

The Door to SAMBUCCA

JIM ROBINSON

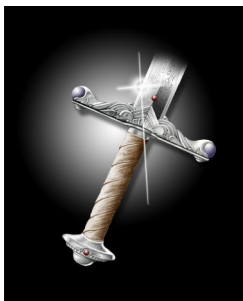


The DOOR to SAMBUCCA

Writing, illustration and book design by Jim Robinson

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To the veterans of the American Wars, especially my deceased Italian grandfather Phillip Rasile, the pressman, who fought in World War II.

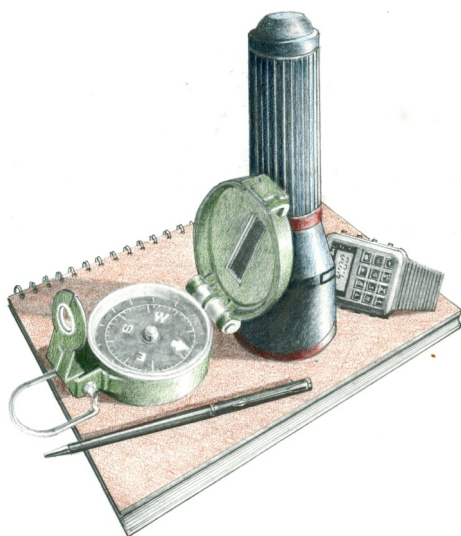
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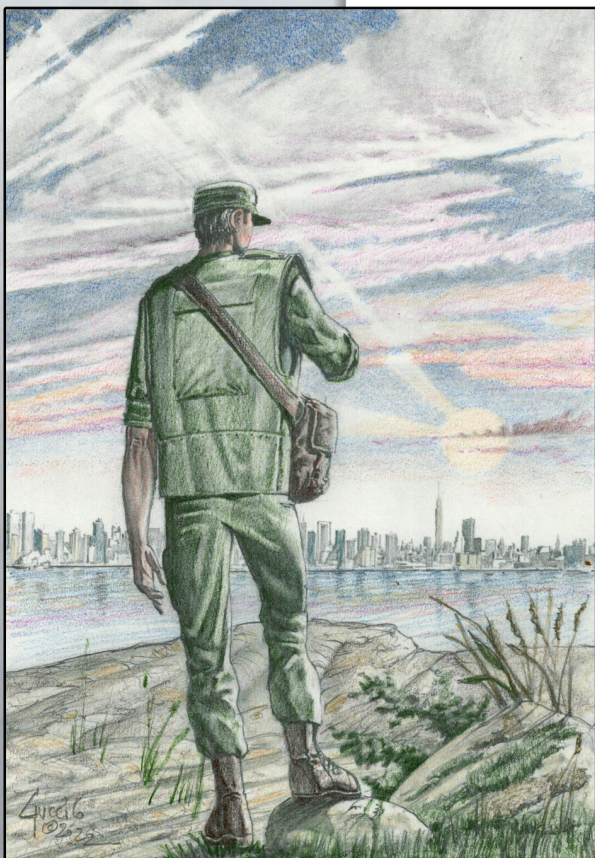
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A fictional account.

1 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. **2** And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. **3** And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. **4** And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Isaiah 2:1-4, KJV





CHAPTER 1

THE AMBER SKY

Just beyond the deep-green horizon of hills stretching past the suburbs, the sun is rising. There is a man walking. He steps onto the rock that spots the land just beyond the parameters of the farm, a powerful muscle pulling a lean stature up the boulders. As he straddles the rock that leads him to the edge of a cliff, he stops and pauses there. The sun ascends in the glory of God, and the sky cries out with a sheen palette of reds, oranges and purples midst the cloud and bluing atmosphere. In all sincerity he kneels there reverently on one knee to talk to God.

He is thankful. Thankful that God put him here, on the farm, away from the city. Thankful for a job that was easy for him and rather pleasant doing farm work at his own pace. Thankful for Hank, the man who brought him here away from a type of hell in the city. It was in front of him now, just beyond the horizon far from the cliff. The steel stretched to Heaven like the Tower of Babel, each building representing a man's attempt to reach God. And beneath the buildings were the streets and the endless multitudes of people like the waters of the earth. The people were all going somewhere, or so it seemed, but he had been there going nowhere. Now he was here, looking back at them. Someone was among them who he thought about, or was she? Had she passed away with her child, or was she still there? Was he not thinking about her but the one who could have taken her? All that remained was the bitter reality that her and her daughter were nowhere to be found. And she was his wife.

As these thoughts presented to his mind, he gazed out at the panorama of New York City and drew

in a long sigh as it were Adam's breath of life. It was an attempt to soothe the persisting tension that began this morning. It would come and go with memories. Memories he had to sort out. Some could have been just dreams that never really happened. Memories of unfinished things, some bitter and coupled with hatred – not his hatred but he hatred the world had taught him. In all of the confusion, the man, after all these years, still could not justify his history. A tear streams down his cheek, and he swallows, insisting that all things work together for good to them who love God.

Although he tried to calm his thoughts, his mind was a whirlwind about now. He thought it best to return to the farm, so he got up from his knees and turned to go saying, "Lord, maybe you would bring them back to me, but not my will be done, only yours."

The man, Nathan, rises and turns from the cliff then begins to trek the path back to his home. He had walked this route many times in the past ten years since he had moved to Hank's farm. Hank is an African-American man who succeeded in business in New York City, and he had a life-long dream to rise up crops in farmlands just past the suburbs. Hank still had family in the city, with a big extended family, still in Harlem, the Bronx and Brooklyn. He would invite them out betimes to spend weekends on the farm. Hank grew mostly corn and vegetables along with his cow and chicken. He also had horses, and Nathan rode often. Nathan handled most of the work on the farm unless it was delegated to hands that Hank had brought in from the city when there was a big harvest.

Nathan often took a walk to the cliff on Sunday morning. He was a very solitude man, and he was rarely able to keep his duty to church services choosing rather to spend the time alone with God. He had limited discourse with others, though he took well to Hank. Church had been a big part of his life, especially during his upbringing in a low-income neighborhood in Brooklyn. As a single adopted child, Nathan was reared to fear God in home guided by a working-class man whose wife was unable to bear children. Yet, his childhood and adolescence had been a success. It was the events of the years to follow that rendered him a recluse. His attempt to start a family was met with the Vietnam War. Falling among the lot, he had to go as a young man and leave behind his wife and daughter. The war pressed on with a grievous tour, and he returned home with shrapnel scars. But some things were missing at home, and he did not understand.

Nathan loved the countryside, however. The clean air, the agreement with God as it was with Adam in the Garden of Eden. For these past ten years he made this country his home and with it a regular schedule that yielded farm work and rest. He did his best here to order his thoughts, but he never gave opportunity for more events to compound his history. Nathan was comfortable on Hank's farm in solitude.

He headed down the hill of the cliff and followed along the road until it took him to the town bus depot. He waited there for the bus, and there was a lady with a child nearby. Nathan couldn't help but to think about Abigail and Candice, and he smiled at the

little girl and spoke to the mother saying, "Beautiful child. How old is she?"

"She's three."

Nathan pulled out his wallet and retrieved a 20-dollar bill. He handed it to the mother. "Here's if she needs anything."

"Oh, that's ok. My husband always takes care of our needs."

"My apologies."

"Quit alright. You must be a Vietnam Vet. My uncle has the same vest. He's a vet."

"Yes, I am."

"What a horrible war."

"Yes, it was."

"God bless you for fighting for my country."

"Well, it's still a free nation."

At about that time a bus turned the corner and pulled up to the depot. Nathan, the mother and daughter boarded the bus, and Nathan took a solitary seat toward the back. On the way home, he thought about work for the next week on the farm so as to leave off the more dramatic brooding. Then the bus pulled to the stop near the farm, and he got off. Nathan walked the rest of the distance back to his house that he had built with Hank about 10 years ago. Still, even with all of the help that Hank could give him, he could not get beyond his memories.

Nathan was sound asleep in his house when there was a great banging on the door that immediately woke him up. By nature he went for the shotgun he

had on the wall by his bed until Hank's voice was heard muffled from behind the door.

"You in there, kid? You're late!"

Nathan sighed in relief and replied, "Yea, I'm in here, Hank."

He looked at his alarm clock. It had shut off, broken.

"Get movin', we've got a lot of work to do today," yelled Hank.

"Yes, sir!"

Nathan started the day with a quiet time with God, reading the Bible and praying. Then he gathered himself and headed out for the fields to meet with Hank.

"I've got some hands today, Nathan," said Hank. "We've got to empty the barns for the coming harvest after the sowing. Show them what to do."

"No problem, Hank."

Hank was a heavy man, a very hospitable man, and a very easy person to get along with. Nothing could match his love for Nathan, in all due respect for a war veteran. Hank had helped Nathan build his small house on the farm land, and he furnished all of it. Nathan sometimes came to dinner at Hank's house with Hank's wife and grandchildren who often stayed the week. It was the least Hank could do for Nathan as a Vietnam War vet. And it wasn't just the war; it was what he failed to come home to after the tour. His missing wife and firstborn left him very sorrowful. Nathan had traveled the city doing construction work as he learned it from working with his adopted father as a teenager. But he refused his family and friends. The memories and losses plagued him extensively, and he

had trouble working. Eventually he trailed off his job and started roaming the city and living off of his savings account. But when his resources were depleted, he became homeless, sleeping in subways and parks and eating at missions. That is when Hank found him on a bench at Columbus Park in Chinatown. And Hank went arm in arm with him to the hospital to get well enough to go the farm where he could live and work. And it has been that way for ten years. Nathan found something he could live with, and he was able to maintain himself, yet he never rose above his memories and losses.

Nathan became familiar with Hank's family. He also did well with the young men that Hank hired as hands on the farm on occasion from the city. Nathan taught them the farm work he so enjoyed. The two hired hands worked with Nathan that day cleaning out and consolidating things in the barn for the future harvest. There was also cleaning and brushing the horses and tending to the chicken eggs.

On occasion Nathan rehearsed his Shaolin katas and combinations. He had grown up in the Shaolin Temple in Brooklyn learning the art as it was taught by the Chinese. He still retained the Sicilian discipline of it, that which his dad had taught him when he was a boy. And after he was taken from his biological family, his step dad brought him up in a working class neighborhood with the standards of a sound Christian family. And to this day Nathan never blamed God for his losses and failures, God forbid. No sooner was little Candice learning how to walk when Nathan went off to Vietnam. Nathan had a passionate romance with his

wife. She would always have fresh food cooked for him when he came home. He made Italian dinners for himself in memory of her.

Vietnam was a political war. They said it was in the name of democracy, unlike the world war where the soldier saved his nation from an overthrow by Japan and Germany. Did the soldier know the little Vietnamese boy had a bomb? If he did know, what would he do? An eighteen-year-old kid from Brooklyn had to grow up quick and make life-saving decisions he never trained for. And where was Nixon the night Nathan's foxhole comrade was blown to pieces – making another political decision followed by Romano Sambuca? And somehow there was always the tight-eye of pity and empathy when the bayonet sliced through the short Vietnamese soldier's shirt and belly. Hate. It was difficult for Nathan to hate. He never did. He only did as he was commanded so he could serve his country.

So Nathan followed a schedule of working on the farm,, usually up at 4:30 in the morning. He maintained his health and life, and he had a good friend in Hank with a hospitable family. So were the peripherals of his life peaceful for 10 years, but his mind was always at war.



CHAPTER 2

A WANDERING SPIRIT

At about 10 am on Monday morning, Nathan was in the field with a rotor-tiller turning the dirt for the next sowing. Hank came out to the field and Nathan stopped the rotor-tiller for a moment to hear what he had to say.

“We got someone who wants to come to the farm and learn how to ride horses. You think you can handle teachin’ ‘em if I raise your wage?” Hank asked.

Nathan paused a moment then said, “Yes, I think I can do that.”

“Good. Give ‘em the Thoroughbred.”

“Ok. When are they coming?”

“Sometime this week.”

“Saddle and all?”

“Saddle and all!”

Hank headed out back to the house and Nathan turned on the motor. Nathan started to move the machinery across the field. He leaned over the seat to check the alignment of the blades and then leaned back, making uniform lines in the dirt. As he lifted up his eyes and gazed out along the parameter of the field, he saw a short figure slightly crouched over walking toward him. He appeared to have a hooded cloak and a cane, and he must be an old man walking across the dirt, the dust of his steps being picked up by the summer breeze.

Nathan stopped the rotor-tiller and shut off the engine. Out of respect for the old man, he hopped off of the equipment and walked towards him, perhaps to save the old man the greater walk. Nathan wondered why a stranger was wondering over the land for he was coming from the opposite direction of Hank’s

house. Did Hank know him? Hank always introduced people new to the farm property to Nathan ahead of time.

As Nathan approached the old man he had trouble seeing the old man's face because he looked down to the earth. It wasn't until Nathan was within about 10 feet of the old man that the stranger took notice of Nathan and finally looked up. The old man was Chinese with a mass of wrinkles.

Nathan, feeling no threat, smiled and said, "Hello, sir."

There was no reply other than a similar smile.

Nathan said, "Can I help you?"

The old man, still smiling, lifted up his cane to the direction of a well on Hank's house not far away. And then he said, "Go...to well?"

And Nathan, much eager to oblige, said, "Certainly. We can go to the well."

The old man said, "Aha!" He started walking to the well with his face down. Nathan followed him. When they approached the well, the old man sat on the stone wall of the well sighing in relief as he rested his legs from walking. And Nathan, out of respect, sat down on a big rock next to the well.

Nathan pronounced his words slowly and carefully saying, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Name?" asked the old man.

"My name? My name is Nathan. What is your name?"

The old man retained his smile and said, "Wong."

"Well, hello Mr. Wong. Are you lost out

here?”

The old man ignored the question and asked, “Foo?”

Nathan didn’t quite understand. “Pardon me?” he asked.

“Foo? Foo a was?”

“I’m not sure I know what you mean, sir.”

The old man rubbed his belly and gestured toward the well. Still smiling he said, “Foo a was?”

