The Man Who Became God 2: Death’s Edition

By Forlando Powell

In loving memory of Sonja A. Williams.

A mother, a daughter, a sister, an aunt, and, more importantly,

a genuine, caring person.

Recap of book one,

*The Man Who Became God…*

Every corner of the globe was ravaged by some form of turmoil: politics, war, famine, greed. From the ashes and blood cries of these upheavals rose a group of individuals who blamed the world governments. This group was known as the Red Warriors, more commonly referred to as the Reds. The majority of its members were men and women with formal military or police training, regardless of nationality. Their goal was simple: attack all governments and all who support them with deadly force.

Misguided by her own personal troubles, a student of Hamilton High—a school composed of kids whose parents worked for the government—felt like the Reds were calling out to her personally. This was a calling she couldn’t ignore, and so she devoted most of her free time to the Dark Web, learning how to build a bomb, one powerful enough to level a city block. After assembling the bomb, she planted it in the basement of the school and watched as it exploded. After her immediate capture, the parents of the now-deceased children were told of their kids' passing.

One of these parents was Jaxon Alexander Carter, a man who not only created his own government lab but was also considered a prodigy among his peers in the scientific community. Upon hearing the news of his only son’s death at the hands of a deranged kid following the teachings of a terrorist organization, Jaxon’s mind permanently shifted. Using his massive wealth, knowledge, and connections, he thought about exacting revenge upon the Reds for what they took from him. But he remembered that his son was a pacifist at heart and wouldn’t want his name associated with such actions. And so, Jaxon decided to move forward with a new plan, one that would change the scales of the world to create a new system of judge, jury, and executioner. This plan was only achievable by using the super serums his company had originally created for the US government to aid in human enhancement, among other things. First, he would find a boy and, from a young age, raise him while teaching this kid about the history, science, and facts of the world, as well as other teachings like hand-to-hand combat and other languages. And he did so with conviction and without bias. Periodically, throughout the years, Jaxon injected the boy with a variety of different serums, and although he himself was oftentimes skeptical and unsure of the effects of each serum, the plan was too far in motion to worry about such trivial matters now. He continued on to do this until the child came of age and was of a sound understanding of the world that he was forced to bring judgment to. With his new abilities, void of emotion, and god-like point of view, any punishment or decision made by him would be impartial and, thus, fair.

Originally, before creating this being, Jaxon had sought help in his goal, casually mentioning the idea to his coworker and best friend since college, Jacob St. Patrick. Jacob initially showed slight interest in this proposition but, on principle, turned down the offer to help under the guise of morality and ethics. Regardless, Jaxon moved forward with his plans, and after several long and tumultuous years of working in secret, his goals had been achieved, and it was now time to send the kid away. Unfortunately, the lining of the kid’s stomach that kept all the serums dormant would only dissolve and thus activate when he reached zero-gravity, so it was absolutely critical that the boy be sent out of Earth's atmosphere. This was a safeguard Jaxon had put in place, knowing that he couldn’t accurately predict the outcome of such an experiment. To ensure that the boy safely reached his destination, Jaxon bought and modified a commonly sold spacecraft that allowed the pilot to travel as high as Earth’s stratosphere. With these added modifications, it would now allow the pilot to travel much further beyond Earth's orbit, accounting for any unexpected side effects from the release of the serums.

As years passed, with no proof that his experiment was a success, Jaxon concluded that his plan had failed and that his science must have been flawed. Then, one morning he saw the news and, in that second, mankind was forever changed.

As the world watched, the news anchor explained what had led up to this moment. Reporters told the events of how the military had picked up on and attempted to divert a meteor heading toward Earth, using missiles and other tactics, all of which were unsuccessful. Based on its speed and size, they feared the worst, that the meteor would impact the earth and hundreds of millions of people would die instantly. As they observed and waited for fate to deal its hand, they soon noticed that the meteor was slowing down on its own like a car slowly coming to a stop at a red light. And just before it reached the surface, it came to a complete halt in midair, defying the laws of physics and baffling all who witnessed it. Slowly, debris broke off from the meteor as it gradually descended. When the last bit of rock fell, a figure with a humanoid form emerged. It stood about six feet tall, had a muscular build, and was covered in a suit that was almost comical, and its eyes reflected that of the cosmos on a moonless night in an area void of city light. It did not speak or move. It stood in the same place it landed and didn’t utter a single word for days.

The military had tried every possible way to capture or confine this being, from using helicopters to lift it away to using bulldozers to heft it from the ground. Every trick they tried failed because anything that inorganic was immediately turned into dust. When the world had nearly given up, thinking it was an expensive joke, it finally spoke, shocking everyone. Its only statement was that it wanted to meet with the world leaders at the United Nations in one day’s time. And after it spoke, like sand being released from one’s hand on a windy day, the being had completely vanished. The world could not fathom what they’d just witnessed.

After arriving at the UN, this being stated that its only mission was to help humanity change since its current trajectory was complete annihilation. This essence referred to the past and the present as if it had lived in both simultaneously. It spoke about time so casually as if it was not affected by it, and because of that form of speaking, the leaders and the world who were watching believed that it was an entity above their understanding. It went on to explain that it had come in peace, that it was neither an alien nor god and that it, in fact, was once human, created to give judgment to humanity. Hearing this revelation, they came to question its merits and purpose. If it was not their god, then how could it demand anything of them?

Realizing humanity would not listen unless they were forced to, the being declared an all-out war on humanity and vanished from the halls of the UN. The world stood still as it struggled to grasp the fact that this thing, once human, now possessed abilities that defied the laws of physics. But, more importantly, it had just declared war on them all…

After the proclamation of impending bloodshed, the being was tracked to the desolate continent of Antarctica. Without being given the luxury of time or options, the leaders agreed to launch every nuclear bomb they possessed at it before it could whisk away, while also coming to terms with the high probability of forfeiting Antarctica forever. As the bombs approached it, the being lifted its hand and disintegrated each one of them. Perplexed by how it could do this, everyone across the world felt the same feeling of defeat at once. After obliterating the bombs, it reappeared within the UN and stood once again before the world leaders and its audience.

It explained that it knew that if humanity felt it had a hand to play, it wouldn’t take anything it said with a notion of seriousness. It explained that it had no intentions of waging a real war on humanity and that it only wanted to push humanity forward scientifically. It stated that once it had completed this task, it would leave Earth for good. Without any room to fight, the world submitted to this being’s will.

Betrayed by his best friend, St. Patrick, Jaxon was discovered for what he had done and interrogated on how to stop and kill it. He admitted to everything, stating that there was no way to kill his creation, and regardless of what it decides to do with humanity, it would be the decision made by a god. Once the world realized that there was no solution to stop this thing, dread covered the planet. For a time, life felt meaningless, but after seeing what this god had accomplished, more and more people started to praise it. That devotion grew, and its followers built churches in its honor. It became revered, but not all people rejoiced for this “new god.” In fact, the Red Warriors hated it. Over the course of a year, their numbers grew from thousands to a million and, when that happened, with their tanks, guns, and bombs, they challenged this entity to an all-out war set in the desert sands of Dubai. They believed that “absolute power corrupts absolutely.” When the being arrived to meet them, news reporters from around the world converged on their location. Their demands were simple: this being must leave Earth today. The essence explained that it would accept their terms only after its task was complete. The Reds declined this and waged a full assault against it. Knowing that it could lift its hand and slaughter all the Reds in a matter of seconds, it decided a more aggressive approach was warranted. It wanted to make an example out of them for the world watching.

The being moved so fast that it burst the eardrums of anyone within its vicinity. It punched so hard that it shattered steel into particles and turned a human into a pool of blood. As the being moved through the crowd, killing copious numbers of Reds, the weather began to shift to freezing temperatures, something that wasn’t possible given the location and time. It was confirmed that this being was indeed responsible for changing the weather somehow. The world watched in horror as this being slaughtered a million people with its bare hands. The leader of the Reds was saved for last, frozen in fear and shock, unable to move. He pleaded for his life as the being walked toward him ever so slowly, and as the being placed its hand on the leader’s chest, his head swelled, his eyes bolded, his jaw tightened, and his skin retracted. The world watched as the life force within him was literally sucked out. From that day forward, the being took up the moniker of God. The world finally realized the gravity of their situation, and from that day forward, no one dared to challenge God again.

A year passed, and as the day of remembrance for the lives lost during the Reds’ slaughter neared, reports of a meteor heading to Earth put all things on hold and put the world on notice. To reassure humanity that it was there to help, God arrived at the location that the meteor was expected to hit, lifted its arm, aimed its hand toward the direction of the meteor, and waited for impact as hordes of people and news reporters covered the surrounding area.

As the meteor got closer, it began to decrease its speed. As it neared the ground, it completely stopped in midair; the rocks fell, and what emerged from inside was another humanoid being, looking almost exactly like God, with a few slight differences. Movement in the world, for the second time in recorded history, ceased completely.

Back in jail, Jaxon couldn’t believe what he was seeing. There, in front of him and everyone else, was a second being, one he did not create. He had a few ideas of how it might’ve happened, like the splitting of atoms and fission, but for now, he and the world had more questions than answers. The new being stood there in a deadlock with God. Nearly two days passed before God spoke: “Who and what are you?”

The second being took a few seconds to respond and replied with a raspy voice: “Death…”

Preamble…

Picking up from the cliffhanger where book one, *The Man Who Became God,* left off, book two follows the storyline of Jaxon Alexander Carter’s creation. Jaxon was a renowned scientist who lost his only son to a school bombing that was caused by a radical member of the Red Warriors, a militant group that had declared open war on world governments and all their supporters. Jaxon created what he believed to be the solution to senseless killing and to all the world's problems: a new system of judge, jury, and executioner. After the world discovered what he had done, Jaxon was arrested and locked away in a wet, dark, and cold prison where he now waits for his own judgment...

Chapter 1:

*The Topic of God*

# “If God exists, then who created God?”

At first, this new being, like the original one, did not speak or move. It stood six feet tall with a muscular build, covered in a grayish-colored, leather-like suit, nearly identical to the original being’s, except for a color difference. In this new entity’s eyes, both the sclera and irises were completely black compared to God’s, which reflected the universe. Both made eye contact with each other, but neither spoke. The world couldn’t believe what it was seeing, for the second time! Everyone started to question whether the first being had lied about everything. Was it really a human before, an alien race of some sort, or a part of something bigger?

All these questions were back on the table again. If it did lie, then who and what were they? The military figured that because this new being was similar to the first one—in appearance and in shape—attempting to capture it would have the same results as the first time. Therefore, they concluded that it wouldn’t be fruitful, so they camped and waited.

Two entire days had passed since the arrival of the second entity. Then suddenly, the ground around the two started to tremor, attracting everyone’s attention. It was as though the tension that everyone was feeling was physically manifesting itself. The original being who had now taken up the moniker of God spoke again, “Who and what exactly are you?”

The second being replied in a raspy tone with a deeper undertone, “The Angel of Death.”

Seconds later, gunshots rang out before God could reply. The crowd surrounding the two fell to the ground for cover and scattered all over the place, screaming as they did so. One after the other, bodies collapsed as bullet holes were clearly visible on their now-mangled bodies. Grenades were propelled toward both beings, exploding as they did so. Then, a man from within the crowd came out and launched a missile from a rocket launcher that made direct impact with God. As the area where the two beings stood became covered in dust and smoke, the heavy gunfire steadily slowed to a stop. Bodies of bystanders lay dead, and the survivors slowly regrouped to see what was happening.

As they did, they witnessed five men carrying assault rifles, walking toward the lingering cloud of dust where the grenades had exploded, where the beings stood; these men were the last remnants of the Red Warriors! “We knew you would come here to do your hero shit to stop that meteor. That’s why we’re here. We were planning to wait until you were done with that to attack you, but now that there’s two of you, that kind of forced our hand.”

The dust started to clear, and a figure’s silhouette began to take shape. As the men stood there, eager to see if their surprise attack had worked, the crowd behind them watched in horror and fear. These men’s reckless acts had already taken countless lives of innocent people, which meant that anyone could be next. The cameramen were still alive, and the recording continued to show and broadcast the event as it unfolded.

“I think we got ‘em, boys! If we hadn’t—”

Before he could finish his statement, his body turned into a pink mist, and the crowd jolted in astonishment. Neither the crowd nor his fellow men saw what had happened to him. Out of shock and terror, the remaining Reds unleashed every last bullet they had into the clearing smoke. Then, one after another, the few men left started to die gradually. As he was firing his rifle, one man began to feel lightheaded and noticed that he was also losing sensation in his hand. Looking down, he saw both of his arms lying on the ground, but he couldn’t make sense of it. Blood shot out from his torn limbs, and before anyone noticed, he was dead before his body hit the ground. Following that, another soldier’s head was ripped right from his spine, and the last two turned into pink mist as well.

The crowd, the cameramen, and the world watching didn’t see a thing; no movement, nothing. As the smoke faded, both beings remained in place, their demeanors unchanged. What had just happened was on everyone’s mind.

# The White House, Washington DC

“On top of this, Madam President, we have another situation!” General Miller stated openly as he lowered his phone from his ear.

“A problem bigger than this?” President Cane asked with irritation as she watched what was happening.

“Our battleship, the navy’s USS Arizona, is sitting on the coast of Iraq, where all this is happening. Well, a pilot has gone rogue. He’s hijacked a fighter jet and is heading toward their location right now,” Miller stated.

“What do you mean rogue? Can we contact him? Shoot him down, for fuck’s sake! This is the last thing we need. Whatever the pilot’s planning will only backfire,” Cane voiced with frustration and trepidation.

“We just made contact. Putting him on speaker now,” Miller replied.

“Lieutenant, this is the president speaking. You are not authorized to do anything. Stand down and return to the ship, now! This is a direct order. Stand down!” Cane demanded.

“Madam President, it is an honor to speak to you, despite the circumstances. I’ve followed orders and done what was asked of me throughout my entire career, but just this once, Madam President, this is not an order I can follow. I’m sorry, but my brothers were with the Reds when they stood up against God. Look at how that played out. He slaughtered all of them like it was a typical Tuesday! We had our hands full with the first one, and now there are two of them. I promised I would not stand by again. This is me taking a stand,” Lieutenant Brown replied with conviction.

“Yes, I know how it went with the Reds: we all do. But we also learned that despite the Reds’ effort, as well as ours, and I say ours as in the United Nations, everything we’ve thrown at God has had no effect on him, including the nuclear bombs. I’m ordering you to stand down, or I will order the USS Arizona to use deadly force to bring you down,” Cane stated with resolve.

“Madam President, I have no choice but to gracefully refuse that order. I’m sorry,” Brown stated with sadness.

“You know better than to attack an enemy you know nothing about, especially one with unclear intentions or a reason for being here. We need to understand it first,” Cane responded.

“Its name is Death, Madam President. There’s nothing else to know.” Brown rebutted.

“Last chance. Stand down,” Cane demanded.

“Ma’am, I understand that you have to do what you have to do, and so do I. But I’ve studied God since that day he killed the Reds, including what he did with the bombs. The one thing you all have in common with attacking him is that he saw it coming. His defenses were up. We have no clue what would happen if we hit him when he’s least expecting it. This could be our only chance!” Brown reasoned.

“No! There are military and civilians there. Any bomb you use will hit them as well. It’s not worth the risk. Plus, you’re in a jet, so they’ll hear you coming,” Cane replied.

“You’re probably right, ma’am, but I’m positive they didn’t detect the four Spider bombs I sent their way the moment I flew from the ship! They are untraceable and undetectable, one bomb having the power to level all of Chicago. If they had, they would’ve destroyed them by now. I’m three minutes out from where they’re located. The bombs will make contact in 60 seconds. There’s no way they’ll notice them in time due to the jet’s deceiving sound. This is all part of the plan! I understand the loss of life that will occur, and I will gladly answer for it via the military court or a bullet, but only after these things are dead. I know the cost of my decision, and I believe them to be acceptable. God bless America—no. God bless all of humanity. One world, one people. Lieutenant Brown over and out!”

“We lost him, Madam President. What do you want us to do now?” Miller asked.

“There’s nothing we can do but watch,” Cane replied as she whispered to herself, “but I pray something good comes out of this.”

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Meanwhile, the spectators watched as God and Death continued their standoff. Then, without warning, the bombs honed-in on the two of them. Just as Brown predicted, no one had noticed, not even the gods. Before anyone could react or utter a single word, the bombs struck both God and Death with full force.

As Lieutenant Brown flew over the area where the bombs had impacted, he looked down to see the expected carnage of flesh and damage. But to his surprise, there was none of any kind. He couldn’t make any sense of it. The bombs did find their targets, but what Brown did not know was that moments before he had passed by, something had happened.

As the bombs detonated, the fire brewing from it reverted inward, like water being sucked down a drain. God had absorbed most of the blast like a dry sponge soaking up spilled milk. The other half of the blast, which flowed around Death’s body like a river flowing around a boulder, reduced, and condensed itself. It was more like the equivalent of a person picking up a heap of snow and squeezing it into a snowball. It then hovered in place, right in front of Death.

The news cameras zoomed in on what they were witnessing. Those in the White House and the world at large continued to observe the broadcast. And though they were unable to comprehend, they still watched intently.

As Brown began to grasp what was happening, he realized that his plan had failed. Humanity had lost. As he refocused his attention, it occurred to him that he had no choice but to surrender himself to the navy. Without looking, God lifted His arm and aimed His hand toward the jet that Brown was flying. Its body slightly expanded, glowing a dark reddish color. Then, from its palm, it discharged a raging fire toward the jet, like water being shot out of a water hose. It was the same blast from the Spider bombs’ impact. Not only did God absorb the bombs, but he was also able to reuse that same energy.

Before Brown could react, his jet became engulfed in fire and disintegrated, leaving no trace of it or him to be found.

The compressed energy that hovered in front of Death soon vanished. Seconds later, a loud explosion erupted that shook the ground, mimicking that of an earthquake. As people braced themselves, pieces of what seemed to be from a warship were seen flying through the sky, slamming into cars, buildings, and bystanders. The USS Arizona had been completely obliterated from what most theorized to be the compressed energy that floated before Death.

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“He blew up the USS Arizon-zona… without moving… at all?” Cane questioned with complete shock and dismay.

“One can absorb energy while the other can warp it, or are those powers interchangeable among them? If God had used that trick when we attacked him with our nuclear bombs… we really… never had a chance to live...” Miller stated hopelessly.

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Completely unbothered by the chain of events that had just transpired, God retracted his arm and laid it to His side. During all of this, neither God nor Death turned their attention from each other, not even for a split second.

“No such physical entity of ‘Death’ exists. I will not ask again. Who and what are you?” God responded sternly as if nothing had happened.

“No such physical ‘God’ existed before your creation either, but here you stand,” Death countered in a mocking tone.

The world stood still in terror and nervousness. This new being came with a personality. And like God, when Death spoke, every person listening heard him in their native tongue. These two beings were both able to speak every language all at once, but unlike God, this new being spoke with sarcasm—a human trait. It remained unclear whether this new development was a good or bad sign, only that it was one.

“By now, you’ve judged the situation at hand. You know I’m like you, and fighting me in any way would result in Earth’s destruction, which is something that neither of us wants. So, let me explain why I’m here, my purpose. It is because both you and these repulsive humans already know what I am. But once I’ve explained my reasoning, you humans,” he said as he turned his head toward the cameras and onlookers, “will have a decision to make. And neither option will be a good one,” Death stated curtly.

# The White House War Room, Washington, DC

“Ma’am, if we thought things were bad before, I have a feeling it just got a lot worse. How do you want to proceed?” Miller queried.

“No weapon, bomb, or strategy we have employed on the first being worked. I have very little confidence that any of it would work on the second one, either. Let’s hope the two of them don’t join forces! We’ll have to do the one thing we can always do,” Cane stated, clearly uneased.

“Which is?” Miller questioned.

“We wait,” Cane stated with hesitation.

