

OUT OF TIME

ENCOUNTER AT MID-DAY.



By

Derek P. Blake

THE SAGA CONTINUES

The long awaited sequel to 'The Time Before'

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ENCOUNTER AT MID-DAY

A NOVEL
BY

DEREK P. BLAKE

This book is dedicated to my lovely wife Dawn who has had the task of proof reading this and other words by the writer. Without her these books would never have appeared and been published.
Thank you!

PROLOGUE

OUT OF TIME – ENCOUNTER AT MID-DAY

Is a sequel to the novel ‘The Time Before’

In 2022 Jo Merkson was on holiday in Cyprus with her parents, Jim and Carol Markson and her younger brother Peter, when the young Jo accidentally discovered a treasure hoard. The hoard included advanced technology that was thousands of years old.

This discovery changed the lives of the whole family and the huge reward from the Cypriot government resulted in the establishment of the Jo Markson Research Trust (JMRT). Nine years on the trust was responsible for the discovery of the ancient Ark of the Covenant, a long-lost artefact of Israel, built by Moses under the direction of God. The JMRT were also responsible for discovering ancient chambers in several locations across the old world, which they dubbed ‘Control Rooms’. These chambers contained ancient technology that ultimately were the greatest discoveries ever made by modern archaeology and were the source of the,

so called, 'God Tapes', known also as 'The Revelation'.

The 'God Tapes' were discovered to be a three dimensional video record of God's dealings with man, from creation to the death of God's Son, Jesus Christ. The discovery had a huge effect on the world, on militant Islam, and on members of the Christian faith, because it contained, 'The Final Warning'.

Now read on . . .

OUT OF TIME

ENCOUNTER AT MID-DAY

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." The Bible
([2 Timothy 3:1](#))

Out of Time - Encounter at Mid-day.

In the summer 2031 an organisation that went by the name of the Joanne Markson Research Trust uncovered an advanced communication system that dated back many thousands of years and some ancient video and audio recordings that showed that God existed. In the course of the investigations, and excavations, the JMRT team discovered and retrieved the Ark of the Covenant, which was placed in the care of Israel. The finding of the Ark prompted the Israeli Government to commence the building of the third Temple.

The recordings showed that the God of the Jews and Christians did indeed create the universe, instigate the Flood of Noah and that the Bible was essentially a factual book as it traced the history of the Hebrew nation up to the resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

The Trust issued a press release a few weeks after the main discovery in Crete, which was met with an astonished silence.

“. . . I have actually seen many hours of the virtual recordings, I was there when some of the discoveries were uncovered, and I can vouch that both the discoveries and the recordings are genuine, and date back many thousands of years,” continued Declan Brook during a news night special, the day after the announcement. “It is often said that no one can understand the present, or prepare for the future, without understanding the past. Well viewers, we have certainly misunderstood the past, but hopefully we can understand what is happening today and, more importantly, prepare for whatever the future has in store for us. This is Declan Brook and you have been watching 'The World Today'. Good-night.”

As the world digested the news the only tangible reaction was the endless stream of TV programs that spewed out of every video production company across the Earth. Each of the world's great unions viewed the news with a different slant. The SAU (South American Union) was possibly the most upbeat as the lower half of the American continent continued to be home to a high proportion of the world's Roman Catholics. In Rio huge celebrations were staged and queues formed at the confessionals. Europe was muted in its response, and the EU president announced an investigation into the Trust that had made the discovery, and the EU government threatened to expel the Republic of Cyprus

over irregularities in the funding of the Trust. The Moslem world accused Christians of perpetrating a hoax aimed at discrediting Islam, and one Mullah ordered Islam to completely ignore the find; an order that would prove impossible.

As would be expected the media coverage in the USA was wall to wall, especially in the deep southern Bible-belt, where many churches suddenly found they did not have enough seats to cater for new members. President Orwell, only the third independent president after Washington and John Tyler in 1841, publicly accepted the find and advised all Americans to "Embrace the new proof of God's existence, and to reunite as "one nation under God." The President's appeal was met with mixed response from the established parties, who had been busy secularising over the past three decades. Supposed Christian militia called for a taking up of arms, and an increase in attacks on gays, Moslem's, and known atheists were reported in local news reports. The National Guard were called out to an all out battle that exploded between the Alabama Salvation Militia and a large abortion clinic in Tyler, resulting in eleven deaths.

China gave the most surprising response of any national government, the Central Committee announced that it was taking the evidence under advisement and invited the Christian League of China [CLC] to advise and authenticate the finds and recordings. Chairman Lu Son Pen, the most liberal Chairman since the cultural

revolution made a statement to the Chinese people saying that he had a great interest in the Christian faith and that “If the recent discoveries are proved to be genuine, there may be a case for Christianity becoming the official religion of the People's Republic of China,” he added that “after a study of the person Jesus, He could be regarded as a true communist.”

London, Wednesday 5th November 2031 10:30
hrs - Extraordinary Meeting of the
General Synod of the Anglican Church.

Archbishop of Canterbury, Doctor Jonathan Benn called the synod to order, and welcomed the Houses of Bishops, Clergy and Laity, he then outlined the reason for the special meeting and introduced the video that had been sent to him and the media back in August. Previously only clips had been shown to the general public, so, for many, this was first chance to see the full sixty-minute video. There was utter silence during the showing and not one person left the chamber until the showing was over. As the final frames of the video faded from the screen Archbishop Benn came to his feet and addressed the assembly.

“My brothers and sisters in Christ, today we meet to discuss what is, obviously, a huge problem for the Anglican Church worldwide. The time is now approaching mid-day and at two o'clock we will be joined by Joanne and James Markson, the archaeologists who made the discovery that we have just seen. Can I suggest that we break into informal groups for the next hour in order to discuss the implications between ourselves? Lunch will be served at one o'clock and the Marksons will actually arrive in time to partake in lunch; can we reserve any discussions with our guests until the afternoon session. Thank you.” The archbishop concluded in prayer for God to guide their discussions and the assembled members wandered off in small groups.

Jo and her Dad, Jim, arrived at just after one-thirty and had to run the gauntlet of demonstrations outside of the Central hall. There seemed to be three distinct factions, one was obviously atheistic, and banners demanded the destruction of the artefacts or proclaiming that the discoveries were false. Another group who seemed to be Christians seemed to take the same view as the atheists, but the third group were also Christians who wanted the synod to accept the messages discovered in the recordings. One of the demonstrators, from the Christian group that wanted the destruction of all the artefacts, made a grab at Joanne and managed to drag her into the barricade. "You are doing the work of the devil," the man shouted in Jo's ear. Fortunately there were many police officers on duty and one was quick to rescue Jo and then arrest her assailant. Jo and her Dad were ushered into the hall and were shown directly to the table where Archbishop Benn and the Archbishop of York were seated. Jo looked shaken, which prompted the Archbishop of York, Geoffrey Milton, to ask if she were feeling unwell.

"One of your supporters outside has just molested my daughter," answered Jim with not a little resentment.

"Oh my, we tried to keep this meeting a secret, so this would not happen," said Archbishop Benn, "I do apologise on behalf of the church Miss Markson." He turned to an aid and asked him to contact the assistant commissioner of the Met with a view to getting the street outside cleared.

"It's hard to keep a secret with so many people

involved,” said Jo, “we have had our own security issues.”

Jim and Jo accepted a cup of coffee and a plate of spaghetti with Soya-meat and sauce, and tried to relax a little. The Archbishop allowed them an extra fifteen minutes in order to compose themselves, but at two-fifteen they were called to the podium.

“My lords, ladies and gentlemen, may I now formally welcome Joanne and her father James Markson, whom I am sure need no introduction since the news broke a couple of months ago. They have elected not to make any statement to this synod as there is little they can add to what you have seen in the video this morning. So we now would open the floor to questions.”

Bishop Anthony of Liverpool's hand was visibly the first to rise and was recognised by the Archbishop.

“I have to state that I am far from convinced as to the age of the recordings that you have found, how can you convince me that they date from the period that you claim,” asked Liverpool.

“Bishop there is a host of evidence as to their ages,” stated Jo, “we have used every scientific dating system known to us; can I refer you to the fact-sheets that I believe are available in the coffee lounge, one of which presents the dating methodology and the supporting evidence.”

“But surely the current radiometric dating systems have been discredited to a great extent,” replied Anthony Liverpool, “what makes your dating any more accurate?”

“We don't use any of the standard radiometric systems,”

came in Jim, “standard testing relies on residual isotopes of certain substances, C14, argon, etc. Our methods now rely upon measuring the amount of radioactive cosmic particles that the material has absorbed, it’s the opposite of residual.”

“And it can be calibrated by using samples that have known ages, lava, material from the deep sea bed, etc.” added Jo, “we can actually calculate your age from the amount of particles your body has absorbed since your birth, accurate to within a month.”

Jim jumped in again and offered, “We can demonstrate the process if you would like to donate a nail clipping or a hair, if you would like us to. We have brought a hand held unit with us.”

“That will not be necessary, thank you,” the Bishop of Liverpool quickly replied.

Another hand went up, followed by several others, the Archbishop pointed to one hand, “Yes, the lay member from Leicester, I believe.”

“I don’t doubt your sincerity Miss Markson, but is there, in your opinion, the slightest chance that the disks with the recordings are of modern origin and a possible stunt by some electronics manufacturer?”

“Firstly, call me Jo please, and I am sure my Dad would prefer to be addresses as Jim,” beside Jo, Jim nodded vigorously, “Now to your question, It took me a few weeks to actually come to terms with the idea, and yes, for weeks after the discovery I had huge doubts, especially as Sony were developing a similar technology. But this ancient technology is far in advance of anything we have today; our tame professor

tell us that there are millions of layers in the disks, each one just a few atoms thick. Professor Gwilliam of UMIST says that it is almost as if the atoms themselves store the data for the recording, sort of an advanced quantum processor. We don't even know what the disks are made of; it's an element but not one known to this planet. So my answer now has to be, 'no' I do not have the slightest doubt."

Another delegate asked, "We have all heard the voice on the introduction disk, do you think that this is the voice of God, and if so why is it in English?"

Jim stepped forward and batted this time, "No I don't think that the recording is the actual voice of God, but I have come to believe that they are the words of God. As to the voice speaking English, we are advised that there is some sort of translator program involved within the equipment in the control rooms. When we first heard the commentary it was in an entirely unknown language, we went through a good number of languages before we hit on English, and that was as much of a surprise to us as when the recording knew there were five of us."

The Archbishop stepped forward and asked, "Do you think the first voice you heard was God's voice, Jim."

"I don't think so, the best guess is that it's like a voice synthesizer, it's a part of the program."

Another member of the clergy asked, "How many of your staff and consultants were believers previously and how many are now?"

"I cannot tell you how many were believers previously, as people's beliefs are unimportant for us. However,

ninety-five percent of staff have expressed some degree of belief since the discovery, some have a greater belief than others.”

So the questioning went on for almost two and a half hours, some questions were openly hostile others were obviously genuine interest questions. At around three-thirty everyone heard a commotion outside, and bullhorns announced that the police were clearing the street, much to Jo's relief. Just before five o'clock the Archbishop thanked Jo and Jim for their time and their sincere answers. Jo and Jim Markson then retired to the lounge for a well earned coffee, a few minutes later the Archbishop approached them.

“Thank you both so much for this afternoon, much of it cannot have been too comfortable for you,” the Archbishop said.

“What happens now Your Grace,” asked Jo, “is that it.”

“Please Jo, no one uses that old title these days, you can call me John, as Christians we should use each other's Christian names. No, there is much more to come yet Jo,” answered the Archbishop, “we have designated three days for this opening discussion, then the delegates take everything back to their parishes and church councils and they will consult with them. Then they come back here in couple of months to express the grass-roots opinions, then we discuss it all over again. Nothing happens very quickly in the Anglican Church, it could take years to make a decision.”

“But what if you don't have years John,” asked Jo; concerned.

“Then my dear, we must all take our chance and hope that what we believe is enough,” answered the Archbishop with a very sad look on his face, “I would like to keep in touch, if that is possible, Jim. I think I may need to answer many more questions and should like to offer any help I can, you never know, the name of the Archbishop of Canterbury can open many doors.”

“That would be good John, here is my personal com address, said Jim, “call me at any time.”

When Jo and her Dad left the Central Hall to walk to the parking facility the street was empty and darkness had descended upon London and already there were fireworks lighting up the sky. November fifth in the UK is traditionally a time for muted celebration of a rebel called Guy Fawkes who tried to blow up parliament with barrels of gunpowder, no one is ever sure whether the celebration is because he attempted the feat, or that he failed and was burnt at the stake. There was a pre-winter chill in the air as they walked in silence the two-hundred meters to the vehicle park. Once in the LIMO and the cabin heaters had taken effect, Jo asked, “How much time do you think we have Dad.”

“The truth is Jo, nobody knows for certain, I've been reading up on the Bible predictions, and it seems that it could be any time now, but I think we have at least seven years, maybe more. It seems that the third temple has to be built on or at the Temple Mount first so no doubt that will take several years”

“Where does the seven years come from though,” asked Jo.

“You know Jo, I am not sure,” her Dad answered, “I am just going by what the experts and Bible scholars are saying, it's a really complicated translation and calculation. In the book of Daniel it says that the period will be seven days, not years.”

“Wow, that's fast.”

“Other experts stick to three and a half years, I looked at a well respected book called the *'Wycliffe Commentary'* that quotes Daniel 12:7 that gives us 1260 days or forty-two months, which is three and a half years.”

**Government House, Jerusalem, Israel.
Friday 14th November 2031 14:40 hrs (local
time)**

Prime Minister, Heidi Goldbloom, sat at the head of her cabinet table, the all-day meeting had been going since nine that morning, and they had just reconvened after a heavy lunch which was having a soporific effect on the ministers. The next two items on the agenda were the 'Rebuilding of the Temple', and 'The Palestinian Claim', both happened to be emotive subjects.

P.M. Goldbloom called the cabinet meeting to order, “Ladies and gentlemen, we have only two items left on today's agenda, but I expect them to be hefty subjects, I hope that your respective families are not expecting you for dinner tonight,” she opened. “Firstly, we decided a couple of months ago that Israel would rebuild the temple, this decision, I feel, may have been a knee-jerk decision after the restoration of the Ark of the Covenant

to our nation. So today I would like us to either rescind or confirm that decision, for starters. Ben you were one of the first in on the discoveries back in August, can you share your feelings please.”

Benjamin Marks, Israeli Minister of National Security, had been involved with the team that uncovered the Ark, and is ultimately responsible for its safe-keeping, said, “Madam Prime Minister, as you all know I was the liaison with the JMRT team who discovered the Ark in the long hidden cave. Co Managing Directors, Joanne and James Markson graciously handed the Ark over to this administration immediately after its removal from the cave. They realised the Ark's significance to this nation and did not even attempt to investigate any of the contents, as was their right under our agreement. Both they and the other directors of the Trust recognised that the Ark was the property of Israel, as does most of the world, and not least of which are the Jewish and Christian communities. At this moment the Ark is housed in a make-shift enclosure within the Jerusalem Great Synagogue at 56 King George Street, but this venue is not ideal. The Ark is vulnerable there and considering the tourist and pilgrimage traffic we expect, that building is wholly lacking. I would advise a purpose built structure and whilst we are doing that it would be a great opportunity to actually start the building of the third temple,”

“Thank you Ben,” said the P.M. “and your comments actually have a bearing on the last item on our agenda. Any other comments?”

The next to speak was Maria Hadash, Minister of

Culture, “We have been proposing the building of the third temple for almost eighty years; we have possession of the Mount at last so there is nothing stopping us. I believe that it will bring Jewry together, where ever in the world they are, it will be a focal point. I believe we should push forward with the project.”

The Minister of Building and Works, David Pinner, commented. “With the damage to the Mount itself after the quake, or whatever it was, and the need to demolish the mosque, which would be a provocative act in my mind, it would seem to rebuild on the summit is not possible. Yes you have my vote to rebuild, but I propose that we build to the side of the Mount and actually include the Western Wall in that construction, where the plaza is. There is plenty of room there and will not interfere with our Islamic friends.”

After another ninety-five minutes it was a unanimous decision to go forward with the Temple Project and David Pinner was charged with sending out proposals to various Jewish architects. A competition was proposed, and accepted, with a prize of five-million dollars for the winner. Once the temple decision had been made the cabinet moved on to the next, and final item.

“The last item today is a delicate and potentially upsetting one,” commenced the P.M., “I have received a request, no, a claim, from the Palestinian government, that the Ark of the Covenant should be handed over to Islam.”

“On what basis do they make this claim, the Ark was constructed by our nation, and on the command of *our*

Lord,” commented Rabbi Kobashi, Religious Advisor to the government.

The P.M. Extracted several sheets of paper from her document case, and spread them in front of her, “It seems that Islam considers the Ark in similar regard to us. The Muslims call it the “Tabut Sakina’, which means exactly the same, ‘Ark of the Covenant’ and is actually mentioned in their Quran, which reads:

“And their Prophet said to them: “A Sign of his authority is that there shall come to you the Ark (Tabut), and in it Sakina with (a Covenant) therein of security from your Lord, and the relics left by the family of Moses and the family of Aaron, carried by angels. In this is a symbol for you if ye indeed have faith”

“That’s a reference al Baqara, v.248, if anyone is interested in looking it up. It seems that the Palestinians think that the Ark is some sort of weapon of war that was used by the Prophets, including Moses, Aaron, David, and Solomon, and it seems by the Prophet Muhammad himself; though how he got hold of it confounds me.”

“Can it be that it was the Muslims that stole the Ark and hid it in that cave, then lost track of it,” asked the Rabbi.

“Who knows, Rabbi, it is not something that I would care to ask in public,” interjected the P.M. “I think we may have enough problems without inflaming the situation further.”

“Do we have any information about the Ark being a

weapon of war,” asked Moshe Oppenheimer, the Minister of Finance.

“No,” stated the Rabbi emphatically, “the Ark is a sacred object.”

“From the reports I received from Major Davidson, and the conversation I had with Jim Markson, there does seem to be some effects associated with the Ark, Ben Marks informed the meeting, “For a start the terrorist's weapons all failed to fire as our commandos entered the cave, our men had no need to use their weapons as the terrorists surrendered, and there was not one particle of dust on the Ark, despite being in the cave for who knows how long.”

“But Rabbi, the Lord instructed us to take it into battle at the head of our warriors,” commented the P.M., “and when that was done we did win battles. From what Ben has said there does seem to be some power associated with it”

“Yes, it is the Lord's power, the power of faith, not some death-ray,” answered the Rabbi.

“Be that as it may, the Palestinians are requesting that we hand the Ark over to them as representatives of Islam,” continued the P.M.

“Is it a request, or a demand,” asked Ben.

“I cannot think why we are having this discussion,” said the Rabbi, “now that the Ark has been recovered for us, I have to say that, it will be over my dead body that we hand it over. It was made by Hebrews under the Lord's

command. It was not commanded by the false god of Islam, nor was it fashioned by Muslim hands; just as Israel was given this land by the Lord so we were given the Ark. It is a symbol of the Lord's covenant with our people.”

The outburst was greeted by a chorus of agreement and ended with a round of applause for the words of Rabbi Kobashi. “Well from that reaction I can take it that we are in unanimous agreement to refuse the Palestinian 'request',” concluded the P.M.

Another two hours passed with several heated discussions, drafting the response to Palestine and her government. The P.M. Insisted that great care should be taken so as not to inflame the situation, as they had already had to deal with the protestations over the arrest and treatment of the terrorists who had, several months before, attempted to hijack the Ark from its hiding place in the cave. The helicopter gun-ships had been confiscated by the Israeli military and the terrorists had been tried and sentenced to prison, despite one of them being an official representative of the Palestinian government. The relations between Palestine and Israel had already deteriorated since the opening up of the Temple Mount, many Palestinians and people in other Islamic countries, had regarded the archaeological works as an insult to both Allah and Mohamed. Many Muslims also retained a suspicion that the, so called, 'laser incident', was really an attack by the West and in particular the USA.

**Yasser Arafat House, Jerusalem, Israel.
Monday 17th November 2031 09:45 hrs (local
time)**

In the legislative centre of the Palestinian government in Jerusalem, the atmosphere was not totally that of peace and goodwill. After the peace agreement the Palestinian government's legislative centre was moved from Ramallah to Jerusalem as a symbol of the shared authority. However the hard-line Islamists had continued with their power-base in Ramallah on the West Bank. The peace has always been an uneasy one, but had improved somewhat, over the past few years. Relationships between the Palestinians and the 'West' had continued to be strained and the 'Great Satan' continued to be the USA, although violent acts had diminished to less than ten percent of the pre-accord days.

Aiden al-Qurashi, Prime Minister of Palestine, threw the printed communiqué onto his desk, and stared at it for several seconds, "Well that was predictable wasn't it," he said to his private secretary, "and I really can't blame them, it was a long-shot at best."

"I don't think certain members of your government will look at it in those terms Sir," his secretary replied.

"I agree," replied Aiden, "we will just have to gently guide our ministerial friends to a peaceful agreement, Michael. I suppose you had better call Minister Dajani for me, will you ask him to come over at about ten-thirty

please?”

“Yes Prime Minister,” Michael said as he left for the outer office.

At just before ten-thirty Aiden heard the voice of his Minister of Defence in the outer office, although he and Ethan Dajani had been friends since university, they often held opposite views over politics and security issues. They had both been educated at the University of London and had degrees in politics and Middle Eastern History; Ethan also had a Masters Degree in strategic sciences. Ethan was much more militant than Aiden, who was on the team that negotiated the peace accord with Israel and maintained a healthy friendship with Mrs Goldbloom, whereas Ethan still regarded her as a potential enemy.

“Come on in Ethan,” Aiden called through his desk intercom, “Michael can you rustle up some coffee please.” In less than five seconds the door opened and his friend Ethan entered, and the two greeted each other with a hug. “Please, sit, how is that lovely family, I haven't seen them for months.”

“Over a year actually,” said Ethan as he dropped into the most comfortable chair in the office. “Helen was only saying last week that we never see you these days, and the kids are always asking where Uncle Aiden is, you must come over for supper, soon.”

“I will, I promise,” said Aiden.

“So, I guess we have a reply from your friend the

Jewish bitch, have we?"

"I do wish you would not refer to Heidi in those terms Ethan, we are both trying to do a very difficult job."

"I'm sorry, but I am assuming that the answer is a absolute negative."

"Yes, you are right, but what did you expect," asked Aiden

"I expected exactly what we seem to have."

"Ethan, I need you to support me at tomorrow's cabinet meeting, there are certain members who would wish to push this demand and I am sure they would savour going to war over it," said the P.M. "If this Ark is a weapon, then we must remember that Israel is in possession of it, and if the legends are correct, as long as they have the artefact, we, or anyone else, can't win a war against them."

"I take your point, Aiden but we have as much right to the Tabut Sakina as the Jews, it is a symbol that will not only unite every Palestinian, but will unite Islam, and if we have the Tabut Sakina, Islam will be united under Palestine," stated Ethan.

"And why would we want to be the leaders of Islam," asked Aiden.

"Because my brother, Islam is destined to rule the world, it is predicted; it is our destiny, Mohamed, praise His name, prophesied and instructed the followers to conquer the Earth. We have not been able to do that

because we have been too many factions, too divided, but united we could convert the world to Islam, Allah be praised.”

Aiden sat back and rubbed his neck with his hand and slowly shook his head, “I can't support this Ethan, I am not a devout follower but we need Islam, the world needs Islam to be a faith of peace, we have had enough of war.”

“The world has the option of embracing Islam as the one true faith.”

“And do you think that the stunt that you pulled when the Tabut Sakina was found, trying to hijack it by force, convinced the world to convert to Islam,” Aiden said with rising anger in his voice, “We have already alerted the world to our intentions, put the Israelites' backs up, and shown that we have not yet done with violence. You did more damage to our cause by that single act than bin-Laden did two decades ago. We are just very lucky that I have a good relationship with the Israeli P.M. Or we may have found ourselves in the middle of a war right now. Think it over Ethan, very carefully.”

Cabinet Room, Yasser Arafat House,
Jerusalem, Israel. Tuesday 18th November
2031 11:39 hrs (local time)

After an hour and a half of heated discussion, it was plain to anyone that the majority of the Palestinian cabinet wanted blood, if they could not have the precious Ark. Ethan was very quiet during the first half of the session, and Aiden assumed that his little chat had had some effect. Out of the thirteen ministers only six seemed to agree with the P.M. and voiced a moderate view.

“The Minister for Finance said, “I have heard that the Israelis are proposing to build a special place for this Arc, which will be of maximum security type, I think that once the object is ensconced in that, there will be little of no chance of retrieving it.”

“Which means that we either act now, whilst the artefact is in temporary housing or we forget about it.” proposed the Transport Minister.

“All we can achieve by mounting a raid on their National Synagogue, is another war,” the Prime Minister pointed out, “and we just have not got the military power or the finances to enter into conflict again.”

Just then a aid entered the cabinet room and went directly to Ethan Dajani, where he whispered in his ear for some minute or so, this was followed by a whispered conversation before Ethan rose from his seat, said, “Please excuse me for a few minutes, Sir,” and disappeared out through the door, followed by the aid.

The cabinet looked questioningly at their Prime Minister,

who just shrugged in frustration, and said, "I suggest that we take a short break until Ethan returns."

Twelve minutes later Ethan returned to the cabinet room to find the ministers enjoying a cup of coffee, he went directly to his P.M, "Can I have a word, Sir."

The two retired to a quiet corner of the room and Aiden asked, "Is there a problem Ethan."

"I think you will see it that way," Ethan stated, "We have just received an intelligence report that the old, supposedly disbanded PLO has formed a faction to 'liberate' the Tabut Sakina. Our old friend Dirar Abu Sitta seems to be fronting the faction, and is no doubt behind the whole thing, as he has never accepted the peace agreements."

"How serious is this, Ethan, does he have the resources to pull something like this off," asked Aiden.

"Maybe, we have intel that suggests that the PLO never surrendered all their weapons and have them stashed in a multitude of locations. Every time we get information on one weapons dump, it's moved before our security forces get there, but from the evidence we find that they *were* actually there, I would guess that they do have the resources."

"What about trained personnel, manpower," Aiden asked.

"I can assure you that at this particular time, that will be no problem, most Palestinians have been angered by both the Israeli custodianship of the Tabut Sakina, and also the discovery of these, so called, 'God Tapes'. There is a lot of anti Israeli and Christian feeling at the

moment.”

“Do we have a name for this faction?”

“We do, they have named themselves, العالم ضد تصرفات إسرائيل في فلسطين or in English 'The World Against Israel's Actions in Palestine,” he answered, “it's an old faction, dating from back before the peace agreements, I believe it started as a web-site.”

“I have heard of them,” said Aiden, “this has the potential to cause us real problems, Ethan.”

“Don't you see Aiden, if the WAIAP organise the liberation of the Tabut Sakina, we just claim that they are what they are, an illegal faction,” said Ethan, “We can show all the usual indignation and keep ourselves above the violence, and if they succeed we gain the Tabut Sakina, if they fail we condemn their actions. It's perfect.”

“I still don't like it Ethan, we should share the intelligence with Heidi Goldbloom, it's a significant part of the peace agreements.”

“No problem, we just feed the bare essentials to her, as much as will keep her on-side but no more, nothing specific,” explained Ethan. “Let's put it to the cabinet, see how everyone feels about it.”

“OK.”

**The Knossos Control Room, Crete, Greece.
Tuesday 18th November 2031 15:00 hrs
(local time)**

The review team had been working non-stop since early

September, working in three shifts, both here and in the Jerusalem control room. Not that they really were control rooms as such, but the name that Peter Markson had christened them with had stuck and that is the way the world knew them. Much had been learned about the controls since their initial discovery, just three months before. Professor Owen Gwillam, of Manchester's UMIST, had volunteered to stay on and oversee the deciphering of the many controls set into the complicated panels.

Three of these control rooms had been discovered, one in Crete, assumed to be the main facility; Jerusalem, and the first one to be discovered, in India. Both Crete and Jerusalem were fully operational, but the Indian government had refused general access. It was thought that the refusal was because of political and religious reasons, despite the claim from the Indian Antiquities Service, that it was to preserve the ancient temple, under which the control room was situated. The Jerusalem complex was thought to be a fail-safe duplicate of Crete, lest one of the systems did not survive, but it was clear that the sheer size and complexity of the Knossos site, made it the prime facility. The JMR Trust had continued to work at both the operational sites and had made several major discoveries, none however that would place the 'God Tapes' in second place. It was of course these 'video records that had fascinated and held the world's attention.

Just after the news of the discovery of the 'God Tapes' was released to the world's media, the Greek government attempted to close the Crete site down. At first they claimed that the site was unsafe, then after a world-renown structural engineer proclaimed them safe, the Greek government claimed that the vibrations were destroying the famous Knossos Palace. In reality it was shown that the real reason was to protect the teachings of the state's Orthodox Church, which held a great deal of 'under the table' influence. It was quickly registered as a World Heritage Site, and the UN were sent in to secure the site in mid September.

For two months teams at both operational sites had been recording in audio, text and video the information held on the transparent disks. This would continue for several years as it seemed that at least the last six millennia had been recorded in real-time. In reality there was much more information stored here than covered by the Christian Bible or the Hebrew Scriptures. No one could begin to imagine how all this information had been recorded. The operator could watch everything from whatever view-point they chose, it was the ultimate in virtual reality that out-stripped anything man had developed.

The public interest was so great that almost every media network had introduced a special daily programme that featured the day's discoveries and the main points of the latest recordings. One European network had begun to serialise the recordings like a

soap-opera, the ratings for these shows had broken all records for audience size. You could also access all of the recordings so far viewed on-line and it was not unusual for the network to be overloaded and local servers crashing with the demand. The main screen was continuing to plod through the time period covered by the Book of Genesis and the character of Abraham, was capturing the public's imagination and it was from this screen that the daily updates were produced. However there were a total of five screens here and the other four were busy with specific research. One station was investigating the 'so called' miracles of Jesus, another two stations were investigating Christ's passion and in particular, the resurrection and ascension. The fourth station was researching information on the 'End Days'.

This 'End Days' research was classified, and each shift included an international team of experts from several disciplines, Bible scholars, technicians, geologists, cosmologists, linguists and forensic graphologists. Of course this was the burning question. The first message from the 'God Tapes' had strongly hinted that the end of the Earth was close at hand, so the 'end Times' research was of paramount importance. It was decided that this research should be kept away from the public in order to avoid panic, and it seemed that there was much to panic over.

Professor Gwillam was kept busy figuring out the many controls, but all the time he had kept an eye on the

research that was proceeding around him. Owen had been given a high level security clearance, the only member of the Trust to have been allowed that clearance as he had for many years worked for the Ministry of Defence. It was of great annoyance to Jo and her father, Jim, that they were not allowed inside the Crete control room. They were however allowed access to all other parts of the complex and met with Owen regularly for a briefing from the 'Room'.

This day Joanne Markson, now doctor Markson, after the University of Bristol awarded her a Ph.D for her work on this very project, and John Moffat, her American mentor, and now romantic partner, were working in yet another of the chambers that branched off the passageway to the teleport portal. Each of the chambers had a different freeze around the walls. The freezes were thought to hold clues and messages, rather than being merely decorative, and seemed to depict scenes of every day life.

Owen met the two at about fifteen after three and entered the chamber saying, "Now stop loitering you two, there is work to be done you know," in his musical Welsh lilt.

"Oh hello Owen, how are things going in the secret society," Jo asked.

Owen responded in a loud voice, for the benefit of the security officers in the passageway, "Now you know I can't talk about that." Owen then toured the chamber arriving where the two were working, "Looks pretty serious in there to me, they are listening to that Isaiah

guy at the moment, and it sounds like he has just got back from a trip to our time.”

“What do you mean Owen,” John whispered.

“Prophecies isn't it,” continues Owen, “it's like he knows what's going on here, right now. And then yesterday they were watching and listening to Daniel, he's the same. Since our discovery I have read most of the prophetic books and the New Testament, and I'm telling you there is not a tenth in the Bible of what he tells us in there.”

“Like what?”

“Much too much to tell you now, I'll fill you in tonight at the hotel after dinner, OK,” said Owen.

“OK, see you later,” said Jo as Owen retreated from the chamber.

**Church House, London, England. Tuesday
18th November 2031 14:00 hrs (local time).**

Back in London, England, the Anglican Church called a press conference, an unusual event, and even more unusually, there was huge interest from the British people in the affairs of the church, and other Anglicans across the world, as to what the church had to say. Since the presentation, some thirteen days earlier, when Jo and her father had addressed the General Synod, the church's council had been in almost continuous session. At several points the discussions had the potential to split the Anglican Church into

several factions. Since April 2025, when the church was semi-disestablished and the church becoming a separate organisation to the British government, there had been little political interference. However as the House of Lords had been demoted to an advisory body, there remained a tenuous and uncomfortable relationship between church and state. The House of Lords now renamed the House of Representatives, now included non-elected representatives from many secular community organisations and faiths, including Islam. The government of the day resisted the lobbying to include representatives of major industry in the chamber, which alienated many multinationals. However the government had managed to retain an interest in the church, as it had done with the Central Muslim Council, through funding conditions and having several seats on the Synod.

Archbishop Jonathan Benn, was a strong leader, and was regarded as a true man of God, a Bishop who had broken the mould of Archbishops of the last two decades. Benn's arguments and disagreements with the government were legendary, and not once had he given sway to their demands. This had not made Archbishop Benn a popular person with the governing body. Although Benn was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and came from a financially advantaged family, he had always championed the poor and disadvantaged. His first parish was, by his request, in the Hackney area of London, and subsequent posts included Liverpool and Brixton, all of which remained

poor parishes.

At precisely two o'clock Archbishop Benn rose from his seat and tapped lightly on the public address microphone, that stood within a porcupine-like cluster of microphones. He waited patiently for silence to settle on the lecture theatre, "Thank you for your attention," he said softly. "The following is a statement, which I will read, has been agreed by the whole General Synod, that is to say both spiritual and lay houses of the Anglican Church. Hard copies, or if you prefer, digital copies of the document will be available after the press conference. After this statement, my Lord the Archbishop of York and myself will be happy to take questions, however, I cannot guarantee that we will be able to answer them," he said with a smile on his face, which brought a ripple of chuckles and smiles across the assembled media.

"With regard to the archaeological discoveries made during the summer of this year including the, popularly known 'God Tapes' the General Synod of the Anglican church has fully discussed and digested the information and makes this statement."

"The Synod accepts and embraces the information from Crete and Jerusalem centres and after careful consideration the Church endorses it as a true record of God's interaction with man, that out dates that of the Holy Bible. We are therefore

forced to conclude that this world is entering into its final phase, regarded as, 'The End Times'."

"We have closely examined the material, and have taken the advice of many experts, in all relative fields, and the information has been cross-referenced with both our Holy Bible and the many other texts that exist (not included in the translations we have in authorised form), and in every case these documents support the new material as true and factual."

"We the servants of Christ, and of the Anglican Church, advise and urge the members of the Anglican church world-wide, to accept and become familiar with the new information, to pray fervently and to renew their efforts to bring those who remain as unbelieving, to accept the Christian faith as a matter of urgency."

"That, ladies and gentlemen of the press is the statement, I would add from a personal basis that the statement is in effect a 'call to arms' to every Christian, and a wake-up call," added the Archbishop. "We will now take any questions you may have."

Immediately there appeared a forest of up-stretched arms surmounted by waving hands. The Archbishop sighed and pointed to a face he recognised, "Erin, Erin Martindale, your question please."

"Erin Martindale, UK Independent News," she stated in

her soft Irish brogue, “Archbishop, I have heard from several sources that the statement you have just read is not endorsed by the whole of the Anglican Church, can you comment on that please,” Erin asked.

“Ms Martindale, when ever do we humans totally agree on anything? Yes there are certain elements in the church that continue to depute the new information, which is good, as God encourages us to test all things,” Archbishop Benn answered, “but we do have an overwhelming majority of agreement.”

Although the forest of hands sprung up once more, Erin pushed on, “I think it is rather more serious than you seem to give the impression of, there seems to be a splinter church that is focusing in on discrediting the newly found records.”

The Archbishop was afraid that this subject would rear its head, “I do not consider this as a serious matter Ms Martindale, at least not a serious threat to the Anglican Church,” Benn stated, as calmly and as forcefully as it was possible, “we have always had clergy who seem not to believe the truth of the Bible, they always seem to need to follow the principle of Jesus without accepting Him as divine or accepting the scriptures as a literal record. We now have an almost concrete source of evidence that, as far as we can so far tell, the Bible is literally accurate.”

“So you are saying that the Reverend Gabriel Roberts is entirely wrong,” continued Erin, “and if so, will he be defrocked?”

“There are no plans to expel the Reverend Roberts from the church at this time,” said Benn, “what she believes

is between her and whatever version of God she worships, now can we move on please. Next question.”

“Will there be a new statement of faith, from the church, Sir,” asked Fred Higgins of the Mail News Service, “In the past the Anglican church has stated that it’s official position has been that of accepting a God-initiated evolution, has that changed?”

“Well of course, we are not totally bigoted or entrenched,” said Geoffrey Milton, Archbishop of York, “especially when we see the evidence before our eyes, yes the Anglican Church’s position is definitely pro creation, if you pardon the expression.” A ripple of laughter spread across the room, which seemed to break the mood somewhat.

The questioning continued for over an hour and was followed by the customary church refreshments of tea and biscuits. One correspondent was heard telling a TV cameraman how you could tell what denomination’s function you were at by the refreshments. When pressed, he explained that Roman Catholics provided chocolate biscuits and both tea and coffee; Anglicans provided tea and cream sandwich biscuits, and the Baptists and Methodists gave you digestive biscuits and orange squash. Eventually the assembled press core felt it was time to leave and as one body made for the exits. What they found outside was another news-worthy story. Great Smith Street, at the heart of Westminster, was congested by over a thousand demonstrators, waving banners proclaiming the false teachings of the Anglican Church. One banner

displayed the message; 'ANGLICANS DEVOLVE' and another said; 'DON'T BE FOOLED BY CRETEN LIES'. There was a PA system in operation and there in Dean's Yard was a trailer with a woman in full venomous flow. Now it was the Reverend Robert's turn to attract the press, and she made full use of the occasion.

Once again Erin Martindale was the first on the scene with her camera crew, interrupting Gabriel Roberts in mid sentence, "Reverend Roberts will you be leaving the Anglican Church," she asked.

"Of course not, our mission is to open its eyes to the falsehood and lies emanating from Crete and Jerusalem," stated Roberts.

"Why do you think this new information is false Reverend," asked the reporter for Euro News."

"Evolution is fact, we have immense amounts of evidence to prove it beyond any doubt, and anyone who objects to that is either a liar or a fool."

"Are you calling your Archbishop a fool reverend Roberts," asked the BBC reporter.

"If he believes these falsehoods, yes, how can it be otherwise, and I think he should apologise for misleading the church."

"What exactly would it take to convince you that the 'God Tapes' are factual," asked Erin.

"Basically, Christ would have to tell me personally, and there is little chance of that, is there," answered Roberts.

You don't believe in this reported second coming then," inquired Erin once more.

“Certainly not, it is all allegory, written for the benefit of simple iron-age people who needed to be kept in line,” Roberts sneered.

Another news-man thrust his microphone into the fray, and asked, “What exactly do you believe Reverend.”

“I believe that Jesus was a good man and gave us a good, God-fearing role model, and that is what is important in this life, not the mumbo-jumbo that these fools and liars believe”

“In that case, you are not a good example of a Christian,” said Erin as she walked away.