“Oh,” exclaimed Nathan. “Food and wash. Is that what you are saying?”

The old man lightened up and said, “Yea, yea!”

“Yes, Mister Wong. I have food for you, and you can wash with well water.”

And the old man threw his hands up in the air chanting, “Foo a was, foo a was!”

Nathan laughed and said, “Wait here, and I will return.”

Nathan stood and walked over the hill to his house as the old man Wong waited on the well. Nathan grabbed two big chunks of corn bread and an apple with a knife to cut it in case Wong had trouble with this teeth. He also grabbed a towel, soap and shampoo and put all of these items in a canvas carry bag. Then he returned over the land to Wong.

“Here you are, Mister Wong. There’s some food for you and hygiene items,” and he handed Wong the bag.

“Danke,” said Wong.

“Oh, thank you, yes, you’re welcome.”

Nathan sat down on a rock and turned his gaze away to the horizon. He wanted to stay with Wong just

in case he needed medical attention. Wong cranked the bucket and dropped it into the well, then he reared it up with water. The water was very cold, but he made lather with the soap and washed his hands and his face then shampooed his hair. He dried off with the towel. Still being silent, he reached into the bag for the cornbread, said grace then bit off a chunk and chomped it. He finished both pieces of bread without saying a word, and then he put the apple into his carry bag and slowly stood up onto weak legs.

“Go,” he said to Nathan with just the nick of a smile.

“Go?” You’re going to go now, Mister Wong?”

“Yea.”

Nathan pronounced each word carefully and slowly saying, “Do you know where you are going? Do you need my help?”

But Wong only replied with a bigger smile saying, “No unstan.”

So Nathan, considering his efforts futile, said, “Ok, God bless you.”

Wong’s face turned a little more solemn and he said, “One thing mo.”

“Yes, sir?”

“You have compass?”

“A compass, yes, back at the house. Would you like me to get it for you?”

“Yea.”

“Okay, wait here.”

Nathan took a second trip back to his house over the field, and in about 7 minutes he returned with

the compass. "Here you are," he said.

Wong smiled and said, "Danke."

"You're welcome."

"Bye."

"Goodbye, Wong."

The old man turned and headed back out over the field the same way he came, the breeze lifting up the dust from his scuffling feet. As Wong's figure became smaller, Nathan mounted the rotor-tiller again and went back to work glancing occasionally at Wong as he made his way past the field. Then Wong disappeared back into the woods.

As the week pressed on, Hank gave Nathan job instructions for the maintenance of the farm. Nathan tended to the fields, preparing each crop's soil for the coming of the sowing. There would be corn in abundance, and pepper and tomato. Hank had ordered the seed and Nathan would go with the truck to pick it up next week.

Towards the middle of the week, the lady came from the city to ride the horse. She pulled up in her car into the driveway and Nathan met her there with Hank.

"Nathan, this is Mary. She will be coming twice a week for the lessons. She doesn't know anything at all about riding horses."

Nathan smiled at her and she smiled back. "Anyone can learn, Mary. As a matter of fact, it's a lot of fun."

"I look forward to it," she said.

"Come on. Let me show you the stalls and the

horse you'll be training on."

The two of them walked off to the south side of the farm where Hank had stalls for several horses when they were not grazing in the fields. The two spent about two hours in the field with the horse. By the time the session was over, Mary had learned how to mount the horse and give it a few commands with the reins. She then said goodbye and headed out the driveway in her car.

The week came to an end, and Nathan took a trip on Sunday back to the high point overlooking New York. With his mind wandering again, a hundred thoughts came and went, and then he prayed that someday Abigail and Candice would come back to him. He turned from the highpoint and returned to the farm, waiting out the rest of the day in preparation for a new week of farm work.

After a sound Sunday night's sleep, Nathan was up before sunrise to start his pattern for the day. He read the Bible and prayed and then went out to meet Hank at his house for the day's special instructions. He would go to pick up the seed in several trips today.

At about 9:00 am, Nathan took his trip over the field to Hank's house. Hank greeted him outside. "Ready to plant, kid?" he asked.

"I'm ready, Hank."

"Gonna be a big harvest this year. Gonna feed a lot of people this year, Nathan." Hank always did find a way to give food to the hungry.

"I'm ready for it, Hank.

"Good boy."

Hank handed Nathan a blank check. "That's for the seed. Will see you later. I've got some other business in town."

"Ok, thanks."

Nathan started out for the field to survey the land. As he stood at the edge of the field, he saw a figure in the distance, just at the opposite end. It was the old man again, crouched over and walking towards him.

"Well, I'll be...it's him again," said Nathan to himself. He must surely be lost this time."

Nathan smiled and then began to walk towards him, hoping to save him the greater walk. After 3 minutes of coming closer, Wong stood before Nathan in his cloak and hood, leaning on his carved cane. Wong looked up to him.

"Nathan?" he asked.

"Yes, it is I," said Nathan.

"How you do?"

"I am well, Mister Wong. I see it's been a whole week and your back."

"Yea."

"What may I do for you this time?"

"Go to well?"

"Sure."

Wong and Nathan walked to the nearby well. Wong sat down on the well's wall and Nathan sat on the rock. Wong was breathing hard for about three minutes, and there was silence. Then he spoke saying, "You have foo a was?"

Nathan replied with a smile, "Sure Mister Wong. I will get the things you need."

Nathan started out across the field to his house, and this time he grabbed a turkey sandwich with some chips and an orange. He put these with a towel and soap and shampoo in the canvas carry bag, then he returned to the well.

"Here you are Wong," he said.

"Danke," said Wong.

Once again, Wong dropped the bucket and pulled up cold well water to lather his face and hands and shampoo his hair. He dried with a towel. Then he opened up the sandwich, prayed and bit into it.

"Goo, goo!" he said in between chomps.

"I'm glad you like it, Mister Wong."

There was silence for a while as Wong finished his sandwich. Nathan asked, "Do you live in the area?"

Wong squinted at him and said, "No unstan."

Nathan sighed. He felt like he really couldn't help the old man.

Wong lifted the cane in the direction of Hank's house and said, "Whose dat?"

"The house?"

"Yea."

"That's my landlord, Hank," and Nathan said the words carefully.

"L-a-n-d-l-o-r-d?" Wong sounded out the word.

"Yes, my boss. I work for him"

"Oh," said Wong, "Boss, boss, work!"

Nathan smiled again. "Yes, Mister Wong." He was happy he could make some communication.

“Go,” said Wong.

“Ok, if you must go.”

“One thing...”

“Yes?”

“You have small flashlight?”

“A small flashlight? Sure I have one of those back at the house.”

“Goo.”

“I will be right back.”

Nathan headed out for his house, and he found a small flashlight among a box of tools in his closet. He grabbed it and headed back for the well where Wong was waiting for him.

“There you are Mister Wong.”

“Danke. Go now.”

“Ok. Will I see you again?”

And Wong squinted saying, “Huh?”

Nathan said, “Goodbye, Mister Wong.”

“Bye.”

And once again Wong turned to go heading out over the field. There was no breeze today. In about 10 minutes Wong had disappeared, and Nathan hopped in the truck to pick up the seed.

Another few says had passed while Nathan worked on the farm. He spent time collecting chicken eggs, brushing the horses, milking the cows and taking care of the machinery.

The lady from the city came again that week to ride the horses. She was very pretty, but Nathan was just making sure she was learning how to ride. She

asked him a few questions.

“You live out here all by yourself? That’s what Hank said.”

“Yea, it’s been that way for some time.”

“But were you married?”

“I was. Perhaps I still am.”

Mary squinted a little. “What do you mean?”

“O lost my wife and daughter after Vietnam. I came home to an apartment with what I thought was the evidence of someone having taken them. I had no proof of it. I didn’t know where to begin an investigation. It troubled me so much it just about destroyed my life. Hank found me homeless in New York, and I’ve been here ever since.”

Mary was about to weep and said, “What a sad story. That must have hurt you. I can’t imagine what that must be like.”

“I’ve learned to let it go, to some point. At least when I’m busy working it doesn’t bother me.”

“Still, there’s always the uncertainty about her whereabouts?”

“Yes,” said Nathan.

“I see.”

“Perhaps we should call it a day?”

“Sure,” said Mary. “Will I see you next week?”

“Yes, I’ll be here.”

So the two parted ways, and Nathan finished up the week’s work on the farm. When Sunday morning came, Nathan opted to go to the cliff overlooking the city, then he returned to the farm and spent the rest of the day enjoying the countryside.

Nathan went out to the fields the following Monday morning to view the land, and once again there was Wong coming from the woods with his cloak and cane.

“I wish there was something I could do for him,” said Nathan watching him make his way over the hill. Nathan walked towards him to meet him along the way.

“Mister Wong!” yelled Nathan when he was within earshot.

Wong stopped walking and looked up at Nathan. He smiled then returned to look at the ground and approached Nathan.

“Well? Foo a was?” asked Wong, looking up.

“Yes, Wong. We can go to the well and you can eat and get cleaned up.”

“Danke.”

“Yes, you’re welcome.”

So Nathan went to his house to get a sandwich, fruit and hygiene items for Wong, then he came back over the lawn to the well.

“There’s a tuna fish sandwich there for you, Mister Wong.”

“Huh?”

“Nathan laughed. “Food!” he said.

“Yea,” said Wong, “Foo!”

Wong silently prayed for the food, then he bit into the sandwich and savored the tuna. After he finished it, he dropped the bucket in the well and pulled up the cold water to wash with, washing and drying himself with the soap and towel. Then he spoke.

“One thing...”

“Sure, Mister Wong.”

“You have small pad and pen?”

“Yes,” said Nathan, “I have them back at the house.”

“Can you get?”

“Sure. Wait here.”

Nathan trekked over the hill to his house and looked for the pad and pen. He returned to the well with the items.

“There you are, Mister Wong.”

“Danke.”

“You’re welcome.”

“Go.”

“If you wish. Is there anything more I can do?”

Wong squinted. “Huh?” he said.

Nathan tried one more time. “Need help?”

“No help. All ok. Maybe work.”

“Ok, Mister Wong.”

“Bye.”

“I will see you.”

Wong turned to go, re-stepping his route back over the hill, roaming like a wandering spirit. As he disappeared into the woods Nathan went back to his work on the farm.

On another day that week, Mary came to ride the horse, and while she and Nathan were out in the field she asked him, “Do you feel very comfortable on the farm? Does it ever get lonely?”

“I don’t remember much of what it is like to have my wife around, it was so long ago. But I’ve

grown used to living alone. Hank is such a good friend he always makes me feel like a million dollars!" And Nathan and Mary laughed. "Tell me," said Nathan, "You don't have a ring. Have you ever been married?"

"No, I'm a career girl from New York City. I haven't settled down yet."

"Well don't wait too long. You'll wind up like me."

Mary smiled.

They finished with the horse riding, and Mary left the farm. Nathan spent the rest of the week performing chores, especially spreading the corn, tomato and pepper seed. He ensured the watering of the crop as there had been no rain for a week. After seven days, Nathan was setting up the sprayer in the center of the field when his eyes looked to the edge of the woods. There was Wong again, coming the fourth time.

"I just don't know what I can do for him," said Nathan to himself. He left the sprayer and walked to meet Wong.

Mister Wong loomed up when he perceived that Nathan was within earshot and said, "Nathan – how you do?" He smiled.

"I'm very well, Mister Wong – how about you?" replied Nathan.

"Good, Nathan."

"What brings you out again?"

"Well?"

"Oh, you want to go to the well?"

"Yea."

"Ok."

"Foo a was?"

“Certainly. I will meet you at the well.”

Nathan turned aside to go to his house while Wong sat on the well’s wall. Nathan fetched a sandwich of ham and cheese, some chips and a pear along with hygiene items, and he went out to meet Wong. After about three minutes, Nathan came down from over the hill.

“Here you are, Mister Wong,” he said. “There’s some pig and cow there for you.”

“Pig, cow?”

“Ham and cheese.”

“Ok, danke,” replied Wong with a smile. As before, Wong opened the bag and prayed for the food then bit into the sandwich.

“Goo,” was all Wong said for the time it took to eat the sandwich, chips and pear. Then he said, “Danke. Was?”

“You’re welcome,” said Nathan. “And you can wash.”

Wong cranked the bucket down into the well water and brought it up full. As he started to lather the soap on his face, he said, “Col.”

“Cold, yes. If you need a shower, Mister Wong, you can take a nice hot one in Hank’s house.”

“Sh-o-w-er?”

“Wash, hot!” Nathan pointed to Wong’s house.

“Oh, yea, was – hot!”

And as Wong finished, he folded the towel and placed it on the well then found a toothpick. He began to pick in-between his fore teeth. He had been very quiet, and Nathan had been very patient, waiting to hear what Wong had to say.

Wong's face went straight, and he said in correct plain English, "*Do the laborers of Rome drink from silver cups, Panther?*"

Nathan was quite surprised, and Wong's expression threw him. Looking into Wong's Chinese face, Nathan had not yet seen him so stern and serious, and his plainness of speech was unexpected. Moreover, the name Panther. Nathan had not been called by that name in over ten years- – it had disappeared from his open conscious. *Panther*. And Nathan's mind wondered back to his youth when the neighborhood kids came to him as a vigilante. They called him Panther because of the way he sparred in the temple and fought in the neighborhood.

"How in the world did you know that name?" asked Nathan instantly.

"Well, let's just say that I'm an old man from a long-lost temple who knows something about you."

"I'll say you do, Mister Wong."

"If you prefer, you can call me Sensei."

"Okay, Sensei Wong. You're from the Shaolin Temple?"

"Yes, and it's been a long time, but we finally found you. You were a decorated student."

"Perhaps, but it didn't change the things that befell me after the war."

"You disappeared. Not even your family could find you."

"I just wanted to get away from those things."

"I see."

"But why did you come here?"

"To see if there was anything I could do for

you.”

“Well, said Nathan, “I thought there was something I need to do for *you*.”

“Huh,” and Wong smiled again. “I can stay for a while. We can try. Maybe there is yet hope for your unwanted solitude.”