After the Reds’ death and the start of a new society, the world was progressively moving forward. Life was good, and things were great for most people. Now that this new being had arrived, no one felt safe nor had any peace of mind anymore. The security God had offered was now fading away.

Back at Carter’s Research and Development Labs, which he now runs, having watched the breaking news on television as it unfolded, Dr. Jacob St. Patrick sat down at his office desk and took off his glasses. His heart started racing as if he had just biked six miles and run two. He darted up and hurried to close his office door before returning to his desk to further assess what was happening on TV. His pounding heartbeat wasn’t from fear of the unknown about this second being but one of exhilaration and joy. His pet project had finally arrived!

In Iraq, the news vans and helicopters zoomed in on Death as he began to speak, “J. Robert Oppenheimer, known as the father of the atomic bomb, was a chief scientist of the Manhattan Project, which was responsible for manufacturing the bombs dropped on Japan during World War II. After he witnessed how powerful and destructive his work was, he spent the rest of his life fighting against the creation of other related weapons. He hated what he had created and came to believe that it was a grave mistake. I’m sure you’re all wondering what that story means, and it will all make sense in due time. But for now, as to my creation, I, too, was once human. However, unlike you, God, I wasn’t lied to; my creator didn’t hide secrets from me or attempt to erase my memory. But his story is not for me to tell. So, without further ado, I present you all to my creator.” Then, waving his hands with no real effort, Death said, “Dr. Jacob St. Patrick!”

Abruptly taken from his desk in the US and brought to Iraq’s frontline where God and Death stood, Jacob looked around in confusion. He couldn’t quite fathom the fact that he was somehow transported in a matter of seconds from one part of the planet to another. When he noticed Death standing above him, Jacob looked out into the crowds as they looked back at him in disbelief.

Jacob gathered himself, dusted off the dirt that befouled his seven-thousand-dollar Brioni suit, and rose with confidence and a smirk as he stood in the presence of gods. Thereafter, a voice was heard in the distance as it started to get closer. Jacob looked around to pinpoint its source. Two men were walking toward him, one holding a camera and the other a microphone.

“Hi, Dr. Jacob St. Patrick. I’m Eric Johnson from Channel 8 News. I have a few questions to ask you.”

The world and the gods turned their attention toward Eric. “Sure. Ask me whatever you’d like,” Jacob replied smugly, opening his suit jacket and putting both hands on his waist.

“Is it true that you created these entities, and if so, for what purpose?” Eric asked.

“You’re half right!” Jacob laughed hysterically. “I created this god, Death!” He pointed at Death with both hands in a dramatic gesture. “Or should I call you Death-God?” he asked rhetorically. “But a man who used to be a really good friend and former coworker, Dr. Jaxon Alexander Carter, created this one,” he stated, pointing toward God. “He’s probably locked up in some shit-hole jail cell by now, cursing his own failure and stupidity for getting caught, unlike yours truly,” Jacob gloated and stated with authority.

“Okay, so you only created one. Death. Got it… but why create it at all? And did you and Dr. Carter work together to create these things?” Eric questioned.

“No, we did not. And if you hadn’t interrupted me, I would’ve told you and the world everything y’all wanted to know already!” Jacob responded with irritation.

“You’re right. My apologies,” Eric stuttered while adjusting his glasses.

“Okay, well, since we’re at the point of no return, and you’re all going to die anyhow, I guess I can tell you sons of bitches the truth!” Jacob spewed out.

The world looked in astonishment and shocked as Jacob paced back and forward next to Death. He took a deep breath, looked around, as he gathered his thoughts and then spoke, “I was 36 years old, happily divorced and had no kids that I knew of. I simply didn’t have the time for them as my career was thriving! Then one day, I was leaving work when I received a call from Jones’ hospital. I heard a voice, one I hadn’t heard in years, but I recognized whose voice it was the second she spoke. My heart started racing like that of a kid receiving their favorite food or candy. I couldn’t believe it was my ex from college, Jessica. Without saying too much, she asked me to come to the hospital, and like a dog running to meet its owner at the door, I drove there at full speed. I walked into the room where she was, and it seemed like I was seeing her for the first time again. I guess from my momentary lapse in nostalgia, I had failed to ask the most obvious thing: the reason she was in the hospital. Her dark brown skin had lost its chocolate color. She had dark circles under her eyes, and her once full-figured body looked to be borderline anorexic now. It had been fourteen years since I last saw that smile, but nothing had changed. All those old feelings and the warmth of happiness I once felt for her came rushing back to the surface. It was crazy! Her voice was so weak and tired, like she hadn’t rested in days. I walked up to her, and for some uncontrollable reason, I started crying as I looked at her. Then, she made a joke saying, ‘It’s only cancer.’ See, that was our thing back in college. We were facetious about everything, and that was actually how we met in college. She made this bad joke about someone crying that their cat died and said, ‘I guess it lived its last life.’ And when I tell you, I’d never laughed so hard. But anyways, after reminiscing about our time together in college, a kid waltzed into the room with a cup of ice and gave it to her. She looked at him while taking the cup and then slowly looked back over at me. Then, at that moment, I knew why she had called. She explained that she didn’t tell me about him because she didn’t want to derail my life or future career plans. And she was right. If she had told me, I would’ve committed everything to her and Marcus. But then, I wouldn’t be the man I am today. Still, I wouldn’t have cared. I felt I had the right to know, and knowing this, I made the change she feared I would. The week after her discharge, they moved in with me. The treatments had taken a toll on her mentally, physically, and financially. For the next several months, we made the most of our time together. I had planned to tell Jaxon about Marcus after Jessica’s passing, but he was all over the place with his own life. He was rambling on about creating a ‘superhuman,’ and for obvious reasons, I decided against telling him anything. But after Jessica passed, things took a turn and started to get more complicated for me. I had to manage work and now learn to care for another person I didn’t really know but loved wholeheartedly. In that short time after his mother passed, we became even closer than we had been. Life wasn’t perfect, but it was really close. Then the Red Warriors bared their fangs and planted their seeds of war. My son became a fucking casualty in that war because he was enrolled in Hamilton High School at the time,” he yelled with frustration. “After my loss, what Jaxon had said about creating a ‘superhuman’ didn’t seem so far-fetched anymore. At that moment, it dawned on me that humanity as a whole had failed, society in general, and people in particular. And I decided that in one way or the other, I would get my revenge on the Reds and this goddamn world. And that train of thought gave birth to what you see now,” he followed, pointing at Death. “To create a ‘superhuman’ was fairly easier to do than I had originally thought. I followed Jaxon everywhere he went after I had confirmed what he was doing. Admittedly, it took some time because he was so damn cautious. But I managed to find his secret lab where he was doing his work and bribed Rawson, the other scientist working with him, to help me do what he was already doing with Jaxon. And since his only loyalty was to the almighty dollar, that part was easy. The outcome that Jaxon and I wanted with creating these things was fundamentally different. I knew for a fact that Jaxon wanted some loving ‘let’s be fair’ bullshit to happen, but I didn’t want mine to play nice or give judgment. For me, I had created Death for one purpose; to kill every single human on Earth besides myself and a selected few. Once my superhuman was completed, long after Jaxon’s was, I had arranged a natural death for Rawson. You can’t trust a guy like that with a secret like this. And yes, I’m confessing to murder because who gives a shit at this point in the game?” he asked smugly. “When the first God had arrived, I knew it wasn’t mine because he demanded to speak to the world leaders. Mine would’ve done exactly what Death did when he had arrived, fuck shit up!” And that is how this all came to be,” Jacob stated as he took a bow in a mocking manner.

The crowd stood silently. Jacob chuckled as he walked closer to Death to show and taunt the world that a god protected him.

“There you have it, the full story of my creation and existence,” Death said as he placed his hand on Jacob’s shoulder, reaffirming his belief that he was being protected.

“Yeah, that’s right. This is the end of days, you stupid fucks! You—” Jacob yelled out, interrupted by gunshots.

The crowd ducked as they tried to identify what direction the shots were coming from. An older man who looked to be in his mid to late 50s appeared, dressed in an old army outfit. He had a spotty beard, a faded military haircut and yellow teeth from what seemed to be countless years of smoking cigarettes and drinking hard whiskey. He had a twitch in his right eye, and his lip leaned to the left side whenever he spoke. His pale sun-damaged skin rested with heavy wrinkles, and the light in his eyes showed that he was still fighting his own demons. This man was responsible for the shooting, aiming the now empty gun at Jacob’s face as he stood nearly 50 feet away from him. His attempt to assassinate Jacob failed. Death stepped in front of the bullets before they made contact, and thus, they had no effect.

The mysterious male spoke, “I’ve served in the United States Army for 23 years. Saw some shit and did a lot worse. The fight between you and me are two different ones. I don’t care for your explanation of why you or that damn Dr. Carter did what you did, but I swore to protect my country from all enemies: foreign and domestic. And you, sir, are a piece of shit that never should’ve been born. You deserve to die right here, right now, like a fucking dog.” with rabies! I have no regrets, just that I wish I had more bullets. My rank is sergeant, my first name is Kick, and my last name is Ass. Call me Sergeant Kick Ass. And you will remember me.”

“There will be no killing until my creator has concluded his speech, Kindleback. That includes your soon-to-come demise as well,” Death stated.

“On any terms, I’m always ready and prepared at any moment to meet my fucking maker. And how do you know my damn name?” Kindleback exclaimed with fierceness while asking in astonishment with a crack in his voice as he coughed.

“It is written on your jacket, you vulgar creature,” Death replied in an annoyed tone as he pointed at the nametag that rested on the old uniform Kindleback wore.

“Well, I don’t give a shit. Fuck you, Death! Fuck you too, God and fuck you, St. Patrick. Most of all, fuck you, Jaxon, wherever the hell you’re at for starting this shit show!”

“Kindleback, you say one more word or interrupt us again, I will rip your heart out of your chest and make you watch it as it gradually slows to a stop. Now, as you were saying, Jacob,” Death said sinisterly while moving back to his original position as the surrounding crowd stood back up and refocused their attention on the two.

“Now, that was fucking exciting! Am I right?” Jacob declared loudly and sarcastically. “But, picking up where I left off, you all took the only thing that meant something to me in this lonely world, so I created something that will take everything from you all. Hold your kids close, kiss those dear to you and reminisce on the good times with one another, because this is the end,” Jacob yelled out at the crowd and news cameras as Death once again placed his hand firmly on his shoulder. “All of you fucking deserve this!”

“So, you can stop this thing from killing us, but you won’t? What happened to your son is despicable, but that doesn’t warrant your actions toward humanity’s complete eradication!” Eric yelled out.

“I do not have the means or knowledge to kill Death or God, but for that matter, even if I did, I wouldn’t dare do it or share it,” Jacob replied with arrogance.

Death stopped Jacob from replying further and started to speak, “He has told his story and what led to my creation. And he blames you all.” He pointed his other hand toward the crowd. “Both his struggles and pain are validated and justified in his eyes, and it explains why he created me. His damnation of the world is what he believes has led to his salvation… but he’s wrong.”

Startled, Jacob immediately looked up at Death, who slowly turned his face down to make eye contact with him. Jacob couldn’t speak anymore, and he couldn’t move anything besides his eyes which darted back and forward. Death’s pitch-black eyes stayed fixed and unchanged as they stared into Jacob’s. One side of Jacob’s face started to slowly move on its own as though it was sliding, while the other side started doing the same. Eric zoomed in on Jacob’s face, and the world saw firsthand what was happening to him. His face and his skin were sliding off his bones. He was being melted alive. Piece by piece, his flesh fell from his body in chunks like wax from a lit candle. Unable to speak, scream or move, Jacob helplessly stood there as his eyeballs slowly slid down past his nose, and his entire face followed suit. Blood poured out from his eye sockets, and before his body hit the floor, only his seven-thousand-dollar blood-soaked Brioni suit remained. Every soul watching was completely mortified.

As they witnessed in disbelief, Death replied, “Unlike Oppenheimer, you regret nothing of what you’ve done, and for that, you pay with your life.”

Now looking at the crowd, he spoke directly to them, “He was the worst of your kind. His actions in creating me made him the single biggest killer in the history of humanity. His actions superseded Mao Zedong, who held the title of the greatest mass murderer of all time, killing an estimated 60 million people, or Joseph Stalin, with 40 million deaths to his name, even surpassing the notorious Adolf Hitler, who claimed 30 million in his wake. Dr. Jaxon Alexander Carter, who created my counterpart, God, doesn’t equate to Jacob’s actions of creating me. Unlike myself, God was offered the sole choice of giving you unpleasant creatures a second chance. I was conceived to simply bring about death and destruction to the billions of you—”

“Then, why not let my bullets kill him?” Kindleback questioned, interrupting Death.

Before anyone could register what was happening, the sound barrier was broken, shuttering some people’s eardrums. As those people yelled from the sudden and intense pain, Death rushed over and stood next to Kindleback. Before he could blink, Death reached inside his chest cavity and pulled out his heart. As it was beating with its veins and arteries still connected to it, he lifted Kindleback’s hand, placed his heart in it and forced him to watch it as it beat slower with every passing second. Kindleback stood motionless as his heart came to a stop.

The crowd gasped. Unbothered and seemingly uncaring, God did absolutely nothing but observe.

Death then turned back toward the crowd and continued to speak, “Although I agree with his plan, that all you vile creatures need to go, I disagree with his methods. He wanted everyone to suffer a cruel and painful death regardless of who played a part in his son's death. Your roles in society, age, and life—none of it played a factor in his decision. So, what he thought was his salvation is what led to his ultimate damnation. Isn’t that ironic? You humans can only see the sun but completely and willfully ignore the universe… he asked for all humans to die but somehow expected to make it out unscathed while being a human himself.”

Death pondered for a moment, then continued, “A book published in 1979, titled Sophie's Choice, tells the story of Sophie and her time at Auschwitz, one of the Nazi concentration camps during World War II. She was forced to choose one of her children to be sent to the gas chamber. Otherwise, they would’ve sent both. She loved them both equally, making the decision nearly impossible to make. Ultimately, she chose to send her daughter, Eva, to save her son. There are often decisions where no outcome is desirable, and that makes them almost impossible. Sophie's choice is what they’ve come to be known as. And, like Sophie, you all have an unfeasible decision to make. In the spirit of one of your most popular holy texts, Genesis 2:2-3, the New King James Version says that your God created, or more specifically, ended his work and rested on the seventh day. So, I shall do something in that same breath. I will rest for six days and end this world on the seventh. You all have one week to make peace with yourselves, your families and with what’s to come next. Your options are as follows: One, do not accept your fates as they are, death by my hand. So, defy me, unite under one banner, and make one last stand for humanity. Try to find a way to kill me if such a thing is possible. If successful, you humans can carry on living like the swine you are. Still, the probability of finding a way to kill me and actually bringing it to fruition within the remaining time you all have left is less than 3 percent.”

Death shifted slightly and proceeded to say, “Then there’s option two. Save me time and kill each other. Every human above the age of one year old dies with no exceptions. But taking this route means that you people will do just as your bible says. Mark 13:12, *A brother will betray his brother to death, a father will betray his own child, and children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed.* Isn’t that too ironic? Also, I know that letting only the children live without parental influence and protection means the chances of them surviving are not advantageous. Still, if humanity is meant to live, then it shall. Social Darwinism will be tested, and natural selection will run its course. Only the fittest shall survive. And for those surviving young ones will be raised and cultivated by my hand alone. They will come to know and understand the sciences of the world, histories, and constructs in my image while remaining unaffected by their historical past. It would be the rebirth of society. I’ve told you all from the beginning the options you would be given are not promising... but like Sophie, a choice has to be made.”

Then, stating in a somber tone, “Last, it should be stated that it was no mistake that I landed here in what you call Iraq. I did so intentionally due to the country’s past, back when it was referred to as Mesopotamia, the ‘Cradle of Civilization.’ I see it as a good place to end what began here. And so, I will count today as day one of a new era’s dawn… but be warned, choose option one, and I will slaughter each and every one of you. I will scorch this Earth of every human, starting with pregnant women and finishing with the elderly. I will bathe in your pain and suffering, and it will last far longer than one week.”

Although very few might have taken Death’s words as a hyperbolic statement, the majority of the people knew that he was deadly serious from what they had witnessed so far. Then, like a sheet of paper set on fire, Death’s body started to disintegrate and turn into ash that floated on the wind as he uttered, “One week is all you have.”

God, too, soon disappeared. His body flickered away as the crowd’s quietness turned into sorrow and wails.

“Fucking St. Patrick,” Eric, the reporter, vented out as he cried a waterfall of tears.

Chapter 2:

*The Birth of the Red Novas*

***“If God exists, then he is either all-good or all-powerful, but he cannot be both.”***

After Death gave his ultimatum, the world erupted in panic.

# The White House War Room, Washington, DC

After seeing the fallout of what had unfolded with God and Death, everyone was fearful, including the president and her trusted counsel.

“Madam President, we need to get you to a secured location,” said General Miller, knowing that anarchy would soon be upon them.

Cane replied, “We’re in the White House. This is the safest place on Earth. Call every agency in the books and collect every piece of data that we have on these things. There must be some way to kill them or some weakness we can exploit. I refuse to let a freak in a superhero costume be the cause of my death! Also, let’s convene for an emergency meeting at the UN. We need to come together on this…”

Screams and gunshots were heard within the building of the White House. Reports of a shooter within the building went over the radio. The White House went into Code Red and lockdown.

A Secret Service Agent spoke, “Madam President, we have to move you right away. We have an active shooter in the building!”

Cane responded immediately, “Okay, let’s go. Miller, get me the information I requested as soon as possible!”

As the president and the swarm of agents rushed to the building’s bunker, further reports came over the radio.

“Madam President, the shooter has been eliminated. But now, we must leave the building completely. The White House has been compromised.”

President Cane turned to the agent and asked, “Who was the shooter? Do we have any information?”

“It was Joseph, ma’am.”

“What? Joseph’s been in the secret service for fourteen years with a clean record. Why’d he do it?”

The agent replied without making eye contact, “His daughter was born two months ago, ma’am.”

“I see. So, he’s chosen his side in this war… he wants her to live. Can you blame him?” the president asked rhetorically. “But this is what it’s come to. This is what we’ve become. Dr. Carter and St. Patrick, those two have fucked us over.”

Gunshots, loud bangs, and chaos erupted outside of the White House. Reports from around the world came in as well. Buildings, cars, and homes were set ablaze. Signs were being hung, and crowds were forming, some rejoicing and others grieving the end of days. It was clear that no matter how you felt, everyone had only two options, which Death had made abundantly clear.

Among the chaos that had engulfed the world, the old Red Warriors’ ashes gave root to a new faction, the Red Novas. Accepting the reality of the situation, they knew their lives were forfeited, but at least their children and others across the world could survive. They stood firmly with Death and his plan. They didn’t see it as the mass extinction of the majority of humanity but as the devotion to humanity’s future, as this would not be something anyone took pride in. Still, to save their children, they understood it was necessary, and thus, the last World War had begun.

It was just as Death stated. Brothers, sisters, friends, and families betrayed each other and chose their sides, convictions and principles be damned. As the news of what was happening with Death’s arrival was broadcast around the world, those news feeds were abruptly interrupted by another. The man who hid in the Reds’ shadows now stood at the Novas’ helm. Sitting in a chair in front of a news camera, he asked that the world listen as he shared his story, and that his original group, the Reds, were the ones that had started all of this. As he broadcasted, he first recited a war mantra, “Here’s to the soldiers, the men who came before us. Here’s to the birth of the Red Novas.”

