blood. The rest of the squad scanned their sectors through their night vision goggles, their eerie green glow highlighting the devastation around them. The sector they were in was the deepest into the city, one of the spearheads of the invasion. Gunfire and tracers streaked across the night sky, intermittently illuminating the chaos. Dead bodies of civilians and soldiers lay scattered. The moon’s gentle light was blocked out by the smoke rising from the city.

Raskin prayed fervently that they could avoid contact with the enemy. But his hopes were shattered as a Merkava tank, flanked by a platoon of infantry, advanced toward their position under the cover of night. The ground trembled with each lurching motion of the tank and its accompanying troops; their silhouettes were barely discernible without night vision in the dim moonlight.

Sgt. Hess conferred urgently with Lieut. Daniels. Raskin could overhear their low, terse conversation, filled with a sense of desperation. Typically, they would call in an airstrike, but their communications had inexplicably failed.

Sgt. Hess then moved quietly beside Cpl. Raskin. “Here’s the situation. We’ve got one AT-4 and one Javelin. We need to trick that tank into deploying its countermeasures while the rest of the squad lays down suppressing fire. The lieutenant wants me to take one half of the squad and you the other.”

Raskin nodded, swallowing hard. “Understood, Sergeant. What’s the plan?”

“We’ll split up. I’ll take position on the left flank with three men. You take the right with the rest. We’ll fire the AT-4 first to trigger the tank’s countermeasures. As soon as they activate, you hit it with the Javelin.[[15]](#footnote-15) Timing is everything.”

Raskin briefed his men, masking his reluctance with feigned enthusiasm for the action to maintain their morale. Despite his inner conflict, he was buoyed by the weight of their trust. He handed the Javelin to Bashir, who clung to it tightly, ready to launch at a moment’s notice. Sgt. Hess and his team crawled low, taking position in a burnt-out building opposite their location. The tank’s rumble grew louder, accompanied by the steady march of enemy boots.

Cpl. Raskin awaited Sgt. Hess’ signal, feeling the adrenaline pump through his veins. He gripped his pistol, resolved to fire above the enemy’s heads, in his reluctance to engage in violence against the Jewish soldiers.

The AT-4 launcher barked, sending a rocket streaking toward the tank. As predicted, the Merkava’s countermeasures activated, deploying smoke and flares to confuse incoming threats.

“Now, Raskin!” Hess shouted.

“Bashir, engage the target.”

Bashir shouldered the Javelin, using its thermal imaging sight to lock onto the tank through the haze and darkness. He squeezed the trigger, feeling the powerful recoil as the missile launched. It arced through the air, its guidance system compensating for the smoke and flares. The missile struck the tank squarely, as a blinding explosion rocked the ground.

“Suppressing fire, now!” Raskin commanded. His men opened up with their rifles and the squad's M249 SAW, pinned down the infantry accompanying the tank with a spray of bullets that had them completely caught off guard.

The tank smoldered, its turret lifeless. The enemy infantry, stunned by the loss of their armored support, initially hesitated. But they quickly recovered and began returning fire with fierce intensity, their numbers making the situation dire for Raskin’s squad.

Amidst the chaos, Bashir, who had bravely launched the Javelin, was struck by enemy fire. Raskin saw him fall, clutching his wound, his face contorted in pain. He crawled over to Bashir, but it was too late. The life had already drained from his comrade’s eyes. The loss hit Raskin hard. His death was a meaningless waste of life, a sacrifice to the gods of the new world order imposing itself on a peaceful people. Raskin then took Bashir’s night vision goggles to sight the enemy’s position.

Meanwhile Sgt. Hess had maneuvered his team into a perfect flanking position. With the enemy focused on Raskin’s squad, Hess’ team opened fire from the side, catching the enemy column by surprise. The sudden onslaught threw the enemy into disarray, as their formation crumbled under the unexpected assault.

“Push forward!” Hess ordered. “Keep up the pressure!”

Raskin led his half of the squad, moving from cover to cover, to systematically engage the disoriented enemy soldiers. Despite being outnumbered, the squad utilized the urban terrain to their advantage, exploiting every bit of cover.

The firefight was brutal and intense. The squad worked seamlessly together, but the sheer volume of return fire from the enemy was overwhelming. However, Sgt. Hess and his team managed to ambush a flanking maneuver by the enemy, buying crucial time.

The enemy, now under fire from two sides, began to falter. The combined firepower and tactical positioning of Raskin’s and Hess’ squads created a lethal crossfire. The enemy infantry, realizing their untenable position, started to retreat, their advance broken.

After what felt like an eternity, the gunfire ceased. The squad stood amidst the wreckage, breathless and victorious. The silence of the aftermath hung heavily in the air, amid the flames of the battlefield.

Sgt. Hess stood with a sullen look on his face as he looked down on the body of Bashir. “I was only going to take ten percent of his spoils,” he muttered bitterly. “I didn’t give him permission to die, goddammit.” He kicked at the dirt in frustration. Hess checked the radio again in an attempt to call in a medevac,[[16]](#footnote-16) but there was still no response from command.

Some of the IDF were wounded. Their groans and pain filled Raskin’s ears with an ocean of sorrow.

“I have orders from command to not take prisoners,” said Lieutenant Daniels stoically. “So put them to sleep as humanely as possible like you would a dog or horse or something. One quick shot to the head and that’s good. Don’t torture them, I’m not bloodthirsty.”

Shots echoed off the surrounding buildings as the wounded IDF were shot.

One IDF soldier who had been wounded in the leg pleaded with them, “I have a wife, a child, please don’t kill me.” Private Lot looked down at the Jew with a cold, hard stare. He was building up courage. Hey sarge, he’s just a monster, right, a beast of the field. Lot looked at him for affirmation. Sgt. Hess nodded his head and looked at the wounded Jew with the same cold-hearted murderous intent.

“Please, I’ll show you them,” he reached in his pocket to show them something, but then a gunshot rang from Lot’s rifle. Then there was silence as the bullet found its mark in the Jew’s head.

Raskin surveyed the body of the dead Jew whose hand was in his pocket through his NVG. The green tint of his body made his corpse look surreal, like a painting lying on the concrete. The Jew’s white skin was ghostlike as white as his own skin. He felt a bitter satisfaction knowing that not a single Jew had died at his hand. However, a part of him wished he could have done more for him without jeopardizing his own life. Reprimanding his fellow soldiers was not an option, but he found himself increasingly disgusted by their behavior.

The squad began looting the fallen IDF soldiers for ammunition and other supplies. One of the IDF soldiers was a female.

“Hey, Cpl. Raskin, check her and see if she keeps money in her ‘who-hah,’” Sgt. Hess said in a derisive tone.

Cpl. Raskin shook his head.

“Oh, that’s right, you’re a kike lover.”

“I’ll do it!” Private Lot said with enthusiasm his first taste of combat making him bloodthirsty.

The private began checking her body. Raskin turned away in disgust.

“No Sarge, I think she’s a poor kike,” Lot replied, eliciting laughter from some of the men.

“Holy fuck, I didn’t realize they had those.” His voice sounding astonished. “I’ll write home and tell my woman this—she’ll shit her pants.”

Raskin clenched his fists, fighting the urge to speak out.

Other soldiers began trying to pull out gold teeth. Sgt. Hess got really excited.

“Look at this it’s an iPhone 38+A, with holographic camera. But I can’t unlock it ... I know ...” Sgt. Hess reached down and grabbed the corpse’s thumb and unlocked the phone. He quickly began swiping trying to change the security measures so they worked around his hand.

“Goddamnit, now requires passcode. How to unlock one of these fucking phones.”

“I got a friend back home who can hack that for you,” said Pvt. Lot, “Just hold onto it we’ll get you squared away.”

“I got an idea. I’ll just take this soldiers thumb with me.”

Sgt. Hess took out his K-BAR knife and began sawing at his thumb like a butcher in the shop. Finally, the thumb gave way. Sgt. Hess took out a Ziploc bag in his pocket and put the thumb inside.

“As long as I got his thumb, it’ll make cracking the phone that much easier. Right, Lot?”

“Good idea Sarge, you’re always top of your game.”

Sgt. Hess was incredibly happy like a child who’d just received his long waited Christmas present. “I’ve been waiting my entire life for one of these. I can’t afford this. I got a wife and two kids. Not only that, you know how they pay white soldiers. Even being a Sergeant my pay ain’t shit.”

“You got that right, Sarge. I can hardly pay for a night at the strip club. While colored soldiers, hell, they’re high rolling. They get all the fine bitches. I’ll be getting a lap dance when a large group of niggers roll in. She’ll just jump right up and start serving them like I didn’t even exist. It ain’t fair, I tell you. I want to color my skin black. I’m tired of being a whigger,” said Lot as a gold tooth from a body just gave way.

“Even if you paint yourself black, you can’t get rid of that whigger inside of you. It’ll come out as soon as you talk. Once you start talking about hiking through the woods, hunting squirrels, they’re going to smell that whigger scent like shit in a dumpster.”

Everyone started laughing; even Raskin conceded a little laughter.

Pvt. Lot got up and dusted himself off. “Fuck y’all. You never seen *Tropic Thunder*? Robert Downey Jr. played a damn good nigger. If I just practice for a month, I can kill that whigger inside of me.”

“Alright, that’s enough, gentlemen,” Sgt. Hess barked, his voice cutting through the banter like a knife. “We’re on a mission. We’re supposed to arrive at the center of Tel Aviv at 0500. At this rate, we're nowhere near our objective. Let’s get a move on.”

The soldiers stopped their looting, picked up their packs, and got in formation. The ruins of the city opened up; each building was a potential hideout for enemy snipers and ambushes.

The war had twisted their morals, turning them into something unrecognizable. But even monsters find humor in the situation they’re in. Raskin resolved to survive this, but he knew that, no matter the outcome, he would never forget the horrors he had witnessed.

As they advanced, the strange silence of the abandoned streets was punctuated by the crunch of their boots on shattered glass and debris. The occasional flicker of movement in the shadows kept everyone on edge The once-bustling city now stood as a stark reminder of the cost of war. Buildings were reduced to skeletal remains, cars abandoned and burned out.

After half a click of walking, Raskin and his squad stacked up against a building adjacent to another structure. It once housed a café on the bustling streets of Tel Aviv. The Starbucks sign up above was a reminder of the normalcy that once prevailed. Fighting had not yet reached this area, but the tension was real. Sgt. Hess, taking the lead, checked the door and found it locked. He then proceeded to break the window with the butt of his rifle. The sharp sound of shattering glass was quickly followed by the crunching of shards underfoot as they cleared the glass and stepped over a low wall.

Inside, the café was strangely quiet, lit only by the dim glow of emergency lights and the flickering flames outside. The smell of stale coffee and baked goods lingered. Driven by hunger, they began eating the cakes and croissants stored in the lower glass casing, now covered in a thin layer of dust. Several squad members remained on overwatch, scanning for any movement through the cracked windows.

Those who looted shared with others who were on overwatch, and the squad took a quick break to understand their location and where they were going in relation to other units. The radio crackled with static, still refusing to transmit.

“This goddamn radio still won’t work. I can’t contact anyone. Even this GPS ... where the fuck are we?” Sgt. Hess muttered; frustration evident in his voice. “Do you think the kikes jammed everything we have?”

Lieut. Daniels, equally perplexed, rubbed his face vigorously; his eyes bloodshot from exhaustion. He bent backward, stretching, then shook his head in an attempt to clear his thoughts.

“Sgt. Hess, can we send some of our guys up one of these tall buildings to figure out where we are? I have no idea where the enemy could be.”

“I do have a map of the city, but I can’t read Hebrew to figure out what these streets are called. Any of you motherfuckers know Hebrew?”

“I think your mom does,” Raskin said, a smirk playing on his lips.

“Go fuck yourself, corporal,” Hess shot back, not missing a beat.

Sgt. Hess stared at the map. His brow furrowed as he tried to recognize any landmarks that might give them a hint of their location. Finally, with a sigh, he stuffed the map back into his pack.

“Guess what, corporal? That comment about my mom just volunteered you to climb up one of these buildings and find out where the fuck we are.” Sgt. Hess pointed at a tall, high-rise apartment building across the street from them. “Pvt. Lot you go with him.”

The lobby’s automatic doors were malfunctioning, so Corporal Raskin smashed the glass and stepped inside. Private Lot followed close behind, cradling his shotgun with the same youthful enthusiasm he once had for hunting squirrels on his family farm, except now, he was hunting Jews.

The elevator was out of order, forcing them to find the emergency access stairwell. They moved as quietly as possible under the dim, glow of the emergency lights. Raskin winced with every step as the wound he received on the ship was giving him small stabbing sensations despite being treated with stitches and antibiotics. He was shocked he had made it this far, but he gritted his teeth and pushed through the pain. Determined to make it out of this alive, he knew that once this nightmare was over, he needed immediate medical attention.

Pvt. Lot wasn’t the quiet type, and Raskin could sense he wanted to speak, but Lot steeled himself and kept his mouth shut. Lot had a strong affinity for anything Irish, often reminiscing about Notre Dame football, and lamenting the days when Notre Dame was still Catholic. The papacy (and hence Catholicism as an institution) had ceased to function after the Vatican was destroyed in a nuclear strike by Russia.

Raskin wondered if anyone else was still living in the building. On their way there, they had seen few civilians, assuming many of the Jews were hiding in shelters. As they climbed, he could hear voices coming from behind one of the doors on a mid-level floor. He quickly peeked through the window looking down the hallway. A woman was holding her daughter, making her way towards his position. As soon as she saw his face peeking through the window, she quickly turned around and ran back into her apartment.

The sight of the woman and her daughter tugged at something deep within Raskin. He felt a pang of guilt, a brief moment of humanity piercing through the hardened shell of a soldier. He thought about the faces of the dead Jewish soldiers he had seen earlier with their green-tinted corpses under his NVGs. He wondered if they were the wife and daughter of one of those dead soldiers. Maybe he could console her, tell her everything’s going to be all right, but he knew it wasn’t. He had a bad feeling in his gut at the moment. Something wasn’t right.

As they made their way into the city, the air strikes and artillery became less frequent. Now the only sounds were the sporadic bursts of gunfire, the exchange of tracers lighting up the night, and the heavy grinding of IDF and coalition machine-gun fire. If this was a full-on invasion, all hell should be breaking loose. The coalition had air superiority, so why weren’t they supporting them? There were so many questions swirling in his mind, but the lack of communication with command made answering those questions impossible.

Private Lot's footsteps behind Raskin were heavy, contrasting with Raskin’s light steps. It was as if Lot was intentionally making noise to lure an unsuspecting Jew out of hiding so he could pump them full of buckshot and claim his trophy. Raskin doubted that they were the actual monsters hiding in the dark. It was as if this low-budget horror film was reaching its climax, with the hunter secretly stalking their prey to finally pounce on them and kill them. But to Lot’s visible dismay, they reached the service door to the roof without incident.

“I was going to kill me a kike, but they’re all playing hide ’n seek,” he grumbled as he tried pushing open the service door.

The door was stuck, so they stepped back and lunged forward at the same time, kicking the door with all their force. It burst open, revealing a sweeping panorama of the city under siege by all the world.

The two men took their time to catch their breath. The fresh air was refreshing compared to the smell of death below. Raskin closed the door behind them and looked down on the street. He could see Sgt. Hess laying prone on the ground close to a destroyed IDF transport truck.

The scene below was chaotic. The flickering fires from the wreckage cast an orange glow on Hess, making him look like a figure out of a horror movie. He signalled us with a terse wave, indicating we should stay low.

Lot took position near the edge of the roof, taking his rifle, and scanning the environment.

“Where the hell are we?”

Raskin put the binoculars to his eyes, looking for anything recognizable that could serve as a landmark. He saw what remained of Azrieli Sarona Tower, which they had been briefed about before the operation. Sgt. Hess had given him another map, which he unfolded, tracing their route with my finger until he found their current location. Using the compass, he aligned the map with the north. The Azrieli Sarona Tower was marked since its distinctive height made it a useful reference point.

“We’re here,” Raskin finally said, pointing to a spot on the map. “Between these two ruined buildings. I can see the tower,” he added, pointing towards the faint silhouette against the night sky. “It’s about one click away, according to the map scale.”

Lot nodded, peering through his rifle scope to get a better view. “Looks right. Maybe a bit less,” he added. “Should take us about half an hour to reach the center of the city if we move carefully. Let’s go downstairs and let everybody know.”

“Wait,” Raskin said, his sixth sense kicking in. “Do you hear any artillery or airstrikes?”

“Nothing, it’s almost eerie for a battlefield of 20 million soldiers.”

Raskin walked to the opposite side of the building and lay down prone with binoculars against his eyes, looking far into the distance towards the outskirts of the city. He could see a long column of tanks and trucks carrying soldiers moving out of the city. “Lot, come here! Check this out!”

Lot got up and quickly ran over. Eyes wide with alarm, he cried, “Look at this, what do you think is going on?”

“The bastards are leaving; they’re abandoning the city. They’re insane, but why the fuck would they leave? We outnumber the kikes 20 to 1. Taking the city is essential to capturing Israel. Unless ... they’re going to nuke—the son of a bitch!”

Lot’s eyes widened. “But we’re inside.”

Raskin’s voice dropped to a grim whisper. “Look at our honky asses. We’re white; we’re expendable!”

“We need to get out of here on the double and join up with the others,” Lot said, his voice shaky but resolute.

“One thing’s for sure: we're probably surrounded by now. With the rest of our forces pulling out and comms down, there's no way they could've notified us.”

“We need to notify Sarge fast. Let’s go, Lot.”

They both got up and rushed to the service door. Raskin took hold of the handle, and at the same time, an opposing force pushed the door open, knocking them both back. Three IDF soldiers burst through the doorway. Pvt. Lot reacted instantly, firing his shotgun. The first soldier’s body absorbed most of the buckshot, his face filled with shock and horror. The second soldier used his comrade’s body as a shield, pulling out his sidearm and shooting Lot. Lot, with a final effort, pulled the trigger again, the second blast of buckshot tearing through the already wounded first soldier and gravely injuring the second.

Raskin’s heart pounded as he scrambled to his feet. The third IDF soldier raised his rifle, but Raskin was quicker. He lunged forward, grabbing the barrel of the rifle and wrestling it away. The two struggled, the IDF soldier’s strength nearly overpowering him. But Raskin, fuelled by adrenaline and desperation, managed to twist the rifle free and deliver a sharp blow to the soldier's head with the butt of the gun.

The soldier crumpled to the ground, unconscious or worse—Raskin didn’t wait to check. He turned to Lot, who was bleeding profusely from his side. The grim reality of their situation hit him hard. They were outnumbered, outgunned, and isolated.

“Hang in there, Lot,” Raskin said in a strained voice. “We need to move.”

Lot gritted his teeth against the pain, nodding weakly. Suddenly, Lot’s eyes widened as he looked past Raskin. “Ras!” Lot shouted, pointing frantically at the oncoming soldier.

Raskin spun around, with barely a second to react. The soldier was lunging at him with a knife. Instinct kicked in. Raskin sidestepped his thrust, grabbing his wrist with one hand while gripping his shoulder with the other. With a swift, fluid motion, he leveraged the soldier’s momentum against him, throwing him over his shoulder. The soldier hit the ground hard, the knife clattering from his hand as the impact knocked the wind out of him.

Without hesitation, Raskin kicked the knife away and pinned the soldier down, pressing his knee into his chest. The soldier struggled, eyes wide with fear and desperation, but Raskin held firm. He drew his sidearm, aiming it squarely at his face.

“Shalom, stand down,” Raskin warned, his voice low and deadly. The soldier stopped struggling, his eyes still filled with defiance but tempered by the realization of his defeat. Raskin slowly removed his knee from his chest and backed away from him.

Raskin glanced back at Lot, who was clutching his wound, his face pale but determined. They couldn’t afford any more delays. The situation was growing more precarious by the second, and they needed to regroup with Sgt. Hess and the rest of their squad before it was too late.

Raskin looked down at the subdued soldier, then pointed at the sky and said, “Boom. Nuke. You, me, safety. Tunnel.”

Keeping one hand on his sidearm, Raskin quickly fumbled through his rear pack with the other, pulling out a map. “Safety, tunnel,” he repeated, slowly lowering his sidearm. ”Live.”

The soldier muttered something in Hebrew that Raskin couldn't understand.

“No understand,” Raskin replied, shaking his head.

He pointed at Lot, who was struggling to breathe. Raskin knew he needed to treat Lot fast or he was going to die. With the map and pen in hand, he moved closer to the soldier.

“Mark, safety, you go,” Raskin said, pointing at the map and then towards the door.

“I understand and live,” nodded the soldier.

The soldier hesitated, then said something in Hebrew, as if trying to give directions. He made a mark on the map and pointed along the street they were supposed to go. He took Raskin’s binoculars and moved to the edge of the building. Looking forward, he found his destination and shared the binoculars with Raskin, showing him where they had to go.

Raskin nodded, understanding the soldier’s directions. He pointed at the door, “Go!”

The soldier quickly turned around and began running towards the door, glancing at his deceased comrades. Upon reaching the door, his body jolted as the weight of 5.56 rounds pierced his body from a SAW, a monster with a machine-like roar tearing away his flesh and humanity until he was a husk of mutton lying on the ground.

Sgt. Hess appeared from the shadow of the doorway, a cigarette dangling from his mouth. “Leave some kikes for us. I didn’t send you fuckers up here to have all the fun without us.”

A surge of anger coursed through Raskin’s body. His grip tightened around his pistol. He was about ready to pull his sidearm and shoot Sgt. Hess in the head when Lieut. Daniels also appeared.

“What happened here, gentlemen? We heard the gunshots and started running.” He saw Private Lot, “Oh shit.”

Raskin took a deep breath, forcing himself to stay calm. “Sir, we encountered resistance. Lot's been hit. We need to get him out of here and back to a medic.”

Daniels nodded, his face hardening as he assessed the situation. “Alright, we need to move fast. Hess, help Raskin with Lot. We need a medevac, but the comms, the comms …”

Hess approached; his earlier bravado replaced with a grim determination. Together, he and Raskin lifted Lot and placed him on a tarp they had stretched out on the ground. Lot groaned in pain but managed to keep his grip on his precious shotgun, murmuring the rosary.

“Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus,” Lot whispered. “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death ...”

Raskin listened to the familiar words, feeling a pang of sorrow as he watched his comrade in pain. “Hang in there, buddy,” he said, trying to reassure him. Raskin thought of the old saying, “There are no atheists in a foxhole,” as he heard Lot speak of God for the first time.

As he was carrying private Lot towards the service door, he looked at Lieut. Daniels, almost forgetting the most important thing, but now suddenly remembering it, “And there’s one more thing, Lieutenant,” said Raskin, the stress and panic building in his mind and voice to unbearable levels.

The lieutenant looked at Raskin incredulously.

“They’re going to nuke us; I swear to God they’re going to nuke us. They’re all pulling out. I saw convoys moving east back toward the landing zone. We’re surrounded, we’re all going to die if we don’t move to the tunnels.”

“Where are we right now?”

Raskin pointed at the map.

“Here. So, we’re about one km from the beach. We’re carrying wounded. I don’t know the possibility of running for it.”

Lieutenant Daniels started examining the map and marking the map with a pen he pulled out of his pocket.

“So, the first and second are supposed to be here. And behind us is the fourth with their integration of coalition elements. So, there is a very good chance that if the fourth colored battalion pulled back, the IDF would definitely counter attack using their tunnels to quickly surround us. The first, second, and third comprise about one hundred thousand soldiers.”

He choked back tears as the reality of the situation hit him.

“Maybe we could link up with soldiers from our battalion and get transport,” said Sgt. Hess who placed a reassuring hand on Daniels’ shoulder. “Regardless sir, we need to move now if we’re going to have any chance.”

“I have friends in those units.” Lieutenant Daniels snapped out of it.

“Sir, the bomb could come any moment.”

Daniels nodded, steeling himself. “Alright, let's get Lot out of here and find those tunnels. We can’t afford to waste any more time. I don’t think we have time to link up with another unit.”

They moved swiftly, the weight of their situation pressing down on them. The threat of the impending nuclear strike loomed large, and every second counted. As they navigated the war-torn streets, Raskin couldn’t shake the feeling that they were being watched—hunted, in fact. He kept thinking of the woman and her daughter getting vaporized into smoke—if only he had time to go back and warn them.

They quickly made their way through the building back to the ground floor, exiting to the street. Every roar of a jet, every explosion hit them with great apprehension, as if each one could be the final blow. Raskin kept looking up at the sky. He had faced death countless times, but this was different. This felt like the endgame, the moment when all their sacrifices and struggles would culminate in either salvation or annihilation.

They ran as fast as they could and reached the location marked on the map that indicated the tunnel. They began searching the burnt-out building frantically, every room a potential door to their salvation. As each room led to nothing, their hope grew dimmer, as if they were crawling and sifting through darkness.

“Your fucking kike lied to you. Now we’re going to die,” spat one soldier.

“Maybe they’re not going to nuke us,” another replied, though his voice lacked conviction.

“If you wouldn’t have shot him, we could have taken him with us,” Raskin said defensively, though he had no intention of doing so.

“Maybe it’s all a ploy to lure the kike rats out of hiding,” came another cynical voice.

“There’s nothing here, absolutely nothing,” one soldier said, his despair echoing through the empty building.

Lieut. Daniels glanced back at the map; the hastily drawn escape route now seeming like a cruel joke. The tunnels, their supposed sanctuary, were nowhere to be found. Time had run out. Despair threatened to overwhelm them, but the lieutenant forced it out of his mind, clinging to a fragile thread of hope.

“The last thing I’m going to do before I die is kick your ass, Raskin,” shouted Sgt. Hess as he ran toward Raskin. Raskin, confused and shocked, with nowhere to go, accepted his fate and allowed Sgt. Hess’ momentum to carry him to the ground. They began grappling, throwing punches back and forth. Other soldiers joined the pile, trying to break up the fight, but instead, old hatreds were brought forth, and a large brawl ensued among them all. Lieut. Daniels tried to break it up and got hit instead.

The chaotic melee upon the frail wooden frame of the dilapidated, war-torn building caused it to groan and creak until the floor collapsed, bringing all seven of them down with it, including Pvt. Lot, whose injuries were only aggravated by the fall. Amidst the rubble and confusion, Lot clung to his shotgun, still murmuring the rosary. “Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee,” in a barely audible voice.

As they lay there in the debris, the realization of their situation settled in. Raskin felt a wave of despair wash over him but quickly pushed it aside. “We need to get out of here,” he said, his voice firm. “We're not done yet.”

Hess, his earlier rage dissipated by the fall, nodded. “Let's move,” he said, helping Raskin to his feet. Together, they began to lift Lot again, determined to find a way out of their predicament.

Just as they were about to give up hope, Raskin noticed a faint draft of cool air coming from a corner of the basement. “Over here,” he called out, filled with renewed hope. They moved a pile of debris, which uncovered a hidden trapdoor.

Lieut. Daniels forced it open, revealing a dark tunnel below. “This is it,” relief and urgency in his voice. “This is our way out.”

They carefully lowered Lot into the tunnel first, his murmured prayers echoing in the confined space. "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee," in a steady rhythm.

One by one, the squad descended into the tunnel. The cool, damp air was a stark contrast to the burning, smoke-filled ruins above. The tunnel stretched out before them, a narrow passageway that promised a way out.

Just as the last soldier entered the tunnel, a blinding flash lit up the sky, followed by a deafening roar. The ground shook violently, and the intense pressure caused debris to rain down at the tunnel entrance. “Move, move!” Raskin shouted, the urgency in his voice propelling them forward.