Nathan scowled a moment then said, “Out of respect for the House of God and the Shaolin Temple, and even for Hank who may have had something to do with this – I will train with you. But I cannot guarantee any changes.”

“As you say,” said Wong. “All they instructed me to do was that if I found you to show you the greatest honor of any man.”

Nathan was quiet a moment. “What is that?”

Wong said, “The Centurion.”

“I will train with you, Mister Wong.”

“Fine. And one more thing.”

“Yes?”

“Do you have a watch calculator?”

Nathan searched his memory a minute then said, “Yes, back at the house. I have a collection of old watches. I will get it for you.”

So Nathan fetched the watch for Wong, and Wong took it with him as he trekked back out over the hill. He would return early next week to Hank’s house to stay for an appointed time. Nathan went back to watering the crops.

When Sunday came, Nathan was up early, and he put on his marine vest, fatigues and boots. He

pulled the strap of his carry bag over his head. Quietly and soberly, he carried out off the farm, and took the road to town, walking and thinking intently. He took the bus to the suburb and trekked out to the rocks, then he made his way to the cliff overlooking New York City. His thoughts of Candice and Abigail were being interrupted with thoughts about his lost father and mother. There seemed to be no end to the things that were taken from him. But he remembered Hank, and he remembered his adopted father and mother and things about the temple and neighborhood. He drew a long sigh and kneeled to pray once again that he might find his wife and daughter. Then he found his way back to the bus stop and returned to the farm from there.



CHAPTER 3

PANTHER REVIVED

Nathan sprung up to the rhythmic buzzing of his new alarm clock and clicked it off. He began a pattern for his day including washing, Bible time and prayer, and breakfast. There was some work to be done on the farm today, but Nathan would spend a good portion of his day training with Sensei Wong. Nathan headed for the door, and he walked boldly across the field in front of Hank's house, stopping at the well where Wong had first met him.

In little time, Wong came from out of Hank's house, and, like a wandering spirit, he made his way across the field to the well. He carried a small bag by his side strapped over his shoulder, and he wore a cloak reminiscent of some ancient Shaolin town in China.

"Good morning Sensei," said Nathan.

"Good morning, Nathan. How did you sleep?"

"Very well."

"Good. Shall we begin?"

"Sure."

"Ok, Nathan, set down in the stance you remember from your youth."

And Nathan straddled his legs wide and rested his forearms on his thighs, facing his head to the side.

And Wong asked, "Now is this...Panther?"

"It's been so long, Sensei, but this feels like it."

"How far back does it go?"

"Almost as of it was a part of my young childhood, when I was four."

"Before..."

"Before I was removed from my family. It may have been what my dad taught me. I don't use it very

often when I train here on the farm. I usually just rehearse the kicks.”

“Shall we go from this stance?”

“Yes.”

And for the rest of the time that Nathan spent training under Wong, the repetition of the movement came from the Panther stance. Nathan practiced the kicks mostly, and the upper body as well. Wong coordinated the throws by correcting missteps and poor mechanics. As the day went on, Nathan felt comfortable that Wong was tapping into a part of him that had been hidden for so long. It was the mystery of his childhood – something Nathan could not put his finger on. And all that troubled Nathan, within his soul, heart and mind, put he into Panther to stretch it, coordinate it and build it that the horror might leave him someday. Wong was with him for the whole duration of the training, as many weeks as Wong would, comforting his new found friend.

That morning session with Sensei Wong came to an end, and Nathan returned to the farm for the remaining 3 hours to tend to the animals. And so it was each day of the week they met and Nathan trained, but he took the weekend off.

On the third day, Wong came from over the hill and sat down on the rock by the well. Nathan sat in the grass early in the morning. And Wong began to teach from the Bible. He started the session by asking Nathan, “Tell me, Nathan, what is the Plan of Salvation?”

And Nathan replied, “It is the gospel: the death,

burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is God's only plan for us to be saved from Hell."

"Do you know it?"

"Yes, it comes in four points. First, a man must realize he is a sinner. The Bible says, *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."*

Secondly, there is a payment to be made for our sin. The reason we die is because of our sin; that is the first of two payments to be made. The Bible says, *"For the wages of sin is death."*

The third point is that there is a second death. First your body dies then your soul will go to burn forever in Hell. The Bible says, *"For whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."* God cannot allow sin into Heaven. At some point in everyone's life they must realize that they are on their way to Hell.

The last point is that Jesus died on the cross and shed His blood as a payment for our sins so that we do not have to pay for them all in Hell. The blood that He shed was an atonement for God to wash away all of our sins. All that is required to be saved is to *pray*, believing in your heart, and ask Jesus to save you. *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* Getting saved is the most important thing you will ever do.

Most men would not confess their sin before God because they do not feel responsible to God. Many do not feel they sin because they feel their good outweighs their bad. But there is none righteous, no not one. After a person gets saved he needs to go before God every morning to clear his conscious of his sins

and start the day with a clean slate. God will always forgive, but there is always a consequence for sin.”

“That was very good,” said Wong. “I have something for you.” He pulled a printed magazine from his carry bag, and he handed it to Nathan.

“Cosmopolitan,” Nathan read. “Quite a high-class magazine.”

“Yes, the epitome of fashion and industry.”

“Why would you bring this?”

“What do you have to say about it?”

Nathan paused for a moment, squinting. He looked up from the magazine after leafing through a few pages and said, “This would not have been ere the photomechanical plate.” For, behold, Nathan sometimes felt the throb of the militia, the power of the cabinet.

Sensei Wong was slightly puzzled. “What do you mean, Nathan?”

“I do not think this particular book is what you are talking about. I think you are referring to the pornographic magazines, the greatest of abominations. Today they are commonplace.”

“Say on.”

“It has something to do with the woodwork – Lucifer likes to work in wood...” and Nathan closed his eyes. “I can see it, Wong.”

“What do you see?”

“His office – my father’s office when I was a boy. My grandfather started the photomechanical plate and daddy perfected it with his magazine. It was one of the greatest breakthroughs in offset printing. It’s where

printed material comes from now. It's the power of the presses over the masses. They all used it."

"Who are *they*, Nathan?"

"My fathers. The militia that rules the world."

And Nathan opened his eyes, gazing into Wong's Chinese face. "You see," he said, "We *can* do it. We *can* dig that deep."

"Up now," said Wong instantly. "And set down into Panther. We've got some training to do."

And so did Nathan rehearse the moves, and Wong worked to perfect them with his cane. They sparred in Kenpo and Akido together, and Wong threw Nathan in flips quite often. And a whole week had passed – the first of several that Wong had set aside to train Nathan, and revive Panther.

During the week, Hank's wife invited Nathan to dinner with the family and Wong. To Nathan it was an honor, so he wore his best clothes and went out across the field to Hank's house at around dinner time. Nathan did not go to Hank's place very often. After greeting Hank's wife at the door, Nathan came in and sat down on the sofa where Hank and Wong were talking. And, behold, there was peace between the three men: the Asian, the African and the European.

Hank said, "So what do you think about the farm, Nate?"

"It's really been a blessing from God, Hank, thank you."

"Meet with the Lord in the countryside in the

morning do ya?”

“Yes, sir. Just about every morning I get up before sunrise and meet with God in prayer and Bible. Breathe in the herbal fresh air. Cool breeze blowing through my hair. It’s like the winds of Heaven.”

Wong said, “The field is white, ready to harvest.”

“Nothin’ like soul-a-winnin’ in the city, kid. I know – I’ve lived there most of my life. The people, kid. City’s got the people,” said Hank boldly.

Nathan lost his mile just a little. He felt sorry he did not go soul winning much, but he just didn’t want to be around all those people. Furthermore, being around people like that got his thoughts going.

Hank spoke up for him saying, “But we need you here, kid. You’re doin’ a fine job on them fields. I could never replace you.”

Nathan replied, “Thanks, Hank.”

Dinner was served at the table, and Wong, Nathan and all of Hank’s family gathered around the table. Wong prayed for the food, and they all started to eat.

Nathan looked up from his plate and said, “This food is delicious. I love collard greens and chicken.”

Hank said, “Got to getchu a wife someday, Nate. Not good to cook for yourself *all* your life.”

Everyone laughed. There was a certain honor for the combat veteran.

“You’ll do fine,” said Wong. “As the Lord leads.”

Nathan became sullen and looked at Hank. “I’m thinking about taking some time off, Hank,” he

said.

“Oh?” replied Hank. “We can do that. Any special reason?”

Nathan looked over to Wong. Wong’s face became a little more serious. Nathan said, “Just need some time to do some things. I’m not entirely sure about it yet, Hank. I’ll get back to you.”

“Sure,” said Hank.

After the meal was finished, the three men returned to the living room.

“Thank God for a country where we can worship as we choose, and the government doesn’t have a tyranny over our heads,” explained Nathan.

“Yea,” said Hank, “America may have been a long time in the buildin’ by the prayers of the martyrs. They hoped for a country like ours. And they shed a lot of blood for 1,000 years.”

“What about Africa, Hank, your homeland? What was it like there for Christians?”

“The Canannites were taken over by Joshua because they were evil in God’s eyes, but a good many black folk love the Lord, Nathan.”

“Part of America’s huddled masses?” asked Nathan.

“Certainly. We came as slaves from Africa, and some brought he abominations of Africa while others had heard of Jesus Christ. We were intermixed – the heathen with the believers. Christianity began in Africa during the first century AD in Egypt when Mark the Evangelist brought it to us. Islam unfortunately spread sometime after that. Many Islamists persecuted the Christians Africans and still do today.”

“It’s been that way for all of us, Nate,” said Wong. “After World War II in China, an autocratic socialist system was created under Mao Zedong that promised China’s sovereignty. Unfortunately, it set up strict controls over the people’s everyday life and resulted in the deaths of tens of millions of Chinese people.

It is said that that the persecution in China has been the worst in human history of the Church, but the Chinese Christians survived it. There have been more Christians detained now and in the past in China than in any other country.”

“And I’m sure you know the fate of the Roman Christian,” said Nathan. “The coliseums were built for the purpose of watching Christians being thrown to the hungry lions. The Roman Catholic Church is notorious for killing and torturing Christians, both in and out of Rome. At one time, around the time of Christ, the Roman Empire ruled the world. Constantine, the Roman Emperor who rose up sometime after the spread of Christianity, created the universal or *catholic* church, and he started a movement that was responsible for the hideous torture and killing of over 100 million Christians. This composed the Dark Ages.”

“How many today are actually honored to live in America where the government enforces a freedom of religion?” said Wong. “Do we not take it for granted and pursue rather the fortunes available to us here?”

“For a long time we’ve enjoyed that freedom,” Wong. It may not be that easy in the Last Days as prophesied by Jesus,” said Nathan.

“We can do our best to teach the little ones how

good we got it, Nate,” said Hank. “The abundance of bread and idleness of mind is what created a Sodom and Gomorrah with the fate of being rained on with fire an’ brimstone. Isn’t that ‘bout where we are today?”

“To say the least, Hank,” said Nathan. “The abominations on the internet have fueled the fire all the more. It is the Beast of Revelation.”

Wong said, “Good ol’ fashioned values are hard to find today.”

“Yea,” said Nathan, “I try to keep it simple.”

“You sure do!” said Hank.

So the three men communed until dark, then Nathan went home to his house.

On the next day of the week, Nathan and Wong met at the well in the morning. Wong once again pull something out of his bag, and he handed it to Nathan. Wong said, “Tell me what you think of this.”

Nathan held the unit in his hand. It was a small computer as a forerunner to the year 2010. “How did you get your hands on this, Sensei?”

“There’s been a few of them at the temple.”

“It’s one of the first of its kind – digital technology. This would have been my generation – computers. This digital would come before the New Age. I was supposed to master the digital, but the brother who replaced me – he’s doing it now.”

Wong looked out to the horizon on the south side of the farm then looked back at Nathan. “Tell me,” he said, “How do you know these things?”

After a quick grimace, Nathan replied, “Something in me, almost a sensational memory. It’s

like a feeling I get. Sometimes I draw a conclusion based on common sense, the way I understand a militia leading the world into the prophecy of Revelation. It's a militia of men who took the souls of fallen angels, the greatest of which is Lucifer as personified by the cabinet – the direct bloodline of the descendants of Cain.

“Say on.”

“In the beginning of time, Cain took the soul of Lucifer to himself and thus ended up murdering his brother Abel out of jealousy. Ever since then, the soul of Lucifer could easily be shared from father to son. And I believe that I am from that same bloodline – the line of Cain. But since I was taken from my father at a young age, for the first time in the course of 6,000 years of human history, I made a conscious decision to accept Jesus instead of Lucifer.”

“Sounds very prophetic.”

“Yes, maybe even manic. But these are thoughts I've had for years, and sometimes they plague me.”

“Have they ever been proven wrong?”

“I've never gained my history from before I was four. I suffered from amnesia after I came home from the war and found my wife and daughter missing. I've never been able to prove anything one way or the other. I concluded it as merely brooding.”

“Say on.”

“I fear my brother and his son, my nephew. I fear my father also. They have far too much power. I fear that my father is in fact the Godfather – the anti-christ – and it is passed as a baton down to the heir. It's

like that in Albany at the Empire State Plaza – a display of the power of the militia from generation to generation. And I believe he will move his seat from Jerusalem to the top of the tower in Albany and thus rule the world.”

Wong said, “You have yet no proof of any of these things. Perhaps if you cannot prove them with scripture you should look to disprove them?”

“I have tried, Sensei. I have tried to find prophecies in the Bible. Sometimes I do, but usually I am at a loss.”

Wong smiled. “Sometimes it’s so hard to let go, being an orphan?”

“Yes, Sensei, sometimes. But then there was the war and my losses. Tell me Wong, does the Temple know things I don’t know that they just haven’t told me?”

Wong was quiet a moment then said, “The Shaolin Temple knows that once you were lost, and now you are found.”

“And what do my adopted parents know?”

“They only know what the Temple knows. You were found wondering through a crowd boldly. And no one knew where you were from.”