Once it was clear that he had caught most of the world’s attention, he began to speak clearly, “My name is Nickolaj Dimas. Up until three years ago, I served as the right-hand man of the president of Russia and was also the director of the Federal Security Service. I am also the one who created and is responsible for the group formerly known as the Red Warriors. I understand what you all must think of me and the questions you must hold. I will address and answer them all after I state my purpose. Throughout my forty years of service to my country, I’ve served under multiple leaders, prime ministers, and generals. I’ve committed egregious acts for each of them, ranging from bribery of minor officials to assassination of foreign diplomats. The Soviet Union, formally known as the USSR, trained people like me to be brutal. For these same leaders, time and time again, I bore witness to the political worlds behind-the-scenes, the underbelly, or what some would refer to as the Iron Curtain. I came to learn that politicians, regardless of their political party or nation, were all the same. For every promise made, some poor country or person was forced to pay its price. I sat and watched as they made these backhand deals for decades. I first joined the military with pride and hope. I wrapped myself in the ‘nationalism’ of the motherland and carried my idealism of what I thought the job would be like on my sleeve. However, I was slowly exposed to the naked and bare truth of what the real world was like. Politicians were betting on wars, oil prices and civil unrest. It was like unearthing a massive grave full of babies. It was disgusting, and it broke the faith I once held for my country and for humanity. For every problem, bombing, assassination, plane hijacking—you name it—some politician in some filthy suit and a crooked smile knew about it beforehand. I was in the room with the prime minister when the US president was told about the Flint bombing in America two weeks before it happened. I stood next to the director of the MI5 in The Hague as he told his men to stand down when they had the chance and upper hand to take out the guys who later killed 43 people in the Hilton Massacre. These are just a few examples of what I know. Then, when these atrocities came to fruition, these same politicians gave speeches of sorrow and discontent and how they needed to do better, all the while lining their pockets. Their hypocrisy drove me to the point of mental exhaustion. I was beaten. Then came their bastard kids. Every one of them wanted to be just like their parents, hypocritical and all. They took to and embraced the idea of power, and at that moment, I knew I had to do something. This is what gave birth to the Red Warriors. I operated in the shadows for years, only recruiting the most devoted, the most loyal, and the most lethal of like-minded people I could find. I regret none of the actions that the Reds or I took in the pursuit of change. For chaos the only thing needed in such an uncivilized world.”

Nickolaj took a moment only to resume his speech, “The Reds are those who make logical, sound, and scientific decisions based on the information they have. Any person who bears the title of Red Warrior or Red Nova understands this notion well. They are those responsible for making hard and extreme decisions for the betterment of humanity as a whole and never decide for the sole benefit of one single person, race, group, culture, or country. We serve with a unifying, utilitarian mindset, all while employing common sense and sound reasoning. Every action taken shall, for the most part, withstand the test of time. Originally, I had created the Reds with the hope of becoming what the Novas are now: a symbol of hope for humanity. Somewhere along the way, that message got lost in translation. The Novas are the teachers, the dreamers, the scientists, the soldiers, the philosophers, the readers, the pioneers, the mailmen, the garbagemen, the mechanics… The Novas are you; the Novas are me. The Novas are those who understand the past, live in the present, and build for the future. We are those who live in the shadows, surviving off the fumes to serve the light.”

As Nickolaj spoke, those listening from all over the world sat in unions. At this moment, everyone was simply human, and there were no borders between them.

“Collectively, as a race and species, we’ve had numerous chances to change our way of life long ago. In hindsight, we could’ve done much better. We then had another chance when the first ‘God’ arrived. He reminded us that we needed to do better. But where did that get us? Here. How much have we really changed? To this day, even with the new god before Death’s arrival, there were still reports of small-scale conflicts, hate crimes and people dying from starvation. Starvation! So, yeah, not much has changed, but our kids do not need to suffer the consequences of our actions.”

The outside world hung onto every word that came from Nickolaj’s mouth. His manner and the way he spoke carried a sophisticated demeanor. The billions of people listening had begun to think that maybe the Reds weren’t so bad and that Nickolaj’s actions were noble in their own way.

“At the very least, this way, we can die knowing that our bloodlines have a chance to continue, no matter how minuscule. To those who will stand with us and bear the title of Nova, those who are willing to make the hard decision, take your kids to any sports stadium. They will be safe there; we’ll have guards watching over them, and we ask that any doctor or nurse go to these places and watch over these infants until the very end. Still, this won’t protect you from Death. I understand you may want to be with your loved ones in your last moments, but any help will be greatly appreciated. As for those of you who will stand against us, I warn you. Anyone who does not have their kids in a stadium by midnight tonight will be considered an enemy combatant, and your entire family shall be killed, children included. We cannot show mercy, regardless of your prior relationship with friends or families. Once the bond is broken, the history doesn’t matter. It’s time to pick a side. So, here’s to the soldiers, the men who came before us. Here’s to the birth of the Red Novas.”

Just as Nickolaj concluded his speech and ended the transmission of his video as his home door blasted open, several men came rushing in with guns.

“My transmission lasted for exactly seven minutes. It takes you fifteen minutes on a normal day to get to my house, and today is anything but normal. Which implies you were already on your way here beforehand. Right, Aleksei?” Nickolaj asked, recognizing the men.

“Yes, we were already coming for you, regardless of your transmission. And that chant, if I may add, it’s stupid. But yes, I felt it in my heart and knew that someone within our government created the Reds within our very own ranks. I even voiced these concerns to the higher-ups. I explained that the tactics were too familiar and that only a selected few within our government could do this. You were always my number one suspect. I never liked you,” Aleksei replied as he aimed his pistol at Nickolaj. The men who came with him did the same.

“Well, you were right. You have me now. Do what you came here to do, but the message is already out. The Novas are here to stay!” Nickolaj proclaimed with conviction.

“I’m glad you’ve accepted your fate. Had you done your job, lived your life, retired, and died like the rest of us, none of this would’ve ever happened. You may not have created these so-called gods, but you’re the catalyst of it all. Your actions in forming the Reds have led us here,” Aleksei expressed with anger.

“There’s no time to live on ifs. We’re here now. So, shall we get this over with?” Nickolaj asked.

“You know I’m not here to arrest you. And so, if you’re that quick to die, fine by me. Goodbye, comrade. I’ll be seeing you soon,” Aleksei replied.

“I wasn’t speaking to you,” Nickolaj stated.

Aleksei looked confused until he wasn’t. Two of his five men began to sing a chant as Nickolaj joined in, slowly grabbing the gun under his seat, “Here’s to the soldiers, the men who came before us—”

Before the two men could finish their chant, the other men realized what was going on and acted immediately. Then sounds of gunfire overtook the small apartment. After five minutes or so, everything went completely silent, and the light faded from the room...

# Day Two. Puebla, Mexico

“Hurry and eat your food, Meg. Honey, it’s almost time for bed. Jack, come in here and turn that TV off. If we’re going to die, then we can do that as a family as well. We will be right here until they come for us. This is still a house of the Lord and worship: nothing’s changed. No false gods will dictate the terms of how we live and die in this house. Oh, no, they won’t.”

Jack walked into the kitchen as his mother, Karen, finished speaking. Jack first made eye contact with his father, Kenneth, then with his mother, and last with his two younger sisters, Lila and Megan, as they all sat at the kitchen table. Tears started to flow down Jack’s face, and his body began to shake.

“Honey, why are you crying? What’s wrong?” Karen asked Jack nervously.

“Son, talk to us. What’s wrong with you?” Kenneth asked as he finished his food.

“He’s just being a crybaby,” the twins said in unison.

Jack’s tears increased, and he sniveled harder as he slowly pulled out the handgun he had behind his back. Kenneth immediately knocked over his plate and stood up in shock. Karen rushed to the twins and grabbed them.

“What are you doing, son?” asked the panic-stricken Kenneth.

“Sarah just had our baby boy. We were planning to run away in a few weeks after I got the money from my last paycheck before all of this biblical shit started to happen! His name’s Wayne, and he’s two weeks old,” he explained as he wiped his eyes and continued pointing his gun at his family.

“You could’ve told us about this. We would’ve helped you, my boy,” Kenneth pleaded as he tried walking toward Jack in an attempt to get closer to the gun.

“Stop! Stop moving, Dad! I know what you’re doing. We were both in the military. You won’t get to me before I get at least four shots in, and I won’t let you get to my head, either. No matter what you say, I haven’t forgotten how you berated Justin and his girlfriend for having a kid out of wedlock. So, even before all of this, how could I come to you about anything?” Jack yelled out.

“There’s more to that story than you know. Sit down, son. Let’s talk about it, please—” Kenneth insisted.

“So, you’re going to kill us, your family, for a bastard child!” Karen interrupted Kenneth before he finished his train of thought. “Do you not care for your family? We’re living in the last days, and you decide to do this to us? Shame on you!” Karen stated as she pulled Lila and Megan tighter to her chest as tears rolled down their faces.

“It can’t be helped. Death gave us two options, and if we don’t comply, we will all die, either by him or the Novas. There’s nothing any of us can do now. What was I supposed to do, Mom? Dad?” Jack asked, waving the gun at both.

“Son, you could’ve just spoken to us. You still can,” Kenneth pleaded.

“If things were different, I would’ve, I would, but... no, there’s no time to speak of what could’ve been done or what could be,” Jack said as his tears lessened and his crying subsided.

Jack wiped his face one last time and began to whisper a chant that was unclear to the family at first, “Here’s… soldiers… who… before. Here’s to the birth of the Red Novas…”

“Fuck, Jaxon Carter,” Jack yelled out as Kenneth rushed to the gun before it went off. Four loud banging shots resounded and reduced everything to silence.

With his family now gone, Jack cocked the hammer back on his revolver and placed it on his forehead. “Fucking St. Patrick…” One last shot echoed through the house.

# Day Three. United Nations, New York City, USA

“This room has gotten a lot smaller since most leaders didn’t feel the need to come. End of days, and all that jazz. Who would’ve guessed we would be having one of these meetings again so soon?” President Cane stated as the meeting in the UN went underway.

“I should’ve just stayed in Russia; at least I could have died with my countrymen. In the end, we’re all fucked anyhow. Dammit, Nickolaj,” President Viktor stated, visibly conflicted and saddened.

“I don’t get why we’re all here. As it was established last time, these things cannot be killed. We should take this time to be with our loved ones,” Prime Minister Noah stated.

“The Prime Minister’s right. All of this—these meetings and discussions—is all pointless. We had our hands full with one of these gods, and now there’s two of ‘em!” the President of China, Lee, responded.

“Yes, if our nuclear bombs couldn’t do anything to just one of them, then what the hell is all of this for? These things can’t be killed. We’re all fucked!” President Viktor spouted out.

“No. I attended this meeting because we can kill them. They can be killed!” the Nigerian President, Adebiyi, said with excitement as he stood up from his seat while buttoning up his suit.

“What the fuck are you talking about over there, Adebiyi? These things cannot be killed,” President Viktor said forcefully.

“Because of our current predicament, I will forgive your disrespect, Viktor. But getting to the point, remember when God had his showdown with the Red Warriors, then right before he killed the leader, he had that conversation with him. He admitted that he could be killed, and the leader made that joke and asked how to do it, remember? Look up the video… Death also stated there was a chance. Thus, it goes to say that if one can be killed, then they both can. We just have to find out how,” Adebiyi stated optimistically.

The room went quiet as the video footage of the slaughtering of the Reds played on the overhead projector. After the video finished playing and the lights in the room brightened back up, Adebiyi continued speaking, “Reviewing the information we have on God and every word that it has uttered since its arrival, our analyst came across that small but critical information. ‘I can be killed.’”

Everyone in the room stood up. It was as if a beam of sunlight had lit up a dark and damped room.

“Okay, this is a start, but we’re not close to finding out what that weakness he speaks of is,” Prime Minister Noah commented.

“As of now, our focus is Death. God can wait until later. I thought that with the combined intelligence of all our nations, we could figure it out here and now,” President Cane replied.

“I don’t know if you remember this, but we were given a week. I don’t think we’re figuring it out any time soon. We haven’t in all this time, and we’ve had our people looking,” President Viktor said with irritation as he slid his flask out of his suit pocket.

“Well, we can try our best, and maybe you should show more uplifting energy. Your life and your family’s lives are on the line too, you Russian asshole,” President Cane fired back at Viktor.

“Ah! I just got another good idea,” President Adebiyi interrupted before Viktor could respond.

“Well, don’t hold it in. Let us hear it, genius!” Viktor yelled out as everyone turned their attention to President Adebiyi with curiosity.

25

“If we were to use the combined intelligence of our nations, as well as every citizen’s on this planet, we might have a real shot at figuring out these beings’ weaknesses,” Adebiyi sputtered out.

“Our nations’ resources I get, but every citizen’s as well? How do you suppose we do that, and what information could a citizen provide that our people who are trained to do this couldn’t? To reach out and contact every citizen on Earth is a far-fetched, borderline impossible concept,” Noah replied.

“And in the middle of this fucking global civil war that Nickolaj started,” Viktor spat out the name like rotting caviar.

Pointing to his smartwatch and phone, Adebiyi smiled. “We use these! Last year, our nations collectively bought out every phone company on the planet and united them all into one, thus establishing ‘World-We’ free global Wi-Fi for the entire world. We gave free smartwatches and smartphones to everyone who didn’t already have one, keeping everyone connected. So, why not use them? Then, for those people that do not have access to a cell phone, like prisoners, we will tell all prisons to give inmates access to one. Every person matters since this affects all of us. More so, it was last estimated that 8.5 out of 9 billion people are registered on it. Out of all those people combined with our nations’ already gathered and now shared resources, I’m more than positive we can find the information we’re looking for. At the very least, someone in this world might have intel or an idea we haven’t thought of or accounted for,” Adebiyi replied with eagerness.

“If our days are to end, at least let’s go out swinging,” President Viktor said as he put away his flask and stood up with a renewed determination.

“Good idea! Okay, let’s get started then. Bring up the link to connect to everyone and ask them to submit any intel, surveillance, or information they may have that could possibly help us. Any and all information will be considered,” President Cane remarked.

As everyone started to move around the room with excitement, the projector showed all humans who were connected and listening as they viewed the UN. Then suddenly, a loud bang that was followed by a loud boom rocked the building and caused some windows to shatter. Gunfire was soon heard right from outside the UN. Security within the room received reports from the outside guards that insurgents were attacking the building.

The people within the UN as well as those viewing it reacted in disbelief. This militia numbered in the thousands. Not much was clear, but their murderous intent to kill every member of the UN was felt. Everyone rushed to the window to get a visual of what exactly was going on outside. As they looked down onto the street, they saw a huge mass of people who were all heavily armed.

One man walked up with a megaphone and began to speak, “It is because of the actions of you so-called leaders that have led us to these trying times, for goodness’ sake. Your decisions didn’t put us in this situation once, but twice! Each one of you will die very slowly and painfully. The only good politician is a dead one! Consider being killed by our hands as a gift from your loyal citizens, one of sincerity. Just think, no matter what we do to you, it will be a lot easier than what Death or that self-proclaimed God would have done. Now, as you all literally look down at us from your Tower of Babel, you can see that your people are dead. You are leaders no more. Well, except to lead the damned in hell. We have the building surrounded, and there’s nowhere to go. You all have exactly five minutes to come out, or we’re coming in. The clock starts now, and in the meantime, we shall sing you all a song to pass the time.”

The leader of the militia mockingly bowed his head as he finished his statement, and the small army started chanting, and random gunshots followed. “Here’s to the soldiers, the men who came before us. Here’s to the birth of the Red Novas. To the brave-hearted men that lifted their chin to fight against those who would dare stand against them. To the strong ladies who fought so bravely. To the children who protected their loved ones daily. And to the lovely change that now falls upon us all, ever so greatly! Here’s to the soldiers…”

“Are you fucking serious? We’re trying to save the world, and we have these fucks to contend with? No such thing as an easy day,” Cane replied with extreme frustration.

“What are our options? Can we make it to the helicopters on the roof? What about safe rooms? This cannot be the end,” Lee asked frantically.

“No, there wouldn’t be time for that, and even if we did, I suspect those rocket launchers they’re carrying would cut our flight plan short. I think Americans have a term for this kind of situation. We’re fucked,” Adebiyi stated with contempt.

“Fucking St. Patrick,” Noah said.

“So, we hunker down, give everyone a gun, barricade the doors, and pray for a miracle. God knows we need one or two of those, for that matter,” Cane said.

“Call your most trusted advisers and have them begin to sort through the crowd-sourced intel… this isn’t the end, and regardless of whether it is or not, we have a duty to do what we can until the very end. So, get to it until we can’t,” Viktor stated with conviction.

The army’s singing got louder, and before anyone else in the room could say another word, the voice of the militia leader was heard again, “Time’s up. Here we come.”

A loud cheer rang out in bloodthirsty affirmative, and a bang shook the building. Every person in the room hid behind cover and waited for what would inevitably come through those doors. A few more loud bangs and a few screams were heard, and suddenly, the noise stopped. The tension within the room was amplified by a thousand, and you could hear the beads of sweat as they slowly crept down the face of everyone in the room.

The building went dead silent, and a few seconds later, Death appeared out of thin air with no warning whatsoever.

Still frozen, everyone continued to aim their weapons at the door while also glaring at Death. They soon realized that they no longer needed to. Death had slaughtered the militia. As they slowly turned their complete attention toward him, the bigger question that now occupied everyone’s mind was simple: Why was he here?

Chapter 3:

*Perpetual Motion*

***“…Once set in motion, would continue in motion forever...”***

***“…I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul...”***

***Day Four. Liverpool, England***

“Daddy, are you okay? Why are you and Mom crying? Are you hurt or something?”

“It’s complicated, Little Mouse. But yes, we’re okay. We’re just crying because we’re so happy that today is your fifth birthday. You’ve grown up, Airy. Your stepmom, Zendaya, and I love you and your sister so much.”

“I thought we were supposed to be happy for birthdays, Daddy?” Airy questioned.

“We are, Little Mouse. We are! Did you and Nina eat cake?” Zendaya asked.

“Yes, we did! We ate all of our cakes, Mom. I finished mine before Airy, though. We raced to see who would win, and I did! We made sure Dad ate his, too,” Nina exclaimed with excitement.

“Is that right? Good job, girls!” Zendaya jokingly replied.

Zendaya and her husband both made eye contact and nodded at one another in agreement as they sat on the couch. They kept the girls between them and held each other’s hands.

The dad whispered to Zendaya, “And you are sure it will be enough?”

“Yes, I’m a veterinarian. Well, I was,” Zendaya replied. “So, I know how to make sure we go peacefully without pain. It should kick in within the next two minutes. I love you so much, Chris, even in death,” Zendaya replied as the tears started to roll down her sadden face. Chris squeezed Zendaya’s hand tighter in an effort not to show tears or worry his daughters.

“Okay, girls. Get closer. Let’s have a big group hug. Then after that, we’ll all take a nap, and when we wake up, we can go get ice cream! How’s that sound, ladies?”

“Yes! May we get two flavors this time? Last time you only let us get one,” Airy asked.

“How about we get three flavors?” Zendaya replied calmly, noticing that the drugs had begun to take effect.

“Yay! Happy birthday to us, Airy! Airy?” Nina asked and waited for Airy to reply.

Both parents made eye contact again and whispered to each other, “I love you.”

“She fell asleep from too much excitement, Little Bunny. Come on, let’s join her,” Chris replied to calm Nina.

The sound of the TV playing in the living room grew louder as the house went stale and quiet.

# Hong Kong, China

“Turn off the TV. There’s no need for us to watch or listen to that anymore. We both know what that is. I only wish we could hold Li Hua one more time before the end unfolds. That is my only regret.”

“Bao, she ran away years ago. Perhaps, just maybe, we were too strict with her. I only wish she has someone she loves next to her in her last moments.”

“I’m sure she does, Yue. I’m sure she does,” Bao replied as their doorbell rang.

Both Bao and Yue walked to see who was at the door, expecting it to be a neighbor in need. But to their surprise, Li Hua, their daughter, who had run away at the ripe age of 16, was standing at the other side of the door. Now she has returned as a grown woman.

“I’m sorry, I’m so sorry for everything. I’ve missed you both so much. Please forgive me,” Li Hua pleaded while covered in tears.