**Agios Nikolaos Hotel, Heraklion, Crete.
Tuesday 18th November 2031 20:30 hrs
(local time).**

The lounge bar was almost deserted, except for a few reporters and businessmen, when Jo and John arrived for a pre-dinner drink. Owen was already there and seated in a corner booth, well away from the bar, which was the centre of the meagre attention in the lounge. The lounge was comfortable enough and was the stereotype of Greek tourist hotel lounges; as usual the décor theme was shipping and Greek's glorious classical past. The walls were adorned by pictures of Greek gods, ancient and modern ships, and old monotone photographs of the original excavation of the Knossos Palace. Near the bar, though, there was a very new addition to the collection, several photographs of the Crete Control Room, and a group picture, that

had appeared in the local press, of Jo and her family, with Owen, John and other members of the Trust's staff. This was always a source of embarrassment for Jo, as the hotel staff continued to point her out to visitors. Owen, it seemed, loved the notoriety and never ceased to enjoy telling tourists how the site was discovered, although, to be fair, he never placed himself in the role of hero.

"Hello, busy day you two," enquired Owen as a welcome, "got your drinks lined up ready."

"Thanks Owen, you are a love," said Jo.

"Got to look after the boss, don't I," said Owen with a laugh.

"You are really enjoying this, aren't you Owen," smiled John.

"Well it does make a change from teaching young engineers that don't know one end of a spanner from the other," Owen said, "I just hope I have a job to return to after this secondment is over with."

"Has UMIST been on to you about it," asked Jo.

"They keep asking how much longer, but the UK government keep smoothing things over,"

"So, what's the top secret news from the inner sanctum," asked John.

"It's scary, that's what it is," whispered Owen, whilst he kept his eyes alert for any of the research team, or reporters for that matter. "Well yesterday they were watching this guy Daniel, he was a prophet you know."

"Yes, we know, Owen, we are not complete heathens you know," said Jo.

“See they are checking everything against the Bible and the Hebrew scriptures,” continued Owen, “and they found this direct reference to the recordings. The Bible got it slightly wrong when it says,” Owen produced a Bible from his briefcase and went directly to a bookmarked page and read, “*But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.*”

“I can see the connection Owen,” said John.

“But wait John, in the recording Daniel actually says ‘*But, I Daniel have been commanded by God to close the records and seal them for the end time, many will be active and run about when their knowledge is increased.*’ But here’s the scary thing, Daniel is sat there as if he’s doing a piece to camera, and he’s in the Jerusalem control room, or one just like it.”

“So Daniel knew about the recording disks and understood the technology,” asked John.

“In the introduction that we heard, it did say that some humans understood the technology, didn’t it,” said Jo, “what else does Daniel say?”

“Then there is a whole lot of stuff about judgement day, after that, but that bit is scary, I only noticed it because the researcher played it over and over again whilst he checked the existing texts,” said Owen. “And you can understand how and why it was changed, not one of us would have understood otherwise, but we all know about scrolls and books.”

“When did Daniel live, about six-hundred BC?” asked Jo.

“About that,” confirmed John.

“From what I have overheard, they seem to think that Daniel was the last human to understand the technology, as he was instructed to seal up the recordings,” added Owen.

“So anything added after that point was down to supernatural intervention,” asked Jo.

“That's what they think,” concluded Owen.

“So I wonder why Daniel was the last technocrat,” wondered Jo.

“I've been doing some research of my own on this Daniel guy,” said Owen, “he seems to have been a bright cookie. He was taken into captivity when he was young, to Babylon and managed to get an education there.”

“See, Babylon seems to be the centre of technology at that time,” said John, “there are so many records about the wonders of that city state, more, in fact, than the legends of Atlantis, and we actually have many artefacts from Babylon, their ceramics were amazing, and there is so much we don't understand.”

“Well there must have been something special about him,” said Owen, “he ended up as an advisor to Nebuchadnezzar, the King. It seems that, although there are claims from all over the middle-east for the location of Daniel's tomb including Babylon (Iraq), it does not seem that he returned to Israel.”

“I wonder if there is another control room somewhere in or around the remains of Babylon,” said Jo.

“That's exactly what I was wondering, Jo,” volunteered Owen.

“Is there any mileage in following that up, do you think,” wondered John.

“Not sure John,” said Jo, “I’ll have a chat with Dad tomorrow.”

“Come on, lets eat,” suggested Owen.

A Secret Location in Ramallah, Israe's West Bank. Tuesday 18th November 2031 21:50 hrs (local time)

Dirar Abu Sitta, sat at a small desk in a room illuminated by a single LED lamp, the walls bore maps and photographs of Jerusalem's National Synagogue, covering the bare plaster. Sitta's face wore a puzzled frown as he read the re-con report on the Synagogue's security, by one of his operatives. Sitta had visited the Synagogue two weeks before, posing as an Israeli, he had donned the prayer shawl and a kippah, and waited in line for over two hours, just to file past the so called Ark. He had felt disappointed by the visit as he had detected nothing from the box; no emotion had surfaced at all. Considering, he thought, the supposed power associated with this artefact, one would have expected something, even an involuntary shiver would have sufficed. There was nothing. For some reason this worried Sitta, but he could not put his finger on exactly why.

The GPS unit that he carried into the Synagogue had given him a good enough plan of the building, and he

has a good memory as to where the video cameras and body-heat sensors were placed. He had also noticed some laser emitters, which meant that there would be a laser net to get through. They could get fibre-optic bridges to cope with the laser net, so that was no problem, but this report had identified the possibility of one-eighty degree scanners and four energy weapon pods, one high up in each corner of the chamber, these were a worry. The problem was that Israel had some of the best technology in the region, much of which, they had developed themselves out in the world's second Silicon Valley.

Sitta was interrupted by a tap on the door, "Come," he called, the door opened to reveal his second in command, Mansur Zubeidi, "Mansur, come in."

"Ah, you are reading Bishr's report; it is very good, no?"

"Yes, very informative, have you read it," Sitta asked.

"But of course, you will find some notations at the end that I made, just thoughts, understand."

"Do you think we can pull it off, Mansur?"

"It is possible, I think we will need around ten fighters and some sort of diversion, I would recommend a vehicle bomb, not too close but not too far away, so that the guards will be able to assist."

"What about collateral," asked Sitta.

"A night time operation would minimise any deaths or injury to personnel."

"OK, Mansur, pull up a chair and let's get the planning started."

Preston, Nr. Weymouth, England.
Wednesday 19th November 2031 08:25 hrs
(local time)

Jim Markson, stood by the panoramic window that looked out across Weymouth Bay towards Portland, although today the near-island was a mere smudge in the misty distance. The temperature had been down to single figures over the past few days and the heating system was running full blast to overcome the morning chill. His wife Carol came into the sitting room with their second cup of synth-coffee of the morning, "Thanks Dear," Jim said as he wrapped his hands around the steaming mug. "You know, I do wonder if we shouldn't move to Cyprus for the winter instead spending the summer's there, when I look at the English weather."

"Maybe," said Carol, "when Peter's finished his degree maybe. He's feeling a little cut-off now with Owen staying in Crete for the foreseeable future."

"Is he coming home for the weekend again," asked Jim.

"Possibly," answered Carol.

"The boy should find himself a girlfriend; he seems obsessed with work lately."

"Jim, he's got plenty time, and you know Peter, he will do what interests him, and with all this chasing around Europe, any serious relationship will be difficult," added Carol.

At that moment Jim's com-unit signalled an incoming call, the image on the lid was that of their daughter, Jo.

"It's Jo, what's the problem this time," moaned Jim.

“Oh we are a grumpy old man today aren't we,” snapped Carol.

Jim opened the lid of the com, and said, “Hi Jo, what's the problem?”

“Your Dad's in a bad mood today Jo, be warned,” shouted Carol from the window-seat.

“Take no notice of your mother, it's just a case of the winter blues,” explained her Dad.

“Cold is it Dad,” laughed Jo, knowing how her father felt about cold weather, “it's still a nice twenty-six degrees here, I might go swimming later.”

“That's it, keep cheering me up, why don't you,” Jim kidded along, “anyway what can we do for you?”

“We were having a chat last night over dinner Dad and something occurred to us,” Jo started.

“Who exactly is we,” asked Jim.

“Owen, John and I,” Jo explained, “Owen was telling us about the Prophet Daniel and without giving too much away, it seems that he knew all about the records and the control room technology. In fact Daniel may have been the last human to understand the technology.”

“And that is significant, why,” asked Jim.

“Owen's been doing some reading about Daniel and from what he said, he spent most of his life in Babylon,” Jo pressed on, “and the video recordings show him doing his apocalyptic bit, as if to camera, and, he was sat in a control room. Now we know that wasn't any of the rooms we know of. . . ,”

“So you think there's another control centre in Babylon, and you want to go-see,” Jim completed the line.

“Well yes and no,” answered Jo, “we were just wondered if you thought there was any mileage in investigating. I can't see there being anything new in the way of recordings, just a duplicate of the others, but Babylon was a centre of civilisation with several pieces of technology we already know about, who knows what we may find.”

“I'm not going to make a snap decision Jo, let me think about it,” Jim told his daughter, “I am not sure how welcome we would be in Iraq though, Islam is up in arms about the recordings. One Mullah has gone on TV saying that the records and the technology are a trap of Satan. As a matter of interest there are a few Christian leaders who are agreeing with him.”

“OK Dad, let me know what you think,” Jo said, “Dad, why don't you and Mom go out to Cyprus for a few weeks, at least it would be warmer.”

“May be, we could all go out for Christmas, make a family holiday out of it,” suggested Jim.

“That would be lovely, I'll look forward to that,” Jo responded, “but how come you're calling it Christmas again, instead of Winter Holiday?”

“It just seems more appropriate now we know Christ is real.”

“Dad, you old softy, you just brought a tear to my eye,” Jo said, “OK, speak soon, bye Mom, bye Dad, love you both.”

MI6 HQ, (Babylon-on Thames,) London,
England. Wednesday 19th November 2031
10:00 hrs (local time)

The MI6 building, known to its staff as either Legoland or Babylon-on-Thames, due to its resemblance to an ancient Babylonian ziggurat, is a huge building overlooking what remained of the River Thames, it needed to be large to accommodate the huge amounts records and staff. The building was built in the late eighties and early nineties on the site once occupied by Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens, a fact not lost on its inhabitants. The building is ideal for a security service, and contains the many required individual offices, huge computing power and storage space that any warehouse would envy. Despite the lowering of national borders, 'Six' as it was known, had continued to collect and analyse the many terabytes of information generated every day. GCHQ near Cheltenham in Gloucestershire, also continued as the main collection point of intelligence, and used cutting-edge technologies that the layman would hardly believe. It was said that the listening devices at GCHQ could hear a mouse in the Sahara, no one has ever denied that statement.

Overnight a signal had been received from the middle-east that was encrypted and marked 'Is6', a coded designation that meant it was from Israel and was destined for MI6. The encrypted message was already in Marty Faversham's computer when he had arrived at the office at five before nine, and was already sorted by

the computer as his number one priority for that day. Marty Faversham was the head of Israeli/Palestinian desk, and had, several years before served as a cultural attaché in the British Embassy in Jerusalem, in reality he was the field officer and later head of station. Marty had been in Jerusalem during the troubles and had been anonymously instrumental in achieving the peace accords between Israel and Palestine. At ten after nine he had decrypted the message and after a short period of contemplation had alerted his chief of Middle-eastern affairs, within thirty minutes a 'special' meeting had been called for ten o'clock.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I don't need to remind you that what we are about to discuss is classified at this time,” stated Abe Marks, head of Middle-east Section. Abe Marks was of Jewish lineage but was a fourth generation Englishman whose ancestors had escaped to Britain just before the Second World War. “We have just this morning received a communication from our Jerusalem station that is very concerning.” Marks explained, “Marty, can you share the intel with us please.”

“Thanks Abe, good morning everyone,” Marty commenced, “You all have a copy of the message that I decrypted earlier, but I will read it through to get some sense of the details. Message starts:

'From head of station Jerusalem, Intel received tonight from contact in Palestine G (government), Have evidence of a resurrection of PLO in form of a new faction nom (named) The World Against Israel's Actions

in Palestine (WAIAP) headed by Dirar Abu Sitta. Ob (objective) to secure the recently discovered Ark of the Covenant from National Synagogue. Message End

“So, what do we know about Sitta, people,” Marty asked.

One of the analysts was the first to speak, “He's one of the hard-liners, a bit of a dinosaur in that he has been evident as an ‘anti-Semitic’ ever since the peace accord. Was an opponent of the accords and wanted the Israelis to vacate Jerusalem entirely. Any more than that I'd have to do the research sir,” said Angela Dobbs.

“I remember this guy,” added Abe Marks, “he was thought to be behind many of the atrocities against Israel, back in the two-thousands. He got the nick-name of the ‘Ice-man’, although we learned that he would not kill unless necessary; he seems to be devoid of emotions. Make no mistake he's very professional and because of that, very dangerous.”

“Can we expect trouble, Abe,” Marty asked.

“Certainly; I'd stake a years salary on it,” replied Abe, “at this point, I wonder if Mossad, has got hold of this yet, and do we tell them, letting them know that we have an inside asset?”

“I would not like to muddy our relationship with Israel at this point Abe,” said Marty.

“No, we would not,” said Abe, “and if the intel we have from Iraq is good, we also have the problem with these ‘God Tapes’, the Muslims are pretty riled up about the info that's coming through. The Arab League is accusing the west of manufacturing these recordings in

response to the up-rise in interest in Islam. There's a distinct possibility that we may have serious issues from that quarter.”

“OK people,” said Marty, “we need a full breakdown, and analysis of the situation, I need a full profile on Sitta, and see who else may have aligned with this WAIAP organisation, anyone we know or have files on. I will contact Ben Marks; any relation Abe?”

“Actually yes, he's a cousin of mine,” remarked Abe.

“Could be useful,” said Marty as he continued, “maybe you could contact Ben and put out a few feelers before we give him the intelligence. Jack, can you do some digging to see where this faction came from and Lou, have a snoop around the Palestinian community here in the UK, see if anyone has heard anything. Right, let's get to it team,” Marty concluded.”

**Office of the President, Baghdad, Iran.
Wednesday 19th November 2031 14:30 hrs
(local time).**

Hakim Arif, the elected president of the Republic of Iraq, waited patiently in his overly-ornate office in the newly built Presidential Palace overlooking Baghdad, He was waiting for the Minister of Politics, which in this part of the world included the spiritual side of life. The Armed Forces Minister was already in the office, sitting in a gold-painted chair with bright red upholstery, and sipping strong coffee. Outside rain was falling quite heavily and

the traffic in the city was bad, accounting for the lateness of the Minister. After a wait of thirty-five minutes the Mullah was conducted into the President's office, Hakim rose to greet the cleric and invited him to sit in the other gold and red chair that had been readied for him.

"Coffee, Sir," Hakim asked.

"No, no, water will be fine Mr. President."

Hakim seated himself behind his desk again and started straight into the business, "We all know why we are meeting today, we have a serious threat to our faith, gentlemen and we have many decisions to make on how we will cope with it. I have spoken to the heads of state in both Iraq and Saudi, and I have agreed to meet with them next week in Abu Dhabi, so I need some options."

"I have received reports from believers in the west, mainly Europe and the Great Satan of the US, that converts to Islam have almost stopped since the discovery of these so called 'God Tapes'. What is even worse I have a report that some of our people are converting to Christianity, not many, but I am led to believe that there is a potential for a disaster," offered the Mullah.

"Conversion to Christianity is not to be tolerated," Hakim stated, "what numbers are we speaking of," he asked.

"According to my intelligence report, some hundred and twenty have converted in the UK, about another sixty in France," the Mullah read from a document, "they are not significant numbers but they are growing. The west continues to screen details and supposedly video of the

records, on TV every night at peak viewing times.”

“This is obviously a western construct,” butted in the Armed Forces Minister, Tariq Hussein, “how is it possible that their god made TV programmes thousands of years ago, I am sure the blessed prophet, Mohamed; bless His name; would have been informed of this in some way.”

“May be so,” answered the Mullah, “however, construct or no, it is having an effect on our people, they are confused, and Islam has nothing to counter the lies of the west. Video is a very strong medium, Tariq.”

“Are you saying Sir, that the Quran says nothing that will counter these claims or expose them as a fraud,” asked Hakim.

“in a word, Mr. President, No,” answered the Mullah, “sadly the Christians have pointed to several verses in their scriptures that certainly hint at these records, of course they claim the previous translations were slightly wrong, and this seems to be true. They are being very convincing in their propaganda.”

“So what options are we left with,” asked the President.

“Mr. President, may I propose a military strike on the source of these records, we have the capability to take these two cancers out with a surgical strike,” proposed Tariq Hussein.

“You are proposing a missile strike,” Hakim asked, a little shocked.

“Yes Sir I am.”

“You are actually proposing destroying one of the most important sites in Islam,” the President said with obvious

incredulity, “have you forgotten that the Jerusalem centre is located below the Al-Aqsa Mosque. That is not an option Tariq.”

A long silence descended on the office after the suggestion, and the three sat in deep contemplation. It was the President who was first to speak. “Unless, we could get a device actually into these centres, where the recordings are supposed to be played and videoed, I am sure the rock above would protect the Mosque, would it not Tariq?”

“Would that be a conventional or nuclear device, Sir,” asked the Minister.

“We need to vaporise the chamber, make sure nothing survives, so I would say that nuclear, possibly and implosion device, is the only option, would you not agree,” Hakim asked.

“Our scientists have been working on developing a new device Sir,” Minister Hussein, explained, “it’s a fusion device, as opposed to fission, I am told it created a miniature sun, and achieves thousands of degrees, which melts everything around it. I have seen the device and it’s about the size of a large orange.”

“Has it been tested,” asked the Mullah.

“Yes, an underground test earlier this year created a cavern the size of this room, two kilometres down a failed drill hole, it has glass walls a meter thick now.”

“Good,” said President Hakim, “get a plan together; let’s give them a Christmas present they will never forget.

**Knossos Site, Crete, Greece. Friday 21st
November 2031 11:25 hrs (local time).**

Jo Markson and John Moffat were again recording the freezes in the many side chambers that were accessed from the passageway to the portal. There were some thirty of these chambers, all were empty and each contained an individual freeze that covered each of the four walls at a height of two point four meters above the floor. The freezes in the four chambers that Jo and John had examined so far had been of everyday life in the stone age and iron age. There were depictions in relief of bread making, marriages, wine and beer production, field tilling, irrigation systems, harvesting, and the like, fairly standard scenes. Today they had elected to examine one of the chambers at the far end of the passage, just three chambers away from the teleportation portal. They commenced the examination from the door and worked from right to left, in the direction any figures were facing. The first wall showed scenes of rock being quarried, the illustration was of huge blocks that were higher than a man, and twice as long.

“John, these quarrymen seem to be cutting the stone with a stick,” commented Jo, she then started a detailed examination.

“Not unusual,” said John, who was setting up the virtual scanner, “Egyptian tombs showed a lot of sticks or rods, they seem to represent power or knowledge.”

“Yes, I get that, but if these illustrations are to any sort of

scale, these blocks are huge,” Jo persisted, “see here, this one is on a sled being pulled by one person.”

“Don’t tell me, it’s an anti-grav sled,” John laughed.

“OK I won’t tell you, but how did you know?”

“What,” exclaimed John, “more high-end technology,” as he stopped his work on the scanner and crossed to see what Jo was talking about. “Wow, it does look like a sled,” he agreed, “and look here, it even shows the power unit, and in some detail.”

“It looks just like the ones that JPL developed,” said Jo, “I guess a sled is a sled, uh.”

“I guess.”

Jo continued to follow the freeze to the right onto the second wall, she gave a little gasp and moved quickly to the wall opposite the doorway, “John there is something weird going on here, come over here quickly,” she said.

John again left the scanner and joined his girlfriend, looking to where she was pointing, his jaw dropped in amazement, “Oh my goodness,” he said.

There in front of them was a depiction of the Dome of the Rock, complete with the beam shooting from its summit and the rock beneath cleaved in two. On the wall opposite the door was a similar scene but with the Mosque in ruins. The procession of stone blocks continued, below the illustrations, to the wall to the right, where they showed a reconstruction beside the ruin and the final wall to the left of the door, showed a complete building. The new building had seven great columns and mounted by a flat or rectangular façade, in the centre of the façade, over the fourth

column was a large menorah, that seemed to be a part of the fourth central column. In front of the building people were leading goats and carrying sacks up the steps and from the top of the building wisps of smoke were depicted.

“John, this looks like . . .”

“Yes I know,” interrupted John, “the third temple.”

“It was on TV in October that the Israelis had decided to rebuild their temple, because they took the retrieval of the Ark as a sign from God,” Jo related.

“I heard something about it,” agreed John, “Owen says that it is one of the predictions of the second coming, before Armageddon.”

“Great, and it's us that found the thing,” said Jo. “Oh crap!”

“What now,” asked John.

“That means that these freezes are not just about ancient life, but our life today and tomorrow,” Jo stated, “Stay here, I just want to check a couple of other chambers at this end of the passage.”

John continued on with the setting up of the scanner and Jo left him, disappearing into the passageway. Jo chose the next chamber towards the portal, where she had been teleported into the antechamber back in August. Her LED lamp illuminated another freeze, it took several seconds for her eyes and her mind to process the information, the freeze on the first wall was a map, a map that showed the Earth as it must have been thousands of years ago. Geologists had predicted that in the early days of the Earth's existence there had

been just one continent, and here it was in detail. The second wall showed a tower and the breaking up of the single continent, the wall to the left showed the continents forming and to the left of the door the world as it was today. On the opposite wall to the door was a schematic, a map that showed Jerusalem at the centre with eleven other stations scattered around the earth all connected by lines and one line that was carved vertically into the ceiling.

The chamber closest to the portal, stunned Jo completely, as she entered the room the light shone on the opposite wall, what she saw made her drop the torch. There in front of her Jo saw a depiction of the control room in some detail, with the panels and seats, and the master chair. However, what had shaken her was that she saw there were just five people, each sat in the exact positions that her team had been in when they discovered the recordings, correct right down to their genders. Jo picked up the torch and made a quick examination of the whole room, it was like a graphic history of how they had discovered the centres. Jo, almost, ran back to where John was just finishing, he could see she was shocked straight away. Without saying a word, Jo grabbed John's hand and pulled him toward the last room, they stood in silence for two full minutes.

John broke the silence and said, "You had better contact your Dad."

Preston, Nr. Weymouth, England. Friday
21st November 2031 12:15 hrs (local
time).

Jim Markson was in his office preparing for the TV broadcast that evening, it took quite a lot of effort to keep up with the latest reports from Crete, and he was sure that he would be asked to comment on something. There was so much information coming through that one person could not possibly remember or even absorb a tenth of it. Besides that, everything that he had believed and been taught, seemed to be wrong. Jim had never really believed in a God, although Carol had always clung to a kind of faith, and she seemed the least affected with the discovery. Jim was in that no-man's-land, between belief and disbelief, his head now told him that God existed, but his heart had not yet caught up. The week before, they had actually been to church, the congregation at St. Andrews Church had treated them like celebrities and the Vicar had called upon Jim to share something about how the discovery had affected him. Jim felt that this was a very embarrassing moment, which had put him off returning. Carol had quite enjoyed the experience and surprised Jim by actually knowing some of the songs that were sung.

After the service the Vicar, Edward Fielding, had invited them back the vicarage for coffee, before Jim had been able to open his mouth to refuse, Carol had accepted the invitation. The vicarage was a new building, and

was just across the road from the church, not a large house but sufficient for the Vicar, his wife and two children. Ed, as he insisted on being called, had been born in New Zealand, and had retained a slight accent. Carol was quite relaxed and chatted away with Mrs. Fielding, but Jim felt like a fish out of water, and 'Ed' persisted in delivering the Gospel message in a dozen different ways. Ed asked Jim if he would return the following month, on Advent Sunday, to give a talk about the Trust, its work and the great discovery. Seeing Carol's eyes light up, Jim reluctantly agreed, much against his better instincts.

Jim sat at his desk looking out over Weymouth Bay, letting his mind wander, he was dragged back to reality by his com-unit chiming, he saw his daughter's picture on the cover and thought, '*Two calls in two days, now what's the matter*'. "Hi Jo, what's up," he asked.

"Dad, we have made another discovery, and it's earth-shattering," Jo blurted over the com-link.

"You mean more earth-shattering than discovering that there is a God," Jim asked a little sarcastically.

"No, but it's sort of conformation, of everything."

"That's a sweeping statement Jo; just tell me what's happened."

"OK, I am sending a virtual scan through and then you can see what I'm talking about."

Jim placed his com into the docking station, "OK send it now."

Jo related the story of how they were examining each of the empty chambers and how she had gone off on her

own, and then she excitedly described what she had found. "These rooms are records of what we did and how we discovered the control room, Dad, but it also continues in other rooms to show what is going to happen. You will see, it even has us in one of the depictions."

"OK Jo, just calm down," said her Dad softly, "I will have a look at the scans and I will get back to you, once I have digested the information. I can't look at them now as I have a TV interview to do in London at eight tonight."

"Honestly Dad," persisted Jo, "you might want to have a quick look before you go. When the authorities find this out, they will want to censor the material, like they are doing with some of the recordings."

"OK, I will have a look before I leave," promised Jim, "and I'll get back to you tomorrow."

"Al-right, Dad, speak tomorrow, Love you."

Jim's curiosity overcame his need to brief himself with the latest output, and he put the first of the scans on his soft-screen. He was amazed to see himself immortalised in stone sitting in the control room and a tingle went up the back of his neck. Quickly he looked around the room and then moved on to the next scan, and then the next, and the next. His mind spinning, he sat back in his high-back chair to think. After ten minutes of wrestling with his thoughts, he suddenly went to work making stills of various frames and saving them to a memory button. Two hours later he was having a late lunch with Carol, to whom he showed the new

scans. As they finished eating, Jim stood and looked at Carol and a wordless message passed between them, Carol gave a slight nod, but her eyes said far more. Jim, kissed his wife, exited his house and boarded his LIMO and headed for the London BBC studios.

**BBC Studios London, England. Friday 21st
November 2031 18:05 hrs (local time).**

After obtaining clearance, Jim's LIMO touched down on the roof area of the studios in Central London, as the machine powered down two security guards approached. One security-man checked Jim's I.D, and then the other man hooked the LIMO to a cable and activated the winch that parked it in an empty bay. Jim was then escorted to the studio 'green-room' where other guests on the night's show were already gathered.

"Jim," exclaimed Jonathan Benn, the Archbishop of Canterbury, "Good to see you again."

"Hello, Sir," said Jim, "I didn't know you were on the show tonight."

"Wrong place at the wrong time, I'm afraid," said the Archbishop, "I happened into your friend Declan Brook earlier today; he prevailed upon me to come and give the viewing public some Christian insights on the day's production."

"That Sir is very convenient, I have some quite stunning news of a discovery that Jo has made only this morning," explained Jim.

"I shall look forward to that, can you give me a hint as to

the nature of this discovery,” asked Archbishop Benn. Jim took Benn's elbow and guided him to the corner farthest away from the others in the room, “Jo has discovered stone relief freezes in the chambers on the site, these relief carvings show scenes from our present and future, Sir.” Jim continued on, to explain the discovery, and showed the Archbishop the stills he had taken, showing the five people who were there at the discovery of the records. The Archbishop was stunned, and lost for words, “I don't really know what to say about this Jim, but I will certainly look forward to seeing the scans later, I will have to think through the implications.”

Jim was still holding his com-unit when the door opened and Declan Brook walked in, he walked directly toward Jim holding out his hand to shake Jim's, “I got your message Jim, what is all this about,” he asked. Once again Jim quickly explained the latest findings. Declan swallowed hard and looked astonished, “Can I view these virtual scans before we go on air,” He asked. “Of course, I was hoping you would find the time before the program.” Jim followed Declan from the 'green-room' and along several corridors and a set of stairs then into a VR studio. Jim gave Declan the memory button, who then took it to a control room about seven meters above the studio. After three minutes he reappeared in the studio and shouted, “Whenever you're ready George,” he then turned to Jim and asked, “Have the UN people seen these yet.” “No,” answered Jim, “all they seem interested in are the

recordings, Jo and John have been examining the side chambers over the past week, and they only found this little lot this morning.”

“Good,” said Declan, “I have to say Jim that it worries me what the UN are keeping from us,” The walls of the studio suddenly illuminated with green light, “Ah we seem to be ready.”

The green light quickly dissolved into a simulation of the first chamber, just as if the studio walls were made of stone, and there the freeze stood out in all its glorious detail, just as if it had just been carved. Declan stood entranced as he reviewed chamber after chamber, and scenes of both recent-past and the future formed and dissolved around him.

“Jim if ever there were any doubts about what this means, this blows it away.”

At seven forty-five everyone the guests were called to the studio to take their places for the broadcast, Declan had taken the memory stick and given it to his production assistant. Jim took his place at the desk with Archbishop Benn, Omar Haseim, spokesperson for the UK's Islamic Council and Monsignor Colin Murphy, the Catholic Church's representative. The chief Rabbi, it seemed had declined the invitation. At twenty-hundred hours exactly the studio went on air and the first item was the official news of the day's discoveries, as released by the United Nations. The news-reader introduced each clip, which today seemed to be about Joseph and his cruel treatment by his brothers. Great emphasises was placed on the 'Coat of Many Colours',

which seemed to be made of just four quite drab colours, blue, dull red, a olive green and a beige. “How different,” the news-reader said, “to the coats we have seen in the classic musical, 'Technicolor Dream-coat', which will sadly never be the same.”

After twelve minutes of the news the red lights on the cameras in front of the panel went on and Declan, who was seated at one end of the desk, smiled and said, “Good evening everyone, Declan Brook here with the news and views on 'Today in Crete', tonight's panel are no strangers to you,” Declan turned and a production assistant cued in each of the guests as Declan introduced each one. “Archbishop, how does the image of the real Joseph stand up to your own image of this great man,” Declan asked. The Archbishop shared his picture of Joseph and his observations from the news-clips, the Monsignor virtually said the same thing using different words. Interestingly Omar said that he didn't really have a personal picture of Joseph as he was more concerned with the Qur'an than ancient history. There were some other points on the latest footage posed by Declan and a short spat between the Monsignor and the Archbishop, but Omar took little part in any discussion. Then at around twenty-thirty-five, Declan gave a nod toward the control gallery and turned to camera.

“There have been some criticism lately that the United Nations team based at the Knossos site in Crete, are not making all of the data available to the world. In

other words information is being censored,” Declan stated, “Until today I will admit that I considered this to be just another conspiracy theory. To day I have received proof from two sources, one source I cannot reveal, but I assure you that it is reliable, the other source, I can tell you, is right here on this panel tonight. Jim Markson had shown me tonight images taken from some side chambers, of relief carvings that show incidents that have happened recently as well as things that may well be yet to come. Jim has allowed us to transmit the virtual recordings, which will start in a few seconds, Jim, can you talk us through them please.”

The red-light came on in front of Jim, an indication that his microphone was live,

“I think everyone will be able to see what the carvings depict, without too much comment from me Declan,” said Jim into the microphone. Jim started off describing the carving that showed the Temple Mount in Jerusalem being split then went on identifying the five people in the 'Discovery' depiction, and then the next comment was to identify the series of scenes that represented the rebuilding of the Jewish temple.

“The next depictions you will see,” said Jim to camera, “will be of what we think is the final battle, you will notice from the banners, that the attacking army is carrying the insignia of Islam,” The transmission reverted to the virtual display of the carvings, and the control zoomed in on the banner that Jim had noted. “The final relief that I want to show you is this one, as you can see, above the raging battle there seems to be a rift, and through this

rift can be seen a figure,” the image of the figure was left on the screen whilst Jim continued, “We have only examined a very small proportion of the chambers and the freezes, the ones we have seen are accurate about the past, so we must extrapolate that the future depictions are also true. Indeed Israel has already started plans to reconstruct Solomon’s Temple, something that we only found out in the past few days.”

“What is your reaction to that Omar,” asked Declan.

“I have no reaction to Christian lies,” responded Omar, “this whole thing is a conspiracy against Islam, Allah and his prophet, Mohamed, all honour to his name.”

“If you would like, I can take you to Crete to allow you to examine the carvings for your self,” offered Jim, “you will see that these are not lies.”

“These are the things that must happen,” interrupted Archbishop Benn, “please forgive me when I tell you Omar, that Islam is a false religion, we now have proof of that.”

“For once, I must concur with my friend the Archbishop, I for one. . . .”

The Monsignor got no further; he was interrupted by someone bursting in through the large studio doors, followed by two security men in hot pursuit. The man, Jim saw, was dressed in traditional eastern robes, which a second later he pulled apart to reveal a suicide vest.

Jim dragged Declan, by his neck tie, and then grabbed Jonathan Benn’s cross and pulled them both down behind the desk, just as one security man rugby-tackled the intruder. There was noise such as Jim had never

heard before, immediately followed by silence, and the studio set disintegrating around them. Jim felt something warm and sticky hit him in the side of the face and he closed his eyes and curled himself into a tight ball. Things continued to fly through the air and now Jim felt heat and smelled smoke. After what seemed like minutes, but was only around twelve seconds, Jim opened his eyes and lifted his head, what he saw was total devastation.

The Archbishop was alive but unconscious, his friend Declan was staring at him saying something that neither man could hear. Jim looked around, neither the Monseigneur nor Omar had been as lucky, and most of their upper bodies were missing. Although they could not hear them, alarms were sounding all around them, much of what had once been the studio was on fire. Jim's first thought was to get Declan and Jonathan out of the building before the roof collapsed. Luckily for the three of them, the desk was a more solid affair than the usual TV scenery, being a permanent fixture, and Declan had escaped with no obvious injuries, Jim's arm had been injured and was bleeding, but the Archbishop had sustained a bump on the head from falling material. Declan signalled to Jim to grab the Archbishop's legs, whilst he lifted him under the arms. They were half way to the doors, which were still slightly open, when they were met by more security men, these guards took over the carrying of the man who was head of the Anglican Church. Within minutes they were outside in the fresh air and Jim collapsed onto the ground in shock.

Two security staff caught Jim before he hit the ground, and carrying Jim, they followed Declan and the Archbishop out of the danger zone. Although none except for the security men could hear the distant sound of police and ambulance sirens, help was on its way. Up in the studio gallery, things were still chaotic, the sound-proof glass windows that divided the gallery from the studio had shattered and there were many injuries from flying glass, but the glass had shielded the production staff from more serious injury. Not so the studio floor, several production assistants and technicians had been caught in the full blast and no longer existed in anything more than particles. People were now appearing from offices and other studios to gasp at the devastation that was studio ten.

Agios Nikolaos Hotel, Heraklion, Crete, Greece. Friday 21st November 2031 22:45 hrs (local time).

Jo, John and Owen had been watching the TV broadcast in the hotel resident's lounge, when the programme had suddenly and abruptly stopped after seeing Jim drag Declan Brook and Archbishop Benn to the ground. A multilingual caption was now displayed on the screen, announcing that the service would be restored as soon as possible. Jo had sat as if stunned and then suddenly, went into panic mode, "What has happened John something is very wrong," she shouted

as she fumbled for her com-unit and selected her Dad's address. The com immediately displayed a screen message that said, '*Unable to connect at present*', which only made things worse. Jo then called up the address for her Weymouth home to speak to her Mother, this time she was connected straight away, and saw a very worried Carol Markson. "Mom, what's going on, were you watching Dad," she asked.

"I know as much as you do Jo, but I am very worried for your Dad," Carol answered, "I can't get through to your Dad and was about to try Declan's address instead. Just hang on and I'll try him whilst you are on the com."

This time the connection was made and a very dirty and dishevelled Declan appeared on the screen, "Is that you Carol," he asked whilst cranking the volume control up to maximum, "my screen is cracked, I can't make you out."

"Yes Declan, what's happened, is Jim OK, she asked.

"Where's my Dad Declan," interrupted Jo.

On the screen Declan nodded, "Don't worry, Jo, your Dad's OK," he explained, "he's out of it at the moment but he will be fine."

"What's happened," Jo heard he mother ask.

Declan looked around as police officers and fire-men came into view in the background, one of which tried to help Declan away, "It was a bomb Carol, a suicide bomber, but for Jim the Archbishop and I would be dead now, we owe him our lives," Declan added. "I'm having trouble hearing you and I have to go," and the connection to Declan was broken.

"Thank God for that," offered Jo, "are you OK Mom," she

asked.

“Just a little shaky, Jo,” Carol told her daughter, “I’m taking my LIMO and going to London, I will call you as soon as I know anything, Jo.”

**BBC Studios London, England. Friday 21st
November 2031 21:25 hrs (local time).**

Jim regained consciousness in the ambulance on the way to St. Thomas' Hospital; with him were two other people, Declan Brook and a paramedic.

“Welcome back to this crazy world Jim,” said Declan, “they don’t think there is any damage, but the BBC just want to make sure, so we are on the way to St. Thomas’.”

“How’s the Archbishop,” Jim asked.

“They say he will be OK, just a concussion, thanks to you.”

“I need to contact Carol,” Jim said, as he searched for his com-unit.

“Too late old son, Carol and Jo were on the com within five minutes,” Declan told him, “by the way your com is scrap.”

Two minutes later the ambulance slid into the reception area of the hospital and the rear doors opened automatically. Two male-nurses walked on board and helped Declan and Jim to the waiting conveyance-chairs that took them directly to the triage station. Both men stood as they arrived but were ordered to reseat themselves by a very formidable female nurse, both

quickly did as she ordered. The chairs were diverted to individual cubicles and within a few moments a doctor was by their side, Jim was asked to lay down on a medi-bed, which he did, and the physician proceeded to read the output on a display screen.

"Well Mr. Markson, you seem to be none the worse for your experience," the physician muttered, "other than a few bruises and scrapes".

"Pardon," said Jim, "my ears haven't recovered yet."

"SORRY!," the doctor shouted, "YOU ARE OK SIR, YOUR HEARING SHOULD RETURN WITHIN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, BUT DON'T DRIVE UNTIL IT DOES SIR."

A nurse arrived and cleaned the cut on Jim's arm, then put a dressing on it, securing it in place with tape, then left saying, "You'll live."

"Thanks," shouted Jim. The nurse turned, gave him a smile and disappeared.

As Declan was on his sensor-festooned medi-bed his com chimed to tell him he had a call, it was Carol again, he again pushed the volume up to maximum and answered the call, "Hi Carol."

"Where's Jim Declan, I am just approaching London, is he all right," she asked.

"He's here with me at St. Thomas' Hospital," Declan told her.

"OK I'll be there in five minutes." Carol reset her navigation system and headed for St. Thomas', no sooner than she had sat back into the driving seat than her com-unit chirped, it was Peter.

"Mom, what's happening, I just got a call from the Professor," Peter told his mother, "he said there had some kind of bombing where Dad was."

"It's OK Peter, your Dad is safe and unharmed, I am just about to land at the hospital," Peter's mother assured him, "so stop worrying, we're all OK."

"Get my Dad to give me a call as soon as it's convenient," Peter asked.

"Fine Peter, we'll keep you informed, bye."

Thirty seconds later, Carol touched down in the hospital parking lot, there were three police LIMO's and two police surface vehicles in the car park, Carol made her way to the A & E entrance. At the entrance she was stopped by a police officer, and asked her business, after explaining who she was and showing her identification, Carol was admitted. A minute later Carol was hugging her husband and suddenly floods of tears rolled down her face, with relief.

"Give him one from me carol," said Declan, as he came into the waiting area, "Your husband is a real hero, if it was up to me, I'd give him a medal."

"Yes, I was watching Declan, that's my Jim," said Carol laughing and crying at the same time. "Can we go home now," she asked.

"Not for a while, I'm afraid," answered Declan, "I think Special Branch, or Anti-terrorism, or some such wants to talk to us."

"Well they will have to talk loudly, if they want it to be a two way conversation," laughed Jim, "I believe they are on their way, so hopefully it won't take long."