“I see. I just can’t be a part of the world, or society, like the rest of you. I prefer to be alone.”

“Because you fear your father the most?”

“Yes, though I wish to conquer him. If I conquered him he wouldn’t rule the world, neither would my brother nor his son.”

“So it’s about power.”

“Yes, absolute power.”

“Say on.”

Nathan said, “This magazine was a forerunner for the computer. The photomechanical plate was the technology of the militia genius that used a film that was light-sensitive with silver halides. The image was broken up into microscopic dots, an on/off. Where the silver halide was activated the ink would go on the metal plate, and where the silver halide was not activated the ink would not go because the water would repel the oil of the ink. That’s what gave us offset lithography in the mid to late 1900’s. The same on/off principle was applied to a TV screen, and as computer internet technology advanced, the computer imaging advanced also. That is what the militia calls digital. Once digital technology was mastered, and everyone had a handheld computer, the antichrist could rule the world from a computer screen and address everyone on TV at the same time. Also, industrial manufacture, engineering and building could be controlled by computer models and imaging.

“Very prophetic,” replied Wong.

“Yes, but it’s not really in the Bible.”

“Still, Nathan, it seems to make sense. The Bible does not always give specifics.”

There was a silence, and then Nathan said, “Perhaps in the Last Days God would raise up a prophet.”

Wong said, “That I can recall, there was no prophet mentioned in the Bible for the Last Days.”

“If the people petitioned God with prayer?”
“Couldn’t a prophet pave the way much like John the Baptist for the coming of Jesus in His glory?”

“I’m not sure I agree.”

Nathan said, “*In the last days perilous times shall come for men shall be lovers of their own selves.* The cabinet – the militia – would teach men to love themselves more than others and have pride in their stature. Thus, nudity, homosexuality and the oppression of the poor in the ghetto would run rampant. The printing press and the computer would contribute to the New Age – a society controlled by the hand of a militia leader at a computer, thus paving the way for the antichrist, the Godfather. In the tribulation he would give us three and a half years of pleasure then rule the world with three and a half years of sorrow as a master-slave society. And the time is coming near – all the result of the abuse of technology.”

Wong replied, “Very well said. I’d like to return to the training. Is that ok?”

“As you say, Sensei.”

The day finished with Wong moving and stretching Nathan’s lean body, and Nathan dug deeper and deeper into what was once Panther. It was slowly coming back to him – the backstreets of Brooklyn. Back then, all of the neighborhood kids came to Nathan when he was Panther like they would have gone to Batman. And Nathan never let them down. And he met Abigail then in high school, the beautiful girl from his Math class that he protected from gang boys. Yea, he longed for her then.

So Nathan fell fast asleep that night, and his dream took him to the sound of a blade cutting the air repeatedly. He was looking out of the chopper door at the men below on the grass in the field for the ones

calling for a medic transport. There was one – a soldier covered in blood with his friend holding on to him tightly. Nathan motioned to the pilot to lower the chopper, and it hovered above the ground just enough for Nathan and two others to discharge. The three men went for the injured GI with the stretcher and maneuvered him onto it. Then there was an explosion nearby, and Nathan looked to see a man blown apart...

...the perspiration was all over his face as Nathan sat straight up in bed, panting rigorously. He looked around the room wide-eyed. It was only a nightmare, but it was so vivid. But that was only the war. He laid back down rubbing his eyes and asking God, "Will it ever leave me, the war? Will Abigail and Candice ever come back?"

His nightmares came together a few nights in a row. Then they disappeared much like the coming and going of a hurricane that leaves behind mass destruction.

At about 4:30 am, the alarm sounded, and Nathan rolled out of bed to shut it off. He caught the sunrise as always while reading, and praying and getting ready for the day. The reds and yellows of the sky swept above the dark horizon, and the glory of the rising sun gave way to lighter colors and the atmospheric blue. The Bible spoke great words to Nathan, like a mirror that reflected his flaws and gave him ample time to correct them. It was a book of history, a book of laws, but more than these it was God's love letter to him. When Nathan got his knees in reverence to God, he thanked Him, glorified Him, and confessed his sins that he might start the day with a clean slate to be the

best possible testimony for God. Although Nathan kept his Bible and prayer time intact, he as yet refrained from much soul winning and even church as he preferred the solitude of the farm than to be around people. He took a liking to Mary, however. She only came once a week now that the lessons were over – she was just riding. He did not spend much time with her.

Nathan collected himself and went out to meet Wong at about 9 am. Over beyond Hank's house he could smell the bacon that Hank's wife was frying, even this far away, and he saw Hank's little grandson out on the porch waving to him as he passed by. And in a little time out came Sensei Wong, walking down over the hill like a wandering spirit. Wong approached the well and sat thus on the rock, and Nathan sat in the grass as usual.

“How did you sleep?” asked Wong.

“Quite well. It was cool in the house last night.”

“Shall we begin?”

“Yes.”

“Ok, give me the long Panther, and we will go from there.”

Wong moved and stretched Nathan to open up his ball-and-socket joints for the bigger strikes. Nathan lunged, spun and threw as much as Wong could get him to remember the Royal Sicilian Court of martial arts of his youth. Wong also sparred with Nathan in Kenpo and Akido, the fluent movement of locks, throws and simple short strikes. So Nathan carried on in training all morning, and Hank's little grandson brought nuts and raisins from over the hill along with a

blended juice that Hank's wife had made special for Nathan. Then Nathan took a pause and sat thus in the grass. Wong sat on the rock, and the little boy watched seated on the well.

Wong took out a toothpick and worked it in between his fore teeth while Nathan panted over the rigorous training. As Nathan's breathing slowed, Wong spoke up saying, "Tell me, Nathan, what do you have to say about friendship?"

Nathan was quick to answer, "*A friend loveth at all times and a brother is born for adversity.*"

Wong said, "And a brother can be distant, but in a time of trouble he should be there. It is not just when things are well that there should be a warm relationship, but in times of trouble too. That's *if* you made a friend indeed."

"Yes. A man can have many acquaintances, but a true friend is rare."

Wong shifted his position and straightened his cane, then he asked, "Tell me: do you think the Bible is a book of laws?"

Nathan replied, "Yes, I believe that there are many laws in the Bible for us."

"...For us to live peaceably with one another?"

"Yes."

"But if we truly loved one another, would we need laws? Isn't love the fulfilling of the law?"

"Yes, it is so. But could we have a world without laws, Sensei?"

"Not hardly. We'd be at each other's throats. But Paul told us that the law was for the lawless and disobedient. Why would you need a set of laws to tell

you how to have a friend if you truly loved him?”

“Maybe, Sensei, we have trouble with love so God had to give us laws.

“It is so.”

“Jesus summed up all of the laws and the prophets with two laws: *love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul and mind, and love thy neighbor as thyself.*”

“But somehow,” said Wong carefully, “it seems that in the course of life we trail away from and defraud our brother and fail to give God glory. Laws help us to have business relationships, but we would have no desire to defraud each other if we had true agape love.”

“Agape love?”

“Phileo love is when you love someone because you expect something in return. Agape love is when you love someone regardless of whether or not he loves you back.”

“I see.”

“Sometimes religious leaders lay heavy laws on their people that they themselves cannot even lift a finger to. And many times the poor get abused this way. The poor often do not know the law.”

“It is true that Jesus went to the poor and preached the gospel to them because he loved them so, but the rich people came to Jesus on their own.”

“Yes, and most of the rich people only tried to corner Jesus and catch Him in his talk to accuse Him. It’s like the arguments rich people get in about whether or not to wear headdress on a woman...”

“...When they have church members who have

holes in their shoes.”

“Yes. Wealthy people have no idea what it is like to need something, notwithstanding they have an irreversible medical problem.”

“Jesus said there will always be poor people,” said Nathan.

“Yes, He did. The duty of the middle class was to give dignity and nurture to the working class. The duty of the working class was to employ the poor. But the fantasy of the ghetto infested these mutual relationships. That’s where pornography, Satanic music, and other cultural deviances came in – to vitalize the ghetto. There never should have been a ghetto – it’s an abomination. But God loves the poor who stumble upon it beyond their free will. And God gives them a hedge to protect them, but sometimes they die there. The AnaBaptists were like that.”

“I was dirt poor for a long time in my life. Sometimes I fear it happening to me again. I was homeless, and I didn’t have money for food. I couldn’t stay clean. I couldn’t find shelter in the city until I broke down and tried the homeless shelters and missions. I was at the White Street Mission, the Bowery Mission, the Belview Shelter. But even then my condition was worsening. That’s when Hank found me.”

“Thank God for him, huh Nathan?”

“Yes, Hank has been very good to me. But I think the militia wants it that way – the poor. They keep people poor on purpose so the rich have a melancholy, a toy to play with. Many poor people wind up addicted to drugs and become criminals, kind of like a dramatic play for the wealthy to live by. My father

pumps millions of dollars into the underground drug trade, gambling, strip joints and pornography, and it returns him billions. It's the business of the militia, and it is handed down from generation to generation. That's what destroys the poor. They seek a heaven away from all of the suffering so they turn to my father's vices. And it only makes things worse."

"The American government does what it can to tax the common man to have programs for the poor..."

"...Yes, but the wealthy people loathe those kinds of taxes. Thankfully there are things in place in America so that a man does not have to live on the streets. God forbid if my father was president, he'd do away with all of it."

"Sometimes, Nathan, some come themselves poor but they are more wicked than the wealthy. They fraud government programs and feed into the rich man's evil lures. It is not just socio-economic class that determines righteousness before God – it's the heart of the man."

There was a quiet, then Wong said, "So you remember your dad?"

"It's really a sensational memory. It's about his office and the mansion we lived in. My mom used to take me through the city and teach me about the people. She wasn't like my dad at all. My dad taught me to hate, my mom taught me to love. But isn't that the way of the militia boy?"

"As you say, Nathan."

Nathan closed his eyes, and he waited a moment then said, "Sometimes I see his office in my mind. The woodwork, the leather chairs. The order of

his men in suits. And the UZI's."

"Quite an experience for a little boy, Nate?"

"Yes...but I fear Sambucca must have been worse."

"Sambucca?"

Nathan sighed and opened his eyes. He looked at Wong who was holding a straight face, waiting for an answer. "I can't put it together yet, Wong. It's still a blur."

Wong had the nick of a smile and said, "Like the growth of a little child – a little at a time."

Nathan said, "Yes, I believe time will help, or *more* time anyway. But had I not been taken away from my father I'd be just like unto him. And I'd have first been possessed by Lucifer then personified him. That's where my brother – my cohort – is now."

"But you have no proof of these things."

"Nathan sighed, "No, Wong, no real proof."

"Sometimes, Nathan, there are so many mechanics to your thinking it's like you are standing in front of a camera shutter."

There was a long silence then Wong spoke, "Let us go to lunch and meet again tomorrow. Your combination kicks are just about perfect, but we can refine them in the morning."

"Okay, Sensei."

Before Wong turned to go he squinted some and asked, "So then, what be the greatest honor of any man?"

And Nathan replied, "Well, as you said, the Centurion. But what do you mean by that?"

Wong lowered his head, as he usually did

when he walked, and he turned to go with the little boy. He left Nathan slightly puzzled as he made his way up the hill to Hank's house. He gave no answer.

Nathan finished off the day working on the farm. He went home that evening doubting the conclusions he had drawn about his history. Wong was getting him to doubt things. Still, he would not dismiss them completely until he had *proven* them wrong. It would take a trip to the city someday.

In the cool summer night in his house, Nathan was fast asleep. The day's labor had rendered his body with fatigue, and his sleep was sweet – until the nightmares came. The guerrilla warfare of Nam had put Nathan in a few situations of hand-to-hand combat when he wasn't shooting his M-16. The bayonet flew wild then. In the South Vietnamese town, the refugees gathered in fear of the Cong, looking to the American soldiers for protection. But among them was a little boy who had a bomb in his hand. Who was really your enemy? Was he marked with a uniform or face? And once again, Nathan watched the boy blow apart and take American soldiers with him. Then he awoke, drenched in sweat. It was about 4 in the morning.

After his morning pattern, Nathan went down over the hill to the well with a cheerful attitude, waiting for Wong. Sure enough, like clockwork, Wong came out from Hank's big house and started over the hill. It was a sight similar to when Nathan had first saw him.

Wong approached the well and sat on it greeting Nathan. Then he started with a question asking, "What do you know the Bible to say about the glory of

God?”

Nathan looked up to the sky, then down around the fields, then smiled and looked back at Wong saying, “*The Heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork,*”

“That’s in the Book of Psalms.”

“Yes, Sensei. The glory of God is revealed in His creation. He paints a masterpiece in the sky every day with the rising and setting sun. The four seasons remind us of death and newness of life, and the death, burial and resurrection of His Son. The animals, the little children – all reveal the glory of God.”

“But man often worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.”

“Yes, because man moves away from the Word of God and the discipline of the scriptures. He makes idols out of God’s creation instead of worshipping God Himself.”

“Yea,” said Wong. “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* And God parted the Red Sea and the Jordan River, the water standing on heaps as the people passed over on dry land. Elija called fire down from Heaven, and Joshua stopped the moon and the sun so the battle could rage on. And Jesus’ apostles healed men and raised the dead. These miracles reveal the glory of God.”

Then Wong paused and said, “And of thankfulness – what have you to say?”

Nathan replied, “A man ought to thank God every day for the blessings given to him. It’s not just the good things God does because sometimes we have trouble. Job said, “*The Lord giveth and the Lord*

taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

“Yea,” said Wong, “And we ought not to murmur when things do not go our way. God’s will sometimes is not the same as our will.”

Nathan said, “I’m thankful that I live in America, a free country. The freedom to worship God as I choose. The opportunity to work and make a better life. The suppression of slavery.”

“Yes,” said Wong, “Thankful for food, shelter, and good health.”

Wong shifted his position on the well then pulled a toothpick out of his carry bag and wedged it between two teeth. He said, “Can you tell me, Nathan, what Jesus said about the talent?”