Unable to believe their eyes, Bao and Yue cried uncontrollably as they embraced their long-lost daughter.

“My beautiful, sweet daughter, there’s no way we can ever stay mad at you. We’re glad that you’re back. Welcome home, come in, come in.”

# United Nations, New York City, USA

“Yes, they’re all dead. I could not allow them to kill any of you repulsive creatures before I’ve had a discussion with you. My reason for coming here is to get clarification and also to give it.” The air in the room went cold as Death spoke.

“You are the so-called leaders of your nations, and so, your voices speak for billions. With that being said, I have a simple question, and I expect you all to answer me. For doing so, I will answer exactly three questions from all of you as a whole. Are my terms understood?”

For a second, the room went utterly silent until everyone, but one person replied in unison, “Yes.”

President Kurt of the Republic of Molossia uttered under his breath, “I won’t comply with a terrorist demand on any terms—” Just as he was finishing his statement, Death appeared inches before him and grabbed him by the throat, lifting him from his seat with one hand, all in a blink of an eye. Kurt’s personal security unloaded almost every bullet in their guns at Death while the rest of the room took cover. The bullets whizzed through the air, making contact with Death, but as expected, they had no effect.

Death looked Kurt in the eyes as he spoke to him. “As I said, I expect an answer and response from every single person here. And since you’ve refused to comply, you no longer need to speak.”

Death tightened his grip around Kurt’s throat and used his other hand to rip out his tongue as the room watched apprehensively. Cauterizing the ripped flesh as he did so, Death attempted not to let Kurt bleed out. Although, he did enjoy watching humans in pain. Once done, he dropped Kurt back into his seat and stated, as he slaughtered the two guards who shot at him, “Despite the immense agony you’re feeling, interrupt me again while I speak, even with a moan, and I will rip the flesh and meat from your bones before your heart finishes pumping its last pump. I will do the exact same thing to your family as well.”

Understanding the choices before him and despite the excruciating pain his body was already experiencing, Kurt lurched over to his now-dead security guard’s body and pried the gun from his hand. He checked to make sure it still had a bullet in it, then put it to his chin and pulled the trigger. His blood and brain matter covered the wall behind him... Kurt had concluded that a quick death would be better than a painful one, and, in this action, he gave his family a bit more time to enjoy each other’s company.

Despite all of what had just unfolded, Death showed no reaction, just as he did with the situation of Kindleback. He then looked back at the crowd and continued to speak, “Answer my one question, and I shall answer three of yours. It is the least I can do.”

“Ask your question,” Lee voiced fearfully. The room waited in anticipation of Death’s question.

“Why should humanity be allowed to continue living?” Death asked.

“Our purpose? Why should we be allowed to live?” Viktor restated.

“I will not repeat the question, and you all have three minutes to answer it,” Death replied.

“We do not deserve to die. Yes, we’ve caused our fair share of destruction in this world, but we’ve also produced great advantages for it as well. Ranging from helping defenseless animals to building protected zones for trees and plants, we established the Endangered Species Act. There are some of us who hurt and destroy, but there are also billions of us who strive for better, who promote the welfare and prosperity that the future holds. There are those who live to spread joy and hope for a better tomorrow! You can look all throughout history, and you’ll see that with every recorded conflict, and every evil committed, there were also those who stood against it. We fought the Nazis and their hatred that took countless lives. We struck down slavery laws and promoted the equal treatment of all people, regardless of creed or background. We don’t deserve to die because we need to live. Additionally, getting rid of an advanced organism in any ecosystem would dramatically cripple that biological community. Humanity as a whole is good,” Adebiyi replied tensely.

Death responded, “Hope and prosperity… humanity good as a whole? Needed? You say that, but your countries still hate one another, and you only work together now because you have to. How long would it have been before you used those nukes on each other had God not stepped in? How long before another slavery era was reborn or another concentration camp was created to kill off the lesser classes of your society? You creatures are a walking infection to everything and everyone around you.”

“You judge us for things that haven’t happened yet, things that probably never will happen,” Adebiyi replied.

“In 1806, in the backwoods of Colorado, a man and his family were taking a hike. More than halfway up, due to erosion from recent construction at the time, a side of the mountain collapsed, and a boulder came rushing down. Before colliding with him and his family, the man's body was flooded with adrenaline and with that boost of energy, he braced himself and grabbed hold of the boulder. Utilizing all the strength and energy in his body, he held onto it, looking back at his family and urging them to run down and out of the boulder’s way. When they made it to the bottom, the family looked back up and yelled at the man to let go of the boulder and get out of the way. He replied, ‘This boulder is too heavy and covers the entire trail. There’s no way I can let it go and move away safely. When I release this, that is it for me. I won’t be going home, and this will be my resting place. Tell the world I died laughing and that I died being loved.’ As the man and the rest of the family started to cry, he continued to speak, ‘It was never about me getting to safety. It was always about you all getting out of harm’s way. My fate was inevitable.’”

“What does that mean? Can you speak in simple English, please?” Noah inquired in a way so as to not show his frustration and impatience. “But surely, his self-sacrifice is an example of why we should be spared!”

“Simply put, the eradication of humanity, either by my hand or your own, is inevitable. I’m simply here to speed up that process. Therefore, all of what you had hoped to accomplish with the collection and combining of your resources would be for nothing. When God arrived, he helped propel you all forward. Because of that, you now have people and robots on nearly every planet within your solar system. But what have you done with it? You’ve hidden your discoveries from the world! Your people still do not know that you have bases on three other planets. The cures you’ve made for almost every type of cancer, the advances of space and road travel, all of it. You hid these things even after you were told to work together. There’s no hope for any of you, so my judgment still stands. All of you die. And as for those humans on other planets, I will slaughter them too. So, go ahead and plot, plan, and scheme to your heart’s content, but there’s no stopping or changing what’s to come. It is equivalent to trying to stop the sun from setting or the earth from spinning. The Book of Destiny has already been written, and this chapter is one I’ve already read,” Death declared with conviction.

“How could you possibly know what we were planning if you weren’t here? Are you really all-knowing?” Lee asked with irritation.

Before Death could reply, Cane interrupted, “You nor God have given us any options! We must use every tool at our disposal to even the odds, even if just by a small margin. Judge us for that, I don’t give a shit, but we will do what we must to survive!” Cane called out fiercely, the vein within her forehead beginning to protrude from her yelling.

“Do not raise your voice when speaking to me, you insect of a creature; that is the only warning I will give. As for your response to my original question, I do not accept it. You all make excuses for your cruel actions and the desolation of at least 2,000 animals, plants, and other species. There’s no benefit to letting you live. I shall exact onto you the destruction you have wrought onto them. Still, since you answered my question, I will allow you to ask me your three questions. However, there is one question I will not answer, and if you ask it, it will still count as a question.”

After realizing their situation, the room came to an agreement, which was to ask their question and make peace with the outcome.

The first question came from Cane, “How do we kill you and God?”

Taking a moment before responding, Death replied.

“The Swastika, now referred to and greatly known as the Nazi flag, stands as a symbol of hatred. But it was used for at least 5,000 years before Adolf Hitler as a symbol of well-being by different cultures all around the world, including China, Africa, Europe, India and so on. Maybe a handful of you might have known that, but a great deal of you didn’t. And that is the problem with your kind. You all only care about the facts and history that benefit you and only you. That will count as your first question, but that is the only question I will not answer,” Death replied as he looked around at the hopeless faces of those in the room and the viewers watching.

“That’s complete bullshit! You knew we would ask that, and you set us up for failure! Why should we continue to participate in this one-sided deal? I won’t do it anymore, so go ahead, do your worst to me. At least I know that I stood my ground—” Casper Simon, the President of Poland, yelled out.

Before he could finish his statement, Death appeared right in front of him, inches away. His heart caved in with fear, and his eyes turned bloodshot red because he knew what was coming next.

“You chose to speak out of turn and told me what you will not do. Since you’ve elected not to participate, then you no longer need to see what happens here. And for your transgressions against me, I shall take your eyes as payment.” Death’s tone darkened, and the room stood still.

In one final and desperate attempt to escape Death, Casper took off from his seat and ran toward the exit. As he bolted, his vision blackened, and he fell to his knees and was feet away from the door. Casper reached for his face only to feel the warm liquid running down it. At first, he couldn’t comprehend what had happened. Then, he remembered that Death, like God, could move faster than the human eye could track, and he concluded that his eyes must’ve been taken from him before Death finished expressing his last words. The room gasped after seeing Casper’s disfigured face. Then, they looked at Death to locate the eyes, but as they saw the blood dripping from his hands as he squeezed and crushed the eyeballs before dropping what remained onto the floor, they knew.

Death spoke, “Interrupt me as I speak, and the same promise I made to *President* Kurt will be enacted upon you and your family.”

“John, you’ve protected me for years as my security and friend. And so, I ask this last favor of you. Kill me, please, and save my family from what’s to come,” Casper said.

John, who Casper trusted most among all his guards and considered him to be a friend, walked up slowly and drew his gun. “Sir, it’s been an honor… your fight is over,” John said as he leveled his gun at Casper’s face.

“Thank you…” Casper replied as John’s gun fired once.

The room went silent, and everyone lowered their heads and gave a moment of silence.

Death continued to speak as if nothing had happened, “Since I’ve arrived, all you creatures have borne that potent smell. It’s infuriating.”

“What smell is it that you speak of?” Viktor asked in a cautious tone.

“That is question two and one I shall answer,” Death replied.

“What? No, that’s no—” Viktor attempted to retract his statement, but Death started to speak. Viktor knew better than to interrupt him.

“You all have a stench that seeps from your pores, and it’s only grown stronger since my arrival. It’s the smell of fear, like a fox that knows it’s about to die,” Death asserted with what sounded like a disgusted annoyance. It seemed that these gods or Death had emotion or some form of it, but no one cared to even mention it.

The world watched the events unfold in the UN, and they were completely apprehensive of what might happen next.

The room was still. No one knew what to say regarding the question that Death had just answered. Then, one man stood up, buttoned up his suit, wiped the sweat from his face, cleared his throat and spoke directly to Death.

“My name is Joseph L. Katumbi, and I am the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo. I believe that silence is golden, but words are silver, so one should not speak unless they have something to say. That is why I have not uttered a single word till now… I have a PhD in physics, a Master’s in aerodynamics and thermodynamics, as well as a Bachelor’s in mathematics and engineering from Howard University. I’ve spent most of my life studying the world around me as well as the construct of the universe itself. To get where I am in life, it’s cost me almost everything to achieve it, sacrificing friends, family, lovers, and the pursuit of happiness. I’ve gained wealth, fame, and power from it, and I would do it all over again! I may be a president—the leader of a nation—but more importantly, I’m a scientist and through blood, like my father and his before him, I’m a pioneer! And so, I speak on behalf of the world and the entire scientific community when I ask this last and final question.”

The room immediately turned their attention toward President Katumbi, who was normally a man of few words. Katumbi continued, “It stands to reason that you and God both acquired a vast amount of knowledge through this transformation you both underwent, and together, what you know and could accomplish in a few years is immensely greater than what we all here can do in 2,000 years.”

Death’s attention was completely on Katumbi.

“My question is this, and it’s several tied into one since your rules did not explicitly state that we could not do that… How was the universe created? How did humans, animals, and just life force itself come to exist? What is the point of knowledge and information, and what is the purpose that we must use it for? Is there a god, a heaven, and a hell? And if so, then where are they located, and how do we find them?”

Chapter 4:

*All Things in Moderation*

# “What happens when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object?”

“To ask a calculated and analytical question like that…, to bend syntax and grammar to allow so much to be included in a singular question, is very bothersome to me but also impressive. Not even I can deny the spark of ingenuity possessed by your species.”

The room and the world watching reacted in disbelief. Everyone looked around and was astonished by the question Katumbi asked, but they were more astounded by Death’s response. “But since I’ve already judged that humanity will die by my hand, and to fulfill my bargain, I shall answer your very cleverly constructed question and give you all enlightenment before you go. It’s the least that I can do.”

President Katumbi unbuttoned his suit, sat back down in his seat, focused his attention, and got ready for a reply.

Death continued, “To start, humanity—”

A sudden loud cough interrupted him. Before the guard next to Katumbi could cover his mouth and apologize for the interruption, Death appeared next to him. Without voicing a single word or missing a step, he ripped out both the guard’s throat and esophagus in one stroke, leaving him to die a painful death.

Witnessing and feeling the blood splatter hit his face, Katumbi didn’t react one bit. He was at this meeting for a purpose, and as long as he endured for a bit longer, all of his, as well as most of the world’s, questions about the cosmos and life would be answered. And so, he continued to sit there unbothered because his end goal was the only thing that mattered.

While still holding the ripped insides of the man he had just gutted, Death moved on with his speech, “Furthermore, as I begin to reveal the truth of the universe, you all will have many questions to ask. And so, because I’m merciful, I will lift the prerequisite of not interrupting me. You all may speak freely and ask your questions but mind your tones.”

The room was silent. Those watching from around the world via their watches, smartphones, or TVs stood still with anticipation.

“When God first came back to this planet, he believed that he was the only one of his kind. Then, when I arrived, he instantly knew he wasn’t anymore. Something happened at that exact moment. Because of our similar DNA structure, our brains’ wavelengths somehow synced with one another. Think of it as two of those smartphones connecting to the same computer and how the information on the computer and both phones are being shared between each other.”

Cane interjected, “In your analogy, if both of you are phones, then who or what is the computer?”

The crowd murmured as Death responded, “The computer is who you all refer to as God. The one you all praised before the new God arrived.”

“Our God? So, there is a ‘God’ just as many of us believe there to be? That’s a factual and definitive statement?” Cane asked in bewilderment.

“Yes, there is, but it is not what you think it is. It has no interest in any of the events happening now,” Death replied sternly. “Or any of you.”

“So, there is an almighty powerful God, and it chooses not to care about its creation and leaves our fates in your hands. What’s the meaning of it?” Adebiyi asked.

“You are wrong. It did not create you, humans per se. All of you and this very universe were a byproduct of its actual creation, equivalent to how your grandkids are a byproduct of you. As well as how some of your inventions came into existence. Your smartwatches are the byproduct of a wristwatch and a computer, and so on. For the sake of comprehension and not to confuse you, repulsive creatures, I will refer to that God as the Supreme. “What it had originally created were perfect species. They did not age, fight, kill or die. They simply existed. Your kind refers to them by many names—caelestibus, Celestials, angels—and they are what created you.”

“So, he, it, created angels, and they, in turn, created us? Why?” Viktor questioned.

“Curiosity,” Death replied and continued explaining further, “As of now, the number of earths and universes that exist are nearly infinite. But in the beginning, there was only one planet, Earth, and one universe to speak of.”

“Curiosity, what’s that mean? You’re telling me that there’s actually more than one universe outside of our own and that the Multiverse Theory is actually a fact?” Katumbi questioned.

“Yes. There are indeed other universes and galaxies that exist outside of what you all have come to understand. And the creation of them is what set our fates in stone, as so written in the Book of Destiny,” Death clarified. “When God or I first arrived here, we did not know of the existence of most of what I’m speaking about. After the confirmation of a third existence was made known to both of us, it all became clear as to how and why we were created and all of what would transpire—even this very conversation. The only uncertainty, the only variable throughout every universe, is and always has been humanity and how you all would respond. But this battle of will between God and I takes place millions of billions of times. It’s happening right now; it happened yesterday, tomorrow, and next year. It is an endless cycle.”

The room and the world watching contemplated in silence. This information changed everything, even if they were about to die.

“When the Supreme initially created the Prime universe, where all other universes derived from, he also created the Celestials, which we shall call the Primes. They lived on the first planet, Prime Earth, where war, famine, greed, chaos, and all things that your biblical text refers to as sin did not exist. The planet stood as a utopia: one voice and one body. Their knowledge, technology and medicine were beyond your creatures’ comprehension. But because of their intellect, the Primes became fascinated with the stars and the universe around them. Because of their intellect— a gift and a curse—they sought greater advancements and knowledge in every aspect of the world. This was their first step to their damnation and, ultimately, my creation. The German scientist, Albert Einstein, birthed the theory of relativity, which states that energy cannot be created nor destroyed. And that stands true in most universes with a few exceptions. Yet, in the Prime universe, laws of physics from any other universe do not apply. So when the Primes sought to find greater knowledge, they physically manifested greed into existence, creating something from nothing. In doing so, they invented something similar to your nuclear bombs but infinitely stronger. We shall refer to it as a Cosmos Bomb. And its purpose was to be used on the universe itself.”

The room listened and wondered in confusion as a slight breeze of air filled the room.

“They produced something stronger than our nuclear bombs, and they planned to use it on the universe? What does that mean exactly?” Katumbi questioned with sincere concern.

The room hummed in agreement as they looked to Death for further explanation.

“When they were first brought into existence by the Supreme, they were made without flaws. Hatred, war, and rivalry were all manifested into creation due to the original sin: greed. Second, these Cosmos bombs were meant to explode in the depths of space. The Primes had conquered all knowledge and information on Prime Earth, and so they now had questions for the galaxy that surrounded them. If it could heal itself or sustain damage were just a few. They could not ask the Supreme these questions, for after their creation, it faded from existence and would not appear again for eons to come. But regardless, they sought answers, and they had every intention to attain it by any means necessary. Until, eventually, their questions were answered. When they launched their first bomb into deep space, they designed it to explode with the greatest force possible. In doing so, they created a rift. Visualize the universe as a body of water like a pond, and now imagine if you wanted to see the ground underneath that body of water, even if just for a second. You would have to make a big enough impact, a splash that moves all of the water obstructing your sight and gives you a quick view of the bottom before the water fills it again. The Primes wanted to get a big enough Cosmos Bomb that would rip open space itself, if only for a split second. They soon accomplished their goal.”

Death took a moment, then resumed in the same somber tone, “And after centuries of testing, they had uncovered all the information they originally sought. But they craved more. The thought of what would happen if they dropped another bomb within the first rift, the possibility that this would produce new information, became something that endlessly plagued their minds. It was a sign to move forward with their curiosity. They learned that when they exploded a bomb within a rift, it birthed a new but imperfect galaxy that formed from the small genetic matter from the Prime universe. This new galaxy was imperfect, although it had the Prime universe's genetic material. Like a sick human who walks into a sterile room and spreads its contaminated DNA, the Primes makeup was also corrupted from its healthy form. This corruption happened whenever their DNA left its original universe, making any cosmos or galaxy produced imperfect. Hence, this is how you revolting things came to be.”

Death gave a room a second to digest this new and astonishing information.

“Centuries had passed before the Primes acquired a full understanding of how the rifts worked. In hopes of creating a replica planet with a copy of themselves on it, they attached complete DNA samples to the bombs that opened the rifts.

“Millions of years passed, during which two new galaxies formed over time. Once developed, the Primes sent Celestials to these planets to watch these new Celestials develop. As these new Primes, who we shall refer to as mortals, gradually gained knowledge, the flaws and faults that manifested within them became of concern to the Celestials. Greed, anger, pride, and hatred were rapidly developing in these new galaxies. The second universe was so vicious and cruel that the Celestials deemed it as the Void universe due to it being the complete opposite of theirs in every way. War, killing, hatred... And so, they withdrew from it, allowing the rift to close and focused all of their attention on the other developing universe.

“Over time, the first galaxy became too much to bear, too. Not as terrible as the Void, it was not like the Primes’ universe either. After realizing what they’d done, the Celestials concluded that they had interfered with the cosmos for long enough. And so, they allowed all rifts to close, and they themselves retreated back to their Prime universe, never to be heard from again. What the Primes didn’t account for was that, although they had intentionally shared their genetics to create life, they also unwillingly shared the Supreme’s as well. From there, within each new galaxy, two mortals who would later bear hatred for the world that gravely affected them were born. Unbeknownst to themselves, these mortals would soon harness the Supreme’s energy that seeped into their universe, leading to God and I’s physical manifestation, time and time again.”