"Where's the Archbishop," asked Carol.

"They have taken him to a private room," Declan answered, "he's conscious but they want to keep him in over night, for observation."

Just then a woman in a grey suit approached them, she looked very business-like and serious, she was tall and slim with long chestnut hair, which flowed like a mane from her head. The spectacles that she wore seemed more for effect than for sight, as there seemed to be nothing but clear glass in the frames, "Good evening Mr. Markson, Mr. Brook, and this is," she asked turning to Carol.

"This is my wife, Carol," said Jim a little too strongly.

"Ah," the woman said, "I am the hospital administrator, Joan King, It's a pleasure to meet you, I wish it was under better circumstances." Joan shook hands with the three, and continued. "I can inform you that someone from MI6 is on their way to speak to you, so if you will follow me, I will take you the executive suite and we can organise some tea or coffee for you." With that Joan King turned and walked toward the elevator behind the desk, without checking to see if the three people were following her.

The elevator took them to the top floor of the hospital, where they were discharged into a carpeted corridor with offices on each side. They were led to the end of the corridor and into a well appointed board-room that had a large table with chairs on each side, but also had a lounge area at one end with easy chairs and low tables.

“Please make yourselves comfortable, and help yourself to any of the facilities,” Joan invited as she opened a well stocked bar, a very large soft-screen hidden behind a wall panel, and a food dispenser.

“How the great and good live,” said Declan, in a voice that was a little too loud.

“Here's your coffee and tea,” Joan said as, what was obviously a canteen worker, brought in a trolley with thermo-jugs and all the acquirements. “If you need anything I'm on the other end of this telephone, just punch in 001,” King said as she pointed to an old style telephone that must have been at least fifty years old. Joan King wished them a good night and left them without another word.

It was almost fifteen minutes later when Marty Faversham from MI6 arrived in the board room, he introduced himself as security advisor on Middle-eastern affairs, “Sorry to keep you all, but I thought it best to come here via the BBC studios, fist-hand information and all that.”

“You will have to speak up Harry, our ears have taken a bit of a beating,” responded Jim.

“Yes, of course,” Marty said, “and it's Marty, Sir.”

“I thought that it was MI5 who were concerned about internal security,” said Declan, “so why is MI6 interested?”

“I can't go into details, Mr. Brook,” answered Marty, “but we have some information about a couple of Middle-Eastern groups that have appeared in response to the 'God Tapes'.

“Oh great,” exclaimed Jim.

“I am going to review the video, but I need to ask you, did you hear the bomber say anything before he detonated,” asked Marty.

“No,” said Declan, “I was concentrating on the panel’s comments; I didn’t even see the guy come into the studio.”

“How about you, Mr. Markson, did you hear him say anything,” asked Marty.

“I am really not sure,” answered Jim, “I think he may have shouted something as the security guard brought him down, but I was more intent on getting whoever I could, under the desk.”

“It may come back to you later Sir, If you do remember anything, can you contact me at this com-address,” Marty asked as he passed cards to Declan and Jim.

“Oh, have you personally, or the studios, received any threats lately?”

“No,” said Jim.

“Not that I know of, but you would be better asking the PR Department or our security office,” Declan told Marty.

“Is that it,” asked Jim.

“For now,” replied Marty, as he strode out of the door.

“Don’t mention it,” Declan shouted after him, “Come on, lets get out of here.”

Preston, Near Weymouth, Doeset, England.
Saturday 22nd November 2031 10:00 hrs
(local time)

Jim and Carol had stayed in bed late this morning, they both felt drained of energy after the previous night's events. Carol made breakfast whilst Jim made the coffee, and they finally dropped into their usual places to eat. Just as the morning's news started on the BBC current affairs channel. The first item up was a report on the studio bombing the previous night, the two watched in silence.

The news-reader started the report by saying, "*Last light the BBC came under attack from an, as yet unknown source. Around two-thirds of the way through the evening's edition of 'Crete Reporting' a suicide bomber broke security and gained access to studio ten, and detonated an explosive device. [the final thirty seconds of the evening's programme was shown without any soundtrack] The bomber claimed the lives of fourteen people, among them Omar Haseim, the spokesperson for the UK's Islamic Council and Primate Monsignor Colin Murphy, the Catholic Church's representative. Two of the BBC's security staff, five production assistants, four technicians and the bomber. Only three people survived the attack on the studio floor, the BBC's own Declan Brook, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the very reverend Jonathan Benn, and James Markson, who turned out to be the hero of the hour, when he dragged the Archbishop and Declan Brook down beneath the*

desk at which they were seated. Both Mr. Brook and Mr. Markson were discharged from hospital later last night, and the Archbishop was detained overnight for observation. We are expecting to hear more of the Archbishop's condition at mid-day when Church House has promised to make a statement.

No organisation has claimed responsibility as yet and the police tell us that they have little to go on at present. MI5 have refused to comment and have denied that there was any warning. The UK's Prime Minister, Frederic Matthews, has issued a statement condemning the action as criminal and promised that every effort will be made to apprehend any group or co-conspirators involved in this atrocity. Reporter Erin Martindale caught up with Declan Brook when he arrived at the BBC this morning. [the picture changed to a shot of the exterior of studio ten with Declan standing with Erin]

"Quite and experience Declan," stated Erin.

"That's the understatement of the year Erin, as you and our viewers can see the studio behind us here is a scene of complete devastation," said Declan.

"What were your thoughts when this happened," asked Erin.

"I have no idea, and in honesty, all I can remember is Jim Markson grabbing my tie or jacket, and pulling me off of my chair. The next thing I can recall is being outside with Jim and the Archbishop."

"The Archbishop was unconscious I believe, how did you get him out," asked Erin.

"Again, I really can't say, I assume Jim and I carried him

out. But, Erin, I need to say one thing here, but for Jim Markson's quick thinking, neither the Archbishop nor myself would be here now, we both owe Jim a great debt that we will never be able to repay, and I just want to say, Jim, if you are watching this, thank you, from the heart."

"This is Erin Martindale, outside studio ten, returning you to the news studio."

Jim grabbed the remote and switched the soft-screen off, "Enough, I just don't feel like reliving the night again through other people," he said.

"Well," said Carol, "it seems that I am married to a real live hero."

"Now stop it, right now," ordered Jim as he took a long drink from his almost cold coffee. He had just returned the cup to the table when his com-unit chimed and displayed Jo's face; Jim flipped the unit open, "Hi Jo."

"Hail the conquering hero, my superman Dad," she said half laughing.

"OK Jo, that's enough, I'm not even sure that I did it consciously, I am certainly no hero."

"Dad I'm just glad you are still alive," Jo said, "are you really OK," she asked.

"Yes, I'm fine, arm's a bit sore but, I'll live," Jim assured Jo with a smile.

"Are you OK Mum," Jo asked, and after getting a 'Yes of course' from somewhere off screen, said, "Right got to go to work now, bye."

Room 334, King David Hotel, Jerusalem,
Israel. Saturday 22nd of November, 2031.
11: 30 (local time)

“Who in the name of Allah launched that attack in London last night,” asked Dirar Abu Sitta, as he switched the room's TV off from his position on the bed.

“No body seems to have any idea, according to the media,” answered Mansur Zubeidi, “it certainly wasn't anyone on our team. I spoke to our London contact earlier, they have no intel, they think it was a random personal attack.”

“This is not good Mansur, all the security services will be on guard and security upgraded, just when we don't need it.”

“We have over a week for things to settle down Sir, and they will, by the end of next week the level will be downgraded to normal,” advised Mansur.

“I hope you are right, or we will need to start planning all over again.” stated Sitta. “Who do we have leading the operation?”

“Jason has over-all command on the day,” answered Mansur.

“Hmm, I know you think he's good, my friend, but he's a westerner, and an unproven one in the field,” said Sitta.

“Sir, he's been through all the training camps, is fully in-line with the Palestinian cause, he's even done some recruit training himself, and he's good Sir, really good, and what's more, he's popular with his squad.”

“He's been briefed?”

“Yes Sir and we have done the simulation four times so

far.”

“Where is the squad?”

“At the South Sahara Camp,”

“And moving up to Jerusalem,” asked Sitta.

“On Saturday morning, all posing as tourists and flying in on a Thomas Cook charter flight from Frankfurt, with a via from Tripoli.”

“Good,” commended Sitta, “but keep them on stand-by till I give the go.”

“Of course, Sir, I'll be in Tripoli myself, until I hear from you. My flight's at thirteen-forty hours,”

“OK you'd better get going,” said Sitta, “may Allah go with you.”

“Thank you Sir; and with you.”

MI6 HQ, Babylon-on-Thames, London.
Sunday 23rd of November, 2031. 14:00 hrs
(local time).

Abe Marks sat in his office chewing the end of a pencil, as he normally did when perplexed with a problem, it was a standing joke that the purchasing budget always had a ten-percent uplift to account for Abe's pencils. Abe stared at his secure com-unit as if it were booby-trapped. The problem was, whether to contact his cousin Ben Marks, the Israeli Minister of Security, firstly there had been a rift in the family, and secondly Abe wasn't sure if he should reveal that they had a man within the Palestinian government's security service. The family issue was the lesser of the two problems of course, but it was a consideration. He had always played the relationship down within the service, as he believed it may have compromised his position, but now it may turn out to be an advantage. Abe's father and Ben's had been brothers, but Abe's Dad, Joshua, had rejected Judaism in favour of atheism, and the family had then rejected Abe's side of the family, Ben's father, Joseph, and his wife had moved to Germany, where Ben was then born.

Abe took a deep breath and picked up his com, he selected the address for the Israeli Diplomatic hub, using the secure system. This address put him in touch with the European Diplomatic Service in Bonn, "EDS," a disembodied voice greeted him' "can you input your security ID code please, and upon hearing the beep,

please speak your password, speak at normal speed and clearly, thank you”

Abe keyed his ID into the pad of his com and waited a few seconds for the electronic 'beep', after which he spoke his single 'day-password'.

“Your security ID has been verified” informed the voice. There was a click and a human face appeared on his screen, “How can we help you Mr. Marks?”

“Can you connect me with Benjamin Marks, at the Israeli Security Ministry, please,” Abe asked.

“One moment Sir, while I try to connect you,” the EDS operator said. Around thirty seconds later the woman came back, “I am connecting you with Minister Marks now Sir.”

“Abraham, it's been a long time,” said Ben Marks, “I would guess this is not a social call with you using EDS.”

“Hello Ben, how are you?”

“I am wunderbar,” said Ben, “I believe you are climbing the ladder at 'Six' Abe, head of middle-east section, you are doing well.”

“Not as well as you Ben, Minister eth!”

“Right place at the right time, Abe. So what can I do for you?”

“What do you know about *WAIAP* Ben?”

“Ah, we have heard that they are back on the espionage scene, but we have had no incidents, they have been around for a long time Abe, they keep surfacing and then disappearing again, we think they have a hard job funding anything, people are not interested in returning

to the old days.”

“You haven’t heard any rumours of late,” asked Abe.

“Can’t say we have, what is your interest?”

“Last week we had some intel come to light, as far as this intel goes it indicates that they have reformed with an old friend of yours in the driving seat, one Dirar Abu Sitta.”

“Sitta?” Ben repeated, obviously surprised by the news, “I guess that’s the end of their funding problems. You know he’s a multi-millionaire I suppose.”

“Yes, we are building a file on him.”

“Thanks for the info Abe, I owe you one,” said Ben.

“Maybe you would like to make that two,” said Abe.

“You have something else, Abe?”

“Yes,” said Abe, “and this is the point of this call, we have information that WAIAP are planning a ‘retrieval’ operation for your newly recovered Ark of the Covenant.”

“What? When? Do you know,” Ben almost jumped off his high-back leather chair.

“We don’t know the when, but we can tell you that the Palestinian government know about it and are doing nothing to stop it, short of sponsoring the raid on a deny-ability basis.”

“Abe you are a good man,” said Ben, “and if this is kosher I will owe you a lot more than two. It will need to happen soon as we are already preparing to move it to a more secure location that will be complete in the new year.”

“We thought it may be imminent,” offered Abe.

"How did you get this intel Abe," asked Ben.

"You know I can't tell you that Ben," said Abe, "let's keep to the rules, shall we."

"You have someone inside the Palestinian government, don't you?"

Abe kept a poker face and said nothing.

"Dam," said Ben, "you lucky dog."

"Unfounded statements like that are dangerous Ben," said Abe.

"Don't worry Abe that does not go outside this office."

"Well that's it, nice to have spoken to you again, Ben."

"Listen Abe, let's get together some time, and let bygones be bygones."

"I would like that," agreed Abe.

"I have a villa at the Dead Sea Resort, why don't you and your family come out and stay with us next year, for a holiday."

"We'll see," said Abe, "if we are still here next summer," he added with a friendly smile.

"OK, that's a date then, Auf Wiedersehen for now then, I have the feeling that we will be working together in the future."

"Could be," said Abe as he broke the connection.

**Office of the Ministry of Security,
Ministry of the Interior, Eliezer Kaplan,
Jerusalem, Sunday 23rd November 2031. 16:
32 hrs (local time)**

Ben closed his com-unit and pressed a button on the

internal communications panel on his desk, the button activated a direct line to the Prime Minister, Heidi Goldbloom.

“Yes Ben, what is it,” came the familiar voice of the PM. “Madam Prime Minister, it seems we have a problem,” Ben briefed the PM about the conversation he had had with his cousin Abe, and the threat to their new national treasure.”

“Thank you for letting me know so promptly Ben,” said Mrs. Goldbloom, “I was expecting something of the sort after the request to hand over the Ark was refused.”

“Indeed, Mam, we have been keeping a listening ear out for anything of interest,” explained Ben.

“Yet our British friends have caught the whispers.”

“So it seems,” admitted Ben.

“Ben, I am giving you cart-blanch in this matter, do what you need to do, but keep me informed.”

“Of course Madam Prime Minister,” said Ben as the connection was severed.

Ben Marks rose from behind his desk, left his office and took the elevator to the basement of the ministry. From there he crossed the garage area and found another elevator, he pushed a key-card into the slot provided and the door slid open. The elevator dropped three more floors and stopped, the doors opened onto another passage, with two armed guards outside the lift, who came to attention and saluted as the Minister exited the elevator. Ben's next stop was at the office of the director of Mossad, the Israeli Secret Service.

Brigadier Bergman was at his desk pouring over some

documents, he looked up at the rare occasion of someone not having the courtesy to knock before entry, and on seeing Ben, jumped to his feet in best military style. "Minister," he almost shouted.

"Can you tell me why the British MI6 can get better intel on what is going on under our very noses, than we can get," Ben asked without preamble.

"I'm not sure I know what you are referring to Minister," said the Brigadier, slightly confused.

"That is exactly my point Max," Ben said as he seated himself in front of the Brigadier's desk. I have just had a conversation with the head of the Middle-east section at MI6 in London, informing us that there is a definite perceived threat to this state."

"In what form Minister?"

"In the form of an operation to seize the Ark."

"Palestinians," asked the Brigadier.

"Yes, but not officially, it seems that *WAIAP* has reared its unsavoury presence again."

"Ha, the *WAIAP* are not a threat Minister," stated the Brigadier a little too smugly for Ben's liking.

"Do you think that a *WAIAP* would be more of a threat if it was headed by our old friend Sitta?"

"Are you telling me that Sitta has taken over the *WAIAP* Sir," it was a rhetorical question so Ben did not attempt to answer the Brigadier. "I thought he'd gone legit'."

"Max, I want him, DOA, and quickly, this operation to seize the Ark is imminent, and we cannot loose it again so soon."

"No Sir, I am on it."

"Make sure you are Brigadier." The Minister stood and

left the office.

**A Secret Location, Nr' Mount Daemavend,
South-east of Tehran, Iran. Sunday 23rd
November 2031. 18: 10 hrs (local time)**

Out in the Iranian desert, in the foot-hills of Mount Daemavend is a training camp designated simply by a Greek letter and numbers, 'Ω60'. The camp is sponsored and financed by the Iranian government, as a 'Black Ops' project. Ninety-five percent of the camp is underground, beneath hundreds of meters of solid rock, that no infrared satellites can detect. On the surface is an oil installation that has fooled every western reconnaissance image analysis over the past twenty years. The underground complex took six years to cut from the mountain and contains accommodation for an army of three-hundred thousand souls, a command and control centre, class-rooms, drill halls, workshops, recreation facilities, and everything that a modern Muslim city needs. Fighters stay at the camp for twelve months and then are discharged into a reserve regiment to await the call.

Each individual is brain-washed and conditioned to obey the call and offer up their life for Allah and the current Mullah. The purpose, to await the day when Islam will be called to arms and take over the western world. Europe, the United States of America and Australia is now home to in excess of six-million

'sleepers' who have passed through 'Ω60'.

In the opposite side of the mountain, under its north face and connected by a conduit is Iran's Second Missile Command HQ, a site that has been in operation since the late nineties. The site now contains the eighth generation of the Shahab-10 missile that has orbital and ICBM capabilities, a highly secret development outside of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT). To this date, no one outside of the Iranian Missile Command and certain departments of the Ministry of Military Strategies has any idea that these missiles exist; it is the Islamic world's best kept secret. A secret that has cost the lives of over seven-hundred people, Iranian, American and European, to ensure the existence of the base and its contents are preserved as non-existent. However that hard won, that secret is today ending.

Almost a kilometre beneath the mountain a technician is working on the maintenance and testing of the launch systems. The technician has eleven years of experience in his job, and feels that he could do these regular checks and adjustments with his eyes closed. At exactly 18:13 hours, there is a low level earthquake, measuring just three on the Richter-scale, no damage should have been caused as the whole installation and the camp is earthquake-proof. The technician is not paying full attention, he is dreaming of seeing his family again in just three days, when his three-month tour of duty

finishes. The sudden shaking startles him and his simple electrical screwdriver falls from the ledge into the launch and guidance control of the thirty-two meter rocket. There is a small spark as the driver shorts out between two terminals, he reaches in to retrieve the tool, and the cuff catches the switch that changes the setting from test back to live.

Twenty meters below he hears the valves open, and the liquid oxygen starts to feed into the rocket engines, there is a burst of hot gasses, followed by a scream from the technician that no one hears. The great rocket shudders in its silo and starts to move toward the still closed doors eight-hundred meters above. The missile is out of control, in the C&C centre there is panic, the systems are jammed on their test settings. Other technicians tear off access panels in an attempt to kill the rocket motors, one military officer has the ultimate responsibility, one switch remains live, one chance, one self-destruct command. The officer punches the previously protected red button and the missile explodes twenty meters from the silo doors, that no longer exist.

**CIA, Satellite Monitoring Facility,
Langley, Virginia, USA. Sunday 23rd
November 2031. 12: 43 hrs (local time).**

Paul Robinson was about half way through his shift when the alarm sounded, I was not an unusual event, but also something didn't happen every day. The alarm was triggered by one of the observation satellites in geosynchronous orbit over the Middle-east; the comparison software that compared previous images with a current image had detected a difference. The image automatically went up on the main screen and showed a bloom of fire emitting from an area within a mountainous area in central Iran. Robinson immediately ordered the satellite camera to zoom in on the area; the view now showed smoke drifting away to the west to reveal a sizeable crater. Paul decided to zoom in even further, what he saw caused him to call his supervisor on the priority button. Within a minute Senior Analyst, Kevin Lodge, was approaching his station.

“What have you found Paul,” Kevin asked, as he looked at the main screen, “what am I looking at here?”

“This is central Iran Sir, about a hundred and fifty miles South-east of Tehran.”

“And what is that, a volcano,” Lodge asked.

“Let me run the back images Sir,” Paul called up the past sixty seconds of the satellite feed, the images showed a area of mountains, some desert area and some snow on the higher altitudes. Then came the explosion and the bloom of fire. Paul then went back to the live image and said, “I zoomed and then I spotted these, Sir.”

“Oh, hell, they look like silo doors,” exclaimed Lodge. “they've had a blow-out in the tube, good work Paul.”

“Thank you Sir,” acknowledged Paul.

“Keep watching, and I want a finger-tip search and mapping of the whole area, UV, IR, spectra graphic, the works,” Lodge ordered, “can you send these images through to my com please.”

Kevin Lodge took the elevator to the seventh floor, and knocked on the door of the third office. The Deputy Director of Imaging was sipping his second cup of coffee of the morning, whilst watching his video message packages from the previous night.

“Good morning Kev,” George Mancini greeted Kevin, “is there a problem?”

“I need to show you this Sir, it just came in a few minutes ago.” Kevin plugged his com into the dock below the wall mounted soft-screen and played the sequence, including the close up views of the silo doors.

“Where the hell is this Kevin,” Mancini asked.

“Iran, Sir, a hundred and fifty miles from Tehran out in the desert, I think it’s a missile blow out accident, Sir.”

“Dam right, Kevin, this is big, very big. We need to take this to the top.”

“The Director,” Kevin asked.

“No Kevin, this I’ll go to the President.”

At the same time, some five-thousand, eight-hundred and eighty miles away in Jerusalem, the explosion had not gone unnoticed by the Mossad satellite imaging centre. Seismic detectors had alerted the duty staff and a cross reference of the shock detectors had given them an approximate epicentre. Satellite control was

then asked to align the closest satellite on that area, they found the crater straight away and by this time the rubble from the explosion had collapsed into the silo, leaving a nice sharply defined hole. The Israelis also saw the slight outlines of other silo doors. The imaging officer for Israel was also a trained analyst and noticed the drilling rig and pumping station on the other side of the mountain. He also noticed that the road to the oil extraction site seemed too well used for an out of the way post, and then switched to infra-red. The area around the oil post was cold in infra-red, and if the station was pumping oil, as the satellite image suggested it was, the pipeline should have shown warmer than the surrounding rock. There was little temperature differential around the pump.

The analyst asked satellite control to move the satellite to a different position, a position that gave him an oblique view-point of the oil station. Twenty minutes later the images from the new position arrived at the analyst's screen, the high resolution ten-thousand mega-pixel images showed every crag and stone. After a thorough search taking over forty-five minutes the analyst shouted, "heurisko", meaning 'I have found it', and find it he had. It was very well hidden and disguised, but the massif doors of the Mount Daemavend camp were unmistakable. The doors themselves must have been clad in the same stone as the mountain itself, as there were no temperature differentials between the doors and the surrounding rock, the only thing that gave it away were the camouflage nets and the shadow from the recess that

the doors slid into, and the motor housings. The images and an 'Instant Analysis' document were sent to Brigadier Bergman within fifteen minutes.

**Preston, Nr Weymouth, Dorset, England,
Sunday 23rd November 2031. 18: 30 hrs
(local time)**

Jim sat uneasily in the second pew from the back of the church; Carol had persuaded him to attend the evening service, telling Him that they should thank God for his escape on Friday evening. Jim had to admit that an hour spent in a peaceful atmosphere of a church was possibly what he needed, so they had arrived as late as possible before the service commenced, in order to avoid the greeting and back-slapping. Almost as soon as they had taken their seats the vicar, Edward Fielding had appeared at the front of the church.

“Good evening,” the vicar said into a microphone, “can we start the service with an old favourite hymn, ‘To God Be the Glory’ for great things he indeed has done. We will be singing the new setting that our worship-leader, Barry, taught us a couple of Sundays ago.”

Jim was surprised when the music started, this time there seemed to be a full orchestra, and the tune was quite beautiful. Jim found himself actually singing the hymn, and it felt good. The song finished and Ed Fielding announced that someone would now give the notices for the following week, then, Ed's his eyes fall

upon Jim.

“It seems that we have our new national hero with us tonight folks,” the vicar announced, “Jim, I wonder if you could come up here for a few moments please.”

Jim waved his hand to indicate that he did not want to be singled out, but some helpful usher came and helped him out of the pew. As Jim walked to the front of the church someone thought it would be a good idea to start clapping, something that no human seems to be able to resist joining in. Soon the whole church was on its feet clapping. Jim reached the front in a state of total embarrassment. None to soon, the Reverend Fielding held up a hand to signal the end of the applause, much to Jim's relief. “You look embarrassed Jim,” he said, “we just want to show you our appreciation for your act of humanity on Friday evening. I for one am proud to have you as a resident of Preston Village. Jim, thank you.”

Jim then had to walk back to his seat; the thought struck him of how it would have been better sitting on the front row. All the way back along the isle people were patting Jim in the back and shoulders. Ed announced that Jim would be speaking to the church in a couple of weeks, which only made the journey worse. Finally Jim slipped into his seat next a beaming Carol, “Not a word,” Jim whispered to her, and added a smile. The remainder of the service passed without incident, and Jim had to admit that, other than being in the limelight he had enjoyed it. It was after nine when Jim and Carol managed to get away from the church, it seemed

everyone wanted to talk to them. Finally, at twenty past nine Jim sank into his favourite chair with a mug of hot chocolate, with his preferred music album of Eva Cassidy playing in the background.

Preston Nr, Weymouth, Dorset, England.
Monday 24th November 2031. 09: 03 hrs
(local time)

Breakfast over Jim settled down to opening the day's mail. The mail had increased since the 'Revelation' as the discovery had at first been dubbed by the media, the name 'God Tapes' had come a little latter as a derogative term, coined by the evangelical atheists. There were the usual bills and requests for personal appearances from Jim or one or other of the team. Sometimes there was a crank letter or threat, these were passed on directly to the police, and on rare occasions there were donations towards the work of the Trust. Today there were no threats, but quite a large donation letter from the Anglican Church, this came as a surprise, as Jim's impression was that they collected money, rather than gave it away. There were three invoices that needed paying and Jim was just setting up the online payments when the gate signal chimed, he switched the soft-screen over to domestic and saw two men in business suites, that he did not recognise standing at the gate from the garage area.

“Can I help you,' Jim asked.

“Mr. James Markson,” asked the taller of the two.”

“Yes,” answered Jim hesitantly.

“Can you spare us a few moments Sir,” the taller one

asked.

“We are on official government business, Sir,” the other man stated with some authority, and held an identity card up to the camera.

“OK, come up to the house,” Jim agreed, “if you turn right at the main door and follow the building round, I will meet you.”

“Thank you Sir,” said the taller man, and they disappeared from view as the gate opened.

Jim left his office on the seaward side of the house and met the two men as they approached the corner. “Will you follow me please,” Jim asked the men, as they shook hands. Jim led them through the terrace doors into the conservatory, which was isolated from the main house by bio-lock security doors. “Please take a seat” Jim said as he indicated two chairs behind a low table, “what can I do for you gentlemen, is this about the bombing” he asked.

The shorter of the two introduced himself as Robert Holdsworth, and his associate as Mitchell Cummings and then continued, “I a way Sir. We both work at Buckingham Palace and we are here at the request of His Majesty the King,” Jim’s frown deepened as he listened to Holdsworth, “His Majesty wishes to reward you for your quick thinking and action on Friday evening in the event of the bomb that devastated studio ten at the BBC.” Jim tried to interrupt, but Holdsworth held up a hand, “Please Mr. Markson, hear me out, As you may know the British Crown remains the defender of the

faith, something that the divorce between church and government has not altered. The Archbishop is therefore appointed by, and comes under the protection of the Crown, and it is the act that saved Archbishop Benn's life which demands a reward."

"His Majesty, wishes to bestow a non-hereditary Knighthood, Sir, this is the traditional reward for assistance to the British Crown," interjected Cummings, "If you are agreeable, Sir you would be dubbed as part of the New Years Honours."

Jim's mouth hung open for several seconds after Cummings had finished speaking, finally, feeling a little stupid, he closed his mouth and said, "I really don't think I can accept any such reward gentlemen, as honoured as I am, I . . .

Holdsworth, stopped Jim in what he was about to say, "Sir, I have to warn you that to refuse such an honour is traditionally regarded as an insult to the Crown, and His Majesty has made it clear that he will be personally hurt if you refuse."

"Well it puts me in an impossible position, so I suppose I must accept," Jim finally said. "Very good sir, can you please sign this acceptance for me," Cummings asked as he produced a sheet of paper from his case. Jim signed the paper where Cummings indicated. "Thank you Sir"

"Just as a matter of interest," Jim asked, "what will I be called; do I have to choose a name or something?"

"No Sir," explained Holdsworth, you will simply be

known as Sir James, chosen names are normally for heretical piers.”

After a further chat over another cup of coffee the two palace workers left, just as Carol returned from shopping in Weymouth town centre. “Who were those two,” she asked as she dumped the shopping on the kitchen table.

“Let’s just say that from New Year’s Day onward you will have to courtesy to me.” “What are you on Jim Markson,” Carol asked laughing.

“Sir, Jim Markson, if you don’t mind,” Joked Jim.

“Are you serious,” Carol asked, “your getting a Knighthood?” “Yep, but we can’t tell anyone outside of the direct family until the New Year, so mums the word.”

Carol’s first action thereafter was to contact Jo, and thereafter peter, with the news.

**The Home Residence of The Minister of
internal Security, Jerusalem, Israel.
Monday 24th November 09:00 hrs (local
time) .**

Ben Marks had a regular meeting with his Prime Minister at eleven that morning to update her on the week’s security matters, and was enjoying a late breakfast and relaxing for an hour before leaving for his office and then the for the PM’s. His secure com-unit chimed just as he had sat down with the daily newspaper. Ben still loved to read the news in a real

paper newspaper, an extravagance these days but worth it, he thought. Of course the paper was recycled, possibly for the thousandth time. It was Brigadier Bergman, he saw. "You have news for me Brigadier," Ben asked hopefully of some news of Sitta.

"Yes Sir, sorry to disturb you, but it's rather urgent."

"You've found Sitta?"

"No Sir, I think we have more urgent problems than Mister Sitta," said the Brigadier, "I have just heard from our monitoring and analysis centre, we have found a missile base in Iran and what we think is an underground training camp."

"I knew they weren't complying with the peace accords," Ben almost shouted, "I'm on my way now, get all the data together, I'll pick it up on my way to my meeting with Mrs. Goldbloom, I'll see you in ten minutes." Ben abandoned his newspaper and coffee, then grabbed a croissant and strode out to his official LIMO.

Twelve minutes later Ben Marks was in the elevator descending to the Mossad base below the ministry, At two minutes before nine-thirty he was in the Brigadier's Office.

"What have you got Max," the Minister asked.

Max Bergman earned his rank in the British Army Intelligence Service and had been recruited by Ben's predecessor when cuts in the UK defence budget had forced the need to reduce staffing, about fifteen years earlier. Max, a fifth generation Brit of Jewish descent had jumped at the chance to move to Israel. Max was without a family, his parents were both dead from a car

crash during the millennium celebrations, and he had been married to his job and too busy to make time for a relationship. However he was now married to an Israeli woman, and had a ten year old son on which he doted.

Max lifted the red security box onto his desk and after pressing his thumb onto the bio-plate, opened the box. As he gave the Minister a run-down on how the analyst had discovered the base, he handed him the still images and a pad which had been loaded the live video of the incident that had been sent over from the CIA. Max also went through the analyst's report in detail. It took close to an hour to brief the Minister, but finally Ben packed the material into the red box and left for the Prime Minister's office.

At ten-fifty Ben was in the antechamber of the Prime Minister's office, he unlocked the security box and sat looking at the images once more, what he saw brought out a cold sweat. He was so engrossed in his thoughts that he did not hear the PM's door open, Mrs Goldbloom stood in the doorway for several seconds before saying, "This must be serious to keep your thoughts so occupied Ben."

"Oh, I'm sorry I was away with my thoughts there," answered Ben a little startled.

"So I found, come in Ben," the PM said before turning to her private secretary and asking for coffee to be sent in. Ben remained standing until his PM had taken her seat on the couch, then he seated himself at a wave from his boss. "So, what do you have for me today Ben," she

asked.

“Not good news I’m afraid, Mam.”

“I sort of gathered that from your expression this morning.”

Ben opened the red box again and lifted out the contents and started to explain as he ordered the documents, “Yesterday our satellite monitoring section picked up an anomaly in the desert south-east of Tehran, after the seismic sensors alerted them.” Ben placed four of the images on the low table in front of the PM.

“What am I looking at here,” Goldbloom asked.

“This first image is from the CIA geosynchronous monitoring satellite, they detected the explosion, and these three images are from our satellite.” Ben pointed to the first image, “this shows a crater where the explosion occurred, this second image is a close-up of the same area, you see here and here these are camouflaged silo doors, there are some twenty silos in all. Then our operative noticed something strange about this pumping station, and found this, we think this is some sort of training camp, by the size of the doors, a very large one, or I suppose it could be an aircraft hangar, but we think it’s a camp as there is no runway or apron visible.”

“What sort of size are we talking about?”

“There is no way of telling Madam, we have been trying to penetrate it with sensors, but it's under a mountain with rock too thick to get any sort of image past the first thirty meters.”

“What about emissions Ben,” asked the PM.

“Nothing, they have possibly got coolant units to cool

emissions to ambient, and a filtration system to take out detectable gasses, according to the CIA,” explained Ben.

“The big question is, what do we do about it?”

Ben was silent for several seconds, before answering, “As I see it Madam, we have two options, we take this to the UN, or we return to the old days and take punitive unilateral action against the two bases. After all, this is in contravention to the peace accord.”

“What would be the repercussions of a military strike, Ben,” the PM asked.

“In my opinion Madam, taking into consideration the size of this complex, and we have to assume that the remaining silos are operative, we may plunge ourselves into a full scale war.”

“Do we know what the Iranian capabilities are,” she asked.

“We thought we did, but then we didn't know about the missile base, so at this time I would say, ‘no’, we have no idea. The size of the silo tube is a good indicator of the rocket size, these are larger than I would have expected.”

“So, the second option seems to be the way to go, but I want our military on full alert Ben, and I mean full, that's level two-red. The Iranians will know now that they have been burnt so there is no telling what they will do. I want a full Cabinet meeting this afternoon at three, can you organise that?”

“Yes Madam Prime Minister,” answered Ben, who started to collect the documents together.

“Where are the Americans on this,” the PM asked.

“As far as I know Madam, the President has already been briefed on the situation.”

“Good,” said Goldbloom, “I’m afraid that I am going to disturb President Orwell’s beauty sleep with this, I’ll see you this afternoon. Thanks Ben.”

The moment that the door closed behind Ben the Prime Minister extracted her secure com from her locked desk drawer and lightly tapped on the direct address of President James Orwell. After a few seconds Orwell’s face appeared on the screen, he was fully dressed and was in the Oval Office, “Hi there Heidi, I was wondering how long it would be before you contacted me.”

“Hello James, I have just been briefed on the Iranian bases.”

“Bases, have you found more,” Orwell asked in surprise.

“You don’t know yet,” Goldbloom questioned, “yes we have found what we think maybe a large training camp on the other side of the mountain.”

“Hell, Heidi, why haven’t your people passed that over, we tipped you off about the explosion.”

“Not really James, our seismic sensors detected it as it happened, but I thank you for the imaging,” the PM stated with authority, “so I am telling you now.”

“OK Heidi, keep you hair on, so what are you proposing to do?”

“Under the circumstances I think it best if we take this to the UN Security Council, the last thing we want is to start a war, not until we know what we are up against, anyway.”

“That's fine with me,” said Orwell, “we can get a full council organised by tomorrow afternoon, could you, or someone else, make it over here?”

“Yes, it's a must James; I will probably get Ben Marks to pop across.”

“OK Heidi, good man Marks, keep me informed of any other developments, ya hear.”

“I guess we will see you soon James, take care.” The Prime Minister severed the connection and sat back in her chair, “Monday, Monday,” she said out loud.

Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics, Tehran, Iran. Monday 24th November 2031. 14: 00 hrs (local time)

The Minister of Defence, Hooshy Ar Karimi shouted, “Come!” following the knock on his Office door, “Ah, MehrzAd, thank you for coming, please be seated.”

MehrZAd Behzadi. Head of the 'Sazeman-e Ettela'at va Amniyat-e Keshvar' or SAVAK, the feared Iranian secret service, took a seat where the only other chair in the room was placed, at the opposite side of the huge ornate desk to Defence Minister Karimi.

Karimi, sat a stared at MehrzAd for some seconds, that seemed like minutes, finally he leaned forward and placed his elbows on the desk and steepled his fingers.

“This is the single most disastrous event in twenty years MehrzAd, what in the name of Allah went wrong,” the minister asked with some danger in his voice.

“As far as we can tell Minister, it was an accident, a

technician was making checks and tests on that particular missile, and something must have gone wrong.”

“Hmm,” the Minister said as he sat back in his chair, “is there any chance that this was sabotage?”

“The technician was a trusted man who has worked on the missile programme since we started it back in two-thousand and thirteen,” MehrzAd said apologetically, “he had the highest clearance for his job and has been both examined and checked out every year.”

“I suppose that there is little chance that the West missed the event,” asked Minister Karimi.

“My sources tell me that the CIA have images of the explosion and have detected the missile base.”

“How very convenient for them,” said the Minister, “What about the training base?”

“We don't know, Minister, but I doubt it, the base is too well hidden and temperature equalisers do not allow any IR detections, our own satellites cannot detect it,” answered MehrzAd.

“Nevertheless, I want our military on alert, and cancel all leave for the foreseeable future,” instructed the Minister, “the Americans will have shared the information with the Israelis, so we need to be alert to a pre-emptive attack. You are dismissed. Oh and I want you to start an investigation, this may not have been an accident.”

**The Chamber of the Security Council,
United Nations Building, New York, USA,
Tuesday 25th November 2031, 14:30 hrs
(local time)**

President Orwell was as good as his word and convened an almost full session of the Security Council, which had been a rare occurrence over the past decade. The four main governments that now formed an international alliance met on a quarterly basis to discuss issues, the EU, not including Russia but most of the former USSR states, and the Islamic states (UIS); the USA, which now included Canada. The remainder included the Southern Hemisphere Alliance, which included Australia, New Zealand and South America. This arrangement had proved to be a successful way of avoiding issues between alliance members and the various national states.

The Deputy Director General, who was from the UK, called the council to order and called upon President Orwell to address the council.

“Delegates, after many years of mutual cooperation under the auspice of the Calcutta Accord, we accidentally discovered that one of our number has secretly breached that agreement. The accord calls for an openness between members and requires that the signatories declare major strategic armaments and installations. It is therefore a great disappointment to find that a member of the UIS has turned its back on these requirements. I see that the representative from

Iran is actually present, together with the Iranian ambassador, thank you for your attendance. I will now call upon the Iranian representative to explain to this council, why they have a non-disclosed missile installation on their territory.”

“Mr Deputy Director, Mr. President. I am assuming that you are referring to the small installation which suffered an accident on Sunday whilst under construction. The base is of limited size and has not been declared because it is not yet in operation. When it is completed the base will operate with short range weapons. There is no need for concern here, as Iran will abide by all of the Accord requirements.”

President Orwell leaned forward to the microphone, “Will the representative for Iran then please explain to the council, why they need a silo of four point six meters in diameter, if, as he says the base will operate short range missiles, Mr Deputy Director?”

The Iranian's face was getting a little redder as he pressed the button to activate his microphone, “As I have already explained Mr. Deputy Director, the base is under construction, and has yet to have its liner, which will reduce the diameter considerably.”

“May I present an image of the 'accident' site, Mr. Deputy Director,” President Orwell asked.

“You have permission Mr. President,” assented the Director.

The blow up of the damaged silo appeared on the very large display screen above the Director's desk, and Orwell continued. “As the delegates will see from the

image, the high density liner is already in place in the silo; that is the darker material inside the concrete. The image has been analysed and my experts tell me that what you are viewing is a fully completed silo. Can the Iranian representative also confirm the extent of this base please?”

“Mr. President, I have already stated that the base is a small one,” stated the representative, “we are building no more than four launch silos.” The Iranian Ambassador was seen to nudge the representative at this point. Orwell knew that he had caught them out.

“At this point I would like to call upon Minister Benjamin Marks who has consented to attend from Israel, Minister Marks has further questions and evidence, I believe,” announced Orwell.

