



THIS EBOOK CONTAINS THE ENTIRE "PART ONE" OF
WAR OF THE ANGELS

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To Maricel, my wife

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Destined to be one of the most controversial books ever written, *War of the Angels* is a Divinely Inspired work about multiple journeys into a celestial world. It is the most informative account of angels ever written, as experienced by a very credible source.

Michael Mullen worked in the National Basketball Association for ten years, where he helped pioneer NBA franchises into the computer age. He was the first person to fully automate an NBA franchise. He was first to create a commercial basketball site on the world wide web when he designed and maintained the original site for Prodigy, and he managed an international cyberstaff of more than 200 volunteer reporters. He was recognized as the top computer analyst in professional basketball, and was acknowledged by the White House and the U.S. Senate.

Mullen eventually left computers and ventured into other areas of the sporting industry. He chaired career seminars with numerous professional teams, and with multiple USA Olympic governing bodies. He also authored, "*How To Get A Job In Sports* (Masters Press)." He served as General Manager of historic Venice Arena (former headquarters of Ringling Brothers and Barnum&Bailey Circus in Venice, FL), where he hosted international events in Olympic-style boxing for Team USA, and nationally televised professional boxing. He consulted for the newly revised American Basketball Association, then became one of the league's first General Managers. He currently consults for several sports and entertainment firms.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
September 6, 1991

"Dear Mr. Mullen:

"You are an example of what can be achieved through hard work and determination. Congratulations on your success, and I hope that you'll continue to share your story and to encourage others.

"Keep up the good work, and God bless you."

Sincerely,
George Bush

"Michael Mullen of Indianapolis, Indiana, is a true American success story."
Dick Lugar, United States Senator

"The Indiana Pacers are the most sophisticated computer users in all of sports, and Mike (Mullen) is the reason why."
Bob Perkins, Corporate Program Manager, TicketMaster

"The League (NBA Headquarters) has no comprehension as to the level (you) are at. You are going into areas where no one has ever been."
Seymour Siwoff, President, Elias Sports Bureau

"We consider you (with your presence on the internet) to be our competition."
Jamin Dershowitz, Legal Department, NBA

"Michael Mullen is generally regarded as the top computer analyst in professional basketball." Scholastic Coach Magazine

"We at PRODIGY recognize that you provide invaluable information to our sports board."
Jenny Ambrozek, Manager, Business Communications, Prodigy

This is a
TRUE STORY

"There are angels in the world. Both good and evil. In fact, they are watching you this very moment as you read this, each vying for your attentions. God's angels, and the fallen angels of Satan. They are at war. They are fighting over possession of YOU, and Earth is their final battleground. They are coming for you—all of them—the whole Biblical cast of good and evil. Satan is coming to inhabit the body of a human being in order to carry out his battle plan. But Michael the Archangel will follow him to Earth with his heavenly forces to protect those who believe.

"The Believers will jump for joy. The Non-Believers will suffer terror beyond imagination. The main weapon of the Fallen Angels is to *make you believe they don't exist*. They want you to believe the whole idea of angels and celestial beings is a joke. But I have been there, and I can assure you that their existence is no joke.

"This is a Divinely Inspired book. I was taken to the world of angels to experience their conflict and to warn you of their impending scenario on Earth. This is a TRUE story They are coming, ready or not. Very, very soon."

Michael Mullen



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BOOK ONE
"THE CALL OF THE DARK WORLD"

"For we wrestle not against (humans) ... but against (the demonic orders), against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Ephesians 6:12

PROLOGUE

Bad Things in the Dark

August 2, 1945
The South Pacific Ocean

Like every scared child who fends off goblins by hiding under the covers and hollering for his parents, Hefford Sharp learned from his father that: (1) he only *imagined* the spooks in his room; and, (2) bad things didn't *really* happen in the dark.

At age 19, however, he regrettably discovered Daddy was wrong. Bad things *did* happen in the dark ... *very* bad things.

The nightly terrors of being lost at sea in the South Pacific proved unbearable. By his fourth day adrift in a tattered life jacket, at the blackest hour before dawn, the boy contemplated suicide. He justified death; nearly everyone else from the U.S.S. *Indianapolis* had already died and decomposed. He'd *earned* eternal rest, reasoned a voice from within, and he deserved to die as an escape. But Hefford yearned to see his family, and once again he postponed drowning himself.

Throughout the night, men died from *fear*, itself. But when the horrors of darkness attacked Hefford's tremulous heart, insanity befriended him. His brain escaped. His mind wandered home safely to Decatur, Alabama.

His fears dissipated into fond memories of yesteryear, to those carefree times when Momma and Daddy chased the goblins and ghouls into hiding—to those innocent days when his greatest fears were childish nightmares of wetting-the-bed or of having broccoli for dinner.

Reminiscing was more than a pastime for the lanky farm boy; it was a lifesaving ritual—thinking of home, recalling childhood pleasantries—while bobbing like a popped cork in a storm-tossed, tropical sea.

His naked, six-foot frame saddled the bucking waves and rode out the latest squall, as he and the dwindling survivors of U.S.S. *Indianapolis* prayed for rescue.

Hefford should not have been in the water; he should not have been in the Navy at all. He'd flunked his physical; he was color-blind and not fit for military duty. He should have been home working in the hosiery mills, as he'd done since age sixteen, helping Daddy financially until their cotton fields bloomed for harvest.

Instead, he deceived his way into the service. Having failed his eye examination in Decatur, he sneaked away to a nearby town, into another recruitment center where he started anew, *hush-hush*, with his physical. But he failed the eye test again.

He journeyed to a third enlistment board, in yet another town, and took the eye test once more. He'd familiarized himself enough with the color-charts by this time, that he was able to bluff his way through for a passing grade. His parents bid him a proud farewell when he reported to boot camp last November.

But now the sea demanded too much. The boy yearned for the simplicities of life on the farm, and for the childhood security of a blanket pulled over his head.

A wave scaled his life jacket and choked him. He was sinking, dreadfully slow, like a helium balloon after four frantic days of treading the ceiling to avoid the deadly

floor. The kapok stuffing in his vest bore an efficiency rating of only forty-eight hours, wrongly judged adequate by equipment designers, since rescue operations rarely exceeded two days. But his time spent in the water now *doubled* the limit.

Many drowned when their heavy jackets plummeted below. The salty sea knotted the leather cords too taut to be released. The frantic victims were ironically trapped inside the faulty equipment designed to save them.

They kicked back to the surface for a gulp of air and to beg God for mercy. They pleaded with their buddies to hold them above the water. They screamed for someone to help untie the cursed knots that doomed them.

Hefford tried saving one shipmate, but he lacked strength to support him, and had to sadly let go. The frightful cries echoed in Hefford's mind as he, himself, inched lower to death, and rested his chin on the polluted surface in a nauseating pool of oil.

When *Indianapolis* sank Sunday night, she still maintained three-quarters of her fuel capacity, and it spewed into the Pacific. The resulting oil slick drifted with the survivors, never parting its own separate way.

Oil coated Hefford. He sipped a rancid breath of air from atop the petroleum, and an uninvited splash of diesel fuel purged his stomach once again. Blood erupted from the cracked pit of his guts. He vomited. Often, the rankness of the fumes alone sparked convulsions, as if he'd cupped his mouth over the exhaust pipe of an untuned city bus and drawn a deadly breath. And when his poisoned lung sacs defiantly gasped for fresh air, they were treated only to a torment of sludge gushing down his opened mouth.

But as dizzy and nauseated as Hefford was, the internal pain from the oil and its fumes was a mere bodily discomfort, compared to the agony of the fuel soaking his ever-swollen eyes, burning as if a careless service attendant had sprayed a tank of ethyl gasoline into his opened eyes.

The situation worsened as Tuesday blended into Wednesday, when the oil transformed chemically into a thick, gummy pitch. It stuck indelibly to everything. Hefford's eyes bonded shut and his lashes fused together; his nasal passages swelled; his ears clogged; his hair sealed to the scalp. Unruly waves slapped tar onto his face—already bared raw by the rugged environment—and cemented his burning agony beneath a permanent black masque.

The crisp evening wind bit into his chilled and quivering spine, but not so severely as did the terse yelps of "Shark! Shark! Oh, God! Oh, God!" A solitary scream of "Sha ..." abruptly sliced itself short, and the eerie nothings which followed were the most dreaded sounds of all.

Such was the fate of a nameless comrade, who'd drifted too far from the group. They called them *Loners*. Sharks whet their appetites on Loners, especially at night. 'Twas better to be dead, than to be a Loner. And the severed screams from this Loner clung to the moon and the stars, and would not fade away.

Darkness hosted many Angels of Death, but one in particular overstayed its welcome and wouldn't depart until sunshine burned it away like daylight on Dracula. Pneumonia created less drama than did sharks devouring Loners, but its little coughs and snuffles instilled as much fear.

Unlike Loners in the distant waters, pneumonia victims were nearby and plentiful. They uttered no resounding cries for help, nor were their lives sharply terminated, as were those falling prey to sharks. Pneumonia lingered.

Pneumonia killed in an orderly manner, in cadence, by the numbers with no surprises: first came the *Wheezers*, who whistled with each drawn breath, signaling "Go!" to the earliest stages; next in rank and file, the *Rattlers*, recognizable by the phlegm pounding against their brittle chest cavities; and very finally, the *Garglers*, who choked on the fluids of Death.

Whistle, rattle, gargle, die.

One-two-three-die, one-two-three-die.

Pneumonia was dependable.

Hefford, too, feared pneumonia, especially whenever it stormed, as it did now (and which it did most evenings, usually two or three times). He wondered why the potent virus hadn't yet claimed dibs on him. He assumed Youthfulness shielded him from death, so it seemed, since pneumonia apparently killed in a descending, chronological order: (*thirty-six years and older, start Gargling; thirty-five years, your turn to Rattle; age thirty-four, commence Wheezing*).

Casualties mounted. Pneumonia victims encircled Hefford. He couldn't see them in the dark, at least not while the rain blotted out the moon, but he knew they were there (*whistle, rattle, gargle*). And there ... over there, too. Experience warned Hefford he'd soon be amidst a floating graveyard, and in search of another group. Not good to be a Loner.

The rain diminished, but Hefford's profusely running nostrils steadily dripped. Green mucous flowed down the insoluble pasting of tar on his face, and spilled over his parched and bleeding lips like mud slides from a broken dam. And only the approaching sunshine had the power to plug the dike.

The erratic environment tormented his body. He burned in the daytime and froze at night. Shivering, he awaited the new morning's thaw. Finally, the sun rose, majestically slow, ascending triumphantly to its throne over the South Pacific in one small, ceremonious step at a time. The blackness faded to gray; a teasing hint of orange peeped shyly above the horizon. It was Daylight, once more. Heaven sent.

Daylight eased his fears. The sun allied with Hefford against the evils of darkness, though like a hired mercenary, it wasn't his true friend, and it cost him dearly. For its toasty warmth, he swapped layers of skin, and drew blood from banks of exposed capillaries. And for its creature comforts, he paid tributes of pain, from wounds swathed in saltwater and diesel oil.

The sun had—and would soon again—hurt him. And unjustly, dehydration kept the boy from crying his deserved tears. But compared to the horrors of darkness, the usurious cost of daylight was a bargain at any price. A blue-light special (*Attention shoppers ...*).

But daytime failed to deliver its expected pleasantries. Instead, Morning flaunted its past, pre-dawn horrors like a retired bowler displaying his trophies on the mantle. Bodies strewn about the watery graveyard would neither sink nor drift away. Hefford shoved them aside, yet they came back to haunt him. They stayed ... stayed ... stayed.

He saw bodies and pieces of bodies. Arms. Legs. Heads. And they smelled. The remainders of what once were able-bodied men floated in the hot sun and swelled up with gas and turned blue. Occasionally, the pockets of gas burst open; the stench nauseated Hefford, but sharks sniffed the aroma as if Grandma had placed a hot apple pie on the window sill.

An inquisitive shark snatched the arm of a ripened carcass like a beggar thieving a hot meal, and descended for some private dining. The body returned to the surface, minus a limb. Hefford's world was a bowl of bodies, a'la carrion, abound with feasting sharks. Waiting-to-be-next frightened him. He tried not to think of it, and he did not appreciate the floating reminders. He wished ever so hard for them to sink.

The number of bodies increased substantially with the new morning's waves, all bobbing hello. Blessed Morning. The merciful daylight enabled the strong to regroup their forces, to discourage the feeding sharks.

Generally, sharks nibbled on seasoned corpses to satisfy their appetites. They thrived on free lunches, another predator's kill ... leftovers. They savored Loners, a shark's pâté. But sharks abhorred having to work for a meal and avoided the resistance from men grouped together.

Henceforth, by dawn's first light Hefford swam off to work, begrudgingly, like a boy with an early morning paper route. He combed the area for survivors and closed ranks. By his fourth day on the job, the chore was excruciating. Few survived, widely scattered. And it was hard to distinguish the living from the dead.

A wave elevated Hefford and at its peak he tread circles, scouting the area for survivors: *dead; alive; dead; dead; dead; alive; dead*. He spied a questionable one. He swam to the person or body, whichever, to investigate. He examined closely. He couldn't distinguish rigor mortis from the stiffness of baked tar. He pried open its eyes with a crunch. It was dead. He could tell by its eyes. If the pupils were dead, the whole body was dead. Hefford moved on to the next one. His route serviced many customers.

Hefford swam past a lifeless body who startled him by begging for help. He towed the half-dead shipmate beyond several waves, to a place where the fittest gathered the weak into a crude, protective ring. *Circle the wagons, boys!*

Back to work, Hefford swam into a puzzling situation: was it a corpse or a body, floating lifelessly in front of him? He tore open its eyes and examined them. They didn't dilate, but still, Hefford had a gut feeling about the body. He pressed his ear against the man's face, in a pitiful effort to detect breathing. He couldn't tell. He slipped a hand inside the vest, and felt the man's chest cavity expand.

Hefford slapped him in the face to keep him alive. "Hey!"

The would-be cadaver uttered a fragmented, "Goway."

"Hey! Stay alive!" Hefford slapped him again.

"Goway. Leave me 'lone."

"Just stay alive. Stay alive a little while longer. Help is on the way. It will be here any minute, now."

"Wanna die."

Hefford grabbed hold of the man's life jacket, and tugged him to the group. When Hefford released him, the man drowned himself.

Hefford located another desolate shipmate, and offered encouragement to keep him alive. "Help is on the way."

"Heard it before. Not true. Nobody's coming."

"Yes, they are. Yes, they are."

"No. Gonna die. All of us. No use." He closed his eyes to die.

Hefford shook him.

"Leave me be," the man protested. "Let me die."

Hefford smacked an open palm across his cheek. "Stay alive!"

The man's eyes shot open. "Do that again ... I'll kill ya."

Intimidated, Hefford swam away. There were others on his morning route, more responsive, more appreciative.

By mid-morning, Hefford rested. He'd expended precious energy helping to regroup seventy-five shipmates. Now he waited for the rescue he'd so freely promised as encouragement to those barely alive. Bobbing, floating, drifting, he scanned the horizons through tar-caked eyes. He pushed away bodies and pieces of bodies, thinking about home and postponing suicide. Somebody would come looking for them. He believed.

Hefford kept a vigilant guard, scouting for ships or planes. But something was amiss. *Train tracks* now scaled the waves. He hadn't noticed *them* before. An oversight? How could he have been so stupid? He hadn't thought to watch for a rescue by train. Had he missed it?

There it was! Rescue! Help arrived. The locomotive chugged down the track. Its light shined a ray of hope; its stack spouted a smoky welcome. Thoughts of Alabama and family filled his joyous mind. Momma would have a nice, hot meal for him and a warm, clean bed made up. *Sweet home Alabama!*

A new danger evolved, however. He'd floated directly into the train's path. The barreling locomotive was about to run him down. Its whistle shrieked an ominous warning: *MMoooooove! MMoooooove!* Hefford tried to swim clear of the track, but entranced, he couldn't move and ...

Luckily, a wave pushed the track aside.

Hefford gawked as the train pulled into the station. Oh, God! He didn't have a ticket. He tediously swam across and purchased one for Decatur.

He relished the sounds of this home-bound train: the bells clanked; the whistle shrieked; the steam hissed. Treading water, he waited for the conductor's blessed words for all to board. But the train didn't stop. Hefford sadly watched it roll past. He heard the rumble of the rails, felt the heavy vibrations. People waved to him out of the windows, and he waved back.

He sadly watched the caboose fade across the sea. In spite of his dehydration, the boy gathered enough moisture to shed a crocodile tear. He had missed the train home.

The farm would be pleasant this time of year. Nicer than floating in the ocean, oh yes. The upland cotton would be in flower. Daddy would need him soon, when the white puffs poked through their bushy green leaves. Gotta get home. Think hard!

Hefford retained enough sanity to reason: *Let's see: the Navy won't send a ship; the planes won't land; the trains won't stop at the station—Got it!* He inserted a coin into the pay phone and called for a taxi.

The considerable wait proved worthwhile when a cab arrived. He swam to it, but a heavyset lady in a purple dress also wanted a ride. It wouldn't be mannerly of him to take this nice lady's cab, he thought. He drifted back a couple of feet and let her have it. He'd catch another. He spoke to her. "You have a good day now, Maam."

She smiled and said, "Thank you." She was kind. He wished he had a hat like hers, to keep the sun off. He helped her into the car. He waved to her, when the cab sped away. "Goodbye!" he yelled.

"Bye-bye." She returned the parting gesture, then disappeared down the road.

Many more cabs drove by, but none stopped, no matter how stringently he hailed. The cabbies waved to him as they sped by, friendly enough, but they all had fares in back. Taxis did great business on the Pacific!

Hefford raised his thumb to hitch a ride. Nice day for it. Trees lined the beautiful highway, as did flowers of every color. Freshly cut grass scented the air, and the farm boy sniffed it appreciatively. All afternoon, he floated by the edge of the road, skimming the waves, waiting patiently for a ride to Decatur.

Oh, God! The sun faded. *Hurry, somebody!* Some of his buddies removed their life jackets and waved goodbye to Hefford. They refused to survive. It wasn't smart to be alive, not now, not when Ole Mister Sun went down. Bad things happened in the dark. And the sun was going ... going ... gone. Bad Things.

TOP SECRET

From: USS Helm

To: Commander-in-Chief, Pacific

Subject: Search for (Indianapolis) Survivors

August 6, 1945

"All bodies were in extremely bad condition and had been dead for an estimated 4 or 5 days. Some had life jackets and life belts, most had nothing. Most of the bodies were completely naked ... horribly bloated and decomposed. Recognition of faces would have been impossible. About half of the bodies were shark-bitten, some to such a degree that they more nearly resembled skeletons. Sharks were in the immediate area of the ship at all times and continued attacking bodies until driven off by rifle fire."

BOOK 1:1

Top Secret

30 Years Later — 1975

Jacksonville, Florida

I was writing a book entitled *Bad Things In The Dark*. It was a true story about the U.S.S. *Indianapolis* based upon Top Secret papers released to me by the President of the United States. It was my first book. I'd previously written for a sports magazine and for a couple of newspapers, but never anything of this magnitude. And it seemed that every senior editor in America was contacting me about book rights. A major publishing house even called me at work and told me not to sign with anyone else until they had an opportunity to make a final bid. They also spoke about "movie rights."