Death ignored the sighs echoing from around the room and continued, “A few billion years had passed since the creation of the first two cosmos. Since then, millions more have come into existence through a process following the deaths of both God and me, an inevitable outcome that will make sense later. When the Supreme did return, he discovered what the Celestials had done, and the aberrations created a multiverse—sentient life. To the Supreme, the one universe it created was perfect and balanced, unlike the Celestials. To put it in simpler understanding, the Supreme created a perfect system, one that makes everything work in synchronization. The bees pollinate flowers, and the trees give you oxygen through photosynthesis. The sun and the moon doing their jobs as well. And with these factors working in tandem with one another, life was created and sustained. All these things were governed by the laws of physics of this galaxy. And without this system, a universe falls apart. Now, consider this on a much grander scale. The Celestials created universes where laws of physics did not exist, where a person can walk on the sun unfazed; a kid can jump from the earth to the moon in one leap, and a human can live in outer space or underwater. Ultimately, anything in existence was an aberration outside of the Prime universe. The Supreme saw how the other galaxies ran rampant and without principle, and thus, demanded correction.”

“And where was the Supreme while all of this was happening? What was it so busy doing, and if it had a problem with the way things happened, why not fix it itself with a snap of a finger?” President Lee asked.

Death paused before responding, “There’s not much known and very little understood about the Supreme. Neither God nor I from any universe can fully comprehend the magnitude of its existence, only that it stands at the helm of creation. And instead of eradicating what the Celestials had created, it decided to punish only them for their actions. And so, the Supreme applied its own set of lesser laws of physics to the millions of universes created in order to stabilize them from running rampant. For their transgressions, it sent a Celestial in human form to each universe, making them live full human lives knowing who they were, where they came from and how they came to be. The Supreme did so with the sole purpose that the Celestials bear witness firsthand to what they’d done. The abilities they possessed since the dawn of time were now stripped away, and the fact that they would die someday haunted them. It was a knowledge that they had no concept of—the afterlife—and this was their divine punishment. In fact, you may have heard of some of these Celestials that were sent here.”

“We have?” questioned Cane.

“Yes. Gandhi, Muhammad, Martin Luther King Jr., Yvonne Clark, Leonardo Da Vinci, Madam C.J. Walker, Sir Isaac Newton, Frederick Douglass, Annie Jean Easley, Jesus Christ. There were others who weren’t revered in their time, some of whom were Galileo Galilei and Genghis Khan. They did their best to educate you all, but you humans did what you humans do. You slaughtered them,” Death replied and went silent.

The room sat in disbelief as to what they had just heard.

“MLK and Gandhi were actual angels? Jesus was not God but an angel? The words they preached were real?” Viktor asked rhetorically and with great sadness as the vodka he drank started to set in.

Death continued, “No. Remember that their existence is beyond what you have dreamed. They are Celestials. Jesus did rise in three days. That part of the biblical story is true, although not through his physical body, only his energy. The same goes for the others. Some people were fortunate enough to see this happen to Jesus and share it with all who would listen, which gave credence to the story you all believe today. When Jesus rose, it was the Supreme bringing his energy or what you humans refer to as his spirit, back to the Prime planet. He had served his punishment. But this was not the case for all Celestials. Those who refused to make atonement for their betrayal against the Supreme were not permitted to go back to Prime. They were sent to the universe that they had created and abandoned to the Void where light goes to die, dreams manifest into nightmares, hope isn’t welcome, and love is hated. It had been given its name due to nothing escaping it. This is where black holes in every universe lead to. The in-between of a black hole and the Void universe is where both God and I lived and how we were able to leave it.”

This information and knowledge that the room was hearing from Death were far beyond the scope of their imagination. Everything started to make sense. Questions that might’ve taken ages to figure out were being answered. So, the world watched and listened as Death continued,

“A few years before a Celestial’s death in any universe, they would get a preview of where their energy would go before they died. It was their bodies’ way of warning them. Depending on their actions during their lifetime, they would either go back to Planet Prime or the Void. But in some cases, if their actions were equally good just as they were bad, they were either sent to another universe to try again or simply reborn back into the same one. This is the same law that applies to you humans after you die as well. The process of crossing dimensions just before you are reborn is what you humans label as white light. This is another fail-safe the Supreme built after your creation. Those Celestials who knew their fate of being sent to the Void made sure to punish the Supreme in their own way, the only way they knew they could. They told and wrote stories of how the Supreme treated them, how wicked, cruel, jealous, and angry it could get. These stories eventually became written throughout the history of mankind and practiced under the banner of religion. You all called this written text, The Old Testament.”

To most of the world listening, religion started to make more sense.

“By the dawn of a new age, most of the old Celestials had died off, and those who knew they were going back to Planet Prime told and wrote new stories of what they loved about the Supreme. These stories and texts became known as The New Testament. Within these testimonies, they spoke of Planet Prime, where other Celestials like them lived. They called it Paradise or Heaven, as your human language changed over time. They shared the truth of what Plant Void is: a place of torment or what you would refer to as Hell. As time passed, the remaining Celestials formed churches in the name of this glorious new creator. But over time, these groups split off, creating different factions of the same religion and sharing their own perspective on their understanding of what they remember about the Supreme. These conflicted ideologies soon created human extremists who went on to join governments to further that resentment and agendas. This would eventually lead you all down the same path that created the Reds and, by extension, us gods. Thus, leading to your damnation,” Death stated.

That logic somehow made sense to most people as they sat there hopelessly and shamefully listening.

“So what you’re saying is that, according to the Book of Destiny that you continue to mention, all of mankind’s actions since the beginning of time were always leading us right here? I see now. Well, another question, you kill us, and that’s it? You live for the rest of the time just doing nothing?” Lee questioned.

“No. I will kill God, your beloved protector, and absorb his life energy. Afterward, I will cleanse this world of 95 percent of all humanity, and those I allow to live will have to survive the trials I set forward. For they, too, will be tested, and those who survive will start anew in the coming world… Then, I will share my abilities and knowledge with the new world, knowing that a new path will be formed in my image. Furthermore, since this vessel I inhabit would only be able to sustain that much life energy for a limited amount of time, I will be forced to create a rift from this universe, just as the Primes did, thus forming a new time-space. There, I will eventually implode and release energy that is the equivalent of a Cosmo Bomb, which you humans refer to as the big bang theory. Since God and I’s vessels hold all of this universe’s DNA in this new time-space, my death will give birth to a new cosmos like the billions that came before,” Death replied.

“I have a few questions,” Cane uttered in disbelief.

“When in the face of absolute death, you still hold on to questions that are inconsequential to you. Ask away,” Death replied.

“Call it morbid curiosity… So, the death of a god in a new universe is what the big bang is? Also, you said the Primes created the other two universes, but for what purposes? You never really explained what their agenda was in doing so. Their original goal about the universe healing itself was already met and satisfied. So, what was the point of creating life within those galaxies? What were they hoping to achieve? And what do you mean by sharing some of your abilities with other people? And if you already have god-like powers, then why not fix your body to contain the excess energy?” Cane reasoned.

The room went silent, and no one uttered a word as they waited for a reply.

“Yes, the explosion from our bodies when we enter another time-space is what causes what you humans call the Big Bang. As for the Primes creating you, they wanted to see if they could make a universe that was identical to theirs and, in doing so, create a bridge where two or more universes could share information and knowledge. And yes, I could’ve or can share my abilities at will. I plan to do it as a way to give the new humanity a fighting chance to start anew. To do better than what you all have created here so far. Last, I can fix this body to withhold the energy force within this vessel, but it wouldn’t be without cost. Additionally, that would eventually result in the same outcome with another God and myself being created, bringing us back to this exact point. My birth and death have already been written in the Book of Destiny before the first atom was ever created.”

After making that statement, Death paused. before continuing,

“I have now answered all of your questions. This concludes my end of the agreement to your well-thought-out question,” Death replied as he looked over to Katumbi, who seemed to be completely satisfied with the wealth of knowledge, he, as well as the world, had just gained.

“A scientist by education and pioneer by blood, in 621 BCE, during the era of Athenian, a man by the name of Draco established a set of laws of conduct for the country. These laws became famous due to their harshness. For practically any crime committed, the sentence was death. And overtime, this way of punishment became known as Draconian, and those who employed them referred to them as the Draconian laws. With that being said, I have a question for you, specifically,” Death stated as Katumbi sat ready.

“Not only in America but the world at large, if people were forced to be a part of the death penalty that they sentenced a criminal to, meaning they are responsible for killing them and or watching, do you think most humans would still vote for the death sentence?”

“You’re saying if the judge who gave the sentence had to inject said criminal with the poison that killed them and the jury who found them guilty had to watch, knowing this to be law, would they still vote the same way?” Katumbi asked for clarification.

“Yes,” Death replied.

“In plain terms, no. Most people would not want to see the results of their decisions and the consequences that follow,” Katumbi responded.

Just as Katumbi was finishing his statement, a random staffer stood up to speak, and before she could utter a word, Death appeared next to her. He grabbed her by her throat and slammed her face into the ground. Like an egg that fell to the floor, her head split open and scattered around the nearby areas. His lecture had ended and thus concluded his period of allowing interruptions. As the blood from her body surrounded Death’s feet, Katumbi sat unfazed. The room and the world watching gasped for air. Death continued, “Exactly. So why must humanity live? You all refer to my way of fixing the problem as heavy-handed, unreasonable, Draconian.”

“I don’t agree with those characteristics of you or your actions, personally, but collectively we don’t deserve to live,” Katumbi replied. “However, building a new society, a new humanity on the ruins of the old one, is a good start. My craving and fascination with the cosmos and life in general, for the most part, have been gratified. I still have a million more questions, of course, and to sit in a room with you and have a conversation for ten years still would not be enough for me. But I will accept what you have given me, us, enlightenment. With the knowledge that I’ve gained here, even if you were to kill me now, I would die a happy death. To me, it would be a peaceful one. A beautiful one.” Katumbi remarked with pride and joy.

“To hear you say that tells me that you’ve made peace with what’s to come. And so, as a reward, I shall grant you what you seek, a beautiful death. By starting with you all, here, in this room. Your people watching will bear witness as to what’s to happen in the coming days,” Death stated with a serious undertone.

The room went cold. Just as Death was stating his last words, God appeared across from him. Everyone’s gaze focused on God, and the room breathed a sigh of relief. Unfazed and unbothered by God’s appearance, Death stood and made one last statement, “I will smash them one against the other, parents and children alike, declares the Lord. I will allow no pity or mercy, or compassion to keep me from destroying them. Jeremiah 13:14.”

Chapter 5:

*The Valley of Death*

# “Those who dance in the dark.”

“You will do no such thing. You promised them a week, and you will give it to them,” God stated as the building started to shake as a result of them being in the same room.

For what seemed like decades for those watching, minutes passed before Death replied, “I suppose you’re right. I have a special plan to kill each one of these so-called leaders. Fighting you here would make them become casualties and spoil that fun for me. For now, I shall wait, but my wrath will be unleashed in a matter of days. So leaders, make peace with yourselves and your gods, for this is not the end, at least not yet,” Death stated before his body disintegrated into ash and blew away.

Now, God and the leaders of the free world stood in silence until Lee spoke out.

“I can’t live like this. No matter how short the time, I think we should still move forward with finding information on how to kill them!” Lee yelled out.

“You all heard what the consequences would be if anyone stood against him, Death? Our demise would be painful,” Noah replied.

“I’m Russian! Death is death, and dying is dying. I’d rather fight than lay down like a stray dog and submit. For my family and all that I hold dear, I submitted to God the first time. I will not do it again!” yelled Viktor as his face turned visibly red from anger and copious amounts of alcohol.

“Then humanity just might have a chance...” God stated with a darker tone.

Everyone within the UN looked on with varied emotions, not knowing what to make of his comment but hoping he was on their side.

“A fighting chance? What do you mean?” Noah asked.

“Although we are more alike than different, I do not support Death’s way of doing things. As such, I will help humanity in this battle. Despite your cruelty and mistreatment of one another, humanity still has value in its existence. I will tell you how to kill a god,” he responded.

Everyone in the room and those around the world watching gave their complete attention to every word that flowed from his mouth. This was the break that they wanted, one that they needed.

“To kill us, you would need particular materials from specific places, or the correct term would be from very specific planets.”

“Planets? Did you really just say planets?” asked Cane, visibly frustrated. “Even if we were able to get whatever you’re going to say from these other planets, it would without question take months to get it from our people who are already there! Let’s consider the logistical standpoint, the man-hours needed, the people, and the current state of affairs. Planetary travel would be completely impossible at this time since we only have a matter of days to live! What person, soldier or not, would at this moment leave their family to go on a shit-for-brains mission to another planet with the notion that maybe we can win with this? Last, do you think Death is going to sit by and, oh, I don’t know, let a fucking human leave this planet?” Cane ended her furious line of questioning.

God stared at Cane as she yelled at Him, not showing any form of irritation or emotional feedback. He began to speak once she concluded her speech, “Yes, I said planets. Our genetic makeup allows us to break down any material within seconds. In order for any weapon that you may use against us to be effective, you would need several different kinds of material from different planets. All materials on Earth, regardless of composition, are of the same chemical composition according to our genetic structure. Now, for understanding purposes, let’s call all of Earth’s materials sand. Sand like you find on the beach. Carrying that same logic, we can call all of the materials found on Mars steel. For the moon, it’s copper. Pluto would be aluminum, and so on. The dust and dirt that Earth has are, within themselves, different on a micro level from the dirt and dust that the moon holds, no matter how small or great the difference is. Our bodies register them on a different plane. So, if all the materials on Earth are one material to our genetic makeup, we can only disintegrate up to three elements at any given time. This means that you would need materials from seven different planets to be effective against our structural code. That would ensure there is enough material left to inflict fatal damage. Based on my knowledge, the world powers hold exactly eight different materials on this planet. You only have enough to make one weapon. I suggest you make a sword or blade with it. Guns can be unreliable...”

“So, you’re saying that if we combine all of these compounds and make a weapon, then we would have the ability to kill Death or even you?” asked Adebiyi.

“Yes. Still, there are a few stipulations. First, you have to stab us in a place on our bodies where the effects would be fatal. To stab us anywhere else would mean that we would heal almost immediately, and thus, humanity would fail… Second and most importantly, since energy cannot be destroyed nor created, killing one of us would cause a release of energy that will obliterate half of your planet and kill everything in its wake.”

“Half of the planet? How does that make things any better for us?” Lee posed with pure frustration.

“It’s better than the whole planet,” replied Noah softly.

“No. I will absorb the release of energy that comes from Death’s body, or he will absorb mine as long as I’m within ten feet of him once your weapon is used,” God replied.

“So you’re not even sure if you can beat him in a fight? And why didn’t you lead with absorbing the released energy part first?” Cane yelled out.

Again, not showing any response to Cane’s frustration, God said nothing as Lee spoke up: “Regardless, it all sounds easy enough. All we have to do is have one of our people get close enough to Death and stab him. Empires have fallen easier than that. Plus, we can have this sword made within a few hours. I’ve already contacted my people to set things in motion on our end. I suggest if you haven’t already, you all should do the same.”

“Yes, but understand that there is no straightforward way for any human to get close enough to Death without being eviscerated. His defenses are nearly equal to mine.”

“Then we shoot a missile from a gunship filled with all the materials, or make the sword, drop it from a plane with a few Special Forces guys sneak up behind him, more like something he doesn’t see coming or expect. I don’t know, but we’ve come this close. What do you suggest we do?”

The room looked to God in anticipation of his response.

“I will confront Death on the battlefield. After the battle has run its course and the dust settles, I suspect that he and I will be greatly weakened, which will give you one small window of opportunity to save yourselves,” God stated.

“Confront him? Are you fucking nuts? He made it very clear that if you and he battled in any way, the both of you would, without fucking question, destroy the entire fucking planet! No, thank you, my good sir!” Noah yelled out.

“Neither he nor I wish to destroy this planet. He made it explicitly clear that aside from the human race, he wants every other species on this planet to survive. Since I want your kind to live as well, we both would be forced to adjust the intensity of our abilities and act accordingly. There will still be unimaginable damage done to the earth as well as countless lives lost, but in time, that too shall heal naturally,” God stated serenely.

“I guess we have no choice. Well, okay, that works for me. That works for us. We already have the materials being molded into this sword and our best men on standby, ready to use it. All that is left is for you to do your part,” Cane commanded God.

“So be it, but before I go, there are two things left to mention. One, the percentage number of 88, and two, no matter how this turns out, Cane, you die a slow and painful death by my hand or his. Either way, you die,” God said curtly.

The air in the room became dense and heavy, as if gravity had started to push down more intensely.

“I die either way?” Cane yelled out in disbelief. “What did I do? I don’t understand! Why me? Why the fuck do I die by your hand as well?” she pleaded as her face turned red and tears started to flow uncontrollably from her eyes.

“You speak and yell at me as if I’m one of your servants or bodyguards. You believed that your tone and behavior were acceptable because of the current state of affairs and your emotional state of mind. You determined that your actions were justified. Well, you thought wrong, and for your misjudgment, I demand your life,” God rationalized.

“You’re going to kill a sitting president and world leader because she, for lack of a better term, disrespected you? And 88 percent, what does that even mean?” Lee asked in confusion.

“It doesn’t matter right now, but later, it will,” God replied.

“Wait, God, and I used that term in the most respectful way, all things considered. How do we know the right time to use the sword?” Viktor stated in a careful but straightforward manner.

“You will know the second you know,” God replied and vanished as quickly as he gave his response.

# Day Five

“My God… we’ve been here for days since Death’s arrival, surviving off power naps, fear, and snacks. We should get some sleep while we can. Tomorrow marks the sixth day. We should all come to terms with what that brings. We’ll meet back in this room at 6:00 a.m. Call your families and friends. Make peace and let go of any grudges. All of that will mean nothing by tomorrow,” Cane said before leaving the UN’s main room to go to a private room to sleep. Everyone else soon followed.

Chapter 6:

*Logical Fallacy*

***“Wherever something good is trying to happen, something bad is working to stop it.”***

# Moscow, Russia

A clean-shaven man in a white robe walked out in front of a group of men, women, and children as they gathered in front of what seemed to be an abandoned temple. As the man approached, everyone dropped to their knees and bowed to him as he walked up the top of the temple steps.

“You all may stand, my children. For today is the day we’ve been waiting for. Our god has come to deliver us justice, peace, and freedom from this eternal damnation. And oh, we have waited so long for this moment.” The crowd cheered as he said this. “Now, we must do our part to go peacefully into that good night. Everyone, ready your cups, for this is our last drink of this life

‘til we meet our lord again in the next one. Until we meet again, until we meet again, until we meet…” The man’s voice faded into the background as the people around the steps started to fall, one by one.

# Nan Madol, Pohnpei Island, Federated States of Micronesia

As the sun rose, the sixth day was here. The sunlight shone over everything its glare touched: the birds, the trees, the mountain tops, and Death himself. He sat in a meditative position—legs folded in, with both hands resting on each knee—on top of Mount Nahnalaud, the highest peak that overlooked the Pacific Ocean. As the sunlight overtook his body, his eyes opened, their dark void piercing the skyline as he looked outward.

“I suppose it’s time to begin,” Death stated out loud to himself as he stood up and looked out into the vast body of water. In that same breath, God appeared behind him, standing over his right shoulder.

“Do you feel that? This island’s ominous, even for us. From the stories told by locals and some researchers, this place is considered to be haunted. Even the magnetic energy that surrounds this island is an anomaly in itself. This city’s entire construct and how it came to be is a complete mystery now and even to the natives of this land who originally found it. The stories, myths, and legends that surround this island are extensive. I intend to investigate this place thoroughly, as well as others like the Bermuda Triangle, Death Valley, Easter Island, and every place like them. But that would only be after my work with these creatures comes to fruition,” Death expressed with resolve.