“Thank you President Orwell,” said Ben Marks, who slipped three image sheets into the display unit under his desk, “Can I draw the esteemed Iranian representative, and the council, to this image,” Ben pointed to the screen that now displayed a close-up of a silo door. “This is an image of another silo at the site, which as you will observe is fully completed, this next image shows exactly twenty of such silo doors. I would call this a major missile complex capable of housing and deploying Inter-Continental level missiles. I would also like to ask the representative about the use of a concealed base on the opposite side of the mountain to the missile complex, this final image clearly shows the entrance to the base, which is some ten meters wide and eight meters high.”

“Will the Iranian representative comment on these pieces of new evidence please,” said the Deputy Director.

“Mr. Deputy Director,” there is no base in that area of the desert, this is a construct of the Israeli government, in an attempt to again discredit Iran and the UIS,” the Iranian stated.

Ben slipped a memory stick into the input socket built into the electrical pod of the desk, he pressed the play button and a real-time image appeared on the screen. “We are now watching a video sequence that was recorded on Sunday from our satellite.” The video imaging zoomed in on the missile base, and then zoomed out slightly and re-focused on a seemingly empty area of desert. Slowly the massif doors came into resolution, as well as the pumping station and the netted area from a low angle, which showed the shadow. “This next clip was recorded in infra-red last night, as you can see the doors of this non-existent base are now open, and out of the doors comes a convoy of some seventy-three vehicles. The base and the vehicles are fitted with ATE technology, that's Ambient Temperature Equalisation technologies, for those who do not recognise the initials. We only get a brief period to get an image as the technology adapts to new conditions, but here we were lucky.”

The Iranian Ambassador, almost pushed the representative away from the microphone, and obviously angered, he spoke loudly into the

microphone, "This is another example of the United States and Israel concocting evidence against my country, will we be returning to the old ways of the first decade of this century, I really must protest Mr Deputy Director."

"Mr. Deputy Director," interjected President Orwell, "the United States tables a resolution that Iran submits to a team of UN inspectors investigating the two sites in question here, and opens it borders of a full survey. I believe that this is the only way to settle this. We further propose that, if the accusations levied by myself and Israel are founded, the bases be destroyed or dismantled as the UN sees appropriate. Can we take a vote please?"

The Deputy Director agreed to take a vote, unsurprisingly there was only seven votes against and one-hundred and sixty-three in favour. As the final votes registered on the digital readout the two Iranians and their support staff rose from their seats and walked noisily from the chamber. The Deputy Director declared, "The resolution is passed, this council calls upon Iran to succeed to the requirements of the resolution, within eight days."

There was no response, the Iran desk was abandoned. However the resolution would be sent to the 'Majlis-e-Shuray-e Islami', the Iranian parliament, electronically within the hour.

Ben Marks walked across the floor of the chamber to the United States desk, where President Orwell, was still seated, "Thank you for your support Sir," he said.

"I think you did fine by yourself Minister, but it's in both our interests to get this sorted, one way or another."

"There is something going on here Mr. President," said Ben, "something more than the Iranians just trying to get one over on us."

"You may be right son," said the President, "and I'd love to know what it is, but we will have to be satisfied with the resolution for now."

"You may be, Sir, but that does not mean I will be, I have some options other than the resolution."

"I am sure you do Minister, I am sure you do."

**The Embassy of the State of Israel, 3514
International Drive N.W. Washington USA,
Tuesday 25th November 2031, 18:40 hrs
(local time).**

Ben arrived at the embassy after a stressful day and was greeted by the Israeli Ambassador, who had only heard of the Minister's impending arrival some half hour before.

"I need access to the secure com-network Ambassador, and I assume you can accommodate me for a night's rest."

"Of course Minister, please use the encrypted connection in my office, will you join us for dinner Sir?"

"Thank you Ambassador, that would be nice, but first I need to speak to home,"

"Certainly, this way Minister," the Ambassador said as he led the way up the stairs to his office. "I will be in the

reception when you are finished,” he said as he left the office.

Ben opened the secure com and entered his personal security code for a direct connection with his Prime Minister.

“Yes Ben, what's the news,” Heidi Goldbloom said yawning, obviously sleepily, as it was two in the morning in Israel.

“The Iranian delegation walked out in the middle of the vote, but we got the resolution past, President Orwell, proposed it and I noticed that the UK seconded it.”

The PM smiled, “That will be the effect of the bomb that tried to kill their Archbishop last Friday, the Brits will have taken that seriously.”

“Yes, I believe our friend Jim Markson was the hero of the night,” added Ben.

“He's really one of the good guys, I was considering having him and his daughter over to open the new building for the Ark,” said the PM.

“Great Idea, Heidi,” said Ben. “There is something going on in Iran that I don't like, I can't put my finger on it, and really it's just a feeling, but it is worrying me. I would like to do something positive to find out, get some agents back into Iran.”

“You really think that is necessary?”

“I do, something is not right, and we need to know what's going on. I still have a few sleepers in Iran, so can I activate them to start with and see how we go,” Ben asked.

“Let me sleep on it Ben, I'll let you know by the time you get back tomorrow, strike that, it's today now.”

“Thanks Heidi, I'll see you tomorrow. Good night and shalom.”

“Shalom to you Ben,” the PM said as she cut the connection.

Ben sat for a few moments before he left the office and retraced his steps down the staircase to meet the Ambassador.

“Is everything all-right Minister, you look concerned,” the Ambassador asked as Ben alighted onto the ground floor of the three story building.

“I think we may have a problem with Iran.”

“So I heard, made the grand exit, I believe. Nothing ever changes,” said the Ambassador, “let me show you to the guest room. Dinner will be at eight.” The Ambassador lead off into the rear of the building and to a comfortable room that overlooked Van Ness Street. “I will send someone to get you just before eight Minister,” said the Ambassador, and left Ben to freshen up.

The Office of the Prime Minister, The Knesset, Sacher Park, Jerusalem, Israel. Wednesday 26th November 2031. 17:30 hrs (local time).

It seemed a short day for Ben Marks, he had left the Washington Embassy just after six that morning, and now just four hours later, it was well after five, as he waited in the ante-chamber to the PM's office.

“You can go in now Minister,” the PM's private secretary told Ben.

Ben rose and crossed to the doors, opened them and walked inside, "Good evening Prime Minister."

"Hello Ben, take a seat," said the PM, "I have been considering our conversation from this morning, Ben." The PM sat back in her chair and assumed a thoughtful expression, "This afternoon I had a conversation with the UK, Prime Minister, Frederic Matthews, I contacted him to thank him for seconding the resolution yesterday. He gave me some tit-bit of intel, something that they have not been able to confirm, as yet, but it seems that the British Army advisors in Iraq picked up some talk about punishing the west over the 'Revelation' these so called God Tapes."

"Oh dear, it never rains but it pours, what next I wonder," said Ben.

"So, I am going to say yes to your proposal, you had better activate your contacts as soon as you can, where ever they are."

"Thank you, I will get a signal out immediately," said Ben.

"Right, now tell me in detail what happened yesterday," asked the PM.

**Ben Gurion International Airport, Israel.
Saturday 29th November, 2031. 16:25 hrs
(local time)**

“Thomas Cook announce the arrival of flight FTC307 from Frankfurt,” the public address system announced across the airport. The passengers, mainly holiday makers or pilgrims, spilled into the arrivals hall fifteen minutes later, among them were six young men who acted like a typical group of bachelor tourists. To the casual observer, they had obviously been drinking, but not one had actually consumes anything alcoholic, on the flight and each one spoke German in a louder than normal voice. They threw sexist remarks at the female airline staff and made a slight nuisance of themselves, but not enough of a nuisance to attract police attention. They were just young Germans on a package holiday, weren't they?

Outside the airport a bus-transporter was waiting to take them to their hotel some forty-five kilometres away, just a ten minute hop. On the transporter the six continued to be overly boisterous and sang songs as they waved containers of beer around. They arrived at the Moriyah Hotel and booked in, then retired to their rooms, as quiet as mice. There was one call to the King David Hotel from room 334, the voice asked, “Is this Mr. Trip.” The voice of Sitta answered, “He's not here at the moment, are you his nephew from Brunswick?” “No this is his nephew from Frankfurt,” and the caller broke the connection.

'Three minutes later there was a similar call from Sitta's com-unit to the Radisson Blu Al Mahary Hotel, in Tripoli, Libya. Sitta said, "Your nephew from Frankfurt has arrived."

The voice of Mansur Zubeidi replied, "You must be mistaken, I only have a nephew in Brunswick," he also then closed the connection.

Room 334, King David Hotel, Jerusalem,
Israel. Sunday 30th of November, 2031.
11: 30 (local time)

Sitta got into the taxi that he had booked the previous night that would take him to the National Synagogue, where the Ark of the Covenant was on daily display. Sitta was dressed as any tourist would dress for a late November on a visit to Israel, a well insulated jacket, cord pants and hiking boots. The day was damp and a fine drizzle seemed to hang in the air, the actual temperature was not cold but the damp sent a shiver through Sitta's body, even though the heater in the taxi was on. It was but a short hop to the National Synagogue, an impressive building built in the early nineteen-eighties, with later additions of a museum and exhibition / conference hall completed in two-thousand and twenty-one. It was in this exhibition hall that the Ark had been placed on display, the hall was not purpose built for security, so Sitta hoped that precautions would not be too difficult to overcome.

Mansur Zubeidi, Sitta's second in command had done an excellent job surveying the building and its security, he had also done the planning for the raid, Sitta just needed to see if any extra security had been introduced, or if the risk level had been raised. Sitta alighted in the forecourt and saw that there was already a short queue of devotees and tourists to view the artefact. Sitta joined the slow moving queue and as soon as he was under cover took his camera from its

case. After about fifteen minutes the queue passed through the security barrier, a side room that had been adapted as a security post, an airport detector had been hurriedly installed in the passageway. The detector was just held down with wood screws, he noticed, a clue to the temporary security arrangements. As Sitta passed the security office he made a point of noting the security level, it was set to 'Special Black' the mid-level status. Along the corridor there were pairs of security guards each armed with the latest Mk 11, home-grown and made, Uzi machine gun, the best, and best-selling, machine gun ever produced. As everyone entered the hall they were patted down and any bags examined, Sitta had only his camera, the guard gave him a cursory look and passed him on.

Inside the hall there was carousel of people skirting a crowd-control barrier, inside the barrier were a ring of security guards, again with Uzi guns, spaced every three meters or so. In the centre was the Ark, and Sitta found a lump of emotion form in his throat, this was very alien to Sitta, who considered himself to be above such emotions. Like almost every other person Sitta started to take photographs with his UHD camera, there were so many camera flashes that the hall seemed as if there was a war going on. The last thing Sitta wanted was to be recognised, so keeping the camera to his eye also doubled as a camouflage. It took twenty minutes to circumvent the Ark and everyone then exited through, what normally served as, an emergency exit. This exit was equipped with little or no security, Mansur had been

correct in designating this door as the entry point, and covertly, Sitta took the synth-gum he had been chewing and placed it over the small sensor that guarded against the opening of the door.

Once outside Sitta opened his com-unit and pressed the tab for Mansur, who was still in Tripoli. After a few seconds Mansur's voice answered, "Yes?"

"I think you were correct, your nephew is from Brunswick," Sitta said.

"Yes," said Mansur, "I will join him soon, I will give him your regards," and Sitta closed the connection, the raid was a go, for the day after next, Tuesday would be a great day.

St. Andrews Church, Preston, Nr. Weymouth, England. Sunday 30th November 2031 18:25 hrs (local time).

Carol and Jim had been invited to tea at the vicarage, Ed's way of making sure that the Marksons arrived on time, or actually arrived, Jim suspected. The time was amiable and Jim had felt less out of his environment than he had on previous occasions, he was actually beginning to like Ed Fielding. They entered the church through the vestry, and the back row seemed so far away, so this time they settled down on the front row with Mrs. Fielding, Angela. Ed stood at the dais and turned the small wireless microphone that he wore, on, and then coughed. The church hubbub abated and people quickly found their seats, and the little music group prepared themselves to play.

“Good evening, and welcome to Saint Andrews Church, a special welcome if you are visiting us for the first time. Also a special welcome, Mr. and Mrs. Markson, Jim and Carol, Jim will be sharing something of the exciting discoveries of the last few months and the effect it has had on him. That's a little later, so let's start by worshipping our magnificent God, in song, number 475, 'Above All Things'. Again Jim enjoyed the singing, and felt energised by it. There were church notices, prayers and a song by a local singer, then there was a period of about twenty minutes during which several songs were sung, and then Ed introduced Jim, “Jim Markson, whom I think most of you have by now met, has consented to speak to us tonight, a suitable subject for Advent

Sunday, a new beginning. Please welcome Jim Markson.”

Jim rose from his seat to a smattering of applause, as he arrived at the small free-standing lectern, he said, “Please no applause, I may be rubbish,” there was a ripple of laughs across the church. Jim delivered his, by now, well rehearsed account of how the 'Revelation' was made and the amazement as the five watched the first of the so called 'God Tapes', and then moved on to how it had affected him personally.

“One thing that has surprised me,” started Jim, “is how little this discovery has affected the world, I had truly expected that there would be queues at church doors, and whole nations converting to Christianity. But that has not happened, the Prime Minister of Israel said to me that as a nation they would have to reappraise their position, but as far as I know the State of Israel has made no moves in any direction other than worship the Ark of the Covenant that we recovered. The team that is, as we speak, wading through the recordings, seems to be analysing them as some kind of threat, rather than a spiritual experience. I know people who have been deeply affected by the 'Revelation', our dear friend Professor Owen Gwilliam, a life-long atheist has embraced the Christian faith. My dear wife Carol, has been least affected of any of us, she has just accepted it as if it were expected, whilst it has left me in a state of confusion.”

“Another thing that has surprised me, is the lack of

action from the Christian churches, again I had expected massif crusades, where the church got its message out. At least I expected the church to be explaining the things that were being discovered. I feel that my confusion is from a lack of knowledge about what our discoveries mean. Yes, I now believe in my mind that God exists, but my heart continues as an atheist, so I ask, what do I do now?" Your vicar Ed, tells me that I have to accept Jesus Christ as my Saviour, but what does that mean and involve? Is my belief that God exists, enough to save me, and if it is, save me from what?"

"I have done quite a lot of reading and research since the discovery and hearing God's words, saying that this is man's last chance. The more I research the more confused I get as to what will happen, one prophet says that there will be a seven day period called the 'tribulation', Bible scholars tell me that those seven days are actually years, and so it goes on, with several other figures mentioned in the Bible. If people are to be saved, they need a clear message about what is happening or about to happen. Thank you for listening."

"Well, you have given us a great deal to think about Jim," said Ed, "and I want to make this one hundred percent clear, Jesus Himself said this, in John fourteen verse six, *'Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'* That means that no one, yes that's no one, can be saved unless they accept Jesus, Jim. You ask 'saved

from what' my answer is from your sin, none of us is perfect, can you say Jim that you have been totally, one hundred percent honest in your thoughts, your deeds, and your words, all of your life? I certainly can't, and unless we are actually totally wrong free, we cannot go to heaven, or pass to the New Earth, we will perish when the end comes, and as you have so aptly proved, Jim, it seems to be ending very soon."

The service ended with another song, but Jim did not join in this time, he was too deep in his own thoughts, he did not know if he looked like it, but he felt as if the blood had drained from his face. After the service, the usual ceremony of speaking to almost every one of the congregation progressed, and someone pushed a cup of tea into his hand. He noticed someone hovering in the background; they seemed to be waiting for a chance to accost Jim. When Jim, Carol and Ed were almost the only ones left the lurker approached Jim as he was returning his half-empty cup to the table.

"Mr. Markson," the woman said as she approached, "God has given me a word for you," she said, "He says you are my instrument, but are not saved, turn quickly and your house will follow." The woman turned and walked from the church without another word.

"Who was that," Jim called to the vicar.

"That's Jean Hazelden, she's a bit of a prophetess," said Ed, "and I have to say that she is rarely off the mark. What did she say?"

Jim repeated what the woman had said as close to verbatim as he could, but added, "She seems a bit

weird.”

“Well, we thought that at first,” explained Ed, “but we have learned to listen to what she says. When she started attending here, after she'd moved into that white painted cottage on the extreme east of the village, she frightened of quite a few people. Everyone accepts her now and she really has God's ear.”

“You know Ed,” said Jim, “six months ago I would have thought her crazy.”

The National Synagogue, Jerusalem,
Israel. Tuesday 2nd December 2031. 23:55
(local time).

Jason, waited, with his small commando squad of five other special forces recruited men, in the shrubbery opposite the emergency doors of the exhibition hall. It was a cold night and their breath was condensing in the cold air, it had been raining for almost two days and the bushes were heavy with water. Jason pulled down his sight enhancement goggles, which allowed him to see all light from the ultraviolet to the infra-red, there was one body-heat scanner fixed to the wall above the exit doors. The scanner was not an issue as the whole squad was wearing gel-suits that almost stopped the radiation of body-heat. He saw that there was no activity in this part of the car park, so Jason led his squad out of the bushes and into the flood-lights that bathed the area around the synagogue in near-daylight. The gel-suits also had a fibre-optic camouflage outer skin that made them almost invisible, when the light enhancer was switched on, which was light absorbing in the dark. No one in the security office noticed the slight wavering of the picture close to the exit, and it would have taken a very close look indeed for it to be noticed.

One of the squad produced a tool, one that had become known as 'The Opener', that consisted of two micro thin grapheme filament plates that were slid either between the jams or the gap, of doors. At the flick of a switch the plates formed right-angled plates, a lever would then be

operated and the two plates were forced apart, forcing the hinges to burst and opened the door. The Opener had been designed for rescue services and the various versions had mostly taken the place of the old 'Jaws of Life', but their advantages had quickly been recognised by the military and police. The exit doors creaked and then popped open, the chewing gum that Sitta had deposited on the sensor during his visit, had worked perfectly, and no alarm sounded; they were in.

The goggles showed all of the beam-security plainly and the Jason analysed the patterns for the shortest route to the Ark. In the hall the only lighting was focused on the Ark itself and a circular lighting bar supported six video cameras. The two techies' of the team connected the fibre-optic connectors to the beam emitters and silently fitted sound pods over the listening devices. Two of the squad made their way to the entrance on the other side of the hall and clamped the heavy doors shut as well as induction welding the hinges; this would delay the security men whilst the team carried the Ark to the waiting LIMO transporters, parked beyond the shrubbery. They had now twelve minutes before the next security round, Jason indicated the time to his team, and one minute later they signalled that everything was ready. Four of the team formed up at the four points of the Ark's carrying staves and waited, Jason gave the signal to go. The four stepped forward into the light circle; each took the weight and lifted the Ark. Almost immediately an alarm sounded, together with ultrasonic defence emitters that were designed to inflict severe pain on the interlopers. The team's headgear filtered most of the sound out and the four seemed unaffected as they trotted at the double towards the exit. Jason produced a remote pad that activated the LIMO's engines and pre-programmed instructions to bring it into the parking area outside of the exit.

In the security office the screens showed the Ark floating in mid air, as the suits did their job, but the security officers were not fooled and jumped into action. The commanding officer's hand came up and hit a protected red button that activated the defence shield, a force field that surrounded the synagogue. The generator took a power-up time of twenty seconds and sprung to life just as the LIMO was coming in to land. The force field hit the LIMO at three meters off the ground, the EM pulse from the field cut the engines and the field threw the LIMO twenty meters into the car park. Within a minute the security men were in the exhibition hall and faced a hail of missiles from automatic weapons. The incursion force took shelter behind the Ark, hoping that the security team would not want to damage the sacred artefact. From a storage room off the corridor the security team broke out the mobile ballistic shields which they wheeled into the hall, the shields were large enough to shelter three people. Two teams of three behind the ballistic shields started working their way around the hall to where the attackers had stopped in front of the exit doors. Five minutes later the incursion team were out-flanked by the security force, and following instructions from Sitta attached a limpet bomb to the Ark. They then held up their hands in surrender.

The security commander ordered the six to walk forward with their hands on their heads, and the team complied, when they were half way across the thirty or

so meters, Jason made a sequence of touches on the remote that was built into his wrist chronograph, the commander shouted for him to stop moving his hand. It was a command too late; the treasured Ark of the Covenant exploded into a thousand shreds of ancient wood, and was gone. The guards stood in stunned shock; the Ark that had been lost for so long was lost again, this time never to be rediscovered.

The six man team was immediately arrested and disabled with restraints, the commander ordered them to be stripped of their camouflage suits, and then placed in one of the store-rooms under guard. He was almost in tears as he contacted his commanding officer, Major Davidson, who had been involved in the discovery of the Ark, so had a personal interest in the artefact.

"Can you connect me with Major Davidson please, it's an emergency," the Captain asked the communications centre operative."

"Your authorisation code please," asked the operator.

"Alpha, four, seven, six, zero, seven, Charley, 9," the captain said.

"Thank you Captain Merrill; trying to connect you now."

"Davidson here, who is this," asked the Major, obviously annoyed at the late hour.

"Sir this is Captain Merrill Sir, we have been under attack at the National Synagogue, a team managed to break in to steal the Ark."

"Are you and your men OK, Captain," the Major asked.

"Yes Sir, no casualties, and I have the intruders disabled and under guard."

“Good man, Captain, and is the Ark safe?”

“Sorry to report Sir, the terrorists destroyed the Ark upon capture, they must have had it rigged,” Captain Merrill apologised.

“OK Captain, I'm going to have to make some calls, but I will be there within the hour.”

The Major's first call was to Benjamin Marks, who then informed the Prime Minister, who asked Ben to handle the situation personally. The Major arrived at the synagogue at just before two in the morning, he found the security detail very depressed and sullen, one soldier was weeping and rocking backwards and forwards in the main synagogue. The Major inspected the prisoners but never attempted to make verbal contact, he made sure the security on the prisoners was tight and returned to the security room. At two twenty-five the Major heard a LIMO landing and went to the main doors to meet the Minister.

“How are things Major,” Ben asked.

“The men are a little shaken, at loosing the Ark but other than that, everything is under control, Minister.”

“Good, can you get the prisoners to Mossad headquarters, as soon as possible,” the Minister continued, “I have put them on standby and they are expecting them, we need to get some answers Major.”

“Yes Minister, I have a secure LIMO on the way as we speak.”

Minister Marks, entered the synagogue and went straight to the room where the incursion team were

held, he photographed each one with his com-unit and sent the images to Mossad HQ before going to the security room.

“Attention,” shouted the Major as the Minister entered, “this is Minister Marks, for those of you who do not recognise him.” Every man stood stiffly to attention immediately.

“At ease gentlemen,” said Ben, “I would like to congratulate each of you on the capture of these criminals, it is sad that the artefact has been lost, but having made the capture of these men you have delivered a service to your country that may well save many lives. Please do not think badly of the loss, lives are more important than artefacts. Carry on Major.”

“Thank you Minister,” said the Major.

**The Office of the Prime Minister, The
Knesset, Sacher Park, Jerusalem, Israel.
Wednesday 4th December 2031. 09:30 hrs
(local time).**

The following morning the newspapers and the other media were full of the attack on the National Synagogue and the destruction of the Ark. The Prime Minister was watching the latest TV News on her office soft-screen when her personal secretary announced the arrival of Ben Marks.

“We are getting a lot of coverage on this incident Ben,” the PM said as Ben walked in.

“Yes we are, it seems to be world-wide, and the media seems to have picked up on the leak that the Palestinians were to blame.”

“Ben I have to congratulate you, the idea of substituting the real Ark for the replica and keeping the security as low as it was, has paid off, we have the perpetrators, the Palestinians are looking bad and we have our Ark safe and sound,” said the PM.

“But we still have not got those responsible, especially Sitta, and Zubeidi, Mam,” lamented Ben.

“True, but these terrorists may lead us to them,” suggested Goldbloom.

“I doubt it, they probably don't know Sitta and there may be an intermediary between them and Zubeidi.”

Mossad Headquarters, Jerusalem, Israel.

**Wednesday 4th December 2031. 11:40 hrs
(local time).**

Brigadier Bergman was overseeing the accommodation and debriefing of the six terrorists, when the Minister arrived. The six had been transported from the synagogue and placed in separate rooms; each had been kept awake by means of lights and noise, in order to maintain sleep-deprivation. All six were feeling the after-effects of the adrenalin rush gained during the raid and capture, so the combination of lost sleep and the adrenalin crash had made them vulnerable. Of the six one was a British citizen, two were Germans, and the remaining three were all from Arab states, it was thought that the British member was the group's commander. The pictures that Ben had taken earlier had been sent to the British MI6, the American CIA and NSA, the European Security Hub, which were the foremost security services outside of Israel. Only the CIA had responded so far and identified one of the group as a US born person of Saudi descent, who was wanted for a racial attack on a Jewish person three years earlier in New York.

Just as the Minister was deciding to contact his cousin Abe at the British MI6 the document printer connected to the European hub started to whirl into activity. The documents were from MI6 who had identified the Brit'. His name was Jason Mark Fletcher, an ex-member of the British Special Air Services SAS, who had been drummed out of the service in 2030 for the use of

excessive force, in dealing with a possible informant in a central African country. The file contained a complete record of Fletcher's life from earliest school days on.

"Right," said the Brigadier, "That will be our starting point, looking at this; I think we will have Mr. Fletcher talking his head off by this afternoon."

"No use of torture Brigadier, we need to be clean and seen to be clean over this, I want a full video record of all interrogations without any unaccountable periods, understand," ordered the Minister.

"Yes Sir, I understand perfectly," the Brigadier assured Ben.

The two Israelis walked one behind the other through the corridors and passageways of the Mossad HQ, which was a rabbit-warren of passages and stairwells that reached well over fifty meters below street level. The interrogation rooms were on the lowest level but one, each was equipped with multi-camera video and a full range of non-evasive conditioning equipment.

One Mossad officer was waiting outside the interrogation room and opened the door for the Brigadier, then entered the room with him. The Minister entered a room at the end of the passage, which was the video room where all feeds were monitored and recorded. The room contained three operatives who stood as the Minister entered.

"Please, relax," said Ben, "just ignore me. Can someone put room nine on the large screen please?" The picture changed to a quartered picture of the three people in room nine. Both the Brigadier and the other

officer sat at a steel table, to which Jason Fletcher had been manacled by his wrists and ankles. The Brigadier and the officer just sat there staring at the terrorist, who was feeling obviously uncomfortable.

“Don't expect any action for the next hour or so Sir,” said one of the video room operatives, “they will just sit and stare for at least an hour, and we have found the technique very unnerving.”

“I can imagine,” said the Minister, “I didn't know about this method.”

“We have been using it for just over a year, with some good results, some times the subject breaks down screaming and crying and volunteering all the information they have.”

“OK, thanks,” said Ben “I think I may come back later then.”

Ben returned to his office almost the same distance above ground as he had been below ground.

**The Iran - Turkish Border near Khvoy.
Wednesday 4th December 2031. 12:21 hrs
(local time)**

The UN inspectors arrived at the border post at almost exactly mid-day to request access to Iran. They joined a twenty plus vehicle queue and it had taken them a full twenty minutes to reach the border post. The UN had received no communications from Iran since the resolution was passed on the 25th of November, neither had there been an automatic diplomatic

acknowledgement, an ADA from the country. The UN inspectors were accompanied by a detachment of UN troops as, essentially, body-guards, this made up the three vehicle cavalcade, now waiting at the border.

“Your papers please,” asked a border guard, abruptly. The senior inspector handed over a wad of papers, identifications and certifications, from the United Nations Security Council. The guard walked away with the papers and disappeared into the border post, fully twelve minutes later he returned with the papers and handed them back through the open window. “Your papers are not in order,” he stated.

“With respect,” said the senior inspector, Jack Blair, “these papers are in order and have been certified as such by the United Nations.”

“Iran, no longer recognise United Nations,” said the guard.

“I have not been informed that your country has withdrawn, there is a procedure for this that has not been followed. We are authorised to make inspections of illegal installations within Iran,” insisted Blair.

“You have *no* authorisation, from Iran government.” the guard almost shouted, “Please turn you vehicles around and leave this area.” The guard eyed the other two vehicles, one of which now had its side doors open, with three of the detachment stood in the doorway holding automatic weapons.

Suddenly the border guard had his right hand on his side-arm and the armed guards that had been wandering around now became interested and took the

safeties off their weapons. “You will leave, NOW,” ordered the guard.

“OK, we are leaving,” assured Blair, and reluctantly the three LIMO's rose into the air and turned west with the second vehicle's doors still open and their weapons continuing to point at the border guards until they were out of sight. Within minutes Jack Blair was on his com-
unit to the deputy Director General of the UN, reporting that they had been refused entry into Iran.

Security Council, The United Nations Building, New York, USA. Tuesday 9th December 2031. 14:10 hrs (local time)

The meeting of the Security Council came into session at two o'clock prompt and after the opening remarks by the Secretary General the first and most pressing matter was introduced. "The first item on our agenda today is the non-compliance by Iran, in denying access to the United Nations accredited inspectors. This, under the 2021 article, is cause for expulsion from the United Nations Organisation. We also have the matter of the existing resolution concerning the covert installations," the DG said by way of introduction.

The US Ambassador to the UN was the first to speak, "Mr. Secretary General, I have been charged by the President and the Secretary of State, to move that a resolution for this council's consideration, that Iran be given a ten day period to comply or face a full embargo on trade and finances. Any bank accounts in US banks should then be also frozen; also communications and travel both in and out of Iran should be curtailed."

"The council recognises the Ambassador's proposal," the DG replied, "are there any other proposals," he asked.

Benjamin Marks pressed the small brass button that registered his interest, and spoke into the stalk microphone. "I would comment that Israel sees this resolution as too weak to be effective, Iran knew the penalty for non-compliance, but that did not stop them refusing entry of the inspectors. Israel would propose

that this council consider the possibility of direct action by a United Nations peacekeeping force.”

“I consider military action a little premature, Minister,” said the US Ambassador, “we need to let diplomacy run its course here.”

“We may not have time for that, Mr. Ambassador,” replied Minister Marks.

“On what do you base this assessment, Minister,” asked the DG.

“Mr. Secretary General,” I have information to suggest that Iran is planning an act of war against the western world, and starting with my country. I have activated several agents within Iran and the reports indicate a conspiracy that has been ongoing for over ten years. I am concerned that anything short of direct action will bring the Iranian plan forward.”

“Can you share this intelligence Minister,” asked the Secretary General.

“No Mr. Secretary General, the intel has been classified,” said Ben, “and cannot be shared generally in order to protect those agents, however I can share this with the United States Ambassador and the Ambassador for the United Kingdom, and I will let them authenticate the information.”

“We will recess for one hour to allow your consultation, Minister Marks.

The two ambassadors left the chamber with Ben and walked to one of the secure rooms on the sixth floor, whilst many of the other ambassadors also made use of the time to consort with each other or to catch up on

paperwork.

In room S611 Ben opened his red security box and placed a number of documents on the table, some were in the Arabic and had translations in English attached. There were also graphic images supplied in the past few days by the Israeli Satellite Monitoring section, but also images sent from covert operatives that had recently been activated. The images showed a map of the secret Iranian base, which amazed the ambassadors by its extent. Other images were of the missile base to the north showing quite clearly that the missiles were operational and that they were certainly of ICBM type. The UK ambassador spent some time reading the agent reports and asked, "Can we have copies of these documents for our security services, Minister."

"Yes, I have prepared copies on these memory sticks," replied Ben, "I don't need to remind you of the sensitivity of this information, gentlemen," he concluded.

At the end of the hour's recess all the delegates returned to the chamber and the Secretary General asked, "Do the ambassadors of the United States and the United Kingdom concur with Minister Marks."

Both the ambassadors made a short statement where they certified the intelligence, the council first voted on the expulsion of Iran from the UN. The result was to defer the expulsion for ten days, in order to allow the possibility of diplomatic endeavours. The vote on the direct action was defeated, but the council agreed that

the resolution should state that 'all possible means' should be included in the original US resolution as a possible outcome. Ben Marks, and the UK and US ambassadors voted against this threat, as it was going to be seen as provocation.

MI6 HQ, 'Babylon-on-Thames', London, England. Tuesday 9th December, 2031 10:55 hrs (local time)

It was almost eleven, and the morning's coffee tray had just arrived in the office of the head of MI6, when the secure, 'your eyes only' package announced its arrival in Sir James Hennessey's desk com-unit. His eyeballs rolled into his eyelids at the sound, 'why does this always happen at coffee time,' he thought, as he keyed in his personal code for the day. He had been looking forward to his coffee, because the peculator in his apartment had been on the blink since last evening. Juice never seemed to satisfy the taste buds on a cold December morning, and this was a particularly cold morning at just eight degrees. The British had become acclimatised to the new warmer climate over the past ten years or so and eight degrees was cold now for this time of the year.

The package opened with a message from Howard Fletcher, the UK ambassador to the UN, Howard was a close friend of Sir James' although they had not met for

almost five years, since Howard's appointment to the UN. The message asked him to review the images and documents in the package and to make the PM aware of the contents, it was marked 'High Priority'. Sir James' eyes were on stalks as he read the Israeli field reports and viewed the imaging, the information was causing a nauseous reaction at the thought of the implications. By eleven thirty Sir James was boarding the car electric car that would take him through the tube system to number ten Downing Street. The Government Transport System had been built about fifteen years ago as an extension to the London 'Tube' system after the roads in the capital had become so congested that a cross city journey took almost three hours.

“Sorry to arrive unannounced Prime Minister, but you need to see this as a matter of urgency Sir,” Hennessey said as he burst into the PM's office.

“What is it James, that's got you so fired up,” the PM asked.

Sir James almost pushed the Prime Minister off of his chair as he slotted the memory stick into the com-unit on the desk.

“What in the name of hell,” said Matthews as he read the reports and viewed the images, “is this for real,” he asked.

“It would seem so, Sir,”

“Has President Orwell got access to all of this?”

“According to Howard the US ambassador should be briefing him about now,” answered Sir James, “It is my opinion that the Israelis will be taking direct action on or

before the ten day deadline, where does this government stand, if this happens, Sir.”

The Prime Minister looked grave as he examined more images, “As you know James, our agreements with certain governments, and our membership of the EU, would dictate that we support Israel, *if* the state calls upon us to do so.”

“The Security Council voted against direct military action, so if Israel goes for a pre-emptive strike, it will put us in an awkward position,” said Sir James.

“Yes it would, but we honour partnerships with our allies first, and that means the EU and then Israel. What were the voting stats’ for the EU members, do we know,” asked Matthews.

“Yes, Howard said that the European countries mostly voted for action to be taken.”

“So we just wait and see, James,” sighed the PM, “I really thought we were through with all this.”

“Well if these ‘God Tapes’ are genuine, I suppose it is something that has to happen, according to what I have read. The UN is being very tight-lipped about the secondary research they are doing in Crete.”

**The Oval Office of the Whitehouse,
Washington D.C. United States of
America. Tuesday 9th December, 2031 11:25
hrs (local time)**

“Thank you for seeing me Mr. President,” Henry Luther, Director of the CIA, said as he entered the oval office.

“Always make room for my head spy, Henry,” President Orwell said with a wicked smile on his face, “what have you got for me today?”

“If I may Sir,” Luther said as he docked the data carrier into the wall soft-screen, “Mr president what you are about to see was given to us by Benjamin Marks, the Israeli Minister of Security.” Luther took the remote keypad from its charging station. “If you will remember the materials that you saw last week that were discovered because of an accident in a missile silo in Iran,” continued Luther.

“Sure, the covert missile base,” agreed Orwell, “please Henry take a seat,” as the President sat in the winged chair facing the soft-screen. Luther talked the President through the images, and then made hard-copies of the reports and documents. “Hell, and the Security Council actually rejected direct action, are they crazy,” the President asked as a rhetorical question, “this is an immediate threat to world peace and needs to be neutralised sooner rather than later. Do we have any assets in Iran, Henry?”

“No, Mr. President,” lamented Luther, “It has not been thought a priority since the Calcutta Accord.”

“What do you think Israel will do Henry,” asked Orwell, “will they take unilateral action, you think?”

“My guess is, yes, Sir, I can't see them just sitting there and waiting to be attacked, whilst the Security Council makes its mind up how big a threat Iran is.”

“My feelings exactly,” agreed the President, who pulled his com-unit from his jacket pocket and chose a secure

address to an office down the hall, when a female voice answered, he said, "Valerie, is General Schlitz still there," the female voice confirmed that the General was still there and just about to leave, "Ask him to drop into my office on the way out would you Valerie." Orwell heard her asking and the affirmative from Schlitz. Just over a minute later General Schlitz opened the door to the Oval Office.

"Mr. President," Schlitz said questioningly.

"Come in General, take a seat."

The General chose a seat next to Luther on the couch; he looked at Luther and asked, "Do we have a problem here, Sir."

"We may well have General," said Orwell, "What military do we have in the Middle-east presently."

"The Navy has two LCS craft in the Med, with five HSV's and attendant submarines. The LCS craft have one hover vehicle each and carry a compliment of a thousand army personnel. We also have three units of infantry working with the Israelis on an exercise out in that dammed wilderness of theirs, mostly whirlybirds and missile units."

"Good, can I suggest that you put them all on yellow alert, General," said the President, "and can we move the Navy up the eastern end of the Mediterranean."

"I guess we're talking about Iran, are we Sir." asked Schlitz, "I saw the minutes from the Security Council."

"As usual, you miss nothing General," commented Orwell, "you may want to have a look at this," the President indicated the soft-screen and nodded to Luther to restart the sequence of images. Luther gave

Schlitz another set of hard-copy documents, when he had scanned several documents and seen the images, he sat back and gave a long expressive whistle.

**The Office of the Prime Minister, The
Knesset, Sacher Park, Jerusalem, Israel.
Monday 15th December 2031. 09:30 hrs
(local time).**

“The deadline expires on Friday at noon US eastern standard time, Madam Prime Minister, that’s nineteen hundred hours our time,” said Ben Marks.

“And that is when they will be expecting us to take action, Mam,” interjected General Jacob Kline, C in C of the Israeli military.

“Are you suggesting that we should make the attack before the deadline General,” asked Prime Minister Glodbloom, “that would be illegal and may turn many of our friends against us.”

“Madam Prime Minister, the deadline ends at nineteen hundred on Friday night, we are already a hour into the Sabbath, so we may have repercussions from our own religious people,” stated Kline, “we have to add to that time difference a notification period, by that time the Iranians will be expecting us to take action.”

“We do have satellite data that they are moving units up to the attack zone and our agents report that there has been a general call-up in all three services, leave has been cancelled from Thursday and report back has been set for Thursday mid-day,” offered Ben.

“What are you advocating,” asked the PM.

“Mam, we need to go in on Thursday morning at the latest, and I mean early morning,” advised the General.

“Do you concur with this Ben,” Glodbloom asked.

“Yes Prime Minister I do, for all we know the Iranians

could also make a strike on us when the deadline expires,” answered Ben, “Can you explain the attack plan we put together in readiness, General?”

“Thank you Minister,” said General Kline as he took over the duty of explanation of the plans they had made, “Our first objective will be a three AM attack on the Iranian command and control centres, these attacks will be made using the Mk6 Hermes 1200 unmanned attack drones, at o-three thirty hours our 'Ibbur II' stealth fighter/bombers will take out the missile base. Under the cover of a flight of 'Golem V' raiders our land forces will attempt to secure the underground base. Because this base is underground this may take some time and small arms fights may take many lives on both sides, but we will be using energy weapons on heavy stun as far as we can.”

“I don't like the thought of heavy casualties General,” commented the PM.

“Neither do I Mam,” said Kline, “but we need to capture this base in order to understand what it is about.”

“Madam Prime Minister, The Iranians would not build such a large base just to train their relative small army, the reports we have from our operatives suggest that something larger is going on, we need to know what that bigger plan is,” explained Ben.