The point being, there will be those who say I fabricated *War of the Angels* just to sell a book and to make a lot of money. Fact is, I already had a blockbuster in the works. I was already promised fame and fortune. I had no reason to contrive this story. I had nothing to gain and everything to lose. It just so happened that one evening, angels came to visit me and commanded that I stop writing *Bad Things In The Dark* and to write *War Of The Angels*, instead. I told the angels, no. I'd worked too hard on the U.S.S. *Indianapolis* project to simply walk away and leave it for someone else to write in the future. Angels didn't understand how difficult it had been to find such a good topic.

I truly enjoyed writing, but until *Bad Things In the Dark*, I'd written only as a labor of love. Freelance articles couldn't pay the bills. I was twenty-four-years-old in July of 1975, when I first went on the prowl for a book topic meaty enough to launch my career as a middle-class author. I never sought wealth. I simply wanted to earn a decent living doing something I enjoyed. Then I stumbled across an article in the *Jacksonville Sun-Times*.

The story told how a series of high-ranking blunders caused the sinking of U.S.S. *Indianapolis* during World War Two, resulting in the largest loss of life ever at sea. But because the tragedy implicated the highest-ranking admirals—even to the Secretary of the Navy, himself—the resulting coverup was quite extensive. The newspaper articles lacked in-depth details because all official documents pertaining to the incident had been classified Top Secret. Since I was a native Hoosier born and bred in Indianapolis, I investigated with great intrigue, thinking I may have found a good story if I could get my hands on more detailed information.

My research was in vain, however. I found only general information. Official war historian, Samuel E. Morison, wrote in *Volume XIV of History of World War II*:

"None of the findings of the secret court of inquiry were made available to the public."

Further, in Richard Newcomb's *Abandon Ship*, I read:

"The testimony has never been made public and probably never will be."

I was mystified. Something so bizarre had happened to the U.S.S. *Indianapolis* in 1945, that the United States Navy decided that the public could never, ever know. If I could obtain those documents, then I had material for a good book. I began a personal campaign to convince the President of the United States to release Top Secret papers to me. Fat chance, but I had to try.

The political arena at that time was advantageous to me. President Nixon was impeached for dirty tricks and coverups. His replacement, Gerald Ford, was sworn into the Presidency with promises of being candid and forthright with the public. Also, *Elections* were approaching and I hoped that President Ford would honor his promises. After four decades of secrecy, History was ripe to release those U.S.S. *Indianapolis* papers to me.

My first inquiry produced only a form letter in return. Something about how happy they were to hear from me. I wrote a second letter, and once again, after a lengthy wait, I received another form letter. They were still happy to hear from me. Praise God. I wrote a third letter.

This time when I went to the mail box I found a large manila envelope that I knew contained more than a form letter. I carefully pried loose the seal, so that I did not rip the return address that simply read, "THE WHITE HOUSE." The grandest of all understatements.

I nervously removed the contents from the envelope. Inside was a cover letter from the Navy, saying, "*The President asked that we forward these to you.*" Attached were about twenty photocopies of some very old documents. The heading of each page read, "~~TOP SECRET~~," with the words crossed out. The first page had my name personally scribbled on it. I was ecstatic for a moment, until I read and digested the content of what the President had sent me. I was once again disappointed. The documents were real. They were declassified by executive order of the President of the United States. They were personally addressed to me. But they were all *old* news. It was common, history-book stuff that had been printed over and over for thirty years.

The information concerned minor details about the American Flagship that had been sunk after transporting the Atomic Bomb across the Pacific. The data had been

public knowledge for decades. Nothing new. Nothing special. I fired off a fourth letter, then a fifth and sixth. I can't remember how many more.

I never heard from the President again. Not even to say how happy he was to hear from me. I gave up on my *U.S.S. Indianapolis* project. Then one day I read in the *Sun Times* that President Ford and a large entourage was coming to Jacksonville for a rare, international summit. One way or another, I intended to get the President's undivided attention.

On November 2, 1975, I joined thousands of local residents who lined Beach Boulevard hoping to catch an historical glimpse of President Gerald Ford and his honored guest, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, when their Caravan traveled along the scheduled route.

Although it was late autumn, the Floridian sun was strong enough to ripple the air as it bounced hard off the highway pavement. I covered my unshaded glasses with cupped hands and peered far away, to where the road and horizon collided in distortion. I strained for a better view.

I glanced at my watch many times. He was overdue. I slipped behind the crowd and paced haphazardly. I twisted the hair on my mustache and lowered my head in thought. I was planning to charge through the crowd, evade armed security, and stuff my letter into the limo for a personal delivery to the President. I was very nervous, wondering if it was a foolish thing to do.

I picked a location where the Presidential Limousine would slow to a creep in order to make a sharp turn. The President would enter the gated community of a wealthy resident who was hosting the meeting. At that point of vulnerability, I would have the opportunity to rush forward and hand-deliver my request through the window to the President.

As I awaited the Caravan, I paced the highway shoulder, debating with myself about whether or not my plan would work. I clutched my handful of ~~TOP SECRET~~ papers, knowing they weren't really valuable. I wondered how much weight they'd carry while looking down a Secret Service gun barrel.

The crowd stirred and sirens blared, alerting me that the White House Caravan had arrived. I edged to the front and watched the pompous parade of automobiles, as political hopefuls—from the governor to dog catchers—rode the President's coattails into town.

There was also an impressive display of security either driving in the Caravan with flashing red or blue lights atop their cars, or else on foot engaging in crowd control: the Federal Secret Service, Florida State Troopers, Highway Patrolmen, the Jacksonville Police Department, Duval County Sheriffs, and an assortment of suburban authorities. Besides the usual security concerns for the President of the United States, there was the added fear of assassins gunning down Anwar Sadat (which they eventually would). Hence, a wall of armed guards separated the crowds from the Caravan. I was about to cancel my plans to rush the President.

Suddenly a gaping hole opened in the security line directly across from me, when the limousine slowed for a sharp turn at the entrance gate, just as I'd hoped. Fate dealt me a clear approach, completely unobstructed, straight to the President who had his window down while waving to the bystanders. Instinctively I darted through the opening like a running-back who saw daylight to the end zone.

I never saw what hit me. At ten feet from the President, the Secret Service slammed me to the concrete and encircled me. They displayed no mercy as they pounced on their would-be assassin. They frisked me for weapons, but instead discovered the classified documents in my possession.

"Hey, look at these," said one to another in amazement.

"Those are *Top Secret* papers!" I yelled, squirming horizontally in their grasps. They perused my confiscated belongings. They were disarrayed by their unexpected find, and I seized the opportunity created by their confusion. I exaggerated my importance and name-dropped the biggest name in America:

"The *President of The United States* released those to me! They're CLASSIFIED! And don't open that letter—it's the President's!"

The authorities examined my credentials and ...

"Hey, I think these documents are *real*," said one agent into a microphone. They passed them around. Each shrugged his shoulders. They released me.

I stood and brushed myself. I had nothing to lose by exploiting their astonishment. "It's urgent I get that letter to the President. It's Top Secret business."

The head of security seized the documents and returned them to me. "We're sorry, Mr. Mullen. We had no way of knowing. We'll see to it the President gets your letter right away."

"That's okay," I said. "I'll take it to him."

The agent put a quick hand in my chest. "I said we'll deliver it for you." They escorted me to the outskirts, warning: "Don't ever do that again. It's a good way to get shot."

In January, 1976, the President of the United States declassified all secret documents pertaining to the U.S.S. *Indianapolis*, several thousand papers, and ordered them delivered to my house.

"I can't wait to pay my five dollars and see the movie." (Ted Kreiter, Executive Editor, Saturday Evening Post)

"Your project on the U.S.S. Indianapolis sounds better and better." (Harold Kuebler, Senior Editor Special Projects, Doubleday)

"Fascinating material. Beautifully presented." (Victoria Darwin, Darwin Publications, Burbank, California)

BOOK 1:2

Beyond Human Help

I persevered throughout the winter months with *Bad Things in the Dark*. I wrote with mental blinders and did not see the burden I placed upon my wife of two-years to bring in the only income. Still, with good reviews following each new sample I'd forwarded to publishers, my wife and in-laws remained supportive.

But by spring, family patience wore thin over the slow, methodical process that a book endures while being pieced together. And adding fuel to an already volatile marriage, I regretfully concluded that my story had reached an impasse. It could not be told by secret papers alone. I needed to interview survivors, few as there were, to breathe life into my characters. I located one, but he lived five hundred miles away and I didn't have expense money to travel. Despondent, I slouched at the kitchen table. I subconsciously opened to the middle pages of the *Jacksonville Sun-Times* and read the community bulletins: "Survivor of U.S.S *Indianapolis* To Give Testimony." It was a *miracle*.

Mr. Hefford Sharp had just relocated to Jacksonville, Florida, where he was employed by Victory Baptist Academy to teach Bible classes. He was giving his testimony that next week at the Bible school and it was open to the public. Not wanting to wait for an impersonal, public event, I hurriedly grabbed the phone book and called the school.

Being late in the afternoon, classes were out and Mr. Sharp was available to talk when the office paged him. "This is Mr. Sharp," he said, answering.

"Hello," I said, introducing myself. "The reason I'm calling is I'm writing a book on the U.S.S. *Indianapolis*, based upon secret documents given to me by President Ford and ..."

"What secret documents are those? From the President you say?"

"Yes. The court of inquiry, you know, with Captain McVay? In Guam?"

"Yes, I'm aware of that. It was all classified secret. You say you've got those papers?"

"Yes. And they're pretty interesting."

"I bet they are. I wouldn't mind taking a look at them, if you wouldn't object."

"Not at all. That's the reason I called. I wanted to get together with you before your testimonial, so I could ask you some questions and let you look over the papers."

"That sounds wonderful. What day did you have in mind?"

"How about tomorrow? Is that convenient for you?"

"Well, I have classes tomorrow. I teach, you know. This is a church, but it's also a twelve-grade school. Now I *do* have a free period at eleven o'clock each day, if that's agreeable with *your* schedule."

"How about tomorrow at eleven, then?"

The entire conversation lasted only a couple of minutes, and scheduling an interview had gone smoother than my best expectations. I penciled in the appointment

for March 15, 1976, at 11:00 a.m. "Hey, that's on my birthday," I said aloud to myself. It was a nice present.

When my birthday rolled around after a dreadfully long night, I got an early start. This was my one and only shot at an interview for my book, and I couldn't afford for anything to go wrong. I arrived at Victory Baptist Academy with ample time to kill. I sat in the parking lot drumming my fingers on the steering wheel of my Nissan Datsun, glancing at my watch every couple of minutes until it was eleven o'clock.

I wiped my sweaty right palm, anticipating our introductory handshake. I marched inside quickly to get the ordeal over with. The door to the room was open, and I instinctively knocked on the frame. "Mr. Sharp?"

"Good morning," pleasantly responded the lanky, gray-headed gentleman. "You can just call me *Hefford*, if you like."

I was too nervous to engage in small talk, so I hurriedly launched the interview. "Where can I plug in my tape recorder?"

Hefford was the perfect interview for a fledgling writer, as he commenced right into his story. "There is no way to imagine any of it," began Hefford, in a relaxed Southern drawl that clashed dramatically with the ferocity of his tale.

"It's kind of like a dream. I still find myself asking if it really happened. Not a man would be able to repeat it. For a long time afterwards, for years, I'd wake up in the middle of the night, screaming.

"Some men, even to this day, refuse to talk about it. They *can't* talk about it; it frightens them. All of us needed *psychiatric* treatment, you understand, along with *physical* help, because we'd seen so much.

"At the time it was happening, we couldn't think about it, because the fear was enough to kill us. I don't know how we ever made it, those of us who *did* make it, which wasn't many."

He paused and looked deeply at me. "It was the *LORD*. It had to be, because we were beyond *human* help. We were physically and mentally shot. We had the minds of cattle. We'd surpassed the human element." Hefford yawned in the middle of a sentence. "Oh, goodness. I'm sleepy."

Continuing his story, Hefford told how Marine Captain Parke caught him sleeping on guard duty, the night before they sank. With a distant glow in his eyes, Hefford mentally slipped away from the tranquil room, back to 1945, and re-boarded the U.S.S. *Indianapolis*.

At only nineteen years of age, young Hefford doubted he'd ever match the serenity of cruising the South Pacific, unescorted, on a late tropical eve. He savored the experience, storing the exotic sensation as a fine treasure in his mind's vault of most cherished memories.

The water strummed a rhythmic tune—a symphony of the sea—raising the ship in the palm of its swell like a conductor bringing up the softness of his strings, then gently backing off; sswiiIISSHHH-SSWOOooosshhh went the ship, accompanied by whispering breezes and musical winds.

Indianapolis, America's Flagship, waltzed with the frolicsome waves. As the anxious whitecaps courted her favors, the Queen of the Fifth Fleet granted all a spin, before twirling apart when she lowered her bow as if taking a royal curtsy. The luminous CA-35's ("CA" indicating heavy cruiser; "35" indicating Indianapolis) adorning each

cheek of her moonlit face dipped flirtatiously, like a pair of made-up eyes on a romantically dim, tropical eve.

A most relaxing moment. Too relaxing, in fact. Hefford stood Night Watch that July 28, a tortuous deed for a young man who loved his sleep. His odds on staying awake wouldn't have equaled those posted by a wooden horse in the Kentucky Derby. He fell wonderfully asleep.

But Marine Captain Parke caught Hefford in the middle of his lullaby, and planted an angry combat boot firmly in his chest and reeled him backwards.

Startled awake, Hefford's bugging eyes dimly focused on the muscular Marine shaking a wild fist at him. "Do you want to get Killed!?" threatened Captain Parke, heavily emphasizing the last word, as if he'd be the one to do it.

"No, Sir," said Hefford meekly.

The Marine slammed Hefford's shoulder with an open palm. "Then stay awake!"

"Yes, Sir."

So the next night, on July 29, Hefford retired early, hoping the extra rest would prevent him from sleeping again on Night Watch.

He said good night to his best friend, fellow-Alabamian Huie H. Phillips, and grabbed a blanket and pillow. His regular sleeping berth sweltered beyond use in the torrid tropics, and he combed the ship for a comfortable place to bed down.

Normally, everyone slept naked on Main Deck. However, Hefford thought it might rain, so he descended one deck, to Number Two Mess Hall, near the fantail. He knew others would join him later, so he stacked the tables, then set up a cot beneath the fresh air blower, the prime spot. Being first to sleep had its advantages. He slept peacefully.

At 12:12 a.m. two Japanese submarine torpedoes slammed into Indianapolis and completely snapped off the bow. The explosions launched Hefford from his cot and onto the hard deck. He rubbed his head; it hurt. He groped in the dark for his clothes, finding them between the stacked tables.

A man scurried through the mess hall, lighting battery lanterns on the bulkhead. By that yellowish light, Hefford inched his way to the ladder and climbed topside to investigate.

The moon shone brightly and Hefford saw clearly. He sat on a closed hatch and observed the chaos. Everyone paced back and forth. Nobody knew what to do, nor where to go.

The ship's silence disturbed them: the boilers shut down; the engines quit buzzing. Only boisterous men seeking information broke the stillness. Hefford grabbed someone by the arm, as he ran by. "What's wrong?"

"I don't know. Somebody told me the forward boiler room blew up. I guess everything will be okay, after a while."

Another shipmate ran by. "Do you know what's happened?" yelled Hefford.

"Somebody said we hit a floating mine. There's not much damage, though."

All the damage from the torpedoes loomed in the forward area. Hefford sat aft of midship, near the fantail, lacking details. He stopped another, and another.

"What's wrong?"

"I haven't been up forward, so I don't know what it is."

"I don't have any idea. Somebody said we've been hit by torpedoes, but I don't know."

Hefford, afraid to move, timidly watched others run this way and that. Some of the men sustained injuries from flying debris; others suffered burns from a fire.

Hefford suddenly wondered if perhaps Huie was hurt and needed his help. Hefford leaped to his feet to find his friend, when Indianapolis listed sharply. Hefford fell.

Explanations spilled forth from a panicky crew.

"The plane fuel exploded!"

"The kitchen blew up!"

"The paint locker caught fire!"

"The engine room exploded!"

Suddenly the ship capsized and washed most of the sailors overboard. A few men balanced perilously on the overturned hull, but voluntarily jumped into the sea when it grew apparent their ship was going under. Only Hefford remained. Scared, he sat alone on a tiny portion of the stern, too dumbfounded to leave her.

"Jump!" yelled someone from the water. "She's going down!" Others begged young Hefford to abandon ship.

Hefford ignored them. The water looked cold and dark. He felt he was safest right there.

"Jump! She'll blow up and kill you!"

Hefford stared at the group in the water. If the ship blows up, they'll all be killed, too, he reasoned. They were no better off in the water, than he was on the ship, he thought.

"Huie!" called Hefford. Huie would know what to do. He wondered if Huie had jumped. Hefford scanned the water, searching for his confidant.

Hefford sat on the ship and clutched a life jacket tightly against his breast like a scared child grasping a security blanket. "Huie!"

"Jump! Jump!"

Hefford thought that if he jumped, the ship might sail away and leave him. Confused and frightened, he cried. "Shutup! Leave me alone!" Water gushed over the bottom and crept toward him. He removed his shoes, socks, and pants, and wearing only underwear and a blue denim shirt, he walked into the sea and swam away.

A whirlpool sucked him under! He held his breath. His lungs burned from carbon dioxide trying to burst free. He couldn't reach the top. His life jacket proved powerless against the swirling sea. He kicked. He stroked. Painful air escaped his lungs.

Finally his head pierced the surface. He hoarded oxygen, but in the process of siphoning air, he gulped a mouthful of diesel oil, as well. He choked and spat. He vomited profusely.

Likewise, the sea regurgitated the ship that it had so greedily swallowed. Elevated by the water's dense pressure, Indianapolis rose eerily, pointing straight up. Her stern reached to cling hold of the moon and the clouds, to keep it from plunging to her death. And then down she came, straight toward Hefford like Moby Dick after Captain Ahab.

Fearful of being crushed, Hefford swam for his life. He thrashed wildly, and the inefficiency of his flailing tired him in thirty yards. He stopped and looked back.

Indianapolis slipped into the sea without havoc: she didn't explode; no further suction drew anyone down with her. Doused flames hissed lightly, emitting a fine steam. The American Flag snapped a parting salute from the fantail.

Hefford swam off to find his friend. "Huie!"

While deep into his story, the tape ran to the end of its reel, and the recorder clicked off loudly. "Goodness, I thought I'd been shot," jumped Hefford.

He laughed and eased out of his chair to stretch, while I inserted a new tape.

"Were sharks a problem that first night in the water?" I asked, continuing.

"I'm getting kind of hungry," said Hefford, looking at the clock, ignoring the question. "I'll just get a candy bar or something, before class starts.

"No," he continued, "the thing we feared until daylight the first day, was this:

"If we *were* torpedoed by a Japanese sub, we had no escort and we were helpless. Just as helpless as we could be. I think some of the officers had .45 automatics on their sides, but how can you fight a submarine with a .45? And that's *all* they had.

