

‘I BELIEVE THAT BANKING INSTITUTIONS
ARE MORE DANGEROUS TO OUR LIBERTIES
THAN STANDING ARMIES.’

(Thomas Jefferson, 3rd President of US, 1743 – 1826)

A SHADOW GOVERNMENT IS AT THIS MOMENT EXECUTING
ITS PLANS TO USHER IN A NEW WORLD ORDER.
A SECRET CABAL OF RULERS MORE POWERFUL THAN ANY
GOVERNMENT THAT EXISTS TODAY.

THEY CONTROL:

THE MILITARY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX
THE BANKING SYSTEMS OF THE WORLD
THE BLACK-OPS UNITS OF THE MILITARY
ROGUE FACTIONS OF THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITIES
THE FEDERAL RESERVE.

THEIR PLANS ARE AS OLD AS TIME . . .
THEIR INTENTIONS TREACHEROUS.

AS OF TODAY – THEIR EXISTENCE REMAINS
FOR THE MOST PART UNDISCLOSED.

. . . BUT STILL THEIR PLAN ADVANCES.

PROLOGUE

THEY CAST NO SHADOWS

2001

WORLD TRADE CLUB
107TH FLOOR, WORLD TRADE CENTER
LOWER MANHATTAN, NEW YORK

IT WAS THE TENTH of September 2001, a day almost like any other, Lorcan De Molay reflected. At precisely 8.46 am tomorrow, the entire world would change.

He pondered this fact as he gazed out of the vast expanse of glass at the breathtaking panorama of Manhattan's skyline from the private club room that rose a full quarter of a mile above New York City.

He stared silently across the spectacular vista of the Manhattan Harbor, his eyes fixed on the relentless passage of sleek 757 and 747 airliners arriving and departing from La Guardia, JFK and Newark Airports.

Finally the priest drew his gaze away from the skyline and turned.

His face, although strangely scarred, was imperial. His features striking. The wide brow and straight patrician nose

framed imperious sapphire eyes that held a haunting mesmerizing beauty. His thick raven hair was silvering at the edges.

On an average day, he wore it fastidiously pulled back from his high cheekbones into its customary braid bound by a simple black band.

On an average day, he wore the flowing Black Robes of his Jesuit Order.

But today was not an average day and this dusk De Molay's gleaming raven tresses fell loose to his shoulders, skimming the exquisitely tailored, bespoke Domenico Vacca suit that accentuated the deliberately honed body beneath it.

The priest caressed the carved silver serpent on the top of his cane, slowly surveying the men seated before him.

The Grande Druid Council of Thirteen, the highest orders of the Committee of Three Hundred, The Black Nobility of Venice, The Supreme Mother Council of the thirty-third degree Masons of the Scottish Rite.

He scanned the faces of the elite who controlled the Federal Reserve, the Bank for International Settlements, the World Bank, the Council of Foreign Relations, the Bilderberg Group and the Club of Rome, his gaze finally resting on the Frater Superior and Grand Tribunal of the Ordo Templi Orienti.

The Grand Masters of the Illuminati.

The secret cabal that controlled the United States government.

That controlled every government of the Eastern and Western world.

A slight smile flickered across his lips.

PROLOGUE

Who were in turn controlled by himself – Lorcan De Molay.

He flipped open a silver cigar case. Kester von Slagel, his emissary, materialized from the shadowed corner of the club holding a cigar guillotine. De Molay inserted the head of a cigar as Von Slagel cut deftly into the cap before vanishing back into the shadows.

De Molay put the cigar to his lips, positioning the end just above the top of the flame. ‘La Corona, 1937 . . .’

He puffed in gratification, then slowly removing the cigar, he let his gaze linger on the impassive faces of the chairmen of the most powerful banks in the world seated before him.

They were simpletons. Power hungry despots.

But according to the Tenets of Eternal Law, the fallen angelic Dread Councils had no direct jurisdiction over the Race of Men.

He pursed his lips at the memory of the Nazarene.

He had no alternative. After his humiliating defeat at Golgotha, the Fallen’s presence on this mud-spattered orb was illegitimate.

He had only one alternative – he had to use the craven masses. Beguile them – engage them in his masterplan. Dark Slaves of the Fallen.

At least until the Great Battle.

Until the defeat of the Nazarene.

After that, they would all be expendable. The thought gave him a rush of undiluted pleasure.

And Jerusalem would finally be his.

But now – to the business at hand.

De Molay spoke softly, his voice low and cultured. His

accent was distinctly British, London W1K to be precise, but it carried a subtle exotic inflection that was indefinable.

‘By precisely 8.46 am tomorrow, our operation to subvert and destabilize the United States of America will have begun.’ He caressed his cigar slowly between slender, elegantly manicured fingers. Every eye was fixed on him.

‘By noon, there will be closings at the United Nations, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the stock markets . . . ’ he murmured, ‘We will have struck at the foundations of the entire Western world.’

He turned to Charles Xavier Chessler, the silver haired Chairman of Chase Manhattan.

‘Our insider trading account stands as we speak at fifteen billion dollars,’ Chessler said. ‘Untraceable back to the Brotherhood.’

De Molay puffed on the cigar until the outer rim began to glow.

‘The towers will collapse like a proverbial house of cards,’ he murmured.

‘Freefall,’ added Jaylin Alexander, former Executive Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. ‘The evidence of controlled implosion buried forever in the debris.’ De Molay gestured to an imposing figure – in military dress and with a shock of coarse white hair – who sat at his right hand. NORAD Commander General Omar B. Maddox.

‘Vigilant Guardian is in effect, General?’

The general saluted. ‘NORAD is on standby, Your Excellency. At dawn, we execute the largest imaginary air defence exercise in our history, simulating an attack on the United States.’

PROLOGUE

The general smiled but his small hawklike eyes glittered hard.

‘Vigilant Guardian,’ he drawled. ‘The simulation will create the distraction and confusion necessary while the real attacks succeed. NORAD’s FAA technicians will be half blind.’

De Molay turned to Gonzalez of the United States Secret Service Presidential Protective Detail.

‘The terrorists are in possession of the codes?’

‘Air Force One codes and signals and our top White House codes, Your Excellency.’

‘Access to NSA’s surveillance systems?’

Gonzalez nodded.

‘In place, Your Excellency.’

‘We must cast no shadows.’ De Molay turned to Alexander.

‘The car registered to Nawaf al-Hazmi will be ditched in the parking lot at Dulles Airport the morning of the twelfth,’ Alexander stated. ‘Inside is a copy of Atta’s letter to the hijackers, a cashier’s cheque made out to a flight school in Phoenix, four drawings of the cockpit of a 757 jet, a box cutter-type knife and maps of Washington and New York.’