“Yes, there is an unknown presence that resides here, and even for us, it’s unclear as to what that is. This planet still holds many unknown mysteries,” God replied as he focused on Death’s movements.

“It’s the frequency that our two bodies emit., completely undetectable to these lesser creatures — these humans — but for us, it is as perceptible as the heat coming from a fire. That is how you found me… and how we can always find each other no matter the location, planet, or distance in this great cosmos. Our bodies are nearly the same. Have you come here in an attempt to stop me at their behest?” Death asked as he continued to look over his shoulder slightly to keep a partial view of God standing behind him.

“You don’t have to do this. Your way is too extreme. Re-adjust your plan, and I may be inclined to assist you with it,” God retorted.

“Extreme? That’s a bit callous coming from you. You control these humans with the promise of a better tomorrow but keep the notion that death by your hand is imminent if they are defiant. You bear the fruit while carrying the sword. But I’m curious: how would you suggest I modify my plan to satisfy you enough to assist me? Those are rhetorical questions, of course, because there’s nothing you would say that will change anything,” Death replied as he turned his whole body back to overlook the ocean. He then continued, “The Spanish flu.”

“What about it?” God asked.

“It had more casualties than the First World War. Yet, the way this world recorded history would make you believe otherwise. These humans make light of death and destruction. They never seem to be affected by anything that’s happened to them over the centuries. They refuse to change, and they never will. They need to understand fear, sacrifice, and pain: this is why I’m needed. They’ve ignored the fact that they are a disease to this planet. They are the planet’s cancer. They’re the only species that kill each other senselessly and without provocation. My plan is the only feasible option. I was originally going to freeze this planet, dropping temperatures well below anything they can adapt to. It would’ve turned their skyscrapers into glasses, their bodies into ice sculptures, but all the animals would’ve died too. So, I won’t do that. Then the thought of acid rain, a scorching fire, or lightning storms, but none of that felt right to me. So, this is my conclusion. This is my design.”

As Death finished his statement, his body started to emit a blood-red fluid, which then started to take form and, upon closer look, developed into large and small bugs. They resembled a combination of dragonflies, bees, and mosquitoes. Their skin was so transparent that you could see the organs and veins they were composed of.

God gazed upon the bugs and warned Death once more, “Don’t do this.”

“This sunshine is amazing: it breeds life and instills hope in humanity. These hybrid insects that I’ve created: I call them Viathans. They shall take away the hope that these creatures cling to, that humanity they speak of, that happiness they share, the love that they breed. They will leave only death and misery in their wake. But first, I shall keep to my promise of protecting their offspring. I really do intend to shape the new humans in my image.”

Deaths stated as the Viathans increased in size from bug-like insects to bald eagles. And like geese, they flew to every corner of the world, passing through every sports stadium they came across. Having the ability to differentiate between a twelve-month-old and a two-year-old child, the Viathans did their job completely and with extreme prejudice. Like fresh meat being fed to starving piranhas, the Viathans devoured every adult and human older than one year of age within these stadiums, leaving the young ones unscathed. The screams of many filled the air with sorrow. It was as if the earth itself had suddenly opened up, taken form, and physically cried out. After the Viathans feasted, they surrounded the stadiums, using their bodies as a shield of sorts to make sure that no other human entered. Those remaining flew to the skies, covering the entire world in a matter of hours. Then a slight humming noise emitted from them. Due to their transparent skin, the sunlight passed through them, forming a red tint around the planet. As the world looked up, bearing witness to this biblical event, the pit of everyone’s stomach started to turn. To some, this was undeniably the end of days. In that same stroke, Death was steps away from his wish being fulfilled. Hope was fading, like ice cubes left out in the Sahara Desert.

# Kingston, South Africa

“Dad, Dad, you were right! It’s happening! Well, something’s happening.”

Hearing his son yelling, the dad jumped up from the couch, where he was half-asleep. He grabbed his beer off the table and fumbled with it as he rushed out the door. Stepping outside and seeing the sky as it turned red, he placed his hand on his son’s shoulder and made eye contact with him and his other two sons as they walked his way.

“Are you boys ready?” he asked as he cracked open his beer and took a long sip of it. As the sons made eye contact with each other, the dad sat down in his lawn chair and awaited their reply. Before responding, the boys also followed suit and sat in chairs, all facing each other. Then they all replied, “Hell yes!” All the men made eye contact once more. The boys opened their beers and raised them in the air to toast.

“Here we come, Ayanna,” they yelled in unison as they lifted their guns and pointed them at each other’s faces.

Four shots went off simultaneously as the guns fell to the ground, and the beers spilled over, leaking from the chairs.

# United Nations, New York City, USA

The world leaders and those with them looked out the windows and witnessed the sunlight slowly fading from the world as it became engulfed in a red glare. No one said a word, but everyone felt the same worry.

“Now that I have stolen what they cherish, their hope, I shall take what they don’t value. Their lives,” Death said as he bent down and readied his body into a jumping position like a track runner before sprinting. He positioned and aimed his body over the ocean.

As the fluids from his body stopped gushing and his Viathans covered the skies, God stood still, listening and watching as Death acted. Death leaped into the sky so forcefully that it split the ground underneath him and God. He hurled his body so high that by the time it had reached its maximum velocity, he had pierced Earth’s stratosphere. As his body began to descend, he strapped his arms around his torso. He forcefully rotated himself, causing a violent and volatile rotation that plunged into the ocean until his feet made a solid impact with the bedrock, cracking and splintering it as he did.

The ocean water rose nearly 3,500 feet in the air from the force of that fall, with Death at the epicenter. From this impact’s force and the height of the waves created, what followed next could only be described as a megatsunami. Prior to this, the biggest ever recorded occurred in 1958 in Lituya Bay, Alaska, which stood at 1,720 feet. The world had no idea what was coming. After reaching the Pacific Ocean’s floor bed, Death vanished and reappeared over the other four bodies of water: the Atlantic, Indian, Arctic, and Southern Oceans, one after another, creating the same violet rotation and causing the same ripple effects as the first.

After creating the tsunamis, Death made sure to address the world’s landlocked areas. Although extremely unlikely, those living in these areas might’ve been spared from the coming impact of the storm. Death, as a perfectionist, left nothing to chance.

First, he commanded his Viathans to clear the sky within the given area. He then used his left hand to create and emit air so cold that any living thing caught within its grasp froze instantaneously. Birds flying froze in midair and shattered like glass as they fell to the ground. Death aimed the cold air directly at the sky. It trapped and froze water droplets within the atmosphere, creating the right amount of hot and cold temperatures that darkened the surrounding clouds and formed thunder and lightning.

Once that had begun, Death used his right hand to create and emit extremely heated strong winds that he then aimed at the ground. This extreme wave of heat dried out the surrounding land completely. One strike from a lightning bolt would ignite it all, creating a furious and uncontrollable inferno. Death had created the conditions for yet another perfect storm. He wanted to ensure the complete destruction of all things. Nothing or no one outside of his allowance would be safe.

After following and watching Death, God had witnessed enough. His first objective was to stop the megatsunamis that would surely wipe out more than half of life on Earth, and that was not something he could let happen. God deduced that he had to meet force with force to stop the tsunamis, resulting in both forces canceling each other out. Although obliterating the tsunamis like he did the nukes was an option, taking away that much water supply from the earth could cause unforeseeable effects for the planet. So God lifted his left arm, aimed it at the sky, and began emitting freezing air, killing the Viathans in its path. As he shifted the weather, God created the ideal conditions for a thunderstorm. From that storm, he shifted the air’s temperature, creating warm, moist, cool, and dry air. From the intermingling of these temperatures, the air masses collided, creating instability in the surrounding atmosphere. In return, it began to form a tornado that became equal in shape and size to the oncoming tsunamis.

Although both forces colliding with each other would, without question, kill millions of people and cause immense damage and destruction, it wouldn’t be nearly as horrible as letting the tsunami make a full impact. The residual water from the tsunami would take care of the fire infernos in the landlocked areas and would, in return, kill two birds with one stone. After dispersing the first tsunami, God appeared on land before the other ones as well, creating the same effect and getting the same results. Then, last, as he reappeared back by the Pacific Ocean in hopes of stopping the last one, Death arrived in the process. Just as God had his hand aimed at the sky, Death punched him in the face before he could react. The impact of the hit was so powerful that it cracked the ground beneath them and launched God’s body into the Rocky Mountains that stood behind him. His body hit the ground and trees as it flew and flung backward as he looked to regain his standing. His body bounced across the land like a pebble being tossed across the lake. The war among the gods had begun.

Chapter 7:

*The Death of a God and the Birth of a Titan*

# “You have to be ready at any moment to sacrifice who you are for who you want to become.”

Dispersing the thunderstorm that God had created and refilling the hole in the sky with Viathans, Death was determined not to let anything stop his plan. But just as he was nearly done, he was hit with a blast of fire and electricity. It was as if someone had a flamethrower pointed at him while being struck by lightning.

God had reemerged in front of Death within seconds after slamming into the mountains. Before giving Death time to react, God launched a flurry of punches at him, landing each one on his face and torso. To stop the onslaught of punches, Death shielded himself with his hands. Just after he successfully blocked the last two hits, God stopped his barrage of punches and leaned backward, kicking Death in the chest. That sent his body flying back into the dirt and rocks behind him. Just as Death’s body made impact with the ground, God appeared on his side, grabbing his head as his body bounced upward, and slammed his face into the ground repeatedly.

Grabbing God’s hand as he was forcing his face into the ground, Death pushed himself off the ground and used God’s own body weight to slam him into the ground. Just before his body hit the ground, God vanished and resurfaced in the streets of Mexico City. Death was able to track God through his body frequency just as God could track him. He had appeared in Mexico a few moments after God.

“You started this fight. Now you’re cowering away from it?” Death asked God as he closed in on him.

Before giving God a chance to respond, Death picked up a taxicab with a driver in it and launched it at God. For unknown reasons, their ability to obliterate matter did not work on one another or any other physical substance when the two deities were in direct physical contact or in conflict with one another. And that same ability could be nullified if the two gods used it on the same object at the same time. If God attempted to destroy a mountain by obliterating it and Death did the exact same thing at the exact same time, then both powers would cancel each other out, and the mountain would remain intact. But their power would reactivate if an outside force attempted to attack either of them. And so, when Death threw the taxicab at God, they both aimed to destroy it at the same time, and thus it made full impact with God’s body servicing only as a distraction since it did not cause much physical damage. Not giving him a chance to counter, Death continued grabbing vehicles and hurling them at him. Death had made an impact with four cars before God reappeared behind him. In that same instant, God flung his elbow into Death’s face, giving himself a slight opening. God grabbed Death by the neck while simultaneously vanishing from Mexico City and reemerging in Dubai over the Burj Khalifa, the world’s tallest building. For a slight second, seeing where they were now, Death showed a sliver of fear. And before giving him time to react, God tightened his grip and thrust downward to slam Death directly through the Burj Khalifa, forcing it to collapse on top of them as they plunder down floor by floor.

Vanishing before receiving the full brunt of the falling building, God reappeared in Nepal near Mount Everest’s base. He stumbled for a few seconds before finding his footing while onlookers glared with surprise. In that second, Death appeared. Before the spectators or God could counter, Death launched a frontal kick at God’s face, knocking his body through some of the bystanders behind him, immediately evaporating their bodies into a pink mist. His body then slammed into the mountain, causing it to split and crack down the middle. The sound of the mountain splitting was so loud and violent that it was as if the sky itself had cracked in two. Seconds later, the roaring of an avalanche could be heard.

Hastening in hopes of finishing God, Death shifted his bone structure, turning his entire right arm into something resembling a scythe that measured about five feet. Pulling his arm back and rushing to attack God as his body was still stuck in the crumbling mountain’s side, God shifted his body just enough to avoid grave damage but unfortunately still received most of the attack. Death jumped back and readied himself once more for a finishing blow, and just before making impact again, God moved out of Death’s line of attack as he launched at him once more, causing him to slam into the mountain as well, cracking it further as his arm regained its natural form.

God quickly took advantage by grabbing Death and slamming his face into the mountain, then releasing a combination of fire and electricity throughout Death’s body, causing the side of the mountain they were trapped in to partially explode. As the crumbling mountain descended upon them, God released a fury of punches, each one loud enough to break the sound barrier. Hundreds of onlookers in the surrounding area now rushed to find safety. God looked upward and saw car-sized boulders and tons of snow hurtling down. God attempted to vanish after slamming Death’s face into the mountain once more but was slightly delayed by Death shooting a blast of fire into his stomach. God soon reappeared in the thermosphere over the Dead Sea. Appearing behind him within seconds of his escape from the mountain, Death grabbed God and plummeted into the sea. Still able to breathe and operate with no oxygen, it was clear that God and Death didn’t rely on it to live. As they fell from grace, both their bodies were engulfed in flames due to the atmosphere pressure and friction buildup. Onlookers watched as what they first thought to be a meteor burrowed through the Viathans, creating a small opening that let a gleam of sunlight through before being blocked out again until they saw what turned out to be both deities fighting. Unbothered, they continued to exchange blows, and just before making impact, God released a gust of wind from his palms to break their fall as they plummeted into the sea, so as not to create a tsunami. Death continued attacking God with punches and a mixture of other elemental attacks until both of them hit the floor bed, something that shouldn’t have been possible, given that all things float in the Dead Sea. They were both still able to see and move completely unhindered, regardless of the low visibility and the insurmountable weight that bore on them.

Vanishing from the seafloor and appearing in Paris, God dropped down onto his left knee as if hurt or weakened. Death appeared right in front of him. He was seemingly sluggish, as if he had been drugged or was extremely drunk. Death looked around for a few seconds to figure out what to do next and then zipped over and grabbed the first human he saw and launched them at God like a baseball pitcher. Without discrimination, Death attacked God using everything as a weapon, including pregnant women and even children. Nothing nor anyone was safe. While still on one knee, God lifted his hand. As the cars, humans and other things were hurled at him one after another, he incinerated them before their bodies ever made contact with him.

“You’re killing these humans whom you love so much? That’s not very god-like of you,” Death stated irritably.

“Killing them without pain is the best mercy I can offer them in this situation. If they had impacted me or any other surface, the pain they would’ve suffered would have been excruciating. What I did is merciful,” God struggled to speak properly and wobbled as he stood up.

The world at hand watched from news helicopters and live social media footage. God, as well as Death, concluded, without ever speaking, that their bodies were weakening, something that shouldn’t be possible, but clearly was, due to them fighting each other to the extent in which they did. God made a move to end things quickly as he knew his strength was fading. As Death attempted to grab another human, God moved quicker than the human eye could see. He slammed directly into Death, sending his counterparts through the Louvre Pyramid that stood behind him, shattering it. God dropped to his knee again, seemingly from exhaustion, as Death stood up and walked out from under the rubble, slightly limping as he did so.

# United Nations, New York City, USA

“They’re weakened right now. This is our time to strike! We can probably kill them both. I don’t think they have enough juice to stop our bombs anymore. Even if they aren’t nukes, we should attack both of them with the sword after they’re down,” Cane said as she gripped her hands with anxiety while watching Paris be decimated.

“You’re wrong, Madam President. Even if we were to hit them with our best shot, it probably still wouldn’t be enough to kill one of them, let alone both. God told us as much, and we would not only have one God after us if we miscalculated this, but they may join forces from our betrayal and wipe us out completely. Don’t let his threat to you affect the rest of humanity. We keep our promise and let God handle this. Wait for our opportunity. Remember, we only have one chance to get a clean kill. If this doesn’t work, we’re all dead anyhow,” Viktor stated in a serious tone.

“I agree with Viktor,” said Noah. Everyone mumbled in agreement as their focus went back to the news of the battle.

As Death walked out from under the fallen Louvre Pyramid’s shattered glass and crushed steel, the suit that covered his body was partially ripped from his left leg that he limped on. Both his arms and some of his face coverings were also partially torn, exposing his now cut, bruised, and ripped flesh underneath. His skin, fair in complexion and silky in texture, radiated as the sun bounced off it. Bluish blood secreted from his visible wounds. As it dripped and made contact with the ground, puffs of smoke rose each time. Those watching in person or via social media with a basic understanding of chemistry concluded that his blood must have been extremely acidic. As Death looked at God, the ground beneath him started to crack, and the slight humming coming from the Viathans in the sky grew louder as their color became redder.

His hatred had physically manifested itself.

Appearing under the Eiffel Tower while maintaining a line of sight on God, Death kicked out one of the legs holding up the structure. Then, he aimed his hand at another leg and obliterated it, forcing the tower to tilt in God’s direction. Seconds later, Death appeared on top of the tower, grabbed it with both hands and launched it at him. In an attempt to save as many lives as possible, God lifted his hand to crush the tower. Still, just as he did, Death stood before him. Seeing how their destructive abilities didn’t work on one another, God couldn’t react in time to stop the Eiffel Tower from slamming into himself, Death, and the many people around them. The two gods received the fallen tower’s impact’s full force. Like Death, God’s suit was now ripped and torn. Bluish blood fell from his open wounds, and just like Death, his, too, was acidic.

Now clearly in a weakened state, God grabbed Death’s arm and vanished, reemerging in Washington DC, on the White House’s front lawn.

“Why did you bring us here? Well, it doesn’t matter. They can die with you,” Death yelled out as more blood oozed from his body, running down his arm and dripping from his fingertips.

Looking around to gather his bearings, Death began with another parable, “Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis was a Hungarian scientist in the 1840s. He was responsible for watching over two maternity wards. One was a teaching school that covered all medicine, autopsies, drugs, birthing, and so on. The Second Ward was a clinic for women who couldn’t afford healthcare. Midwives and nurses mainly governed this second clinic. As head of both wards, Ignaz noticed that one of the clinics had a higher mortality rate than the other. It was so bad that it was almost safer for a woman to give birth at home rather than at this clinic. The surprise for Ignaz was which of the two clinics had a high death rate. He couldn’t understand why it was the teaching school. Ignaz eventually figured out that the high mortality’s cause was what was called Puerperal Fever. Upon this discovery, he proposed the idea and practice of washing hands with a chlorinated lime solution. After enacting the practice of hand washing, mortality rates within the school dropped significantly! Now with proof, he published his idea and his findings. Yet, despite all of this evidence, Ignaz’s observations conflicted with the beliefs of the current scientific community of the time. Other scientists even mocked him for his suggestion. Ignaz was eventually committed to an asylum by his own colleagues, where he later died. Nearly a decade passed after his death before the scientific community accepted his findings. I’ve told you that story to say although my way of doing things may seem cruel and unfair even. In time, the new humanity will come to understand that, like Ignaz, my way will eventually help them save themselves.”

Knowing that this would probably be their last act, the gods stood feet apart, looking each other in the eyes. Without using his hands or any movements, Death created a lightning storm and focused all of his remaining energy to force the lightning to strike God. In that same breath, seeing what Death was doing as the lighting was reaching him, God shifted his body and bone structure’s genetic makeup to make his hand and arm into a sword-like weapon, just as Death had done on the mountain. He hurled himself at Death, piercing his suit, and ripping a hole in Death’s heart at the same moment the lightning bolt made contact with him. The lightning drained his body completely of energy just as his strike did the same to Death. God’s hand reverted to normal as he pulled it out of Death’s chest, and both beings fell to the ground. None of their attack against themselves was enough to kill them completely, but they exerted every bit of strength they had left. Both beings were now lying on their backs next to each other, looking at the sky, completely stiff and unable to move.

“We were built to never die or get hurt. Well, at least not by anything a human could create. But look at us lying here. I predict that our bodies will heal within a few hours, and when that happens, we will get back to having fun. Just imagine if we fought at full force and power. We would split the universe in two,” Death said cynically.

“Although our knowledge and understanding are nearly equal in every way, the downside of mental connection with the Supreme is that we can’t share an active link, which is why I can’t see what you’re doing in real-time, nor can you see me. Which is why you don’t know what’s coming next. In short, fighting again won’t be possible. This is where one of us dies,” God uttered as he gazed up at the red tint that covered the world.