"This is what happened with other sailors in the war: the Japanese surfaced and killed all the survivors on the water. And we knew this could happen to *us*, if we *had* been hit by a Japanese submarine. But we didn't fear the sub coming to the surface anymore, after dawn the first day.

"Many terrible things happened, even during the first few hours in the water. Those of us who weren't wounded in the blast aboard ship—and there were quite a number of us; not many men were hurt, except the ones who never got off and went down with the ship—began to kid each other about having a thirty-day survivor's leave. Anytime you have to abandon ship, you get a thirty-day survivor's leave. We looked forward to that—even *joked* about it.

"We knew—at least we *thought* we knew—that rescue was only a short time away. But only the LORD knew what was in store for the next five days and nights.

"We had a crew of 1198: 887 lost their lives in various ways; 311 of us survived. No one knows how many men went down with the ship. My guess is as good as anyone's. I'd say most everyone made it to the water alive, because most everyone slept on Main Deck. It was the time spent in the water, you see, that killed nearly everyone.

"Each of the three hundred eleven survivors has his own story to tell. Not any two of us will tell the same thing, because no two of us had the same things happen to us.

"The whole thing was a nightmare.

"Occasionally now, when I meditate upon it, I find myself asking, '*Did that really happen?*' One hundred twenty-three hours, more than five days and nights with no water to drink and no food to eat. I finally forgot about food, but I never got over thirst.

"Men died almost immediately. They gave up shortly after we abandoned ship. I guess some of them were scared to death. Some of them were wounded. Some of them were in terrible pain.

"We tried to encourage ourselves by saying things like, '*Our Navy's too big, not to spot us. We have too many ships. Surely going from one island to another, we'll be sighted, either by planes, or by ships.*' Or, '*Indianapolis is the Flagship; it's too important to lose track of. We'll be spotted right away.*'

"We grasped at anything, imaginary or real, and encouraged ourselves. We'd think of *anything* to encourage us. And *nothing* to discourage us, because the situation as it was, was discouraging enough.

"Everybody has *closer* friends than they have *other* friends—of course, we were *all* friends aboard ship—but I had one friend especially: Huie H. Phillips. Where you saw one of us, you always saw the other. He was the leader aboard ship. Huie knew everybody and everything. Why, there wasn't anything Huie didn't know. He was a year older, and I guess maybe because he was married he seemed so much brighter and wiser to me. I just really thought he was something. I'd grown to depend on him. But I never saw him the whole one hundred twenty-three hours in the water. That's what scared me, you see. I had to depend on myself.

"We were *every man for himself*. No one was the leader. I did, though, toward the end, find myself giving some orders, even though I was the youngest, simply because I was one of the few who still had sense enough to think. I couldn't think *all* the time, but I could think *some* of the time.

"Almost hourly, I either turned my head, or I'd see somebody die. It wasn't polite to watch a man die. I'd see one of my shipmates take his own life. He'd pull his life jacket off, wave goodbye to us, and go under the water.

"Some of the men went berserk, after a few days. I remember one young boy on his first cruise—it was only my second cruise—but one boy even younger than myself, pulled off his life jacket and put a knife between his teeth and said he was '*Shark huntin*.' He kept saying, '*I'm gonna get that shark. I'm gonna get that shark.*'

"We begged him not to do it. He was out of his head. He would dive down, and we'd say, '*Well, he's gone.*' Then after a while, way out there someplace, he'd pop back up. But he kept doing it, until eventually he *didn't* pop up. He finally drowned himself, or a shark got him, or something.

"Sharks wouldn't bother us, as long as we stayed in a group; but sharks got *Loners*. In the middle of the night, we'd hear somebody scream, somebody holler, '*Shark!*' It was the scariest thing I ever heard. He'd drifted off by himself *A Loner*. Of course that was the end of him.

"By the third day, men died so fast we had to constantly form new groups, to keep the sharks off of us. As far as I know, no one attacked by a shark, lived.

"I heard—I didn't see it, I heard it—one man got his leg bitten by a shark, and he *did* survive. And one survivor showed me later, where something had eaten out the palm of his hand. But he didn't know if it was a shark, or what.

"Many terrible things happened at night. One night, the third or the fourth, all the salt water drinkers went crazy. Drinking salt water and diesel oil affected their minds. Not a man who drank salt water, to my knowledge, survived. They'd go out of their heads and talk crazy, weird things.

"Some of them said they'd swum back to the ship; the ship had come back to the surface, just enough for them to get some water, or to go into the galley for something to eat. And they'd swum back to get us. That's what they said.

"I still had enough mind to know if they did all that, they wouldn't be back out there; they'd still be aboard the ship.

"Some of them said they'd swum to one of the most beautiful islands they'd ever seen; the natives on the island had given them a picnic, with ice cream and Coca-Colas

and ice water. Anything we craved, they'd already gotten, on one of the islands populated by friendly natives.

"One day, three of my good friends—not Huie, cause I didn't know what happened to Huie, whether he'd been eaten by a shark or what—but still they were good friends, and they came swimming up to me and said, '*Do you want to go with us? We're going back to the island.*'"

"I said, '*What do you mean, you're going back to the island?*'"

"*Well, we've been on ...*' They even gave it a name; it was some far out thing. They'd gotten ice cream and ice water and Coca-Colas, and they'd been fed, and they'd had a good time. They'd come back to tell me about it.

"Now I still had enough mind to think this thing through: *If they've been to an island, and gotten food and water, what are they doing back out here?* I still had that much mind left.

"Some of them popped out of the water and patted their stomachs. They said, '*Look! We have full stomachs.*' And their stomachs were swollen. They swore up and down they'd been to the island. And they wanted me to go with them.

"My mind slipped up for a minute, and I started to swim away from the group, going toward an island, they said. But the thought came to me again.

"My mind came to me enough to figure the thing out. We were four hundred fifty miles from *any* island, *anywhere*. They hadn't been *anyplace*. They were just rattling out of their minds from drinking salt water and diesel oil. I turned back; they went on. That's the last I ever saw of them."

Hefford paused in solemn remembrance. He looked as if he might cry.

The class bell rang.

"You can come back tomorrow, if you like," volunteered Hefford.

The interviews for *Bad Things in the Dark* continued throughout the week. Hefford recounted terrifying ordeals that intensified with each new session. But it was on that last day when Hefford truly scared me. And it had nothing to do with sharks. At the conclusion of our final interview, Hefford leaned forward from his relaxed position and told me of some very Bad Things.

Oh, sure, sharks were bad. Drowning was bad. Friends dying ... very bad. The ordeals aboard *Indianapolis* had *all* been bad. But not as bad as these new Bad Things Hefford surprisingly warned me about. He suddenly spoke of other worlds, and demons, and devils, and some very Bad Things that were going to happen to people who didn't believe him.

"I was kept alive for a reason," Hefford said ominously. He spoke with a chill in his voice that set a new, hypnotic tone, and his eyes penetrated deeply into me with an uncanny sense of urgency to convince me. He had a frightening determination to explain.

"Something supernatural kept me alive. Some living being from another world brought me out of a desperate situation. I know a lot of people believe otherwise, but to me, they're downright foolish to *not* believe in life elsewhere. We are not the only life there is."

With each word, I wanted more and more to exit the door. But for some reason, I had to keep listening. Those words would haunt me for years and would prepare me for my own terrifying ordeals that were about to commence.

Shortly after my interviews with Hefford Sharp my wife came to my bedside and said softly: "Michael, I want a divorce."

I said, "Okay."

"I want you out by Saturday."

"Okay." And that was that. Nothing else was spoken, as she left for work, then spent the rest of the week with her mother until I moved out.

It wasn't a gruesome departure; there were no children to fight over custody, nor material goods to divvy up. In fact, from the day our wedding announcement was so vehemently objected to by her family—up until that final day—ours had been one of those marriages doomed from the words, "I do."

So the phrase, "Michael, I want a divorce," was like an extinguisher to a grease fire. It was nice to be out. But I suddenly had no where to live, no job, no money, no food, and I was uncertain about my life's detoured path. And I was in no mood to write, so *Bad Things In The Dark* was placed in a holding pattern.

After several fruitless months of sharing a cockroach-infested old house with several teenagers, I migrated back to Indianapolis, Indiana, on August 6, 1976.

I wasted more than a year at my parents' house, being content to live in a friendly environment for a change, and in reuniting with old high school friends I hadn't seen in years. I played away my precious time and didn't do any work at all, except for a few temporary, meaningless jobs that gave me just enough spending money.

Finally, in January of 1978, I moved from my parents comfortable house in the suburbs, into a cheap downtown apartment next door to the neighborhood tavern. The low rent allowed me to work only part time, and to focus on my book, should I ever again get motivated enough to sit and write for hours at a time. The publishers were still interested. In fact, they would phone me at work to check my progress and to remind me that their publishing house wanted the final bid before I signed with anyone else. My co-workers teased me about it and called me, "Hollywood."

I worked at the Indianapolis *Gorman* Boys' Club. I wasn't there to motivate underprivileged children, nor was I there to help kids conquer problems and to straighten out their lives. I was there to play and make a few bucks.

I befriended youngsters who—unlike my own shallow obstacles in life—suffered true adversity. Their parents would regularly beat them for superfluous misdeeds, such as using the telephone for too long. I watched police handcuff a twelve-year-old boy who'd raped an eighty-year-old widow. There were teenage boys who got busted for supporting their drug habits with armed robbery; and there were little girls who supported their drug addictions by selling their bodies to every boy in the neighborhood for a buck or two.

I'd grown up in a sheltered environment, and guilt slowly crept in for having thrown away opportunities that these kids would never know. I cannot pinpoint exactly when I started to care about the kids, instead of looking at them like a part time paycheck, but I found myself working longer hours and for free. I like to think I played a part in the school truancy rate dropping, as well as the neighborhood crime rate.

As a result of working with the kids, 1978 was also the year I grew up. By summer of 1978, I dusted off my U.S.S. *Indianapolis* papers and renewed my project, working steadily until fall, when an *Alien Being* first visited me.

In politics *nothing* happens by "accident."
If it happens, you can bet it was *planned* that way.
Franklin D. Roosevelt

BOOK 1:3

Holy Murder

Indianapolis, Indiana

The afternoon of October 22, 1978, was a relaxing, sunny Sunday. It was an ideal time for establishing a friendship with my downstairs neighbor. Although I'd lived in my building for nearly a year, I'd generally used the back entrance and had seen my neighbor only on occasion, in passing.

Now I anxiously proceeded downstairs, to the front apartment overlooking the botanical gardens in Garfield Park. I'd often observed pleasant people my own age visiting *Apartment One*, and judging by the constant laughter from within, I envied the popularity of the man who resided there. The time had come to join the party. I knocked on the door.

"Hi," I said, when my neighbor answered.

"Oh, hello," said my neighbor. He looked surprised and flinched his thick, black eyebrows and mustache in unison.

"I'm your upstairs neighbor."

"I know. I was wondering if we'd ever meet. David, come see who's here. I'm Patrick. Come on in and meet David." Patrick was astonished that his aloof neighbor had finally come down to meet him, and he hardly knew what to say to me. He was thankful David took charge of the hospitality.

"God, we meet at last. Hi, I'm David." He smiled as brightly as his blondish hair shone. And the warmth in his soft voice assured me a welcome visit. He broke the ice of a newborn friendship, and offered freshly brewed tea.

The stained-glass front windows allowed little sunshine to penetrate, and Patrick lit a small, antique lamp with a yellowish shade, to supplement the light next to the rocking chair where I sat.

Patrick sighed deeply and said, "Well, I'm so glad. Do you mind if I'm blunt?"

"I guess not."

"David and I are gay; I hope that doesn't bother you. I just want to be open with you because you seem so nice."

Later, I would understand how necessary it had been for Patrick and David to explain their homosexuality up front, with someone they wanted to know. The shock of an accidental discovery had, in the past, destroyed many friendships. Family, too.

Patrick's only brother abandoned him. David's father, likewise, disowned David. Macho men taunted them, and worse, hit them. They'd even been chased by Christians, who'd demanded the "queers" get out of their church. Gays were favorite targets of every prejudiced group. Patrick and David had both been admitted to mental wards for intensive counseling, to become *normal*. Neither had intended, early in life, to *become* gay. In fact, they struggled to be straight and to avoid the ridicule, the hatred, the beatings, and the abandonment. But they were gay.

I was taken aback at their "outing" on the first day we met, but I understood their explanation. If I wanted to hit them, or verbally abuse them, or create an excuse not to become friends with them, it was best to do it now.

"Thank you for the compliment in sharing that with me," I said. "Let's make a deal: you don't try and change me, and I won't try and change you. Is that okay?"

"Fair enough." And the darkened apartment grew bright with cheerfulness.

I told them I worked at the Boys' Club. I also discussed my book about the *U.S.S. Indianapolis*. And when afternoon faded into evening, I was telling about my personal life. Patrick and David had a genuine openness that allowed me to share of myself. It was a wonderful gift they had, I thought. Patrick would later confide in me, "You're the brother I never had, and always wanted." Our friendship bonded that first day.

As we conversed, the television played in the background. We paid no attention, until the networks ran yet another news bulletin about Pope John Paul II's coronation to the papal throne. David complained, "God, not again? This is a little sickening, don't you think?"

"That's all we've seen for a week," said Patrick. "This guy's getting so much coverage he ought to have his own show."

"Have you been reading about the death of Pope John Paul I?" I asked.

"Ooooooh," said Patrick with a bit of mystical music in his voice. "That was strange, wasn't it?"

"I can't believe he died after just thirty-three days," said David. David always managed to crack a joke even during the most serious of conversations. "It's the Pope-of-the-Month Club," he laughed. "Join now and you'll receive a new Pope about every thirty days. And if you don't like him, just send him home in a box."

"I read something about the Vatican a couple of weeks ago that really freaked me out," I commented. "It was about Pope John Paul I, right before he died."

"What about him?"

"Are either of you Catholic?" I asked.

"We're Lutheran," said Patrick. "That's sort of diet-Catholic."

I explained that I wasn't Catholic and that I didn't understand much about the papal elections or procedures. However, I did noticed something in the newspaper about Pope John Paul I prior to his death that struck me as being odd. On September 26, the newly elected Pope John Paul I claimed that he'd uncovered an organized crime syndicate in the church.

I cut out the article from the *Indianapolis Star*. It was only a short news brief, buried way back on page twenty-six. The Pope issued a statement to the press, saying a '*Holy Mafia*' had embezzled millions of dollars from the Vatican Bank, for what he called 'immoral purposes.'"

On September 28, Pope John Paul I elaborated that *two* crime syndicates had conspired together to steal the Vatican's vast wealth. A secret society of Catholic laymen who worked from *within* the church; and another secret society of non-Catholics who worked from *outside* the church. John Paul personally organized a committee to purge the church of the "Holy Mafia". The Pope said he'd compiled a list of names, and planned to make formal accusations at noon the following day.

The next day, I checked the paper to read about the list of names in the Vatican Mafia. However, when I read the day's headlines I knew there'd be no published list.

"POPE DIES IN HIS SLEEP"

"God! Are you kidding me?" said Patrick. "He was *informing* on the Mafia right before he died? Is that why all this happened?"

"I don't know. Kind of interesting, though."

"Hey, I remember something about that on television," said David. "There were *thousands* of Italians marching in the streets, claiming the Pope was *murdered*! I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I haven't heard anymore about it, though."

"I think it's been censored off the airways," I said. I lifted my cup off the glass-covered, wicker table and sipped my tea. "You know what else? Everybody was *screaming* for an autopsy on John Paul. There must have been a hundred thousand Italians marching through the middle of town waving banners and signs and *demanding* an autopsy."

"What did the autopsy show?"

"Nothing. They didn't *do* one."

Prior to the Pope's death, a church lawyer named Michael Alvarez was instrumental in creating a new Vatican law stating that it was illegal to perform an autopsy on any Pope. They were "too Holy" for such barbaric human practices. The death of Pope John Paul I was the first opportunity to enforce such a law. No matter how many people demanded an autopsy, it simply couldn't be performed. It was illegal.

"One other coincidence," I said. "The church lawyer who instigated the new autopsy rule was a prominent member of *Opus Dei*. That's the very same group that John Paul I called the Holy Mafia right before he died."

"Why doesn't anyone else know about this?" asked David.

"They do! Why do you think they're screaming their heads off in Italy?"

"What'd the Vatican say about it?" asked Patrick.

"They just scoffed at the idea. They said it was, 'Pure fantasy.' They don't think anyone would ever conspire to murder a pope. And that's the last anything was ever said about it."

"All the other stuff I got piecemeal from news articles or else from the library. I started searching out of curiosity, but it kept developing into more than what I'd expected."

"What's the new Pope going to do about it?"

"Nothing. The 'Holy Mafia' *elected* the Pope!"

"What? How do you know all this, Michael?"

"It's in the news, but people don't pay attention. Just like today on TV. After his coronation, Pope John Paul II marched across the street and prayed at the graveside of *José Escriva*, instead of to Jesus Christ?"

"Who's he?" asked Patrick.

"Didn't he sing, '*Come on Baby Light My Fire*'?" laughed David.

"That's *José Feliciano*," said Patrick. "Go on, Michael. You'll have to forgive David. Sometimes he just flies off the wall with these things."

"*José Escriva*," I repeated. "He was the *founder* of *Opus Dei*—the *Holy Mafia*—the group accused of embezzling money and murdering the Pope. The new Pope is a member of the group that supposedly killed the first Pope. Interesting, huh?"

At that moment a *Spiritual Being* tugged hard on my brain. I didn't know who, what, or why, but it was a living creature trying to separate my soul and body. I fell out of the rocking chair and onto the floor.

I grabbed hold of the chair and helped myself back up. I spurted, "Gotta go." That's all I could say. I was confused about what was happening. I didn't want it to occur again in front of company.

The Alien Being returned and tugged on my mind again. It was not simple dizziness or a fainting spell. A living, spiritual creature shanghaied my brain and spun it in rapid circles, trying to pull me from my body like a cork from a bottle.

Scared, I resisted. I was like a stubborn hypnotic subject who refused to enter the hypnotist's dreamy world. I engaged the Being in a frightful tug-of-war, over control of my mind.

My soul exited my body. Taken away by the ... whatever it was. My body was an empty shell, and it dropped to the floor.

The Alien Being pulled me toward a gyrating black tunnel, wanting me to enter. It spun my brain like a child's game of merry-go-round, trying to make me dizzy enough to surrender.

It looked scary inside the tunnel. I refused to go. But the tunnel whirled rapidly, hypnotically coaxing me closer, closer. I was now at the fringe of the cone-shaped funnel, at its widest opening. I stared inside, toward the deep exit, where it narrowed, leading mysteriously down to ... somewhere. Somewhere dark.

I determined not to enter the dark cone. The Alien Being pulled from the other side of the funnel. I pulled from Patrick's living room. But the spinning made me too dizzy, too nauseated to continue my meager resistance. I slumped further to the floor. Then once again, I floated above my empty body.

"NO!" I screamed in defiance.

I gained control, stood up, and dashed for the door. I wanted more than anything to run upstairs to the privacy of my own place, where I could at least retain my dignity, if not my willpower and my soul. But when I reached the door, the spiritual force grabbed hold of my brain like an authoritative parent twisting a bad child's earlobe. I dropped to the floor, where I wallowed in the corner to the horrid shock of Patrick and David. They helplessly watched me grope at their door, trying to escape from their place as if I'd seen a ghost.