‘The terrorists have accepted the cover story, hook, line and sinker. They take over the planes. Their “bogus” mission – to return to the airports where fuelled planes will be on standby for them and their hostages. Once we activate the primary control channel, they will realize they have been deceived. Hijacked from the ground. Too late.’ Alexander smiled thinly. ‘They will die unwilling martyrs of the Brotherhood. Textbook black-ops scapegoats.’

‘Bin Laden?’ Julius De Vere, Chairman of De Vere Continuation Holdings, queried.

‘Osama bin Laden flew from Pakistan to Dubai on the

4th July,' Lewis, Deputy Secretary of Defense replied. 'He was accompanied by his personal physician, four bodyguards and a male Algerian nurse, and admitted to the urology department of the American Hospital. His family's evacuation is taken care of.'

'Two Boeing 777s are on standby as agreed,' Alexander nodded. 'The bin Ladens will be evacuated on September 18th in the no fly period.'

'*Then we invade Iraq . . .*' interjected Drew Janowski, special assistant to the President for Defense Policy and Strategy. 'Saddam's resistance to our oil for dollars programme permanently eradicated. We create the crisis, then willingly manage it. We introduce Homeland Security, then the Patriot Act . . .'

'In the Fall of 2008, we will crash the market . . . ' Werner Drechsler, president of the World Bank, said very softly. 'Plunge the dollar. There will be a deliberate contraction of all credit. We will instigate the single greatest economic crisis since 1929. Between 40 and 45 per cent of the world's wealth destroyed in less than eighteen months.'

Julius De Vere surveyed the assembly in satisfaction. 'By 2025 we finish the job. During the run on the banks, we intentionally collapse the Federal Reserve and replace it with our One World Central Bank. They will cry out to us to do anything to stop their pain.'

A bony, creased-looking man in his early fifties wearing horn-rimmed spectacles looked up from his papers.

' . . . *then, gentlemen . . . our coup d'état* – the United States' sovereignty permanently eliminated.' Piers Aspinall, chief of British Intelligence Services removed his spectacles and breathed on the lenses.

PROLOGUE

‘The first phase of the North American Union. We launch the Amero currency. Introduce mandatory gun control.’

He leaned back leisurely in his chair.

‘Then we divide the world into ten superblocs. Stage a false flag incident – nuclear or bioterror – weaponized Avian flu; smallpox . . . ushering in martial law and mandatory vaccination.’ He removed a perfectly pressed, monogrammed linen handkerchief from his suit pocket and polished the lenses. ‘We eradicate resisters. Patriots. Constitutionalists.’

He and Lorcan De Molay exchanged a fleeting glance. ‘Christians . . .’

‘Our conspiracy will be dismissed by the American people in decades to come as nothing more than an *urban legend*.’ De Molay smiled faintly in the direction of the Chairmen of North Sea Petroleum and the Dutch Oil Corporation seated to his right.

‘To over four hundred billion barrels of Iraqi oil reserves,’ he declared, holding up a glass of vintage port.

‘A toast to black gold, gentlemen.’

The Brotherhood raised their glasses. De Molay walked over to the floor-length windows and gazed out towards the Atlantic.

‘To Iraq . . .’ he murmured.

He turned from the window, his expression strangely distant.

‘*Then* Jersualem . . .’

The men stood as one and lifted their glasses.

‘Jerusalem.’

To our New World Order, ‘Lorcan De Molay declared. ‘Novos Ordo Seclorum.’

SON OF PERDITION

The voices of every man in the chamber echoed in unison:
'Novus Ordo Seclorum.'

Lorcan De Molay raised his glass a second time at unsuspecting Manhattan glimmering in the weak autumnal sun. His voice was barely a whisper.

'And to the reign of my only begotten son . . . '

11TH SEPTEMBER 2001

FLIGHT 11 – AMERICAN AIRLINES

LOGAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, BOSTON

7.40 AM

The eye-catching brunette wearing enormous Prada sunglasses smiled and turned to the nervous olive-skinned young man in a blue shirt seated next to her. He stared straight ahead. Stony-faced.

She shrugged, ran slender French manicured fingernails through her long low-lighted hair, then glanced back at the half empty plane. She yawned.

Since Alex's birth twelve weeks ago, Rachel Lane-Fox was *obsessed* with sleep.

She stretched out her long shapely legs, wiggled her toes and sank down into her business class seat in row 8 of the Boeing 767.

Scrabbling in her bag, she removed her mobile phone, then scrolled down until she found Julia De Vere's number and dialled. It rang twice.

'Hey, Jules,' she grinned. 'Yes – I'm on my way back. We're on the tarmac at Logan . . . ' She peered out of the window.

'We've been slightly delayed. Listen – Yes – Dad's out of

PROLOGUE

intensive care. I can't thank you enough for looking after Alex.'

A flight attendant stood at her elbow. Rachel looked up.

'I'm sorry, ma'am – your mobile phone and . . . ' She gestured at the seatbelt.

Rachel fastened her seatbelt awkwardly, tucking the phone under her chin.

The flight attendant frowned. She studied Rachel intently.

'Aren't you the supermodel Rachel . . . Rachel Lane-Fox?'

'Yes – you got me,' Rachel sighed. 'Guilty.'

She removed her dark glasses and put her free hand on the stewardess's arm.

'Look,' she pleaded, 'it's my baby. He's only twelve weeks old. My dad had a heart attack. My baby's with a friend. I've never left him before.'

She pointed to the phone. 'Please?' She grinned disarmingly, her perfectly veneered white teeth gleaming.

The flight attendant looked down at her watch. She sighed.

'Okay.' She gestured to the aircraft doors. 'As soon as the doors close.'

'Thanks,' Rachel mouthed and winked.

The man in the blue shirt glanced at her, disapprovingly.

'Jules . . . ' She glanced at the man, then lowered her voice. 'Look, did Alex sleep through the night or did he drive Jason *crrrrazy*?'

She stifled a giggle. The man next to her glared at her openly.

'Okay. I'll get a cab straight to the *Cosmo* office when we land in LA. Pick you both up for lunch.'

The flight attendant was back at her elbow.

'Mizz Lane-Fox . . . '

SON OF PERDITION

‘Have to go, Jules. Kiss Alex for me.’

Rachel clicked the phone shut, put it in her bag, and stowed it hastily under her seat.

She glanced down. ‘Strange,’ she thought. The olive-skinned man was grasping the armrest as though his life depended on it. He was sweating profusely.

He must hate flying.

‘Hey,’ she said, softly, tapping him on the arm.

‘When you do this regularly it’s not so bad. You get used to it.’ She gave him a soft smile. ‘I did.’