“Die? You know that’s not possible for humans to do. If it must happen, then it will be by our own hand. Now, I thought I was the one to make jokes,” Death stated in a confused tone as he, too, investigated the sky.

God spoke softly to Death, “Daedalus, who created wings held together by wax, told his son, Icarus, that when they escaped the labyrinth and headed back to Athens, he was not to fly too low by the water as the wax wings might get filled with too much moisture from the waves, nor fly too high because the sun’s heat would melt the wax and the wing would fall apart. During the escape, Icarus realized that he was natural at flying and disregarded his father’s advice. His father called out to him as they flew to stay close to him, but it was too late. Icarus decided to test how high he could get with his wings, and his action led to the sun melting the wax on his wings. He fell to his death crying out to his father as he did.”

As they stared into the heavens and Death attempted to make sense of what he’d heard, a military helicopter appeared above them. Soldiers rappelled down from the chopper, dropping boxes of cargo as they did. Once on the ground, one soldier radioed to the chopper to leave the area as he walked up to Death and looked down at him with a sinister smile.

Chapter 8:

*The Trial of God*

# “We are slaves to the dictates of freewill.”

As their bodies lay there, barely able to move, the soldier who stood over Death continued to smile from ear to ear. He flung his rifle over his shoulder, letting it hang on his side. Then he took off his helmet and dropped it next to Death’s head. More helicopters swamped the airspace over the White House as they zoomed in to investigate the soldiers’ presence. The other soldiers that exited the helicopter stood behind him with their weapons pointed at both entities.

“Do you two know who I am?” the soldier asked.

“You are Sergeant Davis of the United States, 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment, also known as Delta Force. You were the first US soldier I came into contact with,” replied God.

“Okay, that was a rhetorical question, but I must admit I’m more than surprised as well as honored that God himself knows and remembers me,” Sergeant Davis responded as he extended his hand out to his side, signaling the soldier standing behind him.

Swiftly, the other soldier began to unsheathe what seemed to be a sword out of his backpack and handed it over to Davis. Death looked at the soldiers and started to chuckle softly despite his grave wounds.

“Do you think some dull sword will be able to kill us? You humans, you never learn. The second my body heals, I’m going to kill you all slowly and painfully. Everyone dies, including your kids now,” Death said with cynicism.

“Nah, I don’t think you’ll be killing anyone or anything else for that matter. Are you ready to do this?” Sergeant Davis asked God.

God looked at Davis, nodding his head slowly and pointing his hand toward Death as if he was waiting to be given something. Both gods locked eye contact with one another. What God had said to him earlier about one of them dying now made sense.

“I don’t know what you’re planning, but it won’t work. Only God has the possible hope of killing me, and even that would not be without cost. Some fancy sword definitely won’t do the trick,” Death stated carefreely.

Sergeant Davis gripped the sword more firmly as he stood over Death’s head.

“Should I do a traditional samurai or more of a Viking stance to kill him?” the sergeant asked his fellow soldiers in a joking manner as he mocked both poses.

Still standing over Death, Davis grabbed the sword with both hands and lifted it over his head. “For crimes against humanity, genocide, animal cruelty, and just for being a dick, as well as a shit load of other things that you’ve done, Death, I, Sergeant Davis of the United States Military, empowered by the United States and the United Nations, hereby sentence you to death.” With all his strength, Davis thrust the sword through Death’s chest.

“I told you that your little trick wouldn’t work—” Death’s sentence was cut short.

A second or two after the sword pierced his chest, Death’s body began to shake violently as if he was having a seizure. The ground underneath him started to turn pitch-black and disintegrate like the grass had acid poured onto it. Sergeant Davis attempted to grab the sword and jump away from the body, but the sword, too, started to deteriorate. Davis and the other soldiers backed away to get a grasp of what was happening. The Viathans that Death had covered the sky with began to fall, turning into liquid as they did so. For the first time in recorded history, it rained what seemed to be blood.

The suit which covered Death’s body deteriorated completely, exposing the human flesh underneath, and that, too, along with his exoskeleton, incinerated down to a cellular level. Once the smoke cleared, a high beam of energy was seen in the place where Death’s body lay, but it vanished as quickly as it came. As the ground surrounding the area stopped caving in upon itself and the dust settled, God continued to lay there, seemingly unable to move.

Viewing from the many news helicopters hovering above the White House, the world could not believe what they had just witnessed. Man had slain a god. Witnessing this restored hope. Across the world, men, women, and children dropped the weapons they had once used to kill their brethren for the sake of survival and, for the first time since Death's arrival, breathed a sigh of relief. Like a cool summer breeze on a hot summer’s day, a whiff of harmony and hope was felt across the world as sunlight now covered once again.

Sergeant Davis slowly walked up to God and spoke, “Now, it’s time to deal with you...” He extended his hand again to another soldier who unsheathed a second sword and passed it to him.

“You thought we only had enough to kill one of you. I guess you’re not ‘all-knowing’ after all. This sword was personally made for you. We call it, The Harp. It was mentioned in Greek mythology. Cronus, a Titan, used it to castrate and kill his father, and since you’re ‘God, our father,’ we found it appropriate, given the circumstances. However, it’s not my decision to kill you here and now, not until after the vote, at least. You shall be judged not only by me, but by the entire world.”

Having finished explaining himself to God, Sergeant Davis thrust the sword into the ground beside his head. He walked over to the other soldiers as they began to unload the boxes of cargo they had arrived with. They brought a satellite television and high-grade antennae. They were planning to broadcast God’s execution to the world.

After setting up the satellite TV and antennae, the soldiers recollected their weapons and stood behind God as he continued to lie there. They were in plain view of the world watching. Sergeant Davis, who stood in front of God and facing the TV, looked back at God while he picked up his rifle off the ground and lifted his other hand to point back at the screen as it loaded.

“God, welcome to your trial,” Davis stated arrogantly.

Eventually, the images loading on the TV screen became clear. It was the world leaders back at the UN.

“Madam President, I did as instructed. The hostile known as ‘Death’ has been naturalized, and the information given was, in fact, correct. The video footage is being uploaded to you now. We have everything set in place for phase two. With your permission and that of other world leaders, we would like to proceed,” Davis reported.

“We’re looking at the footage now, Sergeant Davis. Great job, this is great work! So yes, I and everyone else here agree. You and your man are free to proceed,” President Cane stated to Davis.

“Copy that, Madam President,” Davis said. “Everything on our end is done. I leave it in your hands and await your orders. Sergeant Davis, over and out.”

# United Nations, New York City, USA

“There’s no time for small talk, Madam President. Start the broadcast now,” President Viktor yelled out.

“I know,” replied Cane irritably.

The satellite TV started to load. Soon after, it showed red dots of every place in the world viewing the live stream in front of the White House. Ninety-one percent of the world: close to 3 billion people (which was what was left of humanity after the chaos—the death toll had yet to be properly tallied), were either viewing the broadcast or listening to it in some form. Standing up from her chair and walking in front of the broadcasting camera as she held her hands together, her long hair hung over her shoulders, and pearl earrings with their matching necklace emphasized her formal soft gray, pencil skirt suit, Cane began to speak: “Hello world, or more accurately, humanity. I am President Cane of the United States of America, and here with me are most of the world leaders. We come to you in these dark days and trying times, not only with words of sympathy but also hope. As most of you witnessed, it was with the help of God and through hard work, tenacity, and perseverance that our countries combined their resources and managed what was considered an impossibility. We have found a way to defeat the threats that plague us now! Deeming his actions as extremely hostile, we had no choice but to eliminate Death immediately. For those who have not seen the video already, we will broadcast the video to all viewers very soon. We are showing you this video to provide proof of our claim and, well, frankly, because the question that’s being asked or will be asked affects all of us. What we do and decide here will determine humanity’s fate. And so, we believe that it is not our decision as the free world’s leaders to make but for the entire world to cast a vote. With that being said, ladies and gentlemen, I welcome you all to God’s trial. Due to the work of our brave men and women in uniform from all over, we were able to subdue God to the point of physical exhaustion. We will present the facts as they are, weighing everything he’s done since arriving, both good and bad. We will allow him, or anyone for that matter, to defend him or speak on his behalf. Once all the evidence has been presented and the testimonials have been heard, we will leave the judgment of guilty or not in your hands.”

Cane looked at the screen directly at God. “God, or whatever you prefer to be called, you are being charged with war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and 124 other crimes including, but not limited to, terrorism, animal cruelty, and hate crimes.”

Looking back at the other screen with the world watching, Cane spoke, “Based on the information we have attained, we know we have approximately an hour before he’s fully recovered. We won’t have another chance like this, so forgive me, and forgive us, for moving fast, but for those selected to speak, please express your grievances or support without delay.”

Turning her attention back to God, Cane started, “God, your trial begins now. Since arriving here, you killed an estimated 25 million people before Death appeared. Some acts of your killing were murderous and self-righteous, and very few could even be considered justifiable. But even still, it’s not, nor was it ever, your place or right to judge or give judgment to any of us. You acted without regard to the laws that we, humanity, have set in place. Your blunt disregard for our way of life has been noted, and you decided humans’ guilt and judgment without care. You’ve threatened not only the life of humans but animals’ and this very planet’s as well. Here, we decide if what you did can be forgiven or not. We will open the lines to the world and hear if they’re in support or against you. Nod if you understand this.”

God nodded slowly as the world watched him through the screen for his confirmation.

The first person was selected to voice their grievance: “My dad was a soldier in the Red Army. You butchered him and forced my mom and me to watch. I hope your death is as painful as it was for my dad!”

Another person selected, “I got chosen? Oh, I only have a few seconds. Well, yeah, fuck you. You’re no god, and you deserve to die for this gross blasphemy—”

Next, a female sputtered, “Oh, hey! Well, I just wanted to say that since you’ve arrived, you’ve done a lot of good in the world. But I don’t believe anyone should have that much power, and I’m sorry, I vote against you, sir, God.”

Another man shouted as he called in, “You killed a lot of my homies. Fuck you. You are just like a cop and the government trying to control and keep us down. Die, motherfucker.”

A woman spoke next, “Since he arrived, he’s helped us in every corner of the world. Yes, his methods may have been heavy-handed and rough, but I still support him and his actions. I support you, God!”

Someone else agreed, “Please don’t kill God. We need God. Please don’t kill him.”

The line of testimonials for and against God continued for 45 minutes, leaving 15 to spare.

“And due to the timeframe, we cannot take any more video calls. We don’t want to risk God recovering too soon. We ask that everyone cast their vote now,” President Cane said.

Seconds felt like hours as everyone voted to give judgment. Within the UN, everyone was standing on pins and needles. The tension was so heavy that it was as if everyone was walking underwater. The monitor rang loudly to signal that everyone watching had voted and that out of the 91 percent of the population that had voted, 88% of them voted in favor of killing God.

Looking at the results on the screen, President Cane spoke directly to God as Sergeant Davis stepped over his laying body.

“The results are final. God, today, we have put you on trial, and with the current and limited resources at our disposal, we deem that we have given you a fair and honest one. But for the crimes we have charged you with, we, in one voice, have found you guilty of all charges. The sentence for these crimes is death.”

Claps and cheers ranged loudly within the UN as People hugged and embraced each other, and with the viewing audiences, the same reactions were being shared. After the joyous responses calmed and the room quieted down, Cane continued, “Sergeant Davis, get ready.”

“Yes, Madam President,” Davis responded.

“Sergeant Davis and the other souls that stand with him, I ask you all to approach the camera so the world can see the brave men and women who are sacrificing their lives in the name of hope, in the name of peace and for humanity as a whole. We salute and thank you. Godspeed! For those who do not know, once God is killed, the blast radiance of the energy released from his body will incinerate all things and life within 100 miles. And since they volunteered, this will be their last act of goodwill. And so, I ask that we all hold a moment of silence in their name to thank them for their service. It will not, and can never, be forgotten…”

After everyone went silent for a few moments, Sergeant Davis lifted his head to say parting words, “I speak for all of us when I say it has been an honor and a pleasure to serve under the command of you, Madam President, under the United States and for our last act to be in service of humanity itself.”

As the other soldiers took their original positions, Davis pulled up his sword, The Harp, out of the ground as the other soldiers started to hum and sing softly. Their humming soon became clear as Davis lifted the sword above his head.

“O say can you see, by the dawn’s early light, what so proudly we hail’d at the twilight’s last gleaming,” the soldiers chanted.

“God, as the standing voice for all of humanity, I, in good consciousness, will ask you if you have any last words,” Cane said, and the world turned its attention to God and waited.

And with a slow nod of agreement, everyone waited in anticipation to hear God’s last words.

“Eight...” God whispered.

“Eight?” President Viktor stood up and yelled out in confusion.

“What does eight mean?” President Cane asked.

God replied louder, “88.”

“What does that mean?” Cane asked in frustration.

“Wait, wait… this can’t be,” Prime Minister Noah said as his voice cracked, and the fear seeped out.

Everyone within the UN, as well as those still watching via the broadcast, turned their attention to Noah.

“What is 88? What the hell does 88 mean?” President Viktor yelled at Noah.

Chapter 9:

*Kaprekar’s Constant: The*

*Mystery of the numbers - 6174*

# “Experience is the worst kind of teacher; it gives you the test first and the lesson afterward.”

“The votes… check the percentage of those who voted to kill God,” Noah yelled out frantically.

“Why does that matter?” President Viktor responded as he looked at the screen and saw the numbers.

“Before he left to fight Death, he told us to remember that number. But how could he have predicted this outcome so far in advance? How could he have known that he would survive the battle with Death or that we wouldn’t kill him over Death first? This just isn’t possible. It’s not!” President Adebiyi reasoned as his eyes turned red with frustration.

“Those are questions we can figure out ourselves later. Sergeant Davis, I’m sorry, but you need to do this now. May the Lord be with you,” President Cane stated openly and directly.

As Davis thrust the sword downward into God’s chest, he yelled, “‘Merica!”

He closed his eyes with anticipation of his and his fellow soldiers’ death. But to his surprise and the world watching, nothing happened. The same amount of material that was used to craft the sword to kill Death was also in this one. But something was wrong.

Confirming that the sword was impaled into God’s chest, Sergeant Davis looked increasingly confused. Fear soon ran through him like electricity...

# United Nations, New York City, USA

“This is bad. What’s happening? What the fuck is going on?” President Viktor screamed out as the world watched.

God adjusted his body with the sword still impaled in him. As he slowly sat upright, he pulled the sword out and tossed it away as it started to deteriorate. The surrounding soldiers lifted their rifles and unleashed every bullet that was made of the same material as the swords into him, but all to no avail. God’s body and suit were completely restored. Everyone drew their focus to him.

“What is this...? Did he lie to us about how to kill him? I don’t understand what is going on. We did everything right...” President Adebiyi declared.

God looked directly into the camera and spoke, “The gods you pray to have allowed for natural disasters to take root in your everyday lives, killing you indiscriminately each year and by the millions. Since my arrival, I have corrected that problem. I have rid the world of war and suffering. I’ve fixed the system of economic injustice, healed the sick, gifted you with knowledge, gave you hope, and still, that wasn’t enough for you. You still bare your fangs at me all the while I am the hand that feeds you… But it’s too late. There is nothing you can do now. Humanity dies just as I had expected. Even if Death had managed to kill me with your help or you decided to use your first sword on me instead of him, the outcome would have still been the same, only with Death at the helm. He and I both knew this very outcome was inevitable. But to be clear and answer the question that you all seek to know. I did not lie about how to kill one of us. I simply did not include all the information. Even if you had four or five swords and successfully attacked me with all of them, it wouldn’t alter reality. From the start, you only could kill one of us with the material I spoke of. I had hoped Death was wrong about you all. I purposely avoided mentioning that you humans had enough materials to make two weapons. Even if I had, it would not have changed this very outcome because you would have still attempted to kill me. To clarify, to kill both of us, you would first need to use the sword and kill one first. Second, you would need to have accounted for the extra energy the other would have amassed and absorbed from the death of the first one. Since energy cannot be destroyed or created, it can only be transformed. To kill the second being, you would need a much larger weapon. A bomb, to be precise, one that was filled with the same materials you used to make the sword, and it needed to be as big and equivalent to one of your nuclear bombs…”

“Oh. My. Dear God. We never had a chance,” President Cane stated with hopelessness.

“Now, do you understand the gravity of your situation? Had humanity stayed the course, judgment would have been passed, and it could have continued,” God stated as he began to lift both his hands in front of himself as if he were about to pray.

Those watching, as well as the world leaders, stood in shock. The last line of hope humanity held on to had now simmered away like a candle flicking out.

“So, in actuality, we had no real chance of winning and or surviving this?” President Cane asked calmly.

“You did have a chance. A 12 percent chance. If humanity had voted to support my actions, I would have given you all one more chance at living. But that time has come and gone. Even more so: if you all had taken my advice on advancing yourselves scientifically, you would’ve inhabited other planets by now and would’ve had more than the necessary amount of material to kill the both of us. Truthfully, you have led yourselves to your own damnation.”

“Of course we did. So, what happens to us now? Are you just going to kill us?” Prime Minister Noah asked with contempt.

As God’s hands touched, he responded, “Yes, what comes next is death...”

Then, like a bright flash of sunlight hitting a person’s face in the morning, God emitted a heat wave that incinerated Sergeant Davis and the soldiers who stood behind him. The cameras that were set up to film God’s trial were also destroyed. The live feed simply went blank until a few seconds later, the footage from the news helicopters above showed what looked like an explosion going off where God stood. Everyone had just witnessed firsthand how they would soon die.

Shocked and scared, the world had come to terms with the truth. This was the end, and there was nothing they could do about it. After what seemed like dreaded hours, God appeared once more within the halls of the UN Unsure of what he would do or say, the world leaders and the world could only watch him. The silence was deafening.

God spoke, “I’ve tried to give—”

“No, fuck that and fuck you!” Prime Minister Noah interrupted and yelled out. “Fuck your long-winded speeches and moral judgments. You’re going to kill us either way. So, before you do that, just give it to me, to us, straight. Was it all a lie? Was all of this some game or joke to you? How much did you know of our plan to kill you both, and what exactly are you?”

Surprised by Noah’s outburst, everyone looked back at God for a reply or sudden death for Noah, whichever came first.

“You’re right, and you’re wrong,” God responded.

“Damn it! Didn’t he say you should stop with the riddles and get straight to the point?” President Viktor shouted.

Just as Viktor finished his statement, the building shook as if an earthquake was forthcoming, but God lifted his hand, and it stopped. Everyone sat down, taking the hint.

“I will give answers to all the questions you seek but interrupt me again, and I end everything right here and now,” God stated calmly.

The room went back to complete silence, and everyone felt the same feeling across the world. It made the hairs on the back of their neck stand up.

“I was given humanity’s facts. Taught and learned the human race’s history and all of its benefits and faults. Even with your many shortcomings, I believe you could still be redeemed. But it appears I was wrong. So, I will do you all a favor and tell you what exactly comes next. But first...”

Just before God could act or finish his statement, a barrage of gunfire was suddenly heard. Those within the room ducked for cover while the agents and other guards unloaded every bullet they had in their guns at God. It was a pointless but last-ditch effort to kill him.

After their clips emptied and the smell of gun-powered smoke filled the room, everyone stood silently, waiting to see the results, but as expected, God remained unharmed. Simply standing there, unfazed.

“So, it didn’t work… We were hoping that you or Death would be a lot weaker due to your battle. We couldn’t be sure who was going to win. Even if one of you somehow survived the battle and being stabbed with the sword, we predicted you would come to address us first. So, we used the leftover materials from swords to forge bullets,” President Cane explained with a cold undertone.