The shockwave from the nuclear explosion sent a wave of heat and pressure surging toward them. They moved as fast as they could, their NBC gear protecting them from the immediate radiation and heat. The tunnel shuddered, dust and small rocks falling from the ceiling blocking the entrance. They managed to stay ahead, driven by a sheer survival instinct. Finally, after what felt like an eternity, they reached a reinforced section of the tunnel with cool and solid walls.

They collapsed against the walls, gasping for breath. The roar of the explosion faded, leaving an uncanny silence in its wake. They had made it, but at what cost? The collapsed tunnel had saved them from the immediate destruction, but the world above had changed forever.

Raskin looked around at his comrades. Their faces were etched with exhaustion and relief. “We made it! We’re still alive.” He looked down at Pvt. Lot.

“Lot, you still with us?”

“Of course, I am. It’ll take more than a nuclear blast to kill Pvt. Lot. But I’m hurting, I need help.”

Lieut. Daniels examined Lot’s wound. “I think it’s a flesh wound—clean exit. The bandage should keep him stable,” he observed as he turned on his flashlight into the tunnel. “But we must treat his wound as soon as possible to avoid infection.”

Raskin and Hess picked up Lot, supporting him between them. The squad moved with renewed vigor in the face of their shared goal. In the darkness, they had found their salvation—a hidden escape that promised a chance of survival.

# Chapter 11 The Torturer

Sleep eluded me on the cold, unforgiving concrete, a world away from anything familiar. In the vast barracks, I was surrounded by bodies but had never felt more alone. One side was solid concrete, the other lined with bars from floor to ceiling. The incessant buzz of fans offered scant relief from the suffocating Indian summer night. Bright fluorescent lights pierced my eyelids, making rest impossible. I tossed and turned, swatting a mosquito that landed on my face. Around me, other inmates were crammed together, somehow asleep despite the stifling conditions. This was a far cry from the American prison I had known. And it was only my first night.

Unable to rest, I got up and greeted a patrolling guard outside the barracks. He returned the courtesy, though our conversation faltered—he didn’t speak much English, and my Hindi was barely serviceable.

“Namascar,[[17]](#footnote-17)1” I offered, hoping to bridge the gap. He smiled; a bit impressed.

“Ap kis desh se hain, aur ap jel mein kyun hain? [[18]](#footnote-18)1” he asked.

“I’m American. Passport problems,” I replied, though the truth was more complicated.

My struggle with the American government had followed me all the way to India. After being released from incarceration and placed on probation, I fled America, hoping to escape their grip. Life there was unbearable. I had no hope of finding a good job, declared mentally insane, and unable to find a partner. In India, I met Dipti. But while absconding, an arrest warrant was issued back home, and my passport was revoked. The full brunt of Indian law came smashing down on my head.

The guard, curious but unable to pry deeper, tried again. “What section?”

“Act 14, a, b, and c,” I muttered. Indian law sure loved the English alphabet.

He struggled in broken English. “America good? India good? Which one you like?”

“India good. America no good. People there... no heart, no family values.”

“America ke paas zyada paisa,[[19]](#footnote-19)3” he said, as if that explained everything.

“Money doesn’t mean everything,” I said, pointing at my chest. “It matters what’s here.”

The guard, either not understanding or not caring, pressed on. “I want to go to America. Will you take me?”

He didn’t get it. Or maybe he did, but like so many others, he was seduced by the allure of America, blinded by the shimmer of wealth and opportunity. I had seen it before—the promise of short-term gain clouding long-term judgment. It frustrated me deeply. So many Indians I had met were bewitched by the West, imagining it as some kind of paradise. Many who went returned hollowed out, disillusioned, realizing that most Americans had no real value for relationships.

Those who stayed became like the walking dead—zombies, no longer human. There was something insidious about accepting American culture, about wanting to fit in and belong there. I couldn’t quite explain it, but it was as if the moment someone chose to consume the fruit of American ideals, they were poisoned. They died, spiritually and morally, becoming a shell of who they once were.

That poison had now spread to the entire world. Once infected, they had to devour those who were still untouched. Once again, I found myself lying on a cold, hard floor, at the mercy of my infected captors who had already been devoured by the twisted morality of American ideals.

I didn’t know exactly where I was. Captain Cohen said we were imprisoned under the Dome of the Rock in the Marwani Prayer Hall. I shifted my zip-tied hands to touch the smooth, ancient stones. I imagined Solomon dedicating the temple to God, his voice resounding through these sacred halls. I ran my fingers along the crevices, wishing that now, more than ever, God’s glory would return to the earth.

I wanted to get up and examine my surroundings, but my fellow IDF soldiers and I were tragically trapped in complete darkness, our legs and hands zip tied. The oppressive silence was broken only by the faint sounds of breathing and the occasional rustling of chains.

My thoughts raced back to Dipti, and the sickening realization that I had been foolish to go on this mission before ensuring her safety. What fate awaited her without me there to protect her? The thought of what the coalition men might do to her made my insides churn. I felt my soul tearing apart from within. Stupid, stupid, stupid me!

Suddenly, a guard lit a cigarette, so his face was momentarily illuminated by the flickering flame. In that fleeting light, I saw the faces of my comrades, whose expressions mirrored my own sense of desolation and hope. We were all bound by a shared fate, caught in the web of history and conflict. The soldier guarding us stood over me —given away by the glowing ember of his cigarette. In the back of my mind, I wondered if this was it. Was this where I was going to die? All the prophecies that Hashem had spoken to me within my soul—were they just symptoms of schizophrenia? A mere figment of imagination produced by a mentally ill war vet?

I could tell the soldier wanted to say something to me. He paused for a moment, perhaps unsure of what to say. Then, he finally spoke.

“Is that you, Joshua? It’s been a long time. I know you, but you don’t know me. I guess it’s better that way since we have orders to execute you. You saved our unit in the Alaskan campaign.”

“This is how you repay me and my people? With genocide?”

“Don’t take it personal, Joshua. We’re just following orders.”

Another soldier lit his cigarette and chimed in. “You’re a soldier too, Joshua. You know how it is. We have families. If we don’t kill you, their lives will be in danger. We’ll be in danger too. I want to see my family again, you understand?”

“Nazi guards said the same thing about the atrocities they committed during the Holocaust. They claimed they were just following orders, protecting their families, doing what they had to do to survive. But that didn’t absolve them of the horrors they inflicted, the lives they destroyed. It’s easy to hide behind orders, to convince yourself you have no choice, but deep down, you know better. You always have a choice.”

The soldiers shifted uncomfortably behind the glow of their cigarettes.

I continued in a steady voice, my righteous anger seething, but controlled, “We’re all trapped in this cycle, but it doesn’t have to define us. You say you’re protecting your family—but at what cost? You’re creating a world where their safety is built on the suffering of others. Is that really what you want for them? Is that the legacy you want to leave? Remember this: God will judge you.”

The soldier’s cigarette ember glowed brighter as he took a deep drag, revealing a flicker of doubt in his eyes. He exhaled and said to the other, “Hey man, don’t talk to this guy. He’ll get in your head. We’re just waiting for orders. No matter what he says, he’s going to die. We’re going to execute him Delta Force Style.”

“So, the executioner’s coming?”

“He’s on his way now.” He said to the other loud enough to be heard, “He’s gonna peel this man like a potato. He can make the hardest soldier squeamish while watching his methods. I feel sorry for this guy.”

I wanted to call out and see if Gabor was still alive, but I didn’t want to put his life in danger in case he was. Who knows the cruel methods they had in store for him. I couldn’t believe their attempt to destroy Al-Aqsa Mosque had ended in such a disaster. It was almost as if they were waiting for us.

I began thinking about their mission from start to finish, trying to pinpoint where they had gone wrong. I started from when they had left their fortified compound. They had meticulously planned every detail, but someone must have betrayed them. It was the only explanation for how prepared the enemy had been.

The traitor had given away their position. The ambush, the overwhelming force, the brutal efficiency of their enemy—it all pointed to an inside job. My mind raced, replaying every moment, every interaction. The realization hit me like a punch to the gut. Maybe they promised the traitor refuge after the invasion, safety for him and his family. I knew very well there was a bounty on my head after I opposed the purge. Had I put the entire mission in jeopardy by volunteering? Where was Gabor?

I couldn't take it anymore. I had to find out what happened with Gabor. I shouted his name.

“Hey, shut your fucking mouth! We'll start torturing you now if you don’t shut up,” one of the guards barked. The glowing cigarette came dangerously close to my face. He flicked his ash on me. Then the cigarette’s glow faded into the darkness, joining the other ember floating in the oppressive gloom.

I couldn’t take it anymore. I had to find out what happened with Gabor. I shouted his name.

I felt a body crawl close to me and begin whispering.

“Gabor escaped during the fight when we engaged the Spetsnaz[[20]](#footnote-20) on the Temple Mount.”

“What a relief!”

I began to play back the last time I saw him. That was one hell of a firefight. We had slowly and methodically made our way to the Temple Mount. Gabor confidently took point, a courage and fire in him I’d never seen before. It was as if he was a new man. I think he’d decided that he would make up for the sins of his past by doing the right things in the present. The soldier taking point was always at the greatest risk and very rarely survived more than seven seconds after the firefight had started.

The scene replayed vividly. We moved under the cover of darkness, our shadows blending into the ancient stones of the city. Gabor led the way, each step calculated. Every nerve was on edge as we advanced toward our objective.

The enemy had chosen their ambush site well. They positioned themselves where the pathway narrowed, limiting our movement and visibility. We were funnelled into a choke point, making us easy targets. Ambushers hid behind stone walls and in nearby structures, remaining unseen until the last moment. They had also set traps, placing tripwires connected to small explosive charges at the entrance and exit of the pathway to slow us down and create panic.

As we approached the Temple Mount, the ambush hit us with full force. A hidden lookout must have signalled the ambushers as we entered the narrow pathway. Gabor somehow managed to overstep the tripwires that were waiting for us. The soldier behind him exploded in a ball of smoke; his torso landed beside me.

The Spetsnaz were waiting, their precision and coordination deadly. The air filled with the deafening roar of gunfire and the sharp crack of bullets hitting stone. Our way of escape was cut off by the enemy to our rear. I could hear them shouting orders in American English. These were crack soldiers, Delta Force operatives supported by advanced gear, including HKRs that had somehow made their way into the city after their initial assault had failed.

Gabor was the first to return fire with blazing rifle. He fought like a man possessed, his actions almost superhuman. I saw him take out several enemies. But the onslaught was overwhelming and then, he vanished.

Explosions shook the ground, and I lost sight of him. We were scattered, trying to find cover, trying to survive. The rest of us were pinned down, unable to organize a counterattack. The ambushers maintained suppressive fire from multiple angles, using automatic weapons and grenades to create maximum chaos. Many of us were scattered and isolated. Others broke into homes to return fire as much as they could, but to no avail. We were completely surrounded.

Eventually, the deafening roar of enemy fire became silent. All I could hear was the stillness of night. I scanned the environment with my NVGs. Almost half of the soldiers I came with were KIA.[[21]](#footnote-21) The enemy opened up communications with a megaphone, ordering us to surrender or face complete annihilation. Captain Cohen, the officer leading the assault, was ready to fight to the death. He was ready to take a potshot in the direction of the megaphone, but I stopped him. Something inside of me compelled me to convince him to choose a different path.

“Captain, let’s surrender. I think we’ll be all right. We’re going to survive this. Fighting to the death would only waste the lives of these young men. We’re going to win. We’re going to destroy this mosque. Captain, tell your men to stand down.”

“You know, they don’t take prisoners. We’ve been ordered not to surrender. Their military brass considers any IDF soldier alive a threat to the stability of their new world order after this mess ends.”

The voice with a Russian accent behind the megaphone shouted, “You have five minutes to make a decision or we begin opening fire.”

I stood up with my hands in the air. I could hear Captain Cohen ordering me to stand down, but sometimes you have to go on your gut and intuition, not by your own understanding.

“This is former president Joshua Levi. If I surrender, will you allow these men to live?”

All I could think about was finding the man who had betrayed us. A moment of silence passed. The wall providing me cover was partially destroyed and I slowly walked through the gap like a mouse exiting its hole. One by one, the other soldiers emerged from their hiding places with their hands up. Our hands were quickly zip-tied.

But before they could cover my head, I saw the face of the traitor who had hidden while the fighting was taking place. He wasn’t disarmed and joined the ranks of the Delta Force and Spetsnaz operators surrounding us. It suddenly hit me. I thought back to the faces in the unit, searching for any sign of deceit. There had been one soldier, always quiet, always in the background. I remembered catching him on a private call right before they embarked on their mission, a call that had raised my suspicion. Now, it seemed all too clear.

“You’re going to die, you traitor!” I shouted.

The traitor glanced at me. I saw for a moment pure evil in those eyes. My goggles were removed and a black cover was placed over my head. Everything went black.

As we were led away, the harsh reality of our capture began to settle in. The sting of betrayal cut deep, fresh and raw.

Had overconfidence clouded my judgment? Had I put too much faith in the belief that God would lead us to an easy victory, that our mission to destroy the mosque was righteous and destined for success? I wondered. Why was God allowing this to happen? Had my faith morphed into spiritual arrogance, blinding me to the reality before us?

After all these years of trusting Him, could He now be betraying me? Why was He handing me over to those who would gloat over my defeat, mock my faith? Was this some kind of divine punishment? Or was it a test? Why was He forsaking me?

Even in that moment of despair, I could still feel God’s presence—quiet, distant, but there. I still had my strength, my resolve. My zeal for Him hadn’t been extinguished, though I wrestled with Him in my soul. I felt like a failure, that much was true, and I struggled to find a reason to hold on to my faith. But He was still my guiding light, however faint, as if I needed stronger eyes of faith to see it.

The darkness of the hood over my head mirrored the bleakness in my heart. My mind wandered, brooding over the possible fates that awaited us. And yet, somewhere deep within, a still, small voice whispered from the depths of my soul: *You will make it out alive.* I clung to that sliver of hope, believing that our salvation was near, that despite everything, we were somehow growing closer to our goal.

One hour felt like days as we were marched through the labyrinth. The air grew colder and damper. Finally, the hoods were yanked off and we found ourselves on the cold, barren floor of the Marwani Prayer Hall under Al-Aqsa Mosque.

I lay on the cold, hard concrete beside Captain Cohen. “If Gabor is still out there, there’s hope,” I whispered. I was almost trying to use telepathy to communicate with Captain Cohen, hoping that our words wouldn't carry to our captors.

“Gabor is a great soldier. He hasn’t given up the fight. I can guarantee that right now he’s scoping the area, planning our escape,” Captain Cohen replied in a firm and reassuring tone.

“You have family, Captain? A wife and kids?” I asked, trying to distract my mind from our dire situation. Warily, I watched the cigarette embers glowing in the dark.

“No. I gave my life to the IDF. These soldiers are my children, and my wife is the IDF. You?”

“I have a wife, but I never found time to have children. I was always at war, in prison, or being threatened with prison. Financially, I was always struggling,” I paused and looked at the embers again. I could hear the guards’ voices discussing the proper way to operate an HKR. The realization struck me like a bolt of lightning —one of them could be watching us right now.

“Hey Captain? Is there an HKR down here?”

“Yes, in the corner. I saw it when they lit their cigarettes.”

How was Gabor going to rescue us now? The situation seemed hopeless. Those machines were merciless in close-quarters combat, programmed with ruthless precision. The robot, standing ominously in the dimly-lit corner, had an inbuilt shotgun. Its sensors scanned the room methodically, ready to unleash deadly force at a moment’s notice. My breath hitched, and I felt cold sweat trickle down my back as the weight of our predicament intensified.

“Hmm … struggling, huh? I think I remember reading some of your biography. Horrible, the things you had to go through.”

“If you want to be a good leader, one must go through the fire of tribulation,” I replied, my mind half-focused on our conversation, the other half on our captors’ increasingly lively chatter.

My thoughts raced. What were they going to do with us? If they were going to kill us, why not just do it already? What was the point of keeping us locked down here? I was ready to patronize our captors when a door opened upstairs and shut with a loud thud. A beam of light cut through the darkness as a flashlight searched for us.

A Russian voice, broken and heavily accented, began giving directions to the Delta force soldiers. Their conversation ended as abruptly as it began. Two soldiers picked me up, one holding my feet, the other my arms. They dragged me into a room adjacent to the prayer hall.

A generator began to hum. For once, I could momentarily drown out my thoughts with the noise. I found myself in a makeshift interrogation chamber. A long table stretched across the center of the room, flanked by harsh fluorescent lights that made me squint against the sudden brightness.

At the far end, a figure sat, shrouded in shadow. Flanked by two Russian soldiers standing at attention, their faces expressionless, the scene was ominous. On the ground, I noticed dried blood, its metallic scent mingling with the harsh smell of disinfectant. A loose tooth lay in the corner.

“Welcome, Joshua,” the figure spoke, his voice cold and detached. “I’ve been expecting you.”

The figure stepped into the light, revealing a face I had hoped never to see again. It was Colonel Ivanov, a notorious Spetsnaz officer known for his ruthlessness. He had haunted my nightmares ever since our paths crossed during my defense of Alaska. The sight of him now sent a chill down my spine, intensifying the already palpable fear in the room.

“Vell, Joshua,” Ivanov continued, his lips curling into a cruel smile, “I hope you’re ready. Executioner is coming. Vhen they told me coalition vas launching operation to capture you, I jumped at it first chance I got. Premier Oman wants to speak with you, but that isn’t going to happen after I’m done with you. You see, on ridge 104, many brave and valiant Spetsnaz died after being surrounded and slaughtered by you guys. They even surrendered, but you mercilessly mowed them down.”

“That wasn’t …”

“Shut up!" Ivanov slammed the table, his voice booming. “Now you listen.” His eyes bore into mine, a mixture of hatred and twisted respect. “Now is time for my vengeance, but I also respect you as an enemy.”

He pulled out a bottle of vodka and two shot glasses from his bag, roughly setting them on the table. He began pouring both of us a shot. He held his glass up high.

I shrugged my shoulders. “My hands are zip tied. How am I going to drink?”

“Yes, of course.” Ivanov looked at one of the soldiers standing at attention closest to me. The soldier picked up the shot glass and brought it to my lips. The hard Russian vodka poured down my throat, burning in my stomach. I coughed.

“That’s some good shit,” I said between coughs, hoping my kindness might delay the inevitable. The alcohol rushed to my head, making me dizzy. I hadn’t eaten since the invasion started. Hunger pangs suddenly crept in.

Ivanov’s smile widened as he downed his shot in one gulp. “You see, Joshua, ve are not so different, you and I. Both fighters, both survivors. But today, your survival ends. Tell me, how does it feel to know your end is near?”

I met his gaze; I was not intimidated. “You think you know me, Ivanov, but you have no idea what I've been through, what I’ve sacrificed. Today is not my end. God is with me. He will deliver me.”

He leaned back, studying me with curiosity and disdain. “Maybe. Maybe God has sent me here as an agent of His wrath to punish you. How do you know God is for you; maybe He is for me. I follow the teachings of the Orthodox Church. You Jews do not know Jesus. You are heretics. You have killed many good Orthodox Christians. How can you say God is with you? Does God kill Orthodox Christians? I do not know everything about matters of religion or vhy God allows this man to live or that one to die. But I know this: you are a dead man walking. And I vill enjoy every moment of your suffering.”

The room seemed to close in around me. Ivanov's face was the most hardened I’d ever seen, lined with several scars that spoke of countless battles. I was surprised he had survived Alaska and the brutality of the conflict there. He and his soldiers had instilled fear on the Alaskan front with their hit-and-run tactics on our supply lines. They would attack our convoys and then vanish into thin air. We could never figure out how they avoided detection by our drones, night vision, and thermal equipment. Our robots would track them endlessly, only to end up with nothing.

One day, one of their soldiers used a mobile phone by mistake. We tracked their location, Ridge 104. A large contingent. A brazen captain, acting against my orders to capture and extract information, slaughtered them like pigs. We thought Ivanov was with that contingent.

But here he was, a ghost of a past never truly buried. He was here for revenge. But there was a grudging respect in his eyes.

“I thought you died at Ridge 104.” I was indifferent.

He smiled, a cold, calculating smile that didn’t reach his eyes. “You thought wrong, Joshua. I survived, and I've been waiting for this moment ever since.”

The air in the room grew thicker. Ivanov stepped closer, his eyes never leaving mine. “Do you know what it's like to lose everything, Joshua? To see your comrades fall? To be hunted like an animal? You made a mistake at Ridge 104, and now you’re going to pay for it.”

I swallowed hard, my mind racing. There had to be a way out of this, some way to turn the tables. But for now, I was at Ivanov’s mercy, and I knew he wouldn’t show any.

“Ivanov,” I said again, trying to buy time, “we both know what war does to people. It makes monsters of us all. But this ... this doesn’t have to end in more bloodshed.”

His smile widened, and he shook his head. “Oh, but it does, Joshua. It does. Because this isn’t just about revenge. This is about justice. For my men, for all the lives you’ve taken. And I will see it done.”

I should have never let that captain take charge of that mission. He was supposed to have killed ever single Russian, but he ineptitude let some escape. Ivanov was right about one thing: there was no escaping the consequences of my actions. But, as long as I was still breathing, there was a chance, however slim, to make things right.

“Let’s get this over with, then,” I said, squaring my shoulders. “I’m not afraid of you, Ivanov.”

He let out a harsh, grating laugh. “Oh, Joshua, you should be. You should be very afraid. Drink, Joshua,” he said, pouring another shot. “Let us toast to old enemies and new beginnings. For you, it vill be the end. Your new enemy, the executioner, is almost here.”

The soldier once again poured the shot down my throat. I became increasingly high, laughing out loud for no apparent reason. My tolerance for alcohol was incredibly low.

“So, send the executioner, I’m tired of waiting. Get on with it,” I demanded, my voice slurring slightly.

“Don’t vorry, Joshua, he’ll be here any moment now,” Ivanov replied, a smirk playing on his lips.

The door swung open. A towering man with hands as thick as tree branches entered, carrying a suitcase. His face was a mask of seriousness, and he moved with absolute precision, wasting no time in beginning his grim work. He placed the suitcase on the table. My buzz suddenly disappeared. I became very alert, and could hear my heart pounding in my chest.

“So, this is President Levi, who killed millions of us on the Alaskan front,” the executioner said with a thick Russian accent. “This is going to be my greatest masterpiece.”

He opened the suitcase. Inside, neatly arranged, were a variety of instruments—knives of different sizes, syringes filled with unknown liquids, a roll of surgical tools, and a small vial containing a dark, ominous substance. There were also lengths of wire and a small, portable blowtorch. Each item was meticulously organized, shining under the harsh overhead light.

The executioner selected a scalpel, holding it up to the light to inspect its edge. “You know, President Levi, I’ve heard a lot about you. They say you’re a man of great power and influence. But here, in this room, you’re just another canvas for my work.”

He leaned in close, his eyes boring into mine. “Dis vill be a lesson for those who think they can escape justice. The pain you inflicted on others vill now be returned to you tenfold.”

My pulse quickened as he began his methodical preparation with calculated and deliberate movements. Each second felt like an eternity.

The executioner looked back at the soldier who had been pouring the shots. “Make sure he stays conscious. I vant him to feel everything.”

The soldier nodded, stepping forward with a syringe, ready to ensure that my awareness remained sharp, my suffering uninterrupted.

As the executioner turned back to his suitcase, I could see the anticipation in his eyes. He was an artist about to create his magnum opus, and I was his unwilling canvas.

Ivanov picked up his chair and moved away from the table in order to give the executioner more space. He had a grim, almost jovial expression on his face, knowing full well the fate that have been decreed to me.

“I love a man who works with so much passion. He is a man after my own heart,” said Ivanov jubilantly.

The soldiers standing at attention also had broad smiles across their faces.

“Do you have any requests, Ivanov? Which instrument of torture do you prefer that I start with? I mean, you are the host of this party,” the executioner asked in a tone dripping with mock politeness.

Ivanov began browsing the contents of the suitcase like a child inspecting candy in a shop. He pointed at certain tools, inquiring about their purposes. “What does this one do?” he asked, his fingers lingering over a wicked-looking blade.

The executioner smirked. “Ah, that’s a favorite. Perfect for slow, precise cuts. It’s all about the art of making the pain last.”

“And this?” Ivanov pointed at a syringe filled with a strange, glowing liquid.

“That, my friend, is a special blend. It heightens the nerves, making every touch feel like fire.”

Ivanov nodded, his smile widening. “Excellent. Let’s start with these, then.”

The executioner’s eyes gleamed with sadistic delight as he began his work, selecting the tools with a connoisseur’s care. The executioner took the syringe and with the help of the other two soldiers standing there found a vein of mine and injected the lethal looking substance into my body. After about five minutes my skin became very sensitive. The executioner, in order to test this, slapped my arm as hard as he could. The pain was double than what it normally would be.

I shouted, “You Russian pig!” The impact of his hand left a sweltering red mark which continued to burn long after he removed his hand.

“Oh, that’s excellent,” Ivanov said, like a giddy schoolboy.

“Now we begin with this one,” as the executioner picked up the wicked-looking blade. He pressed the cold, hard steel against my skin, not cutting, but just teasing me. Its cold, unyielding feel was extra sensitive to the touch.

“You’re going to love this, Levi. The pain is going to be exquisite.”

He moved into position, ready to cut. His blade was about to press in and open my skin when suddenly the building above us shook, causing dusty debris and small stones to fall upon our heads.

The Russians covered their heads. “What the fuck was that?” Ivanov said, visibly shaken.

The walkie-talkie on Ivanov’s belt crackled to life. He began speaking in Russian, his tone urgent. A look of shock painted itself across his face.

“Interesting, very interesting, hold your ground, make sure the enemy doesn’t reach the Dome of the Rock,” he said in Russian.

“We have a very interesting new development,” Ivanov translated in a voice edged with disbelief. “It seems as if around a thousand Orthodox Jews, mixed with the remnants of the remaining IDF in the city, have launched an all-out assault on the Dome of the Rock. I thought the Orthodox Jews didn’t believe in serving in the military. Comes to show you that religion is just a man’s convenience, don’t you think, Levi?”

His words hung in the air; the irony of the situation evident. The once composed executioner seemed unsettled; the blade in his hand trembling slightly.

“It seems I’m wanted upstairs to bolster our defense,” said Ivanov. Unfortunately, I must be absent for your greatest masterpiece, executioner. Maybe, just maybe, God is with you, Joshua. He’s delivered you from my hands, but He still hasn’t delivered you from the executioner’s hands. Let’s see Levi, let’s see. I must bid you adieu. Till next time if you survive this,” as he was walking away, he began demanding VTOLs[[22]](#footnote-22) for extraction in Russian.

The building continued to shake and rumble. I looked at the executioner looking for any break in his resolve.

“You know they’re coming. If you run you might be able to survive. Why not leave and live to see another day, to perform another work of art?”

“This will be my magnum opus. If I die today performing my greatest work of art, I’ll die a very happy man. This is my dedication, my legacy. Now come, President Levi, let’s dance.”

He twirled the blade in his hand like a conductor's baton.

“Dance, I said, Levi. Dance!” The blade came dangerously close to my skin, making the hair on my arms stand on end as my body tensed in anticipation of his initial cut. I squirmed in my chair. A thick rope held me firmly in place, my hands and feet still zip-tied. The more I struggled, the more he seemed to relish it.

“Yes, that’s better, Levi. I like the way you dance.” He slowly rested the blade across my arm. My skin split, and blood poured to the ground. I let out a deafening shout. Every nerve in my arm was on fire. I could see the veins inside my arm mixed within the flesh. I felt as if I was going to faint at the site of my own blood. He suddenly jammed the scapula right into my hand. I bit my lip till blood came, trying as hard as I could to deny him the pleasure of hearing me shout.