Mohammed Atta stared right through her.

She shrugged, picked up a fashion magazine and flicked idly through it as the aircraft taxied away from Gate 32 onto runway 4R.

Eight minutes later, Rachel Lane-Fox stared out of the window at the spectacular view of Boston Harbour as the Boeing ascended into the clear fall skies.

It was precisely 7.59 am, on Tuesday morning – 11th September.



Lorcan De Molay glanced idly down at the gold chronograph face of the 1925 Grogan Patek Philippe watch on his right wrist.

‘The only watch of its kind ever made for a left-handed wearer,’ he reflected idly.

It was 8.14 am precisely on the East Coast of America.

The hijacking of American Airlines flight 11 was now in process.

In minutes Mohammed Atta and his CIA patsies would realize they had been betrayed.

PROLOGUE

There would be no planes waiting for them.

He smiled thinly, dabbed at his mouth with a monogrammed linen napkin, then set it down next to his unfinished lunch – mille-feuille of Catalan lobster.

The remote control protocol would kick in at any moment.

The primary control channel would be activated.

He stared out past the bronze lions supporting the 132-foot red granite Egyptian obelisk, past the Via della Conciliazione, past the murky green waters of the Tiber to Rome's seven hills, then checked his wristwatch one more time.

Four minutes and the 767's functions would come under the direct ground control of the 'Command Post'.

He smoothed his Jesuit robes and closed his eyes, raising his face to Rome's soft autumn breeze.

The Boeing's flight control system was about to be reconfigured to fly directly into the World Trade Center in New York City.

The first phase of the One World Government was under way.



NEAL BLACK US SECURITIES BROKERAGE
WORLD TRADE CENTER

8.40 AM

Jordan Maxwell III, investment banker, checked his computer screen for the third time in as many minutes.

'Hey, boss!' Damien Cox, wet-behind-the-ears Harvard grad, leaned against the glass door of Maxwell's office, holding a Starbucks coffee in one hand. 'Something's up. We're locked out of the system.'

He grinned. 'Weird.'

Maxwell nodded to Powell, Neal Black's fifty-year-old VP of Information Technology, now standing in the doorway behind Cox.

'We're locked out all right,' Powell muttered.

'Everyone?' Maxwell raised his eyebrows.

'Every computer. All three floors. Three hundred and eighteen workstations to be precise. We've been completely taken over. And something . . . someone is downloading all our files.' Powell paused. 'Out of the building.'

'Hackers?'

'Nah.' He shrugged. 'Too sophisticated. Locked out by a program I've never seen before.' Powell shook his head. 'And I've seen everything.'

Maxwell rose, walking briskly to the expansive open-plan office floor of Neal Black, followed by Powell and Cox.

He scanned the computer screens as he walked, then glanced up towards the glass doors of the boardroom where the Managing Director and two general partners of the securities brokerage firm were engaged in intense hushed conversation.

'You've informed Morgan?'

'Conference call with Europe. The big cheeses. No disturbances,' Powell replied.

'Okay, I'll inform him via the in-house line.' Maxwell turned abruptly, walked back into his office and slid into his expensive leather chair, his eyes still riveted to the computer screen. He moved to press the in-house line, then hesitated.

The files were still downloading.

He was supposed to be in the dark, but he'd been tracking the abnormal transaction traffic since the 6th of September.

PROLOGUE

Over \$200 million in illegal transactions had been rushed through the Neal Black WTC computers in the past forty-eight hours alone.

Then there was the single five billion dollar Treasury note trade that von Duysen had mentioned over drinks yesterday.

He looked through the glass doors of his office over to the boardroom, troubled.

It was connected with Europe. The Powers that were never to be disobeyed. Of that he was certain.

Maxwell tapped the key of his keyboard impatiently, then stared back at his computer.

There was no doubt about it. An extensive financial 'sacking' operation was in process.

Someone was covering their tracks. Every file was being downloaded out of the building at lightning speed. In front of his eyes. Out of the system. 'But to where?'

He shook his head, picked up his lukewarm coffee and walked towards the window.

He gazed out at the clear Manhattan skies.

'And why?'

He frowned. There was a strange sound. If it wasn't so ludicrous, he'd swear it was the roar of jet engines.

He turned his head to the left.

The coffee cup slid out of his hand onto the elegant berber carpet.

The 767 was headed straight towards him.

TWENTY YEARS LATER

CHAPTER ONE

ALLAH'S CHARIOT

DECEMBER 2021
CISTERN NUMBER 30
TEMPLE MOUNT, JERUSALEM

‘GRANDFATHER! Grandfather!’ Jul Mansoor tugged on the old Bedouin’s tunic as his grandfather walked doggedly through the maze of surface cistern entries down towards Warren’s Gate.

‘Grandfather!’ he cried. ‘We should not be here – it is forbidden territory – the radiation!’

Abdul-Qawi turned, frowning darkly at his thirteen-year-old grandson, then suddenly his dark leathered face broke into a broad toothless smile.

‘Jul.’ He raised his gnarled sunburnt hands in the air in exasperation, then unclipped a hand held radiation meter from his belt and held it up.

‘Hah! No radiation!’ he exclaimed. ‘It is the UN’s how do you say – spin? The radiation is in Tel Aviv – in Jaffa *not in* Jerusalem.’

SON OF PERDITION

‘The soldiers will stop us, Grandfather.’

‘Do you *see* the Israelis? Do you even see the Wakf?’ Abdul-Qawi gestured dramatically at the cordoned-off deserted Mount.

He spat on the ground, then wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

‘They are all gone – *gone* – since the war ended.’ The old man continued walking the 150 feet towards the Gate.

‘The soldiers are gone – but YOU are still trespassing, Jadd.’

At the sound of his name in Arabic, Abdul-Qawi halted.

‘Ah!’ He flung his hands in the air, this time in despair. ‘Private school – European tutors – all it teaches you is to disrespect your grandfather. Now let your Jadd be your teacher.’ He turned to face Jul, his hands on his scrawny hips.

‘This old Bedouin archaeologist knows that at this very moment the Israelis and the Wakf lie dead and wounded in hospitals all across Jerusalem while the Europeans recline in their opulent palaces – dividing the Mount as we speak.’

He raised one hand dramatically.

‘This for the Jews – this for the Arabs – this for the UN. Pah! We take our chance.’

He pointed to the rubble ahead of them.

‘The Israelis and the Wakf sealed the Gate – the earthquake has unsealed it. For the sake of Allah – for the sake of my archaeological diggings these past sixty-five years – I *must* search.’

Carefully, the old man began to climb through the rubble and into a great hall about seventy-five feet long with many

exit tunnels running in different directions. His hawk-like eyes glittered with excitement.