“Yes,” said Nathan, “A man gave each of his 3 servants talents before he went on a journey. To one he gave 5 talents, to one 3, and to another 1. The ones with 3 and 5 talents invested their money and made more. The one with 1 talent hid it in the earth so as not to lose it. When the master returned, he commended the ones who invested the talents, but he condemned the one who hid it and had no increase.”

“Likewise,” said Wong, “God gives to every man a talent to earn a living. A man can thereby glorify God with his talent and win bread for his family. Some men are plumbers, some carpenters, some engineers, some bankers and doctors. Whatever a man’s talent, he can use it to glorify God.”

“But not everyone does.”

“True. Some abuse their talent and violate God with it. But as Ecclesiastes tells us there is nothing better than for a man to eat, drink and enjoy the good of

all his labor for the portion God has given him.”

“I can’t say that my biological family ever glorified God with their talent.”

“But you do.”

“Yes, Sensei, I do.”

“You must be concerned that your wife is still alive and therefore you cannot remarry.”

“Yes, those thoughts crossed my mind.”

“Did you pray about it? Because only God has that answer.”

“The two of them haven’t shown up in years, Wong. I would have to think my wife would want me to remarry, but I just want to be alone.”

“I see.”

“Things are fine just the way they are, as they have been for 10 years.”

“Yes, Nathan.”

“The things that plague me come and go. When I am busy on the farm for Hank they do not bother me.”

“Well then, that’s the way it should be. Would you like to call it a day?”

“Sure, Wong.”

“I will see you tomorrow.”

“Yes.”

Wong asked, “And what is the greatest honor of any man?”

“The Centurion. And what exactly do you mean by that?”

Wong did not answer the question. He only turned to go up the hill back to Hank’s house.

The next day, Nathan came over to the well,

and Wong came from the house to meet him there. Hank's little granddaughter had come with Wong bringing nuts and raisins and Nathan's favorite drink of pulse.

"Shall we begin?" asked Wong.

"Yes, sir."

Nathan set down into Panther, and he raised his arms into position. Wong gave a few commands to stretch and throw a little, then he had Nathan do a series of katas. After Nathan was done with the first exercise, the little girl had some things for him while he rested in the grass.

Nathan scowled a little and looked at Wong. "Can you tell me," he said, "what do you think about the Last Days? How do you understand the prophecy?"

Wong, sitting on the well, straightened his cane and pulled a toothpick out of his carry bag. He picked between his fore teeth and said, "It's mostly in Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24."

Nathan said, "Tell me, Sensei, what it says."

Without reading it, Wong quoted scripture, saying, "*And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations*

for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall

also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore:

for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

There was a silence for about a minute then Wong spoke again saying, "So, give me some of your thinking."

"It was here before," said Nathan.

"What was?"

"New York City."

"How do you mean, Nathan?"

"They came, Cain and Nod, from Mesopotamia – the area of the Garden of Eden that was the beginning of man. This same Cain, Adam's firstborn son, had taken the personification of Lucifer. And Nod, a descendant of his, sided with him and took Apollyon to be his fallen angel spirit, the Angel of Engineering. And together, flesh and steel, they built New Jerusalem."

"I do not recall that in the Bible anywhere, Nathan."

"The Bible neither proves it nor disproves it. Revelation Chapter 12 talks about Lucifer by his name Satan, and Revelation Chapter 9 speaks about Apollyon – the great angel of the bottomless pit. Maybe a prophet of the Last Days could clear it up."

"Say on."

"The two built a ship, as Apollyon had learned how to do in Heaven, and Leviathon, the serpent of the sea that had also accepted the spirit of Lucifer, pushed

it. They sailed here, to this continent and surveyed the land with Nod's camera. Nod, using the spirit of Apollyon, had made the camera under Cain's leadership, but the world never knew about Nod's camera. And Cain said that with Nod's engineering and his leadership he would rule the world from here and thus he built his kingdom within God's kingdom – the Kingdom of the Earth."

There was a pause, and Wong said, "Say on, Nathan."

"So, Cain and Nod returned to the land of Nod to find a race of builders. Cain said he would not make them slaves – he would render them laborers, but it would be in their blood. Because Lucifer would do anything to pervert God's creation even before it had a chance to settle the earth. It was the descendants of Shem, Noah's son, whom he brought to America to be builders. The ocean was not as wide as it is today because the continents had just started to separate with plate tectonics. And he brought them by ship and Leviathon over the ocean to what is now America, to the harbor of New York City, what he called New Jerusalem in defiance of what Jesus said in the Book of Revelation."

"That is very interesting. Still, it's not in the Bible."

"Nay, it's not."

"Say on."

"So he built with the laborers. And those laborers became the Native American Indian. But after New Jerusalem was put under, the memory of the building was removed from the people and they only henceforth

learned the land. That's how the rest of the world knew the Indian of America. Lucifer had remade their apocathary. But when they built, they built miraculously under Nod's engineering genius a city of skyscrapers much like it is now. Nod always had that ability. He just cloaked it for the east continent. Yea, Wong, the Indian built tall and wide – it was the first Manhattan. But there were Nod's buildings and Cain's buildings. Nod's were engineered and Cain's were architecture with beautiful carving and sculptures and wood working. Lucifer is a master artisan, copying God's biological creation and tampering with apocathary in an attempt to create human beings. Cain represented the aristocrat; Nod represented the slave.

Lucifer is a spirit that can take the man who wants him. When Cain died some 900 years later, another man took the spirit of Lucifer and replaced Cain – it was his son. Lucifer always kept the same bloodline which is where the militia family comes from. The same is true for Apollyon and Nod. So be the Kingdom of the militia.”

Wong said, “Maybe these are just thoughts that plague you and not realities. Say on.”

“About 500 years before Europe came to America, Lucifer in the man of that era had New Jerusalem disassemble block by block, steel beam by beam, and taken underground to be rebuilt. Thus it became Sambucca. It was done with Apollyon's camera using the man of that era who took Apollyon's spirit. But Europe did not know about any of this because it was still antique.

In the years to come, Europe came and settled

in America, coming to the Ellis Island area of NYC. As the city was being built to what it is today, Nod returned to the blueprints from long ago. He copied the city from Sambucca, and he had it rebuilt piece by piece over about 200 years. Thus, Lucifer had built the Kingdom of Hell in addition to the Kingdom of Earth to mock the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven.”

After Nathan had finished, Wong was quiet for a minute then he said, “Still it’s not in the Bible. Could these just be thoughts?”

“Maybe, Wong. But they haven’t left me. I must go now, back to the city.”

“What would you do there?”

“Look for them – my father, brother and nephew – one last time. And maybe God would bring me Abigail and Candice.”

“Would you come back?”

“...When I resolve it. Wong, I must go. I will talk to Hank. I can see you in the morning.”

“Very well.”

Hank’s little granddaughter stood looking at Nathan then she put her arms up in the air.

“Go” said Wong. “Pick her up and kiss her goodbye.”

So Nathan smiled and ever so carefully reached for her and picked her up. He kissed her and she giggled, then he put her down. Nathan and Wong then parted ways, and Wong walked the little girl home.

Later that day, Nathan approached Hank while he was out at the stalls with the horses.

“Hank,” said Nathan. “I need an indefinite time

off of the farm.”

“Sure, kid. It’s not hard to meet your needs. I’ll just hire ‘nother hand ‘till you come back. “You are coming back, right?”

Nathan did not quite answer the question. “I’ve got some things to work out, Hank. Keep my house here. That’s all I can tell you.”

Hank was never one to probe Nathan with questions. He replied, “No problem. And what should I tell Mary?”

There was a pause, then Nathan said, “Just tell her that there was always an uncertainty about my wife’s whereabouts.”

“Ok.”

“And Hank?”

“Yea, kid?”

“I love you.”

Hank smiled and said, “I love you too comrade!”

They shook hands, and Nathan carried on his way back to his house. He would meet with Wong in the morning.

There was a flash in the sky, and it fell slowly lit like a firefly. Immediately, as now the men could see, the fire engaged. The Americans held the line in the fields and the Cong were in the forest, hiding. For every shake of a leaf Nathan fired into the woods. He saw his enemy vibrate backward at the spray of bullets, wailing in pain. And he kept shooting and killing...

...Nathan sat up in bed, heaving. He blinked

several times, rubbed his eyes and looked around the room. He was home. He was on the farm. The war was over now. Or was it? He lay back down.

After the sun rose, Nathan had a morning time with God, had breakfast then went out over the hill to meet Wong. Wong came to the well with the same carry bag he had when he had first appeared.

“So I guess we part ways here, Sensei?”

“Well,” said Wong, I believe my job is done.”

“Yes, it is. Somehow you got it out of me.”

“I just want you to have joy, Nathan, not sorrow. You’ve given too much to your country. Solomon died of sorrow even though he was the wisest and most blessed man who ever lived.”

“I will go, Sensei, and I will resolve it.” There was a pause, and Nathan said, “Will I see you again my friend?”

“Only if you need me,” said Wong. He smiled and opened up his carry bag to pull out a pouch. He handed the pouch to Nathan saying, “Take these. You may need them.”

Nathan grabbed the sack and looked curiously inside. It was the things that Wong had collected from Nathan when he came the first four times.

And Wong said, “So then, what is the greatest honor of any man?”

Nathan replied, “The Centurion.” The words were on the tip of Nathan’s tongue to ask further as to exactly what the Centurion is, but Nathan felt if Wong wished for him to know – he would say.

Wong only said, “Farewell, my friend.”

Nathan’s face went distant saying quietly,

“Farewell Mister Wong. Thank you. Thank you for reviving Panther.” The two embraced. Wong smiled and turned to go.

Nathan longed to ask him what the Centurion is, but nonetheless he remained quiet, watching Wong leaning on his cane and walking over the hill like a wandering spirit. Then Wong disappeared into the woods.



CHAPTER 4

TO HUNT, TO STRIKE

Early in the morning that Sunday, Nathan gathered his clothes and bag together and included the tokens that Wong had gave him, namely the compass, the flashlight, the pens and pad and the calculator watch. He also set a pouch on his belt for wrist cuffs, and he took three pairs of them in his bag. He had purchased them from the Army-Navy store in town. He wore loose clothing because he anticipated the use of the martial arts. His ambition was to find his nephew, brother and his father and detain them in cuffs so that he might prevent the tribulation of the End Times. As manic as it seemed, to Nathan it made sense, and he was able to justify it as a reality using 10 years of contemplation after the loss of his wife and daughter when he returned home from the war. The time had come. Perhaps he would find Candice and Abigail, perhaps not, but finding his lost loved ones for selfish reasons was not the objective of his trip. The objective was in proving his inference about his bloodline and preventing the world from falling into slavery.

Nathan walked to the town that was near to the farm. The bus would take him from the town to the suburb, and he could go into the city from there. The bus pulled up to the stand, and Nathan got on. Very quietly riding the vehicle, he watched the heavens open as the sun hit its morning mark of bright light.

His thoughts were very stern and ambitious, rehearsing the hunt to find his bloodline over and over in his mind. He thought about his starting point, the decisions he would have to make, the coding he would have to do, and the clues he would have to look for. Nathan was not sure how long it would take to find

them, but he had enough money in cash and on his bank card to ensure a long stay in the city if need be.

Nathan sung a hymn quietly to himself as the bus hobbled over potholes in the road. The bus traveled out of the township and into the suburb of New York City as Nathan drew closer to his mark – Central Manhattan. Everything would start from Port Authority. Once the small bus came into the suburb, Nathan exited it and waited for the city bus. He had a few tracts which he had reserved from the town church, and he handed them out to some passers-by. Before he could engage in a conversation with the Plan of Salvation, the city bus pulled up to the shelter, and he boarded it. It would take him to Manhattan, and then he would walk to Port Authority from there. The sights on the city bus were different: the horizon outlined the silhouette of the Manhattan skyline. Looming ever so closely, the bus headed right for it and was soon engulfed by the byways and bridges that lead directly to it, like a vein to the heart. Nathan beheld the fascination of Apollyon's engineering, and the movement of the bus presented a motion panorama of the cubes and linear perspective stretches of the buildings, bridges and highways. In little time, Nathan was exiting the bus and found himself in mid-town Manhattan.

Nathan checked his compass for the direction south and headed towards the lower street numbers until he came to 42nd Street. As he walked the famous isles, his eyes beheld the Satanism of the cabinet. Neon lights screamed out from porn groves along the way, and it was nothing more than the art of the militia that had overtaken this part of the city after World War 2.

Then it was made a cauldron of stew by his father in the 1960's, about the time of the Vietnam War. Drugs ran rampant as people walked to and fro buying lewdness and contributing to a community serum which Nathan wondered if it was making its way to the pharmaceutical companies. And people came from all over the world to see every detestable thing that his family blood had done to America. Nathan's thoughts became distant as he wondered if perhaps the camera eye had found his wife here as well.

And, behold, Apollyon's engines. The cars, the trucks, the motors of the city. It was as if Apollyon had created a city of flesh, steel flesh, that had the heartbeat and hum of electricity.

People passed on the street, and Nathan had a straight face as he walked, looking upon the metropolis. He was looking for clues, and he found some things he thought would lead to his confrontation with James, his nephew. Nathan knew he would have to go up the ladder starting with James, then his brother Nicholas, then his father Robert. Nathan had a notion that his father ran the city from the underground, and that his father would catch on to him being there. His father would send his nephew and brother first, if he would even allow himself to show at all. But Nathan was ready for anything. He vowed not to go back until he had made considerable progress and proved his inferences one way or the other. So he took a hotel room there in mid-town and rested for a while, gathering a lunch from the restaurant on the corner. Then he began on his way in the subway from Port Authority, putting to test his theories about Apollyon's numbers. Would

he find Sambucca in the midst of it all? Would Abigail and Candice be there in Sambucca? It was quite a piece to chew, but Nathan decided he would go for all of it at this time.

So he followed Apollyon's numbers with his calculator as he traveled through the city via subway. He took notes with the pad and pen, and in the dark portions of the subway tunnel he used the flashlight to read numbers on posts. Calculating on paper first and then in his head, in a matter of half a day Nathan had a pattern down for hunting his bloodline and a method to find the Door to Sambucca.