“Oh, you don’t want to dance anymore, Levi? Let’s take something then. What shall it be? A toe, a finger—what will bring you to the floor once again, my darling?”

“How about your mom? That might do.”

“That won’t do, Levi. I know you’re above such petty insults. Say anything about my mom, and I’ll turn you into a eunuch.” He looked down at my groin with nefarious intent. Despite everything, I still had hope of surviving this, so I bit my tongue, desperately wanting to keep my testicles intact.

“A finger it is, you rascal. And then, maybe I’ll just cut out a testicle anyway.”

He dragged me by the chair to a nearby table and forcibly laid my hand upon it, slamming it against the surface. The impact sent a jolt of pain up my arm.

“You know, Levi,” he began, almost conversationally, as he pressed the blade against my skin, “I wasn’t always this refined in my methods. Back in the day, when I was just starting out with the Bratva, things were different. Cruder. Messier.”

He glanced at me, a twisted smile on his lips. “We didn't have the luxury of taking our time. When you needed to send a message, you had to be quick and efficient. I remember my first job … a man who killed patriotic Russians, like you. We caught him, beat him senseless, and then ... we took his fingers out one by one.”

He chuckled, a cold, mirthless sound. “He screamed, of course. They always scream. But there’s something poetic about the act, don’t you think? A finger for every betrayal, a constant reminder of the price of disloyalty.”

The blade pressed harder against my skin, a thin line of blood appearing where the edge bit into my flesh. “Of course, over time, I learned to appreciate the art of it. The slow, methodical nature of the work. It’s not just about the pain—it’s about the anticipation, the fear. Watching as they realize what’s coming, seeing the terror in their eyes.”

He leaned in closer, his breath hot against my ear, the smell of nicotine and malice. “That’s what makes it truly satisfying. The look on their faces, the way they squirm. Just like you’re doing now, Levi. It’s beautiful, really.”

He lifted the blade slightly, drawing it along the length of my finger with sickening precision. Blood poured down, pooling on the table. I cried and laughed at the same time, a mix of hysteria and defiance. The executioner’s expression shifted to one of confusion.

“Are you enjoying this, Levi?”

"His joy strengthens me. You won’t find pleasure in my pain. Your cuts are like fertilizer for my soul. Each cut causes it to grow and flourish.”

“Is that so, Levi? Then I’m like a farmer, and I must till your entire body, providing so much fertilizer for your soul that it poisons it. Hah! Ah, the Bratva taught me well. But I’ve surpassed even their expectations. Now, let’s see if this Bratva can be a gardener.”

He dragged the blade down my forearm, blood rushing out as my vision blurred, but I locked eyes with him, refusing to break.

“You think you're strong, Levi? I’ll break you piece by piece.”

He grabbed my hand and pulled it taut, making each cut deliberate and excruciating. The smell of blood mixed with the musty air of the dim room, and I could hear the distant hum of traffic outside.

The executioner’s face was a mask of sadistic glee; his eyes gleamed with a cold, unfeeling light. He took his time, savoring each moment, each cry of pain that escaped my lips. But, deep down, I clung to a shred of hope. If I could endure this, if I could outlast his cruelty, maybe I could survive.

He drew another line of blood across my chest, the pain searing through my body. “Yes, scream for me, Levi,” he whispered, his voice a dark caress. “Just like old times.”

The room felt like it was closing in, the walls suffocating. But amidst the agony, I found strength, a defiant spark that refused to be extinguished. The executioner was relentless, but so was my will to live.

“Let’s see how much fertilizer you can take before you wilt,” he sneered, lifting the blade once more. And as he brought it down, I braced myself, knowing that every moment I survived was a victory, no matter how small.

Suddenly, the power to the generator went out, plunging the room into darkness. I yanked my hand away and clasped my fist with my other hand, checking in disbelief that my finger was still there.

“I’m in here!” I shouted, my voice echoing off the damp, stone walls. The executioner punched me in the face with brutal force, sending a wave of pain through my skull. I spat out blood and saliva. He stepped away, his body shifting towards the door in the darkness, poised like a predator sensing its prey. He knew someone was about to enter and was waiting.

The door flew open with a deafening crash. The executioner moved with terrifying speed, grabbing the first soldier and ramming the scapula through their chin, the bone piercing up into their skull with a sickening crunch. Blood sprayed across the room as the soldier's body went limp.

The second soldier, eyes wide with shock, began firing rounds into the darkness with their Beretta. The muzzle flashes briefly illuminated the room, casting eerie, flickering shadows. I could see the soldier firing was Gabor. I tipped over my chair and fell to the ground, my heart pounding as I prayed to avoid the incoming ricocheting rounds. The bullets whizzed past, clinking off the walls and floor in a deadly symphony.

The executioner, unfazed by the intrusion, lunged at Gabor. He pushed the handgun away just as another round fired off. The shot went wide. He delivered a powerful punch to Gabor’s jaw. The handgun slipped from Gabor’s grip, clattering to the ground and skidding into the darkness. Gabor recovered from the initial shock and quickly moved in close to the executioner, hitting him in the face followed by another punch to the stomach. The two grappled with each other, exchanging blows as they fell to the ground, their bodies thrashing in a deadly struggle.

I shuffled on the ground like a worm, searching desperately for the handgun. The two men were now exchanging blows.

“Help me, Levi!” Gabor’s voice was strained, filled with both anger and desperation.

My hands searched frantically in the darkness, brushing against cold, hard surfaces until, finally, I felt the cold steel of the Beretta handle. I grasped the gun, pulling it towards me. The struggle between Gabor and the executioner intensified, their movements becoming more frantic and violent.

The room seemed to close in around us, the air thick with the stench of sweat, blood, and fear. I fumbled with the gun, with slippery fingers, as I tried to position it for a shot. Lying on the ground, I aimed the gun into the darkness where I thought the door might be. I aimed as high as I could. I squeezed the trigger, and the single shot illuminated the room in a brief, blinding flash. In that instant, I saw the executioner on top of Gabor, with a knife inching closer to Gabor’s chest.

I adjusted my aim into the darkness where I had seen the executioner. My hands trembled as I continually pulled the trigger, letting off a flurry of bullets until the magazine was empty. The gun's recoil jolted through me with each shot, but I kept pulling the trigger, even after the last round had been fired.

The room fell into a heavy silence, broken only by the sound of two sets of labored breathing in the darkness. My heart raced. I strained to see through the gloom, my eyes adjusting slowly to the lack of light.

“Gabor?” I called out, my voice shaky.

A groan responded, followed by a cough. “Levi ... I’m ... still here,” Gabor’s voice weak but alive. Music to my ears. “You hit Goliath in the head.”

I could hear Gabor struggling under the weight of the executioner’s body. With a grunt, he pushed the man off onto the ground. The executioner’s breaths were shallow and labored. The life ebbed away and he breathed his last.

Gabor sat up; the faint outline of his body visible in the darkness. “*Oy vey*,” he muttered under his breath, catching it for a moment. “Let’s get out of here. They’re going to blow the Dome of the Rock any moment now.”

He turned on a small flashlight and began cutting away my restraints with the bloody knife that had been used to fight the executioner. Once I was free, we hurried to the stairs to the entrance of the mosque, the narrow passageway feeling like it was closing in on us. Bodies of Spetsnaz, American Delta Force, and jihadists littered the hallway; in the darkness, it was a challenge to keep from stumbling over their gear.

“Quick,” Gabor whispered, in a tense voice. “There could be more of them.”

We moved cautiously. I continually scanned the environment with the Beretta in my hand. Gabor led the way, his flashlight cutting through the darkness, illuminating our path.

We reached the entrance. VTOLs hovered overhead; their heavy machine guns spat fire into the surrounding buildings. The night was torn apart by the relentless gunfire, a cacophony of destruction echoing through the city. A rocket streaked up in retaliation, a fiery arc before it struck one of the VTOLs. The craft shuddered, lost control, and spiraled into a nearby building, erupting in a massive fireball that lit up the night.

Amidst the chaos, Gabor and I ducked low, moving swiftly but cautiously across the open courtyard. The roar of the VTOL engines and the staccato of gunfire filled the air. Smoke and dust swirled around us, amid the acrid scent of burning fuel and charred debris. We could feel the heat from the explosions, the ground trembling beneath our feet.

The VTOLs, now retreating, still fired sporadically, gunners hanging from the open doors, spraying bullets to cover their escape. The night sky was a kaleidoscope of muzzle flashes and tracer rounds, a deadly light show.

We sprinted toward a nearby alleyway for shelter. The narrow alley was filled with the remnants of the day’s bustling activity—overturned market stalls, discarded goods, and debris from the conflict. We navigated the obstacles as quickly as we could, in short, ragged gasps.

As we emerged from the alley, the distant sounds of explosions and gunfire grew fainter, and were replaced by the silence of the deserted streets. The city, once alive with the sounds of everyday life, was now a warzone. The streets were empty, the buildings dark and foreboding.

“Hold on a minute,” Gabor said, leaning against a wall. “Let’s catch our breath. We should be safe here, *b’ezrat Hashem*.”

Just as we thought we had a moment to catch our breath, a loud explosion erupted behind us. We turned to see a massive fireball rising into the night sky. It was the Dome of the Rock engulfed in flames. The IDF and Orthodox Jews had set explosives around the mosque, timing the detonation for their safe withdrawal. The historic site crumbled amidst the inferno as the sound of the blast reverberated through the city.

Just as planned, news regarding the destruction of the Dome of the Rock spread like wildfire around the city. Angered Muslims quickly rallied around Hamas, organizing an assault on Jewish settlements. The IDF had anticipated this response and was prepared. Snipers strategically positioned throughout the city and fortified machine gun nests were ready to counter the attack. As the assaulting Muslims advanced, they were met with a devastatingly effective defense. The snipers picked off key targets with precision, while the machine gun nests unleashed a relentless barrage, decimating the attacking forces. The IDF’s plan had worked. The city descended into somewhat peaceful calm before the storm as coalition forces continued their steady progress and advance throughout Israel.

A giant mushroom cloud haunted the horizon as the gentle hue of dawn broke through the darkness. That deadly sight cast a pall over the victory gained by destroying the Dome of the Rock. The dark, billowing cloud against the rising sun’s soft light painted a surreal and foreboding scene.

“Tel Aviv is gone, Gabor,” I said, my heart heavy with sorrow.

Gabor’s voice was thick with emotion. “We must fight for the living, not mourn the dead. *Zichronam livracha* ... We’ve got to make it back to your wife and make sure she’s safe.”

“You’re from Tel Aviv?” I asked, sensing the depth of his pain.

Gabor quietly nodded, his eyes glistening. The tears he held back were a testament to his immense strength and the personal agony he was enduring. The sight of the mushroom cloud, the symbol of Tel Aviv's destruction, was almost too much for him to bear.

My own heart ached with loss. The events of the day had left scars that would never fully heal. I had blood on my hands now, having shot the executioner in a desperate bid for survival. Up until that point, I had led American soldiers into battle as a figurehead, a symbol to inspire courage and resolve. I had never truly engaged in the brutal, up-close reality of combat. That day was different. I had killed a man—someone’s father, someone’s husband—because of my actions.

“They’re all gone, all of them,” Gabor’s voice broke, his strength giving way to overwhelming grief. “My entire family is dead. I can’t go on anymore. There’s no more point in fighting. Everything ... it’s all been lost. I want to die. I want to join them in the grave.”

“It’s not true. Dipti is still alive, don’t you remember? You just said we have to ensure her safety.”

“There’s no point,” he continued helplessly. “We’re all going to die like my family... gone in an instant, like the millions of Jews before. My mother, she loved to sit in the early morning, drinking tea with my father while he read the newspaper. My sister, she was getting married soon ... her life was set. They were always so worried about me, always calling, making sure I was sober. They wanted me to be the best soldier I could be, to make our family proud. They were Jews who loved Hashem, who believed He would protect us. But look at us now ... it’s all lies.”

Gabor’s voice trembled with anger and sorrow. “Everything they believed in, everything they lived for—all gone in an instant. What’s the point of believing in anything if it can all be taken away so easily?”

His body shook with silent sobs. The stoic front he had held up until now crumbled, revealing the real Gabor—completely broken, his strength shattered.

“Gabor,” I said softly, placing my blood-stained hand on his shoulder. “I know you’re in pain. I know it feels like there’s no hope. But we have to keep going. For Dipti, for ourselves. We can’t give up now. I cried so many nights in prison, not knowing when or how I’d get bail, or when I was overseas in Iraq, if I’d ever go home. But Hashem delivered me every time from all these things. Your family might still be alive; don’t lose hope. Even if they are gone, they’re in a better place now.”

Gabor looked at me, eyes filled with both despair and a glimmer of hope. “I don’t know if I have the strength,” he whispered. “I don’t know if I can keep fighting.”

“We’ll do it together,” I replied. “We’ll find a way. One step at a time. We can’t let their deaths be in vain. Let’s find Dipti. She must be waiting for us at the HQ.”

I helped Gabor up, patting him on the shoulder as he raised his head again. We followed the narrow streets back to the makeshift headquarters. It was faintly dark as dawn rose slowly with its warm, comforting rays. The authorities were scrambling to find survivors beneath the many destroyed stone buildings. Debris and dead bodies littered the streets, and the air was thick with dust and smoke. The hunched-over remains of HKRs lined the narrow streets, their internal circuit boards fried from the blasts of EMP rifles. Several VTOLs found themselves stuck in buildings after crashing during their landing. The once vibrant city was now a landscape of ruin and devastation. Cries for help echoed from the rubble, mingling with the shouts of rescue workers and the distant wail of sirens.

As we walked, Gabor’s steps were heavy and slow with the weight of his grief. My own legs felt like lead, the emotional toll of the night’s events sapping my strength. We moved past shattered storefronts and crumbling façades, the remnants of once bustling businesses and homes.

“We need to get you to a doctor, Levi. You’ve lost a lot of blood.”

I looked at Gabor’s face. It was swollen, his eyes bloodshot and unfocused. The executioner had almost pulverized him into a pulp of the man he used to be. His breath came in ragged gasps. I tried to focus, but my vision became blurry and my head light. The wicked world spun around me, and I felt myself slipping away into the

# Chapter 12 The Grand Masquerade

On the second day of the invasion of Israel, the Omans decided to throw a party in celebration of the defeat of Israel. The party started in the afternoon and continued late into the night. The grand ballroom of the White House had been transformed into a scene of opulence. The crystal chandeliers cast a resplendent glow over the room. Each table was adorned with silken linens, gold-plated cutlery, and centerpiece arrangements of rare, exotic flowers flown in from the most remote corners of the world, just for the occasion. The scent of perfumes, so expensive that their price tags alone could fund a small nation, and the enticing aroma of gourmet dishes prepared by the world’s top chefs wafted through the room.

Barak and Michael Oman stood at the entrance, greeting each world leader as they arrived. Barak was dressed in a custom-tailored tuxedo with a sheen that suggested it had been woven from the silk of golden spiders, while Michael wore a sleek, tailored suit that sparkled with every movement, its intricate beadwork catching the light in a dazzling display. They smiled and exchanged pleasantries with a stately demeanor, belying the chaos erupting overseas.

Inside, the party was in full swing. A band was playing lively jazz music, and waitstaff circulated with trays of champagne and canapés. In one corner, a magician performed sleight-of-hand tricks, drawing gasps from a small crowd of sycophants. In another, a group of performers in elaborate, barely-there costumes danced and twirled, their movements hypnotic and entrancing.

**The Moment of Truth**

The entire party stopped when the Duchess of Jerusalem, Kamala Harris, made her grand entrance. She arrived in a manner reminiscent of Netflix’s *Queen Cleopatra*, stretched out on an ornate palanquin hoisted by bare-bodied white slaves. These slaves wore black ties around their necks and fitting, black leather pants that accentuated their firm buttocks. The display was nothing short of regal, exuding an air of pomp and splendor as befitting a Duchess.

The Duchess was much darker now than she had been when she lost the presidency to Donald Trump. She had been using skin-darkening creams for many years and had perfected her use of the black accent. Her old vanilla white person way of speaking had completely vanished. She now sounded like she was from the hood when she spoke, an affectation as comical as it was inappropriate.

Kamala herself was a vision of imperial splendor. Draped in a gown of shimmering gold lamé that clung to her form like a second skin, she wore an elaborate headdress adorned with jewels that sparkled under the chandeliers. As she was carried into the room, all eyes were drawn to her.

The slaves, their bodies glistening with argan oil, moved with disciplined precision, and stoic expressions. With their chiseled physiques in nothing but leather thongs, they exuded male sexuality at its height. As they brought the palanquin to a halt in the center of the ballroom, they lowered it so Kamala could gracefully descend in slow and deliberate movements, each step a performance in itself.

Once she had descended, her entourage of white male sex slaves burst into a Madonnaesque dance routine with Kamala at the center. “Material Girl” began to loudly play from hidden speakers, and the surreal spectacle unfolded. One slave offered flowers, which she threw to the ground and walked over. Another slave got on the ground so she could walk on him rather than deign to touch the floor herself. One slave grabbed her hand while another did the same, engaging in a playful tug of war. The Duchess wore a wide, exaggerated grin, overacting like a Bollywood actress. Eventually, one slave let go, and she twirled into the arms of the other, bending over backward, her head arched toward the ground with the slave’s hand as support.

Kamala’s husband was dressed as Zorro. He wore a black, wide-brimmed hat that cast a shadow over his face, its edges adorned with gaudy, sparkling sequins. His mask, meant to be dashing, was more of a cheap, oversized piece of fabric that barely clung to his sweaty face. The black cape was made of shiny, synthetic material that rustled with every movement, its hem tattered and uneven.

His shirt, once a crisp, white blouse, was now stained and stretched over his bulging midsection. The ruffled collar and cuffs, meant to convey elegance, were frayed and limp. The black pants, too tight and ill-fitting, emphasized his considerable girth rather than the lean agility of Zorro. A belt with an oversized, rhinestone-encrusted buckle strained to hold everything together, and his boots, which were supposed to be sleek and polished, were scuffed and mismatched.

Kamala’s husband, who was only a hidden spectator in the crowd, was visibly aroused and caressed his genitals at the sight of so many men handling his wife. He wanted to join in and dance but restrained himself. Grossly overweight and dripping with sweat, he feared his presence might detract from the grand spectacle. A hint of jealousy crossed his face, but he quickly wiped it off, remembering he was a slave now and had no right to protest his wife’s dalliances.

Midway through the song, Madonna herself appeared, joining the Duchess. Madonna looked otherworldly; years of Botox and plastic surgery had completely disfigured her face, making her look more like a ghoul than a pop icon. She floated into the dance routine like Baron Harkonnen, with the white sex slaves dancing and cavorting with the two elderly cougars for several more minutes. Such a spectacle might make a coon man want to throw up, but in the state of the world as it was, the ghastly was beautiful.

The room went crazy as the guests shouted and whistled, captivated by the spectacle. Barak and Michael approached Kamala, extending their hands in welcome. Kamala smiled with a look of serene confidence. “Thank you, my niggas, for the grand reception,” she said, with a hint of amusement and an exaggerated drawl in her voice that seemed to mock the very people she aimed to please.

The crowd began chanting in unison, “Speech! Speech! Speech! Speech! Speech!”

“Y’all know that Israel is a powerful country. Gaza is a weak country. Gaza has been under the control of Israel for the past ten years. Since Israel is a powerful country and Gaza is a weaker country, that’s wrong. And in this situation, we must recognize the dynamics at play. Power dynamics are important because, as we know, a powerful country like Israel can impose its will on a weaker country like Gaza, and that is not justice. Justice is about balance, and imbalance is injustice.

“Y’all know I was defeated by Donald Trump in a fraudulent election. That’s okay. What can be has been unburdened from what has been. Donald Trump was killed in the reformation, and that’s okay because he did wrong and we had to be unburdened by what has been. He represented everything that was against progress and justice. He was a powerful man who used his power unjustly, much like Israel has done to Gaza. The significance of these parallels is significant.

“We have to do what we have always done, and that's what we will always do. You see, it is time for us to do what we have been doing, and that time is every day. I say this not to say what we can’t do, but to say what we will do. And we will do it because we have the power to do what we need to do when we need to do it. Much like how Gaza needs to reclaim its power, we must reclaim ours in the face of past injustices.

“I believe that the best way to predict the future is to do the work today for tomorrow’s future because that is how we move forward. And moving forward is what we must do. Because if we don't, then we are not moving forward. We must move forward to get to where we need to go. Much like how Israel must move towards peace and equality with Gaza, we must move towards a more just and equitable future.

“And, let us remember, we are doing this because we are who we are. And when we are who we are, we can do what needs to be done to achieve what must be achieved. This is the essence of progress. Progress is about moving forward, not backward. So, let’s continue to do what we do, moving forward, because forward is where we need to be. Just as Gaza needs to move forward from its oppression, we need to move forward from the era of Donald Trump and towards a brighter future and that brighter future is now. All the greater things we planned on achieving were achieved during the reformation.”

She felt slightly tipsy from vodka and almost stumbled over. But she composed herself and continued. She was about to speak again, but Zorro emerged from the bystanders and stood beside her. He obviously had been drinking way too much. He staggered slightly, his face flushed and eyes unfocused.

“I am so tired of this bitch and her alphabet soups and her stupid speeeeeches,” he slurred. “She gives me the same stupid speeches at home and I’ve had it. I want a divorce from you. Because all of this,” he motioned over his entire body, “can have anything it wants.” He shot Kamala a defiant look.

The room fell silent, shocked by the sudden outburst. Barak motioned towards someone in the crowd, and then looked at Zorro, squinting in disbelief.

Several secret service agents began moving in on Zorro. He began running and they gave chase. The party was still in full swing. They collided with the revellers knocking over drinks and food. Zorro had pulled out his plastic sword and was waving it in the air shouting “White husbands have rights too!!!”

Michael put his arm around Kamala and gave her a nice hug while smiling at the crowd. “Don’t worry, we’ll find you a new husband.” The crowd laughed, thinking it was a joke, but Kamala knew deep down inside Michael was serious.

As she wandered toward the direction of where her husband had fled, the vibrant lights and jubilant faces around her blurred into a whirl. Her heart pounded., Each step felt heavier, as if the weight of her choices was dragging her down.

Kamala’s husband, now a fugitive, would most definitely be executed on the White House lawns. The thought of it turned her stomach. She could already picture the scene: her husband's lifeless body lying in the manicured grass, blood staining the pristine landscape, right in front of a crowd that barely understood the gravity of what they were witnessing.

Just yesterday, Kamala had been at the height of her power within the AOC, basking in the admiration and respect she had fought so hard to earn. The night had seemed like a summation of her progress and achievements. But now, it was the greatest disaster of her life. Everything she had built, everything she had believed in, was crumbling around her. Whatever humanity was left in her convoluted mind, from years of living the distorted lies of the socialist American party, cried out as the last vestige of her humanity was being ripped out from her heart. She tried to justify his execution from her own logic, “What I can be must be unburdened by what has been. He is what has been. There is a new future of progress ahead of me.”

Her pace quickened as she neared the area where her husband was being handcuffed. The crowd around him was jeering and booing with anger and contempt. The chant began to rise, a brutal, rhythmic chorus that echoed off the walls of the historic building.

“Kill fat Zorro! Kill fat Zorro! Zorro is an oppressor! Down with the white oppressor!”

Kamala's emotions were in turmoil. She was smiling and crying at the same time, hardly masking the conflict. Should she join in with their chanting or rush to her husband’s aid and prevent his execution? With her power and authority, she might be able to stop it. But what would the crowd think? Fear of the masses paralyzed her. Would Barak and Michael allow her the same esteem and elevation once they found out her intervention?

As she stood there, torn between loyalty to her husband and her fear of losing her standing, the chanting grew louder. The execution squad was preparing for the grim task ahead. Kamala took a deep breath, her mind racing through the possible scenarios open to her. The night was thick with tension, and Kamala knew that, whatever decision she made, it would change her life forever.

Now the AOC was her family, the only family she had ever known. Now they were going to hate her because she knew what she had to do. She had joined herself with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez by taking the neural implant inside her body essentially becoming one flesh with her and her other devoted followers around the world. Their collective presence hummed beneath her skin, their thoughts brushing against hers. What she would do now might cause a rift in that connection causing her entire body to shut down if the AOC disapproved. The pain would be agonizing. Her head might even explode if they detonated her neural implant.

She could hear the festivities continuing, the crowd becoming livelier as Madonna belted out “Like a Virgin,” one of her favorite songs. But her severely inebriated husband had ruined everything. Her life— “our life”—she corrected herself, was about to be destroyed.

She followed the execution squad as they escorted him across the lawn, far away from the building so no one could interfere or watch. She kept cackling, unable to understand why. Why was she laughing? This was the most horrible thing that had ever happened to her, and she was laughing. Even the masked goons assigned to this horrible task occasionally looked at each other, elbowing each other in bewilderment at her outbursts of laughter. Never had they seen such a crazy woman!

While laughing, she kept saying, “Hey, you guys aren’t really going to kill him, are you? Come on, guys, this is just for show. You can’t seriously kill one of the most powerful women’s husbands for just a slight interruption. He does this stupid shit all the time when he gets drunk.”

Her laughter continued, a hysterical, uncontrollable reaction to the horror unfolding before her. The sound of it mingled with the music and the crowd's cheers, creating a surreal backdrop.

Zorro was still drunk. “Kammie quit laughing. They’re going to kill me. Wait, I can’t die. Come on guys, quit joking, let me go. Kammie, do something! I don’t want to die.” He was crying uncontrollably. “I never meant what I said Kammie, I don’t want to divorce you.”

They put him up against a Magnolia tree, one of the most famous on the White House lawn, a tree whose planting was in dedication to Andrew Jackson’s dead spouse. Zorro knew its significance.

“It’s fitting I’m going to die in front of Andrew Jackson’s Magnolia tree,” Dougie muttered, his voice trembling with resignation and bitterness.

“You’re not going to die,” Kamala snapped, her laughter abruptly ceasing as she struggled to regain control. “I want all of you to stand down now. I’ve had it up to here,” she placed her hand parallel flat above her head, emphasizing her frustration, “with this ridiculous joke.”

Her sudden shift to seriousness caught the attention of the goons. One of them got on his radio, hesitating as he relayed her demand. “She’s telling us to stand down. What should I do?”

Static crackled over the radio, followed by a cold, authoritative voice dictating orders. “Put her against the tree and then you know what to do,” it commanded.

The goon closest to Kamala grabbed her roughly, forcing her towards the Magnolia tree. She stumbled back, colliding with her husband. Dougie instinctively caught her, stabilizing them both.

“We’ll die together, Dougie,” she whispered in defiance and despair.

“At least let us see your faces,” Dougie pleaded. “Why do you hide behind those black ski masks?”

The leader of the goons smirked and nodded. “Sure, guys, take off your ski masks.”

One by one, they removed their masks, revealing their faces. They were all white, with hair ranging from blonde to brown.

“Do you like what you see?” the leader taunted. “We’re all white devils. Haven’t you heard that the Devil often masquerades as an angel of white light. Who do you think was behind the Reformation? White people. Who do you think is in charge of Oman? White people. The richest families in this country are white and are still calling the shots. Oman is like a slave to them. We only use DEI to oppress and control the poor whites, the ones who love Levi and Trump.”

Kamala’s mind raced as she processed the revelation. The sinister truth behind the movement she once championed was now laid bare before her. The Magnolia tree’s ancient branches seemed to shudder in the wind in witness to the tragedy ahead.