'Hurry, hurry,' he gestured impatiently to Jul, who was ten feet behind him, and started clambering down the stone stairs.

Then he stopped, lit his lamp and hunched down over a crumpled map.

Jul sighed heatedly. Suddenly, the old man clasped his free hand so tightly he winced.

'The Holy of Holies!' Abdul-Qawi's eyes shone with a strange ecstasy. Trembling, he clambered to his feet and scuttled through fresh rubble towards an already-excavated tunnel.

He frowned. His gaze was fixed thirty feet away on a glistening golden object jutting out of a small ravine.

Abdul-Qawi stepped tentatively closer, waving his grandson back behind him.

Awestruck, he stared at the glistening metal.

'Allah's Chariot,' he murmured.

He continued walking, muttering to himself in Arabic as though in a hypnotic trance – his hand outstretched until he was only inches away from the ornate gold handle protruding from the sand. He reached out his hand, trembling.

Jul watched in awe as Abdul-Qawi touched the handle. Instantly a ferocious blue lightning struck savagely from the casket.

'Allah Akbar!' Abdul screamed as he closed his hand over the golden handle. The savage electric current surged through his body. Jul watched in horror as his grandfather's body thrashed violently from side to side in paroxysm.

SON OF PERDITION

'Jadd!' Jul ran towards him.

The old man stared at Jul through terrified, exhilarated eyes, then summoning all his strength, he wrenched his hand free from the casket and was thrown violently to the ground.

Jul pulled him through the rubble away from the pulsating chest.

'Jadd . . . Jadd!' Jul cradled his grandfather's head in his hands, trembling, tears rolling down his mud-streaked face.

Abdul raised himself up, looked through Jul, then uttered a strangled cry. 'The seal of Daniel.'

And fell back.

Struck dead by the Ark of the Covenant.

CHAPTER TWO

AFTERMATH

JASON
DECEMBER 2021
VOX COMMUNICATIONS YACHT
UPPER NEW YORK BAY

IT WAS THE FOURTH of VOX Entertainment Group's illustrious PR launch campaigns in that week alone. And the most lavish.

Despite the below freezing temperatures, New York was in the mood for celebration. As was Jason De Vere, Chairman and owner of multibillion dollar media corporation VOX Entertainment.

The Third World War had ended fourteen weeks ago after the nuclear strike by the West on Moscow. And Manhattan's countless multinational conglomerates were tentatively resurfacing. The constant threat of a nuclear strike in downtown New York was now a swiftly fading memory and the lowest deck of the largest of Jason De Vere's five corporate yachts was literally heaving.

Middle-aged Wall Street financiers, hedge fund owners

AFTERMATH

and managers, ageing TV news anchors and entertainment agents crammed the dance floor, mingling with the crème de la crème of New York's twenty- and thirty-something elites in the television, fashion and publishing industries – all gyrating to the pounding music.

Jason De Vere had arrived by helicopter ten minutes earlier. An unusual occurrence, which those who worked with him intimately knew could only be accounted for by the attendance of five billionaire Beijing media-investors who were involved in Jason's latest venture.

His most recent hot button. The launch of VOX's multiple media networks and film conglomerates into China.

At forty-four, Jason De Vere was still ruggedly handsome but already well worn. His tanned face was creased and his cropped silvering hair unbecomingly severe.

As was his current demeanour.

He was unenthusiastically entwined in the clutches of a svelte, overtanned blonde, trapped in the centre of the dance floor, gyrating awkwardly to the music, whisky glass in hand.

He glanced around at the dance floor. They were all so *young*. Nearer his daughter Lily's age than his. Where *had* time gone? The blonde clone, VOX's latest music awards presenter, entwined her arms more intensely around his neck, now making it *completely* impossible for Jason to drain the last swig from his ever-present whisky glass.

'Damn the need for PR.' He rolled his eyes in frustration, trying to locate one of his three executive assistants.

The newest and youngest, a stylish Asian beauty recently transferred to New York from VOX's Singapore bureau, was engaged in deep conversation with his Beijing clients.

Desperately he scanned the room for his trusty personal

executive assistant of nineteen years – fifty-seven-year-old Miss Jontil Purvis, originally of Charleston, South Carolina.

Jontil was the salt of the earth and completely indispensable to Jason. She had joined VOX at its inception and rough ridden through the hectic and chaotic start-up years.

Over the past two decades she had been involved in the inexhaustible task of endeavouring to make every aspect of Jason De Vere's brutal and unrelenting existence manageable.

From the complexity of his multibillion dollar mergers to organizing Lily De Vere's hospitalization and therapy after her accident, and, more recently, finalizing the unpalatable details of Jason and Julia's acrimonious and highly publicized divorce.

Jontil Purvis had given Jason the cold shoulder for a full year during the separation. She adored Julia St Cartier and had since she had first met Jason's sparky young journalist wife nineteen years ago. She and Julia had forged a deep friendship and Jontil Purvis was loyal to a fault. She was also a devout Baptist who fervently believed in the sanctity of marriage. And believed in Jason and Julia.

Then there was his youngest brother Nick. Jason scowled. Jontil Purvis had no intention of making it easy for Jason De Vere, that much he was sure of. But she fielded Nick's calls and kept her opinions to herself. Jason trusted Jontil Purvis implicitly. And Jason De Vere trusted very few.

He finally spotted her impeccably coiffed blonde beehive. She was standing in the corner with her ever-present Blackberry, two notebooks in her left hand, her rather matronly figure attired in a silk lilac suit. Composed as always.

SON OF PERDITION

‘Purvis!’ Jason shouted over his shoulder. ‘Purvis!’

Jontil Purvis looked up from her call, looked the blonde and Jason up and down, nodded and disappeared.

A split second later, a tall gangly brunette rushed out and extricated Jason from the furious blonde’s grasp. Guiding him over to the cocktail bar, she pressed a remote screen. A man’s face appeared on the screen.

‘Jason . . . ’

She clasped his arm tightly, barely able to contain her excitement.

‘Jason!’ She pushed the screen towards him. ‘Matt’s on the line from Teheran – it’s your brother. We’ve got the *exclusive* – breaking news. The final date’s just been set for the peace accord. This is a goer, Jason.’

‘You’re kidding, right, Maxie?’ Jason frowned. ‘This is Purvis’s rescue ploy.’

She stared at him blankly. Jason’s eyes narrowed.

‘The Ishtar Accord – ’ He grasped Maxie’s arm so hard that she winced.

‘Israel – Iraq – Iran – Russia.’ Maxie nodded vigorously.

‘The Third World War Peace Treaty – You’re *sure* . . . ?’

Jason pulled his Blackberry from his belt and scrolled down until he reached a message marked A.D.V.