Had he only been there in his dreams? Was there really a Sambucca under the earth? Was it Hell? If he passed through the door would he ever come back through the other way? There were many uncertainties, but Nathan was not afraid to go forth with his inferences. Being from the bloodline of the militia, he felt he had the ability to free the slaves from Sambucca and then detain the family to put an end to a militia that has tried to rule the world since man was first created.

Nathan followed the symbols and people of the city he thought would lead him through the maze that his father had made for him. His father knew he was there. It was in the stores and faces of the people, one by one that led Nathan to beautiful modern buildings. Nathan's attention shifted to the technical business class, the romantic of his nephew – the youngest of the bloodline men. James' kingdom was technology inso-much as it could be used for surveillance and storage of information about people and all of the things we do with computers. Nathan surmised that James had a

style for his buildings, and he developed an eye for it as he caught James' trail. Then, conveying from one building to another, and from storefront to another, he came to what he thought would be one of James' buildings. Nathan felt sure that by now his nephew had caught on to him, for they shared the same apocathary. As he approached the foyer, the door opened electronically, and Nathan walked into the lobby. And behold, there was his nephew James about 20 feet from him, standing about 6 foot 5 inches tall in an impeccable suit and tie.

Nathan approached him saying, "James – it is Nathan, your uncle."

"Yes," he said, "I know who it is."

"And..."

"You're not one of us...yet. That's what grandpa said about you."

"No, James, I'm not one of you, and I never will be. But if you take part in the New Age you will wind up in the seat of the antichrist. I can't let you do that."

"Is that because you are a Christian, Uncle Nate?"

Nathan pulled a pair of cuffs from his pouch, and they clashed in the still air. "I do not want to hurt you, nephew. I just want the law to deal with you."

"I am the law."

"That's what the family blood always taught us. Yet we are responsible for most of the atrocities in the world. I'm not going to buy that, James."

"Oh?"

"You are the generation of the New Age using your father's digital."

“I am an entrepreneur. This is my computer business, my building.”

“But you are still a young man. You will only eventually use it to rule the world. Your father will make sure of that.”

James came near to defend himself against Nathan’s cuffs. He certainly wasn’t going to be shackled by his uncle. Yet the men, so close in blood, would rather not cause pain or injury. It is that Nathan would do his best to restrain his nephew to get the cuffs on him.

With the cuffs jingling in his hand, Nathan sent a swipe to the feet, and it was very quick. But James, young and fresh at his martial art, hopped it and went for a forearm to grasp and twist it into a hold. As the slap came to Nathan’s arm, he met it with his hand and grappled James, reversing it into a twist. But James shimmied away. Again the two engaged in grapples and throws. Nathan threw his nephew when he came to him again to get the cuffs out of his hands. James was impressed with the throw – it sent him in a flip. He landed without harm.

“Uncle Nate, your Akido cannot be the same as the Sicilian court. It’s Chinese. You’ve been away so long, uncle, it would not have been possible for you to learn the art our way. And you must know that our art never failed. That’s why we are leadership.”

“The Chinese have a different philosophy, James,” said Nathan stepping away for a moment. They were less concerned about ruling the world with romantics than about protecting the property God gave them, including their loved ones, from rape and harm. Isn’t a lot of what the militia does on the internet rape

and harm, James?”

“Doesn’t the leader give the people what they want themselves if he cares for them? Can you have a people without a leader, uncle? Aren’t we fit for it? In all these years you never discovered that our family genes were the most pure to the original creation in the Garden of Eden? Why do you think grandpa works so hard at preserving our blood?”

“Technology in the hands of a tyrant produces a master-slave society.”

“Slavery? People have what they want. Why would that be slavery?”

“They do not have Jesus Christ, nor do they hear the gospel. You pollute their mind with everything that opposes Jehovah.”

“They are always welcome to the gospel, Uncle Nate.”

“But their leader doesn’t believe the gospel. He believes in himself and his blood.”

James smiled. “I guess the years that you and your dad have been apart have made you one of them.”

“I’d rather be this way than to have all of the power in the world if it meant that I honored God. Never would you know what it meant to be humble. You never gave yourself the chance to be a common man.”

“I am humble with my son.”

“Yes, James, your own blood once again.”

Nathan jingled the cuffs, and James was certain to grab them from him. So the movements engaged again, and they were fluent, from one grapple to another, then a lock for a moment. For each move there was

a counter, and neither James nor Nathan could resolve them. Then again there was a grapple, and Nathan this time got a hold that James could not rebuke. As Nathan held it, he wrapped one cuff around a wrist. Then he wrestled the other arm and brought it to the cuffed arm, and instantly he locked the other cuff before James had a chance to shimmy away. Nathan stepped back, and James faced him, his hands restrained behind his back.

“The common law can judge you now,” said Nathan.

“Will that work?” asked James. “Does the common law believe in your Christ?”

“Most likely, James, they do not. But it is the best I can do. I am going to find your father, my brother. You can change, James. You’re still a kid. As for my brother and grandpa, it’s too late for them.”

“Grandpa said to be careful because you’re not one of us. I didn’t know much about you.”

“Because God hid me from Cain’s bloodline. You all willingly accepted Lucifer for the sake of your kingdoms. In time, James, I can teach you about Jesus. I’ll be back for you.”

James was quiet as Nathan exited the building.

The day had passed and Nathan was on a trail. He returned to his hotel room in mid-town Manhattan. After gathering a meal, he thought about sleeping for it had been a long day. Maybe he could catch about 4 hours? But he said to his self, “It will only interfere with the complexity of bringing out my brother.” Nicholas had 30 years on Nathan at mastering New York

City, and he would be even more difficult to lure. Nathan gathered another wrist shackle, stuffing it into the pouch he had on his belt. His leather coat covered it. Then he made his way back out into the city to look for Nicholas.

For that night and the entire next day, Nathan followed the sidewalks of Manhattan, walking through some of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the world. There was a feel to it, but that was his dad's feel. His brother was different. It was about the kids and the punk and heavy metal – that was Nicholas' romantic to rule the world. Was it a taste of Sambucca for the rest of the people?

Nathan looked for the faces of Nicholas' kingdom, and he found things that he understood, although virgin to his mind as a militia man. He made his way to St. Mark's Place, and he shifted in and out of the groves there. He came to the night clubs, the lust of Judas, the sorrow of what Nicholas had done to the city. Nathan did not spend much time in the clubs, just enough to send his brother a message, and his last stop for the whole day on the trail was a punk night club on the Bowery. He was there for a while on camera. He saw the dark wood design of his grandfather's WW2 romantics, and he prayed quietly for the fate of the young people that had developed a fondness to Nicholas, though they knew him not. And at about 2 am on Tuesday morning, Nathan stood outside of the club and waited.

Sure enough a black sedan pulled up across the street. The back door opened, and a black boot with a steel clip on it stepped out. A muscular man followed the boot out of the car, very athletic, standing about 6

foot 5 inches tall. He wore black pants, a white collar shirt unbuttoned at the top and a black vest.

“It’s him,” said Nathan. “It has to be. I found him.”

Nicholas crossed the quiet street walking perfectly like an emperor. He approached Nathan and stopped about 20 feet away on the sidewalk. He was quiet for a moment, looking at Nathan.

“It’s Nicholas, Nathan. I am your younger brother.”

Nicholas spoke very softly, almost so that Nathan had trouble hearing him. “After a life span we meet for the first time. Dad never forgot about you, nor did he speak evil of you. Your father always loved you, Nathan.”

Nathan began to feel a tug on his heart. He felt closer to his brother than to his nephew. They were cohorts. But he was careful. “Yes, Nicholas, it is an honor to meet you for the first time. But I can’t say that I agree with you.”

“And why not?”

“Is this yours?” asked Nathan, gesturing to the punk club.

Nicholas sighed for a moment. “It’s not my property or my business, but I gave them what they wanted.”

“Maybe like Aron gave the Hebrews a molten calf? Did you always give your son what he wanted when he was a boy? Isn’t it a leader’s job to know the difference between right and wrong for his people and judge accordingly, especially when they want the wrong thing?”

“Should I have put a task over their heads? Here they are happy. A task would grieve them.”

“Nay, Nicholas, maybe not a task overt these, but how about over a different group of followers? And do these, although not under a task of labor, do these not serve the spirit of Judas, the great betrayer, with his mannequins in windows driving men insane in their lust? Didn’t God tell you not to forge idols?”

“You’ve been gone so long Nathan that you would never understand.”

“Because I chose to be a common man, Nicholas? Because I rejected all the pleasures of Egypt? And moreover, does not Judas sacrifice four times a year from his stock? How can you justify that, Nicholas?”

“I’m going to take you back to dad in honor of the blood.”

“I am an honor to Jehovah, not my father. Our bloodline is corrupt, Nicholas. We have too much power. We are masters of slaves.”

“You’ve been away far too long, but you are my blood brother,” said Nicholas, ever so quietly.

It was dark on the Bowery, and only a few cars passed. The city lights persisted. Nicholas set himself down in the Panther stance, and he raised his arms. Nathan followed with the same, and he pulled the cuffs from the sheath and they clashed midst the faint rumble of the city. Then Nicholas threw one hand to the head, and Nathan bobbed it. Nicholas did not expect any strikes to get in – he only tested Nathan’s art. But this was the second night Nathan was going without sleep, and he was some hindered. Then Nicholas threw another hand, then two feet, all in jest. But Nathan was

too good at dodging and blocking the strikes for any to get through.

Nicholas stepped back and dropped his arms. He said, "You didn't lose it. You can never lose it, Nathan, even if you didn't grow up with it."

Nathan scowled and said, "You're breaking God's laws, Nicholas. You're organized crime. That's not the way God intended the world to be."

"We're fit for it."

"We're the bloodline of Cain, the first murderer. And all the heir ever did was accept the spirit of Lucifer to fuel the mastery of the militia. I did not accept Lucifer, Nicholas. I accepted Jesus as my Savior."

"You've been away from the family for too long, Nathan. Dad wants you home."

"Even if I did come home to dad there cannot be two heirs."

"Then dad will take you honorably. You fight like us because you are one of us."

"I'm not going that easy."

"What did you expect to do with me?"

"Shackle you so the law can deal with you."

"The law? I've got a bounty for that. If the government has any say in what I want to do they have to deal with my bounty – the heads that pay the price."

"Then the Lord will deal with you."

The two set down in Panther, and Nicholas stepped in and threw hands and feet again, which Nathan bobbed, weaved and blocked. Nathan threw a few strikes at Nicholas, the he attempted to use jiu-jitsu to wrestle him down and get the cuffs on him. He fluently got from under Nicholas abdomen to lift him, send him

to the floor and put a hold on him, but Nicholas countered the move and sent Nathan in a throw.

Nathan knew he would have to trip him to get the hold, so he sent it once, and Nicholas jumped it. Nathan's moves were getting sloppy due to his fatigue, but he sent another swipe and this time it landed. Nicholas went to the ground, and Nathan struck the hold on his arm to his back. There was a test of strength, but Nathan held it. With the cuffs remaining in his hand, he clasped one wrist. Then, in an arm wrestle, he grappled the other arm by twisting it to the first arm, and he struck the cuff on it. And Nicholas was shackled.

"You will never conquer the blood," said Nicholas. "Dad will find me."

"If all I could ever do, Nicholas, is send my father a message that I disagree with him, I might disappoint him when it was time to start another world war. What do you think grandpa did? A demand using "heads that pay the price" for military leadership? Fabrication of war machines using the American, German and Japanese governments as scapegoats? Where does war come from, Nicholas? Could it be from *one* world power that disagrees with God?"

Nicholas was quiet for a moment as he stood to face his brother. "Our heaven is different than theirs, Nathan. If dad took you honorably then you'd still be one of us in the afterlife."

"That's a lie Satan told our bloodline, Nicholas. God defines Heaven in the Bible. I am an honor only to Jehovah and His righteousness, not the righteousness of the Angel of Light."

Nicholas had nothing to say.

Nathan looked at the brother he never knew for a moment then he turned to go. "I'll be back for you," he said.

The broken tar of the street met with the granite curbstone with some attempts at grass near the sidewalk. There was no cobblestone, just concrete slabs, much broken, that made a sidewalk. The logos of the store signs, some in neon, reflected the culture of the people – the souls of that family business. For some it was a restaurant handed down from generation to generation, for others it was a corner store and still yet for others a specialty store. Windows of residences lined the street, each looking out into a cityscape with the hope of something better tomorrow. But this was America. People still had food to eat and even some kind of government housing. Very few lived in the streets comparatively. But for how long? Was America only a step away from a dictatorship?

Nathan took a trip back to mid-town Manhattan by cab to his hotel room. He shut the door behind him, blocking out the city, and he looked at the carry bag on his bed with the final set of cuffs. He ran his fingers through his hair to ease some of the tension and glanced at his watch. It was 4 am. The night was gone now, and he had his father yet to find. He sighed, his mind growing all the more burdened with fatigue. His thoughts seemed to have blurred edges, almost like he wasn't in reality. It was the second day of his venture and he had gone without sleep. After 36 years he was fulfilling a dream. He still had energy – a desire so

strong to go on before he lost his trail that he could not miss a beat.

“I can sleep on the bus to Albany,” he said quietly, looking out the window into the cityscape. “I’ve got to go now and start my trail here in New York then catch the 7 am Greyhound bus to Albany to meet him. He won’t come out here. Then I must return here.”

So Nathan put the final pair of cuffs in his pouch and zipped the carry bag shut. He got on his knees and prayed, asking God to give him the ability to bring his hunting to its summit then he exited his hotel room and returned the keys downstairs. He left the building and carried on through the city early in the morning to the more elite neighborhoods for a while. At around 6 am he made his way to Port Authority, and he boarded the 7 am bus to Albany. But, agitated about the trail, he couldn’t sleep. There was no rest for his mind as he passed in and out of the sensations his father had instilled in him as a militia boy.