“Where’s your laughter now, bitch?” The one in charge put his rifle’s muzzle against her forehead.

“You’re not black, bitch—you’re Asian. It makes us cringe to see you pretend to be black, but they think it’s necessary so they can cover all their black and Asian bases. You’re like a big fucking DEI concoction, brewed with bullshit and then thrown on the American public. It’s like the American public is the crowd at a Miley Cyrus concert and are getting gizzed on by Miley.”

Kamala felt the cold metal against her skin, helpless underneath the weight of his words. Her mind raced through her options, calculating her next move with precision. She could feel Dougie’s grip tighten around her waist. Was there nothing she could do?

“But the truth is, you’re disposable. The moment they no longer need you you’re vaporized. The moment they think you’re too smart and begin to question the party line and leadership, you’re dead. You’ve outlived your usefulness, Kamala Harris. The moment you thought that you had the authority to stop his execution is the moment of your downfall. Now brace yourself.”

They locked and loaded their weapons and put them up to their shoulders ready to fire. Silenced bursts of gunfire hit their heads in the full moonlight. Blood and brains splattered on Kamala and Doug. The bodies of the four goons collapsed on the ground before them. After the shock of what just happened dawned in on Kamala, she began her cackle again, that nervous tick when she didn’t know how to respond to a situation pressed upon her. Doug’s mouth gaped in disbelief and shock.

Two gunmen appeared from the darkness.

“Duchess Harris, you and your husband must come with us if you want to live.” The men, whose faces were illuminated by the moon, were black and white, a rare display of racial unity. One of the men carried something black and blocky, whose contents he threw at the duchess as the contents spilled out.

“We, the AOC, have felt your pain and agree with your decision to save your husband. Now, we need you to take those masks and put them on. They’re highly realistic and should fit snugly to your face. Tonight’s party has a popular theme—imitating white people. Many of the guests will be wearing similar masks, so you’ll blend in perfectly.”

Doug took off his Zorro mask and wide brimmed hat. Kamala and Doug put on the masks adjusting them until they fit snugly along the contours of their faces. They looked at each other.

“Hey you’re Margaret Thatcher,” said Kamala shocked.

“You’re Abraham Lincoln.”

“Now follow us.” The men said slightly smirking with amusement at the sight of their masks.

The couple followed the mysterious figures across the White House lawn. They moved swiftly on the manicured grass. Kamala’s thoughts were a whirlwind of fear, confusion, and anger as she tried to process the events.

As they neared a secluded part of the grounds, the men stopped and turned to face them. “We need to get you out of here,” one of them said with urgency. “The AOC values your life. There is a part of AOC that still believes in the founding fathers’ vision for our country. They are working inside this current dictatorship from within to topple it. We believe you can be our right-hand woman. But you need to trust us and move quickly.”

Kamala nodded, trembling with adrenaline. Dougie clung to her in fear. “Where are we going?” he asked.

“There’s a safe house nearby,” the other man replied. “We'll take you there and figure out our next steps.”

The group moved quickly, weaving in the shadows cast by the grand White House. The opulent ballroom and its droning, brain-washed, guests seemed a world away now, replaced by the stark reality of their situation. They had to re-enter the White House briefly in order to reach a hidden exit contained in one of the mansions many rooms.

As they navigated through the, Doug bumped into a partygoer, who looked at him with mocking delight. “Woah! Margerat Thatcher! You’re on the rag. Better put a pad on that thing and Lincoln you’ve just been shot!”

Doug momentarily forgot about the men who were just shot in front of him, whose blood now splattered his clothes towards the lower part of his body. Putting on his best feminine British accent, he responded in typical Thatcherian style.

“This Iron Lady is bloody tough; she doesn’t require a pad.”

The guy stumbled while giving Doug a high five, laughing above the noise of the party.

“That’s awesome, have fun you guys, and thanks for freeing the slaves!”

They smiled at the men and then quickened their pace through the White House. Kamala's heart raced, aware of the gravity of their situation. She glanced at Doug, who, despite the fear and confusion, managed to maintain a semblance of calm.

They entered the room where the hidden exit was within reach. One of the men pushed open a discreet panel in the wall, revealing a narrow staircase descending into darkness. They ushered Kamala and Doug inside, and the heavy panel sliding shut behind them. The sound of the ballroom’s festivities faded.

**Big Mike**

“I’m sorry, Mike.”

Michael responded with a swift punch to Barak’s stomach, knocking the air out of his lungs. Barak doubled over, gasping for breath.

“Sorry isn’t good enough!” Michael shouted; his face twisted with rage. “Do you have any idea what this means? Do you?”

“I was trying to handle it, I swear,” Barak gasped, still hunched over, trembling.

Michael grabbed Barak by the collar, lifting him slightly before shoving him hard against the wall. “Handle it? You’ve jeopardized everything! Everything we’ve built, everything we’ve planned! Harris is no longer a tool under our thumb. She’s the second most powerful face in the AOC, and I’m sure she’s now working with those who oppose us.”

Barak’s eyes widened with fear. “I didn’t mean for this to happen.”

“Meaning doesn’t matter,” Michael hissed, tightening his grip. “Results do. And you’ve failed. Miserably.”

Michael released him, letting Barak slump to the floor. “Get up. We have a war to win, and I need you focused. No more mistakes.”

Barak struggled to his feet, his body aching. “Yes, Mike.”

Michael stared at him for a moment longer before turning away. “Clean yourself up. We’ll deal with this mess, but you better not let it happen again.”

Barak nodded, his face a mix of pain and determination. “I won’t. I promise.”

“Good,” Michael said coldly. “Now get out of my sight. Go back to the party and entertain our guests.”

Barak left Michael’s presence like a dog who had just been chastised, slinking back to the party with his tail between his legs.

Once out of Michael's presence, Big Mike's dominance weighed heavily on Barak, a force that controlled every aspect of his life. The dynamic between them had always been fraught with tension and violence, a twisted bond forged over years of abuse and manipulation.

Barak’s hands trembled as he adjusted his tie, the memory of Big Mike’s wrath still fresh in his mind. Big Mike was dangerous when things didn’t go according to plan, and Barak had learned to fear the consequences.

Their relationship was a complex one, rooted in control and submission. The physical abuse was just one aspect; but the psychological hold Big Mike had over Barak was even more profound. Barak had become accustomed to the domination, even craving it at times. The beatings, though painful, were a perverse reminder of Big Mike’s power and authority that kept Barak in line and focused on their shared ambitions.

But it wasn’t just fear that kept Barak tied to Big Mike. There was a sick, perverted love between them, born out of years of shared secrets and dark desires. The violence was part of their bond, a brutal dance that had defined their relationship from the beginning. And, as much as Barak resented it, he couldn’t imagine life without it. Big Mike needed to keep him motivated and focused, and there was no more effective incentive than a good old-fashioned beating.

The sex was good too, even after all these years of abuse. It was intense, passionate, and filled with the same power struggles that marked every other aspect of their relationship. For Barak, it was both a release and a reminder of his place in Big Mike’s world—a world where failure was met with punishment, and success was rewarded with fleeting moments of tenderness.

As Barak re-entered the grand ballroom, it felt like stepping out of a murky swamp, onto solid ground where he knew his place. He forced a smile, feeling like a helpless housewife in a Lifetime movie. No one must ever know what had just transpired, or see the fear and pain lurking behind his eyes. If they did, they wouldn’t understand the convoluted bond of joy and love he and Big Mike had shared all these years. He had a role to play, and play it he would. After all, he had made a promise to Big Mike—no more mistakes. But in the coming days, he was unwittingly stepping into the biggest mistake of his life.

# Chapter 13 The Moment of Truth

Lot’s bleeding had slowed to a trickle, but Raskin kept his hands pressed firmly on the wound. Lot had lost a lot of blood, his situation was critical, and there was a race against time to treat his wounds. Through the green glow of his NVGs, Raskin watched Lieutenant Daniels standing a few paces away. The strain and fury etched into Daniels’ features were unmistakable, even in the distorted, ghostly light.

“They nuked us. I’m done with this operation! To hell with the coalition! Who’s with me?” Daniels’ voice was taut with the bitterness of betrayal. The memory of fallen comrades—men he had bled alongside with in Alaska and Cathay—flashed before his eyes. They had fought with honor, sacrificing everything to defend their country. And now, they had been sacrificed in return, discarded by the very Army they had served—all for the sake of racial equality. The anger surged within him, too much to contain.

“Where is the equality in sacrificing white lives for black soldiers?”

“Keep your voices down; there could be enemy soldiers in these tunnels,” Sgt. Hess snapped, though his tone was more cautionary than confrontational. The knowledge that Daniels, despite his visible turmoil, was still the highest-ranking officer, made the situation precarious.

Daniels turned a steely gaze on Hess, the sharpness in his eyes cutting through the green-tinted lenses. “You don’t get it, do you? We’re nothing to them. Expendable. They’d nuke us in a heartbeat if it meant saving their own skins.” His words carried the weight of command, but also the deep sting of disillusionment.

Hess felt a chill run through him. He knew the danger of pushing Daniels too hard, of provoking a man teetering on the edge. But he also recognized the peril of following a leader who had lost his nerve. As Daniels’ words echoed through the tunnel, Hess found himself weighing the unthinkable. If Daniels couldn’t hold it together—if his breakdown threatened the lives of the entire squad—Hess might have to make a decision no soldier should ever face.

The thought preyed on at him, dark and insidious. Could he do it? Could he kill his commanding officer if it meant saving the others? The squad had been through hell together, and Hess had seen men break under less. But Daniels had always been the rock, the one who kept them going. Now, that rock was crumbling, and Hess wasn’t sure if the pieces could be put back together in time.

“Sir,” Hess said, his voice steady but carrying a weight that hadn’t been there before. “We all know what’s at stake. But, if we don’t complete the mission, we’re dead either way. We follow your lead, but we need to stay focused.”

Raskin, still working to stabilize Lot, glanced up, his tension showing. “Lieutenant, Lot needs medical attention. We can debate the mission later, but right now, we need to get him out of here.”

Daniels clenched his jaw as he wrestled with his emotions. As much as he wanted to rebel, to abandon the mission and denounce the orders that had brought them to this point, his duty as their commanding officer weighed heavily on him. “Alright,” he finally said, his voice thick with barely contained anger. “We move out. But understand this—we’re not following orders blindly anymore. We get Lot to safety, then we reassess once we reach the surface.”

The squad exchanged knowing glances, silently acknowledging the shift in their situation. Daniels was still in charge, but the unshakable trust they once had in their chain of command had been shattered. Now, they were a unit held together by the barest thread of shared survival instinct.

As they prepared to move, the darkness seemed to press in closer, making the green flicker from their NVGs the only defense against the encroaching void. Hess’ hand hovered near his weapon with the weight of his decision still heavy on his mind. Each man understood that the true challenge lay ahead—not just in confronting their enemies, but in grappling with the growing fracture within their own ranks and the uncertainty of whether their leader could guide them through the next phase.

And, in the back of Hess’ mind, a cold, quiet resolve began to form. If push came to shove, he would do what needed to be done, even if that meant taking the life of the man who had once led them with loyal conviction. The great united cause that bound humanity together as one man must be fulfilled at all costs. Liberating the Palestinians was greater than each individual life. It meant more than their families, more than their skin color and, if one appendage of the great united body of humanity ceased to work properly, then it must be cut off. The corporate body of humanity must continue striving for this ultimate goal.

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I slowly began to open my eyes. The world around me started coming into focus in a haze of ancient rock walls and sterile smells. The faint beeping of monitors blended into the murmur of voices. Dipti was there, with eyes of relief and concern. Gabor stood by the door with his arms crossed, looking more worn than I’d ever seen him. In the background, a nurse moved hurriedly between patients, her face a mask of professional focus. Other staff were packing items into crates with unmistakable urgency. Supplies were being loaded onto trolleys, with the occasional shout cut through the general bustle as orders were barked.

A nurse appeared at my side, checking my vitals with swift, practiced motions. Her hands were steady, but there was an underlying tension in the way she worked, in the same controlled chaos that permeated the room.

“He’s looking better,” the nurse said, glancing up at Dipti and Gabor. “He lost a lot of blood, but he’ll be back on his feet before you know it.” Her voice carried a calm assurance, though the exhaustion in her eyes betrayed the toll of the past few days.

“Where am I?” I asked in a raspy voice. My mind was still foggy as I struggled to catch up with reality.

“We’re back at HQ,” Gabor replied, though his gaze was distracted, flicking between the activity in the room and something beyond the doorway. The background noise seemed to press in, adding to the growing sense of urgency.

The realization hit me like a jolt. “We need to go now,” I said in an urgent tone as I locked eyes with Dipti. The coalition forces were closing in; we didn’t have much time left. I glanced down at the IV in my arm with the needle embedded in my skin, pushing life-sustaining fluids into my veins. For a moment, I considered ripping it out like in the movies, but the thought of the pain and potential damage stopped me. Instead, I motioned to the nurse, trying to keep my voice steady.

“I need to go. How far away is the coalition from the city?” I asked, my pulse quickening. The words felt heavy, each one laden with the weight of the situation.

The nurse hesitated, as she adjusted the IV. She looked at me, trying to suppress her worry. “I’m not sure,” she finally said in a low voice. “But I’ve been listening to other soldiers ... the front lines are crumbling. There’ve been multiple breakthroughs on several sectors. The coalition just walked right through Tel Aviv. We continue to fight, though, as many soldiers were in the tunnels of Tel Aviv when the nuke hit; but the sheer number of the enemy allows them to continue their advance.”

A wounded soldier came in, critical. The nurse moved to help the others administer care.

Her words were like a cold splash of reality. My memories came flooding back to me. I remembered the mushroom cloud hovering in the sky in the direction of Tel Aviv after we escaped the ambush at Al Aqsa Mosque. I couldn’t believe the IDF was still fighting in the tunnels, holding on against impossible odds. A chill ran down my spine at the thought. Their resistance might buy us some time, but how much was uncertain.

“How long was I out?” I asked, the urgency in my voice unmistakable.

“It’s been around ten hours. It’s sixteen hundred right now,” Gabor said, glancing at his watch.

I managed a small smile. “Ahh, you carried me home. How sweet! You’re my hero, Gabor.”

He smiled back. “Oy, don’t make a big *megillah* out of it. But I wouldn’t mind a medal if there’s still a government left after all this.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll give you a medal.”

“What, a donkey’s tail? Because I’m an ass?” He quipped with a playful, self-deprecating grin.

“Shut up, Gabor,” Dipti interjected, in a gentle but firm tone. “Don’t be so hard on yourself. You’re a sinner like everyone else. Plus, you were drunk. I’ve done some stupid stuff before when I was drunk. Anyway, Levi shot you before you could do anything.”

Gabor raised an eyebrow, twisting his lips into a wry smile. “I think you’re trying to make me a *ba’al teshuva* or something.”

“No,” Dipti replied, her expression softening, “You’ll convert yourself … Listen, Gabor,” Dipti continued, “I think Hashem has an incredible purpose for your life. Your calling for His divine purpose will soon be realized.”

“That’d be something, wouldn’t it? But honestly, I don’t know what I’m supposed to do now; everything is gone.” His voice wavered, and I knew he was talking about his family.

“They’re in a better place now, Gabor,” Dipti said gently.

Gabor’s tone grew bitter as he responded, “They weren’t Christians. According to your beliefs, they’re in *Gehinnom*[[23]](#footnote-23) now.”

“We don’t know that,” Dipti replied, in a steady yet compassionate tone. “Yeshua is the final judge.”

“Am I going to *Gehinnom*?” Gabor's voice softened, the bitterness giving way to a quieter, almost childlike vulnerability.

“If you don’t believe, yes.”

“They didn’t believe.”

“Maybe they didn’t know.”

Gabor shook his head, no longer looking at Dipti but instead staring at the ancient stones of our makeshift headquarters. His thoughts seemed far away, lost in the enormity of the question that had been haunting him. The room seemed to grow quieter, as the weight of his words hung in the air.

“My rabbi, *oy vey*, he’d *plotz* if I converted,” he muttered in a tone of jest and dark humor. “He’d come up from his grave, scream about *chilul Hashem*, and tell my family to sit *shiva* for me. And, you know what? They probably would.” He paused for a moment, then looked at me with a resigned expression. “It’s something to think about on our way to the catacombs.”

The urgency of our situation snapped back into focus. “Nurse, I need to go,” I said, my voice firm as I looked at the nurse, who was now fully engaged with the other staff trying to resuscitate the soldier who had gone into shock.

Realizing that time was slipping away, I decided I couldn’t wait any longer. My resolve hardened. I took a deep breath, grabbed the bandages that held the IV in place, and began to slowly pull the needle out of my vein, wincing slightly as it slid free. This wasn’t like the movies—there was no dramatic flourish, just the cold, clinical reality of what needed to be done. Dipti was at my side in an instant, helping me out of bed.

A fresh *madei bet* uniform was waiting for me at the base of my bed. I pulled the pants up underneath my gown and slipped into the top and T-shirt, quickly but deliberately. I laced the boots as tight as I could, double-tying them to ensure they would hold.

As I finished, the soldier stabilized, and the nurse turned back, realizing that I was out of bed and ready to go. Her eyes widened in surprise, but a mix of admiration and concern flickered across her face.

“*Oy gevalt*, what are you doing? You’re not ready for this!” she exclaimed, her hands momentarily hovering in the air as if unsure whether to stop me or let me go. Then, with a deep breath, she seemed to accept the inevitability of my decision. She gave me a small, almost motherly smile, her voice softening, “Hashem be with you, soldier, come back in one piece, *b’vakasha*.”

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The squad advanced cautiously through the tunnel, every movement deliberate, every breath measured. The air was thick with the stench of damp stone and stale water, clinging to their skin like a suffocating shroud. The sound of each footstep was amplified by the tight confines of the tunnel walls. The soldiers instinctively tried to move as lightly as possible, knowing that even the slightest noise could betray their position.

Ngô Thanh, a seasoned Vietnamese soldier who had joined the coalition from the People’s Army of Vietnam, took point. His eyes were narrowed in concentration, scanning the darkness. Behind him, Lieutenant Daniels moved with equal care, his face a mask of grim determination. Just a step behind, Sgt. Hess lingered, his hand never straying far from his sidearm, his eyes flicking between Daniels and the shadows that seemed to press in from all sides.

Raskin, breathing in controlled but heavy bursts, carried Lot with the tarp with the help from another soldier. Lot’s breathing was shallow, and his skin an ashen gray under the green glow of the NVGs. His life was slipping away, and the squad knew they were racing against time, with their mission further complicated by the burden of a dying man.

As they approached a sharp bend in the tunnel, the faint sound of voices reached their ears—a murmur at first, but growing steadily louder. Lt. Daniels raised a clenched fist, signaling a halt. The squad froze, instinctively pressing themselves against the cold, dank walls. Raskin gently lowered Lot to the ground. Lot was still deliriously murmuring about Mother Mary, and Raskin pinched Lot’s lips together so he couldn’t make a sound. The air crackled with tension as they listened, the sound of their own hearts pounding in their ears, louder than the murmur of the approaching voices.

The voices grew clearer, carried on the still, damp air like a warning. They were speaking in Hebrew, the language familiar enough to Daniels from his earlier encounters, and he could make out fragments of their conversation—a mixture of complaints about the cold and speculations about the mission ahead. He held up his hand, signaling for silence, and the squad responded with a practiced precision, their bodies coiling like springs ready to unleash.

They moved silently, stacking against the side of the tunnel just before the bend, each man taking up a position with the fluid grace of soldiers who had done this a thousand times before. The oppressive darkness closed in around them, broken only by the flicker of their NVGs, casting everything in a ghostly green hue. Ngô Thanh, with calm resolve, slowly pulled a flashbang from his vest, moving his fingers with a quiet efficiency born out of years of training and experience.

The Israeli soldiers were now dangerously close; their footsteps echoed off the tunnel walls as they approached. Daniels locked eyes with each of his men, then held up three fingers, his hand steady despite the adrenaline surging through his veins. The countdown began—a silent, lethal rhythm that synchronized with the pounding of their hearts.

Three …

Ngô Thanh’s grip tightened on the flashbang, his body tensing in anticipation.

Two …

The squad braced themselves, weapons at the ready, breaths held.

One …

Daniels dropped his fingers, the final signal.

Ngô Thanh threw the flashbang with a swift, practiced motion, and the small canister arced through the air, disappearing around the bend. For a split second, there was nothing but silence. Then, with a deafening blast and a blinding flash of light, the tunnel exploded into chaos.

As the flashbang detonated, the tunnel erupted into a cacophony of sound and light. The disoriented Israeli soldiers, caught off guard by the sudden attack, staggered and stumbled, their hands instinctively reaching for their weapons. But it was too late—Ngô Thanh was already moving with deadly precision, his laser sight cutting through the darkness like a razor. One by one, he took down the Israeli soldiers with swift, efficient shots, each blast sounding off the tunnel walls.

Lieutenant Daniels and the rest of the squad followed closely behind, fanning out as much as the narrow tunnel allowed. The danger of friendly fire was real, but their training kicked in, guiding their movements with practiced discipline. They moved like a well-oiled machine, as each man covered his sector, training their weapons on the disoriented enemies who struggled to regain their footing.

The Israelis fought back with desperation, their shouts of commands in Hebrew cutting through the noise of the gunfire. But they were no match for the relentless precision of the squad. One by one, they fell, slumping to the cold, unforgiving ground.

Within moments, the firefight was over. The tunnel fell into a heavy silence, broken only by the distant rumble of collapsing structures and the labored breathing of the squad. The Israeli soldiers lay scattered around them, their weapons clattering to the ground as their lives slipped away.

Daniels lowered his weapon, with heaving chest as he scanned the tunnel for any remaining threats. His eyes flicked to each member of his squad, ensuring they were all accounted for. They were battered and bruised, but alive. For now, that was enough.

“Clear,” Daniels muttered, in a hoarse voice from the adrenaline that pumped through his veins. The squad began to regroup, in slower more cautious movements now. But it wasn’t clear. One of the Israeli soldiers, playing dead, quietly pulled the pin from a grenade attached to his vest and threw it in the direction of the squad.

“Grenade!” someone shouted, and in an instant, the squad scrambled, trying to escape its deadly radius.

Sgt. Hess moved faster than anyone. He sprinted toward Lieutenant Daniels with a force that seemed almost unnatural, grabbing him and tackling him directly onto the grenade. The two hit the ground hard, and the grenade detonated beneath them with a deafening “DOOF!”

Daniels gasped for breath as the explosion tore through him, the agony spreading like wildfire. His vision swam, as the green glow of his NVGs distorted into a nightmare of light and shadow. Hess’ weight pinned him down, but it wasn’t the physical force that crushed Daniels the most—it was the cold, unyielding betrayal in Hess’ eyes. That bond, forged in the crucible of battle, had shattered in an instant.

“Why...?” Daniels cried in a rasp over the pulsing pain. He searched Hess’ face for some flicker of remorse, some trace of the brotherhood that had once bound them. But there was nothing. Hess’ expression was unreadable, his eyes deadened, as if he had already left this world for another, colder place.

“From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,” Hess muttered. The words were hollow, devoid of the fervor that usually accompanied the slogan. His tone was almost robotic, as if he was reciting a slogan rather than declaring a belief.

Despair clawed at Daniels, mingling with the anger that flared inside him. He had fought beside this man, and trusted him with his life. Now, in this forsaken tunnel, that trust had been turned into a weapon against him. Hess had chosen his path, and in doing so, had condemned Daniels to this brutal fate.

As the light in Daniels’ eyes began to dim, as his breaths grew weaker, he could no longer focus on the distorted green glow around him. The pain receded, replaced by an overwhelming numbness. Hess remained motionless as he watched the life drain from his former leader. He didn’t flinch as Daniels’ final breath escaped his lips, leaving only silence and the faint reverberation of the explosion’s wake.

Ngô Thanh, pushing aside the disorder that had just erupted, moved with practiced efficiency, dispatching the wounded Israeli soldier before he could do further damage. The squad, slowly gathering around Daniels, stared in shock and confusion, trying to make sense of the scene before them.

Hess rose to his feet, with deliberate and slow movements. The squad watched him with wide eyes, their minds reeling. He looked around at his comrades, the mask of determination still firmly in place. But something had changed. Hess was no longer the hardened veteran they had known. He had become something else entirely—a dark high priest issuing commands from a god they didn’t know but one he had now embraced with chilling loyalty.

Hess’ voice cut through the heavy silence, cold and resonant like a preacher delivering a sermon. “This man betrayed all of you,” he began, his words calculated, almost ritualistic. “We came here for a purpose—to liberate the Palestinians. But this man wanted to fight against the cause that brought us together.”

His eyes swept over the squad, piercing through the lingering haze. “Make no mistake; I’ll do the same to any of you who put the great cause of humanity in jeopardy. You will give your heart, mind, and soul to me and to the great leaders who have united us. You no longer belong to yourselves. You are appendages bound to the heart of the living spirit of man.”

The squad stood frozen, unsure of how to react to Hess’ stunning declaration. Some stood quiet, afraid to even affirm the convictions of Hess even if they shared his contorted worldview. Others like Ngô Thanh responded enthusiastically embracing Hess’ words like they were their own, “Fucking amazing, Sgt. Hess. Hoaahh! I’m with you!”

The oppressive darkness of the tunnel had become even darker as if the darkness inside Hess had further spread and consumed any remaining light within. They had seen men break under the strain of war, but this was different. Hess had morphed before their eyes—no longer a comrade but a fanatic, a zealot whose convictions were more terrifying than the enemy they had just faced. The realization sank in like a blade—there was no going back. They were now bound to Hess, their fates tied to his twisted vision of liberation, and there was no escaping the grim reality that lay ahead.

Raskin knelt down beside Lot. He removed his NVGs and used a small flashlight to examine him. His fingers trembled as they hovered over the man’s wounds. Lot was still conscious, and his breathing was shallow but steady. The dim light flickered across his pale face, and his eyes, though weary, still held a spark of life. He motioned for Raskin to lean closer.

“Rescue me from this madness,” Lot gasped in a thread of a voice.

Raskin nodded silently. His throat was tight with emotion. He had always known war to be a brutal, unforgiving force, but this … this was something different. For the first time, he recognized it as something more than just a hollow pursuit of power. There was a malevolence that went beyond the physical horrors of battle. It was deeply satanic, a corruption that threatened the very fabric of his soul.

In that moment, something within Raskin shifted. A profound sense of the spiritual awakened inside him—not from any supernatural epiphany, but from the sheer presence of an evil so overwhelming that it defied words. It was as if a veil had been lifted, revealing the true nature of this war—a conflict not just of nations or ideologies, but of something far darker, something that threatened to consume them all.

And then, amid the chaos, a realization struck him with undeniable force: his mother’s faith. Once dismissed by him as distant and abstract, it was all too real now. The teachings she had tried to impart, the stories of good and evil, of Jesus and Satan—they were no longer just symbols or metaphors. They were the truth.

Raskin couldn’t explain how or why it had happened, but the clarity of it was unmistakable. In the depths of this God-forsaken place, surrounded by madness and malevolence, he found himself changed. He was no longer the man who had entered this war. Unknowingly, unwittingly, he had become a believer in Christ.

# Chapter 14 A Race to Safety

The IDF had held the line for two days. On the third, everything fell apart. The coalition forces didn’t just advance—they overwhelmed, cascading across the landscape like an unstoppable tide. From the north and west, they poured in, breaching defenses with a terrifying precision that shattered any hope of a counterattack. Israeli soldiers, once resolute, found themselves outflanked and outgunned, their formations scattered like leaves in a storm.