He opened the text that had been sent over an hour earlier.

Iran conceded. Ishtar Accord. Jan 7. Your scoop. EXCLUSIVE.

‘Damn!’ Jason pushed Maxie aside.

‘Matt, what’s going on?’

His eyes bored into the image of Matt Barton, VOX’s Teheran Bureau Chief on the screen.

‘There’s virtually nothing left here, Chief. Teheran’s the only city left standing. Mashhad, Tabriz – incinerated. Direct

nuclear strikes. But the Iranians have still been as stubborn as hell. Until your brother arrived. They conceded an hour ago. It's confirmed.' Matt nodded. 'The Accord's set to coincide with the opening of the United Nations in Babylon. Three weeks' time.'

'Babylon, not Damascus?' Jason raised his eyebrows. '*Interesting.*'

He frowned.

'And Israel . . . ?'

'Intractable as always. I'll let Melanie give you the lowdown.' Melanie Kelly, VOX's senior Middle East Correspondent, came into view.

'Israel *is* prepared to denuclearize, sir. We're sure.'

'How sure is sure?'

'As sure as sure can ever be, O great tycoon, but the rumour is your genius of a little brother has somehow got pre-signatures from Israel dependent on some major concessions known only to himself – sorry to say it – you know how cagey he is – bit like a pre-nup – it seems. Anyway – trust me – Iran's in. Israel will be in by next week. It's watertight. We go on air in ten.'

Jontil Purvis placed her hand calmly on Jason's arm.

'VOX Central's online, sir. They're waiting for you downstairs.'

Jason snapped off the small TV screen, then wound his way through the crowded cabaret and lounge bar and strode down the spiral stairs into the lower deck executive quarters, stopping outside a leather-covered door.

'Lily,' he spoke into the system.

'Palm verification.'

Jason held his palm up to the reader and, a second later,

the door swung open. He walked over to the vast bank of television monitors that straddled one entire wall of the deck.

The transmission controller flicked a switch and the VOX Manhattan broadcast centre came online.

Jason watched as dozens of baby-faced producers fresh out of media college hustled in and out of transmission clutching VCDs, shouting instructions over mobile phones. A twenty-five-year-old with a West Coast tan and long highlighted hair came into view.

‘Hi boss – we’re uplinking your brother live on VOX – any second . . . ’

‘Turn it UP.’ Jason threw his jacket down on the plush black leather sofa and slowly rolled up his shirt sleeves, his gaze locked on the running chiron on the TV screen.

Jontil Purvis stood in the doorway watching her boss intently. Twenty years in the business and he still got a high when it was a live exclusive scoop – Jason De Vere was in his element when he was hands on.

Jason watched as New York lined up.

‘Ten . . . Line it up – Nine – ’

‘Jason – We’ve got China – ’

‘Where’s Al Jazeera?’ Jason shouted into the mike.

‘Al Jazeera’s just come online, Jason – ’

A lanky Ivy-League-looking executive strode in, exhilarated.

‘They’re all desperate for the feed – Reuters, Associated Press, CNN, ABC – ’

‘We make money.’ Jason muttered. ‘Good. Desperate is good.’

‘The BBC . . . ?’

AFTERMATH

‘We’re linking to London now – over to Mel in Teheran.’
Melanie Kelly, Middle East Correspondent, visible on two of the preview screens, cupped her hand over her earpiece.

‘Clay’s just finished wiring the President up – we’ll be ready in eight.’

Jason stared exhilarated at Melanie on the television screen.

Next to her stood Adrian De Vere, newly inaugurated President of the European Union.

‘Tell my little brother, hi,’ he murmured into the mike.

‘Will do, boss.’

Jason watched – Adrian smiled on the preview screen and lifted his hand in recognition.

‘Ask him if Israel’s in the bag.’

Adrian nodded, then gave Jason a thumbs up sign.

Jason shook his head, grinned, then held out his hand to Jontil Purvis. She mixed him a whisky and passed it to him. He clutched it and slugged it down, his attention now fixed on the New York news anchor broadcasting from VOX’s midtown Manhattan Studios.

‘We have breaking news that a final date for the most tenuous peace treaty in the history of the Western world – the peace accord in the aftermath of World War Three – the Middle East ‘Ishtar Accord’ has been set half an hour ago in Teheran, Iran.’

Jason sat down on the sofa, his eyes fixed on the screens.

‘All major participants from the bloodiest nuclear war in history, the Russo-pan-Arab-Israeli War, are signatories. Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey, Egypt as well as Russia, Israel, America and the European Union.’

SON OF PERDITION

‘We cross over to Melanie Kelly VOX senior Middle East correspondent reporting for VOX News live from Teheran.’

The camera zoomed onto the slight blonde figure of Melanie Kelly.

‘With me here in Teheran, I have the United Nations chief negotiator of the Accord and newly appointed President of the European Superstate. At just thirty-nine years of age – hailed as the new John F. Kennedy – Adrian De Vere.’

The camera panned onto Adrian De Vere. Jason stood watching, elated.

‘This is a historic day in the history of the Middle East . . .’

Adrian smiled brilliantly with his easy relaxed charm. ‘. . . and the world.’

Jason studied his younger brother. Adrian’s face was perfectly proportioned for the camera. Strong. Chiselled. High cheekbones. Almost beautiful. He was urbane. Refined. His hair was a blueish-black and skimmed his perfectly tailored suit. He wore his usual summer Caribbean tan.

Jason frowned.

His teeth looked slightly different, perfectly veneered and whiter. Julia’s influence, no doubt. Her newly established PR company in Chelsea, London, had signed up two major celebrity clients in less than two months. The England football team and Adrian De Vere, newly inaugurated President of the European Union. Jason scowled. After twenty years of marriage he was proud of the fact that, until their divorce, he had stubbornly resisted her every attempt to restyle him. But even he had to admit that, thanks to the

AFTERMATH

efforts of Julia De Vere, Adrian was now the epitome of a modern movie star.

‘Both the East and the West have longed for the day when we can rest knowing that our families and future generations will no longer face the threat of nuclear warfare . . . of suicide bombs . . . of hostages being murdered . . . ’ Adrian hesitated. ‘Of the sons of the East and the sons of the West being killed in action.’

Jason shook his head. It had to be said. Never in the history of television had any one politician, anchor or movie star come remotely close to the intense personal connection that Adrian generated with the individual viewer.

It was instantaneous. It was mesmeric. It was undeniably compelling . . . and effortless.

Adrian De Vere was the darling of the international viewing public. It had been the same during his recent two terms as British Prime Minister. Whether they watched him in Iraq, Syria, Germany, England, America, China or France, he was their son, father, brother, neighbour, friend. In fact he was . . . ’ Jason shook his head, incredulous. ‘Whoever they wanted him to be.’