I struggled to my knees and grabbed hold of the doorknob to pull myself up. I opened the door and stumbled out of Patrick's apartment and into the hallway. I barely was conscious that Patrick and David spoke to me. I shrugged off their efforts to assist me as I tried to methodically scale the two flights of stairs leading up to my apartment.

I gripped the stair railing with both hands and pulled myself up one step at a time. Eventually at the top stair, I paused to lean on the wall. I fought for control of my mind and body. I wobbled about six steps down the corridor, before the Being tugged again and crashed me into the partition.

At ten steps from my own front door, I conceded defeat. I felt Patrick's hand take hold of my elbow, and I surrendered to the inevitable. I slumped to the floor, knowing Patrick was there to watch over my body until I came back for it.

No! Not here. Not in the hall. And not in front of anyone. I battled to my feet, using the wall as a crutch. Feeling my way blindly, I made it to my door.

I pulled out my key and stabbed at the lock, as it quickly faded from view. Again I aimed and missed, before allowing Patrick to unlock my door for me. When opened, I darted in and slammed the door in Patrick's face. I latched the chain quickly, ignoring Patrick's inquiries, and immediately sought refuge on the adjacent sofa.

My brain revved in circles until an overwhelming nausea forced me into submission. I wasn't going to vomit, but rather the dizziness was used as a seat belt to restrain me in place, as I protested the impending journey. The Alien Being didn't want to hurt me. It only insisted that I follow.

I entered the mysterious tunnel. Out of my body. Toward the unknown. Down to its depths, spinning into blackness. Through to the other side, and into a vast, empty place.

A Dark World.

I couldn't see anything, but I heard a soft voice from the Alien who'd yanked me there.

"Be still. Know that I am," said the Voice.

The Alien pumped thoughts of John Paul I into me. I never saw a vision of the deceased Pope, nor did the Voice speak John Paul's name. But nonetheless, it overwhelmed me with thoughts of John Paul I. No margin for misunderstanding. The feelings were nice. Comforting. Friendly. Warm. Then suddenly the feelings were not so nice. Not so comforting. Not so friendly and not so warm.

The Voice responded, "Murder."

Having said what it wanted to say, the Being released its nauseating grip that held me captive.

I slipped back into the tunnel, narrow end first, spinning the opposite way I'd come in, heading towards the original opening. When through to the other side, I popped open my eyes. I was home again.

The next day, I learned from a short news brief that Opus Dei maintained a United States' Headquarters in New York. I wanted to ask them something. I dialed information.

"What city puh-lee-aazz?"

"New York, please."

"New York. What listing puh-lee-aazz?"

"I'd like the listing, please, for 'Society of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei.'"

"Looking under 'Society of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei' I find no listing."

I tried again.

"What city, puh-lee-aazz?"

"New York, and I'd like the listing, please, for 'Opus Dei.'"

Got it! I dialed the number. Instead of identifying themselves when they answered the phone, they evasively referred to their 9 96th Street address, as a generic response: "Nine ninety-six."

"Is this Opus Dei?" I asked.

"Who is this?"

"I just want to talk to someone about obtaining a membership list of Opus Dei."

"Who is this?"

"I'll call back."

"Give me your name and number. Someone will call you."

"No. I'll be out and can't be reached. Is the new Pope a member of Opus Dei?"

"Who is this?"

"Never mind."

"What's your name? Just give me your number."

I hung up. The conversation wasn't going as cordially as I'd hoped.

I wrote them, instead, disguising my letter as a query for a college thesis, saying I was Catholic and wanted to know about their organization, and if Pope John Paul II was a member. I'd appreciate any help, including brochures or other information they could forward.

It was days later when I received an answer, of sorts, to my inquiry. I entered the common hallway of my apartment. I stopped abruptly, taken aback at what I saw.

My mail box had been twisted apart from its hinges. My letter to Opus Dei was inside, standing on end. It was stamped: "Return to Sender. Moved. Not forwardable." And it had been steamed open, read, and put back.

I placed another phone call to Opus Dei, my hand positioned on the button, ready to cut them off when they answered:

"The number you have dialed has been disconnected."

SPECIAL NEWS UPDATE — *On January 7, 1991, the family of Pope John Paul I publicly contradicted the Vatican's version of John Paul I's sudden death after only 33 days into the papacy. They said that Pope John Paul I had discovered an organized crime syndicate operating diligently under the guise and protection of the Vatican. They said that a Holy Mafia had launched an aggressive international bank scandal, designed to embezzle money from banks and savings institutions worldwide. For this reason, family members denounced the Church findings that Pope John Paul I died in his sleep from an apparent heart attack. His own family proclaimed that he'd been murdered. They astonishingly claimed that the Church was involved in a scandalous coverup.*

BOOK 1:4

The Beast

Nothing more happened until the spring of 1979. The Dark World faded from memory, as had Holy Mafias and murdered Popes. My family and others helped me understand that what I'd *thought* had happened, *hadn't*. And with the passage of time, I realized they were correct. *Something* had occurred, no doubt, on that first night I met Patrick and David, but not anything supernatural. And most assuredly the deceased Pope had not been murdered.

I was thankful for everyone's, "*What probably happened was ...*"

"What probably happened was ..."

you've been working too hard.

you haven't been eating right.

one of those dreams that seemed so real.

Everyone rationalized away what I'd thought had happened. And I was inclined to agree, after Time befriended me.

On April 14, 1979, the Boy's Club officially shut down at 9:00 p.m., but the staff wasted another hour rounding up boys who refused to leave. I was exhausted by the time my '64 Falcon chugged home at about eleven o'clock. I planned to write a page or two on *Bad Things In The Dark*, and to hit the sack early, Saturday evening or not.

I shuffled up the two back flights of stairs to my apartment, then cautiously opened my door. I paused before entering, in anticipation of an attack. I quietly set down my briefcase, so that I had both hands free to defend myself against the beast that I knew awaited me. The door was barely cracked enough for me to slip my hand inside, and I retrieved a pair of shredded mittens and a ragged towel from a chair placed strategically just inside the door. The battles had become routine and my arms were scarred and scabbed with dried blood. I donned the gloves and protectively wrapped my forearm with the rag. I was ready for battle.

When nothing happened, I scooted my attaché into the apartment and softly latched the front door. I was most vulnerable in the dark, but the only living room lamp was in the far corner. I waited for my eyes to adjust. I cautiously shuffled through the blackness on my way to the lamp. I turned on the light and scanned the living room. I was alone.

Convinced there would be no attack this evening, I removed the gloves and padding. I tossed my coat onto a chair and exhaled loudly. I was too tired to sit down at my desk and be creative. I'd eat, then call it a night.

Bending at the waist, I eyed longingly the leftover pizza and the one can of beer in my otherwise empty refrigerator. In my fit of hunger, I failed to sense the beast of prey peering down from high atop the cabinets.

Cold, piercing eyes from an extremely large head targeted my neck for a kill. The beast drew taught its hind legs in preparation for a midair pounce across the kitchen and onto its unsuspecting victim. It sprung, airborne, with the grasping talons of an eagle.

George the Kat swept onto my shoulders and bit into my neck. I jumped and screamed, trying to shake loose the rider and its impaling claws. But my screaming only startled George the Kat into spurring me more deeply, like a crazed cowboy hanging onto a *Bucking Bronco* until his eight seconds were up.

Hot blood oozed down my neck and shoulders. "Easy. Eeaassyy," I whispered. I dared not cry out again. A sudden reaction would only frighten George the Kat to rip away more of my skin. I gently reached to withdraw its claws from my shoulders. That's when I dropped my beer. I couldn't let it hit the floor—it was my last can. I lunged to snatch it from midair and George chomped his lethal fangs into my neck.

"Aaahhh!"

"Mmmeeeoowww!"

"Oh, God! Oh, God!"

I bounced through the kitchen, trying to shake the enemy loose of its stranglehold. I slipped on the pizza and fell, landing on George the Kat, who "Rrrreowed" and regrouped to the living room.

As suddenly as it had begun, the battle was over. All was quiet. I wallowed in beer foam and pepperoni, counting the casualties of battle, massaging my punctured neck and bleeding shoulders. I trashed my soggy pizza, then searched for George. "Here, kitty, kitty, kitty."

Last Thanksgiving, Patrick gave me a kitten to keep me company. At first I declined, not wanting the responsibilities, but then rescinded and took him back. I told Patrick it was the ugliest cat I'd ever seen and that it would have to be put to sleep because nobody else would want it. The real reason I wanted him, though, was to have someone to come home to. *George the Kat* lived for the moment I walked through the door. But he truly was ugly. George the Kat had an immensely disproportionate head, with a clownish orange-and-white coat. And he seemed to have grown frightfully bigger each time I returned home. Entering the door had become a bloody adventure. George loved to show affection by pouncing on me. He never tried to hurt me, unless I scared him, which I often did when he startled me.

As I tended to my bleeding, George lounged on the sofa with an indigenous expression of victory. And because he still had that playful look, I approached him slowly and cooed. I talked that embarrassing nonsense Masters say to their pets when alone. I hugged George to display affection, and to show I'd conceded defeat. Wanting no more escapades, I said good night and prepared for bed.

I draped a thick blanket over the drawn shades to block the intruding light from the parking lot. I turned on the bathroom fan, wanting its background noise to damper the Saturday night disturbances from nearby Shelby Street and Garfield Park. I quickly dozed off.

The inner-perception of someone being present in my room awakened me. But when I opened my eyes, all I saw was the clock's fluorescent green numerals: 3:15 a.m. The light switch was several feet away and unreachable from bed. Shrouded in darkness, I listened intently for an intruder. Then it seized me. The same Alien Being who'd abducted my soul last October in Patrick's apartment, had returned. Once again, it pounced on my brain in an unearthly kidnapping.

I resisted, but unlike before, the Being swiftly overpowered me. The speed at which he flushed me in and out of the black funnel, circumvented the nauseating side-

effects that accompanied my first journey. This time, I was not gradually forced into submission with a pressure-hold on my brain. Rather, the Alien seemed hurried, as if it had no time for my foolish resistance. It spun my mind clockwise, accelerating rapidly as it dragged me into that same long, twisting, black funnel.

For the second time, I whisked through the spinning cone and exited the other side. I reentered the Dark World. For a teasing moment the darkness receded, enabling me to see my discarded body below, still in bed. My spirit lingered above, observing, like a turtle who'd been fished out of its shell and who longed to crawl back inside and hide.

I viewed my estranged body as an *IT*. *IT* lay on *ITS* stomach. *ITS* right arm extended back toward *ITS* side. *ITS* left arm bent around the pillow, reaching toward the headboard. *ITS* right leg protruded straight back; *ITS* left one had drawn into a semi-fetal position. And *IT* had kicked the sheet off, except for a small patterned portion of vivid green flowers that still covered *ITS* bare buttocks.

Then everything darkened and the familiar sights below vanished. I again roamed the Dark World, as a lost little boy.

As a child I was called, "Little Mikey." I remember graphically when Little Mikey played hide-and-seek at Grandma's and Grandpa's house, often spending most of the day shut away in their dark basement closet. But the darkness of that closet could not have matched the darkness of the Dark World.

One time, Little Mikey ran away from home—way across the street to the cornfield, where he dug a foxhole and lived half the afternoon. There, terribly alone, Little Mikey cried. But being alone in the foxhole back then, was nothing like the frightening solitude of the Dark World now.

And there was that day Little Mikey followed Buck Creek too far back into the woods to fish. It was scary, being so lost. But Little Mikey hadn't been as lost in the woods then, as he was now in the Dark World. A virtual quagmire of Blackness. I was Little Mikey all over again, and I stayed fearfully quiet and awaited my Dark World fate.

Finally, the Alien Being spoke. "*Do not worry.*"

It was a gentle and thoughtful thing to say. Although I'd been kidnapped, my abductor meant no harm. I believed it. Its words were kind and sincere, and they dissipated my fears.

Next, a light appeared. It wasn't much of a light (the size of a pinhead and a trillion miles away), but in the Dark World it sparkled more brilliantly than the rarest crown jewel. The ball of light zoomed across the Dark World, and reached me within a blink of an eye. And it was huge. I backed away to better focus my eyes, as if I'd suddenly found myself standing too close at the foot of a movie screen.

Like viewing a movie on a large crystal ball, I watched an image of Grandma project itself onto the sphere. But she looked much older and paler, gravely ill, with her cheeks caved in. I stared into Grandma's bleak future, when suddenly she glowed, illuminating a good portion of the Dark World. Then the vision of Grandma faded.

My mother appeared in the sphere, but she didn't glow, as had Grandma. The Friendly Alien spoke again, tenderly. "*Tell your mother, 'Do not worry.'*"

I asked, "*Why?*"

It repeated with compassion: "*Tell your mother, 'Do not worry.'*"

I persisted. "*Why?*"

Without answering, the Friendly Alien abandoned me. A final reminder echoed throughout the Dark World: "*Do not worry.*"

Moments later, I sensed I wasn't alone. I saw nothing. I heard nothing. I tasted nothing. I smelled nothing. I felt nothing. All five senses registered zero. Yet I knew hostile eyes pierced me from afar. Cold, steely eyes.

Something in the dark snickered at me.

"Hello!" I called to the Friendly Alien. "Are you there?" I turned this way and that, straining in the dark to find the Alien who'd brought me there. I didn't like this Second Alien, and more, I was afraid.

The Second Alien laughed at my awkwardness. It mocked me. Nothing was funny, but its laughter intensified, heinously.

Finally it stopped taunting me. But like war drums ending their incessant beatings, the eerie silence frightened me equally as much. Something growled at me like a beast. It growled again. Short, raspy bursts from the back of its throat. It crept closer like a carnivore stalking dinner. It paused and snarled with every cautious advancement. It seemed leery of a baited trap. It used the darkness to camouflage its methodical approach.

Convinced I was alone and helpless, the Beast pounced on me.

I never saw its eerie hands (or claws) lunge out from the dark, but most assuredly a vivid image registered in my mind of what it was that snatched me upside down. The Beast wrapped its *fingers* (or claws) around my left foot. They were long enough to overlap my tiny ankle and extend far up my calf. And they were cold. Cold as a bloodless corpse. Its skin had scales like snakeskin or lizard.

Its fingertips sprouted long nails that painfully dug into me. There was no escaping the powerful grip. Its growl was menacing. The Beast was going to kill me, but it wanted to prolong the terror. It wanted to kill me without mercy, without pity, and with as much rage as possible. It *quavered* from anger, reaching the very pinnacle of wrath until it was impossible to express more. It hated me.

The Beast raised me high over its head. It shook me, wanting to jar the life out. It shook me, as if to frighten me to death. It shook me exactly six times, each time screaming the word, "NO!".

"No! No! No! No! No! NoooooorrrrrGRRRRRR!" The last word trailed into an awesome growl that vibrated the Dark World like a strong earthquake, only it wasn't a quake and it wasn't earth. Its last rumble nearly popped my heart. It drew me to the peak of its backswing, intending to smash the life out of me. But at that pendulum point where the backswing starts its deadly forward arc, someone (*something*) gently removed me from its grasp. The Beast fled, apparently afraid of whoever rescued me.

Then, that same someone cradled me like an infant. Caressed my head. Rocked me gently. Calmed me.

"*Do not worry.*" The Friendly Alien had returned.

I went home to my body. I lay in bed and opened my eyes. I was scared. The bathroom fan whirled noisily, but not enough to deafen the thundering pulse in my inner ear. My heart revved in fear. Every gland pumped out of control. My naked body sweat through the bed sheet and soaked the mattress padding. Tears flooded my face and drenched my pillow. Mucous flowed like lava from erupting nostrils. I shivered in the cool dampness.

I opened my mouth to scream, but the air from my lungs just skimmed across my vocal cords and exited out my mouth, as if running away in terror. I couldn't create a sound. I breathed erratically. Heaving. Trembling. Yelling for help was a physical impossibility.

Then a familiar, warm and furry body cuddled against my shoulder. George the Kat returned from his late-night apartment safari, and perched on top of me for a nap. His purring vibrated my back and arms like I'd put a quarter into a *Magic Fingers* mattress.

The purring tickled, and I smiled. I stopped crying and rolled over to wipe my face on a dry sheet corner. When I turned and pulled the blanket, I accidentally tossed George to the floor. I scooped him up on the rebound and stroked his groggy head (top heavy, George seldom landed on his feet). I embraced George until he snored in contentment.

I, however, couldn't sleep. I stared overhead at the chandelier, afraid to close my eyes. I tried to reason away the Dark World and the Beast. *A nightmare. It was only a nightmare. What probably happened was ... (fill in the blank).*

Suddenly, George awoke. He jumped, hissing at the foot of the bed. He retreated across my face. His actions begged for mercy. In his own way, George was begging me for protection.

I sat up. I flexed my eyes, but it was too dark to see anything. It didn't matter—visual confirmation wasn't necessary. George the Kat was a perpetual killing machine, yet now he feared for his life. That was all the proof I needed. Evil stood at the foot of my bed. I wasn't sure I *wanted* to see.

The blood vessels pulsated hard in my *left* ankle, exactly where the Beast had grabbed me moments ago, while in the Dark World. My foot seemingly wanted to depart from my body and to run away. George arched his back high. His fur bristled on end. He'd never done that before. He was afraid. His muscles flexed for a fight to the death. This was the End. Right here. Right now.

I held George tightly to my chest, until he gashed me with a deadly kick and ran for all his nine lives. My own survival instincts surfaced from their primeval dwellings within and screamed at me to flee from the darkness at the foot of my bed!

My body overflowed with a chilling fluid produced specifically for that one rare moment of terror. The icy adrenaline gushed through my heart and veins and caused me to yank my foot from the end of the bed. But even that superhuman effort was not fast enough. The Beast got me.

Like offering final proof of its existence—that it was more than a nightmare—the Beast broke the plane of the Dark World and invaded my bedroom. It attacked me while I stretched open my eyes to their limits, and while my senses were sharp enough to know real from unreal. The Beast came after me so horrendously that no amount of logic, no semblance of reasoning, no *what-probably-happened-was*, would ever convince me otherwise.

The Beast put me on notice in no uncertain terms that when it was good and ready, it was going to kill me. And It would terminate me with a great deal of *FEAR*, with more horror than defenseless Little Mikey ever imagined.

Hiding in darkness so that I could not see it, the Beast once again clamped its fingers and claws around my left foot. Evil ran through my veins, and I jerked as if a jolt

of electricity shocked my heart. It yanked hard on my foot and lifted me from bed. I sailed from its ugly grasp and slammed into the wall, next to the light switch, five feet away on the fly. I spun the dimmer switch to its brightest output.

The Beast fled, its task accomplished. Its warning had been delivered. Little Mikey would soon be dead, as a hummingbird whose heart would burst in fear. In time, my pretty, in time.

I leaned against the wall. I cupped my face in both hands and cried. My lungs pumped out of control. I ran to the living room. Light from the bedroom shined just enough for me to see the telephone on the table in front of me. I wanted to call my neighbor, but couldn't move to lift the receiver and push the buttons.

I sat paralyzed in the worn armchair, its rough fabric scratching my naked body. I snatched at the telephone, but knocked it to the floor. My muscular coordination malfunctioned.