“We cannot utilise robotic assault modules,” asked the PM.

“Yes, they will be utilised, but they are not discriminative enough, we need to preserve as much of the base as possible,” said Ben.

Mrs. Goldbloom sat in contemplation when Ben's com-unit chirped; telling him that there was an urgent message. The Minister opened the unit and the message was displayed, he read the message and his expression must have changed, the Prime Minister asked, "Is something wrong Ben."

"It seems that the American fleet has moved into our twenty kilometre limit and has moored there. I knew they were on an exercise but that was supposed to be off Libya."

The Prime Minister went to her desk and opened the direct secure connection to President Orwell, who after just a few seconds appeared on the screen."

"Heidi, you are slipping, I was expecting your call an hour ago," said Orwell.

"What the hell is happening James, why is your fleet on our doorstep," she asked.

"Hey, don't panic, Heidi, it's there to support you, whatever you are intending to do, we got your back, like real friends," said Orwell.

"We didn't ask for your help James."

"Well you got it anyways," said the President, "When does the party start?"

"Thanks James, I'll send you the plan when we know what it is," Said the PM, and cut the connection. She looked over towards Ben and the General, "I guess that's a 'go' then."

Studio 7, BBC Studios, London, Tuesday
16th December 2031. 19:55 hrs (local
time).

“Well viewers that is nearly it for this edition of 'Today in Crete', and once again I think that we have given ourselves something to think about,” said Declan Brook as he brought the evening's broadcast to a close. “Except to tell you that it's just nine days to Christmas, as if you needed to be told, you will notice that we at the BBC can again mention the word 'Christmas' instead of using the generic 'Holiday'. Well this year we have something very special for you, never mind all those school nativity plays, this year we will be televising the real thing. The UN researchers at the Crete site have accessed the records of the birth of Jesus and our editors are, as I speak, busy editing these video records into a seven day serial, or rather a mini-series. From Friday of this week please tune in to watch the greatest event in the history of mankind.”

The floor manager gave Declan the ten-second signal and started the countdown to the end-music, “Be sure to log in to see that, people, till then, this is Declan Brook wishing you a calm and blessed night,” Declan gave his best smile as the vision mixer faded to the credits, then he relaxed. “Thanks everyone, good job,” he said to the studio crew.

“Declan, there's a call for you,” announced the producer from the control room, “we're putting it through to the floor phone, it's the DG.”

Declan crossed to the small booth that was fixed to the wall to one side of the set and lifted the old style receiver, "Yes Sir, Declan Brook here."

"Mr. Brook," started the Director, and Declan knew her was in trouble from the formal way the DG addresses him, "just a small point, I did not appreciate you comments on allowing the word Christmas to be used on air."

"It was just an observation Sir," said Declan.

"We can all make 'observations' Declan, we realise we have been wrong to secularise our programming, and comments such as these do not help, I want no finger-pointing in future, do I make myself clear," continued the Director General.

"Crystal clear Sir," agreed Declan.

"Thank you Declan," said the DG, "Good programme, by the way, keep up the good work." he said and the line went dead.

**Residence of the UK Prime Minister, 10
Downing Street, London. Tuesday, 16th
December 2031. 20:07 hrs (local time).**

Frederick Matthews had just finished watching Declan Brook's presentation and he sat in his office in deep contemplation when the secure com-unit chimed on his desk, he tapped the vertical soft-screen and Heidi Goldbloom's face appeared. "Well good evening Heidi, what can I do for you tonight," he asked.

"Nothing Fred, I just wanted to let you know personally, that we are going in tonight to take out these Iranian

bases," Goldbloom told Matthews.

"Well I must say we expected you to go in, but not quite so soon," admitted the British PM, I thought they had until Friday noon to respond."

"You know as well as I do Fred that the Iranians are not going to respond and we have intel that they are gearing up for an attack, and putting defence precautions in place around the attack zone. We are hoping that a pre-emptive surgical strike will negate any drawn out action and in the end save lives on both sides," explained the Israeli Prime Minister.

"That sounds like a plan Heidi, is there anything we can do?"

"Thanks, but no thanks Fred," we have a US fleet riding shotgun off of our coast as back-up, but I am hoping that they will not be needed. I'll let you get back to whatever it is you were doing,' said Heidi Goldbloom. "Good night Fred."

"Thanks for letting me know, and may God go with you tonight," said Matthews just before the connection ended.

**Nevatim Israeli Air Force Base, Tuesday
16th December 2031. 23:00 hrs (local
time) .**

The electronic camouflage nets had been out for most of the day, the nets consisted of a pure copper mesh that was capable of generating a magnetic field that projected an adjustable and programmable frequency

on the unshielded face. This frequency was calibrated to reflect the same visible light frequency as the ground over which it was stretched. The ECN's were a joint development product between Israel and the UK and continued to be on the European secret list of strategic equipment. Other than tests, this was the very first use of the 'Net', and their own satellite monitoring was giving a thumbs-up on the effect.

Under the nets the Israeli aircraft were being prepared and checked, the ordinance crews were wheeling out the armaments and locking them into position on the firing racks of the 'Golem V' raiders, the power cells for the energy weapons had been fully charged and slotted into the bays on both sides of the fuselage and connected to the projectors. The AI rockets were fitted in their tubes, twelve per cartridge, and the ballistic cannon were loaded with their carousels of miniature missiles. The pilots were now filing into the briefing room to be given their orders and instructions of how the raid was to be choreographed.

At Hatzetim Israeli Air Force Base in the Negev Desert on the western outskirts of Beersheba the same scene was taking place but with the heavier 'Ibbur II' stealth fighter/bombers, which would stay unseen and undetected on the very verge of space over a hundred sixty kilometres above their target. The Ibbur II's were now preparing to take off and take up position by midnight, where they would stay until called upon to release their own special style of hell. Their main

weapon was the extraordinary implosion warhead that carried a single particle of anti-matter, a positron, held in a negative magnetic field that collapses, exposing the anti-matter particle to the positive world. The effect is to suck in all energy in a thousand meter radius, after which everything returns to near normal, with no radiation or lasting effects.

The Ibbur II's smoothly taxied out onto the lift off pads and two at a time lifted slowly into the air. Their running lights were soon lost in the black of the sky, and no image appeared on any radar or imaging system, the only indication of where they were was provided by their ultra-high frequency transponders, on a closed decimal frequency. The crew of the Ibbur watched as the lights of Israel and then the eastern Mediterranean receded into a light-map. Their upward speed attained that of escape velocity, but the Ibburs were not leaving the planet, the eight craft stationed themselves in a geosynchronous orbit at one hundred and sixty kilometres above the earth. From this position each crew busied itself programming the missiles they would use to take out Iran's command and control stations. Each had the precise coordinates of the eight centres each of which had been assigned to a craft. After that the processors in the missiles and the Ibburs would take over and await the command to launch.

**Nevatim Israeli Air Force Base,
Wednesday 17th December 2031. 00:00 hrs**

(local time).

“Tower to Angel Leader, You are cleared for take-off, wind at nineteen, that's one-niner at one-seven-two degrees, there is no ceiling to target, Angels take-of in twenty second intervals. God go with you, tower out,” said the voice of the air traffic controller over the short range radio.

“Roger that tower, switching to inter-bird frequency,” responded Angel Leader, “out.” Angel Leader was twenty seven year old Flight Commander, Christopher Adams, father of two, he was one of the most skilful pilots in the Israeli Air Force. He was trained by the USAF and now was the senior trainer in the IAF, all the pilots in tonight's flight had been trained by Christopher, and he knew each one and how they reacted. The flight was headed for the American fleet just off the coast, and would land on the multi-purpose craft in order to pick up an observer, coincidentally the pilot who had been Christopher's mentor during his six-month intensive training period.

The flight leader landed on the MPC at twenty minutes after midnight and climbed down from his Golem V to be greeted by Richard Holmes, the two men embraced before walking off to the briefing room below decks. This time it was Christopher that was briefing Richard. The remaining twenty-five pilots used the thirty minute lay-over to socialise with the American crews or make last minute checks on their aircraft. At O-one hundred hours the flight took off again and headed north towards

the coast of Turkey some five-hundred kilometres away. Over Mount Erciyes the flight turned east, for the fourteen-hundred kilometres to the southern end Caspian Sea and then south-east to their target just after three in the morning. The ground troops had already travelled the seventeen hundred kilometres to a point close to the target and were awaiting the signal than would tell them to move in.

**A Supposedly Secret Location, Nr' Mount
Daemavend, South-east of Tehran, Iran.
Wednesday 17th December 2031. 02:45 hrs
(local time)**

The Second Missile Command was actually on yellow alert since the accident, and extra technicians and structural engineers had been drafted in to get the base operational again. They had orders to leave the damaged silo as it was, lest the 'West' see the activity from their 'satanic satellites'. The workers had been working day and night to repair the damage, and were still several weeks away from completing the job. As usual the base was a hive of activity, and few had any thoughts about security or the chance of attack, other than the generals. Whatever the weather outside, it was always hot inside the mountain, and Baraz Attar was sweating as he climbed inside yet another computer panel. Baraz had been drafted in from First Missile Base close to the Azerbaijan border, as a computer specialist he was in demand by the military

and had several contracts with the state.

Baraz Attar was a family man, who was more western than was good for him, although he was viewed with suspicion, he was regarded as the best there was at what he did, so his life-style was tolerated. Baraz was just twenty-seven and had been married last year to Firuzeh, who was now almost three months into her first pregnancy. Baraz had been educated in Saudi Arabia under a scholarship scheme for gifted young Muslims, despite the fact was that Baraz was a closet Christian. Although Iran had taken some giant strides toward tolerance, being a Christian, working within the secret military industry, was not one of them. Baraz and his wife visited the houses of friends in order to worship with other like-minded Iranians, but some of these had disappeared over the past year, so their faith-life was becoming difficult. He just hoped that his usefulness to the Iranian government would outweigh the perceived threat of his religious beliefs. This had worked, so far, and he was the most sought-after computer technician in his country.

It was just before three in the morning when the alarm klaxon started its barking sound, Baraz's head jerked up instinctively, bashing his head against the chassis of the enclosure, he lost his balance and toppled backwards into the cramped space. His head made contact with the floor of the enclosure and he lost consciousness. Less than ten seconds later a Major of the Iranian army rushed into the telemetry room shouting that everyone

must go to the shelters, seeing no one in the room he rushed out again leaving Baraz alone and unconscious. Three minutes later the first of the missiles hit the outside door to silo four and Baraz regained some sense, he was about to drag himself from the enclosure when another missile imploded on silo eleven. Baraz pushed himself back into the maze of cables and computer components, pulling the panel closed behind him. For the following minutes missile after missile hit the mountain under which the base had been built, Baraz heard sounds like the whole structure was collapsing, and something heavy partly crushed the enclosure, then suddenly everything went quiet. Not a normal sort of quiet, but that ominous silence that happens after a true catastrophe.

Baraz had to remove another panel before he could get out of the enclosure, the telemetry processor room was wrecked, and the roof was being held back by the girder, whose lower part had crushed his hiding place. Baraz stood in shocked amazement until the girder moved again bringing down a shower of powdered concrete. Fortunately the door to the passageway outside was not obstructed and Baraz made his way out, just as the girder finally slipped bringing down several tonnes of rock and concrete. Induction training had informed him where the shelters were and he made his way along the passage toward the nearest one. The steel door was jammed by the twisting of the frame from the pressure of rock above, and the passage had collapsed ahead, so Baraz moved off in the direction of

the launch silos, some kilometre away, the only option open to him.

Mount Daemavend training Base, South-east of Tehran, Iran. Wednesday 17th December 2031. 03:05 hrs (local time)

The ground troops were fast to move on the conformation that the missile base had been neutralised and were at the main doors of the base before they had a chance to fully close. Laser canons had quickly stopped any further movement of the doors by welding them to their tracks. The guard garrison were totally outnumbered and the defence of the base crumbled within minutes under the superior forces of the Israeli army. Inside the base it was a different matter, the secondary security doors had thundered into the floor slots in a matter of a second, once the main doors had been breached. The Ibburs monitoring the area from low Earth orbit, known as LEO, were coming in with a warning that one of the reinforcement convoys was just thirty minutes away. The operational commander, Yaron Levin, ordered the Golem V raiders in, to deal with the convoy and requested satellite laser ordinance on an area some fifty meters in from the main doors. The hope was that the satellites could concentrate the energy from twelve ground-based laser projectors on the rock beyond the secondary security door.

Twelve minutes later an orange line of light shot down from the sky and hit the mountain above the doors. The

Israeli troops had evacuated to a five kilometre radius so were not

showered by the thousands of molten rock bombs and fragments that would certainly rain down on the immediate area. After several minutes the rock fragments gave way to the molten rock bombs that lit up the night as if the mountain has suddenly become a volcano, as the beam revolved, cutting out a twenty meter hole. It took seven minutes of laser cutting before a relatively larger explosion indicated that the laser had broken through into the base. Major Levin signalled the cessation of the laser, which disappeared within seconds, leaving a glowing crater.

"Ideas people," broadcast Levin over his short range com, "we can't wait for that to cool naturally."

There was no answer for five long minutes, then the com-unit buzzed with a call from one of the lbburs, "This is Captain Arison, Sir, my flight engineer assures me that he can adjust the yield of one of our missiles to extract all the heat out of those rocks, almost instantaneously."

"Is he sure Captain?"

"Yes Sir, *she* seems to be, and she's pritty smart."

"OK Captain, go ahead," said the Major, "we are five k's from the target, are we safe here,"he asked.

There was a pause of some seconds before the voice of Captain Arison said, "Yes Sir I am assured that will be a safe range."

"Thank you, Captain. If this works remind me to buy your engineer a drink."

"He said, 'that's a deal' Sir."

Four minutes later the Major saw something descend at high speed, towards the under mountain base, almost as if someone had switched the lights off the, glow died. As the transports started back to the base the major spoke on his com again.

“Captain Arison, does your engineer drink Scotch,”he asked.

“Sir, she's nodding her head,” answered the Captain.

“Tell her there's a large bottle on the way, will you,” the Major said by way of confirming that the idea had worked.

The army division moved back to the entrance to the base and set a team of commandos down on the edge of the crater cut by the laser. The drop was over thirty meters to the floor of the base but the solders repelled down the vitrified rock-face and swung onto the floor. There was no resistance and no personnel were in sight. The team divided into two groups, one establishing a defence line, whilst the remainder went back to the secondary security door, in the hopes that it could be lifted. The section found a security post to the right of the door and entered the small room; luckily there were controls there for the lifting and dropping the door, which still had power. The section leader, a sergeant, hit the green mushroom button, and he heard the hydraulic pumps start up. Seconds later the door started to rise slowly, as it did carbon filament props were inserted to stop it descending again if the power went out. After about five minutes the opening was high enough to allow mobile weapons and carriers to pass

through.

The first unit through was an engineering team, they were needed to bridge the crater in the floor, caused by the laser, with telescopic road-way panels. Once the panels were fixed in place with self anchoring stem-bolts, the main column started forward. At two-hundred and fifty meters the tunnel took a ninety degree turn to the left, the commando team stopped just before the turn and brought up four RAM's (robotic assault modules). The RAM's had been developed by a British robotics company in Leicester, and were an evolution of both the robots that were used by bomb disposal units, and the technology used in autonomous drones, with a great deal of armour added. The RAM's looked intimidating, they were coated with light dispersal panels, that were totally black, as armour against energy weapons, which made them look like shadows. They were fitted with body-heat and infra-red detectors, which controlled the dual cannons of conventional missiles and energy weapons, they were also equipped with EM projectors and a two shot air-blast emitter (ABE). The ABE's were capable of producing an air blast of about the equivalent of a three-hundred kph wind, enough to knock several people over and render them unconscious.

The RAM's moved forward in a line, which swung around the bend of the tunnel, they immediately drew fire from further down the tunnel. The commandos were able to see through the RAM's eyes, that there

were ten defenders behind a flip-up barricade that was no match for the RAM's weaponry. The AI computer made the decision to use a wide spread stun energy bolt, and fired, eight of the ten shooters went down and one RAM was able to pick off the remaining two with a standard shot. The RAM's moved forward and closed the barricade; the commando team moved in and moved the unconscious defenders, who were secured outside of the combat zone. It was obvious that the remaining defending force had witnessed the ease at which the RAM's had dealt with the first line of defence and decided to surrender. The next site that greeted the commando unit was a line of people walking towards them with their hands in the air.

The occupants of the base were marshalled outside in the desert, whilst the various teams took up occupation. The demolition specialists started their work placing charges in key places whilst the Mosad officers moved in to retrieve as much intelligence as they could find, and computer specialists came to strip the base of its data storage. The decommissioning of the base would take several hours so the job of the Golem V raiders was now to keep the area secure until the Israelis left the scene.

The Wrecked Missile Base at a Secret Location, Nr' Mount Daemavend, South-east of Tehran, Iran. Wednesday 17th December 2031. 04:50 hrs (local time)

Baraz Attar, the Christian technician, reached the silo section of the base to find total devastation, the carbon steel access doors to the silos had all been dragged into the tubes and the missiles themselves were crushed beyond recognition. The fuel for the rocket motors had completely disappeared although the air was heavy with their vapours. The liquid oxygen pipes still bled their icy mist into the area, somewhere above, chilling the air like a mountain morning. Baraz shivered as he contemplated his situation, as much from the prospect of being sealed in this concrete tomb as from the cold. Only the red emergency lights were working, and then only in the access passageways. In the dim red light desperation overtook him and he fell to his knees whilst images of his wife flashed through his mind, still on his knees he bowed his head and prayed whilst he wept. Baraz didn't know how long he knelt there, but suddenly he was aware of a draft of air across his curved back. It took several more seconds to process the information and realise that the air must be going somewhere. He stood and looked around and noticed that a liquid oxygen vapour tendril was drifting down the access passage to the next group of silo tubes.

Baraz followed the cold mist along the passage and eventually it floated upwards into silo nine, a quick look into the tube confirmed that it was full of more liquid oxygen vapour from a ruptured line near the exhaust duct, but the vapour was moving upward. Baraz

retraced his steps down the passage to an emergency stowage locker, he thanked God that the locker was intact and opened the doors. Inside the locker were several protective suits, used by the engineers who fuelled the rockets to protect them from the corrosive fuels. Baraz climbed into one of the rubbery suits and fastened down the headgear, he then returned to silo number nine, and went inside. There were no lights now to guide him but realised that the suit was equipped with a lamp in the helmet and he lifted his hand to switch it on. He saw that the silo was filled with rubble but it was his only way out, seeking the largest gaps between the massif chunks of concrete he found the steel rungs that were embedded into the silo liner, he began his eight-hundred and fifty meter climb.

An hour and thirty minutes later Baraz emerged from the crater at the top of silo nine with both his arms and legs about to go into spasm. The centre portion of the climb had been aided by full metal ladder still being in place, but the last part had been a scramble up the wrecked silo side and then up the sloping side of the crater. Breathless he pulled the helmet from his head, and half collapsed, half sat on a nearby piece of rubble to rest. In the east the grey glow of dawn was just starting to show itself above the Desert Mountains and the night's stars continued to shine through the gaps in the cloud.

In the sky far above Baraz, someone had noticed his appearance on the mountain, and as he sat regaining

his breath a signal was being sent to Major Levin, the operational commander.

“Sir we have a body heat signal from on top of the destroyed missile silos,” the voice reported from LEO, “could be trouble or a survivor.”

Levin immediately ordered one of the transporters, with six commandos, to the site in order to investigate. It took just a few minutes for the transporter’s pilot to locate Baraz prior to landed, with the side door open, and two commandos there with weapons trained, just twenty meters from where their target sat. Baraz held up his arms with difficulty, after the climb. The soldiers quickly had him in the transporter and on their way back to where the other Iranians were being kept. The next hour saw Baraz being debriefed and the evacuation of the remaining specialists from the base, their work done. Almost three thousand Iranian citizens were moved out to a safe distance, and the Israeli troops loaded back into their various vehicles, at last, just as the sun crept over the ridge to the east, one communications transporter was left, hovering two-thousand meters above the site. Major Levin gave the order to send the radio signal that would detonate the explosives and the implosion devices far below.

The explosion was impressive by anyone's standards, first the mountainside lifted into the air, maybe thirty meters, and then the implosion devices triggered and the millions of tonnes of rock collapsed into an almost hemispherical crater. The base was no more. The next on the program was to order the Golem Raiders to

leave the area so that the Irani rescue services and military could get into the zone of devastation. The Israelis were on their way home with zero casualties, a great deal of intelligence, and one less threat from the Islamic republics.

The Council Chamber of the Union of Islamic States (UIS), Islamabad, Pakistan. Wednesday 17th December 2031. 13:30 hrs (local time)

“My country has been violated by the accursed Jews, once again,” shouted Saeed Rostami, the Member of Parliament for Northern Iran, “Early this morning the Israelis once again invaded my country early this morning and destroyed two military facilities. My brothers this outrage claimed the lives of hundreds of devout followers of Islam and it has weakened our defences against the Great Satan, who once more seeks to discredit and destroy Islam and its prophet Mohamed, bless his name.”

The chamber was now in uproar with many of its members standing and shaking fists toward heaven, although the fists were not aimed at that place.

The President of the UIS called for calm in vain, and he just had to wait until the anger had subsided. *'Praise Allah'*, he thought, *'that we banned guns in this chamber'*. “Can the chamber please come to order.” he shouted through the P.A. system, “this is not a bazaar.” Slowly order returned to the chamber and members

took their seats.

Rostami stood once more to continue, well pleased with the demonstration of support he had generated, "Mr. President, if this union of Islamic states is to succeed there must be some united response to these atrocities, can I ask the union council what response it considers appropriate," he asked.

The President rose and walked to the central podium, "Gentlemen, I agree that there must be some response to this invasion onto sovereign territory, however we must not act in haste, the response must be considered by this parliament," he continued. "What I propose is that we schedule a full discussion and we invite resolutions from the members. In the mean time I will contact the Israeli Prime Minister, in order to ascertain what their justification was for the attack, and see if we cannot find a peaceful solution."

This proposal seemed to mollify the chamber, and the business moved on to other issues.

**The Office of the Prime Minister, The
Knesset, Sacher Park, Jerusalem, Israel.
Friday 19th December 2031. 10:34 hrs
(local time).**

Mrs. Goldbloom was reading the report on Wednesday's raid on the bases in Iran, which had just arrived on her desk, of course, she had been briefed verbally by Minister Marks very early on Wednesday morning, but here was the official detail. The report, marked 'PM Eyes only' also contained a goodly amount of intelligence that had been collected from the materials salvaged from the underground base, and, it seems, from several of the personnel evacuated. The most interesting piece of intell was that there was at least one other missile base within Iran. The PM was just musing over this information when her secure com-unit chimed. "Yes," she said abruptly after she saw who the caller was.

"This is President Attar of the UIS Madam Prime Minister," the caller announced.

"I know who you are Mr. President, How can I help you," she asked.

"There is concern about a pre-emptive raid on Iranian territory on Wednesday morning by your forces," said Attar.

"Mr President, there is great concern in this country over the existence of a twenty silo ICBM missile base, especially when we also have intelligence that Iran is planning some sort of insurrection aimed at the west."

"This is news to me Madam Prime Minister," said Attar,

“the UIS is certainly not aware of any such plan.”

“Of that I am not surprised Mr. Attar, Iran has never had a particularly transparent government.”

President Attar spoke to someone who was out of range of the com-unit's camera and he had obviously muted the microphone, then came back to address the PM. “I am troubled by your use of the initials ICBM, according to our records Iran is not supposed to have any long range missiles, what proof do you have of this accusation,” he asked.

“I am not about to share our intelligence with the UIS Mr. President, but yes we do have proof,” said Mrs. Goldbloom.

“I appreciate your reluctance to share sensitive information,” said President Attar, “but I need to have something to quell the anger of our other members.”

“OK President Attar, I will consult with my Minister and get back to you.”

“Thank you Prime Minister, let me assure you that the UIS has no plans for any action against the west, or against Israel, we are quite satisfied with the conditions laid down in the Calcutta Accord. I hope to hear from you soon, As-salam alaykum,” the President said and cut the connection.

The Prime Minister pressed a virtual button that connected her with Minister Marks, “Ben we need to talk, can you pop over please,” she asked.

Basrah International Airport Basrah,
Tuesday 23rd December 2031. 08:05 hrs
(local time)

The package deal for the 'Christmas in Crete' holiday had been a fortunate opening, and luckily there were only three places left. Now it was just a matter of making the connections to enable him to join the package tour in London and there was not much time between the connections. The flight to Beirut–Rafic Hariri International Airport was scheduled to leave at eight-thirty and was due to land at Beirut an hour and a half hour later at o,nine-hundred local time. The British Airways flight from Beirut to London was due to take off at nine forty-five for the three hour and forty minute flight to London, Heathrow, landing at eleven thirty-five. His check-in at Heathrow must be before twelve-thirty, with Cooks Travel. Zaid Farrah was travelling with his wife of convenience, supposedly on their honeymoon, they had been married the day before by an Iraqi cleric, but they were wed more from their common aims than their emotions. They believed what they had been told about the Cretan discovery, that it was a cunning plan of Satan's to discredit Islam. Both were willing to become martyrs for Allah, and both were professional actors, who knew how to play a role. To all around them, they were a couple deeply in love.

The explosives for their operation were already on Crete, and had been delivered earlier the previous week, they had been hidden in the iconic clock-tower of

their destination, The Candia Resort Hotel. The plastic explosive, together with the detonators, had been delivered by boat on a moonless night by three ex-Iraqi army officers. There was enough plastic to make two large bombs and two detonators both ready matched to one remote, in order to guarantee simultaneous detonations.

The Iraqair flight 233 took off on time at just seconds past eight-thirty and soared into the cold, dry air, made a one hundred and thirty degree turn, then headed west to Beirut.

Candia Resort Hotel, Crete, Wednesday
24th December 2031. 10:00 hrs (local
time)

The weather was fine and dry and the sun was shining on a warm Christmas Eve, warm even by Cretan standards. The slight wind was blowing up from the south-west, straight off of the Sahara Desert just three-hundred miles away, although it certainly was not summer. The tour bus was waiting as Mr. and Mrs. Farrah climbed down the steep roadway from their traditional style apartment on the cliff-side. The bus was only half full as only a few of the visitors had attended the welcome meeting the evening before, most had gathered in one of the resident's lounges to watch the television airing of the 'Real Nativity' transmitted from London. The couple, who both spoke perfect English, were accepted by the other passengers as the honeymoon couple they actually were. The tour set off at a few minutes after ten for the hour's journey to the Knossos site.

It was in fact just after eleven-thirty when they eventually arrived in the car park of the Knossos site, as they had been in a queue to get into the site for around twenty minutes. The site had become a major tourist attraction since the 'Revelation' had been made public the previous September, and the guided tours now included a glimpse of the entrance passageway to the control room, where even today UN researchers were unravelling the hundreds of thousands of recordings.

The couple showed a little impatience as the tour wound its way around the Knossos Palace and the newly discovered 'Labyrinth' beneath, enough for it to be noticed by one fellow tourist. After a hour the tour at last made its way out of the palace site to the new entrance, cut by Owen's laser-mole, which now had a staircase fitted. The group descended into the passageway and through some of the smaller chambers that were adorned by the friezes. At the far end of the passage, the guide stopped at the beautiful doors that guarded the Control Room', after a quick explanationm the guide started to retrace her steps back down the passage. The line of people performing a 'U'-turn so as to examine the doors and take photos. Mrs. Farrah, the last of the line, posed for a photograph in front of the doors as the other tourists made their way back to the entrance, leaving a twenty meter gap to the last tourist.

Zaid's camera flashed away as his wife pressed against the door behind her, the door moved and she gave Zaid a slight nod of her head. In the next instant the couple thrust forward into the room that contained all of the ancient equipment and the UN researchers. The reactions were slow as stunned researchers looked up from their work to see the two Iraqis charge into the chamber. The ingress had been timed perfectly, as by pure chance the single security man had just headed for the bath-room. The couple manoeuvred themselves as close to the centre of the room as possible then stopped and shouted in loud voices, "Allah is Great, praise His

name,” then Zaid pressed the detonator button.

Nothing happened. Neither bomb detonated. Zaid stood there, with people running around like headless-chicken and diving behind any convenient shelter, with Zaid pressing the remote, over and over. The security guard, who was stopped on his trip to the bath-room, raised his automatic and fired, he tensed himself for the noise and the recoil, but none came, his gun would not fire either. After several clicks of the gun the guard threw it down and ran forward to the two terrorists, crashing into them with the full force of his body. The honeymoon couple fell to the ground, the remote detonator flying from Zaid's hand. Three of the UN researchers charged forward and restrained the couple, whilst a technician grabbed a handful of cable ties, and used them as restraints for the terrorists. Just then the tour guide opened the door to apologise for her charges intrusion and stopped, mouth agape, thinking that the response was a little disproportionate for a tourist's intrusion.

Someone shouted to her to call the police, as she saw the explosive vests being ripped off of the couple. The tour guide realising what had happened took to her heels for the exit.

The Cretan police arrived within fifteen minutes and formally arrested the pair, then a detachment of Greek Air Force security arrived just ten minutes after the police, sealing off the whole Knossos site. It was almost four in the afternoon when the group of tourists

were allowed to leave for their hotel. Zaid and Fatema Farrah we taken to the Heraclion Police Headquarters, where they were interrogated whilst awaiting an EU antiterrorism detail to arrive from Rome. Word soon spread and reporters were waiting for the tourist group when they arrived back the Candia Resort Hotel. They found themselves staring on the days report from Crete, rather than watching it. They watched their interviews just before the penultimate episode of 'The Real Nativity'.

**JMRT House, Cyprus. Wednesday 24th
December 2031. 22:00 hrs (local time)**

The Markson family together with all those members of the Trust's staff who didn't have anywhere better to be, had gathered for the Christmas holidays. Like Crete, some miles to the west, the weather was mild for the time of year, not weather for sitting around the pool all evening, but the staff lounge was filled with happy people. At ten o'clock the giant screen was switched on for the last but one episode of 'The Real Nativity' and everyone settled into seats to watch, as Declan Brook appeared on screen.

“Good evening, and a very joyous and peaceful Christmas to you wherever you are tonight. But before we run tonight's penultimate episode of 'The Real nativity' we have a news item, a very sad item considering the season. Now it's over to the News Room,” Declan's face disappeared and was replaced by

one of the news-readers.

“This is Leonard Sugar with a breaking news report. Earlier today two people, thought to be either Iranian or Iraqi nationals, broke into the 'God Tapes' control centre and attempted to detonate two very powerful bombs. Thankfully neither of the bombs detonated and the male and female terrorists were arrested. A statement from the UN says that the two attackers are now in the hands of the EU security department in Rome, and it was found later that the two explosive devices were fully operational and that the pistol of a security guard also failed to operate within the complex. There were no casualties and the centre is operating normally. That's it for now, but we will bring you any updates as they happen. Now back to Declan and the Christmas Eve episode of 'The Real Nativity'.

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**London, England. Christmas Day, Thursday
25th December 2031. 12:00 hrs (local
time)**

It was a sight that no one had thought ever to see. It started earlier that day at just after eight AM, when one church, St. Martins-in-the-Fields, had decided to celebrate Christmas day by holding their early Communion service in the open air of Trafalgar Square. The initial congregation of a couple of hundred people had been joined by passers-by, people on their way to work, others on their way to their own churches. Over the hour of the early service, the crowd had grown to over a thousand people. Local news broadcasts had reported this phenomena as a 'nice little item' but this had acted like an invitation to the world and by ten o'clock the crowd had swelled to over eight thousand. The vicar of St. Martin's had quickly dragged their worship band out of the church and onto the steps, PA systems were quickly set up and the still swelling crowd, were singing their hearts out.

By the time eleven o'clock arrived the media recognised the spontaneous event as an opportunity for free programming and sent their OB teams to the square, with aerial support from their 'eyes in the sky'. Now there were an estimated hundred and twenty thousand people packed into the square and the surrounding roads. Central London was choked, surface vehicles and public service vehicles could not get anywhere near the famous square, the London underground was also

choked with more people trying to get to Trafalgar Square, London was at a standstill. The music was ramped up and local café's turned the sound from the live broadcasts up to full, and it seemed that the whole of London was worshipping this Jesus, but not all.

On the stroke of twelve o'clock, announced by the nearby 'Big Ben' clock tower, another crowd, split into seven segments, one for each of the seven main access roads to the square, were approaching the outer fringes of the worshipping thousands. The objective of this crowd was not to worship but to attack. The mob had been hurriedly assemble and marshalled by a fairly recently formed 'Coalition of Militant Atheists' that went by the acronym 'CoMA'. The CoMA groups pushed into the crowd and started lashing out with baseball bats, scaffold tubes and various other items that could be used as a weapon. The screams started from all seven points, but the music was so loud that no one actually in the square heard them. No one heard, until that is, gunfire started from down the Pall Mall access route. The crowd stopped singing, and a few seconds later the band stopped playing, everyone craning their necks to see what was happening, then they heard the screams of anguish coming from all seven access roads.

Police teams who had been monitoring the event suddenly realised that there was no longer peace on Earth, and emergency calls went out to all areas. The British police headquarters was less than a mile away and both the on-duty SWAT and Anti-terrorist units were

on the scene within five minutes. The police squads opened fire with energy-stun weapons on any person they saw wielding a weapon, and the police quickly became the target of the CoMA members. The impromptu worshippers were trapped in the square and panic took over from devotion. Within thirty minutes the police had the upper hand and the CoMA members started to run, pursued by arrest squads.

**BBC News Studios, London, England.
Christmas Day, Thursday 24th December
2031. 18:00 hrs (local time)**

The lights came up to full and the floor manager gave the news-reader the count down, "Five, four, three," and finished the countdown with fingers, finally giving a sweeping point.

"Good evening," Lucy Forbes said with a very serious face, "here is the six o'clock news from central London." The dramatic signature jingle interrupted her, "For the first time since broadcasting began the King's speech was cancelled today due to the disastrous events in Trafalgar Square this morning, Erin Martindale takes up the story."

The picture changed to a shot of Erin with the flood-lit Trafalgar Square in the background, "This is the horrific scene of this morning's atrocity, that will forever mark Christmas Day twenty thirty-one as one of the saddest days in British history. At mid-day this square was filled

with, what some estimates say, some hounded and twenty thousand plus people all worshipping and singing carols, when groups of thugs, belonging to CoMA, the Coalition of Militant Atheists, attacked the fringes of the crowd, killing and maiming indiscriminately.”

“The police have issued figures of the death toll which stands at two thousand three hundred and twenty-two people, with many more on the critical list, this number will inevitably rise over the next few days. The CoMA thugs and murderers approached along the main thoroughfares and attacked the back of the crowd using baseball bats, hammers, scythes, and crow-bars, and some with guns. Witnesses have said that at one time they were faced with a cloud of red mist. As you can see the roads around the square have been sealed off by police, so please, if you have business in central London over the next few days, you should avoid this area. This Erin Martindale returning you to the studio.

“Thank you Erin,” said Miss Forbes, “Parliament was recalled this afternoon to debate the crisis that seems to have hit this country. The Home Secretary, Henry Harden spoke to reporters on his way into the House of Commons an hour ago,” the interview tape was cued in and the picture changed to the gates of the Palace of Westminster.

“Home Secretary,” said a reported thrusting a microphone into his face, “what are you proposing to do about today's disaster?”

“That depends upon parliament, but I can assure the British public, that things will be done and this sort of vigilantism will not be allowed to happen again,” the Minister turned and walked away. The whole of the news bulletin was taken up with interviews of world leaders and representatives from the church and from the BHS, the British Humanist Society, who all condemned the actions of CoMA. Indeed the news was dominated by the incident for the following days.

JMRT House, Cyprus. Thursady 25th
December 2031. 20:32 hrs (local time)

"This is what I was afraid of Jim," said John Moffat just after the staff of the Trust had finished watching the BBC News, "and why I did not want to make it public."

"That wasn't our call, John," said Jim Markson, "we were both commanded to do so and we needed to do it from a moral aspect as well, you just can't keep information like this under wraps."

"Well I hate to think what comes next, we had an attack on the Control Room yesterday and this massacre today, some Christmas."

"John, you can't blame us or the recordings for this," said Jo as she placed an arm around her loved one, "it's human nature that's caused this, people will always react to the truth if they don't like it, or agree with it."

"Since when did you get a psychology degree," John asked in a little lighter mood than he felt.

"I was thinking Dad," said Jo as she turned away from John, but grabbed his hand, "both the bombs and the guard's pistol didn't work yesterday, that can't be a coincidence."

"Now you mention it Jo," answered Jim, "are you thinking that there is a dampening field in the Control Room," he asked.

"That was the thought that crossed my mind," said Jo.

"You mean like the one that you found operated in the cavern where we found the ark," stated John.

"Exactly," said Jo, "when we found the complex I got interested in the Knossos site and I did some research,

I read something that puzzled me at the time, but then I forgot about it until now.” Jo broke off and went to the nearest soft-screen and tapped in a search string, within a few seconds a page appeared, “Here it is,” she said, it seems that on two occasions during the German occupation of Crete someone from the Greek resistance was chased onto the site and hid. On both occasions the Germans tried to shoot the resistance fighter here, and despite the Nazis using pistols, grenades and machine-guns the fighter got away.”

“Maybe just a coincidence, Jo,” said her Dad.

“No, because when I dug a little deeper last night, I found this,” answered Jo. As she typed in another page address. “Look at this, it’s from an archive dating back to the Nazi occupation, here is a report about defective ordnances, and the date coincides with the first incident on the Knossos site, see.”

“You could be right, I think that is more than a random coincidence,” said John, “I wonder how it works, that could be useful.”

“If this is true, look at the area it covers,” added Jim, “if we could isolate the emitter, or whatever it is, think of the lives it could save.” Jim paused for several seconds then, “Owen, have you a moment.”

Owen Gwilliam, was deep in conversation with Dr. Wade in the corner of the lounge, this was his first break from the Control Room in nearly three months and he was hoping to return to Manchester’s UMIST after the Christmas recess. Manchester University were actually getting very frustrated over Owen’s absence, and

although he didn't need the salary, he loved to teach and inspire young engineers. After a few minutes he wandered across to where the three were in discussion, "What can I do for you," Owen said in his soft Welsh accent.

Jim quickly brought him up to speed on the discussion and Jo showed him the evidence that she had found on the super-net, a feint smile started to appear on Owen's face, "don't tell me, you want me to go back to Crete and see if I can isolate this dampening field."

"And," said Jo.

"I was hoping to get back to Manchester after the holidays," complained Owen, "but as you say a find like this could be really important."

Thanks Owen," said Jim.

"Yea', thanks," said Jo and John together.

Owen smiled and wandered back to his conversation with Dr. Wade.

**JMRT House, Cyprus. Thursday 1st January
2032. 11:10 hrs (local time)**

“Congratulations Jim,” said Owen after he had watched the nine o'clock news from London.

“Sorry Owen,” answered Jim,, a little distracted, “what for?”

“OK I'm sorry, maybe I should have said, Sir James,” Owen laughed.

“Oh, that,” answered Jim, “you know I had completely forgotten that, thanks anyway, but it's really you lot that deserve the prize.”

“Nonsense boy, you have been the one that pulled it all together, you deserve it,” said Owen.

The word soon spread around the compound and the remainder of the day Jim had to endure a continuous barrage of japes and silly jokes, by lunch time he'd lost count of the times he was asked to see his sword or armour.

Tomorrow it was back to normality, Jim, Carol and Peter would return to Weymouth, Jo, John and Owen would be returning to Crete and the Trust's remaining staff would continue the investigative work in Cyprus. Jim just wondered what 'back to normal' really meant these days.