He took another long slug and finished his whisky. His eye caught the headline on the business section of the *New York Times*. It read: ‘*European Union’s 2021 GDP set to double the USA’s.*’

‘My . . . my . . . little brother . . . ’ he murmured, his eyes riveted to the screen. ‘You’re the most powerful man in the Western World.’



SON OF PERDITION

NICK

DECEMBER 2021

SOHO, LONDON

Nick De Vere leaned back in the red crocodile skin chair. He was handsome, almost pretty, with intelligent deep-set grey eyes above an aquiline nose and high cheekbones. His fine sunbleached hair grazed the collar of his leather jacket.

He sipped his espresso, enjoying the clamour of the unending clientele of A & R executives, record producers, artists and the normal run-of-the-mill rock star wannabees that milled around the bar.

Soho. London at night.

Back in full swing after the end of the Third World War.

London had been living under threat of nuclear annihilation from Iran and Russia for eight nail-biting months. The atomic weapons site in Aldermaston, twenty-four miles out of the city, and the Faslane nuclear submarine base in Scotland had both been razed to the ground by the Russian equivalent of the mini nuke B61-11. As for Manchester and Glasgow . . . Nick sighed.

Everyone was on tenterhooks waiting for the Ishtar Accord to be ratified. But all things considered, the theatres had reopened to the public last week and scores of creative agencies, record labels, post-production houses and recording studios were all back in full swing.

It was business as usual in Soho.

Nick pushed the ever straying dark blond fringe out of his grey eyes and surveyed the ground-floor restaurant, his innate archaeologist's sensibilities in gear. The boutique hotel had been carved from a pair of Soho townhouses once

AFTERMATH

occupied by MI5. Private cinema. Roof garden. Cool vintage style metallic leather banquettes. Altfield gold rose wall coverings.

He scanned the faces at the entrance for Klaus von Hausen. Still no sign of the lean stylish antiquities expert. Von Hausen, true to his Germanic heritage, was a stickler for promptness. And for detail. He was the youngest senior curator of the Department of the Middle East in the British Museum's existence, overseeing the most comprehensive collection of Assyrian, Babylonian and Sumerian antiquities in the world. Klaus had been uncharacteristically guarded on the phone earlier. Nick would find out why over drinks.

He closed his eyes, a rare tranquillity on his features.

No sign of the invasive British paparazzi who dogged his every move. Today he had given them the slip. Four years ago, at twenty-four, Nick De Vere, brilliant archaeologist, heir to the De Vere banking and oil dynasties and London pop culture icon, had been sex symbol of the year, feted by every gossip magazine in the Western hemisphere. He stared up at the bank of televisions that hung above the crimson leather bar, each broadcasting the familiar VOX branding in the top right-hand corner.

VOX. His eldest brother's monolithic, billion dollar communications company.

He sighed.

Jason.

Jason had never forgiven him for the accident.

Nick put down his coffee cup, exchanging it for the John Smith's bitter on his left.

For that matter, he had never forgiven himself.

Lily De Vere, Jason's seven-year-old daughter had been

permanently disabled. Julia, like the older sister he never had, had forgiven him instantly. But Jason. Jason hadn't talked to him from that day to this. The rich, pretty young playboy had drowned his sorrows and a large portion of the first tranche of his inordinate trust fund in a score of exclusive private clubs strung from London to Monte Carlo to Rome.

His antics had been splashed across the front pages of the *News of the World* and *The Sun*, much to his father's chagrin and his mother's despair, and to his elder brother's outright horror.

His father, James De Vere, a strict traditionalist, had found out about his affair with Klaus von Hausen and had frozen Nick's trust fund the week before collapsing with a fatal heart attack.

And now Nick had AIDS. One evening too many – the sex, the heroin, the adrenaline of the chase.

Nick De Vere was dying.

'Hey!' A soft German accent broke into his reverie.

Klaus sank his tall, lean frame into the crocodile skin chair opposite Nick. Their relationship had been intense but shortlived; yet they were still close.

'Hey!' murmured Nick. 'Good to see you.'

Klaus looked at his watch. 'I can't stay long. Have to pack. I've been seconded.'

Nick raised his eyebrows.

'Classified dig in the Middle East . . . ' Klaus pushed his chair in.

'They've uncovered a historic ancient artefact of international importance.'

He lowered his voice.

'Look Nick – I don't know what they've discovered. But

AFTERMATH

it's huge. MI6 and Interpol. They were . . . ' He frowned. 'How do you say it in English? "Swarming" all over the museum today. The Vatican's involved.'

'And you don't know where?'

Klaus shook his head.

'Iraq . . . Syria . . . Israel. The beginning of civilization. I know the way they work – it'll remain undisclosed until my arrival.' His eyes shone with exhilaration.

'No mobile phones. No laptops. All communications confiscated till I return to British soil.'

'Which is . . . ?'

Klaus shook his head.

'As long as it takes.' He signalled to a waitress. 'Espresso. When do you leave for Egypt?'

'Tomorrow,' Nick answered. 'I overnight in Alexandria, then meet St Cartier at the monastery.'

'Ah – Lawrence St Cartier.' Klaus raised his eyebrows. 'The *enigma* . . . '

He gestured up to the bank of televisions above the bar. 'It looks like your brother's actually got the Iranians to the table. It's all over the news.'

Nick stared up at the six screens, all transmitting the handsome angular features of Adrian De Vere.

'Thank God for Adrian,' Nick muttered.

Klaus laid his hand gently on Nick's frail forearm.

'He's still paying for your medication?'

Nick nodded. 'The meds, clinics, my apartments in Monte Carlo, London. L.A., my Jags, the Ferrari . . . He's saved my life. Literally. The Jordanian monies are released this week. I'll be of independent means again. God.' Nick shook his head. 'Dad hated you and me. Our relationship.'

'It's in the past Nicholas.' Klaus said gently. 'We have to get you strong. You know I'm always here if you need anything.'

Nick smiled faintly. 'Thanks, Klaus. You've been the best.'

'How's the Princess, the Jordanian?'

'Things are good,' he said softly.

'Serious?'

Nick took a sip of his bitter. 'Very serious.'

'And Jason?'

'You know Jason.' Nick shrugged. 'I don't exist.'

'*You've been given six months to live.* Not even a phone call. Leave him to it.' Klaus frowned, visibly upset. '*He* has the problem.'

Klaus gestured back to the television screens.

'Germany's calling Adrian *Der Wunderkind* . . . even my grandmother in Hamburg . . .' He shook his head. Ashen. 'It was so awful what happened in Berlin . . .' He fell silent.