I couldn't breathe. I compressed my diaphragm with both arms and manually injected air into my spastic lungs. I retrieved the telephone and hastily tapped some buttons. But I couldn't hit the right combination. I punched the numbers again and again, until Patrick's phone rang. I leaned forward and shut my eyes, waiting, praying, begging, for Patrick to answer.

David answered, "Hello."

I sobbed into the phone. I couldn't talk. My teeth chattered.

"Hello?"

I tried to get David's attention, before he'd think it was a crank call and hang up.

"Who *is* this?" asked David. David leaned over to Patrick, who hid his head under the pillow, trying to sleep. He told Patrick, "It's somebody crying like a baby." He lifted the pillow off Patrick's head and passed the telephone to him, saying, "See if you can tell who it is."

"H'lo," mumbled Patrick.

With trembling fingers, I shaped my lips to form a word. I exhausted the small amount of air in my lungs to whisper, "Patri ..."

"Michael? Michael, is that you?"

"Uhhh."

"Michael, what's wrong?"

"Uhhhhhh."

"Michael, are you okay?"

I lowered my face and sobbed without shame.

"Would you like to come down here?"

"Uhhhh." I grabbed the robe I had tossed onto the floor the night before, and wearing nothing else, skipped from the second floor and into Patrick's street-level apartment.

Pounding footsteps telegraphed my arrival, and I didn't have to knock. When Patrick opened the door, I bolted inside. Without saying hello, I darted for the antique rocker next to the stained-glass window, and rocked.

Patrick approached and hugged me. David said assuring words to me. I sat in safe company, although I still trembled, hard enough to rock the chair by itself.

David brewed coffee. He and Patrick sipped away, while I set mine on the wicker table. There was no conversation. In silence, they observed me, as I suppressed my crying as long as possible. Inevitably, I exploded in a convulsion of tears.

A couple of hours passed without a word exchanging. Finally, David asked, "Do you want to talk about it?"

I shook my head no. I was physically able to talk now, but no appropriate words came to mind. I only sat in the chair and rocked. Eventually, I calmed down. I suffered only an occasional shiver. The last of the tears dripped off my damp and gleaming face.

The rising sun peeked solemnly through the rainbow-colored windows. David observed with a sigh, then sarcastically broke the silence when he joked, "What a way to spend Easter Sunrise."

I quit rocking. I wiped my face on my sleeve. My first and only words tumbled off my lips:

"Oh, my God—It's *Easter*." I stood and went home. No explanations. No good-bye.

BOOK 1:5

The Origin of Bad Things

It was several days past Easter before I reluctantly told Patrick and David about my journey to the Dark World. They were not unbelieving. In fact, as I recounted my brush with Evil, they exposed a dark side of their own.

Many of the people who'd wandered in and out of their apartment were either practicing witches or Satanists. Patrick and David were neither, but quite knowledgeable of both because their friends were all involved in the crafts. Their Witch-friends and their Satanist-friends worshipped the very same *Bad Things*, although the witches were ignorant of the connection. Those who dabbled in White Witchcraft argued vehemently at accusations linking them to Satan, while their Satanic friends laughed heartily at the foolish witches and spirit channelers.

Witches and New Agers believe they're using *psychic powers*—connecting with their *inner-self*, and with Nature—to achieve their desired, mystical ends. "They don't realize their spirit guides are Satanic angels," said Patrick. Witches are only involved by *default* ... through *ignorance*. They claim they worship *Mankind* and *Harmony* and *Nature*, instead of God or Satan. And they get all uptight when you challenge them on that fact.

"Michael," said Patrick, "I want to give you some books to study. You're not going to find what you want by reading news articles." He explained that writers generally focus on blood sacrifices and grave robberies because that's what sells copy. But in reality, Satanists actually *worship* Lucifer as their *God*. The ultimate goal of the Satanic purist is to pave the way for Satan's return to Earth.

Many people scoff at the existence of fundamental Satanism. It's easier for the public to understand teenagers who kill babies, than it is to comprehend a spiritual world of demons and angels. Most of the reported atrocities are *not* common to traditional Satanism. Rather, the media misinterprets. Blood sacrifices are generally ordained by people who've delved too far into something they know little about. Almost always, the worst crimes are committed by young people with Christian backgrounds. They are slowly sucked in by curiosity, or by spirit guides they have accidentally or playfully contacted.

Some connect through Satanic music. Sometimes an occult game is their key to a wrong door. Many begin with astrology, which is the mainstay for *all* the occults. Same with worshipping Nature. Worshipping the *created object*, rather than glorifying the Creator. There are many ways to connect.

Soon they hear a voice; see a shadow. Maybe they receive an actual message from a spiritual being. Of course it won't identify itself as a Satanic angel or demon. In fact, most channelers argue that their spirit guide offers *good* advice, which it does for a while. But when the demon has earned enough trust from the channeler, it turns destructive. Suicide. Murder. In the end, the demon's only purpose is to destroy, especially if its victim is a former Christian.

But that is *not* Satanism.

Satanism is the orderly worship of Satan, and loyal Satanists diligently prepare for his reign on Earth. They believe Satan has a human counterpart known as the Antichrist. They believe the Antichrist will sweep into power as ruler of a One-World Government. Once he is in his proper political position in The New World Order, Satan will come and incarnate the Antichrist's body and claim to be God on Earth.

That, in a nutshell, is what the Satanic *purists* believe. They never engage in the frivolities of *White Magic* to find a *parking place*, or as a *potion* to get lucky in bed or how to pick a winning bingo card or lottery number. However, such recruiting tactics are used by Satan's angels to gain the confidence of novice witches, channelers and New Agers, prior to sucking them in over their heads. Their imminent demise is caused by ignorance.

Patrick also noted that, unlike witches and channelers, Fundamentalists are *not* tricked or coerced into Satanism. An initiate into Satanism knows exactly which path he takes, and he crosses that boundary on his own accord.

His argument was supported by a passage from the Rite of Initiation, as found in *Satan's Bible*, written by the late Anton LeVey, the High Priest of the Church of Satan in San Francisco.

"... thou receiveth the Vigil of Baphomet and embraceth the Black Flame of cherished enlightenment. Thou hast assumed this Infernal commitment *of thine own volition, without let or hindrance*. This act being done *without coercion* and of thine *own desire* and *according to thy will*."

Patrick and David were instrumental to my research. They allowed me to keep their books. "Just be careful, though," he warned me. "It's real. It's *all* real."

A few weeks after Patrick and David began schooling me in the crafts, Patrick awoke in the middle of the night to see a darkened image standing at the foot of his bed. Patrick nudged David awake. They both sat up in bed, cautiously and without conversation. They were not overly frightened of the Being, who made no effort to hide from them. It made no hostile movements toward them. Neither did it speak. It only stared.

Patrick, an artist, rolled slowly toward the night stand where he kept a sketching pad and pen. In the dark, he hurriedly scribbled its likeness.

The Beast was aware that Patrick was sketching its portrait and it even seemed to be holding a pose until Patrick finished a rough draft.

And although it never spoke, threats burned from its eyes: *they shouldn't be educating Michael in the black arts. Michael was the enemy. They were to disassociate themselves from Michael or face the consequences*.

The next day Patrick told me of the ordeal and gave me his sketching of the Beast.

I quit my job at the Boy's Club and became a high-commissioned salesman, enlisting students for an airline school. *Money* was not my motivation for being in sales, but rather *Time*. I could make a couple of quick sales, then take time off to write until the money was gone and the refrigerator was empty. I wanted to buy enough Time to learn all I could about the Spiritual Beings beseeching me, and I simply couldn't waste time on a meaningless job.

On July 15, 1979, I drove eighty miles south of Indianapolis to the rural community of Bedford, Indiana. I preferred working the smaller towns. I was in no frame of mind for making hard-nosed sales pitches, and country people were friendlier,

more to my liking. However, my sales prospect canceled my appointment. I searched for a shade tree to park under, while awaiting my next scheduled presentation.

I'd driven all over Bedford trying to locate a decent spot to park, but I couldn't find the smallest inkling of a place to pull over. It was a scorching Sunday afternoon, and I eventually lost my temper and slapped the steering wheel with an opened palm. I needed to pull off the road, to utilize the extra time I had between sales appointments. I had books to read; I carried them with me wherever I went. But I could not find a parking spot and I cursed the town for not having a road wide enough for me to pull aside.

I finally spotted a blacktopped parking lot. I didn't care who owned the property, as I pulled in and parked. I looked to see where I was: *Trinity Pentecostal Church*.

My car baked under the mid-summer sun, and I left my windows up and the air conditioning on high speed. I loosened my tie, aware I couldn't keep the cool air blasting for a full two hours, although I'd give it another ten minutes.

I tossed my sales kit into the back seat. I grabbed an array of books and notes to study up front. I thought perhaps that a church congregation ought to know about the Dark World. Maybe they should know about the Beast and the Friendly Alien. Maybe I should speak to them as a group.

I opened the Bible I'd brought with me, and searched for passages about demons. However, I couldn't interpret the King's English or the mystical Prophecies. I closed the book with a thud.

I leaned back and daydreamed. I basked in the scenery beyond the church, absorbing the tranquillity of the hills and the rolling green meadows. I wished I could rent an isolated farm house, to have the required solitude to figure things out. *Somewhere near Bedford would be nice. With lots of land. And horses!*

"Hey!"

I jumped when a man pounded on my window and shouted at me. I thought I was being kicked off the lot for trespassing and I had nowhere else to go. I hurriedly sought an excuse, hoping the man would change his mind and allow me to stay for a couple more hours. I guessed him to be in his fifties. Noting the pin-striped, three-piece suit I also guessed he was an important businessman around town. I shut off the engine and rolled down the window.

"Are you a preacher?" asked the man. He brushed back his long, wavy hair, as he stooped to see inside the car.

"Huh?"

"Well, I noticed your out-of-town license plate. A lot of preachers have been visiting lately—for our revival, you know. That's why I thought you might be one. I'm Charlie Scalf. I'm the pastor here."

I introduced myself and explained my presence in the church lot. I asked if my being there was a bother, which of course, it wasn't. And for good measure, I held aloft my Bible, as if hinting that I was there on church business.

"Say, why don't you drop by tonight? It's the last of our revival and it's been a pretty good one?"

"Oh, I don't know if I'll still be around."

"Course, a lot of folks don't like what I'm preaching about. We're talking about fallen angels and demons. What they are, where they come from, how to deal with them. Kind of scares some folks, you know."

I glanced at my Bible, then at the church. *Coincidence*, I thought. "I know." I picked up the notes off my lap and showed them to Charlie (Charlie insisted on a first-name basis and didn't attach Reverend to it). "That's what I'm studying. I got all kinds of books here about that."

Charlie said, "That's wonderful. Why not come by tonight. Then next Sunday I'll schedule you to speak about what you've been studying."

"Huh? I'm not a preacher."

"That ain't no problem. We always save Sunday evenings for testimonials. We generally get a nice crowd, too."

The invitation stunned me. *Another* coincidence, I thought. I'd dug myself into a hole and couldn't unearth a ready excuse. "Umm, sure. What time?"

"It starts at seven-thirty, but people get here about seven."

Startled by the circumstances falling my way, I assured Charlie that I'd be in attendance.

"That's wonderful," said Charlie. "I think you'll like our church. It's not too big and kinda cozy little place." He mentioned that Trinity had about a hundred members; the building was all paid for, that he didn't draw an income from the church, but rather worked a good job with the railroad. And, he and his wife (who played the "Pie-Annie" for the church) were originally from "West Virginny," but were moving to "Flory-da" when he retired next year. "How do you like Bedford?" he asked.

"Fine. I was thinking about renting a house around here someday."

"You know, I've got a house I'm looking to rent."

Coincidence, I thought. "Actually, I'm looking for a farm house—something with acreage."

"It *IS* a farm house. Me and the wife lived there for fifteen years. But we built this new home in town, you see, and the old one's just sitting vacant. Sure would like to rent it to you. Got thirty acres."

By then I was so overcome with the numbers of coincidences that I made up my mind to take it. "Would you mind if I put a horse out there?"

"Land sakes, the horses are already there. You're welcome to ride them, if you want."

Oh, God. The place practically had my name on the mailbox. But I didn't have the resources to pay for it. I figured I could handle three hundred dollars, no more. "What are you asking for it?"

"Well, that's a problem. I hate to have to charge so much, but since it's a three-bedroom with a refurbished basement—and with the land and all—I've got to have two hundred a month."

"Uh, okay. I'll rent it. First of the month."

Charlie lifted his hands off my car and stood up, looking surprised. "Well land sakes—don't you want to drive out and see it, aforehand?"

"No."

I attended church that evening, and listened intently to Charlie's spiel about Bad Things.

History of Bad Things: The Story

In the beginning ...

God said let there be Good Things, and there was good. Bad Things simply did not exist. No hunger, no disease. All wealth, no poverty. No Republicans, no Democrats. No brussel sprouts. No television reruns.

Good Things. Nobody worked, everyone played. Teachers taught only recess. Edy's Grand ice cream had no calories. And mothers said, "If you don't eat all your candy, you'll have no spinach," while children argued, "It's my turn to do the dishes ... is not ... is too, you got to do them last night, Mom, tell Billy it's my turn or else I get to do laundry." Hockey games took forever because players kept stopping to shake hands, and Monday Night Football was broadcast without announcers.

In the Land of Good Things, two excelled. Elohim, the League Commissioner, and Shining One, the star athlete—both honored positions in a world where only games existed.

The Commissioner organized the perfect league. If a blemish existed at all, it was perhaps his rule that every angel in town had to participate, including Little Michael. The problem was in finding a role that Little Michael could play. He couldn't punt or pass. He couldn't catch. He couldn't run or hit with power. Fact was, Little Michael couldn't do much of anything. He couldn't be water-boy in a world where no one thirst, nor a towel-boy when no one sweat. So Michael roamed the sidelines, leading cheers for Elohim.

At the extreme was Shining One. He won every game. Hit a home run every time at bat. Pitched all no-hitters. Scored a touchdown every play. Made a basket every shot, full length of the court, never missed. So victorious was Shining One, he changed his name to Shining Won and asked to renegotiate his contract.

Elohim, recognizing talent, paid him everything he asked, and more. In fact, he paid him so much more than Shining Won expected, his sports agent asked Elohim to take some back, because nobody deserved that kind of salary for merely playing games.

(The sports agent's request to return money was known far and wide as the first recorded miracle).

The awesome contract offered by Elohim to Shining Won called for rubies and gold and gems of every nature. No-Interest loans, paid-up credit cards. Controlling interest in capital-free business ventures. Company chariot and driver. Designer silk robes. Everything.

"No," declined Shining Won to the offer.

"But why?" asked Elohim. "Is it because you want a long-term contract? I'll make it eternal."

"No," he refused again.

"Is there a problem with your pay? I'll give you as much as a COLLEGE athlete, if that's what it takes."

"What I want—what I demand, or I'll walk—is all of what you've said. PLUS, I want Michael to be leading the cheers for ME. Shining Won then boasted what became known as "The Fabulous Five I AM's."

I AM the one scoring all the points.

I AM winning all the games.

I AM the star.

I AM the Top Vote Getter on the All-Star Ballot.

I AM the one making all the plays."

"I can't understand why the crowd cheers for you. I want the recognition. I want election to the Hall of Fame. Why should you get all the glory?"

And Elohim made the greatest "come back" in history. "Because I AM the one making all the plays FOR you," answered Elohim.

Shining Won could not have been struck with a more insulting response. Thus he made the first reference to bodily functions and about Bad Things with Mom. In fact, his sideline antics were so infuriating that the crowd hushed in disbelief. And that's when it happened ...

the star athlete in question physically shoved the League Commissioner.

"You're fired," said the Commissioner.

"You can't fire me. Who'll take my place?"

Elohim looked to the bench. Shining Won had a valid point; nobody had a fraction of his skills. And then came an even greater insult; a maneuver that rocked the stadium. Elohim stared Shining Won in the eye and proclaimed for all to hear: "Michael will take your place."

"Little Mikey?" Shining Won laughed. And although the crowd was polite, they too, couldn't help but snicker. "Little Mikey?" Shining Won turned to reenter the game as star quarterback, but Elohim intervened.

"Michael—you're in the game for Shining Won."

Shining Won stormed to the sidelines and threatened Michael. "You're dead meat, wimp."

Elohim called Michael's play from the sideline.

Michael entered the game along with an entire new lineup of scrubs. With the game clock winding down, Michael threw a "Hail Mary" the length of the field. He then sprinted to the end zone in world record time, and caught his own touchdown pass. The announcer cheered, "Holy Cow! Scrubs win! Scrubs win!"

Shining Won ran onto the field in protest, and Little Mikey proceeded to throw him out of the stadium. Humiliated, Shining Won took one-third of the players and one-third of the crowd, vowing to start his own league. He vowed he'd be back some day to put Elohim out of business. "And you," he snarled at Michael, "will be dealt with first."

And that's the story of Bad Things as I understood it, explained by Charlie Scalf. Except it wasn't a game. It was serious business. It was war. Lucifer's name was changed to *Adversary* (Satan). His handsome appearance turned beastly. His melodious voice degraded to growls. And he and all his rebellious followers were banished. They became disembodied spirits—fallen angels, demons—with no place to call home or to rest. Satan had demanded a Kingdom, so he'd been granted one of vast empty air. He was King of the Land of Nothing. The Ruler of Darkness. The Prince and Power of the Air.

*Forgive me Father
I have killed a man.
I have loved a woman.
I have stolen for the church.*

*I Am Opus Dei.
(Anonymous)*

BOOK 1:6

Sumpin's Not Right

After my coincidental introduction to Charlie Scalf, I took a leave of absence from my job. I wanted all my time, all my efforts, to be used in preparation for my accidentally scheduled church testimony. Finally, by late Saturday on July 14, 1979, I set aside my notes, convinced I could absorb no more. I climbed into bed for a few hours rest before my upcoming drive to Trinity Pentecostal Church in Bedford, Indiana.

Sometime before sunrise, I was rustled from my body for another interworld journey. This time I never entered the black tunnel. I did not travel to the Dark World. Instead, I was exposed to another plane of the same world, as if a curtain of air had been drawn open.

The world behind the wall of air seemed no different than the world I'd just left, although I'd been asleep in bed back there, and in this duplicate world I was wide awake on a pleasant, sun-shiny day. I stood in the parking lot of the local *A&P* Supermarket on the southside of Indianapolis. The asphalt parking lot was clean and black. The brick building, a brilliant red. The surroundings were tranquil, until I turned to see the Dark Thing drifting to my left.

It was Death. Although we'd never met, I had no difficulty recognizing it. Death was wrapped in a coarse black cloth, a shroud, a dark gauze wound head to toe. It circled in a surreal motion, facing me squarely at all times, as it moved from left-to-left. I'd been surrounded by Death. Or had Death *captured* me? Whatever the meaning, Death *toyed* with me.

I spoke, "You don't bother me."

The shrouded spirit slowly departed, wanting me to behold its flight. I silently watched it retreat toward the "*A&P*" building. I looked beneath the sign and saw my family huddled as if for a family portrait. They were all present—my mother and father; brothers and sister; aunts and uncles; Grandma and Grandpa. They were unaware that Death hovered above them.

"NO!" Frightened for them, I called out. They never heard me. I jumped up-and-down, waving both arms high over my head to warn them. They didn't see me.