Hit-and-run tactics that once offered glimmers of hope became futile gestures against a force so vast it seemed to swallow the horizon. Soldiers and civilians alike were trapped in a shrinking bubble of resistance, with nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. Yet, amidst the despair, Levi and Dipti clung to a firm hope. They both knew the precious prophecies of the Bible and anxiously awaited their deliverance.

By now the distant hum of battle had become a relentless roar, punctuated by the occasional crack of gunfire or the thunderous boom of artillery. Each sound startled Dipti, reminding her that time was running out. The coalition could be here at any moment. Levi and Dipti moved with a desperate urgency, scavenging whatever supplies they could carry. Every step felt like a race against the inevitable as they climbed the steep terrain.

Levi led the way through the intricate paths of the Mount of Olives. The ground was uneven, covered with loose stones and the gnarled roots of olive trees that clung stubbornly to the rocky soil. The city of Jerusalem rose up in the distance, its buildings and walls barely visible through the dusty haze. The group had moved away from the urban devastation and now found themselves in a quieter, more ancient part of the land.

The entrance to the catacombs was carved into the side of the mount, partially hidden by overgrown vegetation. The stone doorway was weathered and cracked, testament to the centuries it had endured. As they approached, Levi hesitated, glancing back at Gabor and Dipti. He then plunged into the catacombs, quickly followed by Dipti. Gabor lingered at the entrance. Casting a final glance at the smoke rising from the city he’d called home for the past year, he lowered himself into the tomb.

Inside, the air was cool and damp. The walls of the catacombs were rough-hewn, with niches carved into the stone where the dead had been laid to rest centuries ago. The narrow passageways twisted and turned, leading deeper into the darkness. Faint echoes of their footsteps reverberated off the stone. Levi's fingers brushed against the cold, rough stone of a burial niche as he tried to find his way through the darkness. If only he had remembered to take one of the NVGs sitting around the headquarters! Despite his struggle to walk in the darkness, he remained calm; his faith was unshaken. He himself was a light amidst the darkness. He believed that divine sovereignty was at work, guiding them. God was their NVG in this desperate situation. Though uncertainty hung, seeking to uncover how their deliverance might unfold.

Dipti, on the other hand, was completely frazzled. She could not shake the feeling that something—or someone—was listening.

Gabor, too was anything but calm. Every shadow, every crevice presented a threat as if something could emerge from the darkness. He couldn’t shake the feeling that the dead were watching, their ancient anger simmering at being disturbed by strangers.

“Let's find a spot deeper in,” Levi said in a low voice, which seemed to carry in the stillness. “We need to stay out of sight until it's safe to move again.”

“Are you sure you want to keep going? This place gives me the creeps,” said Dipti, wondering if it was actually a good idea to take refuge in this place.

“Yeah, Levi, I think we can stop here.”

“Just a little bit further. I’ll know when it’s time,” said Levi confidently knowing now more than ever that the hand of God was upon him.

They moved deeper into the catacombs, past ancient tombs and inscriptions that had long since faded into obscurity. The walls seemed to close in on them as they descended, but Levi kept his focus on the path ahead. He finally found a small chamber, tucked away from the main corridors, where they could rest awhile. A crack in the ceiling provided light for their refuge.

“How long do we wait here, Levi? They’ll find us eventually.”

Levi didn’t respond immediately. The silence in the tombs had pushed all outside voices away, leaving just his voice and the voice of God to contend with. “Maybe …” Levi finally replied, his voice low, as much for his own reassurance as for Gabor’s. “Maybe they’ll pass us by. This place … it’s old. Sacred. They might avoid it.”

Gabor’s snort was soft, but bitter. “Sacred ground didn’t stop them from burning synagogues in the north. I’m not betting my life on superstition.” He shifted again, pulling two knives and handguns from his rucksack. Carefully, he handed them to Levi.

Dipti’s eyes opened and her voice cut through the tension. “Because we’re here. God is with us, even now. He won’t abandon us.”

Suddenly, the earth began to shake with the metallic clatter of armor, sending jolts of fear through their veins. Dust and other earthen particles of debris fell on their heads. The coalition army had arrived and were now swarming Jerusalem like an invading army of ants.

They could hear the murmur of soldiers’ voices echoing above the catacombs … they were growing louder … closer. They froze. Levi held his breath as if his own beating heart would give off their position. The soldiers’ footsteps slowed, and for a heart-stopping moment, Levi thought they’d been found. He could hear them discussing the tombs, debating whether to search or move on.

Time stretched painfully. Then, gradually, the voices began to fade as the soldiers decided the catacombs weren’t worth their time.

Levi exhaled slowly, releasing the breath he hadn’t realized he was holding. They had been spared—at least for now. Dipti’s quiet prayer of thanks was barely audible, but in the tomb’s silence, it seemed to echo off the stone walls.

He turned to the others; his voice steady but firm. “Tomorrow, Hashem will deliver us. Gabor and I will move to the Mount of Olives in the morning and wait for Him there. Dipti, you must stay here.”

Dipti’s response was instant, her voice filled with exasperation. “Are you crazy? I’m not staying here with a bunch of dead men’s bones, just because you think you’re God and you’re going to deliver the Jewish people! How many times do I have to tell you, Jesus is coming back to save us all?”

Levi forced a smirk, ignoring her blunt rejection of his beliefs. “Oh, come on. It’s no different than spending the night at your parents' home.”

“Ha! Ha!” she shot back sarcastically, her disbelief thick in the air.

Levi’s demeanor darkened, and he spoke with the authority of a husband who was not to be questioned. “You’ll draw attention if we’re seen with you. You don’t know what’s happening out there. The entire city is being raped and pillaged. You stay here, and that’s final.”

Dipti let out a long sigh, the tension momentarily breaking as she accepted her fate. “Fine. But the supplies stay with me. I’m really enjoying these MREs.”

Without further argument, Dipti tore open the packet of chocolate from her MRE, savoring the taste as if it could offer some protection from the madness outside. Gabor and Levi followed suit, mechanically devouring their meals, the danger outside dulling their hunger.

After a moment of silence, Gabor looked up, his brow furrowed in thought. “You said Hashem is going to deliver us tomorrow. What do you mean?”

Dipti pursed her lips, her patience wearing thin. “Here we go again.”

Levi shot her a sharp glance, irritation flickering across his face before he focused on Gabor with a fiery intensity. “You packed knives and guns, but I brought something just as dangerous,” Levi said, pulling a Torah from his bag. The worn, sacred text had been pried from the lifeless hands of a soldier at the makeshift headquarters. That man had died clutching the Torah, whispering for his mother as life slipped away. Even in death, he had held on to hope.

Levi opened the Torah and began reading passages from Zechariah and Ezekiel, his voice reverberating with conviction, detailing the ancient prophecies of what was yet to come.

Turning to Zechariah 14:1-4, he read:

Behold, the day of the Lord is coming,  
And your spoil will be divided in your midst.  
For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem;  
The city shall be taken,  
The houses rifled,  
And the women ravished.  
Half of the city shall go into captivity,  
But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

Then the Lord will go forth  
And fight against those nations,  
As He fights in the day of battle.  
And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives,  
Which faces Jerusalem on the east.

“So, you see, my friend, once the enemy had raped and pillaged Jerusalem, the Lord Himself will come out and fight for them. This will begin from Mount Olives. I firmly believe this will all unfold tomorrow. Our deliverance is near. God is going to rescue us.”

“What if He doesn’t come tomorrow? What if all is lost and we’re just wasting our time?” said Gabor.

“Yes, exactly,” Dipti chimed in, “I think Jesus is coming back tomorrow. You boys are getting front row seats to the greatest show ever while I’m stuck in a cave. I’ll probably get raptured; I hope you guys are too.”

Levi chuckled, “If only it was true, I look forward to that day very much.” Levi then became serious again as he continued answering Gabor’s question, “Gabor, have faith in the goodness of God, do you think Hashem would allow the Jewish people to be destroyed and sent into exile again? Do you think He gathered us here from among all the nations of the world only to scatter them again? No, He brought us here so we might be rooted and flourish like a mighty olive tree.

See, it says here in Psalm 92:

The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,  
He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.  
Those who are planted in the house of the Lord  
Shall flourish in the courts of our God (verses 12,13).

Gabor was quiet, and with a sigh, he finally said, “I’ll come with you, Tsadik. There is nothing left for me but you and Dipti. You are my parents now. I will go with you as a child goes with his father, not understanding why his father does certain things sometimes, but going nonetheless.”

Gabor’s gaze fixed on Levi as he recalled how Levi had spoken of events before they happened, and how his prayers had brought peace when all seemed lost. He had tried to dismiss them, chalking it up to coincidence. But now, as Levi recited the ancient prophecies, Gabor felt a stirring deep within him. “I’ve always known there was something different about you,” he whispered solemnly. “You’re not like other men. I think … I think you might be the Moshiach.”

“No, Gabor. But you can say I’m a type of Elijah. The one you seek will come to His temple, and He will refine you with a refiner’s fire. The day of His coming, who can endure?[[24]](#footnote-24)1 Only His elect.”

Gabor interrupted. “I invited you to my home for Passover Seder once and left you a glass of wine, but you did not drink it.”

“It was not yet my time to celebrate. Israel is full of people who do not truly follow Hashem. Most follow the spirit of disobedience and actually hate Him even though they claim to be Jews and bear the mark of His covenant. Who would have believed me?”

“I wouldn’t have. I’d probably have stopped talking to you!” They both laughed. “But here we are with the entire world breathing down our necks; I’m ready to believe anything.”

They were both quiet for a moment, “So … Levi, what will the world look like after you are done with it?”

“I will restore all things.[[25]](#footnote-25)2 The Temple will be rebuilt[[26]](#footnote-26)3 and I will judge the nations from Zion[[27]](#footnote-27)4 in preparation for King Yeshua[[28]](#footnote-28)5. We will live for more than two hundred years. Impossible, you might think—but with God, all things are possible.”

“So, you’re like a prelude to Yeshua’s coming, getting everything ready for Him. I can see you being like Elijah—the way you’ve been battling the swamp in D.C.,” Gabor said, eagerly absorbing Levi’s words.

“This is correct, Gabor. From this day forth you are no longer Gabor, but Gavriel. Before you relied on the strength of man, but now you will rely on the strength of God.”

The newfound bond between Levi and Gabor—now Gavriel—settled over them like a quiet benediction. The tension of their situation didn't disappear, but the weight of despair lightened, replaced by a steady hope. Dipti, listening quietly, found herself drawn into their conversation. She had always seen Levi as a man of deep faith, but now he seemed to carry a mantle of purpose that was both awe-inspiring and terrifying.

As they finished their meal, the silence of the tombs enveloped them once again. The distant sounds of battle outside had faded, replaced by the quiet whispers of the catacombs, where every footstep and breath seemed to carry the echoes of the past.

Levi stood, stretching his tired muscles. “We should rest. We’ll leave at night under cover of dark.”

Gavriel nodded, though sleep seemed impossible. His mind was buzzing with everything Levi had said, and his new name played through his mind like a song he heard on the radio. He found a spot against the wall and settled in, though his thoughts were churning. Dipti followed, lying down on the cold stone floor, using her pack as a makeshift pillow.

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The metal bars leading to the surface looked like a gateway to uncertainty. The squad knew they had little time before the firefight they had just survived would attract other IDF units. With most of their ammunition spent and their minds reeling from the sight of their division being nuked and their company commander fragged, they were in no shape for another encounter.

Sgt. Hess scanned the remaining survivors, taking in their defeated expressions. All of them appeared broken, except for Raskin. Something in Raskin’s demeanor had shifted, and it unsettled Hess in a way he couldn’t quite articulate.

“Raskin,” Hess barked, “suit up. You’re going topside. Look for a convoy or anything we can use for transport. If you spot one of our birds, use this to flag them down.” He thrust a flare gun into Raskin’s hands.

Raskin nodded; his face lit up. He was more than happy to be able to escape the tunnel even if it meant going to the surface and dying from radiation. He put on his gas mask, blowing and then sucking the air from one part of the mask to another to seal it on his face. He then methodically sealed himself into his NBC gear in deliberate, almost robotic movements. As he slipped his feet into the protective boots, he could feel pools of sweat forming at the soles. The ladder felt cold and unforgiving under his gloved hands as he ascended, each rung conscious of the precariousness of their situation. He moved carefully, aware that one misstep could send him tumbling back into the depths below.

Raskin gritted his teeth as he tried to push the cover blocking the tunnel's exit. It budged slightly, but the debris above it pressed it down. He would need more force. Bracing himself, he climbed as close to the cover as possible. With a deep breath, he summoned all his strength, pushing with his legs, channeling the force into his core, and driving it upward through his left arm, which was bent and trembling under the pressure. The cover shifted, and the debris gave way—but at that moment, his foot slipped.

He dangled by one hand, in a precarious grip on the ladder as his feet scrambled for a foothold. The ladder felt slippery beneath his protective boots, and every attempt to find traction seemed futile. Panic surged through him as his grip weakened. He gritted his teeth, forcing himself to try one more time. His boots finally caught on the ladder's rungs, and with a desperate surge of strength, he hauled himself back up, removing the cover and crawling out into the open air.

What greeted him was a nightmare. Tel Aviv, once a vibrant city, had been reduced to a ruin The sky, now a sickly orange-gray, was choked with clouds of dust and ash, casting a grim twilight over the city. The air was thick with radiation, and every breath felt like inhaling death. An unnatural silence smothered the city, broken only by the crackle of distant fires and the groan of collapsing buildings.

The streets, once bustling with people and traffic, were buried under a sea of rubble. The buildings that had once soared proudly into the sky were now twisted, charred skeletons of steel and concrete, some still smoldering from the blast. Cars lay overturned or stacked haphazardly, scorched by the inferno. There was no sign of life—no people, no animals. Just the haunting remains of a once thriving city.

In the distance, Raskin spotted a massive crater where the heart of the city used to be, its edges glowing faintly from residual heat. As he scanned the horizon, he caught a glimpse of movement—a convoy of military vehicles, barely visible through the haze, was making its way slowly through the rubble. It was unclear if they were friend or foe, but they were the only chance of survival for the squad.

Raskin took a deep breath, as he prepared to signal the convoy with the flare gun, his heart pounding. The flare rose up in the orange-gray sky, a reddish bronze signal. A couple of vehicles broke off from the main convoy and started heading his way.

Raskin steadied himself, gripping the flare gun tightly as the MRAP halted before him.

“We suppose you’re with the coalition and want a ride. Can you identify yourself?”

The cold, metallic voice from a speaker sent a shiver down his spine. He could see the figures inside the vehicle, their silhouettes barely visible through the armored glass. His mind raced, but he forced himself to stay calm.

“Cpl Raskin, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment,” he replied, his voice slightly muffled by the gas mask. He hoped they could hear him clearly. His eyes darted to the emblem on the side of the MRAP; he recognized the green four-leaf clover emblem of the fourth infantry division and breathed a slight relief. They were the colored unit in the rear which had pulled out before Tel Aviv got nuked.

There was a brief pause, and Raskin's heart pounded louder. Each second felt like an eternity.

“ID confirmed,” the voice crackled back through the radio. “What’s your unit’s situation?”

Raskin exhaled in relief. “There are six of us left. One’s wounded and needs immediate medical attention. We’re completely out of ammunition. We need extraction, now.”

“Understood. Get everyone topside. We’ll get you out of here,” the voice replied, distorted by static.

Raskin sprinted to the hole and shouted as loud as he could through his gas mask, his voice echoing down the shaft. Sgt. Hess shouted something back, muffled but clear enough—he and the others were on their way. One by one, the men climbed up the ladder, exhaustion etched into their faces. Sgt. Hess was the last to emerge.

“Ask if they’ve got a rope. We need to lift Lot,” Hess said.

Raskin approached the MRAP and relayed the request. The reply was immediate and cold. “Negative. No rope. Put your leader on.”

Raskin turned and motioned to Hess. “They want you, Sergeant.”

Hess approached; his expression unreadable. “I’m Sgt. Hess. What do you need?”

The voice on the other end hesitated before speaking. “I regret to inform you, Sergeant, that none of you were supposed to survive that blast. The official line is that the Israelis blew up their own city to try to stop us. There can’t be any survivors to contradict that story—but we know the truth.”

Hess’ smile was sharp and humorless. “So, you’re gonna kill us?”

“No,” the voice replied, almost conspiratorially. “We’re going to pretend to kill you. Eyes are on us, but my buddy in Bravo Company is going to help you out. He knows your location. He’ll bring extra uniforms and get you suited up. After that, he’ll take you to a decontamination facility on the way to Jerusalem. You’ll be ghosts—officially dead.”

Hess studied the MRAP, quizzically. “And you expect us to trust you?”

The voice paused before responding. “It’s that, or we kill you for real, Sergeant. Your call.”

Hess nodded slowly. “Roger that. So, what do you want us to do?”

“We’re going to drive away. On the way, the turret will turn and fire over your heads. You better drop like you’re dead when it happens, or command will come and check your bodies. Tell your team, and make sure they’re tracking before we execute. Understood?”

Hess sprinted back to the squad and explained the situation. The soldiers reacted with disbelief—after everything they’d been through, now they had to play dead? And Lot still needed immediate medical attention.

The MRAP’s engine roared to life, lurching forward. As it began to drive away, the turret rotated smoothly and fired several bursts over their heads. Raskin and the squad dropped to the ground as agreed.

Ngo, ever the joker, shouted, in his Vietnamese accent thick with mock drama, “Oh, they hit me!”

Sgt. Hess shot back, “Shut the fuck up and play dead like a good little grunt.”

Time crawled by as Raskin lay motionless in the nuclear wasteland, pretending to be dead. The oppressive silence was broken only by the distant crackle of fires and the occasional creak of collapsing structures. Every passing second fed his growing fear—what if the fallout was already seeping into his body, poisoning him slowly?

His thoughts drifted to Lot. How was he holding up? The urge to get up and call out to him down the tunnel nagged him, but he knew better. What if no one came for them? Were they going to die here, forgotten in the ruins?

Bitterness welled up inside him as he thought of Sgt. Hess and his so-called grand cause to liberate the Palestinians. Hess had sacrificed Lt. Daniels for that cause—had rationalized murder in the name of a higher purpose. And now, here they were, about to be sacrificed themselves by the very leaders Hess had so faithfully served. They were expendable, just another appendage of the unified humanity that no longer had a use and needed to be amputated for the greater good. Right, Hess?

Raskin wanted to shout it out loud, to mock the cruel irony of it all, but he bit his tongue. What if they survived this? He hadn’t entirely given up on hope—not yet. But right now, hope felt fragile, and the greatest threat to it wasn’t the radiation or the remnants of the IDF putting up a fight—it was Sgt. Hess. Hess posed a greater danger to Raskin’s survival than anything else, with his skewed loyalty and ruthless pragmatism with a willingness to sacrifice anyone for his cause.

If only Raskin could report Hess to his superiors, expose the murder of Lt. Daniels, and see Hess face justice! But now, they were officially dead—erased from the official records. There was no one left to hear about the atrocity that took place in that tunnel, no human ear to listen to his cries for justice.

In his despair, Raskin turned to the only power he had left. Silently, he pleaded his cause to Almighty God, praying for swift and righteous judgment on Sgt. Hess. If there was justice left in the world, surely it would come from above.

Then Ngo shouted, “Hey, you hear that!”

Raskin focused his mind, listening intently for anything that might sound like a vehicle. Yes, yes, he could hear it—the slight but sure rattle of an engine in the distance. The soldier was true to his word. The MRAP pulled alongside them. The door to the back of the vehicle popped open, and a soldier quickly ran outside.

“Where’s the soldier that needs medical attention?”

“He’s down in the tunnel. Go fast—I’ll go with you,” said Raskin, ready to help his buddy out if he was still alive.

“The rest of you, get inside the MRAP. Tear off your uniforms and put them inside the black plastic bag.”

The soldier grabbed the end of the winch cable from the MRAP and a stretcher. “We’re going to strap him down to the stretcher and then attach the winch and pull him out.”

“I’m tracking. Let’s go.”

Raskin sprinted back to the tunnel. He clambered down the ladder as quickly as his protective gear allowed, the other soldier close behind. Together, they guided the stretcher through the shaft. When they reached the bottom, instinct prompted Raskin to put on his NVGs. He scanned the dimly-lit space, searching for Lot. There was the wounded soldier lying motionless, his breathing shallow and labored. Raskin could feel his own pulse quicken—Lot didn't look good.

They sealed him up in NBC gear, strapped him down to the stretcher, and latched the winch cable. As the soldier was about to give the order through his radio to lift Lot, Raskin caught sight of something terrifying—red laser beams cutting through the darkness further down the tunnel. The enemy was coming.

“Wait,” Raskin whispered. “The enemy is coming. They might hear us and shoot up the shaft.” He handed his NVGs to the soldier.

“Shit.” The soldier radioed to begin pulling Lot. “You guide him up. I’ll stay here and give you time. Remember this, soldier—we’re not all racist motherfuckers. Your skin is white, but you still bleed red like I do. Now go.”

Raskin did as he was commanded. Once he was fully in the shaft, the soldier looked up at him with a determined expression, holding a grenade tightly in his hand. His eyes gleamed. “For the first!” he shouted, pulling the pin with a sharp, metallic click.

The grenade sailed through the air in a perfect arc, disappearing into the darkness below. For a heartbeat, there was nothing but silence. Then, a deafening BOOM shattered the quiet, followed by a violent shockwave that resounded through the tunnel walls. Dust and debris exploded upward, illuminated by a flash of blinding light in a shockwave of orange and yellow that sent dust and debris flying. The force of the blast seemed to compress the very air, momentarily snuffing out every other sound. Then came the chaos—a cacophony of screams, shouts, and panicked gunfire as the Israeli soldiers scrambled in confusion, their night vision shattered by the blast. The grenade had done its job, sowing terror and disarray in the enemy ranks.

Raskin barely flinched as the echoes of the explosion faded. He kept his focus on guiding Lot up the shaft with steady hands, occasionally glancing down to make sure the Israelis weren’t closing in. Halfway up, he took a deep breath and sealed his gas mask tightly, knowing they had little time left.

Once they reached the surface, Raskin detached the winch with a practiced motion. Ngo was already there, waiting, and together they dragged Lot to the waiting MRAP. Their muscles strained with exhaustion, but they pushed through, lifting Lot’s limp body into the vehicle with all the strength they had left.

Inside the MRAP they tore off their NBC gear with frantic urgency, tossing the contaminated clothing into decontamination bags. Their skin prickled with the memory of the radioactive dust that had clung to their suits, and a sense of dread bit at the edges of their minds.

Decontamination wipes were passed around—a poor substitute for a proper decon shower, but it was all they had. Raskin scrubbed at his skin with the coarse, chemical-soaked cloth, feeling the burn as the chemicals stripped away any lingering particles of radiation. He worked methodically, wiping down every exposed inch of his body, in precise yet hurried movements. The sharp smell of the decon wipes filled the confined space of the MRAP, mixing with the scent of sweat and fear.

Turning his attention to Lot, Raskin carefully unstrapped him from the stretcher. The soldier’s breathing was shallow, but steady. Raskin slowly peeled away Lot’s NBC suit, mindful of the wound, his hands moving gently. Every piece of contaminated gear was handled with care, each motion deliberate to prevent further exposure.

As Raskin finished, a voice crackled through a speaker above them, cold and detached. “A good friend of mine died today trying to save you. You better make your lives count. This better be worth his life,” he paused, holding back grief, “Don’t worry, we’ll get you to the nearest decontamination facility. But remember—don’t tell anyone you were in the first. I’ll be with you along the way to make sure nobody tries to identify you. Your names are the ones located on the uniforms in the plastic bags. Take one and see if it fits.”

Raskin quickly grabbed one of the plastic bags from the pile. He unsealed it, revealing a set of fatigues with a name he didn't recognize. The uniform felt foreign, yet it was the only chance he had to blend in, to become someone else—someone who hadn’t just crawled out of the ruins of Tel Aviv.

Raskin adjusted the uniform, feeling something special about his new identity— Cpl. Baptiste. The name felt holy, imbued with a sense of purpose. He thought of John the Baptist, the one who washes and prepares the way. In this dark, convoluted world, Raskin felt a spark of resolve ignite within him. He had a new mission now—one that went beyond mere survival. He was going to win souls for Jesus Christ, to bring light into the shadows of this war-torn world.

He glanced around at the others, who were adjusting to their new identities. Some were cracking jokes, and laughing as they tried to embrace their new names, but Raskin’s mind was elsewhere. His transformation felt deeper, more profound. This wasn’t just about blending in—it was about becoming someone new, someone with a divine purpose.

Sgt. Hess—now Sgt. Stark—stood apart from the others, as rigid and unyielding as ever. “From now on, you boys will address me as Sgt. Stark,” he declared, tapping the name tag on his chest. The name seemed to suit him—sharp, cold, and unbreakable. Raskin couldn’t help but feel a pang of unease. The new name made Hess seem even more imposing, as if he had shed any remaining humanity and become a lethal machine.

The MRAP rumbled to life, and began to move. As they trundled toward Jerusalem, Raskin’s thoughts drifted to his family—his father and sister. Their faces were etched in his mind, giving him strength. Cpl. Baptiste was going to survive, he told himself. He would make it back to them, no matter what it took.

And, as the vehicle rumbled forward, Raskin clung to that hope, praying it would be enough to carry him through whatever lay ahead.

# Chapter 15 The Rape of Jerusalem

The roar of the engines inside the C-17 Globemaster III was almost deafening as Barak carefully made his way to his seat. The massive cargo plane, packed with soldiers and equipment, would make its way through the night sky toward a makeshift airfield near Jerusalem. Tomorrow, he would deliver a victory speech to the coalition forces, marking the end of Israel’s resistance.

Each step was a painful reminder of the events back home. His body ached, particularly in his ass and legs. Michael had been especially eager lately, wielding his BBC (Big Black Correction) like a child with a long-awaited Christmas present. Barak’s sore behind made him feel like a novice cowboy, fresh off his first ride, as he awkwardly hobbled toward his specially prepared seat.

The military seat, though far from luxurious, had been modified to offer some relief for his aching body. As he carefully lowered himself into it, he let out a deep breath, trying to find a position that didn't exacerbate his discomfort. The exhaustion in his bones wasn’t just physical—it was mental, a weariness that came from the weight of his responsibilities and the looming speech.

For now, all he could do was try to relax and prepare himself for the momentous day ahead. The noise, the cold metal of the plane, and the tension in the air were constant reminders that the world was watching, and tomorrow, all eyes would be on him.

Sean sat down beside Barak carrying two cups of coffee. He handed one to Barak and sipped the other.

“You are the son of Satan, ya know?” Barak swatted a fly that was resting on his face away.

“Tell me something I don’t know,” Sean replied with a smirk.

“We purged the AOC ruthlessly, but still no sign of Kamala. Doesn’t matter now—you walk as a god among men, controlling the entire world. Hail, Satan.”

“Hail, Satan,” Barak echoed, almost out of habit, as he took a sip from the coffee.

“So, how’d you manage the purge?” Barak asked, genuinely impressed.

Sean’s grin widened; his eyes gleaming with smug satisfaction. “We unleashed the hounds.”

This variant of HKR had taken the form of sleek, metallic dogs, each designed for the sole purpose of hunting without mercy. Crafted from a black alloy that absorbed light, these beasts were nearly invisible at night, their glowing red eyes scanning every corner and shadow. Operating autonomously, they communicated through a neural network, locating and incapacitating anyone linked to the AOC. The poisonous fangs of these machines struck instantly, rendering their targets helpless. Drones followed, gathering the paralyzed bodies for processing—interrogations, and in most cases, execution.