'Hey – turn it up!' An unshaven A & R executive in a tight-fitting shiny black suit called out.

Nick watched, intrigued as the restaurant quieted.

All eyes were riveted on the former British Prime Minister, Adrian De Vere.

'For the first time in the history of the world since Hiroshima, major cities have experienced the utter devastation of a nuclear strike.'

Adrian's voice was very quiet but like steel.

'Moscow, St Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Damascus, Tel Aviv, Mashhad, Tabriz, Aleppo, Ankara, Riyadh, Haifa, Los Angeles, Chicago, Colorado Springs, Glasgow, Manchester, Berlin. The list goes on.'

AFTERMATH

He hesitated.

‘Entire cities erased from the face of the earth. Communities. Families. Fathers. Mothers. Sons. Daughters. Their bodies consummated to ash.’

Adrian looked directly into the camera. The entire restaurant fell silent.

‘Next month – in Babylon – a pact between Russia, the Arab nations, the United Nations, the European Union and Israel will be signed. A nuclear disarmament pact that will last for forty years. The first phase – the seven-year Ishtar Accord – to be signed in Babylon. It is my personal and fervent aspiration. By that I mean that I am determined.’ He paused. ‘Let me repeat . . . I mean *determined* . . .’

His eyes blazed with intensity. With passion.

‘. . . that under the guidance and protection of our formidable newly formed European Union Military Defence Force, and under my leadership as President of the European Union, the threat of nuclear warfare between the East and the West will be erased not only for an entire generation . . . but for all time.’

He paused.

‘I can think of no better way to end this address than to quote directly from the thirty-fifth President of the United States. From John F. Kennedy’s speech on 10th June 1963 to the American University.

What kind of peace do I mean? What kind of peace do we seek? Not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war. Not the peace of the grave or the security of the slave. I am talking about genuine peace – the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living – the kind that enables men

SON OF PERDITION

and nations to grow and to hope and to build a better life for their children – not merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women – not merely peace in our time . . .

Adrian looked straight into the camera lens, his sapphire blue eyes like steel.

*‘ . . . but peace for **all** time.’*

Nick looked on in amazement at the faces gazing up in adulation at Adrian.

The discriminating and frequently sceptical British public were hanging on his every word.

He shook his head in wonder.

It was an indisputable fact.

His elder brother was, at this moment, the most influential public figure in the civilized world.

Nick had promised Adrian he would drop in on his way back from Egypt.

He'd book his flight to Paris in the morning.



Lorcan De Molay stood staring at the television screen, a slow smile spread across his face.

‘When the Accord of Men is signed . . .’ he murmured. *‘And when Zion’s Gates stand fast . . . The First Seal shall be broken . . . The Tribulation come to pass . . .’*

He drew deeply on his cigar.

‘Three weeks until the Accord is signed in Babylon.’

He clicked the remote. Adrian De Vere’s face disappeared from view.

‘Three weeks until the First Seal of Revelation is broken,’ he mused, turning to the Presidents of Iran and Syria.

AFTERMATH

Kester von Slagel appeared at his side.

‘Everything is going according to plan, Your Excellency. Soon this parched tract of dust shall be a thorn in your side no more.’

De Molay walked out onto the balcony of the presidential suite of the King David Hotel, his jet-black hair lashed his cheeks in the icy Jerusalem winds that blew up from the west.

He wrapped his smoking gown tightly around his form and stared out past the Western Wall and East Jerusalem, over the Old City, in the direction of a nondescript rocky hill towards the North. Golgotha.

He would defeat the Nazarene in his own backyard. The Last Great Battle.

A thin hard smile flickered on his lips.

‘In Jerusalem.’

CHAPTER THREE

BROTHERS

2021
LINCOLN MEMORIAL
WASHINGTON DC

MICHAEL PULLED HIS jade cloak around his lean, imperial form, scanning the horizon for what must have been the eighth time that hour. His imperial features were set. Gabriel stood just paces behind, his clear grey eyes lit with a rare intensity. His platinum locks blew in the sudden winds.

The intense aroma of frankincense permeated the air.

Michael frowned. There, striding towards them up the palatial staircase, past the monolithic fluted columns that soared above the porticoes, was a priest. His hair was pulled back from his cheekbones into a single braid and he wore the flowing black robes of the Jesuit Order.

Lucifer raised his hand in recognition to his brothers.

‘I have *converted*,’ he declared. He grinned maniacally at Michael. ‘A soldier of Christ.’

BROTHERS

Michael stared at him grimly.

Lucifer stopped directly beneath the immense, seated sculpture of Abraham Lincoln, his six foot form dwarfed by the sculpture carved from white Georgia marble.

His entire body started to transform into what seemed to be billions of atoms radiating at the speed of light as six monstrous seraph wings rose from his shoulders. He stood. Nine feet tall. Imperious. Lucifer. Seraph. Fallen Archangel.

Michael studied his elder brother. Still magnificent.

Lucifer's sculpted alabaster features had been scarred almost beyond recognition in the torrid inferno at his banishment from the First Heaven. Yet tonight, as he stood bathed in the soft moonlight of Washington DC, the haunting beauty of aeons past was strangely evident: the wide, marbled forehead, the high imperial cheekbones, the straight patrician nose. His gleaming raven tresses were loosed, devoid of their intricate gold braiding and had grown longer, now falling past his waist.

Lucifer's imperious steel-blue eyes held Michael's gaze. Abruptly he pushed his long raven mane back from his face, turned, and stared up at the sixteenth President of the United States who stared pensively eastwards down the Reflecting Pool.

Bowing melodramatically to Lincoln, Lucifer flung his arms in the air towards Washington's dawn skies, the ice diamonds on his white velvet cloak radiating with fire. An iniquitous smile flickered at the corners of his full, passionate mouth.

'I have a dream . . .' he cried, his cultured tones resounding through the Greek Doric Temple. *' . . . I have a dream*

that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low . . .

He watched Michael out of the corner of his eye.

‘ . . . the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight . . . ’

He strode to the very front of the memorial, staring out at the Reflecting Pool, the indigo silk robes beneath his cloak billowing in the sudden gales from the Atlantic.

‘Let freedom ring – from the Stone Mountain of Georgia.

‘Let freedom ring – from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado.

‘Let freedom ring – from every hill and molehill of Mississippi, from every mountainside, let freedom ring!’

Grinning maniacally, he turned with a flourish and walked towards Gabriel.

‘And when this happens, brother . . . ’ Lucifer grasped Gabriel’s shoulders with both hands, his voice soft yet intense with emotion. *‘When we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city . . . ’*

He released Gabriel abruptly, then closed his eyes, his imperial face raised to the heavens, his voice imbued with passion. *‘We will be able to speed up that day when **all** of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old spiritual, “Free at last, free at last”.’*

He stood, silent for a full minute, then turned to Michael, an irreverent smirk on his face.