The Home Office, 2 Marsham St, London,
Friday 16th January, 2032. 12:30 hrs
(local time)

The television cameras were all powered up and the BBC production crew were ready and waiting for the Home Secretary to arrive in the dedicated studio in the basement of the Home Office. At a minute past twelve-thirty the Home Secretary, the Rt Hon, Henry Harden, M.P. Marched into the studio, and without a word to the waiting technicians crossed directly to the desk and seated himself. "Are we ready," he asked abruptly. Harden had been a police commander prior to going into politics and then later becoming Home Secretary and he had gained quite a reputation for being hard on crime. He was a very focused man and rarely accepted compromise. Of course his critics accused him of building a police-state, but crime had been reduced by thirty-two percent since coming into post.

"Ready when we have the cue from the studio Sir, stand bye," said the on-site producer. The amber light started flashing and the producer counted, "Three, two, one," and his hand dropped.

"Good afternoon," said Harden, "I have decided to address the country directly due to the urgency of the situation, and of course because of public opinion since the atrocity on Christmas Day. Your government has debated long and hard over what should and could be done to avoid a repeat of this massacre. The appalling loss of life on December twenty-fifth and the horrendous

injuries that many more sustained, together with the attacks on two churches in the past two weeks, one in Leeds and another in Cardiff, have dictated that your government take emergency measures.” Henry Harden M.P. Shifted slightly, showing some discomfort in what he was about to announce, then shuffled the papers in front of him. “Emergency powers are intended for times of national crisis, such as war or attack by Britain's enemies. We consider that our way of life is indeed under attack, therefore the government has activated these emergency measures. From twelve o'clock, mid-day today, we have declared the Coalition of Militant Atheists, the so called CoMA organisation as a proscribed organisation, and is therefore illegal to be a member of said organisation. CoMA is considered an enemy of this state. We have also passed an emergency law preventing Christians meeting in any form in public, or in a public place. We realise that this measure will not be a popular one but we must protect the population in general, and we hope that this measure will be a temporary one. It is also aimed at protecting the many Christians of this land as well as citizens that may become involved. There is without doubt a strong anti-Christian feeling in this country, and we would warn anyone who contemplates violence toward any group or persons to think again, we are adopting a stance of zero tolerance. Thank you for listening.” Once the red light had winked out the Home Secretary rose from his seat, gathered his papers and walked to the studio door, “Thank you ladies and gentlemen,” he said as he disappeared.

By the time Henry Harden reached his office on the top floor of the building, his official com-unit was chiming, he stopped for a few seconds in the outer office and told his personal assistant to fend off all but official calls, then entered his office. No sooner had he taken his seat behind the oversized oak desk, than his personal com-unit buzzed, he took the unit from his pocket and sighed as he saw the face of Archbishop Benn. "John, I don't need to ask what you want, do I," Harden said.

"Henry, what are you doing," asked the Archbishop.

"It's already done John, and I am as sorry about it as you are, but we are subject to the will of parliament, and it was certainly a sizeable majority that passed the measures."

"This is the worst time to bring in measures like these, did you know that last Sunday over twenty percent of the population attended church, we haven't seen attendances like that for over a hundred years," countered Archbishop Benn.

"Yes, I am not surprised, but what of the ones that do not attend church, John, and how many of them do not believe in a supernatural being. There are many atheists out there who refuse to believe, even after these so called, 'God Tapes', holding any sort of public meetings at this time is foolhardy. These CoMA people have set a president that we do not want to continue. And John, this includes evangelism, anyone found preaching in public *will* be arrested,"

"You are making a big mistake Henry, and this is setting another, very dangerous president," said Benn.

“OK, John, I have to go, thanks for calling,” said Harden and broke the connection, 'Old fool,' he said to no one.

The Great Cross, Pershing County, Nevada, USA. Saturday 31st January 2032, 07:20 (Local Time) .

The FBI arrived at the site nearly half an hour after the local police, the closest they were allowed to get to the site was just over a kilometre away, and even from here they were wearing radiation suits. The agent-in-charged found the local sheriff after asking several deputies, they all looked the same in their white environment suits.

“Sheriff Johns?” the agent asked.

“Sure, and who are you,” he ask.

“Agent Michael Ford, FBI,” the agent introduced himself,

“What have you got so far?”

“Just what you see Agent Ford, just a dam great glowing hole in the ground.”

“Do we know how long it will take to cool down,”asked the Agent.”

“About five hundred years, they tell me, but the heat will dissipate in a couple of days,” Sheriff Johns told Ford.

“Anyone claimed responsibility yet?”

“Yep, the USA,”said Johns.

“What!”, exclaimed Ford.

“Calm down, not the government,” exclaimed the sheriff, “its a group calling itself United States Atheists, never heard of them before. The call was bounced to us via satellite.”

“Neither have we, you spoke to them,”asked Ford.

“Yep,” replied Johns.

“Accent?”

“Sounded like southern, maybe Dallas,” said Johns.

“What they say,” asked Ford

“The bozo said they needed to clean the world of Christians, and this was just a warning, cause the building was empty. Oh and they said it was a nuclear device and they had a good supply of them.”

“God save us,” said Ford, just as his com-unit chimed, “Ford,” he said, he listened in silence, his jaw slowly dropping, “Thank you,” he stuttered.

“Problems,” asked Sheriff Johns.

“You could say that,” said ford, staring off into the distance, “These goons have just blown off the top of the Washington Monument.”

**West-end of the National Mall,
Washington, D.C, USA. Saturday 31st
January 2032, 07:45 (Local Time).**

The blue and red lights were dazzling in the pre dawn gloom, and a thousand alarms were sounding and echoing from the stone masonry of the closest buildings. The piazza around the obelisk was scattered with more masonry, some of which damaged the paving severely. The top of the remains of the monument were still smoking and one could see occasional flashes from loose electrical wires. The mangled aluminium cap had landed in the Constitution Gardens pond, some six hundred metres away. A kilometre away the White House was on lock-down, fearing that the attack on the

monument was a diversion for an attack on the president.

The city police were busy cordoning the area off from the public, and the area was full of shiny black LIMO's that gave a clue to the numbers of FBI agents that had arrived from the nearby Pennsylvania Avenue headquarters.

Ed Winkler, a supervising agent had taken over the site just minutes ago and was already giving orders, he was the stereotypical FBI agent complete with the hair-cut and dark overcoat. "Camille!," he shouted as he saw an agent he recognised.

Camille changed course in mid step and came to her boss, "Yes Sir, hell of a mess hu," she said by way of greeting.

"For sure," Winller acknowledged, "do we know what happened," he asked.

"Some kind of rocket, from what witnesses have said," the agent informed him. "almost all the people we interviewed so far have reported seeing some kind of streak like a rocket engine hitting the monument," she said.

"Where did it come from," Winkler asked.

"From the south-west, my guess is from the Potomac, Sir," Camille guessed, "I've already alerted the river patrol to stop and search any boats that they don't recognise."

"Good work Agent," Winklet commended.

Back in FBI headquarters at Pennsylvania Ave NW, a

group of agents were gathered around a soft-screen, the automatic monitoring unit had immediately picked up a on a new video on the site of the U.S.Atheists. On the screen was the hooded figure of a male, "My fellow Americans, I am speaking to you on behalf of the USA, this organisation has this morning taken an offensive step against the insidious re-emergence of Christianity in this country. The Christian faith has crippled this great country too long, so we chose two targets which have been destroyed, as symbols for our cause, and as symbols of the Christians." The picture changed to show a view of the worlds largest modern Christian landmark, Nevada's Great Cross, then the picture went dark and something streaked across the dark screen and exploded in a dazzling explosion as the tactical nuclear device detonated just above the roof of the Cross. The light flash briefly illuminated the Great Cross, then it disappeared in a fireball. The shot changed again to show the hooded figure, "The Great Cross, was chosen simply because it is the largest modern emblem of the Christian faith in the world. Our second target is the Washington Monument, or at least the cap." The picture changed again to a night shot of the floodlit obelisk, again another object shot across the sky and hit the top of the stone needle, there was a small explosion and a cloud of dust with masonry falling and the extinguishing some of the flood lights. The hooded figure appeared again, and continued, "The reason for this target is that it represents the very centre of our countries government and the aluminium cap bears the inscription, 'Praise be to God' in Latin. Just

as we have destroyed these emblems, the Christian faith must be destroyed and pruned from this country. If heed is not taken, more will follow.” The screen twisted and returned to the home-page of the organisation, bearing a Bald Eagle destroying a cross.

**The White House A.V. Studio,
Pennsylvania Ave, Washington D.C. USA.
Saturday 31st January, 2032. 13:00 hrs
(local time).**

President James Orwell sat behind the usual lectern bearing the Great Seal waiting for the L.E.D.s built into the reading desk to turn red, which told him that the transmission had begun. Why did *this* have to happen in *my* watch, he thought as he waited, this needs to be stopped one way or the other. The presidential press officer stood facing his political master, with one eye on the president and the other on the studio door, he was waiting for the congress vote result that would give the President the power he needed to declare the US Atheists illegal.

“One minute,” the in-house producer said.

The President looked cool and relaxed but underneath he was sharing the anxiety that his aid and press officer was feeling. Orwell had had more practice at the poker-face than most of his staff and as the seconds ticked away he went through his preparations, and said a quick prayer.

The lights suddenly turned to yellow and started their flashing dance, getting faster and faster as the last ten seconds passed, then stopped for one second before turning red.

“My fellow Americans, today the very roots of our country were attacked by terrorists,” Orwell started, “the guilt for this heinous attack has been claimed by a group calling themselves the United State's Atheists, I must add quickly that these people do not represent these United States in any way, nor is there any connection with this administration. I am sure most of you have seen the video that this organisation has posted today, I thank God that there has been no loss of life, but this organisation have promised that people will loose their lives if this administration does not act against the Christians in this country. I reiterate, the US government does not deal or comply to the demands of, terrorists.” Just as the President was about stall for more time the door opened and a messenger hurriedly stepped into the studio, then handed a document to the press officer. The press officer looked at the document then towards the President and shook his head.

The President looked straight at the camera, and continued, “My friends and countrymen, I have just heard that Congress has voted not to give me emergency powers that I need to outlaw this organisation,” he bent forward and took the slip from the PO's hand. “However I am taking the unusual step of assuming control as Commander and Chief of the armed forces, in order to protect this country. I promise

that every member of this organisation will be hunted down, they will not be allowed to threaten this country. Thank you for listening.” The lights on the lectern faded out and Orwell stepped down from the little dais, his face immediately showed the anger that he was feeling, “Kirk,” he called to his aid, “I want a meeting with the Chiefs of Staff first thing tomorrow, I don't care where they are, I want them here by ten tomorrow,” with that he walked out of the studio, leaving his aid and PO looking at each other with open mouths.

Meeting room 12, United States Capitol Building, Washington, D.C., USA. Saturday 31st January, 2032. 15:00 hrs (local time)

The whole of Congress was shocked and appalled by President Orville's unilateral declaration of taking the armed forces over, despite Congress' decision not to declare the US Atheists an illegal organisation. In truth many of the congressmen had opted to swear allegiance to the flag, and had opted out of the final '*So help me God*', prescribed by the oath. The room was filled with over a hundred congressmen, all wanting to have their say, and only a handful were themselves Christians. In actual fact there was a near riot in the room, and the person responsible for the impromptu meeting had lost control. The hope was that Ernest Parsons would be able to organise an emergency vote of censure on the President, before things got out of

hand.

After over an hour Congressman Parsons managed to regain some control and was getting the numbers that he needed to hold a vote. Both houses were called into sitting and by eleven o'clock that night, the censure motion was passed. At just five minutes after the vote was announced a US Marine detachment entered both upper and lower house, their commander announced that the houses were being dissolved and that the elected representatives should vacate the Capitol Building. Whilst most left quietly, twenty-three senators and over a hundred and fifty representatives refused to leave and were arrested.

**The Strategic Command Room, below the
White House, Pennsylvania Ave,
Washington D.C. USA. Saturday 1st
February, 2032. 08:30 hrs (local time).**

The joint Chiefs of Staff assembled in the command bunker beneath the White House, on a cold frosty morning, many had travelled over-night to attend at their Commander in Chief's orders. The mood in the room was muted, and the most prominent thoughts were surrounding what would happen to the United States under the military control of this president. Nothing like this had ever happened in the history of the US, there was no president to guide anyone, including the president.

Montgomery Hearst, the Commanding General of the US Army and Chairman of the JCS, was particularly apprehensive, if the President wanted these US Atheists hunted down, It was he who would be called upon to provide the essential ground troops. Hearst felt the eyes of the others on him, which made him even more uncomfortable. At eight thirty five the room stirred as the President entered the room and the staff members saluted whilst taking their seats.

“Please be seated,” Orwell said as he took his seat at the head of the oval table. “Thank you for attending at such short notice. I am sure that every one of you has seen the transmission from yesterday, so I will not be explaining my position on this, and let me say this first of all, some of you may agree with me some may not. That is immaterial, no matter what your personal beliefs, to obey the President as your C in C is your duty. Do I have your allegiance?”

There were general nods around the table, some seemed enthusiastic others were hesitant, neither of these went unnoticed by Orwell. The president was particularly heartened by the unswerving loyalty of Major General Ray Dempsey, of the US Marine Corps, who he saw was nodding vigorously.

There were only two people in the room that were not wearing a military uniform, one was the President, the other was Herb Courtney, Director of Homeland Security.

The President continued, “You all know Herb, from Homeland, who I have asked to attend today, I

conferred with Herb yesterday and ask him to get what ever information he could at short notice about these US Atheists. Herb, can you share what information you have please.”

Herb opened a security folder, and remaining seated he said, “This organisation is completely unknown to Homeland and the NSA, they seem to have arisen during the past two to three months. Their leader seems to be a male Caucasian by the name of Richard Perking, unfortunately we have no record of him. The FBI gave us the satellite tag for a boat they think the the Washington rocket was fired from, and we traced it down to Charlton, where it's been abandoned. We have forensics on it now. So that's the starting place as the boat was stolen from the marina there. Their net-slot claims they already have over a million members.”

“Not much to go on,” commented the President, “Herb, I want you to coordinate the action against these people, and I want us to clamp down hard.”

“Yes Sir, one other thing,” said Herb, “we have learned one thing that may be a complication, it may be that the Christian militias are mobilising to find these terrorists, the feeling is that if they find any members, they will shoot them.”

“I will not have any vigilantes causing problems,” Orwell said, we need to keep these private militias out of the picture. Herb I am leaving you to continue this meeting, and I want one hundred percent cooperation from each one of you, I want no more attacks.”

The president left the room and the JCS continued

under Herb's direction, in order to come up with strategies to find and stop the US -A's.

The Council Chamber of the Union of Islamic States (UIS), Islamabad, Pakistan. Wednesday 11th February 2032. 10:40 hrs (local time).

The council chamber was also in uproar as the Iranian Minister Saeed Rostami, now Minister of Foreign Affairs, wound up he fellow members with a hate speech against Israel.

“Brothers in Allah we cannot let these Zionists get away with the atrocities they perpetrate against our faith. This Union has no teeth when it comes to dealing with our enemies, many of our Islamic states have become too western, too liberal in their outlook. Do we always want to come under the control of the west, is it that we are scared of the west now that our oil is running out? Do we enslave ourselves to to energy, is this the will of Allah?”

There was a new swelling of shouting and cheering.

Minister Rostam turned to the Union Chair, “Mr. President, where is Saudi Arabia in this dispute? It is a month since you promised to contact the Zionists about our protests, but have we heard anything from you or the criminal Goldbloom, no we have not. We have been patient Mr. President, but the patience of my country is shortening by the day, many good Muslims lost their lives when the our installation was destroyed, their families need closure.”

“Minister Rostam, I have spoken to Prime Minister Goldbloom several times and I am waiting for some

materials to show that Iran has broken the conditions of the Calcutta Accord,” said the President. “And to answer your question, my state, stands full square with all of the states of the Union, but we also stand by the agreements of the Calcutta Accord. Mrs. Goldbloom has given me some information and some non-sensitive evidence that the installation attacked was an inter-continental missile base. I have asked the Iranian Ministry of defence to comment, but thus far I have received no answer.”

The chamber went silent, so silent that you could hear people breathing, and Rostam could hear his heart beat faster.

Rostam stood his ground, he leaned with both hands on the lectern and stared at the floor for several seconds, took a deep breath and answered, “Mr. President the facility was nothing more or less that a launch area for our communication and navigation satellites, of course there were very powerful rockets there, how else can we place these satellites in high orbit, this is more Zionist lies.”

“Mr. Rostam, there were over twenty silos in the complex, according to the Israeli intelligence that I have been sent, why so many,” asked the President.

“Mr. President, I do not have the technical details about the facility, but you seem to be falling for Jewish lies.”

“This feels like a cover-up Mr. Rostam,” said the President, “It seems as if you have been caught with your hand in the sweet-meat jar.”

“Mr. President, are you calling me a liar, Sir?”

“That, Minister Rostam, remains to be seen,” replied the President.

Just then Ali Sulaib – the member for the Basrah area of Iraq stood and walked forward to the podium, “This is a disgrace,” he stated, “we are supposed to be brothers in Allah, praise His name, but it seems that we are just as far apart as the the Jews are from us. As for me, I stand with Minister Rostam, and my state, will back Iran against the Zionist evil.”

Ali Sulaib then started the long walk to the exit, as he did so, one by one the members from his state and the Irani state joined him and silently filed out of the chamber, Rostam was the last to leave.

**Buckingham Palace, London, England.
Thursday 26th Feb 2032, 11:14 hrs (local
time)**

Jim Markson stood in a line waiting his turn to go forward to the place where he would suddenly become 'Sir James'. He and his family had arrived just after ten that morning and had been directed to an ornately decorated and large ante-room along with the other people who were being honoured that day. Some refreshments were served by quaintly dressed footmen carrying silver trays with glasses of hot punch, it was a nice touch as the weather outside was damp and chilled. At fifteen minutes to eleven the accompanying families, Carol, Jo and Peter, had been directed to find their seats in the 'throne-room', as Jim thought of it. The time that following was taken up by Royal Enquires organising the waiting recipients into a line in the correct order. Then each had been instructed on how to act and what they could not or could say, and not to speak until spoken to.

The prospective 'Lords' went first, there were just four of them, then came the new Knights, of which Jim was one. The line moved slowly forward toward the double doors. At last Jim could see into the throne-room, and now there were just three people in front of him, then two and then one. As it sank in, the nerves started and he felt slight tremors hit his knees, and his first step forward nearly threw him off balance. Jim recovered quickly and continued to his walk to the dais. The King

stood two steps above him but stepped down as Jim reached the dais.

“Jim Markson,” the King said as he held out his hand for Jim to shake, “We are so grateful for your actions to save our friend the Archbishop, you have the gratitude of my entire family sir.”

“It was just an instinctive action your Majesty,” answered Jim.

“Nevertheless it was an act of selfless courage,” the King continued, “But I am also a great follower of your work and I follow, as closely as duties permit, the discoveries you and your family have made, you have performed a great service to humanity.”

“I am not sure if that is a positive or a negative, Sir, with recent events,” commented Jim.

“I am sure that God chose the right people for the job, we all feel honoured to have you and your family in our midst,” assured His Majesty, “I would dearly love to meet your family later, if that would be permissible, but now, we really must press on.”

The King stepped back onto the dais and retrieved the ceremonial sword from a nearby table. The King rested the sword on Jim's right shoulder and said, “For services to the British crown in the saving of Archbishop Benn and for services to mankind, you are dubbed a Knight of British Empire.” The sword was lifted from Jim's shoulder and then touched his left shoulder and then withdrawn. “Arise Sir James Markson.” Jim stood, bowed to His Majesty and walked on to take his seat to the right of the dais.

It seemed as if the parade of those receiving honours would never end, and Jim found himself loosing himself in his thoughts, one of which was, how thankful he was that Knights no longer needed to wear the long gowns and silly hats that they had been forced to wear no so many years ago. As he imagined himself in that 'get-up' he was having a little chuckle to himself when the investiture ended and everyone was invited to move to yet another room to 'partake' in some light refreshments. The doors at the other end of the wall in which they had entered, opened. The room was a long gallery with a equally long table, stretching most the gallery's fifty meter length. The table was filled with plates of food and drink, and Jim saw his son's eyes open wide at the sight of the food.

The Markson family mingled for over half an hour, answering questions and telling the story of how this or that had been discovered, Jim had just secured a second glass of cordial when he felt a tap on the shoulder. Jim turned to find himself face to face with the British King, "Your Majesty," exclaimed Jim. "Just a plain 'sir' will suffice, Sir James," laughed the King, and again shook Jim's hand. "And this must be the famous Joanne who started the whole thing," the King said as he held out his hand to Jo. "What did you think when you discovered the treasure hoard in Cyprus," the King asked of Jo. After being introduced to Carol and Peter, the King spent about twenty minutes chatting and asking

questions before he excused himself and left the reception. The Marksons were amazed at the length of time His Majesty had spent with them, only Peter was unimpressed by the attention. Jim put that down to him being diverted from the wealth of food available.

**The Palace of Justice, Athens, Greece.
Monday 15th March 2032, 14:30 hrs (local
time)**

Maria Toyrbalh, the Greek correspondent for EBC stood out side of the largest courtroom in Greece, which contained the Supreme Court. It was a cold day and the north wind was blowing straight of the mountains of Northern Greece. She shivered as she awaited the verdict that would be announced at any minute, but the minutes had stretched into a half hour and the wind was getting colder. Maria was not on her own, the steps of the courthouse were occupied by at least fifteen media teams, many of which she knew, and the banter between the teams was good entertainment whilst her team waited. This verdict was of interest to most of Europe and the Middle East and had the potential to cause an international incident.

Suddenly Maria's ear-piece came live as her producer told her that the verdict was about to be announced, and to start the introduction, in, three, two, one.

“This is Maria Toyrbalh, reporting for EBC from the steeps of the Greek Law Courts. You join me just as the verdict on the two bombers that attempted to blow up the Knossos site of the God Tapes chamber, is to be announced. I am sure you will remember the attempt on Christmas Day to destroy the records in Crete, and the amazing fact that the bomb failed to detonate. The couple, who it seems were man and wife, were arrested by United Nations officers, and it is the UN that have

brought these people to justice. The Greek provincial government have also charged the couple with espionage.” Maria's earpiece buzzed in her ear to alert her that the video feed was about to switch to the court room. “Now we can take you into the court for the verdict,” Maria said as the picture changed to a shot of the accused man and his wife. Then the shot again changed to watch the three judges file out of their chamber and onto the podium desk. The senior judge was the Chief of Justice for all Greece, the second was an American justice, representing the UN, and the third was a Judge from the European Union, in fact a member of the Belgian Judicial System.

The three judges took their seats and the court also sat down, the senior judge turned to the jury and asked if they had reached a verdict, the foreman stood, holding a piece of paper in his hand.

“Yes Your Honour we have agreed on a verdict.”

“What is your verdict, on the charge of attempted murder,” asked the judge.

“We find the accused guilty.”

“What is your verdict, on the charge of espionage against the Greek State?”

“We find the accused guilty.”

“Will the defendants stand,” the judge asked and the couple complied, as the shot switched to Zaid Farrah and his wife inside of a transparent dock, and the voice of the judge continued. “Mr and Mrs Zaid Farrah, you have been found guilty of attempted murder and of espionage against this state, you will be held in custody

until Monday the twenty-ninth of March 2032, when you will return to this court for sentence.”

“Well,” said Maria as the video returned to the exterior of the court, “there you have it, this is Maria Toyrbalh returning you to the EBC News Studio.”

**The Palace of Justice, Athens, Greece.
Monday 29th March 2032, 08:30 hrs (local
time)**

The sentencing of the Farrahs was held in camera, and the convicted couple were brought in from the security rooms below the court, and stood before the bench, and chained to four police officers. Again the judges filed in and seated themselves, whilst almost everyone else in the court continued to stand. There were no barristers in attendance but two European Intelligence officers were there from Eurotell the security agency. The two officers wore no ID badges, wore dark business suits and could only be identified by the letters, 'A' and 'B'.

“Officer 'A' can you make your report to the court please,” the Greek judge asked.

“Your Honours, the two prisoners have both cooperated with security services over the past two weeks, I and my team have been responsible for the debriefing of Mr. Farrah and my colleague, Mr. 'B' has managed the team who questioned Mrs. Farrah. Mr. Farrah has given us a host of items of intelligence about the the Iraqi counter-intelligence services, and has admitted that both he and his wife of convenience, are members of the Iraqi military, special forces group. The operation was conceived and commissioned by the Iraqi government, who will disavow themselves of any involvement.”

“And has this been confirmed by Mrs. Farrah Mr 'B',” asked the judge.

Your Honour, the subject was kept entirely separate from her partner, and the two accounts do confirm each other, in all major aspects. Mrs. Farrah again has been cooperative, though not as keen to share details as her partner and some psychological tools were needed to 'encourage' her to share," said Mr. 'B'.

"Thank you, and give our thanks to your agency for the efficiency of the debrief," said the American judge.

The Greek judge dismissed the two intelligence officers and then went into consultation with the other two judges, which lasted for some minutes, he then turned to the prisoners.

"You are here today for sentencing, and we have all agreed on that sentence," said the senior judge, "we have taken into consideration your cooperation with the intelligence services, however the crimes you have attempted are of the utmost seriousness, and without regard for human life. Therefore we are pronouncing a sentence of the highest tariff for the crime. For the crime of attempted murder, you are committed to a custodial period of not less than twenty-five years. For the international crime of espionage you are sentenced to twelve years, to be served consecutively."

"We have also made an order that the security and intelligence services will have free access to you for the next twelve months," added the American judge.

The Markson Household, Preston, nr. Weymouth, Dorset, England. Friday, April 9th, 2032. 15:42 hrs (local time).

It was a sunny spring day on the Dorset coast, and Carol and Jim had been out for a stroll along the beach at the eastern end of the bay. Peter was in the last year of his engineering degree and Jo was still in Crete with John, and working on the last of the freezes in the side chambers. They climbed to the top of the little headland hand in hand and crossed the field that lay between their house and the coast.

"I am just ready for a good strong cup of tea and a packet of chocolate digestive biscuits," said Jim as they passed through their garden gate.

"I suppose that's a hint for me to make it is it," replied Carol.

"If you're offering, that would be nice."

"Yes, your Lordship," said Carol laughing.

"I'm Knight not a Lord, well not yet anyway," replied Jim, as Carol chased him into the house. Ten minutes later they were sitting in their sun-room with a full pot of tea and a full packet of biscuits. "This is why I love this house and this area, to be able to wake in the morning and see that view, what else can anyone need."

"I notice you weren't saying that a few months ago," said Carol.

"Well I'm saying it now," Jim said as he settled further back in the reclining chair with his fourth biscuit. They both sat gazing at the view across the bay to Portland, but their peace was interrupted by Jim's com-unit

chiming. "What now, can't even have one day of peace," Jim complained.

Jim tapped the accept button and Owen's face appeared on the screen, "Hello Owen, how's Manchester," asked Jim.

"Hello there Sir James, do I doff my hat or tug my forelock Sire," asked Owen with a wicked smile on his face.

"Seeing as how you have neither, you can just continue to call me Jim," Jim retorted with a smile. He really was getting a little tired of the 'Sir James' jokes.

"Fair enough," said Owen, "but I'm not in Manchester, I'm back in Crete."

"How come, I thought that you had been ordered back to the university."

"Indeed I was, but I was seconded again to sort out some problems," explained Owen.

"Ah," said Jim, "well it's nice to hear from you, have you sorted the issues out now?"

"Oh yes, I sorted that last week, but that's why I'm contacting you. I stayed on a while because I wanted to find out about this suppression field."

"You mean what stops guns firing and bombs exploding," asked Jim.

"That's the one."

"And have you?"

"Actually, yes I have."

"Really, tell me about it," asked Jim.

"Well, I knew it had to be some kind of field, so I set my

equipment up to detect any sort of EM field, I found a negative energy field emanating from that boss in the roof, you remember it?"

"Yes," said Jim, "we thought it was just decoration."

"So did I, but that's the emitter. The real works are in one of the cabinets at the back. I have copied the circuitry and the feeds and I reconstructed something along the same lines and it works, Jim, it works."

"You've tested it," asked Jim.

"Yes, I borrowed the security man's gun when he was off duty, the system seems to scan for sudden bursts of energy, normal energy expenditure is accepted, but anything like a gun or a bomb are suppressed within point one of a millisecond. And guess what that includes, human exertion, like throwing a punch, or a spear, or anything, it even absorbs the energy from a bow before you fire the arrow. I think its something about the tension build up, I'm not quite sure yet but the darn thing works."

"That's amazing Owen," chirped in Carol.

"Thing is Carol," answered Owen, "I don't know what to do with it."

"What's the legal position Owen," asked Jim, "My feeling is that you certainly have the intellectual rights to the device."

"Well maybe, but there are others involved, the Greek government, the Trust, but for you guys I would not have had access, and I guess the UN would have a call on the original device."

"Well I think the Israelis would challenge that," offered

Carol, "don't they have a similar device connected with the Ark?"

"Good point," responded Owen.

"Owen, just a thought," said Jim, "why don't you contact Mrs. Goldbloom, she seemed quite enamoured with you when we met last summer. She may well have suggestions, and it may be of use to Israel."

"It's a good thought," Owen came back, "but I am not sure about troubling a prime minister about something so trivial."

"Just think about the security implications Owen," suggested Jim, "I have a feeling that there are some rough times ahead and something like this that can protect people will be a high priority."

"I guess so;" Owen was silent for a couple of seconds, during which time Jim and Carol shared one of those looks that only a seriously involved couple can understand. "OK I'll give it a go," said Owen, "have you still got her com-address, Jim?"

"I do Owen, I'll send it to you."

"Thanks, both of you," Owen said, " I'll let you know how I get along, see you soon."

**European Security and Antiterrorism
Service Headquarters, Boulevard Saint-
Germain - Paris, France. Wednesday 14th
April 2032. 10:00 hrs (local time)**

It was April in Paris, but the rain was persisting to descend upon the romantic city, the top half of the iconic Eiffel Tower was lost in the brooding drizzle. In the city centre the security chiefs of all the European Union partners had been summoned to the a briefing by E-SAS. It was not a common occurrence to be summoned for a briefing, so almost all of the embassy's had sent a representative. At exactly ten o'clock the deputy director of the agency entered the conference room on the second floor, he wore a serious expression and walked directly to the lectern.

“Good morning ladies and gentlemen, thank you for attending,” said Eamonn O’Reilly, agency DD. “People, we may have a serious problem,” O’Reilly continued. As is common knowledge the two bombers who attempted to destroy the site in Crete, where the God Tapes are being examined, were apprehended, red-handed. You will also know that the subsequent trial gave the E-SAS access to the couple for a limited period. The Farrah's have been interviewed almost daily since sentencing, Mrs. Farah has not been too forthcoming but her husband has been in full flow.”

“Two days ago our Mr. Farrah informed us that the raid was not only authorised but instigated by the Iraqi government. He has been a senior agent for almost

eleven years, four of those as head of station in London, which accounts for his impeccable English. He admits to being involved in covert activities across Europe and in the US. We have yet to obtain details on those activities. Now comes the blockbuster, Mr. Farrah was trained in Iran, at the facility that the Israelis destroyed some while ago. So, we have evidence that Iraq and Iran are in league with each other, and that there seems to be some plan to take action against Europe and it seems the USA. Mr. Farrah has also told us that there is an immense amount of money passing through Iraq, mainly from undisclosed Islamic states and is sent out to the West, we are talking many billions of dollars a year. Mr. Farrah does not have the details of exactly where this money is going. We need to assume that this money is not to finance Islamic community centres. We will be attempting to identify the recipients of this money and what it is being used for. Our anti-fraud squad are looking at this as they have the expertise to detect and follow illegal finance trails. Any questions?"

Mr. Deputy Director, do we know what has, shall I say, encouraged Mr. Farrah to provide all of this information," asked the British representative.

"It seems that the discovery and information from the Cyprus Revelation has affected him deeply, and he tells us that he had great misgivings about the bomb run and nearly did not go through with it, but his wife of convenience, persuaded him to proceed by threatening to shoot him. I can believe this from the reports our

agents have submitted on Mrs Farrah.”

The Israeli ambassador asked, “How can we be sure that the information is accurate Mr. O’Reilly?”

“Sir, so far everything that we have been able to check has proved to be correct and polygraph examinations have shown that he is speaking the truth. We believe that the intel is accurate.” O’Reilly paused for some seconds, then continued, “If there are no further questions, I suggest that you take the information back to your respective governments so that a contingency can be developed. I am informed that EU Security Administration is set to discuss the issue in its May meeting. Thank you for listening.”

With that DD O’Reilly, left the representatives to discuss among themselves.

The Office of the Prime Minister, The Knesset, Sacher Park, Jerusalem, Israel. Thursday 22nd April 2032, 16:05 hrs (local time).

Mrs. Goldbloom was leaning back in her leather desk chair making yet another call to her friend Rick Pickles, she had been trying to call Rick for the past few days but had yet to succeed. However this call seemed to be just as successful, Heidi was about to press the disconnect button when Rick Pickles' face appeared on the screen. Rick Pickles was possibly the most famous billionaire in Europe, and gaining fame in the US. He made his first million before the age of sixteen when he launched his own music web-site on the old internet. Then came a range of personal computers and the iconic 'Babble' tablet computer of the late twenty-teens, the first truly verbally interactive hand held computer. From there on Pickles could do no wrong, and made more money than he knew what to do with, the answer to that problem was to become philanthropic. Rick set up a trust fund that was simply called 'Humanity'. His many international companies continue to generate more, and more, money each year and 'Humanity' had more money to hand out in line with Rick's profits. The Humanity Trust gives money to charities, independent medical research, has built several 'free to use' hospitals, and they have several not-for-profit businesses that develop equipment, with a charter to assist humanity.

“Heidi!,” he exclaimed, “I wondered who was making all those calls.”

“Well thanks for answering Rick, how are you these days?”

“Busy,” said Rick, “It just never ends.”

“Poor you, but you know you love it, what would you do without all the challenges you take on, it's your life-blood Rick.”

“I know, and how is prime ministering going?”

“Also busy,” answered Heidi.

“So I have been seeing, but what can I do for you, I am assuming that you need something Heidi?”

“As it happens, I think I may be able to do something for you.” the Prime Minister, said, “You will have heard about all the adventures we had last summer.”

“Yes, very exciting stuff, and you actually have the Ark back?”

“We do, but one of the engineers that came here, a Professor Owen Gwilliam. Very famous engineer,” stated Heidi.

“Gwilliam, yes I have heard of him.”

“Well he has figured out what stopped that bomb in Cyprus from exploding and has a working model that needs developing, we think the same device is fitted to the Ark but we dare not interfere with that one. It's a energy suppression field. Rick, this could be very valuable to us, and the civilised world of course, so I wondered if you might like to take on the development work with the Professor.”

“No promises Heidi, but I will meet with Professor

Gwilliam and get my tec-guys in to review the device.”

“No Rick,” Heidi quickly interrupted, “Meet with the Professor by all means, but I need this to be a black project, for the time being we need this to be kept under wraps, all Owen needs is development finance and an organisation to back him with resources. He dare not take it to the university as they will claim it and I don't need to tell what will happen then.”

“OK you got it, send me Gwilliam's contact details,” agreed Rick.

“That's a deal,”said Heidi, “I'll tell him to expect a call.”

**Thirteen Miles North-east of Mansfield,
Ohio, USA. Saturday May 1st 2032, 10:55
hrd (local time)**

In a small area of woodland in the vicinity of Ashland, a vehicle moved slowly into a clearing between trees, five people, four men and one woman, alight from the articulated truck and direct the driver reversing his unit. The driver jumps down from the cab and joins the others in removing the canvas cover to the trailer. The female removes a side cover on the trailer and removes what looks like a sound mixing desk, which she carries to a small, newly-built concrete-block hut covered with branches from the removed trees. The other five men stow the canvas cover between the trailer and the cab in a specially constructed steel locker. At the press of a button an antenna slowly rises into the air from the front of the trailer, and the woman switches on the small desk before her and a series of coloured lights flicker into active mode. The five men join the woman in the hut and one of them gives the woman a strip of plastic on which is encoded some electronic instructions. The semitransparent plastic strip is slotted into the control board and some of the lights start to flash, as a larger red light starts to glow the woman throws a small switch that is protected by a yellow and black striped cover. Outside electric motors whirl into action and a missile rises from the back of the trailer. The rocket is painted matt black and bears no identifying marks of any kind, it stops at twenty point seven-two degrees from the vertical.

Inside the hut the woman produces a key from a string around her neck, and one of the men also removes an identity bracelet from his wrist, from which hangs another *almost* identical key. The two people with the keys look at each other for two seconds, then insert the keys into two key-switches on the board. Both keys are turned together and another red light snaps on. The woman removes another cover from a larger red button and gently rests her forefinger on it's domed top, she looks at the man and then the others. One by one the five men nod and the woman presses the mushroom shaped button.

Outside there is a sudden hiss that quickly turns into a quiet roar and the rocket slides off the ramp and like a flash soars into the air, where it turns south-west.

The Bible Walk Museum, 500 Tingley Avenue, Mansfield, Ohio, USA. Saturday 1st May, 2032. 11:00 hrs (local time).

The first visitors of the weekend were just arriving at the Bible Walk Museum, several cars were turning off the avenue into the car park to join the dozen or so cars already parked. In another part of the parking lot a dozen buses were already there and empty other than their drivers enjoying a well earned drink over the daily newspaper. The coffee concession was doing a brisk business as people waited in line to get through the entrance. Visitors to the museum had increased

twenty-fold since the 'Revelation' and the management had enlisted the services of a pastor to deal with the new converts. The Museum had also started screening the recordings that had been sent directly from Crete and the current favourite was the edited version of the crucifixion and resurrection sequence of Jesus Christ. The first showing of the day had just started, and another queue was starting to form for the next showing in sixty minutes time.

The twenty or so people in the parking lot were the first to hear the sound of what they assumed was a jet plane, but as the sound grew louder, heads lifted to the north-eastern sky just in time to see the missile rush toward them. That sight was the last thing they would ever see. The blinding flash of the atomic detonation occurred fifty meters above them, the blast wave flattened the museum and the fire ball turned the immediate area into a lake of molten glass, a kilometre in diameter.

**CNN News Studio, Atlanta, Georgia, USA.
Saturday May 1st 2032. 12: 17 hrs (local
time)**

The news reader was suddenly aware that the studio had gone quiet, the floor crew were just staring at each other. Louise Greer was waiting for the video item to finish before she resumed her role as anchor, but something was not right. Then she heard the voice of her producer through her earpiece, she listened in

astonishment as she was updated on the breaking news. Then the new script came up on the auto-cue and on her console screen. The producer gave her two minutes to compose herself, then they were interrupting the current video feed. The two minutes passed too quickly and she took a deep breath and started to read the script.

“We have interrupted this segment to bring you disturbing breaking news. Initial reports suggest that a nuclear device has been detonated in the atmosphere above the city of Mansfield, Ohio. The explosion seems to have happened at around ten after eleven today and is thought to have been centred on the Bible Walk Museum just outside of the city of Mansfield. I am told that we are receiving feed from a satellite that is in orbit four-hundred miles south of Mansfield.”

The video feed came in showing a devastated area with a glowing red centre all of which was occasionally obscured by smoke. As the field of view widened it was obvious that the roads, especially the I71 and route 30, were clogged with vehicles trying to evacuate from the radiation zone. In another side room off the studio a reporter was busy comparing the satellite feed with existing aerial photographs held on computer. A minute later the reporter entered the studio and sat next to Louise, seeing the look of shock on her face he placed his hand over hers and gave a little squeeze just as the camera went live.