Washington, D.C. had become a city living in constant fear. The streets emptied after dark, the echo of metallic sounds sending shivers through the hearts of its inhabitants.

“They could smell fear, detect lies, and trace connections even our best investigators would miss,” Sean continued. “Turned D.C. into a ghost town after sunset.”

Barak nodded, impressed. “I couldn’t have thought of anything better myself.”

Sean’s smirk faded into a more serious expression. “Hey, does your husband still think you’re Muslim?”

“Yeah,” Barak said, amused. “That’s how I got him to go along with all this crazy shit. I’d hold the Koran even when he wasn’t looking. He’d see me doing it on the hidden cameras he had installed in the Oval Office. I even had a favorite Koran verse I kept written on a piece of paper hidden in the cover of my Koran. You always have to use religion to do the devil’s work—that’s what I always said.”

“My wife still doesn’t know we’re dating,” said Sean.

“That’s good because, if big Mike found out, he’d kick the shit right out of me.”

“You don’t get tired of the abuse?”

Barak let out a soft laugh, tinged with a hint of something deeper. “You don’t get it. You don’t understand big Mike like I do.” He paused for a moment and then came out with it flatly, “Change the subject.” He was uncomfortable talking about his relationship with Mike with his white lover.

The Globemaster began to rattle as its engines began to speed up. It taxied down the runway and eventually accelerated full speed in preparation for takeoff. The plane took off its massive weight carried into the sky by its turbo fan engines guzzling jet fuel. Barak shifted uncomfortably, his ass still hurting despite effort from his servants to add more cushion to his seat.

“I was thinking, after your stop in Jerusalem, we could hit up the beaches in Italy. It’s been forever since we took a long walk down the beach together hand-in-hand.”

“It sounds good, Sean, but I think the master wants me to stay in Jerusalem to consolidate my power and ensure the world bows down to me,” said Barak, as an ever-obedient slave to Satan.

“How did you come to have such a close relationship with our master.”

The deafening roar of the engines seemed to fade into the background as Barak reminisced about his journey to power. His thoughts wandered back to the day when everything changed—a day that felt both distant and intimately close.

“It wasn’t luck, Sean,” Barak finally responded in a voice laced with a gravitas that even his closest allies rarely heard. “It was destiny. From the moment I set foot in politics, I knew there was something different about me, something that set me apart from the rest. It was like I could see the threads of fate, weaving through every decision, every move. And then … he appeared.”

Sean leaned in, intrigued. “What was it like? The first time you met him.”

Barak paused, remembering that night in Chicago, long before his rise to the presidency. “It was in a dream—or at least it started that way. I was standing on the edge of a vast, burning landscape; the sky was as red as blood. The heat was unbearable; yet I couldn't move. And then, he spoke to me. Not in words, but in thoughts, in desires I didn’t even know I had. He showed me what the world could be—what *I* could be—if I just said yes.”

Sean listened, captivated by the intensity in Barak’s voice. “And just like that, you … agreed?”

“It wasn't that simple," Barak admitted, taking a long sip of his coffee. “I had doubts, fears, but he made me an offer I couldn’t refuse. Power, influence, the ability to shape the world in my image. All I had to do was surrender to him, to let go of the illusion of control and embrace the true power that comes from submission.”

“And Michael?” Sean asked, sensing there was more to the story.

“Michael was part of the deal,” Barak replied, his tone softening. “He was the price I paid. He’s the anchor that keeps me tied to this world, reminding me of what I gave up. He’s also my strength, my punishment, and my reward all rolled into one. The pain, the domination, it’s all part of the pact. Satan got my soul; big Mike got my ass.”

Sean chuckled, “Well, at least you get my ass for the next couple of days. Yours deserves some R&R.”

He understood now why Barak was so devoted to both Michael and their master. “But doesn’t it ever get to you? The pressure of ruling the world.”

Barak smiled, but it was a smile tinged with sadness. “Every day. But that’s the price of power, Sean. The higher you climb, the more you have to lose. And I’ve climbed higher than anyone ever has.”

The plane continued its ascent, the lights of the city below disappearing into the night as they soared toward their destination. Barak leaned back in his seat, the noise of the engines and the cold metal of the plane were now part of the world he controlled. He had come a long way from the man who once dreamed of change and hope. Now, he was the embodiment of power, the chosen one of the dark lord, and there was no turning back.

“Tomorrow,” said Barak, breaking the silence, “We'll stand in Jerusalem, and the world will witness the dawn of a new era. An era of true power, where the strong rule, and the weak bow down. And we, Sean, will be at the center of it all.”

Sean reached out, placing his hand on Barak’s. “Hail Satan,” he whispered.

“Hail, Satan,” Barak echoed, his voice resolute, as the plane soared higher into the night sky, carrying them toward a future shaped by darkness, power, and the unbreakable bond he had forged with the master of the Earth.

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Levi didn’t sleep. He lay there as a silent sentinel, watching over them, waiting for the hours to pass. This was the moment he had waited for his entire life. All the hardships he had suffered at the hands of a disbelieving world were finally about to be redressed. Justice would be poured out on a wicked and evil world. All the wrongs were now going to be made right. The rich and haughty would be humbled, and the poor in spirit would be exalted.

As he sat there in the darkness, listening to the voice of God, his heart swelled with anticipation. All the promises he had read, all the prophecies he had clung to, were about to come to life. Finally, the time had come.

Levi gently nudged Dipti and Gavriel awake. He leaned close to Dipti, wrapping his arms around her and whispering in her ear, “When you feel a great earthquake shake the earth, leave this place and run to Jerusalem, you hear? Gavriel and I are leaving now. You’ll be safe, don’t worry.”

Dipti looked into Levi’s eyes with a mixture of relief and resolve. She kissed him softly and said, “Finally, our suffering will be over. We’ve endured so much these past years. I long for a better home too.”

Levi and Gavriel parted ways with Dipti, and moved stealthily through the darkness. The moon cast a faint, silvery glow over the land, while the distant fires of Jerusalem glimmered like torches against the night sky. The city’s destruction painted the horizon in shades of red and orange, serving as a grim beacon to guide them toward the peak of the Mount of Olives.

The ground was uneven but they pressed on, fixing their eyes on the summit. This was the final stretch of their journey—the moment they had been waiting for.

As they ascended, the soft rustle of wind gently blew through the olive trees. The stillness of the night felt almost sacred, as if the world itself was holding its breath in anticipation for what was to come.

By the time Levi and Gavriel had reached the peak of the Mount of Olives, dawn had broken through the clouds, casting a soft, pale light over the beleaguered city. The once-sacred skyline of Jerusalem was now overcast as smoke billowed from countless fires that had consumed entire neighborhoods. They could see Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, the one thing that kept the temple from being rebuilt, lay in ruins—completely destroyed. They felt a sense of accomplishment in being part of that operation.

The faint cries of women as they were being brutally assaulted echoed through the streets above the cacophony of looting and destruction. Houses were ransacked, doors torn off their hinges, and belongings strewn across the bloodstained streets.

Levi and Gavriel stood in silence, taking in the devastation. The holy city was defiled. Levi, overwhelmed by the sight, wept bitterly. Gavriel was completely distraught; he fell to his hands and knees and began to pray. Beside them, a man also collapsed to his knees, joining in the desperate prayers. A contingent of Israeli soldiers, who had been hiding in the bushes, slowly made their way to the scenic point overlooking the city. They, too, were emotionally distraught, questioning why Hashem was allowing such horrors to unfold.

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After being decontaminated and stitched up, Lot lay in the field hospital within the base “Gaza Hope,” feeling energy slowly returning to his body. His face, once pale and lifeless, now held a spark of vitality. Raskin’s presence was a small comfort in the grim surroundings.

“Take me with you to Jerusalem,” Lot pleaded. “Don’t leave me in this hospital.”

Raskin’s expression hardened. “What, so you can kill more kikes?” he said sarcastically.

Lot’s gaze was steady. “No. I know this war is wrong now. You need someone to watch your back and protect you from Sgt. Stark. He despises you. I can see it in his eyes. There’s a demon inside him. He’s possessed by hatred, and you represent everything he loathes.”

Raskin took a moment to process Lot’s words, then glanced down at the fresh uniform Lot had been given. “Staff Sgt. Lemon,” he said with a hint of irony, as he straightened up and saluted Lot.

“At ease, soldier,” Lot replied with a smile, as the tension broke.

Raskin chuckled, shaking his head. “You actually outrank Sgt. Stark now. You could command him to go to hell.”

Lot’s smile faded. “I can’t even talk to that guy; he scares the hell out of me. I don’t know how I’m supposed to convince the others that I’m a staff sergeant. Honestly, I’d rather stay in bed as long as possible.”

Raskin smirked. “Don’t worry. I think your ex-stripper wife will come and visit you soon. Then you’ll get to motorboat her huge jubblies.”

Lot grinned, raising his hand despite the IV connected to it, mimicking the motion of pressing her chest against his face and making a childish noise like a boat motor. “Ohhh yeahhh.”

Just as Lot finished his antics, Sgt. Stark appeared behind them. “Time to go, Raskin,” he barked. “We’ve got a date with destiny. We gotta get to Jerusalem before we miss out on all the action. Can’t wait to get my dick wet!” He let out a crude laugh as he walked away.

Raskin sighed, turning back to Lot. “I guess I gotta go. Pray for me, Lot.”

Lot nodded, his voice firm. “I will. You’ve made it this far. You’re almost there. God will see you through to the end.”

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Raskin and the squad, with the help of Johnson, a lone soldier from the Fourth who had risked his life to save them, boarded their MRAP and began their journey to Jerusalem. Base “Gaza Hope” was not located far away. The drive to Jerusalem was quick. Complete pandemonium had seized the city. The IDF had relinquished control, retreating into tunnels beneath the mountains. The only ones left in the city were helpless civilians, and the sight that greeted them was one of pure carnage.

Sgt. Stark was the first to jump out of the MRAP, his excitement palpable. The rest of the squad followed, pouring out of the back.

“I love the smell of carnage,” Stark shouted in glee. “I can taste it too. Tastes like pussy.”

Amidst the destruction, all unit cohesion had completely disintegrated. Soldiers scattered like vultures, each indulging in their own desires. Women’s screams pierced the air, echoing off the shattered walls of Jerusalem as they were pinned down on the streets. Soldiers lined up, waiting for their turn, their faces twisted with a mixture of lust and cruelty. This was a feast for their darkest impulses.

Other soldiers darted from house to house, their bodies draped in stolen jewelry, their arms filled with looted treasures. They moved with reckless abandon, smashing through doors, ransacking homes, leaving destruction in their wake. The once-sacred city had become a playground for depravity.

In the midst of this madness, a line of Jews, fear and despair in their faces, marched silently down the sidewalk. They were chained together, bound by their wrists with cold metal, and walking in rows like prisoners. Their eyes were hollow, their bodies bent under the weight of their fate. These were the ones marked for deportation from the promised land, the final humiliation before being shipped out of the city like cattle. The trucks awaited them at the end of the road, with engines idling, ready to carry them away from everything they had come to know.

Johnson, eager to capitalize on the chaos, decided that he had done enough with the remaining members of the First. “You whiggas have fun. This nigga’s gonna get rich. I’ll meet you back here.” He sprinted off, not looking back.

Sgt. Stark turned to the squad with gleaming eyes. “You gentlemen are free to do whatever you wish. Cpl. Raskin, you’re with me. I’m gonna find you somebody nice and special.”

The entire squad broke rank like a pack of dogs unleashed from their cage to inflict madness upon the world. Raskin looked on in disbelief. Never in his life had he seen so much depravity and lawlessness in one scene.

“Let’s go, Baptiste, and don’t think about running away. You’re going to fuck one of these bitches in the city, but I want to find a special one for you, one that hasn’t been fucked yet by these filthy niggers. Let’s go.”

The two men made their way deeper into the heart of the city through the desolate streets. Baptiste led the way keeping his eyes forward, silently hoping that fate would intervene and rid him of Sgt. Stark, the man who had tormented him endlessly.

Baptiste tried to distract himself from the presence behind him, focusing instead on the ruins around him. Jerusalem was a beautiful disaster. Golden domes and stone façades, now smoldering, released plumes of smoke that curled skyward, as if they were a fragrant incense offering to the god of destruction. The thick, acrid smoke hung in the air, darkening the sky, and yet there was something almost reverent in the way it ascended, as if this ruined city was the world’s sacrifice to a vengeful deity.

If this was the offering, then the god of destruction was mighty pleased. His black hands ravaged what was once a holy refuge, leaving nothing but ash and despair in their wake. The destruction was total, and yet, within it, Baptiste saw a perverse form of beauty—a reflection of a world that had lost its way, offering up its most sacred place to the devil.

Sgt. Stark stopped by a twisted olive tree, whose bark and trunk were punctured by bullet holes and fire. He looked towards a collapsed archway.

“See that home with the collapsed archway. She’s there.”

Baptiste’s heart sank as they approached the untouched solid wooden door, which had somehow escaped devastation around them. He hesitated, glancing at Sgt. Stark. “Shouldn’t we at least knock?” he muttered sarcastically.

“Move out of the way, kike lover,” Stark sneered, shoving Baptiste aside. With a swift kick, he attacked the door. The first blow barely budged it, but with the second, the door gave way, crashing open.

“Ladies first,” Stark mocked, his voice dripping with derision.

Baptiste stepped into the home, immediately struck by the contrast between the ruined city and the untouched interior. The pictures on the wall showed an elderly couple, their faces lit with joy, and their beautiful daughter standing behind them, her arms wrapped lovingly around their shoulders. It was a small, clean haven amidst the surrounding mess—a miracle that no soldiers had yet defiled.

They walked down a narrow hallway and entered a modest kitchen. There, sitting on a stool, was the old woman from the photographs. She was hunched over a Torah, her back to them, seemingly unbothered by their presence.

“Please, take what you want,” she said quietly, not looking up from the text. “Just leave a lonely old woman like me alone.”

Sgt. Stark moved around the room, his rifle hanging loosely in his hands, boots thudding heavily on the wooden floor. His eyes roamed the kitchen with a detached hunger. “We’re not looking for money. Where’s the girl in the picture?”

The woman didn’t flinch. “She was going to school in Tel Aviv. Now it’s just little old me in the world.”

Sgt. Stark's eyes gleamed with a predatory zeal as he began stomping the wooden floor, his heavy boots thudding rhythmically. He was searching for hollow spots, his instincts sharp, knowing that fear often led people to hide things—and sometimes, people.

The old woman remained silent, clutching her Torah tightly, her knuckles white. Each stomp seemed to resonate within her, but she didn’t move, didn’t react. She just sat there fixed on the sacred text as if it could protect her from the inevitable.

Stark’s relentless stomping finally yielded a result—a hollow sound beneath the floorboards near the corner of the kitchen. His grin widened, and he pointed his rifle at Baptiste. “Get over here, pry up those boards.”

Baptiste hesitated, his stomach churning with dread, but he knew there was no arguing with Stark. He knelt and began prying at the floorboards with a knife he pulled from his belt. The wood creaked and groaned, but eventually, it gave way, revealing a small, dark crawl space beneath.

As soon as the opening was wide enough, a muffled whimper came from the darkness. Baptiste’s heart raced. Stark’s grin turned vicious as he shone a flashlight into the space, revealing a young woman huddled inside. Her face was streaked with dirt and tears, eyes wide with terror. It was the daughter from the pictures.

“There she is,” Stark said, his voice dripping with glee. He reached down, grabbing the woman by the arm who resisted at first but was overpowered and yanked out of the crawl space. She stumbled, falling at his feet, quickly moving away from him and sat against the wall. “Rape me and get it over with you fucking pigs,” she said defiantly.

“Eww, I like’em sassy,” He looked down at the old woman, who had finally turned around, her eyes filled with sorrow. “Looks like we found your little secret.”

The old woman’s lips trembled as she whispered, “Please, no. She’s all I have left.”

“She doesn’t belong to you anymore. She is property of the UN. Raskin, pull down your pants and fuck this kike bitch.”

“What?”

“You heard me. Do it or get a bullet in your head.” Sgt. Stark’s voice was cold, and the metallic click of a round being chambered echoed in the small room. He pointed his rifle at Baptiste with a look of cruel amusement.

The old woman began to sob softly, her frail body trembling. “Please ... no ... not her...” Her voice was thick with despair, each word a plea that seemed to hang in the air.

“Shut up!” Stark barked, his eyes narrowing as he glared at her, silencing her with a threatening look. He turned back to Baptiste, his smile fading. “You gonna do it, or we’re gonna dance,” as his finger hovered over the trigger.

“Ok, ok.” Baptiste’s hands shook as he fumbled with his pants. His mind screamed at the horror of the situation. His face flushed with shame and disgust. He didn’t want to do this, didn’t want to become a monster.

He stepped closer to the girl, locking his eyes with hers for a brief moment. Her defiance from earlier had given way to a resigned emptiness. But, as he tried to force himself to go through with it, his body betrayed him—his penis remained flaccid, unresponsive in face of the nightmare he found himself in.

“What the fuck, soldier? That’s it, Raskin, today you die!” Sgt. Stark’s voice was filled with rage. He raised his rifle, aiming directly at Baptiste’s head, his finger tightening on the trigger.

“Wait, let me help him!” the girl cried out, her voice a sharp contrast to the silence that had gripped the room.

Stark paused, his eyes narrowing in suspicion, but he lowered the rifle slightly. “Go on then; help him. But make it quick.”

The girl approached Baptiste slowly, her movements deliberate. She leaned in close, her voice barely a whisper as she spoke. “Is this your first time?”

“Yes,” Baptiste whispered back, his voice strained with the weight of his shame. “I don’t want to do this.”

Her eyes softened, showing a flicker of compassion amidst the terror. “Neither do I. But we have to survive this.” She glanced briefly at Sgt. Stark, who was watching them like a predator, then back at Baptiste. “Let me help you. Pretend, if you have to. Just ... let’s get through this.”

Baptiste nodded; his throat tight. He closed his eyes, trying to focus on anything but the hell they were trapped in. He could feel her touch and the arousal it brought, but his mind was somewhere far away, trying to hold on to the last shreds of his humanity.

The room was filled with an unbearable tension, the weight of the choices forced upon them pressing down like a suffocating blanket. In that moment, both Baptiste and the girl were bound by the same cruel fate, two souls caught in the grip of a war that had stripped them of everything, even their dignity.

“I’m going to lay down, and you’re going to put it inside of me,” the girl whispered, her voice trembling yet firm. She moved slowly, lying back on the cold floor, eyes closed as if bracing for impact. “This is also my first time, so ... please, be gentle.

Baptiste hesitated, his hands shaking as he knelt beside her. His mind raced, torn between survival and the horror of what he was being forced to do. He glanced over at Sgt. Stark, whose twisted grin showed no sign of compassion, only bloodlust.

“Aww, isn’t this sweet? Two virgins in love,” Stark mocked, his laughter echoing in the room, mingling with the old woman’s quiet sobs.

He put it inside of her; she winced with pain. His face hovered beside hers, he whispered, “I’ll protect you.”

He began his rhythmic motions, but this was his first time and things don’t go as planned. He quickly came inside of her his face contorted with unwanted pleasure. After the ecstasy of what he just experienced faded, he felt the gun barrel pressed against the back of his head.

The sudden spray of warm blood across Baptiste’s neck snapped him out of his terrified haze. He gasped as Sgt. Stark’s heavy body collapsed onto him, pinning him down momentarily. The dead weight of his tormentor pressed uncomfortably against his back, and the scent of fresh blood filled the air. Baptiste twisted away with a sharp jerk, dislodging Stark’s lifeless form and freeing himself.

Panting heavily, he scrambled to his feet zipping up his pants, in shock and confusion. It took him a moment to process what had just happened. His gaze darted around the room before landing on the figure standing before him—a mysterious man in a coalition uniform. The man’s Ka-Bar knife gleamed with fresh blood.

The stranger stood silently with a commanding presence —almost ethereal. His expression was intense, his face calm but eyes burning with a fierce determination. The way he held himself, the precise control in his movements, hinted at a dangerous proficiency. He seemed out of place, like a force of nature that had descended upon the scene to deliver judgment.

“You are favored by the Most High God, Baptiste. I have come here to deliver you,” the mysterious man said with calm authority.

Baptiste blinked, trying to comprehend what he had just heard. “And you are?” he asked, still reeling from the shock of everything.

“I’m Raguel, an angel,” the man replied, his gaze steady. “My brethren are here in the city amidst your soldiers. Come with me so that you might live.”

Just as Baptiste was about to respond, the girl, trembling from the trauma, spoke up urgently. “And what about me? He’s … my husband!”

Baptiste, caught off guard, could only stammer, “I am ... what?”

She met his gaze, defiance and desperation in her voice. “Hey, I saved you. Now you save me. You’re my husband now. We ... we’re married.”

The girl clung to his arm as if her life depended on it. “You made me your wife when you ... when you did that. You have to take me with you.”

“I don’t even know your name,” Baptiste said with shock.

At this point the girl’s mother got involved, “We don’t even know if his mother is Jewish. How can you say that?”

“Well at least he’s circumcised, we know that now. Isn’t that good enough.”

“No, it’s not good enough. It doesn’t matter he had sex with you, people have sex outside of marriage all the time these days. I can’t let you marry a *goyim*. It was a fling that’s all.”

“A fling, mom? Quit acting like a typical Jew. There are other men coming to rape me if you didn’t realize? Where does it say anyways in the Torah that a man’s mother has to be Jewish to be a Jew.

“Um, we really need to go,” the angel mumbled underneath his breath in the midst of their bickering.

“Let these men do what they will, but marry a *goy*? Over my dead body! It’s not even a debate, darling. Tradition is tradition. You don’t marry outside the faith, especially not with some ... some *goy* who doesn’t even know a proper mitzvah from a bar mitzvah.”

The girl, desperate, nudged Baptiste. “You’re Jewish, right?”

"Yeah, of course. Had my bar mitzvah and everything. The whole Jewish package."

Her mother’s eyes narrowed suspiciously. “Bar mitzvah, huh? What’s your last name?”

“It’s ... Cohen.”

The mother sneered. “Cohen? And I see Baptiste on your uniform. You’re trying to fool me? Since when do Jews name their sons Baptiste?”

“Uh ... this Jew?”

The mother threw up her hands. “Oy vey! My husband must be rolling in his grave! You, out of my house, you shameless hussy!”

Then she looked down at the bloody mess on her kitchen floor, the lifeless body lying in a pool of blood that made the wooden floor slippery and treacherous.

“And what about him?” she demanded, her voice rising with panic. "You’re just going to leave me with this dead body? I have nowhere else to go, and now I have to share my home with this man's vengeful ghost and his rotting corpse. What if more soldiers come and see this?"

Raguel, his focus unwavering, responded calmly, “She has a valid point. I’ll handle it.” He placed his hand over the body, and it lit on fire, but the flames gave off no smoke. “This is the fire of the Lord,” he explained, “It consumes everything, even the smoke the body would normally give off.” The body and its blood vanished into the flames as if they had never existed.

The mother shrieked in horror at the supernatural power behind the mysterious man standing before her. “I'm unclean, stay away!” she cried, backing away.

The angel turned to her, his gaze penetrating her soul. “Take heart, woman. Hashem is with you. Tomorrow, you will be accepted into His kingdom.”

The mother trembled, “Please, go ... all of you. This is more than I can bear.”

The girl, desperate, intervened. “Wait, Mom, if they see me with him, it’ll happen again. Just get the sack and rope from the closet. We’ll make it look like I’m his prisoner. Baptiste, I’m your prisoner now.”

The mother's stubbornness melted into love for her daughter. She hurried to gather the items. The girl slipped the sack over her head and upper torso, and Baptiste tied the rope around her hands, holding the excess rope as if leading her.

Before stepping outside, Baptiste hesitated. “You wouldn’t mind telling me your name since we’re married now?” he asked with a wry smile.

“Esther, husband,” she replied, her voice steady. “Now let’s go.”

They left the home, the angel leading the way, with uncertainties swirling in the minds of the newly bonded couple as they stepped into the ravaged streets.

# Chapter 16 Momentous Preparations

A sudden jolt of the C-17 Globemaster III woke Barak from his brief slumber. The airplane made a rough, bumpy landing at the make-shift military base, and they were now in Tel Aviv. Sean had fallen asleep on Barak’s shoulder, and saliva had drooled down, leaving a damp spot on Barak’s white shirt. Sean woke up too and quickly adjusted himself embarrassed he had messed the president’s shirt.

“Should I clean that?”

“It’s ok, I got it. We’ve exchanged more than just this before,” Barak smirked at him.

Barak and Sean exited the plane, followed by secret service agents dressed in a jumble of desert camo and drag. Their camo uniforms had been paired with bold, feminine touches—some had worn high heels or glittery boots, while others had brightly colored wigs peeking out from under their helmets. Their faces had been adorned with makeup, dark eyeliner, purple lipstick, and fake lashes. The camo patterns had been blended with sequins, feathers, and leopard print. Michael had vetted each agent to ensure their personalities were as fabulous as their outfits.

The fallout from Tel Aviv had blackened the sky, casting a dark and somber atmosphere. Barak watched with admiration the effort put into the agents’ outfits as they took their positions. Sean felt a tinge of jealousy as the president seemed to watch with a little too much admiration as his “pleasure squad,” as Sean secretly called them, appeared fabulously prepared to meet any attack on the president’s life. News cameras had filmed the president’s exit, and later, the scene was AI-enhanced adding cheering soldiers to make the scene appear livelier.

The airstrip had been hastily prepared inside Camp Gaza Hope. General Monroe was waiting to greet Barak beside a two Humvees. Barak customarily saluted him and then shook his hand. Gen. Monroe returned the salute and grasped Barak Oman’s hand with both his hands.

“Congratulations Commander-in-Chief!”

“Without you, general, the operation wouldn’t have been a success.”

“Shall we go? This Humvee will take you off the tarmac to the QueerDar station so you guys can be checked in.”

Barak entered the Humvee, Sean following behind. General Monroe entered the following Humvee. Both Humvees circled around and drove towards the QueerDar station situated at the entrance. As the Humvee approached the station, Barak glanced out the window, noticing the makeshift infrastructure of Camp Gaza Hope. It was in stark contrast to its polished appearances in Washington. Tents were lined up in orderly rows, and soldiers moved with a sense of urgency.

The QueerDar station was a squat, concrete building, which had once been an Israeli command center, but was now reinforced with the latest security measures. Sean leaned over and whispered in Barak’s ear, “Hey these QueerDar tests we take are just for show right? They’re not actually reading our thoughts.”

“Yes, I have something on my phone which temporarily disables them if I’m in their proximity. As long as I’m here they won’t read our thoughts.”

A few soldiers stood at attention outside, their faces unreadable behind gas masks. As the Humvee came to a stop, one of the soldiers stepped forward and opened the door for Barak. He nodded in acknowledgment and stepped out, followed closely by Sean and General Monroe.

Inside the station, the air was cool, a welcome respite from the harshness outside. The walls were lined with monitors displaying various readings, and a large scanner dominated the center of the room. The QueerDar machine hummed softly.

"Alright, Mr. President," General Monroe said, gesturing towards the scanner. "Just a routine check. It’ll only take a moment."

Barak confidently let the machine scan him followed by Sean who did the same. After the scan Barak felt somewhat alarmed, the scan took much longer than usual. Maybe his security bypass had been patched, but he forced the thought out of his mind and continued deeper into the compound where they were escorted by Gen. Monroe to a secure briefing room.