“It could not be helped. Now that you’re out of cards to play, allow me to show you one of mine,” God stated as he stared at the guards, who began screaming in agony as layers of their flesh were ripped from their bodies in a matter of seconds. The clothes they wore and the weapons they carried and soon their very bodies were completely disintegrated. It was as if they had never existed, as not even a single drop of blood was left by them.

Once he disposed of them, like Death before him, God’s body started to emit a liquid-like fluid that manifested into Viathans. Unlike Death’s, which were red, God’s were lavender purple. As they were being released, they burst out of every door and window within the UN and took to the skies. The world was once again encased in a layer of Viathans. The Sun was blacked out, and the world stood still once more.

Scared at what he was seeing, Adebiyi began to plead, “You must understand. Your heavy-handed methods, your rules, and your so-called judgments have given us no choice. We had no other alternatives but to take extreme measures against you and Death, for that matter. Do you not agree?”

“What would you have us do, sit on our hands, and take it?” said President Lee.

The room went silent as God gave his reply, “Even in the face of death, you all commit to the lies that everything you and your ancestors have done up to this point was justifiable. The gall and the audacity of you humans is inconceivable. My original judgment before coming back to this planet was like Death’s, the eradication of humanity. That was the more logical and reasonable conclusion. Still, I somehow allowed my former humanity to seep in and render a different judgment. Humanity’s reset I gave you all the first time.”

“What the hell does that mean? For fuck’s sake, stop speaking in tongues and just give it to us straight,” Prime Minster Noah demanded with irritation.

God looked at Prime Minister Noah and watched as his body’s movements slowed dramatically and his skin color faded. His cheeks turned red, then blue, and finally black. His body had hardened as if he was sealed in place like the Statue of Liberty. As Noah tried to speak, his breath emitted cold air: he was being frozen alive. His fingertips began to fall off as his heartbeat slowed and came to a stop. The room and the world watched.

God continued speaking, completely unfazed by what he had done to Noah, “So be it. I will speak at a lower intellectual level for all of you to understand… Simply put, those who voted for my death will die.”

The room gasped, and most of the people watching reacted in disbelief as well. God persisted, “But those who voted in my favor will be allowed to live.”

“So that’s it? Nearly the entire population will be gone, and the ones left get to restart humanity. But what good would that do? Once you leave, die, or whatever happens to you, all of what you dislike about humanity, the fighting, the classism, poverty, hatred, and wars, will be reborn. But to be clear, you will let those who supported you live. I’m just curious as to what the point of all of this senseless death that you’re about to cause will do in the end,” Adebiyi queried.

“None of what you speak will be reborn because those who live after I’m done will not remember humanity’s history. After I take their memories, I will dismantle every piece of your past existence. I will wipe away your infrastructures, technologies, and inventions, and I will tear down your Towers of Babel,” God expressed with a dead tone.

Chapter 10:

*The Last Act of Freewill*

# “No rest for the wicked, and no place for the damned.”

***“…I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul...”***

“Before I die, this will be my final judgment,” God stated.

“I thought you couldn’t die now? You said you can’t anymore,” President Cane asked, staring in confusion.

“I said that you, as in humanity, cannot kill me. That fact still stands. I never said I cannot die.”

“Then explain it to us. I mean, we’re all going to die, so humor us, please,” President Viktor said as the room chilled.

“The excess energy I absorbed from Death after his demise was and is too much for this vessel of mine to handle. My death and his were already set in stone as written in the Book of Destiny. A fixed point in every universe. This was always the result of our creation, that battle, all of it. The only variable was you all, humanity, as you were told…”

“If you knew this would happen this way, why not just outright kill us when you arrived?” President Viktor asked in confusion.

Before speaking, God paused to observe everyone in the room’s reactions.

“Death and I knew one of us would die when we first met. It was just a matter of the sequence of events that would be the determining factor of who,” God responded.

“We get that you both knew you would have to fight each other and that one of you would die. That much is clear, but the rest still makes no sense. When exactly did you both know this, and how? Also, how did humanity play a part in who died if we had no way of killing either of you until you told us?” President Cane questioned.

God concluded that no matter what he said to them, they would not comprehend his message unless he showed them the future himself, and so that is what he did. He prognosticated the future for all the world to witness...

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The lavender smoke from God’s body increased dramatically. It was thick and dark, like a car tire set on fire. The sound emitted swelled to a painful sting, like fingernails screeching across a chalkboard. Cups, plates, televisions, windows, and anything made of glass shattered around the world. Blood ran from people’s ears as their eardrums burst. The dark lavender once again took shape, forming into a mix of what appeared to be a hybrid of bees and mosquitoes, and began to devour every human on the planet aside from the few God spared. Screams, cries, and pain soon spread around the world. As human after human seemingly vanished after being devoured. Back in the UN, the world leaders stood tall and faced God in the eyes as they began to die, ensuring not to give him the satisfaction of screaming.

“Fuck you,” President Cane uttered before fading away.

# 450 years later. Location unknown

A woman in shabby clothes walked to a hill’s top and sat next to a tree as the sun shone down. She pulled out a handcrafted book of some sort, laid it next to her as she folded her hands in front of her chest, and closed her eyes.

“God, it’s me again, your loyal servant, your messenger, Angela. It has been over three centuries since any of us have seen or heard from you. You promised me, you promised us, that you would return when the time was right. Everyone’s getting restless, including myself. Things have gone from bad to worse since I last prayed to you a decade ago. I have written it all down.”

Angela picked up the book by her side and put it over her head to show proof of what she had spoken of.

“I have done what I can, God, to write down everything that has transpired in your absence in this book. It’s bad, my lord. Eve has been wandering in the Garden that you told us never to go into. She’s made mention of talking to some sort of snake or lizard: it’s not clear. Then there’s Adam, who just follows behind Eve, I’m at a loss with him too. But more importantly, an uneasy feeling comes to my heart when I look at their sons, especially Cain. He has some kind of mark on his arm now and claims he doesn’t know how he got it. I don’t believe him, especially with how he’s been looking at his little brother Abel. It’s eerie. I’m not sure what to make of it, but I have a bad feeling.

“Goliath has been making enemies with David and his kind. I think things will take a turn for the worse. Prometheus, the guardian of the flame, has used the ability you gave him to resist fire to steal it and share it with the rest of the people. Zeus is livid about it since it is his job to watch over Prometheus. He and Hades, along with other followers, have left with the abilities you gifted them and have declared themselves the new gods. Cronus, Zeus’s father, as well as the other self-proclaimed Titans, are not happy with this. I fear the two groups will not be able to coexist for much longer. Pandora has gotten curious about the box you’ve entrusted her with guarding. It has been rumored that she’s been lifting it open more and more every day. Zeus has taken it upon himself to tell her never to open it, or he will punish her without mercy. I fear our words fall on deaf ears.

“Michael and Lucifer aren’t speaking again, and talk of the Seven Seals you put in place to lock away hidden power, one of them has been meddling with them. Also, Moses has left in search of a new way. He has taken a group of followers with him as well. They plan to cross the Red Sea. I warned them of your wrath in doing so, but no one listens to me.”

Angela took a moment before continuing, “My lord, please hear my prayers and come back to us. Buddha has gone into the deepest recesses of the forests to seek an understanding of all things. He referred to it as enlightenment. It’s been eight years since he left, and Mohamed has started walking toward the mountains. He said he’d found his resolve to reach the highest peak. I told him it wasn’t possible, but he was determined to do it. Mary still has not taken a husband. She says she’s waiting for your return. Teresa has been watching over the children. They refer to her as their mother now. Things have changed a lot since you left… I feel nothing will get better if you don’t return, and I’m also sad to report that this will be my last prayer. My lifespan is soon coming to an end, but I will pass this book along to someone who will do what I’ve done all this time. Keep record. May we meet again, my lord…”

***200 million years later***

“In the name of King Arthur!”

# 3000 more years later

“Alexander, if you can untie this knot, you shall rule all of Asia.”

Alexander replied, “No problem. Pass it to me.”

Alexander pulled out his sword and cut the once-deemed unopenable knot in half.

“You cut it in half? That’s not what I meant.”

“Well, you never said I couldn’t. And now, I shall rule all of Asia, and you shall keep a clear record of my rule, maybe build temples in my name, maybe a library or two as well.”

“I accept, and from now until the end of time, you will no longer be called just Alexander but Alexander the Great!”

# 2000 years later

“You have been found guilty of witchcraft, and you are hereby sentenced to death by hanging.”

# 1000 years later

“Our enemies are at the gate; we are outmatched and outpowered! I vote that we give the power of our safety to Julius Caesar, a man who has shown his leadership and skill time and time again!”

# 500 years later

“As decreed by the King, the selling, transporting, or buying of slaves is now illegal and considered immoral!”

# 400 years later

“…because we are men of principle that stands for justice and freedom. We come together not as the ten colonies, but as one nation! To give a voice to the voiceless, hope to the hopeless and faith to the faithless. For all, we shall become home to the free and the brave. All shall be welcome. Here and now, we sign our country’s first official document into law, The Declaration of Independence. We unite the ten colonies into one country, and as of today, our country shall be named, The United States of British!

***200 years later***

“Today we mourn the tragic death of Queen Elizabeth II, who was cowardly shot by John D. Rockefeller while visiting The United States of British. President Martin Luther King said the full force of the USB will find all who are responsible and bring them to justice.”

# 150 years later

“‘That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind’are Neil Armstrong’s most famous words, but what else did he say? Read your chapters over the weekend. There will be a test on Monday!”

# 80 years later

A lady sat on a bench at a park with her stroller beside her. She looked at the swing set where a young boy was playing. Another pedestrian walked up and sat down on the same bench, waving her hand and signaling to her son, who was with her, to go and play with the other kids while she rested. She then looked over to the lady beside her and spoke, “Hi, I’m Cataleya. Which one’s yours?”

“Hello, I’m Adaline. My son’s over there, in the red shirt, running this way. The shortest seven-year-old you’ll ever see,” she jokingly replied as she stood up to get ready to leave.

“What’s his name?” Cataleya asked.

“Jacob, Jacob St. Patrick. He’s just like his dad: high energy and loves science. He’s always giving me a new lesson on why things are the way they are. So I bring him here to tire him out and give myself a break. He plans to be a scientist of some sort when he gets older, too, so pray for me. I think I’m the only one in my house who uses emotions to express my feelings, not ‘reasoning or logic,’ as my husband loves to say. Do me a favor and mention nothing about anything science-related when he gets here. Between him and his dad, I can never get a break!” Adaline replied with slight irritation.

“Your son wants to be a scientist as well? What are the odds, mine too! Alex, short for Alexander—another Carter in the family. That’s all he and his dad talk about as well. Between us, they’re the reason I drink bottoms of wine weekly. But hey, who knows, maybe our sons will one day work together and change the world,” Cataleya joked.

“With a third World War brewing and the world’s civil unrest, I hope they do something to fix that. I’m tired of hearing about these radical groups who may blow me up at any time,” Adaline replied as Jacob walked up and grabbed her hand, and they started to walk away.

“Yeah, hopefully,” Cataleya responded softly and waved bye.

# Current time. United Nations, New York City, USA

After seeing what could only be described as a premonition, those within the UN were left completely breathless. They, as well as those still viewing, dropped to their knees, gasping for air. Veins protruded from their foreheads as they vomited. Sweat dripped heavily from their faces, and their bodies became extremely stiff. Some people died from the sudden rush.

“What was that? I saw my own death. What did you do to us?” President Cane demanded as she attempted to stand up. Her legs shook and wobbled as she did so.

“I just showed you all what the future would be if I continued with my plan. Although it may not be exactly how your current history progressed, it is still a variant of what it might be, with a probability of 97.3%,” God replied.

“Based on what principle does that percentage come from, and how’d you make us see the future?” President Viktor replied as he crawled into his chair and wiped his face.

“Explaining that to you all would do more harm than good, and even then, you wouldn’t comprehend any of it. Equivalent to explaining cell biology to a two-year-old,” God replied.

“Fine if you don’t want to explain it. As you have said, if you do things that way, we’ll most likely end up back here. So, what’s next?” President Lee questioned.

God replied, “Going about my original plan when I first arrived didn’t work. Adjusting my plan to account for Death’s intervention, as we have just witnessed, would inevitably lead you back here to this moment. Then considering the situation, Death’s plan to save only the young ones is also not a factor here. God paused for a moment as the world hung on every word. ‘I will go about a plan that no universe ever has. I will set forth what I shall deem the cosmos’ plan.”

“Which is what?” President Lee questioned.

“Those who voted against me still die. That much remains. For the rest of you, what will be different now is that I shall let you all live as you are. I will allow you to keep your memories, knowledge, history, and understanding. I will let you remember what has happened and convey this story to your kids and grandkids. I will let you live with the knowledge that led to the destruction and desolation of humanity with the hope that you make a grave change, given you are the few chosen ones. Now, make peace with one another,” God replied as the sounds of the Viathans increased.

“So, you’re just going to kill most of us and leave?” President Cane replied.

“You’re half right. As I said, I will take your creations and inventions away from you: your skyscrapers, your fancy roads, your clothes, your mechanical means of transportation, your satellites, your maps, and your borders. I shall take everything you humans hold dear, and leave you with nothing but the knowledge to rebuild. Maybe in doing so, a new outcome can be found,” God stated.

“Wait, how will we get back to our families if you do that? Some of us live on the other side of the planet. How will we find them?” President Viktor reasoned.

“You won’t. This is the punishment of God and your betrayal of me. Those who live shall start anew right where they stand. Social Darwinism shall take its course… Look at where your ambitions have led you. Now, make peace with what’s to come.”

“Wait, before you kill us. I have but two questions and one request to make,” President Katumbi stated as he stood up and regained his form.

Out of curiosity or simply just because, God halted his Viathans and signaled for Katumbi to speak.

“One, how do you know who voted for and against you during your trial? Two, what is your name? I will make my request after you respond to my questions.”

These questions were simple but informational as well. Those in the room couldn’t believe no one had thought to ask them before.

“Death was right about you. You are exactly what humanity needs, Mr. Katumbi,” God stated.

Referring to President Katumbi with respect shocked the room. Neither God nor Death had done that to anyone before.

God responded, “Like the satellites you use to connect your smart devices, like this very newsfeed you are broadcasting across the globe, I am connected with everything this universe holds. In your terms, I am all-knowing, yet I am not all-powerful. Two, my name is Rebis! Now, make your last request.”

“That makes sense. I understand and suspected as much. Also, Rebis, derived from the pseudoscience of Alchemy, refers to a humanoid being that is both male and female. If that’s your name, then my assumption of you must be right as well,” President Katumbi replied with intrigue.

“What are you talking about, and what does that mean for us?” President Viktor yelled out to Katumbi.

“It’s better if you all see. Now, for my request. May we see your face?” President Katumbi asked.

The room and God stood still in silence for a second. Everyone held their breath, unsure of how he might react, until God replied, “Very well.” He slowly lifted his hand, gripped the side of his mask, and ripped it from his face. The room slowly gazed upon what they saw…

Chapter 11:

*The Last Act of Goodwill*

# “It’s not about making the decision; it’s living with it.”

The room sat quietly as the sight of Rebis’ face came into full view.

For some reason, people began to cry uncontrollably. But it was a happy cry, like a cancer patient being told they were cancer-free or a child who was not expected to live through the night of their birth making it to see their 18th birthday. For some, seeing Rebis’ face was an emotional moment for everyone.

“God, he’s... he’s white. I can’t believe it,” President Viktor said as he cried with joyous tears.

“White and a ‘he’? What are you talking about? God is a beautiful indigenous woman. She looks better than I had imagined. I feel ashamed for laying eyes on her right now,” President Cane replied as she, too, wiped the tears from her smiling face.

“And yet, I see a strong, chiseled chin Black man with perfect form,” President Katumbi replied.

“I see an Asian man who looks like an Olympian. What does this mean?” President Lee replied.

“It means I am what you hoped I would be. That is what the Rebis is: that is who I am. I am neither man nor woman. I am nonbinary, and my physical features are what the observer wishes them to be when they look upon me. My eyes are what reflect your desire for me,” God replied.

“Even your voice sounds angelic,” President Cane stated as she continued to cry.

“So, you really are made in *our* image,” President Katumbi stated.

At that moment, the Viathans began to devour everything in their path that wasn’t made by nature. Those within the room looked around as the building’s walls started to vanish, exposing them to the outside. Everyone wiped their faces as they came to terms with their new world.

While looking at the walls around her crumbling in disbelief, President Cane noticed a spider on her arm. She quickly flicked it off and began to check the rest of her body. She then noticed a worm on her foot. Now she panicked, not comprehending why bugs would be on her. Feeling something in her hair, she screamed. The occupants of the room turned their attention to her and watched as her entire body became covered in bugs, spiders, worms, ants, and maggots. The more she pushed them off, the more they covered her. Cane was being eaten alive, slowly, by the things she most feared, bugs.

“I warned you that your death was a fixed point. ‘Come into my parlor, said the spider to the fly,’” God stated as the room’s floor dusted away, leaving grass under their feet. Their clothes faded from their bodies. Skyscrapers crumbled, and satellites fell from the sky like meteorites piercing throw the lavender Viathans that engulfed the world.

Some looked to see God’s reaction, but it was too late. Like a flicker of a flame in the open wind, God was gone.

As the civilized world faded to dust and only grass and trees remained where the UN once stood, the remaining world leaders pondered their situation.

One person asked softly, “What do we do now?”

A few minutes passed before President Katumbi walked out in front of everyone and looked toward the sun as the Viathans fell from the sky, and they, too, began to die. With the sunlight’s warmth hitting his face and bare chest, he smiled slightly, looked back at the group, and replied, “We rebuild…”

Released from prison due to the circumstances of the world ending, Jaxon drifted through the streets without food or water in search of his home. As the buildings, cars, and roads around him slowly faded away, he knew what was happening. Although his shoes were worn from the many miles he had walked and his body had weakened from the lack of hydration and sustenance, Jaxon looked ahead. As the many homes turned into dust, he noticed what used to be his neighborhood. Envisioning his wife and kids’ beautiful faces brought a smile to his and made him push forward to meet their gaze.

Moments before walking up to his house, God appeared before him. Jaxon’s eyes widened with surprise and admiration for the angelic look he gazed upon. Startled but not frightened, he stood tall to meet his God. He knew that this was an eventuality.

“I have two questions for you,” God stated.

“I may have answers,” Jaxon replied with conviction.

“After creating me and seeing the outcome of what you’re responsible for, do you think it was worth it?”

Taking a second to reply, Jaxon spoke, “Every action I’ve taken, regardless of how ruthless it may seem to the outside, I stand by. I know what it has cost me, and I know what I have gained. In the end, I would do it all over again, without fail. I knew the consequences of my actions, and I still consider them to be acceptable. So yes, it was worth it.”

“I see. Even after all that has transpired, you still consider this outcome, destruction, and loss of life to be tolerable… If you could leave this world with a farewell message that would last forever, what would it be?” God questioned.

“Hmm, good question. I suppose I would want every human to ask themselves three objective questions. ‘To get where you are right now in life, what did it cost you? What did you gain? Last and most importantly, was it worth it?’” Jaxon stated with resolve.

“This may be my human side speaking, but I find it comforting that you stand firm in your conviction,” God replied as he raised his hand, opened it, and pointed it at Jaxon’s face.

Coming to terms with the fact that he would never see his family again, Jaxon took a second to reminisce on the good times. At least he would die with a smile on his face.

“Before you kill me, answer me this, please. Were my actions in creating you justified in your eyes?” Jaxon asked.

As Jaxon’s body slowly started to deteriorate, God replied, “Yes, but at too great a cost.”

Without uttering another word, both understood each other at that moment. Jaxon smiled with pleasure. In his heart, he had found peace. As his body faded from existence, a teardrop rolled down his face, hitting the ground just as the last part of him blew away with the wind. God had judged Jaxon, and he had found that judgment and the consequences to be acceptable.

After Jaxon’s death, God, too, faded from existence, never to be heard from or seen again.