“Thank you Louise, we will shortly be taking you over to

Washington live for the response of our government. In the mean time we can confirm that a device, probably nuclear, has wiped out the area around the Bible Walk Museum, this area has destroyed a large proportion of a residential area and two correctional institutes close by. From what we have seen from the satellite feed the fatalities will be in the thousands. Hundreds of people have been visiting the Museum since 'The Revelation' and as this is a Saturday the death toll is liable to be high. We are now taking you over to the White House where President Orwell is about to make a statement.”

The European Security Administration Meeting, The Council of Europe Building, Brussels. Monday 17th May 2032, 13:30 hrs (local time).

“Need I remind the members that what is discussed and the information to be revealed in this chamber, must not be divulged to any person outside of you individual governments or those cleared to level seven,” started the chair of ESAM in opening the meeting. The members consisted of the heads or deputy heads of every member nation of the EU, and every seat was filled because a level one meeting classification had been issued by ESAM, the highest possible priority. “We are about to be briefed by ESAM agent Mr. 'A', who will be sharing information obtained from one of the two Crete bombers, who has been keen to cooperate, Mr. 'A' the floor is yours.”

Agent 'A' had flown in from Athens that morning on a security flight and had transferred from the airport in a security LIMO with a full guard contingent of four agents. He was one of Europe's top agents and bore the rank of lieutenant general, 'A' had served his time, first in the Israeli army and later trained with MOSAD, still regarded as the best security service in the world. “Ladies and gentlemen, we have a serious problem,” said 'A'. You will all know that the two Crete bombers were apprehended and convicted under both Greek and EU laws, the male bomber has proved to be very helpful, but sadly the female has resisted all

encouragement. The information gained from the male bomber and information we gleaned from a sole survivor of the Irani missile base after the Israeli attack on the missile base, have confirmed each other, and the sleeper agents that Israel has activated across the Arab world has painted a rather serious picture.”

“We can now tell you that Iraq and Iran have recently joined forces following the failure of the UIS to persuade Israel to provide recompense for the raid that destroyed the missile base and the associated training facility. As of last week, Iran has activated thousands of agents across the western world, these are *not* intelligence agents people, these are aggressors trained at the base that was destroyed. We are not sure when, ladies and gentlemen, but it seems that an attack on Europe and the US seems to be imminent. If there are any leaks of this knowledge, we fear that will instigate the attack, so total secrecy must be maintained. When any attack materialises, it is our assessment that the other member states of the UIS will align with Iraq and Iran, with the possible exception of Kuwait and Dubai. You will now see some video of the salient points of the interrogation, so that you can make your own assessments, after that I will take any questions you may have.”

The chamber light dimmed and the wall-screen flickered to life. A series of numbers filled the screen for a few seconds to be replaced by a clock stamp with a date, that shrank to the bottom right of the screen. The scene showed a sparse room with a table and three chairs.

After three seconds two guards appeared with a third person, who was obviously the bomber, and the guards attached a device to the bomber's belt and the table, and then moved out of view. Two men then entered from the opposite direction, the men wore suits and placed some papers on the table before being seated. The members watched a series of interviews, which lasted over two hours, and after the screen went blank there was a stunned silence in the chamber for several minutes. The chair of the meeting then announced a short comfort break, after which the delegates would go into session to discuss the situation and decide on a common response, which would then be taken back to their individual states. It was expected that the session would continue for many days, if not weeks.

**The Motor Yacht, 'Margaret' moored in
Cocoa Beach Marina, Florida, USA. Friday
4th June, 17:20 hrs (local time).**

Owen Guillam arrived in the cool of the early evening breeze off the Atlantic, he had been invited for the weekend by Rick Pickles. The yacht was certainly a luxury one, with long, sleek lines in white and pale blue, stretching out to almost forty meters in length. The superstructure was topped by a large scanning dome and a bristle of communications antennas. Space had been reserved for his LIMO just twenty meters from the gangway, and as Owen alighted from the craft, Rick Pickles bounced down the gangway with two other men, who were dressed in sailor's uniforms. Rick strode up

to Owen with an outstretched hand, Owen took his hand, which Rick shook vigorously.

"It is so good to meet you at last Professor Gwillam," Rick said as he nodded to the two sailors to get the luggage from the LIMO, "quite a bit of luggage for a weekend, Professor."

"Owen, please," responded the Professor, "as to the luggage, I brought the prototype of the suppression-field generator with me, I thought you may want to see it in action, Mr. Pickles."

"That's great, and I am only Mr. Pickles to those who owe me money, call me Rick."

"Thank you, Rick," said Owen.

"Come on," said Rick, "let's get you settled in, then we can relax and get to know each other over a few drinks."

Rick followed the two seamen up the gangway, followed by Owen. They entered the yacht via a hatch in the side of the hull and Owen was immediately impressed with the sheer luxury. The passageway they entered was panelled with glossy walnut with hidden lighting between the wall and the ceiling, and the carpet was so thick as to loose the soles

of his shoes completely. Owen was taken to a cabin on the starboard side of the yacht, that now overlooked the marina and out to the Atlantic, no portholes here, Owen thought, just wide windows.

"I'll let you get settled and freshened up, Owen and when you are done, come on up to the stern lounge deck, for some drinks," said Rick as he retreated through the cabin door.

Half an hour later Owen left his cabin and wondered how you found the after-deck in this floating palace. He turned right outside of the cabin and found a set of stairs around the first corner. At the top he found himself in the dining room, with a girl setting the twenty place table, 'how many people are on this boat', Owen thought. The girl directed Owen to the after-deck, which he found within two minutes.

"Hi Owen," Rick welcomed him, "please sit, what's your poison?"

"Scotch and dry, if you don't mind," replied Owen. Rick poured the amber liquid into a glass and brought a bottle of dry ginger to the table where Owen had taken a seat. "You not drinking," Owen asked.

"No I don't drink alcohol," explained Rick, "it's been nearly fifteen years since I got on the wagon. I wasn't an alcoholic, but it started to interfere with business, a couple of bad decisions when I'd had a few."

"Very sensible," commented Owen, as Rick returned to his soda. "Have you had any thoughts about the suppression device?"

"Let's leave that until tomorrow, Owen, I never mix business with pleasure, and I just want us to get to know each other, and hopefully be friends."

"Fair enough," stated Owen.

The two millionaires, or one millionaire and one billionaire, just sat and chatted until eight o'clock when the girl he had met earlier in the dining room came and announced that dinner was ready. Owen and Rick retraced Owen's steps to the dining room, where eight other people were waiting. Rick introduced his wife,

Margaret, his two children Louise, a teenager and Lauren, who looked about ten or eleven. The five others were Ricks brother and finance advisor, a man called Herbert Hess, who was introduced as an investment advisor and the younger girl's god-father, Rick's P.A. Thelma, his wife's P.A. Shirley and the ships captain, Roger Glazier. The meal and the evening passed pleasantly enough and Owen excused himself just before midnight, and retired to his cabin.

The following morning Owen awoke to the vibration of the ship's engines. It was already eight, late for Owen, and he immediately rose, showered and dressed, just in time for the ship's public address system to announce that breakfast was being served in the dining room. Again Owen found his way to the dining room, where he opted for his usual full-English breakfast. Breakfast lasted over an hour with the conversation taking up most of the time, and was followed with coffee on the after-deck, where talk turned to business.

"Seeing as how you have brought a prototype device with you, it may be good if we started off with a demonstration," suggested Rick.

Owen returned to his cabin to collect the home-made device and brought it back onto deck, where Rick suggested that they go to the bow, away from any interruption. When they arrived Rick's brother, Ron, and Herbert Hess were already there. On the forward deck several fire-arms had been laid out on a tarpaulin, together with a nautical flare gun. Owen opened the carry-case and took out the suppression field generator

and connected the power source.

“Smaller than I had expected,” commented Rick.

“This is just a prototype,” Owen explained, “it has a range of about one hundred meters, I think I can reduce the device considerably if we can go into production.”

“Are there any side-affects,” asked Hess.

“Not as far as I know, in fact you cannot even detect the field, we think it emits a passive detection field and the suppression element only engages for a fraction of a second when the potential energy discharge is detected.”

“OK, gentlemen, shall we see what it can do,” said Rick, “I think we first need to test all of these fire-arms, just to make sure they are working.” There were six guns on the deck, a standard rifle, an automatic AK49, a hand pistol, a RPG, a hand-held energy weapon and an EMP weapon. In addition to these there were a stick of industrial plastic explosive and a nautical flare gun. Ron, took each weapon in turn and fired it, each one operated correctly and all four men seemed satisfied.

“OK Owen,” said Rick, “switch you magic box on, and we'll see what happens.”

Owen placed the device on a hatch cover and pressed the power button, nothing seemed to happen, “Is that it,” asked Ron.

“Let's hope so,” said Owen, “No fireworks, but the indicator light suggests that its working.”

Ron chose the AK49, Rick grabbed the pistol and Heir Hess took the energy weapon. Rick was first to pull the trigger, nothing happened, he tried again without any

result. Both Ron and Herbert started too, trying to fire their weapons, without any effect, the other weapons were taken up and they proved equally dead. Ron then took the ferry-pistol pointed it low toward the sea and fired, again nothing happened, and an attempt by Rick to detonate the plastic explosive on the deck, a risk that Owen would not have taken, thankfully failed.

“Right,” said Rick, “that seems to have proved your device works, you can switch it off now.”

Owen crossed the deck where the plastic explosive was left discarded, and threw it over-board, it splashed-down about twenty meters from the boat. Owen crossed to the device and turned off the power, the plastic explosive detonated immediately drenching all four in spray.

The other three were shocked by the explosion, “The field does not kill the detonator,” explained Owen, “with explosives, once the field is switched off, it will still detonate.”

The remainder of the morning was taken up with a detailed discussion about the design, manufacture and marketing of the Suppression Generator, A deal was agreed that after Owen had finished the miniaturisation of the device, one of Pickles' corporations would take over the ascetics design and would then market the device within the military and security industries. The afternoon and the following day were used up in relaxing whilst the boat cruised the Florida Keys, an area Owen knew well, having an holiday home in Florida close to Cocoa Beach. On their arrival back at

their port of origin Owen decided to spend the week at his holiday home instead of returning to Manchester.

The European Security Administration Meeting, The Council of Europe Building, Brussels. Thursday 10th June 2032, 15:00 hrs (local time).

After several weeks analysing and discussing the implications of the UIS threat posed by Iran and Iraq's intention to wage war on the west, the Administration finally came to an agreed profile and recommendations format that would be presented to the individual states of Europe. The intelligence community has by now suspected that something big was going on, but, no word about what that issue was had leaked. The security chiefs returned to their hotels and apartments, each with their security cases, containing secure memory cards of evidence and the recommendations. Those recommendations would ultimately change the face of the earth.

Sir James Hennessey, head of the British MI6 headed directly to his embassy, where he accessed the secure connection that in earlier times would have a red encrypted telephone, to his prime minister in number ten, Downing Street, London. Fredrick Matthews had just finished a cabinet meeting and was feeling a little exhausted when his private secretary's head appeared around the door.

"Excuse me sir, Sir James is on the secure connection from Brussels, he says it's urgent."

"Very well," said Matthews with a sigh, "I'll pick it up here." Matthews rose from the couch and went to his desk, where he pressed the illuminated red button on

his desk-com. He checked that his PS was gone and said, "Sir James, my friend where have you been, and where's the fire?"

"You sound tired Sir," started Hennessey, "and I am afraid I am going to add to your stress level."

"I knew your absence was not a good sign James, what do you have for me?"

"We have a perceived and actual threat from the Middle-east Sir, I am sending the details to you now, but I have a feeling that we have trouble."

"Is there anything other than trouble comes out of that region?"

"Well Prime Minister, this looks serious, the data includes the recommendations from the ESA, but my advice, if you want it, is to find some cover story for placing our troops on full alert ASAP."

"OK James, I'll get through the information this evening," said Matthews.

"I'm staying here tonight Sir, but I should be in my office by lunch-time tomorrow. If you need me you can get me here at the embassy."

"I'll try not to disturb you until tomorrow James, have a good night." The British PM closed the connection and punched in a code to bring the download up on his screen. The introduction was enough to scare the Prime Minister into calling Field Marshal (OF10) Sir Alan Robinson, the UK's most senior soldier and advisor to the Prime Minister.

"Alan, where are you," the PM asked.

"Good evening Sir, currently chin-wagging with the old American cousins in Fort Brett."

“Is that important Alan?”

“Not desperately so, Sir, just reviewing some new tactics.”

“When can you get back here,” asked the PM.

“Tomorrow afternoon OK for you, Prime Minister,” asked the Field Marshal.

“That's great, can you come straight here and let me have your ETA as soon as you can.”

“On my jolly way first thing Sir,” responded the Field Marshal a second before the PM closed the connection.

The Cabinet Room, 10 Downing Street,
London. Friday, 11th June 2032. 14:00 hrs
(local time).

Sir James Hennessey, Field Marshal Sir Alan Robinson, Home Secretary Henry Harden, Defence Minister Daniel Grieves and the Prime Minister, Fredrick Matthews sat at one end of the long table, whilst two service officers loaded the table with refreshments and sandwiches. As the door closed the Prime Minister welcomed his inner circle of security advisers and thanked them for attending. The PM handed out a folder to each person, each contained briefing notes on the current issue. "Please take some time to read and absorb the notes whilst you eat some light lunch," the PM invited, "then I need your thoughts." The reading of the briefing notes took almost twenty minutes, the reading was punctuated by the exchanging of looks. When all the papers were at last placed on the table the PM asked, "Options please gentlemen."

Field Marshal Sir Alan Robinson was the first to speak. "My gut reaction is to activate call-up and put the Air Force and Navy on full alert, Prime Minister, we seem to have a clear and present danger to the security of the western world."

"With all due respect Alan, this does not threaten us alone," Sir James pointed out, "there are our European partners and our allies on the other side of the water, our antipodean cousins, not to mention the Indian sub-continent."

"However Alan is correct, in that our first concern has to

be the UK,” interjected the Home Secretary.

“Yes, Prime Minister, I would agree with Alan and Henry on this one,” stated Minister for Defence Grievés, “the UK must be our priority, but we also need to coordinate any action with our partners. How does the US President feel Sir?”

“I have no idea,” admitted Matthews, a little embarrassed in his omission, “I haven’t had a chance to speak to him as yet.”

“The problem is gentlemen, if we open this up too much and the UIS gets wind of any moves to defend ourselves over and above what is normal, that may well trigger whatever attack they have in mind,” Sir James reminded the group. “Let’s not forget that according to our informer, there are sleepers in most all western countries, a couple of million of them. They could be anywhere, even within the armed forces.”

“Well that’s damned awkward,” muttered the Field Marshal.

“So, we’re dammed if we do and dammed if we don’t,” said Henry Harden.

“May I suggest Sir,” broke in Daniel Grievés, “that we see if President Orwell is in his office and bring him in on this over the secure link.”

“You may be right Dan,” said the PM, “but we should also include Heidi Goldbloom, at least she will be up to speed on this, and we cannot guarantee that President Orwell will have the intel as yet”

The Prime Minister activated the wall screens and pressed the button under the table that activated the

secure conference link. First he tapped the auto link tab for President Orwell, whose face appeared on the centre screen within seconds.

“Good morning Fred,” said the President, “what can the US of A do for you today?”

“Firstly it's afternoon here James, and secondly it is far from being good,” retorted Matthews.

“Well you sound in a jolly mood, what's the problem?”

The Prime Minister and Sir James, spent the next twenty minutes updating President Orwell of the current situation, twenty minutes that was punctuated by comment and interjections from others in the Group.

“Well this started as a nice day here in Washington, but I can see some heavy weather heading our way,” Orwell said when the briefing concluded.

“James, I think we should bring in Prime Minister Glodbloom on this, she will have been fully briefed by now and in honestly Israel is right on the front line,” suggested Matthews.

“Well you can try, but I think she has a few internal problems at the moment, or haven't you heard,” asked the President.

“Heard what,” asked the PM.

“She sent the bulldozers in to demolish the mosque on the Temple Mount this morning, and all hell has let loose, preparation for building the new temple.”

“Great, that's what I call timing,” commented Sir James.

“So it seems Sir Jimmy,” answered the President.

Premier Matthews tapped the secure tab for the Israeli Prime Minister on his com-pad. The face that appeared

on the screen was that of Heidi Goldbloom's private secretary and aid. "Good afternoon Prime Minister, I am afraid Mrs Goldbloom is out of her office at present and cannot be disturbed, Sir. Can I ask her to contact you later?"

"Yes please, do you know when that will be," asked Matthews.

"Not until tomorrow, I am afraid Sir," said the aid "I know her diary is open until eleven."

"I will call her tomorrow at nine, your time, if you can tell her."

Certainly Prime Minister, good evening."

As the connection ended, President Orwell cut in, "Look Fred, I think this would be better being discussed in a face-to-face meeting."

"I agree," said the PM, as Sir James and the others nodded in agreement.

"OK, you arrange things with Heidi and I promise we will fall into step, where would want to meet," asked Orwell.

"Probably less noticeable if we came to Washington on some pretext," suggested Sir James.

"How about Camp David, It's my twentieth wedding anniversary next week, what say you guys come for the party, any day you like," Orwell asked.

"Good idea, James," said the PM

"In the mean time I have to find out why my CIA guys have not had a smell of this," said Orwell, "see you guys next week." The connection broke.

The meeting lasted another three hours, whilst the

group discussed what could be done covertly to increase national security, which was difficult when no one knows who or where the undercover people were. It was decided that all members of the police, armed forces and the security agencies should undergo DNA tests. On the surface this would be for elimination and biometric identification purposes, in reality though anyone with direct genetic links to Iran or Iraq would be watched very closely. Once complete, the security at entry and exit points to Britain would be increased.

ERAF-wing's BAE RJ30 VIP Passenger
Transport, Eighty-three Thousand Feet
Over the North-east Atlantic Ocean.
11:30 hrs, Tuesday, 15th June 2032. 14:00
hrs (GMT).

The Air Force executive jet had just achieved cruising altitude for the ninety minute hop to Andrews Air Force Base. The BAC RJ30 was the first passenger aircraft since the ill-fated Concorde, to fly at supersonic speeds. The RJ30 had a cruising speed of around two-thousand miles an hour, Mk3, and an absolute speed of over five times the speed of sound. The aircraft was made possible by the successful British development of an efficient 'Scram-jet' system that used mainly hydrogen, and a small amount of propellant as its fuel, which gave it a range of anywhere in the world without the need for refuelling. The plane owed more than a passing relationship to the Concord airliner of the mid-twentieth century, but although it was much the same shape, the RJ30 was almost three times its size with the trailing edge of both wings housing thirty thrusters.

In the main cabin the British Prime Minister, relaxed with the other four members of his security committee, as well as Abe Marks, from the MI6 Middle-east Section and Wolf Schneider President of the EU, in addition to the usual retinue of high ranking politicians. Some of the passengers were taking the opportunity to complete work whilst others chatted amicably. Although there was work ahead there was also the prospect of a pleasant

time at Camp David whilst President Orwell celebrated with friends. Twenty minutes into the flight the Flight Sergeant appeared from the crew quarters and made directly to PM Matthews, where he whispered something that made the PM's eyes widen. Seconds later the Sergeant disappeared through the door to the cockpit, and the PM rose from his seat stroking his face and chin.

"Gentlemen, the Sergeant has just informed me that we are being forced to take a detour to the south, it seems we have a volcano in mid-Atlantic."

"When did this happen Sir, it's a bit sudden isn't it," commented Sir James.

"It seems CNN are covering it, can you turn the wall screen on to CNN Abe, please?"

Abe, who was sitting closest to the control pad obeyed his PM and the image appeared on the screen. The scene was of a seascape with a plume of black smoke appearing from a small blotch at sea-level, mixed into the lower parts of the smoke plume were angry red flashes with the area around filled with smoking bombs as they fell back to the water, then producing steam.

The CNN anchor-woman was recapping on the story, "Just forty-five minutes ago the small, island you see at the base of the smoke column burst through the surface of the Atlantic Ocean. Ten minutes later the island exploded and commenced spewing lava into the water. . . ." The passengers watched in awe as the pictures from an oblique satellite continued on the screen and the aircraft banked to the left to assume a new course.

Five minutes later the anchor-woman appeared on camera to read another report, "Reports are coming in from Greece that several eruptions have commenced over the past hour. The series of volcanic eruptions started with an incredible explosion from the Greek Island of Milos, at about one twenty-five, local time. Seven minutes later the volcano of Methana, some thirty-three miles from Athens also erupted. At almost the same time a long extinct caldera, now known as the Gulf of Kalloni, on Lesbos island became active and started turning the sea-water into steam, which is enveloping the south of the island. There are unconfirmed reports that both Vesuvius and mount Etna have started spewing smoke into the atmosphere. More after these messages. . . "

"What the devil is going on," demanded Field Marshal Sir Alan Robinson. No one seemed willing to hazard a guess.

After a few seconds Abe Marks decided it may be safe to remind the small group about the Crete revelations.

"You don't think this has something to do with the message of those 'God Tapes' do you Sir," he asked.

"What makes you say that Mr Marks," asked Home Secretary Harden, "you're not a Christian are you? "

"No Sir, I'm Jewish, but I thought that would be obvious, Sir, "retorted Abe. "However, to answer your question, and having studied the Christian Bible, it does warn of volcanic activity during the lead up to the final days, and I think you will agree, Sir, this seems to be quite an unique occurrence."

"Poppy-cock," stated Harden, "superstitious nonsense, I

have seen nothing to suggest that these, so called, 'God Tapes' have any validity in reality."

"Until six volcanoes decide to erupt at the same time," ventured Sir James, with a little chuckle.

"Did you know that there has been more volcanic and seismic activity in the past forty years than in all of the past five hundred years all together," added Abe Marks.

"That's a little bit worrying," commented the PM.

Harden was about to make a rather acerbic comment when everyone noticed the picture on the wall screen. CNN were transmitting a real-time feed from medium high orbit satellite looking at the Pacific. Around the ocean were some seven plumes of smoke, clearly seen as black blotches. Someone switched the audio on again as the anchor-woman was continuing her commentary.

". . . people have been killed on Fiji as molten lava burst through the crust of a natural bath. Unconfirmed reports suggest that there are now eleven points of eruption around the Pacific rim, sometimes called the 'Ring of Fire'. Authorities in Iceland have also confirmed that the often active volcano Eyjafjallajökull, has again erupted, together with several other volcanoes in the area. We take you now to Harvard University to get some comments and hopefully some explanations from Doctor Colin Hamby, head of seismic studies. Doctor what is happening here?

"Hi Sue, well, I have to say that I have no idea, we have had no indications that an event of this magnitude was about to happen. We have never considered that an event such as we are seeing now was even possible."

"Can we make a guess as to why all these volcanoes

are erupting at the same time, Colin?"

"Not really, normally eruptions are not connected in this way, each depends upon the individual magma chamber pressures. magma chambers are normally not connected in any way other than they all accept magma from the mantle and outer core. All we can assume is that there is something unique happening to the core, and I can't say we understand what it might be at this time."

"Thank Doctor Hamby, we have just heard that there are eruptions in New Zealand at Mayor Island in the Bay of Plenty, and along the Tonga string. . . ."

"My God, this could turn into a global emergency," suggested Defence Minister Daniel Grieves.

It took over two hours to make the crossing to Andrew's, and another fifteen minutes to make the seventy mile hop to Camp David, where President Orwell greeted them in person. As expected the topic of conversation was not about national security and Iran, but about the unprecedented eruption events across the globe. The following three days were a mixture of socialising and serious discussion. Agreements were formed about what to do about the perceived threat from the Middle-east and a multi-national action and relief group was set up to manage the latest threat from volcanic activity.

**Camp David, Maryland, USA. Monday 18th
June 2032, 11:15 hrs (local time).**

The European contingent were due to fly out at three on Friday afternoon and were sitting in one of the visitor lounges enjoying the real coffee and each other's company, when the head of President Orwell appeared around the door. "Hi guys," the president said in greeting, "before you go I just wanted to have a chat about this anti-Christian feeling that seems to be developing. I believe you have had some similar issues."

"Well, yes we had some problems but we seem to have it under control currently," answered the PM, "I doubt if it could compare with your atomic bomb problems though."

"So, how did you nip the bud, in the UK," asked Orwell. At a nod from the PM Home secretary Harden took the question, "Mr. President, it was quite simple, we used emergency powers to ban all public demonstrations of faith, nothing pertaining to any faith outside of churches, mosques, temples, or whatever. The Christians didn't like it but none of the other faiths tend to evangelise, so they don't really care."

"Not sure that would work here, especially down south in the Bible Belt," Orwell thought out loud, "and the US has many exhibits and museums, like the popular Creation Museum, and the one that the terrorists hit, been there myself."

"The problem is that the Christians are so vocal, especially now we have these God Tapes, they all feel

vindicated and want to tell everyone else that they are wrong. That puts people's backs up and sooner or later there is always trouble," explained Harden.

"I take your point Henry," agreed Orwell, "there is also a political issue, as a professing Christian, I rode into this job on the back of the Christian vote. If I put bans in place I just feel like it's a betrayal."

"You haven't got the people responsible yet then," asked the British PM.

"Hell I wish we had, we think we know the group and we have made membership of the US-A illegal, but all that seems to have done is to increase their membership, and we can't arrest them all. We'd need another ten Guantanamo Bays, remember that?"

"I do Jim, but sometimes we need to protect people and bend the rules," stated Matthews.

"That sure is true," agreed the President, "well guys thanks for coming over, I have to get back to the Oval Office straight-way, so keep me posted," he said as he made to leave, then stopped, "Oh yea, just so you know I have dispatched a fifty person geological team to investigate the eruptions, I'll keep you in the loop on that, and we are a little concerned that our super volcano in Yellowstone is about to blow, so we are evacuating the area in Wyoming a hundred miles around the volcano. See you later guys." With that the President of the United States disappeared.

**Pickles International Development Centre,
Longridge, Preston, Lancashire. Monday
21st June 2032, 09:00 hrs (local time).**

Professor Owen Gwillim arrived at the security gate of the Pickles Organisation scientific development centre on the dot of nine o'clock on a cool drizzly Lancashire morning. After the last week in the sun of Florida, fine rain caused a shiver to charge unbidden up his spine. The building was a modern nondescript construct of three floors, with only a small plastic sign on the gatehouse to indicate who whom it belonged, the sign merely stated, Pickles International. Every window along its sixty meter length was silvered against prying eyes.

As the LIMO stopped at the barrier a security guard walked smartly from the gatehouse and immediately recognised the Professor, "Good morning Professor Gwillam, welcome to Preston Sir," the guard said, "please follow the orange line to you parking slot, you will find your name on it, the Chairman will meet you there, have a good day Sir."

The LIMO resumed its low hover mode and Owen steered the vehicle along the orange line, as he rounded the building he got his first indication of the size of the site, that was hidden from public view. The front building was built in the shape of a square bracket with the back facing the public road, the main entrance was situated in the centre of this side of the block with parking slots arrayed along each side. As Owen

cruised along the road he spotted an orange flashing light in one of the bays, which on closer inspection bore his name. The professor guided the LIMO easily into the bay and powered down, rising from the pilot's seat her moved to collect his brief case and by the time he opened the door, Rick Pickles, was there with a hand outstretched in welcome.

"Let me be the first to welcome you to our little boffin centre Professor," said Pickles.

"I am afraid that your security guard beat you to it on that score Boss," laughed Owen.

"OK Professor, but don't call me 'Boss' we have a partnership here, I supply the facilities and you supply the know-how."

"Right, that's a deal then, I call you Rick and you call me Owen, I'm only Professor when I'm at the University," agreed Owen.

"Done, come on, let's get a coffee and then I'll show you around our establishment."

The two headed for the main entrance, which opened into a foe-marble reception that cut through all three floors, the centre piece seemed to be the biggest and tallest Swiss-cheese plant he had ever seen, the plant actually touched the roof. To the left was a reception desk manned by an attractive receptionist and another security guard, who operated the security barrier between the entrance and the elevators in the back wall. The guard saluted Rick Pickles as he and activated the barrier release, the elevators were the continuous conveyor type that one needed to jump into

as the car passed. Both Rick and Owen jumped together into the first available car and were whisked upward to the top floor, where the executive suites were situated.

Pickles' office was much less grand than Owen had expected, functional rather than anything palatial. Rick noticed the look on Owen's face and explained, "Not what you expected? I don't waste money on status offices, yours is identical to this. Please take a seat Owen."

As Owen seated himself in one of the four easy-chairs arranged around a low table, the door opened and an imposing female figure entered carrying a tray with a coffee pot and three cups, "Ah, coffee," said Rick, "Owen meet your P.A. this is Joan, one of this organisation's most valuable assets, so you had better look after her."

Joan Simmons was about six feet two and looked about mid forties, she was dressed in a smart business suit in a very dark red that contrasted with her dusky blond hair, which was worn in plat that reached the middle of her back. "Joan has degrees in business management, a well as two MSc's," Rick said by way of introduction, "How long now Joan" Rick asked as he indicated her to a chair.

"Just coming up to fourteen years Mr Pickles," she answered in a cultured voice that bore just a hint of the Lancashire accent.

"Anything you want to know, Joan's the person to ask," concluded Pickles.

Owen rose from his chair to shake Joan's hand, "Very pleased to meet you Joan."

The talk around the table was general chat, mainly Owen and Joan getting to know each other, then Joan said, "Professor, I think I remember you, from when I did my second MSc, Mechanical Engineering, at Manchester Uni."

"What year was that Joan," asked Owen.

"Twenty twenty-one was my final year, Professor," answered Joan.

"I can't say I remember you Joan, but yes, I was there at that time, I hope I didn't bore you too much," said Owen with a chuckle.

"You two can reminisce later," interrupted Rick, "if you've finished your coffee, we had best get on with the tour, will you come with us Joan?"

"Yes, if you wish Mr. Pickles."

The first stop was at Owen's new office, which, as Rick had suggested was a duplicate of his own office, a desk and high-back swivel chair, a low table with four soft chairs, two filing cabinets, one of which was a high security type, white boards along one wall and a computer/com station. Owen left his case in his office and followed Rick and Joan back down the corridor to the elevators, the floor below was almost totally devoted to laboratories. Some laboratories were chemical and others were biological, with their own bio-hazard areas. One of the laboratories was an electronics area with a positive cleaned atmosphere. The ground floor was the administrative offices, procurement, finance, health and

safety, and so on. The small group left the main building via a door in the north wing, and they crossed a garden area and headed toward a line of tall evergreen trees, behind this screen of trees was a high fence that would not have looked out of place surrounding a prison. They passed through another security barrier and entered into another universe.

Before them, laid out like a small town, was the nucleus of the facility, workshops, test beds, an experimental nuclear fusion reactor under the huge dome that formed the centre of the complex. Owen was shown through different areas where dedicated operations took place, "It was here that the EMP pulse canon was developed Owen, I hear you had reason to be thankful for that one when you were back in Israel," explained Rick.

"Yes indeed, young Jo Markson and he father had direct experience of how effective they are," replied Owen.

"At the moment we are working on an Air-pulse Canon," continued Rick, "very effective, invisible, undetectable, and basically harmless, it just renders targets unconscious, sort of knocks the wind out of their sails by winding them." The trio headed toward another building, which bore the designation 'Building E3'. "This is where your designs will be built and tested, the designation 'E' on a building simply means 'electronics', and the '3' tells us it's used for small or portable devices."

"What have you done with my prototype that I gave you," asked Owen.

"Its in here, but my engineer hasn't been able to make

head nor tail of it," Rick said, "come on I'll introduce you."

"Here he is," called Rick, and strode off towards a white-coated figure on the other side of the workshop, "Owen, meet John Harrison, your principle engineer."

"Good to meet you John, what have you done with the prototype energy suppressor, tried to back-engineer it, have you?"

Harrison shook hands warmly, "I am so honoured to meet you at last Professor," he said, "I have to say you have been an inspiration to me, I really look forward to working with you."

"Well for a start you can knock off the Professor stuff, I'm Owen from now on, OK," Owen told him.

"Here is your security pass Owen, now I think we will leave you two together," interrupted Rick, "John will show you where the restaurant is, you know where to find us, we'll see you later."

Rick and Joan, left the workshop as Owen and John started discussing things that neither Rich or Joan could understand, Owen didn't even notice them leave.

The White House AV studio, Washington
Monday 5th July 2032, 12:58 hrs (local
time).

The small studio was always a hot place to be, despite the air conditioning, and it was always the place where hot issues were announced to the American voters. President Orwell was ready seated in front of the automatic camera that was operated from the control-room next door, a make-up assistant mopped the President's brow as the seconds counted down. The only other persons in the studio were the floor manager and the presidential press secretary. The floor manager waved a hand and make-up moved away from the President, the floor manager's hand held up five fingers, then four, three, two and one, his thumb came up and the red light on the camera suddenly glowed.

"My fellow Americans, yesterday we celebrated the birth of this great nation, we celebrated independence and individual freedom. We have seen much of those freedoms eroded over the past year, particularly in our individual freedom, not because this administration has decided to curtail that freedom, but because certain factions in this country have decided that, although they demand freedom to express their beliefs and the freedom to spread hate, they do not want other people who think differently, to have the freedom they demand. Back in the day when we fought for independence from Britain we never envisaged that the day would come when we would seek to be equal partners with those

same previous masters. The United States has grown closer to Britain and indeed the European Union, who share many of the problems that we ourselves face. At this time the UK Premier stands shoulder to shoulder with us against the threats to our mutual freedoms."

"Both of our countries have recently experienced attacks upon the Christian communities in our countries, people; citizens; have been killed, wounded or made to suffer, physically or psychologically, from the after effects of these attacks. So we must take measures to protect those people who could be hurt in the future, until such times as these people are apprehended and brought to face the full justice of the law. I have decided under the special presidential powers to close all public exhibits and public demonstrations connected to any faith. It breaks my heart to instigate these measures, however I must protect our citizens. I pray that the members of the many faiths within our borders will understand these measures and cooperate with the federal government in order to avoid further trouble and death. Thank you and may your God be with you."

The red light blinked out and President Orwell relaxed, "Stand by for the recoil," he said to his press secretary as he left the studio.

European Parliament Chamber, Brussels,
Belgium

Wednesday, 22nd September 2032, 09:45 hrs
(local time).

The volcanic eruptions had continued over the past three months and showed no sign of ceasing. New volcanoes had appeared and others that had previously been active seemed to become extinct. Five new islands had appeared in the north Atlantic forming a string from Iceland south as far as the Azores, with fears that there were more to follow. Greece had been the worst affected country in Europe, with several existing and new vents appearing, with the North-east Aegean area suffering the most, being shrouded in mist all through the main summer season. Fishing, the main industry after tourism, was also damaged by the polluted seawater. The island of Lesbos, where the Kalloni volcano appeared, has been almost entirely evacuated, due to many areas experiencing hot rain, and clouds of sulphur gas. The US President had been true to his word and had sent a small team to address the European Parliament, and for this reason this special session was taking place.

"Thank you for your warm welcome, my name is Robert Schultz and I work within the USGS as a volcanologist. I have been instructed by my president to brief you on our findings concerning the volcanic action over the past three months. In brief, the news is not great. For some unknown reason the inner core of our planet has

started to rotate in an unstable manner, that is faster than normal, whilst the outer core and magma seems to have slowed. I will be honest, we do not know why this has happened and we do not know what the long term affects this will be on the planet."

Doctor Robert Schultz continued to address the members of the parliament for a further fifty minutes, showing charts and photographs of how the USGS had come to the conclusions and possible events that may or may not happen in the immediate future.

EBC News Broadcast, Brussels, Belgium
Monday October 25th, 2032. 13:00 hrs
(local time)

The floor manager watched the opening credits and counted down from twelve seconds, at two seconds his hand rose into the air, and two seconds later he pointed at Cheryl de Verne, the newscaster for the day.

"Hello and welcome to the lunch time news from the centre of Europe. Here are the headlines. More volcanic eruptions affect air traffic across the planet. More riots in Jerusalem as the Israeli government's third attempt to demolish the Al Aqsa Mosque fails. Christians in the UK plan to defy the British government's ban on public meetings. In the US the death toll from the destruction of the Bible Walk attraction grows. Spokesman for Iraqi workers in Europe say Iraqi police officers are being passed over for promotion, and Greece loses out to Ireland in the third round of the European cup."

"As the numbers of erupting volcanoes and fissures around the world climbs above two hundred, more air traffic restrictions are put in place by the International Air Traffic Control Authority." Pictures of Athens airport occupied the screen with low visibility and 'ash-drifts' against walls. [Voice-over] "Athens Airport has been closed until further notice as the southerly winds drive the ash northwards from the seven eruptions around the Aegean Sea. The Icelandic government have also closed Reykjavik Airport, and have started to evacuate

the population to the North-east of the island, away from the main eruptions. The Atlantic chain, as it has become known, has added eleven new island volcanoes, and the chain is headed for the coast of South America. Authorities in Brazil are making emergency preparations as the chain extends toward their country. Trans-Atlantic flights have been restricted to stratosphere flights that fly over the particulate pollution. Although close to a hundred volcanoes of the Pacific Ring of Fire chain have erupted most of the eruptions have been small, experts explain that the eruptions are mostly connected and have reduced the overall pressure."

In Jerusalem this morning, contractors again moved in to start demolition on the Temple Mount, only to be faced again by a solid wall of Moslems protecting the sacred site. The Israeli police, backed by the army moved in to clear the site [voice-over] and the situation quickly deteriorated into a full scale riot. Unconfirmed sources say that over seventy Palestinians and others were killed before the military withdrew. The site is being cleared in order to commence the building of the third temple, following the discovery, last year of the fabled, Ark of the Covenant, by the Jo Markson Research team. Palestinian government sources have made it clear that the demolition of the Mosque is unacceptable and all efforts will be made to change the decision of the Israeli government."

"Fears grow as Christian leaders in the United Kingdom continue to organise a public prayer vigil in defiance of

the government ban on public religious meetings. The ban was introduced after the ill-fated impromptu celebration on Christmas Day last year when many people were killed or injured in the Trafalgar Square area of London. The president of the British Christian Alliance, the reverend Kenneth Woods, made this statement earlier today."

Kenneth Woods was a man in his late sixties with thinning grey hair and presented as slightly over-weight in his grey business suit that was a little strained around the buttons. Woods, born in New Zealand in the late nineteen-sixties, settled in Liverpool with his parents in the nineteen-seventies, became an ordained minister in the Church of England at the age of twenty-nine, but resigned from the church in two-thousand and nine due to the church departing from strict biblical principles. Married with two sons, he is a strong advocate for traditional marriage and was active in the Coalition for marriage campaign in the run-up to marriage redefinition being passed by the British government. The video showed Woods and a reporter, with Liverpool Cathedral in the background.

"Reverend Woods, the UK government has banned public religious meetings in order to protect the lives of Christians, toward which there is presently a great deal of ill-feeling, how can you justify defying this ban." asked the reporter.

"I think, to say that the ban is to protect Christians is just a smoke-screen, the fact of the matter is that the Home Secretary is and has always been anti-Christian. The

ban is purely discrimination against Christians."

"That may be or may not be true Sir, but you are planning and inciting others to break the law of the land, isn't that against you Christian principles?"

"Let me bring this into perspective, as Christians we are told to obey the laws of rulers and governments as the Bible says that all government is ordained by God, that is true. However, there is a very definite caveat on that, we are told to obey the laws unless they are contrary to the law of God, then we must resist. God's law or command is that we share the Gospel, the laws of this land tell us that we cannot do that, that we cannot share the good news with anyone, and it is that we are resisting."

"Are you prepared to take the responsibility for any injuries or deaths that result from your so called resistance," the reporter asked.