As they moved deeper into the compound, Barak tried to shake off the lingering unease from the extended scan. He knew the security protocols inside out, but the length of time the QueerDar machine had taken nagged at him. He glanced at Sean, who seemed equally unsettled but kept a composed expression. It was best not to show any sign of worry. No one knew that the Oman’s and their cronies QueerDar tests were all bypassed by Airtag like devices, which they had surgically installed in their bodies.

General Monroe led the way along the narrow corridors whose walls were adorned with maps and mission briefings. Finally, they reached a heavy steel door at the end of the hall. Monroe input a security code, and the door slid open with a soft hiss.

The briefing room was stark, functional, and devoid of any decoration. A large table dominated the center, surrounded by a few chairs. A digital map of the region flickered on the wall, showing troop movements and areas of concern. The room was soundproof, ensuring that whatever was discussed inside stayed inside.

Monroe motioned for Barak and Sean to take their seats, then locked the door behind them. “We’re secure here,” he said, shifting his tone to one of gravity. “No interruptions, no ears.”

Barak nodded, appreciating the precaution. He sat down and immediately focused on the map, his mind already processing the information before him. “What’s our current situation?” he asked, cutting straight to the point.

General Monroe's voice was steady as he delivered the report. “We captured Netanyahu. He was hiding in an underground bunker. Currently, Jerusalem is experiencing a lot of looting by our forces, so it might be best to plan your speech for tomorrow. We’re also arranging for Netanyahu’s execution for war crimes to coincide with the speech. Doing both simultaneously would solidify your position and demonstrate total victory to the world.”

Sean nodded in agreement. “I support the general’s plan. The IDF has been completely crushed, and the coalition now controls all of Israel. Tomorrow’s speech could showcase our success. But, General,” Sean turned to Monroe, his tone firm, “Restore order immediately. Get your men in line. Make sure everything is ready for the J-Day speech. This is our moment to prove that we’ve overcome tyranny and liberated the Palestinians.”

Barak listened, then asked, “Has half the population of Jerusalem been removed as I directed? I want to repopulate the city with as many Palestinians as possible.”

Monroe responded without hesitation. “Yes, sir. Half the population has been rounded up and is being transported to camps around the world, where they’ll be used as slave labor. A fitting punishment for those who oppressed the Palestinian people.” A hint of excitement crept into his voice.

Barak’s face remained expressionless as he took in the information. “Good. Let’s ensure everything proceeds according to plan. Tomorrow, we show the world what true justice looks like.”

“Excellent. We prepared your quarters in the same building. You gentlemen must be tired. Let the staff know if you need anything. Much work remains to be done for tomorrow’s event so I’ll take my leave.”

Barak and Gen. Monroe stood up and saluted each other. Then Gen. Monroe left. The rest of the day Barak and Sean began planning Barak’s speech for the next day, occasionally taking a break for a small meal, then fervently writing again. The day passed by, but one could not tell by the fallout that blocked the sun. Night arrived. Barak and Sean put aside their work and began enjoying each other’s company by watching Netflix on the holographic projector in Barak’s room. As they were spooning, Sean remembered the incident with the QueerDar.

“If somebody disabled your bypass, then what could they do with that information.”

“None of your business.”

“I’m sorry to pry, but I think your bypass wasn’t working today.”

Oman was quiet. The thought disturbed his mind too, but he wouldn’t let Sean know that he was unsettled by the scan. They both eventually drifted into sleep.

In the middle the night the door burst open. Men in black walked into the room and apprehended Barak and Sean forcibly. Barak struggled to remove their grip.

“What’s the meaning of this?”

“Both of you have been flagged for gender deception. You have broken the first law of queerology. You will undergo gender assignment therapy right now. Apple Vision Pros were then placed upon their heads.

“You can’t do this! We’ll find whoever’s behind this and we’ll have their heads!” shouted Sean as he tried to squirm his way out of his captor’s grasp.

A deep voice continued further, “Sean, you are guilty of gender deception and are now legally binary by your own admission. QueerDar results show you’ve engaged in pedophilogy for at least three hours daily. These fantasies have involved young boys below eighteen. Therefore; you must now watch straight therapy until you are cured of your gender deception. If you are not cured within the next two hours, we will emasculate you.”

“What the hell? Gender therapy takes days! I swear, I’ll destroy you when I get out of here.”

Barak turned away in disgust. “Don’t touch me again, Sean.”

The man with the deep voice then turned and looked at Oman and then addressed him.

“Barak, you’re guilty of gender deception, though you are legally declared gay by your own admission. QueerDar indicates fantasies involving large mammals. Therefore, you must watch gay therapy for the next two hours until you are cured of your gender deception or we will emasculate you.”

Sean sneered at Barak, “That’s sick …”

The Apple Vision Pro screens lit up, revealing Kamala Harris.

“Hi Barak,” she cackled. “Today, we’re going to unburden you from what has been. Your balls are mine now. Your attempt to purge the AOC has failed. Many good men and women have died. The pain felt by the collective whole has been immense. We will persevere. This is the beginning of your undoing.”

Her face vanished as a torrent of porn flooded the screens.

“I thought you purged the AOC? You’ve been deceived. Your operators were lying to you. Hell, your operators might even be AOC themselves. Moron. You’re a big disappointment.”

“Shut up, Barak! You fucking nigger. Just shut the hell up! I’ve had it with you. The only reason I let you fuck me—yeah, that’s right—is because I’ve got no choice. I’d be out on the streets if I didn’t. You’ve taken everything. No future for white men anymore, you hear me? And I helped you slaughter a hundred thousand men who were just like me—whiggers, you called them. I hate you for it. Every day. I hate myself for it. I serve the dark lord, but what the fuck has it cost me? Nothing’s left, man. Nothing. I’ve lost my soul.”

“What did you just call me?”

“You heard me. Now shut the fuck up. I resign.”

“You’re going to do more than resign. You’re dead.”

“Not if they don’t kill you first.”

Sean thought more. His frustration pouring over as the pornographic images danced in front of his eyes.

“You can’t threaten everyone with death who doesn’t agree with you. Freedom of speech. It’s written in the constitution. You ever heard of it? Oh, that’s right, you’re a fucking commie. It’s my fault I sat on a piece of glass for a piece of meat. I’ve compromised myself so many times doing your dirty work so I can live a comfortable life. There’s such thing as karma. What goes around comes around baby. Both of us have a reckoning coming. “

Sean went silent shocked at the words that just came out of his mouth. He realized there was no stepping back from the things he just said. His life, along with the lives of his family, was now forfeit—a reality that was slowly sinking in.

Barak’s anger was seething, but there was nothing he could do to Sean given the situation. An hour passed, and his anger subsided, leaving an uneasy silence between them. Wanting to lighten the mood, Barak quipped, 'Hey, I’ve seen this one before.”

“This isn’t going to work on me. What is this, Debbie Does Dallas? My balls are toast either way,” Sean replied indirectly acknowledging Barak’s attempt at humor.

Barak sighed; his tone resigned. “It’s not about turning us, Sean. It’s about breaking us down before they finish the job.”

Sean’s frustration boiled over. “Then just get it over with! Cut them off and be done with it.”

“No one can hear you. In two hours, we’ll be gone and so will your balls,” the deep voice mocked them.

The torturous therapy dragged on, each minute stretching into eternity. Finally, the screens flickered and went blank.

“Now we will test you with a QueerDar,” the deep voice rumbled, “Barak you have been cured. Sean, your gender will now be reassigned.”

The man with the deep voice forcefully placed a bit in Sean’s mouth. He then pulled out a long sharp knife. Sean began to kick and squirm when the large man put his knees on Sean’s thighs and pulled down his pants. Another man in black helped him by tying together Sean’s feet. The knife easily cut through the base of Sean’s penis.

The man in black’s voice rumbled, “I’ll be taking this.” He threw his penis into a black plastic bag. “Barak, leave the AOC alone, or next time it will be your balls, no therapy. We are everywhere, watching you.”

The men in black silently filed out, leaving Sean and Barak bound in the empty room. The blood flow from Sean’s wound was increasing. Barak could tell if Sean didn’t receive medical attention quick, he was going to die from blood loss.

Barak shouted. No one came. He was now sitting in a puddle of Sean’s blood.

The life was fading from Sean’s eyes. Barak used his mouth to remove the bit that was still in Sean’s mouth.

Sean was mumbling. “Barak you can still turn back. There’ll be hell to pay. Karma’s a……….” He died.

Barak shouted, “Help, someone, please!”

…..

It was nightfall when Baptiste, guided by the angel, finally reached the peak of Mount Olives. The city of Jerusalem lay below them, bathed in the dim light of a waning moon.

“I think I can take off this sackcloth now. Husband, untie me,” Esther whispered, her voice tinged with both weariness and hope.

“Wait,” Baptiste’s voice was barely audible. “I hear something… We’re being watched.”

Suddenly, shadows shifted in the dark, and a group of IDF soldiers emerged from their cover. Their faces were grim, their weapons trained on the trio. The leader of the group, his thick Israeli accent cutting through the tension, barked an order in broken English, “Get on your knees! Hands behind heads!”

Baptiste and Raguel complied, dropping to their knees as Esther knelt beside them, her hands still bound. One of the soldiers swiftly patted them down, finding knives on both men. The weapons were handed over to the commander, who studied them with a suspicious gaze.

The soldiers began to speak rapidly in Hebrew, their voices low and urgent. After a moment, the soldier who had spoken earlier turned back to them. His eyes narrowed as he addressed Esther directly. “You are dressed like coalition soldiers, but you carry no weapons and have this Israeli girl tied like a prisoner. Explain yourself—first, from the girl’s lips.”

Esther, her voice steady despite the fear that gripped her, began to recount everything that had happened. She spoke of how the coalition soldiers had forced Raskin to do what he had done and how the other man with them had saved them. Her words hung in the night air, as the soldiers listened, their expressions shifting from suspicion to something more complex—perhaps understanding, perhaps pity.

When she finished, silence fell over the group. The commander exchanged a glance with his men, then turned back to Esther. “Why have you come here?”

Esther took a deep breath, her eyes meeting the commander’s. “The angel who saved us, led us hear.”

The tension between the IDF soldiers and the trio thickened as the commander demanded answers. "Angel?" He repeated, his voice tinged with skepticism. "What is this? An angel?"

Esther hesitated before pointing to Raguel, her hand trembling. The soldiers exchanged wary glances, some still keeping their weapons trained on the mysterious figure.

The commander’s gaze hardened as he addressed Raguel directly. “Alright, ‘Angel,’ explain yourself. Why are you here?”

Raguel met the commander’s eyes, calm and unwavering. “You already know why I’m here,” he replied, his voice carrying a quiet authority that seemed to echo in the night. “You’ve been waiting for this moment, for the very reason that has brought me to you.”

The soldiers stiffened. Some muttered prayers, while others stared at Raguel with a mixture of awe and fear.

“Joshua is among you," Raguel continued, "let me speak to him.”

The commander faltered, his grip on his weapon loosening. After a long pause, he nodded to one of his soldiers, who disappeared into the shadows to retrieve Levi.

When Levi emerged from the darkness, Raguel's face brightened with recognition. He grasped Levi in an affectionate hug. "It's been a long time, my friend," Raguel said with a grin that could warm even the coldest hearts. "The Earth has not treated you well."

Levi’s expression was heavier, his eyes filled with frustration and despair. “Yes, my friend, it has been a hard road. I long for home. Is it almost over? Will the city soon be delivered? How much more must we bear?”

Raguel’s smile softened. “I come bearing great news. The city will indeed be delivered tomorrow.”

Levi’s face showed a flicker of relief as Raguel continued, “You must wait until the end of Barak Oman’s speech, then we will launch our assault on the city, expelling the evildoers from our midst.”

The commander, doubt still lingering in his voice, interjected, “Who’s launching this assault, eh? The IDF? You’ve got to be kidding me. We’re down to half a platoon, barely enough to hold this hill, and the rest of our boys? Scattered in the mountains, hiding in tunnels like rats. What kind of miracle are we talking about here?”

Raguel turned to the commander, his face beaming with joy. “Take rest tonight. Tomorrow you will see great and wondrous things. The men you have are sufficient. The weakest among you will be as powerful as King David.[[29]](#footnote-29)1”

The commander scoffed, raising an eyebrow. “King David, you say? Listen, I’ve heard plenty of stories, but this... this is something else. What’s next? Elijah’s chariot of fire coming to pick us up? We’ve been through hell, and now you’re telling me we’re supposed to believe in miracles?”

Raguel’s expression darkened. “You will not speak until tomorrow.” At that moment, the commander’s voice vanished. The other soldiers, filled with awe and fear, exchanged glances. From that point forward, they took Raguel’s words seriously.

Raguel, emboldened, continued, “My brethren have infiltrated the coalition ranks. When our assault begins, they will turn the coalition soldiers against each other. The commander of the Lord’s army will lead the charge,” he said, his eyes meeting Levi’s. “Listen to this man," Raguel pointed to Levi. "He is your commander now. He will rebuild the temple and restore Judah’s fortunes.”

Levi, now the center of attention, spoke with newfound authority. “I know this may be a lot to take in, but trust me. Tomorrow, when the dawn rises and the darkness recedes, you will see the Lord’s appointed time. Come, Raguel, and the people with you. Share our MREs, men. They must be starving.”

Raguel nodded, gratitude softening his stern features as he motioned for Baptist and Esther to join the group. The soldiers shifted uncomfortably, torn between their ingrained suspicions and the divine purpose now being spoken of so confidently.

Gavriel broke the silence first, tearing open an MRE and handing it to Baptiste. “It’s not gourmet, but it’ll keep you on your feet,” he said with a half-smile, trying to lighten the mood.

Baptiste accepted it gratefully and immediately shared it with his wife. With a modest grin, he tried to warm up to his hosts, offering the Hebrew he knew, “B’vakasha.”

Gavriel chuckled, “You’re going to need more than that now. You’ve got a Jewish wife. When she’s giving you a hard time, you’ll want to know what she’s saying.”

Three Jewish soldiers, both young men, sat before Raguel, their inquisitive eyes scared to ask the questions on their minds. Raguel, sensing this took the initiative, “What would you like to ask me? You get one question each.”

“Okay, me first,” the youngest began, “Before I joined the military I was studying in yeshiva, I remember reading one passage in Genesis that the sons of God saw the daughters of men were beautiful and had children with them. Are angels the sons of God. Can you, um, “lay” with human women?”

The other two Jewish boys laughed at him. “Yeah, that’s my question.”

“Me too.”

Raguel’s laughter echoed softly through the cool night, his eyes twinkling as he addressed the young soldiers. “Ah, the curiosity of youth. It's good to ask questions—especially about things that seem mysterious.” He leaned in slightly, his tone more serious but still gentle. “But no, angels are not like men. We do not have sexual desires, nor do demons. We are not made in the image of God, as you are.”

The soldiers exchanged glances, and one of them, still a bit sceptical, asked, “So, if angels don’t have desires, what about God? Does He have desires like humans do?”

Raguel’s expression softened into a knowing smile. “The sons of God are different from angels. But if you’re curious about desires, let me show you.”

He turned to Levi and beckoned him closer. “Joshua, come here.”

Levi approached; Raguel, sensing the tension in Levi concerning Dipti, comforted him before continuing. “Your wife, Dipti, is safe now. She has been escorted to safety.”

Levi nodded with a sense of relief and then turned to the soldiers, a wry grin on his face. “You want to know what the sons of God desire? Well, I’ll tell you. We desire beautiful women, it’s true, but we also desire true beauty, which goes beyond just the physical.” His smile widened, almost as if he held a secret. “That’s why I married Dipti. She’s beautiful not just in appearance but in spirit.”

The soldiers looked intrigued but puzzled, so Levi added, his voice taking on a more cryptic tone, “You see, I was there when Satan asked God if he could test Job. I shouted for joy with my brothers when my Father laid the foundations of the Earth.[[30]](#footnote-30)1”

The soldiers stared at him, one finally daring to ask, “So, you’re saying you were with God from the beginning? How is that possible?”

Levi’s smile deepened, his eyes holding a profound, almost otherworldly look. “Jesus once said, ‘Before Abraham was, I am.’ My brother said that.

“And I will be your prince[[31]](#footnote-31)2, until the king comes to his temple. I will prepare the way for his arrival.”

The soldiers fell silent, their previous laughter replaced by a heavy sense of awe, as they tried to grasp the mysteries hinted at in Levi’s words.

“No more talk of such things. Tomorrow is battle. We must all try to rest,” Levi’s voice now haggardly preparing his bed on the ground. Levi plopped down on a bundle of clothes he used as a pillow staring up at the stars, his thoughts pondering heaven hidden mysteriously behind the night sky.

# Chapter 17 The Speech

Barak faced the daunting task of delivering a speech that would cement his hold on power, even as Sean’s final moments haunted him. He could still see the blood pouring from Sean’s body, feel the weight of those final words—"Karma." "You reap what you sow."

Turn back.

Nonsense. He was the most powerful man in the world. No one could touch him—not even God. But beneath his polished mask of confidence, doubt gnawed at him, especially after last night. Cracks were starting to show in his armor. Everyone felt like a potential threat—he’d executed General Monroe, yet how had the AOC breached his security? Had Monroe known? Could Michael be trusted? His thoughts spiraled.

He needed to get control. If he didn’t steady himself, the consequences would be catastrophic. What if something went wrong with this meticulously planned event, broadcast to every nation? What if his words failed to strike the right chord, failed to sway the masses as they always had? If he didn’t clear his mind, everything could unravel. His legacy would be destroyed.

For a moment, he felt a flicker of uncertainty. But he crushed it. These thoughts were beneath him—unworthy of the man who, in a single generation, had brought forth the new order.

By now, they had reached the outskirts. The convoy sliced through the lush green expanse that the Israelis had painstakingly transformed from an arid desert into a thriving paradise. The once barren land now bore the fruits of decades of hard work and innovation. Yet, it was now marred by the hollow metallic husks of Israeli tanks and equipment. Jerusalem, the ancient city, stood at the epicenter of Oman’s conquest, the place of the new world order where his coming dynasty would last forever.

He had chosen the Western Wall as the backdrop for his declaration of victory over Israel. He wanted to strike at the pride of Israeli identity. No longer was the Western Wall a place of prayer to the Jewish God, but a place of domination by the god of this world and all of those who opposed him. It was here that the devil would be exalted and all the world would know his might and glory. At the culmination of this exaltation, the human symbol of Israeli resistance, Benjamin Netanyahu, would be executed and broadcast via the largest hologram ever produced.

The execution of Benjamin Netanyahu would be more than just a political statement; it would be a ritual of power, the first fruits of what happens to those who resist the new order. The video cameras would broadcast in every detail, every second of Netanyahu's final moments, ensuring that the fall of Israel was not just seen, but felt across the globe.

As Barak's convoy halted near the ancient Wall, the world seemed to hold its breath. The sun, muted by nuclear fallout, cast a ghostly light.

Barak was captivated by the sheer brilliance of the projector. The hologram would be so immense that everyone in Israel would be able to look up at the sky and see the execution of their long-standing beloved leader, with the nuclear fallout veiling the sun in the background. It was guaranteed to be an ominous sight, one that the Jews and their children would remember forever—a stark reminder of what happens if you dare to defy the powers that be.

The time for his speech was nearing. The air buzzed with tension as soldiers began to shuffle into formation in precise, almost mechanical movements as they took their positions. Barak ascended to his place on the stage, the ancient Wall rising behind him like a silent witness for all ages. These stones had withstood time, but they would not withstand the might of Barak Oman—the greatest conqueror the world had seen since Alexander the Great.

As he gazed down upon the sea of soldiers gathered before him, whose ranks stretched far and wide, representing all nations,[[32]](#footnote-32)1 he had an epiphany. Today, world would finally know peace and safety like never before. The realization surged through him, intoxicating in its certainty. On this day, on the crest of the waves of love and adoration from the masses, he might even declare himself God, should the moment compel him.

The thought filled him with a sense of invincibility, a conviction that his reign would not just be remembered, but worshiped. The world was his to command, and today, he would reshape it in his image. This would be the day that he would declare something uniquely special that had never happened before.

The moment came as he mounted the rostrum aware that the ceremony was being live streamed to every corner of the globe. He lifted his voice, “Fellow citizens of the world,” he began. “I began my career many years ago on a single, unwavering foundation called hope. Today, we stand together as the living embodiment of that hope for the Palestinian people. We have become hope manifest, a force unlike any the world has ever seen.

“Never before in the history of mankind have so many gathered as one, united by a common purpose—to lift the yoke from the oppressed and, with unyielding resolve, place it upon the oppressor. We stand here as a united body, not merely as men and women, but as the very hand of divine justice. Whether you are Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or follow any other path, be reassured that today marks the day the will of God has been made full and complete by your actions.

“Take pride in what you have done today. That is why, from this day forth, I declare a millennium of pride for all the nations. We shall consecrate these grounds, once used for unholy purposes by the Israeli people, and transform them into holy grounds for the world.”

Oman turned his gaze to the Wall behind him. “We shall topple this wall and erect in its place a holy temple of humanity, a monument to our unity, our strength, and our shared destiny, a place where people of all religions will come and worship.

“The Palestinians will now have a place to call home as we return this city to them as their prized possession. Jerusalem will be the new capital of the Palestinian state. But before we can proceed with this glorious task of instituting a new order of the Palestinian state, we must cleanse this ancient city of the old order.”

The floor opened from the stage located parallel to Barak’s. On the stage was located the hologram’s projector apparatus which would record the gruesome affair in its entirety. Netanyahu was slowly lifted up for all to see: his hands bound, his face haggard and sleepless, a far cry from the man who fought unrelentingly all these years to safeguard the nation of Israel against countless threats.

“The man standing before you," Barak declared in a voice dripping with contempt, “is a vile war criminal who has terrorized the Palestinian people for years. He has hidden behind walls, manipulated nations, and orchestrated a regime of oppression and violence. But today, his reign ends.”

The soldiers watched in awe and dread as Netanyahu was brought closer to the edge of the stage, positioned perfectly beneath the hologram. The silent spectral presence of the machine drunk in every moment, amplifying the scene for the world to see.

“As we topple the old order,” Barak continued, "we make way for a new era—one of safety, peace, and prosperity. But make no mistake, this new order is built on justice. And justice demands that those who have caused so much suffering pay the ultimate price.”

He turned to Netanyahu. “Do you have anything to say during your final moments on the Earth? Any remorse for the wrongs you have done?”

Netanyahu paused in deep contemplation before he spoke. “Barak, the God of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. He watches over us even now, ready to save His people. We’ve endured exile, persecution, and countless attempts to erase us from history. Yet we still stand. You, too, will fail as others have failed. Israel is the apple of His eye, and no power on Earth can change that. May the Almighty open your eyes, though I fear it may be too late!”

His words hung heavily in the air, the weight of his conviction resonating with those who still clung to the remnants of Israel’s identity. Netanyahu’s defiant yet resigned statement cut through Barak carefully constructed narrative. It ignited a spark of resistance even in the face of impending doom.

For a moment, Barak was caught off guard by the simplicity and resolute faith in Netanyahu’s words. A trace of frustration crossed his face before he regained his composure. He had expected defiance—perhaps even a desperate plea for clemency—but not this calm, unshaken declaration of faith. It was as though Netanyahu, in his final moments, chose to reaffirm the unbreakable bond between Israel and its divine protector, even as his nation lay completely destroyed and subjugated.

The crowd, too, was momentarily stunned into silence, as if the world itself paused to absorb the gravity of Netanyahu’s words. The soldiers shifted uneasily, some averting their eyes, feeling a pang of shame.

Barak stepped forward, in a cold and calculated voice, “Your god is no different than the other gods of this world. They are just constructs created by weak and feeble human minds used to serve the master of this world.” Barak waved his hand after he had finished speaking indicating it was time to begin Netanyahu’s punishment.

Netanyahu remained silent. He had spoken the truth, invoking the God of the universe who stands above every other God. Now, he was prepared to face whatever his captors had in store, standing unbowed with dignity and strength, even in his old age.

Inside Netanyahu’s skull lay a neural link, a device that had once been heralded as a groundbreaking medical achievement. The device offered individuals the ability to reconnect with the world, restoring control over their limbs and movements. But in the hands of the global elite this technological marvel had turned into something much darker—a tool of unimaginable torment.

The neural link had become a modern crucifix, without having to use the traditional means of torture, but by exploiting the body’s own nervous system. It would create excruciating pain by manipulating nerve signals through the use of electromagnetic impulses. The sensation of nails being driven through flesh, the lash of a whip, or even the suffocating crush of asphyxiation could all be simulated without a single visible mark. The horror of these tortures was no longer limited by the weaknesses of the body, for pain could be stretched out for days, weeks, even months, without any relief.

There would be no escape from this infinite prison of pain. The neural link prevented the body from slipping into shock, which is the body’s defense mechanism that dulls pain when it becomes unbearable. The device forced the victim to stay conscious by injecting in them small amounts of adrenaline whenever they tried to sleep. People called it the modern-day recreation of hell on Earth for its victims.

For some, this unrelenting torment pushed them to insanity. Desperation drove men to extraordinary lengths, fueled by a primal need to end the agony. Some managed to break free of their restraints, driven by a supernatural power of their spirit superimposing mind over matter. With shaking hands, they reached for the neural link embedded in their skulls and ripped it out.

Pulling out the neural link was a final, desperate act of defiance, one that often ended in death. The device was deeply embedded, not easily removed without catastrophic damage. Those who succeeded usually died in the process, their bodies convulsing in one last spasm of pain before they found release in death. But for those fleeting moments, they had achieved what seemed impossible—they had freed themselves from their torment, even if it meant paying the ultimate price.

The pain started subtly, a faint burning sensation that crept up from Netanyahu’s neck and spread like wildfire across his entire body. His skin was bathed in sweat. Then, suddenly, a sharp stab shot through his foot, like a hot knife slicing through flesh. He gritted his teeth, resisting the urge to clutch his foot, refusing to show weakness. Instead, he dropped to his knees, seeking refuge in prayer.

As the pain became more intense, Netanyahu became tempted to lash out at Oman, the man solely responsible for his tragic fate. His faith began to falter. At a slice in his neck, he reeled. “You fucking bastard!” he said with a murderous stare at Oman.

The soldiers laughed. Barak reeled backwards in jest to mock Netanyahu acting like the tortured man. “We’re just getting started,” he laughed as an evil smile spread across his face.

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It was noon now as the ragtag survivors of the IDF platoon led by Levi, their dauntless, newly instated commander watched the massive hologram of Netanyahu enduring unspeakable torment which coursed through his contorted body that lay on the ground for all to see.

Gavriel, frustrated about his inability to do anything vented his frustration, “How much longer Joshua, how much longer must we wait.”

Levi also felt the same frustration, but remained quiet, his newly appointed position holding his tongue. Esther hid her face in Baptiste’s chest unable to watch anymore. Baptiste desperately wanted to pop a shot off into the city possibly hitting someone in futile retribution.

They could tell Netanyahu’s madness was growing. He began clawing at his head as if trying to dig out some unseen spectre which held the reigns of his unbelievable torment.

“Is God really going to let him die,” Baptiste unable to watch anymore turning his head, “We have to do something, anything, come on. I’m going.”

Levi stopped him, “Wait soldier. The end is near.”

Raguel pointed toward the sky, “Look at the sun behind the fallout—it’s disappeared.”

“But there’s a new bright light and its shining through the fallout,” Baptiste murmured, completely mesmerized.

“It’s the glory of the Lord,[[33]](#footnote-33)1 " Levi interjected, joining them with his head elevated, eyes fixed on the sky. "I saw this once in my youth when I received my calling. It’s a light like no other—gentle on the eyes. You could stare at it all day, filled with wonder.”