‘Thank God Almighty, we are free at last.’ Lucifer bowed with a flourish.

‘To Martin Luther King in whose symbolic shadow I stand.’

‘A thorn in your side, I think,’ Gabriel said staring at him grimly.

‘A barb, it is true, Gabriel. But I dispensed with the rabble-rouser.’

He bowed to Abraham Lincoln.

‘As for Lincoln,’ he murmured, ‘his printing greenbacks became a real impediment to creating a central bank. It became essential to remove him.’

‘As you did with John F. Kennedy and too many others to mention.’ Gabriel’s eyes narrowed.

‘I reward the elite with power . . . they serve me unwaveringly. The Race of Men sell their souls *so* indiscriminately.’ Lucifer shrugged. ‘Power. Riches. Assets. Reserves . . .’ He hesitated, then gave Michael a slow depraved grin. ‘. . . *Sex.*’

‘You are contemptible.’

Lucifer walked towards Michael. ‘My sanctimonious brother, Michael.’

‘Not all succumb,’ said Gabriel, gazing back up at Lincoln.

Lucifer smiled. A wicked fire flickered in his eyes.

‘Ninty-nine succumb. Then we exterminate the one.’

‘You delude yourself, brother.’ Michael stared at him coldly. ‘Your kingdom ended at Golgotha. The Nazarene dealt you a deathblow.’

‘But no one appreciates the *fact*, Michael.’ Lucifer answered in a patronizing tone. ‘The past two thousand years, I have painstakingly ensured that the sacrifice on Golgotha is a mere myth for the weak and stumbling. For kindergarten. Except that thanks to my fervent disciples . . . even *kindergarteners* no longer pray to the Nazarene.’ He gave a derisive laugh, staring out over the water past the Washington Monument to the Capitol building which lay straight ahead.

SON OF PERDITION

‘His influence wanes,’ he murmured. ‘I shall erase His name and face forever from the records of the Race of Men. Like Europe before her . . . I shall bring America to her knees.’

Michael held out a missive with the Royal Seal of the House of Yehovah.

‘Yehovah offers mercy.’

Lucifer glanced down at the missive in Michael’s grasp, then directly up into his clear emerald gaze.

‘*Mercy?*’ He frowned, momentarily taken aback.

‘*If* you and the fallen abandon your plan to annihilate the Race of Men.’ Michael averted his eyes from Lucifer’s.

‘His unfailing compassions are infinitely more than you deserve, Lucifer.’ Gabriel’s voice was hard.

‘Tut . . . tut . . . tut . . .’ Lucifer instantly regained his composure. A disparaging smile flickered on his mouth.

‘I see the altar boys are here today.’

He snatched the missive from Michael’s grasp and tore it open. He scanned it, then turned, his eyes searching Gabriel’s face.

Gabriel held his gaze. He nodded, then bowed his head.

Lucifer walked over to the edge of the stairs and gazed out into Washington’s dawn skies, beyond the Reflecting Pool to the Washington Monument whose red light flickered in the dawn.

He stood a long time, his back to his brothers, the missive held tightly in his grasp.

Finally he spoke.

‘He offers mercy . . .’ he whispered. ‘But He of all knows that I am long beyond redemption . . . He taunts me.’ His eyes scanned the heavens. ‘Tell my Father this is a war to

BROTHERS

the death. I will fight. At every turn. At every opportunity. I will *never* surrender.'

Michael stood staring at him for a long while, his fierce green eyes boring into Lucifer's back.

'Then it is war, brother.'

Lucifer stood silent. Finally he turned.

'And there was war in heaven!' he cried. He raised his scarred imperial features in ecstasy to the skies. 'Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. The King James version.' He opened one eye. 'It has a certain turn of phrase . . . don't you think?'

He stared at Michael, a half smile on his lips. Michael stared back, fierce.

'And prevailed not,' Michael said though clenched teeth.

'War between two brothers.' Lucifer moved closer to Michael. ' . . . *such* a thing . . . ' he murmured, 'such a thing should *never* be.'

Clasping Michael's shoulder, he pressed his lips to his brother's ear.

'*We, of all*, Chief Princes – brothers – should *never* be asked to choose.'

Lucifer's features contorted into a mask of disdain.

'It is malevolent.' He crushed the missive in his palm. 'It shows His weakness. His Achilles heel,' he hissed. 'It is *precisely* why He should vacate the throne . . . the throne *I* intend to occupy, Michael.'

Michael removed Lucifer's hand from his shoulder.

'That would be a cold day in hell,' he snapped.

Lucifer bowed mockingly in deference to Michael. 'Tell Yehovah . . . ' he murmured, his voice carried across to

SON OF PERDITION

Michael on the winds. ‘ . . . He can still surrender to me if He chooses.’

He rubbed his chin, in deliberation.

‘I may even offer Him mercy.’

He swung around to Gabriel.

‘But not the Nazarene!’ he hissed.

He cocked his head to one side for a moment studying his brothers intently.

‘No – there will be no surrender,’ he answered, suddenly matter of fact.

‘My plan to annihilate the Race of Men is far more in advance than Yehovah dare to admit. My son rises even now in the ranks of the dissolute and wanton corridors of political power.’

He pulled his velvet robes around him.

‘You will inform me of the time of our war.’

‘You will receive a missive from the Royal Courts,’ Michael said coldly.

‘In the middle of the Tribulation . . . ’ Gabriel’s voice was soft. ‘When the Son of Perdition breaks his covenant with Israel – the war between Michael and the dragon draws nigh.’

Gabriel’s eyes bored into Lucifer.

‘You will lose, Lucifer – as you lost at Golgotha.’

Lucifer stared through veiled eyes at Gabriel’s flawless features.

‘That, my naive younger brother . . . remains to be seen.’

He pulled his cloak to his form, then turned.

‘Tell Him that if I lose, I shall set myself up a kingdom on their territory. In their midst – a seat of power. Babylon.’ He shrugged. ‘Although Washington DC holds a certain

BROTHERS

callow appeal . . . Either way, Michael, I shall wreak havoc among the Race of Men.'

Michael watched as Lucifer strode to the very edge of the Memorial.

'Before the first seal is opened,' he said softly, 'you shall be summoned by Royal Missive to witness the reading of the Tenets of Eternal Law regarding the Seven Seals of Revelation.'

'I await His summons.' Lucifer's eyes flashed with a dark, evil fire. Six monstrous black seraph wings rose behind him.

And before their eyes, he vanished at the speed of light into the clear skies above the District of Columbia.