I charged forward to attack Death, to save my family. But suddenly a giant military policeman, twenty feet tall, intercepted me and blocked my path. The soldier—dressed in khaki pants, a short-sleeve khaki shirt, and a black helmet with an MP insignia—would not allow me to warn my family about the black-shrouded being that hovered above them, and I was forced to watch helplessly.

I attempted to out-flank the giant, hoping to flee past him and chase Death away from my family. The giant side-stepped and blocked my route. I struck at him, trying to force him away. But how could I fight the mighty soldier? I watched them fade away with Death, into darkness. I cried in defeat.

I was still in tears when I awoke, back inside my body. The sun peeked through my window, reminding me it was time to arise and get ready to go expose the Beast to the church in Bedford, Indiana. I thought long and hard about the threats made against my family by the black-shrouded being I'd just encountered. I decided to ignore the threats and on July 15, 1979, I drove to Charlie Scalf's church.

The doors to the tiny, cinder-block church remained open between the morning and evening sessions, and I sauntered in alone, six hours early. The lights were shut off, but sunbeams sneaked through the frosted windows and slid across the varnished wood like moonlight on a slick river, enabling me to see my way to the front.

I meandered up three altar steps in slow, ceremonial strides. I was allowing God ample opportunity for a miraculous sign, should He display one, but He never did, not even when I leaned into position behind the gleaming, oaken pulpit. I stared across the darkened chapel and conversed with my soul, while empty pews echoed my thoughts.

In rehearsed gestures, I positioned my chalkboard and strategically arranged my many notes. I had never addressed a congregation before, but I needed to tell someone about the Dark World, and I didn't know who else might listen. My own family disbelieved me about Bad Things. My father said, "If you don't quit talking like that you'll go nuts." My older brother said, "I don't want that #^!*&! kind of talk in my house." The nicest thing my younger brother said was to say nothing at all. And my mother said, "I believe you, but what will my friends think if you go around talking like that? Can't you say something funny?" My sister believed me, but she didn't count because she would have believed whatever I said. I needed an attentive ear outside my own family.

I ached to inform others about my ventures in the Dark World. But even so, I hadn't planned on speaking in church—it just happened that way. By coincidence. Nonetheless, when the Sunday Evening worship service began, I was somehow up front on the altar, facing the congregation.

I dreadfully awaited my introduction, while the pastor opened service with prayer, songs, and announcements. I mentally rehashed. Physically perspired. When finally introduced as the featured speaker, I approached slowly, unsure of myself. I acknowledged to the congregation that I wasn't a Biblical scholar; I intended to glance toward their pastor occasionally, to seek a nod of approval when interpreting Biblical passages.

"Amen" filled the air, catching me off guard. I paused, scrambling for my notes, trying to reorganize my thoughts.

"I have something to tell you," I began, "and I'm not going to waste my energy trying to convince you that I'm telling the truth. You either believe me, or you don't. I hope you do, but nonetheless, I'm here to tell you there's another world besides the one we now live in."

"Amen."

"I say that, because I've been there on more than one occasion."

Nobody said amen. They seemed a bit stunned at that statement.

"I'm not talking about Heaven. I'm not talking about Hell, either, although maybe it *is* Hell, it's *scary* enough. For lack of a name, I call it the Dark World.

"There are *living* creatures in the Dark World. I don't know what *kind* of creatures, even though I've had contacts with them. I haven't *seen* them—it's too *dark* in the Dark World to see them, but I believe they're some kind of spirits. Some are friendly. Some are hateful. One of them in particular is the *Ruler of the Hateful Ones*. One of them in particular is the *Ruler of the Friendly Ones*. And I know—even now as I stand here and talk—that the Friendly Ones and the Hateful Ones are at war in the Dark World.

"I don't know why I'm here tonight," I said with a tone of sadness. "It just kinda happened by coincidence, I guess. I don't even know how to say what I'm trying to tell you.

"Some things happened to me, but from what I've learned about Pentecostals, many of you, yourselves, have experienced ordeals with the supernatural. So I guess I don't have anything special to say, other than to confirm your beliefs that another world does exist, and in it, a struggle between the bad guys and good guys."

"Amen."

"Brother Scalf, am I correct in my interpretation of the Prophecies, that in the final years before the reign of the Antichrist, there shall be a corruption of the church and 'spiritual wickedness in high places?'"

Charlie nodded his head. The congregation saw his approval, and they all nodded, with some "Amens" sprinkled in.

"Well, again I want to reiterate that I don't know very much, but what I *do* know is this: Something's going on in the Vatican that's not quite right. I know many Protestant Christians equate the Catholic Church with the devil. I don't happen to believe that, but that's not what I'm trying to say.

"What I *am* trying to say is this: I think Pope John Paul I was murdered. I think the Roman Catholic Church has been taken over by some very bad people. They've *stolen* the church.

"I can't prove anything. I have nothing but circumstantial evidence, scattered in various print media and history books. But I also have been visited by a Spiritual Being who confirmed to me that John Paul I had been murdered. So therefore, for the sake of argument, let's pretend everything I'm about to tell you is purely, 'Coincidental.' Nonetheless it's all documented, and you can research this on your own, if you have doubts. I think the more you look into this matter, the more convinced you'll be that something doesn't gel.

"Sumpin's not right."

Sumpin's Not Right

José Maria Escrivá de Balaguer was a young attorney-at-law in his mid-twenties when political turmoil erupted for the overthrow of King Alfonso XIII, and for an end to the Spanish Monarchy. Never the one to miss an opportunity for personal gain, Escrivá took full advantage of the revolutionary atmosphere.

He envisioned himself as replacing the monarchy with his own "perfect society." His Perfect Society would consist of two classes of people: (1) the ruling elite, and; (2) a lesser army of lay people to carry out the elite's desires. A world of "Have's" to govern, and "Have-not's" to labor in servitude. But because opposition to the throne was forbidden as treasonous, Escrivá had to repress his aggressions for his own safety. He dared not to publicly declare his aversions.

However, Escrivá discovered a loophole that would allow him to legally sew contempt with the Spaniards against their King. He ingeniously abandoned his law career, for the priesthood. As a priest in the Catholic Church, he was legally and morally justified to pursue his ideologies of the "Perfect Society." To carry out his master plan, he established the "Sacerdotal Society of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei," as an exclusive brotherhood within the Catholic Church.

Nevertheless, the Catholic Church refused to recognize Escrivá's outlaw organization. The Church claimed that Opus Dei was:

"(nothing more than) a white masonry, seeking to establish the well-being of it's own members."

Opus Dei was proclaimed a forbidden evil by the Church of Rome. The rejection angered Escrivá, who warned the Vatican:

"Those who will not believe in the ways of Opus Dei, those who will not follow, will be—patiently over the years—convinced through 'Holy Coercion and Holy Forcefulness.'"

The long-term plan for his Perfect Society emphasized:

"international banking maneuvers (that will) sap economic power from the opposition, and divert their funds (into the holdings of Opus Dei). We will succeed in obtaining our perfect society of the international elite and of the international dollar."

But he would need cooperation of the upper class who would benefit from his lofty goals, and also of the young intellectuals who would carry on their struggle over time.

Opus Dei recruited important financiers and military help. By the mid-thirties they were powerful enough to back General Francisco Franco, who successfully ousted the King and seized the reigns as Spanish dictator. Franco rewarded Opus Dei with key positions in government. And the General would forever regret that he let Opus Dei in his front door.

Escrivá's plans had slowly, but firmly, taken root by 1943. As published by Max Gallo (E.P. Dutton, 1974) in his book, *Spain Under Franco: a History*, Opus Dei's pattern

of growth included heavy enlistments of young intellectuals, recruited by establishing college communities, *"where their lives (were) controlled and supervised by priests and indoctrination."* They'd induce student membership with glorious ideals of the Perfect Society, a society in which they'd be greatly rewarded for their efforts.

Their undying goal, simply stated in their own words:

"... to gain control over the whole of society, by a judicious placing of men."

When any of their well-trained members reached a position of power, they were bound by secret oaths to appoint other members, until they had a controlling interest in said establishment, or governmental branch. And to accomplish this magnanimous task of world domination, they'd require *"blind obedience."*

By 1947, Opus Dei spread like a cancerous growth in the Spanish government, controlling nearly every position of power. Other positions, in all walks of life, followed suit. Escriva reiterated that Opus Dei would:

"spread throughout all classes of civil society and particularly among intellectuals, in the quest for the (perfect society) within the world."

War between Opus Dei and the Vatican raged onward. Annually, Opus Dei applied for official admission into the Catholic Church, in order to receive legitimacy. Annually, Rome denied their request.

Rome cited Opus Dei as nothing more than a *"Holy Mafia."* They accused Opus Dei of trying to form a One-World Government, as well as a One-World Religion—which was blasphemous to Christianity and to the Roman Catholic Church.

Opus Dei adhered to their own *"Bible."* Jesus Christ was *not* listed as the way of salvation, as taught by the Catholic Church. Rather, Opus Dei declared their own book, *The Way*, as the true guideline to holiness. Their declared objective on Earth was not to promote salvation into Heaven, but instead, for each initiate to become:

"A Leader of Men, a Leader of Nations, (by adhering to its) 999 Maxims."

The Vatican would repeatedly lambaste Opus Dei for its wretchedness. The Catholic Church consistently accused Opus Dei as being:

"entirely contradictory to the Christian Bible. They are neither Catholic nor Christian of any faith."

By 1952, Opus Dei had grown too mightily to oppress any longer. They'd spread their tentacles worldwide. The Vatican dubbed them, *"Octopus Dei."*

They especially targeted the Spanish-speaking Latin American countries. They would find a weak nation to prey upon, win an election or an appointment to power, then bring others onboard. In this manner, they established footholds in international organizations, such as the Vatican's own College of Cardinals.

In 1952, Opus Dei blatantly and defiantly established their own international headquarters in Rome. Using *"Holy Coercion and Holy Forcefulness,"* they applied a ruthless pressure the Church could no longer thwart. Finally, the Vatican granted Opus Dei its official status. *But the Church refused to recognize them as a "Christian religious order."* Rome officially labeled Opus Dei as:

"A humanistic, secular cult of men."

Only about two percent of Opus Dei were priests. The remainder were laymen who carried out the work as instructed by their leaders. The laymen forfeited all their earnings and earthly possessions to Opus Dei, who in return provided all their living necessities. An exception was granted to the wealthy and powerful, who became "*honorary cooperators*" and were not required to make financial sacrifices. In fact, they were often the recipients of financial rewards for having granted generous favors. Such Honorary Cooperators included Nelson Rockefeller, who belonged to the Brazilian Chapter, and several members of the Rothschilds family in the German Chapter.

In 1966, General Juan Onganía was invited to an Opus Dei "*awareness retreat*" in his homeland of Argentina. Afterwards, General Onganía led a revolution to overthrow the government. When he seized power as Dictator of Argentina, General Onganía nationalized all the banks into one central bank, *with the exception of the Banco Ambrosio, owned by Opus Dei.*

A similar pattern preceded the revolution in Chile. General Allende attended "*awareness meetings*" with Opus Dei, after which a revolution ignited, resulting in General Allende's elevation to Dictator. And again, the banks were nationalized, except for Banco Ambrosio.

The method repeated itself, worldwide. Banco Ambrosio, headquartered in Luxembourg, fostered an international group of phony shell banks, most notably in South America and in Panama. And as the norm, in exchange for future political favors, Opus Dei would exalt a cooperator to power. In fact, when a later government of Argentina warred with Great Britain over the Falkland Islands, it was *Opus Dei who purchased the Exocet missiles for their Latin American partners.*

Opus Dei worked diligently with America's CIA. President Nixon sought cooperation for a military coup in Peru, and he needed people with enough savvy to run the operation outside the jurisdiction of the United States. America needed right-wing military support in Latin America, as well as vital military commitments in the strategic Mediterranean gateway controlled by Spain. Those objectives required dealings with Opus Dei.

In 1969, Opus Dei virtually controlled the Spanish Government via their most alluring vehicle of operation—infiltration. They sat on every vital cabinet post. And more importantly, they'd persuaded General Franco (with Holy Coercion and Holy Forcefulness) to name Prince Juan Carlos—the most elite member of Opus Dei—as heir to the Spanish Throne upon Franco's death.

July 23, 1969: Newsweek

"As always, the 76-year old Caudillo ('the Leader,' General Franco) remained firmly in control of himself—that is, until he came to the reason for his rare public appearance. Suddenly his voice began to quaver, tears welled up behind his gold-rimmed spectacles and his hands shook violently. 'The relief of the Chief of State is a normal act imposed by man's mortality,' he declared. 'Conscious of my responsibility before God and history, I have decided to recommend Prince Juan Carlos de Borbon y Borbon as my successor.'"

While in charge of Spain's national economy, Opus Dei embezzled billions of dollars by granting themselves unsecured loans. Eventually, the national banks declared insolvency and had to be bailed out by the government. The same pattern was carried on throughout the years, even reaching far into the American banking systems where so many banks would be pilfered by Opus Dei that the American government would bail out billions to keep the entire banking system from collapsing.

The Spanish media attacked Opus Dei and sought the arrest of the technocrats in charge of the fraudulent bank loans. But the State's main witness opted to shoot himself in the head with a shotgun. Pursuit of the bank embezzlements ceased.

With their pilfered fortunes, Opus Dei bought a large chunk of the world.

In an October 7, 1968 dispatch by UPI, it was noted:

"(Opus Dei owns) international newspapers, radio stations, a news magazine, a leading news agency, leading universities, a business school associated with Harvard, an agricultural college and scores of schools and technical education centers, banks, insurance firms, real estate interests and a large industrial empire. The Roman Catholics see them as a threat to the religious tradition ... a Holy Mafia or White Masonry."

A 1973 *Los Angeles Times* report on June 24, described:

"Critics call it 'Octopus Dei,' God's Octopus, or the 'Holy Mafia,' and charge that it exerts immense influence in ... economic, academic and political life"

"Further, the critics say, it is an elitist fraternity, the members of which are selected not so much for religious vocation as for their wealth, brains, and even good looks."

"One conservative general described the movement as 'a new white Masonry that is trying to sow discord in the heart of national institutions.'"

As with the case of the biggest scandal in Spanish history, Opus Dei went about its worldwide mission of embezzling funds to support its Perfect Society. Behind the scenes, they pilfered from banks and savings and loans institutions until the vaults were barren. Often, Opus Dei's planted bank officers used the guise of unsecured loans, but sometimes they boldly resorted to blatant skimming.

It was Pope John Paul I, himself, who caught them in the act of pilfering the Vatican Bank. The Pope discovered that Paul Marcinkus, head of the Vatican Bank and a member of Opus Dei, was receiving hush money to turn his back on, or perhaps even aid, Opus Dei's mass robberies.

Despite denials by Marcinkus, the Pope discovered documentation that Marcinkus had received payments of six million, four hundred thousand dollars from Opus Dei and their outside collaborators, the P-2 Masons. As supporting evidence, the payoffs to Marcinkus were made in fifteen installments to three banks in Switzerland, then transferred to two Opus Dei facades: Riverinvest, and Stanley Brothers & Company. And the Vatican Bank itself, had been depleted.

It was on September 28, 1978, that Pope John Paul I announced his intentions of exposing Opus Dei and the P-2 Masons, at noon the following day.

"POPE DIES IN HIS SLEEP"

Upon the Holy Father's untimely death by "*natural causes*," the Italian government pursued John Paul's leads. The federal investigators discovered that the international bank frauds ranged all the way to the Franklin Bank in New York, and later to the Continental Bank of Illinois (both owned in large part by Opus Dei).

American banks, and those of other nations, were robbed on a daily basis, depleting the cash and funneling it into Opus Dei and P-2 Mason accounts, while governments borrowed back the stolen funds at high rates to pay their insured depositors. But John Paul I had uncovered key men in the operation, and *the information was confirmed by Italian government investigators!*

An arrest warrant was issued for Paul Marcinkus of Opus Dei and for Michele Sindona of the P-2 Masons. Marcinkus took refuge within the Vatican walls and the police could not enter to serve the warrant. However, Michele Sindona was jailed. The headlines read:

"Michele Sindona Dies In Prison"

The coroner's report said that Sindona died of "Natural Causes." Cardiac arrest. He'd suffered a heart attack while eating a prison breakfast before his scheduled court-testimony. He simply dropped dead. His last words before his "*heart attack*" were:

"They poisoned me."

In fact, six other witnesses all committed suicide before government investigators could question them. That left only Paul Marcinkus as a link to an international bank embezzlement scheme. And the new Pope refused to cooperate with investigators and offered political asylum to Marcinkus.

Opus Dei and their outside cooperators, the P-2 Masons, had established the nasty habit of granting "bad loans" to themselves, not repaying, and thus putting the banks into insolvency. Thus national governments were forced to cover the losses with taxpayers' money. They didn't stop with individual nations, either, as they also pilfered the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, chaired by George Rodo Lopez, member and mastermind of Opus Dei.

According to CovertAction Information Bulletin #18-W83:

"Opus Dei and the P-2 Masons were robbing dozens of banks daily."

Because their operations were implanted within the protected confines of the Vatican, the Italian Government could not get at Opus Dei, nor the P-2 Masons, who took refuge in the secrecy of Masonic Lodges. Marcinkus went to the extreme of imprisoning himself within the Church, never leaving, as authorities waited outside to nab him.

Nonetheless, Milan magistrate Emilio Alessandrini proceeded to prosecute him, even while Marcinkus hid behind the new Pope. Judge Alessandrini issued an official summons to Pope John Paul II to allow the arrest of Marcinkus, but the Pope refused. When the Italian Government sued for his surrender, the Pope merely extended his protection. The Pope, himself a member of Opus Dei, assured federal authorities that he would never allow the arrest of the Vatican's official banker.

That week's headlines read:

***"Communist Red Brigade
Assassinates Milan Magistrate"***

The case was dismissed.

One member of the secret society decided he'd had enough, and offered testimony to the State. The Italian Government reissued arrest warrants to purge the Vatican of its harbored international crime syndicate. But the day before the court hearing the "Communist Red Brigade" blew up the informant's car. That case, too, was dismissed.

Authorities soon implicated the Chairman of Banco Ambrosiano. An arrest warrant was issued for the syndicate member. But they found him hanging by the neck from a bridge. Quick-thinking police rushed to his office to confiscate damaging papers. Unfortunately, the secretary had destroyed them all, moments before she *"fell out the window"* of the upper floor of the building. Case dismissed.

The Italian Government solicited the highly touted services of bank investigator, Giorgio Ambrosoli. An intense, independent review concluded the same as had Pope John Paul I:

"Opus Dei and the P-2 Masons have established a direct link to the Vatican Bank and the Church's worldwide holdings."

Giorgio Ambrosoli, himself, issued an arrest order for Marcinkus. But again, Pope John Paul II refused to turn him over to authorities.

But this time, the Vatican was up against a powerful investigator in Ambrosoli. He'd found John Paul I's secret list of names. At last, the Italian Government had solid proof of an international bank scandal that went right to the Vatican itself. Ambrosoli telephoned the Chief of Police, Boris Giuliano and stated that the list:

"Reads like a Who's Who, and it includes top politicians, generals, publishers, industrialists, and financiers."