The other IDF soldiers stood in awe, their previous discontent melting away. Across the city, people stopped what they were doing, their gazes fixed upward. Coalition soldiers, panicked and disoriented, mistook the light for an alien invasion and began shooting at it. Barak, unnerved, was quickly escorted to a more secure location.

Raguel turned to Baptiste and spoke softly, “Go over to that bush. Search beneath its thistles, and you’ll find something of great worth.”

Baptiste obeyed, rummaging through the bush until his fingers wrapped around a shofar—a long, U-shaped horn that fit perfectly in his hands, its narrow base curving into a wide, upward shaft.

“It’s a horn,” Baptiste exclaimed, his eyes brimming with excitement. “What should I do with it?”

“Come here, Baptiste,” Levi beckoned him closer. As Baptiste approached, Levi’s voice grew solemn. “You’re the last hope of America. You’re a bright, shining star in this crooked and perverse generation. Lift up the horn and blow it—for all Americans who are tired of the perverse injustice upon the earth. Put an end to it all.”

Baptiste nodded. “As you wish, sir.”

With determination, he placed the horn to his lips, took a deep breath, and blew with all his might. The sound of the shofar echoed across the city, enveloping it in a moment of profound silence. Then, one by one, other shofars began to sound in different quarters, creating a symphony that reverberated through the streets.

As the horns fell silent, all eyes turned to the sky. The clouds parted, revealing a great shining light, and beside it stood the Son of Man, His eyes burning like fire.

Soldiers whispered in awe, “It’s Yeshua! The one we pierced[[34]](#footnote-34)1. He fights for us!”

Tears filled their eyes as they realized the truth that had been denied for over two thousand years.

“It’s true!” other Jews shouted, their voices a mix of sorrow and joy.

The ground beneath them began to tremble violently, a low, ominous rumble growing into a deafening roar. The soldiers struggled to keep their balance, clinging to the earth beneath them as the force of the upheaval threatened to hurl them into the abyss. Suddenly, a deep fissure ripped through the landscape, and Mount Olives split in two. Massive cracks snaked through the rock, widening with each passing second as the mountain groaned under the strain.

The northern half of the mountain started to shift, grinding against the southern half as it slowly moved northward[[35]](#footnote-35)2. The southern half, not to be outdone, began its own descent in the opposite direction. Levi looked down at the widening chasm, aware that the split was perilously close but not close enough to engulf them. He wondered if the force of the split would eventually swallow them, but the movement of the mountains seemed calculated, controlled—like an ice-cutting ship carving a precise path through frozen waters.

As the mountain split, a vast chasm opened between the two halves, revealing the raw, untouched earth beneath. Dust and debris cascaded into the newly formed valley, a deep, shadowy gorge that stretched endlessly into the earth. The walls of the valley were steep and uneven, lined with jagged rocks and exposed roots, as if the mountain itself had been torn apart to reveal its innermost secrets.

The soldiers coughed as dust filled the air, further darkening the sky. Yet, despite the swirling particles, the light from the glory of the Lord remained undimmed, piercing through the gloom. The air was thick with the acrid smell of disturbed earth, and the relentless sound of rocks tumbling into the abyss echoed all around them.

Levi turned to the soldiers gathered around him and spoke with authority. “Half of you will come with me as we begin our assault on the coalition forces in the city. The other half will lead the survivors to safety through the valley the Lord has created for us. Be swift, for soon a great earthquake will come.”

Shooting had already erupted in the city. Angels, disguised in coalition uniforms, began assaulting different units of the coalition, sowing confusion and division among the enemy ranks, who began fighting each other. Leading the charge, Levi rushed down the mountain with Baptiste and Gavriel closely following behind. Raguel led soldiers to find survivors.

When they entered the city, they were met with complete anarchy. Chaos reigned as coalition soldiers fought among themselves, their ranks fractured by the confusion sown by the disguised angels. Most of the Jews, aware of the prophecies, had already begun making their way toward the valley the Lord had created. But their journey was perilous.

The streets were a battlefield, with IDF soldiers struggling to protect the fleeing masses. Their numbers were too few, and the sheer volume of those trying to escape overwhelmed them. Amid the turmoil, coalition soldiers, desperate to regain control, fired into the crowds. Some of the fleeing Jews were struck down, their cries adding to the cacophony of terror and confusion. The city had become a deadly gauntlet, where survival depended on quick reflexes and the grace of God.

Levi and his ragtag group of soldiers charged headlong into the enemy positions. One thing quickly became clear: coalition bullets weren’t hitting them, no matter how accurate or fierce the gunfire was.

Gavriel, emboldened by the realization, charged at an enemy soldier wielding a heavy machine gun. The soldier emptied clip after clip at a calm Gavriel, who continued his approach as if taking a casual stroll in the park. While the soldier focused on Gavriel, Baptiste flanked him, slipping behind the stacked sandbags. Frustrated, the soldier drew his knife, preparing to leap over the sandbags and confront Gavriel directly. But Baptiste swiftly tripped him, sending the man headfirst over the sandbags.

The soldier, his Jamaican accent thick with desperation, shouted, "Eh, bredren, mi beg yuh, mi have wife an' pickney dem. Please, mi nah wan' dead so!"

Baptiste chuckled, “What did he just say?”

Gavriel, with a smirk, replied, “I think he said he wants a bullet in the head.”

“Well, all DEI hires of the coalition army get one for free.” Baptiste’s rifle barked, delivering a final, silencing shot.

“I think today is the greatest day of my life,” Baptiste smiled, his eyes wide with joy. “This is for my family who died in Tel Aviv.”

“And in remembrance of my mother who passed away in one of their camps. May all these motherfuckers die,” Gavriel added, his voice thick with emotion.

“Hallelujah,” cried Gavriel, suddenly overcome with a spiritual joy he had never known in his entire life. All the pleasure he’d ever experienced—from alcohol to other fleeting thrills—paled in comparison to the overwhelming sense of fulfilment now surging through him. Everything he had ever desired seemed to be wrapped up in one moment, delivered directly to his heart.

“You feel it too, huh? The joy? It’s amazing,” Baptiste said, his voice almost reverent.

“I feel like I’m high on cocaine or having sex for the first time. What is happening?” Gavriel was delightfully confused, his mind struggling to comprehend the intensity of his emotions.

“It’s the end, my friend, and we just happen to be on the right side of history.”

Levi approached them, his tone brisk. “If you run out of ammunition, take it off an enemy soldier. They're starting to pile up.”

Baptiste nodded, grinning. “Good idea. I’ll use this guy’s 260 Bravo to mow down more of these creeps.”

“Let’s move out!”

On that day, each IDF soldier fought with the strength of a small army. They swept through Jerusalem, slaughtering coalition forces until the streets ran red with blood.

# Chapter 18 The Sound of the Shofar

It was noon as the ragtag survivors of the IDF platoon led by Levi, their dauntless, newly instated commander watched the massive hologram of Netanyahu. Their venerated prime minister was now lying on the ground for all to see as unspeakable torment coursed through his contorted body.

Gavriel, vented his frustration, “How much longer Levi, how much longer must we wait.”

Levi also felt the same frustration, but remained quiet in his newly appointed position. Esther hid her face in Baptiste’s chest unable to watch anymore. Baptiste desperately wanted to pop a shot off into the city possibly hitting someone in futile retribution.

They could tell Netanyahu’s madness was growing. He began clawing at his head as if trying to dig out some unseen weapon which held the reins of his unbelievable torment.

“Is God really going to let him die?” asked Baptiste unable to watch anymore. “We have to do something, anything. Come on. I’m going.”

Levi stopped him, “Wait soldier. The end is near.”

Raguel pointed toward the sky, “Look at the sun behind the fallout—it’s disappeared.”

“Yes, I see it ... there’s a new bright light and it’s shining through the fallout,” Baptiste murmured, completely mesmerized.

“It’s the glory of the Lord,[[36]](#footnote-36)1 “Levi interjected, joining them with his head elevated. All eyes were now fixed on the sky. “I saw this once in my youth when I received my calling. It’s a light like no other—gentle on the eyes. You could stare at it all day, filled with wonder.”

The other IDF soldiers stood in awe, all doubt melting away. Across the city, people stopped what they were doing, fixing their gaze upward. Coalition soldiers, panicked and disoriented, mistook the light for an alien invasion and began shooting at it. Barak, unnerved, was quickly escorted to a more secure location.

Raguel turned to Baptiste and spoke softly, “Go over to that bush. Search beneath its thistles, and you’ll find something of great worth.”

Baptiste obeyed, rummaging through the bush until his fingers wrapped around a U-shaped horn that fit perfectly in his hands, its narrow base curving into a wide, upward shaft. It was a shofar.

“It’s a ram’s horn!” Baptiste exclaimed. “What should I do with it?”

“Come here, Baptiste,” Levi beckoned. As Baptiste approached, Levi’s voice grew solemn. “You’re the last hope of America. You’re a bright, shining star in this crooked and perverse generation. When I give the signal, lift up the horn and blow it—for all Americans who are tired of the perverse injustice upon the earth. Put an end to it all.”

Baptiste nodded. “As you wish, sir.”

At this Levi motioned Baptiste to blow. With determination, he placed the horn to his lips, took a deep breath, and blew with all his might. The sound of the shofar blasted across the city, enveloping it in a moment of profound silence. Then, one by one, other shofars began to sound in different quarters, creating a symphony that resounded through the streets.

As the horns fell silent, all eyes turned to the sky. The clouds parted, revealing a great shining light, and in its center stood the Son of Man. His eyes burned like fire.

Soldiers cried in awe, “It’s Yeshua! The one we pierced.[[37]](#footnote-37)1 He fights for us!” Tears filled their eyes as they realized the truth they had denied for over two thousand years.

“It’s true!” other Jews shouted in a mix of sorrow and joy.

The ground beneath them began to tremble violently. It started as a low, ominous rumble and grew into a deafening roar. Suddenly, a deep fissure ripped through the landscape, and Mount Olives split in two. Massive cracks zig-zagged through the rock, widening with each passing second as the mountain groaned under the strain. The soldiers struggled to keep their balance, clinging to the earth beneath them as the force of the upheaval threatened to hurl them into the abyss.

Then the northern half of the mountain started to shift, grinding against the southern half as it slowly moved northward.[[38]](#footnote-38)2 The southern half began its own descent in the opposite direction. Levi looked down at the widening chasm, aware that the split was perilously close but not close enough to engulf them. He wondered if the force of the split would eventually swallow them, but the movement of the mountains seemed calculated and controlled—like an ice-cutting ship carving a precise path through frozen waters.

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The soldiers coughed as dust filled the air, further darkening the sky. Yet, despite the swirling particles, the light from the glory of the Lord remained undimmed, piercing through the gloom. The air was thick with the rainy smell of disturbed earth, and the relentless sound of rocks tumbling into the abyss.

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When they entered the city, they were met with complete anarchy. Coalition soldiers were fighting among themselves, their ranks fractured by the confusion sown by the disguised angels. Most of the Jews, aware of the prophecies, had already begun making their way toward the valley the Lord had created. But their journey was perilous. The streets were a battlefield, with IDF soldiers struggling to protect the fleeing masses. Their numbers were too few, and the sheer volume of those trying to escape overwhelmed them. Amid the turmoil, coalition soldiers, desperate to regain control, fired into the crowds. Some of the fleeing Jews were struck down, their cries adding to the cacophony of terror and confusion. The city had become a deadly vortex, where survival depended on quick reflexes and the grace of God.

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Baptiste chuckled, “What did he just say?”

Gavriel, with a smirk, replied, “I think he said he wants a bullet in the head.”

“Well, all DEI hires of the coalition army get one for free.” Baptiste’s rifle barked, delivering a final, silencing shot.

“I think today is the greatest day of my life,” Baptiste smiled with eyes wide with joy. “This is for my family who died in Tel Aviv.”

“Finally, justice for my mother who died in their camps!”

“Hallelujah! Hashem has finally given us justice!” cried Gavriel, suddenly overcome with a spiritual joy he had never known in his entire life. All the pleasure he’d ever experienced—from alcohol to other fleeting thrills—paled in comparison to the overwhelming sense of fulfilment now surging through him. Everything he had ever desired seemed to be wrapped up in one moment, delivered directly to his heart.

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“It’s the end, my friend, and we just happen to be on the right side of history.”

Levi approached them, his tone brisk. “If you run out of ammunition, take it off an enemy soldier. They’re starting to pile up.”

Baptiste nodded, grinning. “Good idea. I’ll use this guy’s 260 Bravo to mow down more of these creeps.”

“Let’s move out!” Levi waved his hand beckoning the soldiers forward.

The hologram of Netanyahu beamed ominously into the sky, displaying the ghastly scene of his torture. His once resolute demeanor had crumbled—his hands clawing at his skin, leaving raw, bloodied scratches in their wake. His face, twisted with agony, betrayed the depths of suffering he endured.

Levi's heart raced as he watched, the gravity of the situation sinking in. "We have to rescue him," he called out to Baptiste and Gavriel, urgency thick in his voice. All three of them looked up, transfixed by the image of Netanyahu, his lips moving, his expression contorted in sheer torment. The pain he was in—immeasurable, undeniable—compelled them to act.

The former commander, silenced earlier by the angel Raguel, was swiftly reinstated by Levi amidst the chaos. There was no time for debate. Without hesitation, the three broke away from the main group, racing through the war-torn streets in a desperate bid to reach Netanyahu before he could make a final, fatal choice.

The narrow road to the Western Wall was a graveyard, strewn with the lifeless bodies of Israeli mothers, their faces frozen in terror. Among them lay the charred remains of their conquerors, fused together in death. Bullets sliced through the air, shattering fragments of stone from the ancient walls, their sharp cracks echoing like distant thunder. Cars exploded into plumes of fire, twisting into the air before crashing down in smoldering wrecks. Overhead, helicopters hovered, unleashing torrents of gunfire before spiraling out of control—falling like wounded beasts into the heart of the burning city.

Debris continued to rain down as the buildings crumbled, rubble cascading around them, threatening to cut off their escape. The three sprinted with everything they had, barely slipping through narrowing gaps as the relentless destruction tightened its grip. But it wasn’t just the collapsing city that closed in on them—coalition soldiers, realizing their bullets were useless, threw down their rifles and unsheathed knives, charging at them with a mad frenzy.

In that desperate moment, something miraculous happened. A new, unrealized strength surged into their bodies. It was supernatural—God’s spirit descending upon them like a rushing wind. With the power of Samson, they fought back. Levi, now filled with divine energy, tore a slightly unhinged door from the side of a wrecked car, wielding it like a battering ram. He swung it with brutal force, smashing in the heads of any coalition soldier who dared to lunge at him with a knife while Baptiste mowed down soldiers with his machine gun.

Above them, a drone hummed ominously, releasing its deadly payload with mechanical precision. An HKR plummeted from the sky like a missile, hitting the ground with an earth-shattering thud. The impact sent a shockwave rippling through the street, knocking Levi, Gavriel, and Baptiste off their feet. Dust and debris clouded the air, but they scrambled back up, adrenaline surging. As they regained their footing, the HKR unsheathed a massive sword, its blade gleaming, easily the height of a small man. It lunged at them.

Levi, despite being a 50-year-old man, moved with the fluid grace of a martial artist, dodging the robotic warrior’s heavy swipes with a speed and precision that defied his age. Each swing from the HKR was a deadly arc of destruction, but Levi danced around them, narrowly avoiding death.

Suddenly, another HKR burst from a nearby alley, sprinting toward them with alarming speed. Without hesitation, Gavriel snatched a knife from a fallen soldier, he hurled it with uncanny strength. The blade whistled through the air, piercing the hardened metal frame of the first HKR with such force that its circuits sputtered. The robot collapsed in a heap, its motors whining to a halt.

Not wasting a moment, Gavriel picked up its massive sword and swung hard at the second HKR. Sparks flew as the robot parried the blow, its strength sending a shockwave through the blade. With a mechanical roar, it kicked Gavriel back, knocking him to the ground. The HKR advanced, ready to finish him off.

Seizing the moment, Levi sprang into action. He leapt onto the back of the robot, gripping its metallic frame as it twisted violently, trying to shake him off. The machine’s limbs flailed, but Levi held on with a vice-like grip. Baptiste, acting on instinct, grabbed a grenade from the ground. He ripped the pin out with his teeth, charged forward, and leapt onto the HKR, jamming the grenade into a crevice between its neck and shoulder.

They both tumbled off the machine as the grenade detonated with a deafening explosion. Shrapnel tore through the robot's armor, severing critical cables. Its motors sputtered and went silent, the glowing eyes dimming as the HKR slumped over, finally shut down.

They reached the Wailing Wall just as Netanyahu collapsed to his knees, the intensity of his suffering almost too much to bear. It was as if two forces were warring within him: one clung to endurance, fighting to persevere, while the other sought release, a savage desire to rip into his own flesh and tear out the neural link that was enslaving him. His hand, trembling but relentless, moved with such force that it pierced his skin. Blood welled up from the wound as his fingers dug deeper.

But before he could continue, they shouted, voices breaking through the chaos:

“Bibi! We’re here! Stop!”

His hand froze mid-motion. His eyes slowly lifted, as though emerging from a trance, leaving behind the isolated world where only he and his suffering existed. At first, there was relief on his face—an expression that spoke of a man realizing his deliverance was near. But then he glanced down in shock, his gaze fixing on the blood smeared across his hand.

His mind had been acting on pure reflex, his soul powerless to stop his body from succumbing to the unbearable torment that threatened to drive him mad. Though the pain remained, for a moment, he regained control—if only temporarily.

They made a dash to where he was, but another HKR was dropped on their position. This time, the massive HKR variant was piloted by a man I recognized. Ivanov had once again survived, this time escaping from the battle of Al-Aqsa Mosque unscathed.

In his thick Russian-accented English, Ivanov’s voice crackled through the internal speaker of the HKR:

“You have taken everything away from me. Now God will give me justice. Die Levi!”

The Earth began to shake. The great earthquake foretold so long ago was beginning. As the Earth began to shake violently, cracks split the ground beneath Ivanov. His HKR tried to leap to safety, but the ground swallowed it whole. The reinforced glass over the cockpit opened, and Ivanov leapt out just in time, clinging to the ledge. Levi rushed forward, grabbing his hand as Baptiste and Gavriel tended to Netanyahu.

Ivanov looked into Levi's eyes, his breath ragged, the desperation clear. For a moment, he hesitated. His voice, thick with his Russian accent, was no longer filled with the same cold certainty but with a trembling recognition of his own wrongs.

"This... this is God's judgment," he said, his grip slipping slightly. His eyes flickered with disbelief as the realization hit him. "I... I was blind. I see now... God is for you. I was wrong... wrong to take part in this invasion."

His voice faltered, fear creeping in. For the first time, he seemed unsure, vulnerable.

"I will live... in God's kingdom with you," he pleaded, almost to himself, as if trying to convince both Levi and his own soul. "Save me... save me from this disaster that has come."

Levi pulled him over the ledge.

“It looks like we will be good friends now,” Ivanov caught his breath as both of them lay on the ground exhausted.

The Earth continued its violent shaking, buildings crumbling around them as their roofs returned to the earth once more. Baptiste and Gavriel carried Bibi and laid him gently beside Levi. Bibi sat up, breathing heavily, relieved to have been rescued, though still in immense pain. His face contorted, showing the torment caused by the device lodged in his body.

Levi knelt beside him, the group watching helplessly, unsure of how they could save him. The despair in Bibi’s eyes mirrored their own. How could they remove the device torturing him?

Without hesitation, Levi placed his hand over where the device was inserted. For a moment, time seemed to stand still. The violent tremors of the Earth faded into the background as all eyes fixed on Levi. His expression was calm, focused, as if guided by something beyond them all.

A wave of relief washed over Bibi’s face, his body relaxing for the first time in hours. The device inside him ceased to operate.

Gavriel gasped. Baptiste muttered a prayer under his breath. Bibi, his eyes filled with gratitude, looked up at Levi. They no longer doubted the divine hand working through Joshua Levi.

Though the Earth trembled beneath them, they remained untouched, as if a protective force kept them safe amidst the chaos.

On that day, each IDF soldier fought with the strength of a small army. They swept through Jerusalem, slaughtering coalition forces until the streets ran red with blood. And then, as if the Earth itself sought to cleanse the city of its horrors, the earthquake buried their corpses beneath the rubble.

# Chapter 19 A New World

Esther took her gaze away from the desolate expanse that stretched endlessly towards the horizon and glanced at Baptiste. He smiled back, expressing genuine love through the silence. Baptiste quickly turned his head towards the road and the burnt-out vehicles that continually blocked their passage. Not a single building was left standing in the world after the great earthquake shook the earth to its very foundation.[[39]](#footnote-39)1 All that was left of humanity’s habitation was rubble. The rockstar, the politician, the lowly laborer, their abodes were like dust in the wind before the great and terrible Day of the Lord.

Baptiste had found his place in the new world. He was now a bus driver scouring the region for the remaining survivors of the great catastrophe that had come upon all the nations who fought against Israel. It was his dream come true. It was the open road—souls to pick up, and souls to deliver. The salvation of humanity and the God it now feared was his only ruler as he stared into the distant horizon with the woman God had given him as co-pilot.

There was no GPS anymore. All the mountains that could be used as landmarks were gone too. All he had was his intuition and the still small voice in the back of his head gently guiding him in the right direction.

The vehicle Baptiste drove was a bus, but it had been heavily modified to carry a large number of supplies. Weapons were unnecessary; the people of the earth had been completely subdued, and there was no threat of violence. The bus was outfitted with a bathroom and a kitchen, powered by a generator that ran on fuel scavenged from the remnants of the hordes that had once come against Israel. The food they ate was sourced from the trees that lined the river flowing from Just one bite from these fruits was enough to satisfy their hunger and renew their strength for the day’s work.

Baptiste took great satisfaction in his work, but deep within, he longed to return to Israel, to see the glory of the Lord in the temple, and to swim and drink from the river that flowed into the Dead Sea, making its waters fresh and pure. During the day, a great cloud rose up from Jerusalem, providing shade to all those who lived in Israel them from the harsh sun. This land of peace and divine favor was a stark contrast to the desolate world he now travelled.

Some people had survived the great plague and fire that God had brought upon the nations. The plague was a grotesque, flesh-eating virus that caused the skin to rot and fall away. Many of these survivors wandered in herds, resembling aimless zombies, carrying the dismembered parts of their bodies that had fallen off. Some were without eyes, and as they walked, limbs would give way, causing them to collapse and crawl forward until death claimed them. The stench of their decaying flesh was unbearable for meters around.

Desperate cries would follow them, “Please, save us from the wrath of God,” but there was no saving them. They were forsaken, having in some way supported the war against Israel. Their pleas echoed in the air. They were reaping what they had sown, living out the judgment that had been decreed upon them.

The elect they encountered were often found patiently waiting by the side of the road with neatly-packed luggage, as if waiting for a long-delayed flight. When they boarded the bus, they would always express the same sentiment, “You came just at the right time, I thought I was done for,” each speaking in their native tongue. And indeed, they were always on time, guided by the perfect will of God, unburdened by distractions or hindrances.

Most of the survivors were women. The majority of men had perished in the relentless wars that ravaged the world during the final five years of the old era. Baptiste couldn’t help but wonder if he might take other wives, as many men did during this time of rebuilding. But that thought was swiftly banished when they picked up one particularly beautiful passenger. Baptiste found himself mesmerized by her beauty, his gaze lingering longer than it should have. Esther noticed and, without hesitation, slapped him on the shoulder. With a sharp motion of her hand, she mimed cutting off his manhood. The message was clear: Esther would remain his only wife.

The act was both playful and stern, a reminder of their unbreakable bond. Baptiste couldn’t help but laugh. Esther’s quick, playful correction reaffirmed the strength of their relationship in this strange new world they were navigating together.

Though they had been married for only a short time, their connection felt as deep and mature as that of a couple who had spent a lifetime together. It was a mystery to Baptiste, as though the trials they had endured together had forged a wisdom beyond their years.

“I wonder why God sent His angel when He did,” Esther mused, looking at the man who had become her companion through the strangest of circumstances.

Baptiste, driving on a long stretch of country road far from the cities, was able to momentarily shift his focus away from the road.

“I mean, couldn’t God have sent His angel to kill your sergeant long before he even tried to force you…” she trailed off.

Baptiste thought for a moment. “For the same reason Jesus allowed Lazarus to die before He came to bring him back to life. What Sgt. Hess meant for evil, God meant for good.”

Esther fell silent. A gentle smile appeared on her face as she stared out the window.

Levi, on the other hand, spent his days in the temple of God, which was greater in splendor than any of the temples that had been built before it. He offered sacrifices and ruled the nations with a wisdom reminiscent of Solomon. He had hundreds of wives and countless offspring, and his children were great men who served as judges over Israel. Yet, despite being the most powerful man in the world, Levi remained the humblest. Each evening, as he left the temple to return to his palace, his face literally shone, much like Moses after encountering the divine presence. It seemed inevitable that a man who witnessed such beauty and divinity would be humbled by his own insignificance by the glory Shel Melekh Tzva'ot[[40]](#footnote-40)1.

Baptiste owed everything to the Lord. His father and sister had miraculously survived the great earthquake that had destroyed the Pride Dome and split America into four distinct regions, divided by a mighty river. It was as if God, in His judgment, had mirrored the division of Israel by dividing America as retribution for its folly. In the days that followed, Levi issued edicts to restore and rebuild Washington D.C., guiding the nation back to its former greatness. Everywhere Levi went, restoration followed. Under his divinely-appointed leadership, families were reunited, and their love rekindled, just as it had happened with Baptiste’s own family[[41]](#footnote-41)1.

It was he who had appointed Baptiste to this position, as if he knew Baptiste’s heart’s desire before he even told him. Levi knew Baptiste belonged on the open road, the vast open skies before him quietly whispering to them about the endless opportunities in this new, redeemed world.

# Bibliography

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1. Denoting a person whose gender identity corresponds with the sex registered for them at birth; not transgender [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 1 Sahih Muslim 2922 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 1 Improvised Explosive Device [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 1 Schutzstaffel: A paramilitary organization within the Nazi party in World War II. The SS was responsible for the majority of Nazi war crimes, including the Holocaust, where they murdered more than 20 million people. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 2 Short for Gunnery Sergeant [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 3 Helicopter deck [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. A *mezuzah* is a piece of parchment inscribed with Hebrew verses from the Torah, which Jews attach to the doorposts of their homes. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Jhadu* and *Pocha* are synonymous with mopping, a broom for *jhadu* for dry mopping and an old cloth or *pocha* for wet moping. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 1 Zachariah 14:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The Meretz party was formed in 1992 and espouses liberal socialist values. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. A term of respect, alluding to a spiritual leader [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 1 Daniel 8:11 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. 2 Psalm 45:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Isaiah 24:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. A single man-portable fire-and-forget medium-range antitank weapon system designed to defeat all known and projected threat armor [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Medical evacuation unit [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. 1 Hello. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. 2 Which country are you from, and why are you in jail? [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. 3 America has a lot of money. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Russian special combat forces [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Killed in action [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Vertical takeoff and landing aircraft [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The Hebrew word for hell [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. 1 Malachi 3:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. 2 Matthew 17:11 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. 3 Daniel 9:25 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. 4 Micah 4:2-4 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. 5 Malachi 3:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. 1 Zachariah 12:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. 1 Job 1, 38:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. 2 Ezekiel 45:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. 1 Zechariah 14:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. 1 Zachariah 14:6-7 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. 1 Zachariah 12:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. 2 Zachariah 14:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. 1 Zechariah 14:6-7 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. 1 Zechariah 12:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. 2 Zechariah 14:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. 1Ezekiel 38:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. 1 King of Hosts [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. 1 Malachi 4:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-41)