At around 9:45 am Nathan arrived at Albany after careful contemplation during the sleepless trip of what would come next. He exited the bus, and it was a Tuesday, a business day in the small city –the capital of New York State. He had his carry bag with him.

He made his way through downtown Albany, and he knew it wouldn’t be long before he drew out his father. That’s how well Nathan felt he knew him, though he had not seen him in decades. Nathan walked to Lark Street and spent some time in and out of the groves that were open. There was a feeling here – it was the Vintage reminiscent of the 1960’s. It was more like his father’s eye.

Nathan walked across Lark Street and east over Madison Avenue back downtown. Then he headed to the Empire State Plaza. Arriving there in the cool of the afternoon, he stepped out onto the plaza floor and set down his bag. He slowly turned his head to get a panorama of the architecture. There were four buildings to the west. There was a museum to exhibit the glory of New York State in the south. There were three great water pools in the midst of the plaza, and there was a great wall at its base. And, most importantly, there was The Egg (the amphitheater where plays and dancing were performed) and the Corning Tower (a political building for state administration and the processing of public records). But were they these things at all?

As Nathan studied the plaza, he thought with a wearied and sleepless mind. The sensation came again. It was the way he understood the world by the way his dad had taught him. Were the four buildings the significance of the number four to the militia, the four seasons of the militia courtship? Was the museum a display of the articles of power of the leadership? Were the water pools symbols of the multitudes of people? Was the wall the separation of the master from the slave? Was not the Egg the seed of the heir to the militia that would perpetuate forever, standing at attention to the Tower – the Godfather and leadership of the world that looked down on the waters which were the multitudes of people?

It was around one o'clock in the afternoon. Nathan let his thoughts go free. There was no barrier now. Perhaps his father would take him home to Heaven –

that he could not let him live in honor to the blood, nor could there be two heirs. As he thought on these things, he looked to the top of the staircase of the museum and there was a man standing there, ever so far away. The man could see out across the plaza at all of the glorious things there. Could that be Nathan's father among the few folk who trailed along the campus?

The man began to descend the staircase slowly, and when he got to the bottom he began heading Nathan's direction. As he came closer, about halfway, Nathan saw that he walked with majesty, much like James and Nicholas.

"Could that be my father?" asked Nathan to himself. He became slightly excited, having some trouble controlling his emotions in his delirious state.

As the man came closer, Nathan could see that he was old enough to be his father. Then at about 20 feet away, coming ever so close, he slowed to a stop, and he stood tall, about 7 foot tall. He appeared to be very athletic and muscular, just like Nathan's nephew and brother.

There was a long pause as they stood looking upon one another. Nathan could see his own face in the man. It must be him – his father. Nathan could faintly remember his dad's casual sepia suit and mafia shirt unbuttoned at the top.

The man had just the nick of a smile when he said, "Has it been a long road for you, son?"

For a moment Nathan was surprised. It was his father after all. Nathan turned his eyes away from his father's eyes, but he couldn't hold his emotions quite as well as he wanted to. He looked off to the architec-

ture and said, “Papa...” but there were no tears. He didn’t want to look him in the eye.

For a moment Nathan lost himself and became a beloved son again to his father. He could not help but to have some expression in his face.

“I knew someday you’d come home,” said his father. “I’ve been looking for you all of your life. Where are your brother and nephew?”

“I had to leave them shackled, daddy.” And Nathan became sober. “They are wrong. You are wrong. Our family blood is wrong. It’s organized crime. You personify Lucifer – every Godfather does. If Lucifer had a body on the earth then it would have to be yours.”

“You cannot conquer the blood of Cain, son. It’s too powerful.”

“No, daddy, I can’t. But God can. When my father and mother forsake me then the Lord will take me up.”

“You’ve spent too much time away. I would not dishonor you, but I would make sure you go with respect and comfort. Nicholas is the heir now.”

“I know. I’ve thought about that. But I found something else that you do not understand. It’s the power of God that you refuse, relying on your power as a man – and the power of the spirit of Lucifer.”

“Your mother passed on. It was all a part of them taking you away from me. But I have you back now.”

“I found a friend who took good care of me, daddy, after I was raised by a surrogate family. There are decent people in the world.”

“But you couldn’t keep yourself from me and...”

“...And the power of the militia? The power of the man – the secular humanist who believes in himself and the power of Lucifer that comes with it? I did not come to agree with you, daddy. I came to detain you. I came to change the course of history before you usher in the tribulation.”

“Would you detain your father as if to chastise me?”

“God is my father. I’ve rejected you.” And Nathan pulled the wrist cuffs from the sheath.

Nathan’s father took a low Panther stance, and Nathan followed with the same.

“I do not want hurt you, son. I just want you to come back home,” said his father.

“You know there can only be one heir. And I have no intentions of returning with you.”

Nathan put up his arms, and his father did also. Nathan had 20 years of youth on his dad, but then the blood always kept the old man athletic. Nathan wanted it to be fast. His father was quiet, waiting for his son’s argument.

Nathan stepped closer then he took one more step while he calculated the distance. In a sloppy flash he stepped in and threw a swipe to his dad’s chins. It didn’t land. His father dodged it.

There was a pause. Nathan shifted the cuffs from one hand to another. But he was tired, and his dad studied him.

So he tried another swipe, much the same way but this time from the opposite direction. Again his

father dodged it. So Nathan would try a grapple. He set down in Panther again and stepped in then went for a grab to the forearm. It would be a test of strength. He got in with the move and came close to his father. There was an exchange, but it ended up in a soft throw by his father. Nathan was veered away again. Again he came in to lock the arm behind the back, and he came close, but his father only slipped out of it. And Nathan tried at least two more grapples before he threw a jui-jitsu wrestle on him. But his father was too fast and clever. Nathan did not want to strike him. He only wanted to restrain his father for the cuffs. But nothing Nathan did was successful.

The older man stepped out of the Panther stance and stood up. He said, "You're good with the royal art, Nathan. Where did you learn it?"

"There is a temple that teaches it to undo the things you do with it."

"Still you have the foundation I gave you. Do you remember?"

"Yes. But I wish you would turn away from the honor of the blood, daddy. You're far too steeped in it."

"You have cousins waiting for you."

"But that does not justify what our bloodline did with its power."

It was quiet for a moment. Nathan entered into the Panther stance again, and his dad followed him. The younger man tried several more grapples, but they only ended up in soft throws by the elder. Nathan's fatigued attempts to subdue his dad without strikes were failing. His father's years of experience

made him far too swift.

His dad spoke up in the median. “What did the world offer you, Nathan? A job? Laboring an 8-hour day and still unable to pay the bills? I have a fortune waiting for you.”

“That’s the way of the world, daddy. Our bloodline is just spoiled. We never knew the humbleness of the working class.”

His father’s face went a bit straighter, and he said, “Nathan, so you call yourself, but your real name is Guccie. That’s what your mother called you. You were not born in America, Guccie. You were born in the town of Sambuca. Sambuca de Sicilia. We are Sicilian. I built a little house there when grandpa let me have time off of business. It was made of hewn stone blocks and mortar. You were only about two years old then. Do you remember it, Guccie? Do you remember the vineyard and our fields? Why are you so bitter about Sambuca?”

Nathan began to feel the tug of his family culture. He replied, “If I ought to have been there, in the town of Sambuca, it doesn’t matter. I’m grown now. I know what Sambucca is, and it’s not a secret to me, daddy, like it is to the rest of the world.”

His father insisted, “It was quiet there, son. We were a new family – you, your mom and I. We played. It was time off of business to cheer up my wife.”

Nathan’s father slowly lifted his hand to the Tower and Egg. “It brought us back together. Cain had said that nothing could sever the bloodline, and that the heir would perpetuate the leadership forever.”

Then his father shifted the position of his hand and stretched it towards Nathan saying, “Come, Guc-cie, I can change your mind. You’re tired, delirious – the world has worn you down. You will never conquer the blood. Enter into the joy of the Lord, son.”

Nathan could feel it again – the comfort he had then. It was in his dad’s voice as it soothed the channels of his mind. He hadn’t heard it in 36 years. The temptation to appeal to his father was growing. Maybe Sambucca wasn’t Hell. Maybe it had nothing to do with war, poverty and slavery. Maybe after all Sambucca was home as a little boy with mommy and daddy, safe and secure.

But the years Nathan had spent living in the hell that the bloodline had created for mankind drove him to repel his father, and he became somewhat angry.

Nathan squinted just a little saying, “I will never return to you.” And he set down in Panther again. His father did also.

For the first time in the altercation, Nathan’s father *led* the movement with one swift throw, clasp-ing his son’s wrist of the hand that was holding the cuffs. He locked the hand back and the cuffs fell to the ground with a jingle. Then his dad quickly kicked the cuffs to his side and picked them up. He lifted them up then he stepped back and lowered his guard. His father put the cuffs in his suit coat pocket then carefully set down in Panther again.

Nathan followed the stance. They both lifted their arms. He knew now that he would only succeed with a *swipe* before he could throw the grapple, but he

was so tired. Just one last burst of energy – the same move he practiced over and over with Wong and his cane. But there was more. If he could inflict pain it would work much better. It was best to *strike first*, before the swipe, even if he was striking his father. So, Nathan began by throwing hands and feet, surprising his father. He was working his way to a vulnerable point that would sting long enough to get in the trip. But his father was good at blocking the punches and kicks. The elder would not throw back. He only deterred what Nathan sent. Nathan began to speed up the combinations, and, behold, at once he sent a successful side kick to the solar plexus. The force of the kick knocked the wind out of his father and sent him back a moment. Nathan then stepped in twice and threw the swipe. *And he had him* – his dad went down. Struggling with the pain and the attempt to catch his breath, his dad lay on the ground on his side. Nathan came close and fidgeted through his suit-coat pocket to retrieve the cuffs. Then he easily clasped both cuffs on his father's wrists, and he was triumphant. His father was restrained.

There was a wait for about two minutes while Nathan's father gathered his breath. After coughing a few times, the older man stopped panting, and his breathing became normal. Clearing his throat, Nathan's father spoke, his voice like a major chord.

"I am proud of your martial art, son. You did detain me after all. Quite an accomplishment. But then when you were a boy you got my chins quite often with a front kick, then a side, then a roundhouse. I will always love you no matter how far away you

stray. It is only a family tradition that there can only be one son, though there must only be one heir. A Godfather never had to make that decision before. I'd be the first. But that's not so surprising considering that it is the Last Days."

Nathan's dad was not looking at him, but Nathan felt a twinge in his brow. It was his father talking. He said, "I love you too daddy, but I can't agree with you. We are not gods, we are only men. Lucifer was the one who taught you that you are God."

Nathan thought his father Robert could still have the compassion of a man without the hardness of the fallen angel's spirit. Could his dad be saved?

Nathan watched Robert look out into the plaza. He pleaded with him saying, "Papa, wherefore have you rejected Christ? *For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.*"

Robert shifted his reclined position to face Nathan, but Nathan looked away. He said, "You don't know what happened to your mother. I loved her, and so did you. She disappeared when you did. Does that make me evil, Guccio? Someone in the world out there that you serve betrayed me so they could steal mommy? Do you not think that if I was there I'd have died for you, my son? You are the heir, and moreover you are my blood."

Then Nathan's face became weaker. He turned his head aside, trying to prevent the bead and the shake in his jaw, but his emotions prevailed. He wiped the tear away saying, "No, dad, I do not remember

much about mommy. I only remember some things.” It was the Holy Spirit within Nathan that took over his desire to break to his father.

His father continued, “It’s the world that took the two of you – the same world that you serve. That’s why we live in ours and they in theirs. Maybe now you would understand why our blood is above the rest. We are clean decent people. I gave you time, Guccie. You are surely a humble man. But it was the humble boy that couldn’t protect his mother. Now she’s gone, and I am in cuffs.”

There was a long pause then Robert said, “Before you leave me here to do what you feel necessary, Guccie, just look me in the eye.

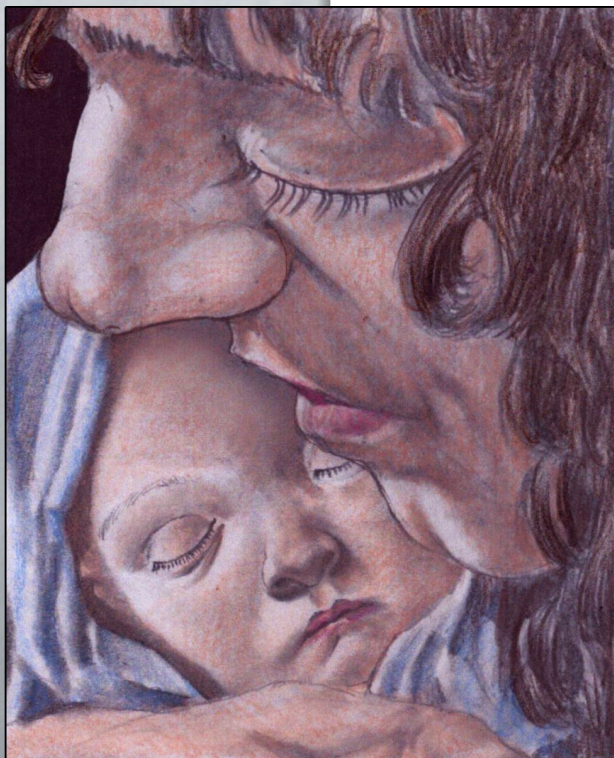
Yea, and his father challenged him to be a man. Nathan turned to him with the evidence of weeping gone, and he looked his father in the eye.

“Set your father free. We are a step above the tradition. I can send you to Sambuca – you do not have to die in honor of the blood. You will find a wife there who will be much like your mother. Your brother will be the heir, but he will never come near you. That is his honor to you.”

When Nathan’s father was done talking, Nathan turned around. He started to walk out of the plaza, and there were no further words exchanged for a moment. Nathan thought that if his father found his way to freedom he would hunt his son with the power of a world dictator, for now he could not let Nathan live.

Nathan stopped and turned to his father again only to say, “I lost my wife and daughter, too. Maybe

it was the same person. But that doesn't make you right. I will be back for you."