He hurriedly went to the home of Chief Biuliano to map a strategy.

The next morning, the "Communist Red Brigade" shot Giorgio Ambrosoli as he stepped outside his apartment on his way to work. The case would have been dismissed, but the membership list had been left in protective custody of Police Chief Giuliano. The case was scheduled to go to court.

But by coincidence the "Communist Red Brigade" shot the Chief of Police outside his home. And the secret list disappeared. Case dismissed.

The Vatican issued a terse, official response toward the accusations:

"There was never a list."

The Italian Government carried an arrest warrant to the Vatican, demanding that the Pope extradite Paul Marcinkus. But this time, the rules changed drastically, and mysteriously.

Pope John Paul II promoted Paul Marcinkus to a rank second only to the Pope himself.

Shockingly, John Paul II then proposed to grant Official Recognition to Opus Dei, and to favor them with the highest status in Vatican history, "a personal prelature," making Opus Dei's secret organization answerable only to "God and Rome." However, Cardinal Giovanni Benelli—the personal advisor to the late Pope Paul IV—protested so vehemently against giving that much power to Opus Dei, that Pope John Paul II backed down. Two weeks later, Cardinal Benelli suffered a fatal heart attack, and Pope John Paul elevated Opus Dei.

Pope John Paul II then rocked the Catholic World when he announced for the first time in history that Masons (of the P-2 variety) could become Catholics and be admitted to the Church.

Then it was disclosed that by coincidence, prior to his being elected to the papacy by Opus Dei, Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II) had traveled Europe on a speaking tour paid for by Opus Dei in order to preach their philosophy of a Perfect Society to members and prospective recruits. They'd even published his speeches in a book that was heavily distributed to the Catholic Secretariats of State. Opus Dei used their vast publishing and media empire to promote Wojtyla to the papacy. In exchange for Wojtyla's help, they funneled forty million American dollars to Poland's Solidarity movement.

Now with the elevation to power of Pope John Paul II, Paul Marcinkus had in essence become the "Vice-Pope." He couldn't be touched, not by the Italian government, neither by police forces of any nation. He was free to leave the Vatican as he pleased under complete international diplomatic immunity.

Pope John Paul II then appointed fellow Opus Dei member, Cardinal Franz Koenig to head The Synod of Bishops, in charge of appointing new bishops around the world (of which 68 Opus Dei bishops were immediately appointed; and later, Alvarro del Portillo, the head of Opus Dei, himself). Opus Dei became a majority in the Cardinal of Bishops, and voting rules changed from needing a two-thirds majority, to a simple majority vote. (In February, 2001, John Paul II made the largest appointment in history to the College of Cardinals, nearly all of them members of Opus Dei.)

Pope John Paul II left the confines of the Vatican and became the most traveled Pontiff in history, resounding that all nations should:

" ... unite not only spiritually, but both politically and economically as well, in a global quest for the Perfect Society."

Opus Dei had "judiciously placed" their own man into the papacy, and by preaching love and applying a firm fist, had "holy coerced and holy forced" their quest for a One-World Government, and a One-World Religion as the foundation of their Perfect Society.

But dissension arose from within the Vatican. The Catholic hierarchy refused to accept the Pope's guarantees that all was well. Numerous Cardinals *demand*ed an outside panel to reinvestigate wrongdoings.

And the Italian Government, as persistent as ever, equally insisted that Pope John Paul II reopen the case. The government strongly argued that organized crime ran the church banking system and global economy.

Bowing to pressure from within the College of Cardinals, John Paul II agreed to an inquiry. He personally appointed an outside investigative panel. Further, he commissioned the outside council to *forever remain in charge of the Vatican's vast economic empire*. Chairing the *impartial* committee was German banker, Hermann J. Abs, *a Nazi war criminal and high-ranking member of the P-2 Masons*. *Hermann Abs concluded that nothing was amiss with the Vatican's economic empire and he dismissed the case.*

The Italian government went ballistic and called the findings a hoax. The Vatican replied with an official statement concerning the government's wild accusations:

"Pure fantasy." Opus Dei's mission was, "strictly spiritual and had never engaged in business or finance of any nature." Governments should leave the Church alone.

Finishing my church testimony for the evening, I read an excerpt from the best-selling book about John Paul II's election, *The Making of a Pope*, by Catholic Priest and Author Andrew Greeley. Greeley writes:

"I've had personal dealings with Opus Dei. They are entirely untrustworthy and totally dishonest."

Greeley also expounded how opponents of Opus Dei were treated to brutal character assassinations and ridicule. And often, if the critics persisted, it was not uncommon for a fatal car bombing from the "Communist Red Brigade" to quiet them.

I wondered aloud to the congregation: "Is this a *holy* organization? Sumpin's not right."

BOOK 1:7

The Burial Shroud Man

The week after my church testimony, I drove to the south side of Indianapolis to visit my parents. I had not seen them or spoken to them in several days. As I leisurely cruised down Madison Avenue, I heard a bleating horn behind me. My eyes shot to the rearview mirror. It was Mom.

She flashed her lights, and overtly pointed for me to pull over. She raced her van to the fast lane beside me and swerved, forcing me into a nearby parking lot. She unrolled her window and I saw that she was crying. She screamed, "Michael, the Devil is after us!"

From inside her van, Mom babbled incohesively about "ghosts" trying to kill the whole family. She cried while she talked, and I sat in stunned silence. Last night she was driving home by herself from a lakeside retreat the family owned in Southern Indiana, when something tried to run her off the road. "It was like a black ghost," she said. She saw it plainly. It was floating right in front of the van as she drove. She swerved left, then swerved right, trying to rid herself of the Dark Thing. She sped faster and faster, daring not to slow down for fear it would get her. It would not go away so Mom tried outdriving it. She was afraid she would crash and die, but she was more afraid of the thing hovering above the hood ornament. She knew it wasn't human. She could see through its transparent shape, her eyes never left it. It was charcoal gray in color. It had two protrusions on the top of its head, sort of like undeveloped horns. It had a full body with no arms or legs, and it tapered down to a funnel shape, looking something like a dark tornado at the bottom. Then it vanished.

Mom pulled off the road and cried. She was so scared that she would block it out of her mind for years, same as Hefford Sharp had done while hiding from the sharks in the Pacific Ocean in the 1945 sinking of *U.S.S. Indianapolis*. It was the human soul's formula for coping with terror—Mom would bury her fear on uncharted isles of memory. She'd later say, "Something scared me so badly, I screamed and screamed. But I can't remember what it was."

Now, listening to Mom cry about this and about that, I sat in my car, stunned. Suddenly I recognized a familiar sign on the red brick building in the parking lot. "A&P." I was in the same parking lot where the Alien Being had taken me last week. Mom was describing the shadowy being of Death that I'd earlier seen hovering above my family.

While I sat in a spiritual stupor I heard Mom explain more about every member in my family. "And a car swerved off the road Monday and broke Steve's leg while he was sitting at a bus stop. Then Cheri went into a coma Monday and she's still unconscious and nobody knows why, and Grandma went to visit her in the hospital Monday and the escalator broke and Grandma tumbled all the way down, and she's still in the hospital with Cheri, and Jason was attacked by a swarm of bumblebees on Monday and they stung him all over his body and he had to go to the hospital, and so did Dad when he tried to

rescue Jason, and I crashed our car Monday when I went to see all of them, cause a bumblebee was in the car with me and it kept stinging me too."

All this had happened the very day after I'd spoken in Charlie Scalf's church. I'd stood in the pulpit and testified that the Beast had threatened to harm my family. I'd told them that Monday, July 23, was the rising of the Dog Star, a holy day for Satan. Then I'd forgotten all about it, until now, as I watched Mom cry and shake in fear of things that were suddenly happening to them all. "Why didn't you stop in at the lake Saturday?" she then asked me. I explained that I'd been busy in Indianapolis and wasn't able to drive down. "But we all saw you there, driving around our trailer. We kept waving for you to stop, but you just kept going around the road in circles and then drove away."

"You win," I said aloud to the Beast. "I won't talk in church anymore." And I didn't. The attacks against my family stopped, as if their *safety* was my *hush* money.

In August of 1979, I moved into Charlie Scalf's isolated farm house. There, I seldom spoke to *anyone*, about *anything*. Simply stated, there were no human ears within miles. There was only George the Kat and my farm animals, with whom I conversed on a regular basis. But solitude is why I rented Charlie's place. I was schooling myself, to settle a score. And I'd never been more studious.

I must acknowledge that I did not live every moment in fear. The peacefulness of the countryside had something to do with that, I believe, as did the companionship of the animals. But another factor, I also believe, was that I kept my part of the bargain, and the Beast kept it's. So with all in order, I assumed the Beast went elsewhere. It went about its business; I went about mine.

On the morning of October 20, 1979, I awoke with the first rays of dawn while I lay shivering on the floor beneath a pile of blankets. I'd been struggling with sleep all evening, waiting for the weak morning sunshine to come rescue me from the cold night. I was glad when it came at last.

The frost deposit on the window warned that winter was on its way, and reminded me to purchase some heat for the house. I'd worked only two days, since having moved into Charlie Scalf's home, and I hadn't any money to fill the propane gas tank. Considering the deteriorating weather conditions, I figured I'd need to make a sale or two, in a few days.

For now, long underwear, sweat pants, blue jeans, two pairs of sweat socks, a T-shirt, shirt, sweater, and jacket would make do for sleeping attire, covered by two blankets and a quilt. The only part of me exposed to the cold air was my face, and George the Kat slept on that. The added weight of a giant feline on my head was sometimes uncomfortable, but the extra warmth of fur made up for any inconvenience. Besides, George slept pretty much where he wanted.

Last week, Patrick and David visited from Indianapolis, and while the two of them huddled on the floor in sleeping bags, George bedded down on David's face. David objected, but every time he tried nudging George off him, George growled a fearsome warning. Unbeknownst to me until the next morning, David had spent the night in fear, immobilized like an accident victim in traction, with George threatening to eat his face if he budged in complaint.

Patrick and David never returned.

But George loved *me*. Though he demanded to sleep on my head, not once did he ever threaten me.. He simply would not accept "NO!" as an answer to anything.

I'd throw him off me at night, but he'd simply jump back up before I could roll over. I'd throw him down again, and yell, "NO!" He'd jump back up. Down. Up.

George knew my limitations on patience. All he needed to do for a comfortable sleeping spot was to jump back up only one more time than he was thrown down. He'd manipulate me into believing there existed an endless assembly line of cats, until I was too groggy to argue the case. Some people counted sheep in order to fall asleep—I counted big cats.

one cat ("Get Down!" Jump back up)

two cats ("Down!" Up.)

three cats ("please ga-down-'m-tired." bk-up.)

five hundred eighty-seven cats ("gdn." up.)

two thousand six hundred twenty-three cats, and so forth, until I mumbled, "snfgmblfmmumm," and rolled over with a cat on my head.

When the sun defrosted my room, I eased George off my face, and edged closer to the electric space heater. The tiny heater wasn't much good in a three bedroom house, but now that I'd sealed off every room but my office, where I slept on the floor, it helped some. But it was good for only one room at a time, and my bladder and bowels screamed for relief, regardless of the igloo-like temperatures in the bare-tiled bathroom.

The cold air slapped me awake when I opened my office door and slipped into the john, where I relocated the space heater. Having plugged it in and spun its dial to *maximum*, I returned to my office. I pulled the covers back over my head and waited on this feeble effort at warming the toilet seat. I otherwise dared not to venture in and sit down as cold as it was, or else I'd have been constipated from shock until spring thaw. And further, I had no hot water to cleanse with in the morning. My whiskers grew. My body stank.

Charlie Scalf came by last week to repair the water heater, but I'd gone into town for groceries and wasn't there to let him in. Since I lived so far out in the country Charlie let himself in to fix the hot water. He was only half-done installing the heating element when, as he explained to me, "I was attacked by a lion!" Charlie ran all the way up the basement stairs and out of the house. The new heating element blew out because he refused to go back in to save it.

Hot water would have been nice, but for now I skipped cleaning. I lived in solitude, except for animals, and neither they nor I objected to offensive odors. I made a note to call Charlie in a day or two to reschedule fixing the water heater.

When out of the bathroom and dressed, I put on my boots and went to the kitchen to prepare breakfast. My refrigerator contained only German potato salad and some baked beans. I could barely afford that. I had a cold bite of each, and washed it down with cheap orange-aide ("*contains no juice, artificial color, artificial flavor, sugar, water*").

When finished with *my* breakfast, I prepared some *Gravy Train* for George (he preferred dog food to the wimpy feline varieties), and stuffed my pockets with apples for the horses. I grabbed my hiking stick and wandered out to the *back thirty* for my morning jaunt.

As I hiked through the shoulder-high weeds on a narrow trail, a black snake writhed across and gave me the jitters. I gripped my walking stick, which doubled as a

weapon: sometimes against snakes; sometimes against giant spiders. I never knew what I'd come up against, in the wilds out back.

The Outback split in two: (1) on the left was a wide-open pasture where the horses grazed; (2) to the right was the seldom explored *Badlands*, a heavily wooded area with steep hills and rugged gullies, waterfalls, and a winding creek at the bottom. It was postcard beautiful and an exhilarating walk.

On this particular morning the horses weren't in the pasture, which meant they were watering at the creek in the Badlands. I liked when they were far away, because I enjoyed whistling for them to come.

The brown filly, whom I'd named "Apples" because she craved them so badly, whinnied in response. She was deep inside the Badlands when she heard my call that an apple awaited her. Her driving hooves beat the hills like drums, vibrating the virgin air and echoing each quarter-note of, "*AP-ple-AP-ple, AP-ple-AP-ple*" She approached me and pushed her nose into my coat pocket, where she always found her treat.

The pinto named "Patches," didn't trust me, since she'd seldom seen a *Two-Legged Creature* in the uninhabited Badlands. I tossed an apple her way, but she fled, convinced the Creature was trying to pelt her. She lunged to the bottom of the hill and peeked from behind a tree, where like an ostrich with its head in the sand, she thought she was hidden. I gently rolled an apple down her way. She ate it, and I rolled her another.

I turned my back to Apples, pretending to leave. Apples pushed me, as if saying, "*Hey! What's that in your pocket!*" She frisked me with her snout and turned up one more. Finally, I emptied my pockets before Apples believed I was finished.

I sauntered down to the brook, where the pure, spring water swirled its fastest at the bend. I swung across on the vines, back and forth a couple of times over the shallow, rushing water. On the far side, I sat on a tree stump.

On this morning, I talked to God. I spoke to Him like God was a Person, capable of listening. I'd not done that before. It was Hefford Sharp's doing. I listened to his taped interviews often. He captivated me when he spoke of other worlds and beings. He made me wonder if God existed as something more than electrical energy, which had always been my guess before ... well, before Stuff happened. So on the morning of October 20, 1979—all by my lonesome in the Badlands, where no one could eavesdrop and think I was crazy—I called God's bluff. *Come out, come out, wherever you are!*

It didn't work, but the therapy of self-confession satisfied me to a degree.

An ugly thought entered my mind: I'd have to return to the house and schedule some sales appointments over the phone. *What a bummer.* But hunger pangs reminded me how badly I needed a sale. And the morning recollections of the merciless cold motivated me back up the steep, steep hill.

When I reached the carport I knocked the mud and wet leaves off my walking stick. I valued the eight-foot-long branch I'd picked up in the Badlands; it was straight, with a sudden crook at the top for a handle, like a cane. Without it, I would have never made it up the incline from the creek, and would have been trapped in the Badlands forever, or so I pretended.

Back to the house, I pounded my stick on the concrete drive under the carport. That's when the Big Hill across the street beckoned me. I'd never been there. So like Moses heeding the call of the mountains, I packed my shepherd's staff in hand, and set off to explore lands unknown. To find the edge of the world; to discover America; and to

search for God, all on the other side of the street. I leaped my only neighbor's wire fence, half expecting to return with a couple of stone tablets, after first talking to a burning bush.

At the top of the hill, I dropped to my knees and cried. The images of the Beast trying to kill me were vivid. How could I fight it? I begged God to advise me. To say something. Say anything.

Nothing. God was shy.

I didn't understand. If God existed, why did He let me fend for myself in the Dark World? Who were those guys I'd met there? Did God already know about it? Did He even care? *Hello, anybody home up there? Where are you? Why won't you reveal yourself?*

I stood and dried my eyes. I was astonished I'd done such a thing. Fear of the Beast had weakened me. I wouldn't allow it to happen again.

I scouted the terrain. The hillside provided a good vantage point. The heavily wooded areas to the north were not plausible for hiking, but the open pasture at the bottom of the hill looked ideal and picturesque. I didn't know where I'd end up, but I descended the hill and jumped the pasture fence.

I paused to watch a herd of cows a hundred yards away. I'd seldom seen cows, until my move to the country, and I watched them studiously. Cows amused me. They huddled in a circle beneath a shade tree, conducting an oval office meeting. Cows did a lot of that; they were business-oriented and orderly.

I enjoyed watching their meetings come to a close, with all the cows lining up single-file to leave. Each would glance up to see her neighbor going off to God-knows-where, and she'd follow. Similar to the way Little Mikey's first-grade class had always marched to the restrooms and to lunch—in orderly fashion, one-by-one, sticking close, not wanting to get lost or to be left behind.

But what entertained me the most about cows, by far, was watching them graze. In order to eat, cows needed a *fence* like people needed a plate and utensils, without which there'd be no meal.

They'd stretch their necks far through the fence to get a bite of foreign grass. Grass imported from *The Other Side of the Fence* was much tastier. They'd take a bite, straighten up, and get lost deeply in thought while eating, like brokers evaluating the stock market in the morning paper at breakfast. Cows focused every thought on how to get a bigger and better bite of foreign grass. How to corner the market.

One morning, I watched them knock down a weak section of fence—their big chance for a hostile takeover. I observed them filing through (*okay, class, one-by-one*), until they were all vacationing on *The Other Side of the Fence*.

And in an orderly manner (*okay, class, one-by-one*), they lined up against the other side of the fence, sticking their heads back across to get a bite of their own grass, which was now on *The OTHER Other Side of the Fence*.

By Fate, one of them *rediscovered* the open section of the fence (their memories being from bite-to-bite), and they all *re-escaped* (*okay, class, one-by-one*), to the land of milk and honey where God had surely led them to *ANOTHER Other Other Side of the Fence*. A land where Each and Every time they crossed there were *MORE Other Other Sides of the Fence*. They'd found Cow Heaven!

Now this particular group across the field paid no attention to me, as they busily discussed world events, such as import-export trade balances of grass from *The Other*

Side of the Fence, and how to get those darned Japanese cows to stay on their own side. All of them were engaged in heavy discussion. Except for one. A black one.

The black one, I thought, would soon be in big trouble with its peers because it wasn't attending their cow meeting. In fact, it had completely ignored the other cows and had done nothing but stare at me ever since I jumped the fence.

From a distance, I kept still, watching the cow.

From a distance, the cow kept still, watching me.

I started through the field, on my journey to find God.

Blackie started through the field, on his journey to find hell's bells.

I stopped.

Blackie stopped.

Halfway across the pasture, I noticed something odd about Blackie; something different from the other cows. Blackie didn't have a briefcase—one of those baggy things underneath. And he had horns, which the other cows did not. I could tell because he lowered his head and pointed them at me.