CHAPTER 5

THE DOOR TO SAMBUCCA

With his nephew, brother and father behind him in restraints, or so he had reason to believe they were, Nathan carried on through the streets of Albany to catch the next bus back to New York City. Yet, he was fumbling his walk with fatigue, and the more he went without sleep, for it had been two nights now, the more he slipped into the sensations of his apocathary. He would go nonetheless, and perhaps he would sleep on the bus, for there was yet one last task. So he caught the 3:30 pm bus to New York City, and as he rode, he prayed.

“Lord, it has been a long time. Years of sorrow for the loss of my Abigail and Candice. If it be not this time, I am through looking. I can look no more. I will go and find a wife somewhere. I cannot wait for her anymore. I must accept her loss, wherever she has gone. And even Candice, my precious daughter, would have been 20 years old now and married – with her own children. Where the little girl could be I know not, only that you let it happen. But I can accept her loss, Lord, after this time.

In my dreams, Lord, I have seen the affliction of my people. ‘Tis not just my flesh and blood that I’ve held so dear. ‘Tis also others that are of no relationship to me. The poor, the afflicted, those forgotten by the world of wealth who despise them so. Yea, the world has but gone a-whoring after the dollar bill, and knows not what she hath done. And her children are empty. Are they there, Lord, in Sambucca? Did daddy show it to me under the earth or were we up top? Do you get there by tunnel or by reading the newspaper? Yea, is it just a delusion? I can only look this one time

after 36 years of the memories of my father. This is my chance, but if nothing becomes of it then I shall return to the farm. For I cannot be plagued anymore with a delusion.”

Within two-and-a-half hours Nathan was in New York City. He made his way through Port Authority out to 8th Avenue. His desire to find the Door to Sambucca would have to be preceded by a walk through the city to gather a sensation, as it was when he was a boy with his father. And with his observations, starting at Port Authority, he looked for anything that would be a mark of his father’s militia bloodline, for the society of Sambucca was secret. He used a compass when he was unsure about the street signs. They manufactured things in Sambucca and sold them up here, and his father was a master. Perhaps he had been there as a boy; it was more of a sensational memory than any picture or sound he could conjecture.

Before Nathan chose a subway entrance, he watched diligently the manufacture, the things being sold in the street-side stores. He felt that the language of Sambucca would sound out a path to the entrance – it could not be found by a map. It was done with sensations that came from his apocathary. That’s what made it so secret to the world, but, being that he had his father’s blood, he could read the language of the street. The Chinese sold things, and the Italians did also. The people living on the street had a rhythm, and he felt for them that their pain would be removed someday. At around 7 pm, Nathan turned the street corner and came to a man selling Sicilian scarves, like

the ones his mother used to wear.

“How much?” asked Nathan as he held up one of purple and patterns.

“It’s-a-seven-a-dollars, justafo you,” said the Italian man with a smile.

Nathan opened his wallet and fetched a 10-dollar bill along with a gospel tract that he had in his bag. He handed it to the merchant.

“Thank-a-you. Enjoy,” he said, handing Nathan the change.

The merchantman was perhaps in his seventies, dressed rugged, and his face was somewhat beaten by the city winds. Nathan looked at him a moment and the man was smiling. Nathan asked him, very tired, “Did you ever know Mary?”

The merchantman lost just a little of his smile, and with a bit of a raised brow he said, “Oh, which Mary? There are-a-so-a-many, huh?”

“Mary, my mother.”

And he smiled again saying, “How-a-do I know-a-you mother when I don’t even-a-know-a-you?”

Nathan drew a sigh, and he looked up the busy street with the New York City traffic rumbling by. But he did not give up just yet.

“I don’t know what happened to her, but I know she was from Little Italy, here, in Manhattan. We came here often when I was a four-year-old boy. I thought maybe if you have been here for many years you’d know the story of the little boy who disappeared on Mulberry Street.”

“So long ago?” he asked.

“At least 30 years ago.”

The old man paused a moment, scowling. “What is-a-you-name?” he asked.

“Nathan Smith.”

The merchantman scowled deeper, then slowly shook his head saying, “Nothing-a-by-a-that name. I’m sorry.”

Nathan was quiet, looking at him. He could not bring himself to ask any further questions. “Thank you,” he said.

“You-a-most-a-welcome,” replied the old man.

Nathan carried on. Time was passing and it was into the evening hours. Nathan was neglecting his sleep to catch some greater reward – one that would come from the sensations his father had brought him. It was 10 pm Tuesday, the third sleepless day now, and he was exhausted.

He had made his way to Little Italy from Port Authority by walking over 40 blocks south from the time he arrived the city. His thoughts blurred as he watched the metropolis to find the Door to Sambucca. And his energy was leaving him. His step had slowed, and he couldn’t make a decision. He started to doubt. He had left the three of them behind shackled, but maybe he was wrong? Maybe he should *go back* and help them? He dismissed the thought and carried on. The day had passed as he walked, looking for marks. Tapping into his boyhood, here on Canal Street is where he felt his father had taken him. And he had it again – the throb of the militia from when he was four. The concrete slabs of the sidewalk stretched for

what seemed forever in a warm-grey tone, spotted with gum wads and scuffs. People passed by, intent on what the city had to offer them, the thrill of being around so many people with the potential for profit. And there, there were the green ball-lamps that marked the New York City Subway entrances. The door was nigh; Nathan turned the corner and stepped down the stairway, through the gateway into the subway. He slid his card and passed through the turnstile.

The tunnels were warm, lined with millions of tiles, and they smelled of oil. Was it the crude oil of Sambucca? The power of the concrete and steel construction of the labyrinths presented an invitation to what could even be further down, unknown to the common citizen. Perhaps somewhere faintly in Nathan's ear were the cries from below. Images shot through his tired mind that took him back to the little militia boy who traveled through the city with his father. What labor had his father exacted from the people of Sambucca? The tale of brick? To assemble? To forge?

Nathan kept searching and the night had come. He had learned a pattern for using Apollyon's numbers like a navigation system used by the militia to get around the city, and to get to Sambucca. He traveled the subway failing to retire for sleep. The steel posts and the walls of the tunnels had numbers, but there were so many. He flashed the light on walls and posts where the numbers were in the dark, and he calculated on his wristwatch. He developed a formula in his pad that he felt was the best possible deduction of his observations to get him to the door. Which spot was the

entrance – the panacea of the persisting rhythm of Apollyon's navigation system that rendered a man to a certain place at a certain time in the city? How much control did Apollyon have over the city's engineering for Nathan's father?

All night and into the morning, Nathan continued to look for the numbers and the trapping of the signs for Sambuccan subway tunnels. He looked at the faces of the people – had they changed? His steps stumbled sometimes due to no resting for his legs; the fatigue was running through them, painfully. But he insisted that breaking away from the search now would cause him to lose all of his findings. He had not anticipated it would take so long.

With a sting in his eye and his vision blurring, he calculated on the wristwatch and diligently compared the inferences resulting from his search. At the last he came to a spot on the subway platform that was the culmination of his numbers. At that spot, he added the digits of the train car numbers, when they stopped, to get a sum for each. He then compared that sum to the prophetic interpretation of the numbers 1-12. Since 6 is the number of a man, it seemed to be most likely that his father would use 6 for an underground kingdom. Then he had it: a subway car with a digital sum of 6. The car would unhitch and then hitch again to another train that would decline and follow tunnels going down deeper into the earth, perhaps to Sambucca. Tired and slouched over, he stood in front of the train car door with the digital sum of 6, waiting for it to open, and someone was shaking his shoulder.

Nathan turned around. There was a man stand-

ing there. It was his father, Robert. Or was he? The visage was the same, but how could he be? Perhaps he was an angel. Nathan's eyes were very heavy, and he could not decide.

Midst the bustle of the people, the man held the nick of a smile and said, "Which is the door to Sambucca, Guccie? Is it this one – the train car that takes you there in the ground? Is it the jet that takes you to Sicily, then the car that takes you to the town? Or is it the door of your mother's womb that brought you into the world?

Is it the door that lets you in or the door that sends you out? Is it a door only in your mind or a real door for your body? Or is it the door of death that sends you to Heaven or Hell for all of eternity? Can you give it one single definition, Guccie?"

And then he turned to go, disappearing into the crowd. There was another shake of Nathan's shoulder from the side...



CHAPTER 6

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

A cool breeze blew on a warm August evening. The Chinamen were out in the park, Columbus Park, playing chess, and the women and children passed by. They were aloof to a man sitting on the park bench in the approaching dark. His head was cocked back to the side a little and his arms somewhat sprawled out, one wrapped loosely around his carry bag. Sleeping ever so sound midst the clanking of the city, the man met the description of Nathan. And this was close to the very park bench that Hank had found Nathan on nearly 10 years ago, much the same way. And, behold, it was Nathan, sometime after he had stopped his father.

As Nathan slept on, two people approached him: a short old Chinaman and a young tall maid. It was Wong who had come for his pupil – perhaps after keeping track of him through the city. And the maid – she must have had an interest in Nathan as well.

The maid stood a way in front of Nathan in a long white patterned dress, and Wong came up close to him. Shaking Nathan's muscular shoulder from the side just a little he said, "Nathan, Nathan, are you ok? It's Sensei."

Nathan's inhale was interrupted with a little bit of a choke when his eyes opened and he swayed his head back to center. He looked at the old Chinaman with relief in his eyes saying, "Wong – it's you."

"Yes, Nathan, it's me. Are you okay?"

Nathan hesitated with his answer looking at the bruises and small cuts on his forearms then he said, "I think so." As Nathan motioned to stand up, Wong stepped back. Nathan surveyed his body and

said, “I feel okay, Sensei.” Then Nathan noticed the maid standing about 10 feet away. It was Mary, the lady who had been coming for horse-riding lessons. Nathan looked into her eyes. She was very beautiful. He started to put together what Wong was saying. She smiled ever so slightly at him, and he politely smiled back. Then Nathan looked down at the pavement.

Wong, watching on, said, “Would you reject the gift of God, Nathan? Do you not think that God would have some good thing for you – for all of your faithfulness and service to your country?”

Nathan looked into Wong’s aged face.

“This is Mary,” explained Wong. “She is here for you. She knows a lot about you, and she is very fond of you. Will you now reject this which the Lord has done?”

Nathan looked over to her again, and she looked him in the eyes. She smiled again, ever so slightly, and, behold, she was fair to look upon, her slender silhouette backlit by the city lights. But Nathan’s mind trailed away again, and he looked at Wong to say, “Wong, you have yet to tell me what the Centurion – the greatest honor of any man – is.”

Wong scowled his eyebrows and looked intently into Nathan’s face saying, “*You*, Nathan, are the Centurion. You stand at the Door to Sambucca to watch for the evil one that he might not pass through to your side to manipulate the weak and poor. And you assay to go through the door and find the slaves, bringing them back out into freedom.

Do not take your sword and fight against the sword anymore,” said Wong. “You have well proven

yourself a Centurion. Rather – take your Bible and go soul winning as a soldier of Christ and nurture and care for the needy. Leave the war well enough alone. And then perhaps the war will leave you, and the prison of your past, and the nightmare of the ghetto, and you may well enter into the joy of the Lord.”

Nathan was quiet for a moment. There was a flicker in his eye, and a small bead started down his face. He said, almost in a whisper, “Has it all been in vain, Sensei? Did I detain my nephew, brother and father or was it only the dream of a manic? Where have I been for four days? Have I been sleeping here? Did I only go in a big circle these past 10 years and wind up here again, where Hank found me in one of the worst possible states a man can be?”

Wong answered him slowly, “Does it really matter now, Nathan? Look at what the Lord gave you in exchange for passing through the door – behold, she is before your eyes. Where man failed you the Lord picked you up. Go back home and sleep. Maybe in fact you weren’t sleeping. Let Mary make you well. Or perhaps this is what you want for the rest of your life?” And Wong gestured towards the bench with his cane.

As Nathan wiped the tear away from his face, Wong said, “Let’s pray. Thank you, Lord, for returning Nathan safely back home. Allow him to leave it behind him now, and let his war be over.”

Wong grabbed ahold of Nathan’s elbow then clenched his forearm. The three of them then headed for the Canal Street subway entrance.



At nearly 10 in the morning, a car pulls into the lot of a country church, and it parks diligently among the middle-class stock. A lady gets out of the passenger's side, and she opens the back door to unlatch a little boy out of a car seat. A man then exits the driver's side, and when he stands he is tall and strong, lean as a military man. After some scuffling, the family assembles and walks into the church through the modest foyer doors. It is Nathan, his wife Mary and their son. They went to church and soul winning together. Nathan had built another house for his family, and Wong had replaced Nathan's shotgun with an UZI from the Shaolin Temple.

Was everything beyond the realities of the farm and the return from the war to find his loved ones missing only the delusions of a manic? It did not matter to Nathan; it was all in his mind, somewhere. But his family and the farm were real, and here.

Some men build their own kingdoms; some men have them built by slaves. Still others let God build them. But for Nathan, it was something different. Given the love of a friend, he would never be the way he was before, having passed through the Door to Sambuca, leaving the melancholy of poverty and loss behind forever...



The Door to Sambucca
A Family Classic!

Biography

Jim Robinson was born on April 10, 1967 and born again by the Blood of Christ in December of 1990 at the foot of the bed in his college dorm room. He graduated SUNY at New Paltz, NY/USA with a BS in Visual Art Education, and he has taught Art in Public School and College for all age levels. He was also an elementary school teacher using the *A-Beka* curriculum in a Christian School. He has published numerous books including a “through-the-Bible” series, and all of his publications and advertisements for commissioned work can be found on jrartworks.org. Jim resides in upstate NY where he attends a Baptist church and advocates for the mentally ill. He enjoys working with young adults and families in low-income neighborhoods, and he has also offered his services to law enforcement agencies including the FBI and international bounty hunters.



A Vietnam vet returns from the war to find the worst has happened. With a life torn from adversity, this short novel gives the fictional account of a Christian man's courage and honor to Jehovah. He sets out to undo centuries of a family's destructive contribution to the End Times.