When Blackie kicked up turfs of grass and came huffing at me, I made sudden reference to a regular body function and hauled butt. Staff in hand, I ran looking for a Red Sea somewhere to part, as the Egyptian Chariots gave chase.

Fifty yards to my right stood an old, vacant house. If I reached that, it was home base. I breathed easier, once I reached the house and dodged inside. Cows didn't have sense enough to find a door. Blackie was only thirty yards away, but I no longer worried, as I explored my new surroundings.

The house was in shambles, as if it hadn't been lived in for quite some time. But at the moment, I didn't care. This was my impenetrable fortress. My castle under siege. I'd simply wait until Blackie forgot about me. At about the time I was wondering why the house smelled like crap, I saw the pile of manure right in the middle of the living room. Then I saw another pile in the kitchen. It suddenly dawned on me that the cows *lived* in the old house.

Blackie rooted through the front door like a muscular husband who'd come home from work early, only to find the milk man in bed with his bride. The ground quaked in close-quarter combat. I could feel its horrid breath whirling at my feet, in a snorting frenzy. I split out the back, just as Blackie lunged his horns upward at my fleeing butt.

I sprinted for the back fence, now only twenty yards away. Of all the courageous ways possible for a brave man to die, I never dreamed I'd be done in by *Elsie Borden's* boyfriend. And way out in the middle of nowhere, my bones would most likely rot before anyone found my remains. I'd hate for some archaeologist in a hundred years to excavate my fossilized tailbone, and wonder what tribal custom enticed me to ram that horn up there.

I made it! I scrambled over the fence with the aid of my staff. The barrier was only two strands of rickety wire, and would not have stopped any creature other than a cow. But *all* cows—even Ole Blackie—were instilled at birth with the deepest respect for fences. It was said by those who knew, that cows in India *worshipped* fences, with the hopes of reaching cow-nirvana: to be one with the wire, and to be reincarnated as a mighty chain-link.

Blackie skidded to a halt and bowed his horns in prayer to the holy fence. It eyed me only a few short steps away, but it wasn't about to violate the sacred shrine of sagging strands.

For the first time, I experienced *The Joys of The Other Side of the Fence*. Yes siree. I'd have to detour my mystical journey, of course. And unfortunately, the side of the fence now confronting me led down a steep hill, through thick woods, and no doubt toward the *Castle of the Wicked Witch*. But the alternative was to cross back through the field, where the defiant Ole Blackie reigned supreme.

So with staff in hand, I descended the enchanted side of the hill, half-expecting to run across a tin man, a scarecrow, and a cowardly lion as I searched for God.

Eventually, I found train tracks. The tracks seemed endless, but I knew if I followed them, I'd sooner or later locate a recognizable landmark. Being dreadfully lost, I stepped to the next wooden beam and the next. I never found God, but thousands of wooden train ties later, I found the road home. And that was equally nice.

I slept well that night of October 20, cold or not. Until once again, the Friendly Alien came for me. Before the sun rose on the twenty-first of October in 1979, the Friendly Alien pulled me from my body and led me on another journey.

I strolled along the sidewalk of a busy metropolitan area. I was in a hurry to get somewhere, but the old, white-haired lady in front of me was in my way and slowing me down. I decided to pass her. Pedestrian traffic poured by heavily from the opposite way, so I slid around to the right. But she side-stepped and cut me off. I didn't particularly get angry with her, because old folks were sometimes confused about where they were going. I reversed to the other side, like a football player cutting back against the grain when the designed hole suddenly closed with a wall of linebackers.

Hey, Lady! She did it again. She deliberately cut me off and blocked my path. Old or not, I was about to angrily confront her, when I heard the elderly person say, "Be patient."

I stopped in my tracks, not because of what was said, but because of how it was said. The elderly person in front wasn't a woman at all. She was a man, or rather, he was a man. His voice was ...

Hey, you're the Friendly Alien.

I recognized his voice, but had never before seen him. Nonetheless, there he was in front of me. Pedestrians continued to pass by swiftly, unaware the Friendly Alien was amidst them. I was the only one who saw him. But standing behind him, I didn't have a good look. I saw only the back of his long, white hair, which I had earlier assumed crowned the head of an elderly woman.

The Friendly Alien turned. I glimpsed his profile in great awe. He was a regular human male, albeit old. His aged skin had weathered to a leathery texture, like that of a salty, timeworn sailor. But his wardrobe simply didn't fit the character. The Man draped an elegant, deep-purple cloak around him that was designed for Royalty. Tailored for a King.

I strained for a better look at the Man, who had his majestic collar pulled high to conceal all but a small portion of his face. The Man turned slightly more, offering me a better view. I noticed his hair was not as long as I originally assumed. Earlier I had thought it flowed well beneath his collar, but it was actually about collar length. Then

the strangest thing happened, causing me to miss what the old Man said to me. As the old Man spoke, he became YOUNGER; and by the time he finished his sentence he was no older than in his early thirties. AGE meant nothing. AGE had no relative meaning in whatever world I was visiting.

The Man spoke again, and the city—the entire city—changed, or rather disappeared. The Man and I had suddenly traveled to a new place so quickly that I hadn't had time to say goodbye to the city. We were now standing at the intersection of an isolated dirt road in the middle of nowhere.

Suddenly I understood what he was trying to teach me. The big city was still around us, only now it was invisible as if we'd simply moved behind a different curtain of air. Furthermore, ALL the cities from Everywhere were around us. In this world, WE WERE EVERYWHERE, ALL AT ONCE. The Friendly Alien was showing me a world that didn't recognize TIME or DISTANCE.

The Man briefly raised the cape from his feet, allowing me the quickest of peeks at the flowing, white robe beneath. And I saw that his feet glowed a bright light of some kind. Then he quickly lowered the white garment that covered his feet, and draped the outer cloak back over the white garment. Then he grasped his outer cloak by both corners of its neck collar, and pulled the material high up over the back of his head, as if framing his face like a fine work of art. He turned to face me squarely.

Looking at his face was like he'd lassoed the very air at the bottom of my lungs and yanked it out. The Man was not really a Man, although he had the shape of a Man. His dark complexion was uniquely Middle-Eastern. So were his high, solid cheekbones, as was his large aquiline nose. His thick, heavy eyebrows matched his snow white mustache. A thought suddenly raced through my mind for no apparent reason: "He doesn't have a beard."

Then his eyes disappeared, leaving me to stare deeply into his empty eye sockets. It was as if a switch had been turned on, and an enormous flow of energy emitted from the bottomless wells of his eyes. Looking into them was like seeing everything that ever happened, in every place, to every person, ever born or who would ever be born—all at the same time.

As a simple human being, I could not take such a sight nor could I withstand so much energy. The split-second I saw such a thing I was knocked off my feet and onto my knees on the ground. His vacuous eyes housed the answers to every question ever asked. Every solution to every problem. I'd seen them for only as long as the blink of an eye, yet it was too great an experience for me. My tear ducts ruptured as a broken dam, my lungs quaked in crying heaves, and any sense of self-worth I'd ever harbored had abandoned me. I'd been reduced to absolute zero. I fell flat at his feet and hoped he'd have mercy on me for whatever tortures he had in store for me.

The Kingly Man reached down and picked me up. He hugged me tightly like Daddy used to lovingly squeeze Little Mikey, only I was too weak to hug him in return. He placed his soft hands directly on either side of my face, looked right at me—this time without the tremendous weaponry of energy flowing from his eyes—and gently said, "Well done." His lips never moved when he spoke, but the words came out just the same.

(And I turned to see the voice that spake with me ... like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot ... His head and his hairs were white like wool,

as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters

...

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, "Fear not ... Write the things which thou hast seen.")
Revelations 1: 12-15

The Man backed away—drifted away, rather; his feet never touched the ground. He said, "I will be back shortly. Occupy yourself." He smiled, then vanished.

I was alone in the dirt road, until the scenery changed again. I was trapped inside a walled city; a large one, completely enclosed. I searched in vain for the Friendly Alien to come take me away. Something awful was about to happen. Something terribly bad, and I knew it.

The city was on the verge of destruction. An unparalleled disaster approached. Fear spread rampant. People tried scaling the walls to flee, but their attempts over the towering barricades were futile. There was no escape as they begged to get out of harm's way.

Death sped toward them. Like swimmers drowning in panic, people lashed out at one another, trying to gain a foothold: men; women; children. All hysterical. Everyone for himself.

I looked beyond the walled city at the source of the terror. A deadly tidal wave rolled toward us. It smashed every building, every tree, every person in its path. It consumed all. Nothing escaped its wrath. It was the end. The ultimate end.

When the tidal wave came closer I saw that the source of destruction was NOT water at all—it was OIL. It was a tidal wave of fiendish petroleum sweeping over everyone in its path. Debris and bodies swirled and tumbled within the churning black surf. Oil was the enemy. Oil was Death. Oil was Evil. Oil was the ultimate end of everything. Bad Thing, that Oil.

The Black Wave burst through the walls and smothered the city, gobbling it up, people and all. It hovered above, about to crash down on me as it crested. But before it tumbled down to kill me, I suddenly vanished.

My entire body changed into a transparent substance. Nothing else was changed about me, other than how my spirit was packaged. The part of my soul that was a living creature was no longer housed inside a vehicle of flesh and bone. I still had a body, but it was not made of earthly material.

I wasn't the only thing that changed, either. The whole earth seemed to have vanished, as well. The oil was gone. Trouble was gone. Fear was gone. Happiness came to stay. I held my breath in awe of my new surroundings. It was so very peaceful, so very opposite of the chaotic destruction going on in the world down below.

It wasn't really a permanent world. I knew, somehow, that it was a temporary shelter to protect me from the Bad Things happening on Earth. It was an in-between world, a barrier separating me from the Dark World above, and the Earth below. The scenery above me was all lined in black, with zero visibility because there was simply nothing to see. It was a solid black curtain. Below me it was a soft, solid white. I was hovering above a Cloud World. These were not ordinary clouds, for they were much too thick for earthly clouds. Their only purpose was to shelter me from the Bad Things that

went on down below because of the Oil. I was so thankful to have been yanked from the worldly destruction and chaos of the Bad Oil, and into the friendly confines of the Cloud World. It had happened so fast it had taken me completely by surprise. The only thing I said when I saw the beautiful clouds was, "Wow." And I was not alone. Although I didn't see anyone else due to the thickness of the clouds and their resulting low visibility, a new sense of knowledge told me that the Cloud World had a large transient population.

The Friendly Alien, hiding within the cloud puffs, spoke three words: "Do not worry."

I returned to my body crying. Sometimes I cried happily. Sometimes fearfully. Good tears and bad tears. Good Things. Bad Things. But I didn't understand. The Friendly Alien had established a pattern of speaking to me in riddles and mysteries, never offering reasons or logical answers to my many questions. But when I came home to my own world, I did know that somewhere, somehow, Bad People were doing Bad Things with Bad Oil. And the powers behind the oil, didn't much care what happened to the screaming people. Whatever Oil wanted, Oil was going to get at any cost, even to the ultimate end. We'd all be dead over oil, except for those who'd be yanked to safety into an extraordinary Cloud World.

The End.

Although I did not attend church often, I waited until service was over the next day, then drove into town to see Charlie Scalf. I told him about my experience and he handed me a Bible and showed me some related verses that astounded me:

"All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh for men ... There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial ... There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.

"Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all (die), but we shall all be changed (into a new type of body). In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." (I COR 15: 39-52)

"... with the voice of the archangel (Michael) ... the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain (at the time of the end) shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air ... (to escape the wrath of the Beast, who's been cast down to earth.)" (I Thess 17)

On Charlie's dining room table, a newspaper lay opened to the *Weekend Entertainment* section. I nonchalantly glanced at the movie listings and saw a display advertisement for a movie: *In Search of Historic Jesus*. "Oh, my God! Charlie, it's him! It's him! It's his photograph! It's the Man I saw! What is this? What is this picture?"

The Shroud of Turin

In the year 1350 A.D. a Knight in Armor rode into the local Church of Lirey, France, and presented to the priest a mysterious object that he'd uncovered on a recent quest. He claimed it to be the burial shroud Jesus Christ was wrapped in, after he was taken from the cross and entombed. The sheet—14 feet, 3 inches long and 3 feet, 7 inches wide—could not be authenticated by the church to be the actual burial cloth of Jesus, but nonetheless it quickly became one of the most worshipped Christian icons in history. In 1578 the mysterious shroud was brought to a new home in Turin, Italy, where it has remained under rigid security measures ever since.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Church of Turin exhibited the holy icon to the public. That's when something happened for the first time in history. It had been a long, long time since the mysterious cloth had been opened to the public, and since the last time, an intriguing invention known as a "camera" had made its way into the mainstream of humanity.

In 1898 Secondo Pia photographed the Shroud for the first time. When the pictures were developed, an uncanny negative image appeared on the film, invisible to the naked eye but plainly visible to the photographic lens. The negative image displayed a crucified man, in perfect reproduction from head to toe, including thorn markings on his head and an apparent tear in his side from a sharp object, possibly a spear. Christians claimed the photographic image as proof that the cloth was the burial shroud of Jesus. Scientists quickly and emphatically scoffed that the film negative was a clever hoax. The Church of Turin safely stored the shroud back into seclusion and the debate raged for decades.

In 1978, the Catholic Church permitted another photograph to be taken, and allowed a small piece of the garment to be researched. In 1981 the research team from the United States completed its study, after three years of rigorous chemical, computer, and photographic analysis. The 1981 conclusions said:

"(The sheet) bears a faint, yellowish negative image of the front and back of a man with a thorn mark on the head, lacerations from a flogging on the back, and bruises on the shoulders. (The image is) a real human form of a whipped and crucified man, and not the product of an artist."

The findings not only failed to end the disputes, but caused debates to grow even more heated. Atheistic Scientists were as determined to portray the shroud as a fake, and Christians were equally set on giving due diligence to their Lord.

Christians said radiation from Christ's resurrection created the photograph. Scientists declared the picture to be a clever forgery by an artist. Christians said they could determine that a coin was placed on the crucified image's right eye, which was the Jewish custom during the time of Christ. Scientists said they didn't see any such coin. The Shroud was put back into seclusion by the Church of Turin and no further tests were allowed.

However, in 1983, a group of computer analysts at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University conducted a series of tests on the remaining piece of the shroud and the previously taken photograph. The research was led by Robert M. Haralick.

Scoffing at the tests was Dr. Walter C. McCrone, a respected microscopist who said that the resolution of the cloth wasn't sharp enough to determine if a coin was there or not. "I don't care what kind of computer they use," he said.

Professor Haralick and his team of computer wizards was able to break up the film negative into more than 250 various shades of lightness and darkness. They concluded:

"Shroud imprints fit six Greek letters of a Pontius Pilate coin from 29 A.D., shortly before Jesus Christ was crucified. In addition, the analysis found the face of the shroud image to be similar to the face of an icon of Jesus dating from the sixth century."

Furthermore, the cloth was found to contain fibers that were indigenous to the Middle East.

Dr. McCrone was not impressed. He said he found traces of iron-ore pigment of the type used by artists to make a paint called red ochre. He was more convinced than ever that an artist drew the image hundreds of years ago. He was asked by Christian skeptics:

How could an ancient artist paint a three-dimensional image in a negative form that was completely invisible to the naked eye?

To this day, no scientist has an answer.

In 1987, church officials hesitantly permitted scientists to conduct tests on one more small piece of the Shroud. Three separate laboratories, one each from the United States, Great Britain and Switzerland conducted sophisticated carbon-14 dating tests. After a year of testing and re-testing, all three labs concluded with ninety-five percent accuracy that the cloth dated back to the years 1260 A.D. to 1390 A.D., and therefore could *not* be the burial shroud of Jesus Christ.

Cardinal Anastasio Ballestrero, the archbishop of Turin, still claimed that the image on the cloth was not a forgery, and that it was miraculously created, regardless of its age. But he did acknowledge that science could not be argued with about the authenticity of the shroud. "I see no reason for the church to put these (test) results in doubt." The Church of Turin accepted the results from all three labs that the cloth could be no older than about 750 years and was not the celebrated shroud of Jesus.

The Carbon-14 tests used a time calendar known as the Radiocarbon Method to determine the age of organic fibers used in weaving the mysterious Shroud of Turin.

Scientists based their findings on a theory that cosmic radiation from the atmosphere united with oxygen as it approached Earth, and formed carbon dioxide that was absorbed by the living plants from which the Shroud was woven. When the plants were picked, they died and ceased to absorb Carbon-14; they began a decay back into nitrogen at a steady rate. Based on the amount of Carbon-14 scientists found in the Shroud, all three universities agreed that the Shroud was created more than a thousand years after the death of Christ, and therefore, was a clever forgery.

Christians disagreed.

The fallacy, they argued, is that Carbon-14 testing is unreliable. Testing the amount of vegetation and the amount of natural carbon present on Earth at any given

moment, would depend upon environmental factors being constant, with little fluctuation throughout history, in order for the steady decline of Carbon-14 to be used as a valid dating method for *anything*. Therefore, whenever science claims Earth to be in the millions of years old, or that the Shroud is seven hundred years old, they are ignoring such events as the ice age and numerous other catastrophic episodes that would throw their relatively crude dating procedures out of whack.

Nonetheless, scientists celebrated their absolute proof that the Shroud of Turin was a forgery. That is, until February of 1989, when one of their own scientists stepped forward and denounced the validity of the Carbon-14 testing on the Shroud, thereby angering his cohorts.

Thomas Phillips, a researcher from Harvard University's High Energy Physics Laboratory, defiantly asked of his peers:

If the Shroud was an artist's forgery, then how was it created?

They, themselves, with all their modern technology, were still incapable of creating a similar forgery. How, then, could a crude artist have done such a thing during the Middle Ages? Furthermore, scientists admitted that the pollen found on the cloth came from "*around Jerusalem*."

Then Phillips offered an astounding theory about the Shroud of Turin that made headlines throughout the world. He believed the image could have been formed by A RESURRECTED BODY.

If the Shroud was the actual burial cloth of Jesus Christ, "*it would have been present at a very unique physical event: the resurrection of a dead body*." Such a resurrection would have radiated light, heat, neutrons or atomic particles. He said in that scenario, the chemistry would have been altered so dramatically that no test would ever be scientifically valid.

IF YOU BELIEVED IN GOD, and in the resurrection of his Son, then you simply could not believe in the Carbon-14 testing because it would have been rendered invalid due to supernatural interference.

Robert Hedges from Oxford University argued in a written response on February 16, 1989:

"If a SUPERNATURAL explanation is to be proposed, it seems pointless to make any scientific measurement on the shroud at all."

Of all the research I did on the Shroud of Turin, it was that one definitive statement by Robert Hedges that impacted me most about science versus religion. From the scientist's own mouth:

If a "SUPERNATURAL GOD" exists, then SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH is pointless.

If God existed and went about His business of working miracles, then being a scientist was meaningless. It was a scientist's *duty* to strike down religion and the

supernatural. At all costs. The supernatural was the born enemy of science. Science was duty-bound to manipulate public disbelief. Science owed it to the human population to promote the brilliance of Mankind. Nobody could argue with science. If science said something *was*, then it *was*!

They were not happy campers when one of their own stepped forward with a belief in the supernatural.

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