"I am not inciting people to break the law, I am saying that I will be at a certain place at a certain time to pray for this nation, if other Christians wish to join me, they will be welcome, and I do make this clear, if anyone does turn up, they will be breaking the law. As Christians we are told to resist evil where ever it may be found, I believe this is an evil misguided government that places man above the law of God. In the end, all it takes for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing, I will be doing something."

"How do you feel about the Christians who have agreed with the God-tapes and believe that the end is coming

very soon," asked the reporter, rather hesitantly.

"I believe that the Crete Revelation, as I prefer to call it, is genuine and that we only have a matter of a few years left before all this [Woods indicated the cathedral behind him] melts away. All the prophesies in the bible are coming to fulfilment, you have reported on two on this news broadcast. The third temple in Jerusalem is being planned and Isaiah twenty-nine, verse six warns us, *"You will be punished by the Lord of hosts with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with storm and tempest and the flame of devouring fire"* There has never been so many volcanoes erupting in human history, a sure sign of the end times. believe me there is more to come."

"Thank you Reverend Woods, this is Joyce Lenton, in Liverpool UK, returning you to the studio in Brussels."

The picture reverted to the studio and Cheryl de Verne, "Thank you Joyce. A Press Officer at the British Home Office told us earlier that the police will prevent any mass assembly from taking place, and that any attempt to assemble will be met with appropriate force. He stated, 'We are prepared to arrest and imprison anyone who attempts to flaunt the law of the land and the police have been given full authority to use whatever means to keep order.'

In the United States the death toll from the recent terrorist attack on the tourist attraction, Bible Walks, continues to rise and the current figure is assumed at over twenty-seven thousand souls. The President's

press secretary gave this statement late last night."

The video cut in with a shot of the White House press room, the press secretary immediately started speaking, "Thank you for attending, I will be reading a statement, and the text will be available as you leave. Today the president was informed by the Governor of Ohio that the list of fatalities from the terrorist bomb has now risen to twenty-seven thousand, eight-hundred and forty three, this includes the entire occupants of Ohio State Correctional Facility. The number is expected to rise as more people, who were affected by the light flash, heat wave and radiation, come to the end of their resistance. Estimates from local state hospitals indicate that the final figure will be in excess of thirty-thousand.

The President has expressed his sadness at the closure of exhibits like the Creation Museum and other sites across the country that are dedicated to the Christian faith. These sites will remain closed until those responsible are caught and incarcerated, he prays that all American Christians will understand the reason for this and that it is for safety reasons. The Federal Government will not rest until all perpetrators and members of this organisation, calling themselves the USA, United States Atheists, which has been declared internationally as an illegal organisation, are identified and taken out of general circulation. The FBI have some very encouraging leads and arrests are expected in the next few days. Thank you ladies and gentlemen."

The picture returned to the studio, "An undisclosed police officer in the Paris, France police service has

made a complaint about being passed over for a due promotion, despite being informed that the promotion would be given and having passed the inspector's exam with one of the highest scores ever. The Association de Police en Frances has disclosed that several officers of Middle-eastern extraction have similarly suffered the loss of promotions. The APF are demanding an explanation from the Ministry de Justice. There has been no statement from the ministry in this case. We will keep you informed as this story develops."

"Now soccer and in the third round of the European Cup last night . . ."

**JMRT Compound, North of Larnaca, Cyprus.
Monday October 25th, 2032. 14:26 hrs
(local time)**

"Looks like we are going to be stuck here for some time Carol," said Sir James Markson after the news has finished.

"Well with the way things are going, I think we'll be better off here, at least until these eruptions die down, not to mention everything else that is going on." said Carol.

"If that Ken Woods is right, we may have a long wait," said Jim

"Darling, if that Ken bloke is right and our discovery is right we may not have that long a wait," chuckled Carol.

"You're right, the volcanic eruptions were on one of those frescoes from Crete, so I don't know why I'm surprised, I suppose it all depends on how long it takes to build the temple in Jerusalem."

"Why does it depend on that Jim?"

"I'm no expert, and there are different versions, many believe that the Bible says we have about seven years from when, either they start to build the temple or from when it's finished. I think we have been in these end times for several decades, and no one has twigged to it until we found the recordings."

"Did Jo say when she was coming over from Crete," asked Carol.

"Maybe in a couple of days, the wind direction is supposed to swing around from the south-west, so we will get some clean air and she can get across."

"It was scary last night, the whole sky to the west was a flickering red and orange glow, I could well believe that it was the end of the world."

"Yes, I saw it Carol, I came down for some ice at just before three, there must have been a huge explosion somewhere, there was a huge flash, amazing how the light gets through all this dust in the air."

"When I was in Larnaca earlier, I parked on the coast road, and the sea has a layer of dust, or ash floating on the surface, and there were some lumps, that looked like rocks floating as well, that was strange." Carol said as she gave a little shudder.

"It's lava."

"What is?"

"Those rocks, they were lava, lava is like rock foam, and

they float on the seawater," explained Jim.

"Quite the scientist, aren't we," said Carol in jest, "which reminds me, have you heard from Owen lately?"

"Not for a few weeks, I believe he's commuting between Manchester and Preston, working at the Pickles research establishments on the energy inhibitor, maybe I should give him a call."

**Pickles International Development Centre,
Longridge, Preston, Lancashire. Monday
October 25th, 2032. 16:25 hrs (local
time)**

It was almost five when the COM-UNIT chimed, almost finishing time and Owen had promised himself an early finish. It had been a wearing day with some crucial equipment burning out and damaging one of the prototypes, a full week's work down the tubes. Consequently Owen was not in a particularly good mood, which explained the curt, "Yes!" when he answered the unit.

"Owen?", said Jim's voice, "is that you?"

"Jim? Sorry for snapping, had a bit of a bad day."

"No problem, it happens," said Jim, "We were just wondering if you were OK"

"I'm just fine, but I'll be glad when this dam gizmo's complete, this Pickles bloke is getting on my wick, he wants an update at least once every day, sometimes even when I'm lecturing at uni."

"Well he is funding the development, so I guess. . ."

"I know, but there is something not right here Jim, but I can't talk about it now."

"OK, look give me a call when you get a chance," said Jim.

The connection was broken, leaving Owen shaking his head.

Knossos Control Room Site, Crete.
Wednesday October 27th, 2032. 10:45 hrs
(local time).

For once the weather forecast was right and the wind had changed over-night, and was blowing from the east, the air when dawn had broken was clearing of dust. Now, nearly three hours later it was clear enough to see the coastline again, so Jo Markson and John Moffat were loading their luggage into the trust's LIMO for the short hop over to Cyprus. The cataloguing and recording of all the relief carvings had been completed nearly a week previously but the poor visibility had caused a shutdown of the Air Traffic Control and Guidance Systems that managed the LIMO movements. Having not had the opportunity to analyse them, they now needed the specialised equipment that the Trust possessed at the Larnaca compound, so the past six days had been a frustrating time. However the delay had its advantages and the couple had taken the opportunity to spend some quality time together away from work.

John punched in the nav-code for the Larnaca compound and waited for the ATC to respond, the electronic handshake took rather longer than usual, but after three minutes the clearance came through and John switched the vehicle over to automatic mode. The LIMO jumped into the air and rose vertically until the island was laid out beneath them. Instead of heading directly eastward the LIMO headed south-west, John

tapped a interrogation code into the computer, which responded with information about high levels of traffic from the nearby airport after the lock-down. Satisfied he took his seat next to Jo, and gazed out of the port window. The LIMO made a wide sweep from Crete almost over the North African coast then swung northwards, scribing a circle that took then off towards the Turkish coast. Twelve minutes into the flight John suddenly stood up and then knelt on the seat, staring at something below. He then took the pilot's seat and contacted ATC with a request to change over to manual control. Seconds later the LIMO was released from its automatic mode and John took the control diving steeply to the sea below.

"Jo, come look at this," John called back to disturb Jo from her book-reader.

"What's up," she said as she slipped into the seat next to John.

"Down there, the sea looks orange," he told her. John levelled out at around two-hundred feet and Jo saw what he was talking about.

"I see it," said Jo, "looks like another eruption."

"No," said John, "there's a trail heading roughly north-west, and I think it's moving toward the south. Let me get a GPS fix on the most southerly point." John hovered over what seemed like the end of the orange line and took a fix. Five minutes, exactly, he took another fix, the computer announced the result.

"Object speed is one point two, seven, kilometres per minute."

"That's over seventy-five kilometres an hour," exclaimed

John.

"Where's it heading?"

"Let me plot it, computer?"

"Responding" came the voice of the on-board processor.

"Plot the course of object based on direction since first fix," ordered John.

"Processing," came the computers synthetic voice, *"current trajectory will coincide with Crete in one hour and four minutes."*

John and Jo looked at each other in disbelief

John switched on the emergency high band radio, trying to contact the Air Traffic Authority, within seconds a Greek accented voice responded, "ATA Emergency Service, how can I help?"

"This is LIMO three-delta-5272 of Jo Markson Research Trust, heading for Cyprus; we have just spotted a running fissure the head of which is extending at around seventy-six klicks heading for Crete."

"Thank you LIMO three-delta-5372, we are aware of the fissure and actions are being taken as we speak. Thank you again for your information, please resume your journey, ATA out," the channel went dead.

"What now," asked Jo.

"Now, we go back for the rest of our team, we don't know what will happen when that fissure hits the island."

"We don't have clearance for that John, but let's do it."

The LIMO, that was already heading towards Crete following the head of the fissure, swept upward to five-thousand feet and headed directly toward the Knossos

site. John grabbed his COM-unit and opened a channel to the senior team member at the site.

"Ed, John, get the other team members together with their bags and be ready to leave in fifteen," John ordered.

"Why, what up," asked Ed.

"No time to explain, this is an evacuation, now step on it."

In the other front seat Jo was also on her COM-unit, "Dad, we are being delayed, there is a giant volcanic fissure opening up, travelling fast toward Crete, we're heading back to e-vac the team."

"Don't they have another LIMO there to use?"

"Yes, but there are eleven of them and the that LIMO only holds seven, we can take the other four."

OK Jo, just be careful."

"Right Dad, see you within the hour, bye."

As Jo closed her COM-unit the navigation screen was flashing red with white letters announcing, 'YOU ARE NOT AUTHORISED ON THIS COURSE - RE-ENGAGE AUTO IMMEDIATELY'. They ignored the message and pushed the LIMO to it's power limit. Four minutes later the emergency channel jumped to life.

"LIMO three-delta-5372, please respond."

"LIMO three-delta-5372 responding, go ahead.

"You are on an unauthorised course, please return to your auto course, the area you are heading to has been classed as an emergency area."

"This is LIMO three-delta-5372, we are heading back to evacuate members of our team, you can either

authorise us to do that or not, we will be going in anyway," announced John.

There was a brief silence, then the Greek voice returned, " LIMO three-delta-5372 we have designated you emergency traffic, you are authorised to proceed on manual control. Please advise when you are again airborne."

Six minutes later John was landing the LIMO back where their journey had started. Most of the team were ready and the first seven were boarding the LIMO transport. John opened the doors and called to the stragglers to hurry. Within the next four minutes all the team boarded the two LIMO's and John contacted the ATA.

"ATA this is LIMO three-delta-5372, we are boarded and airborne."

" LIMO three-delta-5372, you are cleared to engage you automatic navigation," said the ATA controller, "you have a direct course set to Cyprus, have a good flight."

"Acknowledged ATA, and thank you," responded John.

As the LIMO attained altitude they could see the column of steam rising far out to sea, from the super-heated water, but the sight soon fell behind them and everyone gave a sigh of relief. The short flight took just over twenty minutes and both Jim and Carol were in the landing area when the machines fell out of the sky.

JMRT Compound, North of Larnaca, Cyprus.

**Wednesday October 27th, 2032. 14:00 hrs
(local time)**

Unusually for the time of year the dining room was almost full, the staff cooks had been called into work to cope with the influx and the wall-screen had been turned on for the mid-day news from the BBC in London. A half an hour earlier Declan Brook, star reporter for the BBC, honorary member of JMRT and personal friend of the family, had called to find out if Jo were safe. Jim and John had related the story of the evacuation to him and Declan had asked permission to use the story in the mid-day news.

Declan's voice came as a voice-over to the aerial pictures of the fissure,

"Earlier today we received these pictures from a Greek TV vehicle over the south Aegean, the footage you are seeing is of a huge fissure that seems to have originated at, or close to, the island of Milos, connected with the continuing eruption at Thira; site of the famous Santorini volcano. Satalite images have shown the fissure heading south to Crete. These pictures, just in, show some of the devastation caused when it arrived at the town of Agios Nikolaos. The terminal of the fissure seems to have been the, so called, bottomless Voulismeni Lake, which has acted as an inner harbour for hundreds of years. It now seems clear that this lake is in fact a previously extinct volcano, which

is now very active. Within forty minutes the town was almost completely destroyed, despite a quick response from the authorities and many thousands being evacuated to the north, the death toll is expected to rise into the thousands. The renamed Voulismeni Volcano is now producing enormous quantities of lava most of which is flowing out into Mirabello bay."

"One daring rescue just minutes before the fissure arrived was affected by Doctor John Moffat and Jo Markson, the famous finder of the Crete Revelation, when they returned to the island to evacuate the resident archaeological team. Doctor Moffat told me earlier that. . ."

The report continued to expand on the rescue after which the team of eleven stood and gave Jo and John an ovation.

"Have we heard anything from the Control Room, John," asked Jim, "it's a few miles away from the volcano, but we just do not know what going on here at the moment."

"I think they will be quite safe Jim, in fact I think it is about the safest place on Earth at the moment."

"What do you make of this latest development John, this travelling fissure seems a bit unusual."

"This sort of thing happens all the time, but the fissures don't usually travel so fast or for so long a distance," explained John, "they are more often smaller and they follow fault-lines, but we seem to be seeing a connectivity between volcanoes. We now have our own

'Ring of Fire' around the Aegean. There are people who believe the Moon was created in this way, that the Pacific ring was once a complete circular fissure that blew out to become the Moon. I know, we know better after the Revelation, but it has always been a possibility and chunks of the earth could blow out in that way. In fact the whole crust could theoretically crack away like an egg shell."

Jim turned to the gathered staff and tapped a spoon on the table, "Ladies and gentlemen, can I have your attention, please," he said, "I am sure lunch will not be much longer, meanwhile, can I ask us to bow our heads and pray for those people who have lost their friends and relatives or lost their homes today in Agios Nikolaos, let's just hand them up to the Lord."

**Millhouse Chapel, Western Liverpool, UK,
Tuesday, November 2nd, 2032. 19:30 hrs
(local time).**

Ken Woods, opened the door to the small chapel in a quiet lane on the western outskirts of Liverpool, he was attending the regular Tuesday night prayer meeting that had been going for many years. This, Ken did every Tuesday evening, come rain or shine, it was important to him that he did not do anything that was out of the ordinary, he knew that he was being watched and had been for some months. Minutes later other attendees started to arrive, most carrying Bibles or brief cases, all looked innocent and fitted into the stereotype of prayer meeting attendees. However, appearances can be deceptive, in reality almost half of those who arrived

went into the back room, rather than climbing the stairs to the more comfortable meeting room. There was no real deception, the people in the upper room were there to pray for those meeting in the back room, come kitchen. Those in that back room were representatives of eight churches from around the country, who were the organisers of the up-coming mass prayer meeting.

Of the eight Christians in that back room, five men and three women, of the five men three had earlier in their lives, been involved in covert operations. One had been a Christian for many years and the other two had recently come to be believers after the Crete Revelation. One of the three women was a former head of MI5 and of the others, one was a captain of industry and the other a member of parliament. All, being aware of the surveillance, had arrived in heavy disguise, including prosthetic masks, and of course all arrivals were scanned and their images recorded. None of those would be identified. The back room had been swept for bugs four times already, but a small instrument was on continuously, scanning for bugs and remote listening devices. Even so, no names were used during the meeting.

The discussion lasted for just short of an hour, as did the prayer meeting up-stairs, the meeting decided upon a final date for their prayer assembly and the venue. A logo or sign was agree on as a means of identification

and a recognisable logo for the day, it was a stylised praying hands constructed from four lines, with a cross piece forming a cross. The means of invitation was to be via word of mouth with no printed matter whatsoever. The date was to be the date of the US holiday, 'Thanksgiving', which occurs on the fourth Thursday in November, this year it would fall on the twenty-fifth. The venue, Hyde Park, London at twelve noon.

BBC Newscast from London, Friday,
November 5th, 2032. 18:00 hrs (local
time).

"Less than two weeks after the disaster in Agios Nikolaos, Crete, the fissure has cut the island in two across the narrow strip of land between Mirabello Bay and Lerapetra on the south coast. Geologists say they now have some confidence that the ingress of water from the south will quell the eruption. The new island has been given the name Sitia Island, after the largest town in the area."

"Meanwhile in Jerusalem, the bulldozers have finally started work on demolishing the Al Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount, after building a defensive wall around the building. Crowds gathered to protest and the Palestinian sniper who fired on the bulldozer driver, was shot by Israeli security forces, however the bulldozer driver was unhurt, as the machine had been fitted with bullet-proof shielding."

"Fears grow in the United States as militant Christians declare war on the government and the US-A. A spokesman for the Southern Baptists, who made a telecast yesterday, said that any attempt to stop Christian meetings will be met with military resistance, he further assured the government that Christians would not shoot first

but if fired upon they *will* return fire. In London the Home Secretary has reinforced his warning to Christians not to organise the threatened open air prayer meeting. If this event goes forward, there will be repercussions, he added.”

“In the Middle-east the call has gone out by the Union of Islamic States, asking for volunteers to join the so called, Army of the Final Jihad. Sources in the Arab republics report that the response has been higher than expected and almost three-quarters of a million people have stepped forward over the past three days. Western authorities described this development as, 'worrying'. It seems that the centre of this activity is around the Al Thaurah base in the Syrian desert some two-hundred miles south-east of Aleppo.”

“Now the sports results, the ill-fated Manchester United football club has gone into administration after last years relegation to the third division, their manager . . .”

MI6 HQ, Babylon-on Thames, London,
England. Monday 8th November, 2032,
09:05 hrs (local time)

“Good morning Sir,” Abe Marks said as his chief entered his office, “Can I help you with something, Sir James?” Sir James Hennessey, Head of MI6, looked very unhappy for some reason, which was unusual as he was normally a very laid back man, who never seems to let anything get under his skin. “What I want Abe, is to know how the BBC got hold of this story about the UIS call-up before we did, have you seen the news over the weekend?”

“Yes Sir James, I caught it on Saturday,” admitted Abe.

“And you didn't think it was important enough to come into the office,” asked Sir James.

“I was away, family event, Sir, I do apologise.”

“No, no, Abe, it is I who should apologise, I just had the PM on my back for the past two days, of course you must put family first,” Sir James added. “Is there anything in this morning's dispatches.”

“I was just about to open the box Sir.”

“OK, when you've done that, let me know, I'll be in my office.”

Abe Marks opened the red dispatch box and withdrew the sealed file from the weekend's activity. The first was a report of a COM-satellite conversation between someone in the US NSA and a church official, about a prayer meeting, 'Not our bag' thought Abe. He quickly flipped through the other contents of the box until he

found the hand-full of papers sealed together, stamped 'Middle-east Desk, Priority'. "Ah, here it is," "Why was this not on top', he never said. Abe quickly took the papers and started to read. Fifteen minutes later he was on his way to the top floor to see Sir James.

Sir James, looked up as Abe knocked on the already open door, having been waved through by Wendy, Sir James' personal secretary, "Come in Abe, what have we got?"

"In truth, not much more that we gleaned from the BBC report, Sir," admitted Abe, "It seems that most of the Islamic states have aligned behind Iran and Iraq, with the exception of Kuwait and Saudi, who seem to be the Middle-east's voice of reason. There was a Union meeting on Tuesday of last week, but the reason we didn't hear of it was that it was a closed session between the ministers only, our man inside the UIS parliament is just an elected member. The ministers made the decision based on the Qur'an. Surah 7, verse 187: was discussed, this verse says:

They ask thee about the (final) Hour - when will be its appointed time? Say: "The knowledge thereof is with my Lord (alone): None but He can reveal as to when it will occur. Heavy were its burden through the heavens and the earth. Only, all of a sudden will it come to you." They ask thee as if thou wert eager in search thereof: Say: "The knowledge thereof is with Allah (alone), but most men know

not."

"The meeting seems to have concluded that after the God Tapes and the recent flare-up of volcanic activity, they decided that we may be in the 'end times' and as the verse from the Qur'an that says the final battle will come upon them suddenly, and without warning, and that they are determined to be prepared."

"And this has prompted over three-quarters of a million to sign up for military service," asked Sir James.

"It would seem so, Sir."

"With an army that size, it is rather dangerous, someone will inevitably get ideas about using it."

"Yes Sir, my thoughts exactly," agreed Abe, "one worrying aspect is, why Syria, and not Iraq or Iran, who seem to be the main drivers behind it. My guess, for what it's worth, is that Syria borders Israel, and tradition has it that Armageddon will be held on Israeli territory, so Syria will be, shall we say, more convenient from a muster point of view."

"Good point Mr. Marks, do we know how the Israelis are feeling about this," asked sir James.

"They are not happy bunnies, but they are thinking that the commenced demolition on the Temple Mount has triggered this reaction, and nothing to do with Armageddon, can't blame them for that one Sir. They feel that they are following their destiny after the Ark of the Covenant was returned to them, and the Ark was always housed in the temple, so it's natural that they now want to

replace the temple with number three.”

“You're Jewish yourself are you not Abe,” pointed out Sir James, “what are your feeling about this?”

“Well yes my ancestry is Jewish, but I am not a believer, my side of the family left that behind when they escaped at the beginning of the second world war, almost a hundred years ago now, Sir. Totally British now Sir James. However I believe that Israel will not stand by and allow a large army to mass on their border and do nothing.”

“I agree Abe, I think this will bring nothing but trouble.”

“My other thought was that the whole event is a engineered provocation.”

“Agreed, best keep our eye on this one, keep in touch with that cousin of yours, Ben, isn't it?”

“Yes Sir.”

**The Office of the Prime Minister, The
Knesset, Sacher Park, Jerusalem,
Israel. Tuesday 23rd November 2032.
11:50 hrs (local time).**

More rain was falling outside her window as the PM stared out across the city towards the western wall. Heidi Goldbloom was deep in thought and wondering why all this was happening during her administration. The intercom on her desk shocked her out of her reverie as her PA announced the arrival of David Pinner, the Israeli Minister of Building and Works.

“Send him straight in please,” Heidi called from the bullet-proof picture window, “David, please sit,” she said as she took her seat behind the oversized desk.

“Thank you Madam Prime Minister.”

“Now David, tell me, what is going on on the Temple Mount site,” Heidi asked.

David looked a little uncomfortable, as he shifted slightly in the chair, “Basically nothing, I am afraid work has stopped again.”

“What is the problem now, we seem to be getting nowhere, very fast.”

“One of our workforce was killed yesterday when a Palestinian rocket hit the site, it also damaged two of the machines, so we have had to close the site down again,” explained David.

“I’m sorry about the workman, let me know about the family, I will send them a letter and make provision for a pension. Now what do you need to get this project started?”

“We have tried almost every security measure we can think of Prime Minister,” stated David, “I know this is over the top but the only thing we haven't tried is building a higher security wall. Ben Marks has drafted in a anti-missile laser battery, so we just need a measure to stop personnel attacks that thrown missiles over.”

“What sort of wall are you thinking about,” the PM asked.

“Ben suggested a plexi-steel sheet on stanchions set above the existing wall, with a over-hang, that will allow our people to see the progress and is virtually indestructible.”

“OK, David, do it, we need to get this project moving,” announced the PM.

Central London, United Kingdom, Thursday
25th November 2032. 11:30 hrs (local
time).

For once the weather was kind to London, there was neither fog nor rain and the thin cloud was allowing short periods of sunshine. Oxford Street was crowded with Christmas shoppers. The name of the holiday, Christmas, had made a reappearance after many years of just being referred to as 'holiday', and Christmas carols were again heard from mu-sac machines. The general mood was one of relaxed excitement. The notable thing was that the majority of people were moving westward, Park Lane was much busier than usual and there was a traffic jam along Bayswater Road. Visitors to Hyde Park were slightly elevated and all four park cafés were crowded with diners and coffee drinkers, but all of this went unnoticed.

The Reverend Kenneth Woods sat in a fast food burger restaurant, almost opposite Park Lane, he was still being watched by Special Branch, and Ken had become quite expert in spotting his minders. The watchers reported back where he was, and that they thought he was on a recon'. Woods finished his fried chicken and drank the last mouth-full of de-caff tea and at exactly eleven fifty he left the restaurant, followed by his watchers behind their newspapers, and crossed the road to Park Lane, then turned right to cross Park Lane towards Speakers Corner. On the stroke of twelve, and as the chimes of Big Ben sounded in the distance, the

reverend Woods entered Hyde Park. It happened as if by magic, suddenly there were hundreds of people in the north-east corner of the Park, and the two Special Branch officers were right in the middle of it. Officer Little realised what was happening and immediately activated his radio, but by that time it was too late, this prayer event could no longer be prevented, as was hoped.

Within five minutes, there were no longer hundreds in that part of the park, but thousands. The two officers looked around them in amazement, their 'mark' was still in sight and made for a hot bagel vendor who had a small 'barrow'. The bagel man opened the lower part of his barrow and withdrew a portable public address system, which previously had been playing Christmas carols. A microphone was offered and Ken Woods took it and addressed the crowd.

“Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are here today to pray for our country, to pray for our government and the times that are to come. Please, do not respond to any authorities that approach you with violence, do not resist. Ask yourselves, 'What would Jesus do?' and respond in the way He would. Jesus offered no resistance when He was arrested, even though He knew what His ultimate fate would be. I ask you, do the same, God will be with you. Now let us pray.”

After the Reverend Woods had said His prayer, other church leaders and prominent Christians appeared at the microphone to add their prayers to those who had

gone before. It was close to an hour before the police arrived, their progress from the barracks was impeded somewhat by the extraordinary heavy surface and air traffic, mainly due to the London cabbies who had organised themselves through their dedicated radio network. Continuous traffic over the the police headquarters at Hendon had delayed the police LIMOs from lifting off and surface taxies had clogged every available route to Marble Arch. By the time the police eventually arrived there were well in excess of forty-thousand people in the public park, and the police commander took one look and withdrew the three hundred officers that were assigned to the group. The two Special Branch officers who had been shadowing, had attempted to arrest Ken Woods, but decided that they had little chance of extracting him from the centre of the crowd.

By three o'clock the crowd had almost dispersed, and the Home Secretary, Henry Harden, stood in the window of the commandeered hotel room overlooking the park, watching it slowly empty. Harden's face was flushed with anger at what he considered, a personal defeat. Not one arrest had been made and the news media had arrived before the police, the whole country now knew, and possibly the whole of Europe knew that he had failed. These Christians would not get away with this humiliation, he decided, he would make it his objective in life to crush the Christian church, no matter what.

C.I.A. Satellite Monitoring Centre,
Langley, Maryland, USA. Sunday January
9th 2033. 10:37 hrs (local time).

The Sunday morning shift was always full of yawns and stretches, together with several gallons of bottled water, after the previous night's festivities. No one was taking much notice of the screens as the banter seemed much more interesting. Station three had a satellite just coming off of Syria and Israel and dusk was falling over that part of the world. The Mediterranean Sea was not of great interest, but the satellite's imaging camera switched to its infra-red mode on its automatic cycle through the visible and invisible spectrum. It was just as the satellite switched to UV that station three operator noticed something. Graham Tyndall, switched to manual control and flicked back to infra-red. Tyndall, pressed the button on his station that summoned his supervisor, a few seconds later the senior monitoring officer was at his side.

"Trouble Graham," he asked, "what am I looking at?"

"This is Crete, and that is the new volcano, there," Graham pointed to the desk screen. "It's just this heat signature to the south, it stretches about five kilometres to the south-east, I think that fissure is on the move again."

"OK, Graham, well done, I get a report up to the DDTS and he can get the info to the Europeans," the SMO said, "can you continue to monitor it please?"

"Certainly, should I bring a GSO in?"

"That may be a good idea, until we know where it's

going, see to it.”

The Home of Professor Owen Gwillam, on Wilmslow Road, Didsbury, Manchester, United Kingdom, Saturday 31st January, 2033. 12:10 hrs (local time).

Owen had slept in for the first time in months, he was feeling a good deal of relief as the previous day had seen the conclusion of the development of the energy suppression device, the ESD as it had become known. They had developed three versions of ESD, a wide range version that was capable of generating a field about ten kilometres radius, with a variable range control. There was a vehicle mounted model, designed for military and police use, and there was a personal version, about the size of a mobile COM-unit, which clipped to a belt or pocket and had a hydrogen self-generating battery. The battery, which was more accurately called a power-cell, was a new development of the Pickles organisation, a larger unit had been classified as strategic material, but this small cell had been released as a 'built in' sub-assembly.

Although Owen felt some satisfaction for the work he had done, he was relieved to have finished the program, and relieved to be away from his association with Rick Pickles, of whom he had some grave misgivings. The Professor retrieved his toast from the toaster and applied a generous helping of real butter, a very expensive commodity in this day and age. With his usual tea he settled down to watch the morning news on the BBC channel. He just caught the end of a news

item concerning the Mediterranean Fissure that was now slowly creeping south-east from Crete. The news item reminded him that he had promised to call Jim some months ago, but just hadn't had time. Owen finished his toast and grabbed his COM-unit and pressed the icon that would connect him with his friend, Sir James Markson.

"Hello, Jim, Owen," he announced.

"Well hello Owen, we thought you'd left the planet," chided Jim.

"I know, I know, it's just been frantic here, but we finished up with the suppressor yesterday and I am having a relaxing weekend, I'm sat here in my robe, sipping my tea and talking to my friend."

"Well you deserve it Owen," said Jim.

"Where are you Jim, are you still in Cyprus," Owen asked.

"Yes, we came out and then got stuck here with all the volcanic activity, most of the staff are here now, so we thought we may as well stay for the time being, and then there's the weather, a lot warmer than Dorset."

"How are you fixed with that fissure in the Med?"

"We seem to be OK," said Jim, "currently it's about a hundred and twenty miles away, it seems to be warming the sea up so we all make the most of it and go for the occasional swim."

"All-right for some, while I'm stuck in rainy Manchester."

"Well Owen you are welcome here at any time."

"I will take you up on that, Jim and soon."

"You said you were concerned about Rick Pickles when

we last spoke, is everything sorted itself out," asked Jim.

"Well not really, the man's a megalomaniac, you know he's been wearing the first prototype device since we produced it about two months ago, he thinks he's superman, invulnerable."

"He's probably just a guy that loves gadgets," Jim suggested, "his whole empire is based on them."

"No, it's more than that Jim, he actually contacted Heidi Goldbloom and said he would walk into the Temple Mount site to sort the Palestinians out, he wasn't kidding either."

"Owen, she's a friend of his, has been for years, so it's natural that he would want to help her out."

"You haven't seen the gizmo's he's developed and kept secret. John Harrison, Rick's senior engineer told me, I think he was trying to get me to join the organisation. He said Rick has this ring, looks like it's got a huge ruby in it, but in reality it converts solar radiation into a short-range laser weapon. Then I noticed, he wears that all the time, saw it on his finger. Did you know it was Pickles that developed the bio-chip? To date there are about half a billion people that have had the chip fitted, they think it's just a convenience but a convenience for who? Who knows what he's programmed into those things, I'm willing to bet there's a bit more than financial transactions in those chips, and the governments are always advertising for people to have them embedded. And, he's been trying to get me to introduce you to him, because he wants to get into one of the control rooms."

"Why hasn't he asked PM Goldbloom, she could let him

have access to the Temple mount room,” asked Jim.

“Ah, well, it seems that he has, and has been refused, supposedly it's out of bounds to anyone other than the Trust and Israeli security, and who gets in is down to Ben Marks. What does he know about Rick that we don't?”

“Well I guess they have their reasons,” said Jim as soothingly as he could, “When do you think we may see you over here?”

“Not a very subtle change of subject Jim,” laughed Owen, “maybe I'll come over at Easter, if you are still there, or if we are still here.”

“See you then, hopefully.”

“You can bet on it.”

**European Geological Monitoring Authority,
Via Torre Argentina, Rome, Italy. Tuesday
February 15th, 2033. 11:20 (local Time)**

Angelo Giordano, was the senior geologist for the EGMA, an EU organisation that was set up just weeks ago to monitor all of the volcanic activity within the EU member boundaries. Angelo formally the Italian government's advisor on geology wished he'd been a volcanologist, his specialism was with oil and gas deposits and the occasional investigation when accidents happened. Angelo was in his late forties and rather over-weight, with a huge mop of unruly hair that he never seemed to get around to having cut. He had been wearing the same corduroy jacket and suede shoes ever since anyone could remember, and he had never learned to tie his neck-tie properly, or so everyone thought. He was also one of the few people left who insisted on continuing to smoke cigarettes, despite the many bans and health warnings. Amazingly Angelo was married to an ex-model and had two beautiful teenage girls, all of whom regarded Angelo almost as a demigod.

Angelo sat at the computer terminal staring at the screen that displayed the start-up screen of the specially written software that had just been installed. He had spent the last two weeks consulting with the program developers and now he needed to figure out how the darn thing worked. He understood the geology behind the program but they had also incorporated a

modified marine navigation program to help, supposedly, to make predictions on the fissures and trenches that had started appearing. Georges Russo had been appointed as his deputy and was a whiz with computers, but he was off interviewing the first wave of potential staff. Angelo found the access to the American satellite's feed and sat in wonderment of the jagged enhanced line of the fissure, which seemed to have straightened its course over the past few days. It had been estimated that the fissure was heading for the Nile Delta, but had then turned north-east, so the red-alert for Egypt had been downgraded.

Angelo, in an attempt to try out this section of the software, decided to attempt a plot of the projected trajectory of the fissure. The latest fault lines beneath the sea and on land and also the places where the crust was thinnest, were already programmed in, so all Angelo had to do was to register the points where the fissure changed direction and connect them with vector line. All this seemed very easy and was going well. The plot completed he asked the computer to extrapolate the likely destination.

The computer uttered the word, "*working*" and Angelo sat back in his chair to take another bite of the pastry, and washed it down with some synthetic-coffee, just then the display showed the destination point. Angelo nearly choked on his mouthful of pastry and coffee, the flashing red spot was situated right in the centre of Jerusalem. As he zoomed in he realised that the precise location was . . . Ammazza!!

Angelo lifted his desk COM and connected with the EU embassy a short walk away, he asked to speak to the Special Envoy, who was his contact and effectively his boss. Brendan O'Connor, a long serving Irish diplomat, answered the call and Angelo explained the situation, "Are you absolutely sure about this Angelo," Brendan asked.

"As sure as I can be, I have run the prediction three times with the same result," answered Angelo.

"OK, keep tracking it and checking the target, I'll contact the Israeli Embassy and get the ball rolling over there, Thanks Angelo, good Job."

**The Office of the Prime Minister, The
Knesset, Sacher Park, Jerusalem,
Israel. Tuesday, February 15th, 2033.
13:29 (local Time)**

Heidi Goldbloom's face was almost white as she closed the connection with the Italian Embassy, she felt sick to her stomach and her hands were trembling. Thoughts of what had happened in Crete a few months ago when through her mind, was this going to happen to her beloved city. PM Goldbloom sat, or rather collapsed into her high-back leather chair and stared at the far wall for some minutes before leaning forward and tapping the icon that connected her to her Minister of Security, Benjamin Marks.

“Good afternoon Prime Minister, what can I do for you today,” came Ben Marks' voice.

“Can you get over here, please Ben, we have a really big problem, and I really don't want to talk over this link.” the PM asked.

“Of course Prime Minister, I'll be there there in about ten minutes.”

True to his word, Minister Marks was in the outer office in just nine minutes and was directed to go straight into the PM's office.

“Ben, thanks for coming, please sit.”

“Whatever is the problem, you are as white as a sheet,” he asked.

“I have just spoken to our embassy in Rome, the new EGMA have worked out where the Cretan fissure is headed,” she said with the words choking her, “it's headed here.”

“To Israel, where about,” Ben asked.

“Here Ben, Jerusalem, in fact specifically the Temple Mount.”

“How long do we have,” asked Ben.

“I asked that, a few months it seems, at the rate the thing is progressing, but it has changed direction several times already, so it's not one hundred percent certain, but they say very likely.”

“I think we should start planning an evacuation, now,” suggested Ben, “we don't need to make it public unless we have to, no point in causing panic.”

“Agreed.”

“In fact,” said Ben half in thought, “we already have a plan in place, a contingency from back in the bad old days of the Arab wars.”

“I'd like a brief on the feasibility by the end of the week.”

“No problem Prime Minister, you'll have it.”

The World Economic Forum, International Centre, Interlaken, Switzerland. Monday March 14th, 2033. 12:00 hrs (local time).

The World Economic Forum is possibly the longest running annual international forum, it is attended by the good and great of the economic, industrial and commercial communities. It is also attended by the heads of state and heavy-weight political figures, who in the end are always affected, if not controlled, by the financial organisations. In 2017 someone said that 'even a mediocre government could seem great when the financial world supports them', in the end it is finance that governs a country rather than the government. The WEF is then in effect the government of the world by proxy. This year the WEF was opened by the President of the United States of America, who would also attend the main forum for three days before going on to meet with the EU parliament and meet with the various first ministers in an emergency summit. After the official opening and reception the first session speaker was the billionaire Rick Pickles, who was to speak on, 'Strength in Financial Unity'.

“Good morning ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, and any others who do not come under either category, [there was a murmur of chuckles]. My name is Rick Pickles, as if you didn't know that, and I want to address this forum about unity. As we speak this planet faces enormous issues, natural disasters seem to happen by the day, and natural disasters cost money.

There are more political and ideological issues than anyone can count, not to mention issues of religion and faith systems, and all of these cost money. Thankfully we have had over a decade without wars, but that peace looks more fragile by the day. Can we afford more wars, are we prepared to relinquish our high standard of living to fund more wars? What will be the bill for the problems caused by the spate of recent volcanic eruptions, and who will pick up the tab? Who will be paying for the rehousing of those people left homeless in Crete or the devastation of the island of Lesbos? Can the Greek government afford either of those solutions, possibly not, and what country will be next. Is it not time to pool our resources? In this very room there are the representatives of some of the richest political unions in the world, the EU, the Russian Federation, the United States, the Union of Islamic States, to mention a few. But where are the poorer countries, not here, they cannot even afford to send representatives.”

“It is sad to me, that some of the richest organisations on this planet are the various religious institutions, who fund little in the way of support to the poor nations, other than attempting to convert them to their particular faith. The Church of Rome, the Anglican Church, the various Islamic factions that can't even agree among themselves which faith is the right one, and the various eastern sects that have sprung up in the first thirty years of this century. All these together are worth more than the combined economy of the EU and the Russian

Federation. Isn't it time these organisations were brought under financial control, indeed the Roman church represent themselves as an autonomous state, the Vatican, a sovereign state that is untouchable. And then, to add insult to injury, these religious organisations are classed as charities and as such exempt from taxes.”

“I am asking you all, particularly the ministers and first ministers present, to consider taking this forum further than an international talking shop, why can we not combine, stop war for ever, stop poverty for ever, stop the struggling of individual states, and combine to overcome the adversity of natural disasters. Together we are stronger, together we invincible, and, you know it makes sense. Thank you for listening, I can now throw the floor open for discussion.”

The Gondar Archaeological Team, Tana Island, Tana Lake, Ethiopia, North Africa. Tuesday April 19th 2033, 07:37 hrs (local time)

The team had been camped on the island for over a month, and in another month the temperature would be too great to continue. The team had been sent from Harvard University in the US, to investigate the tradition that an ancient monastery on the island contained some early Jewish artefacts. These artefacts were supposedly brought to Ethiopia after the Jewish exile in Egypt around the time of Cleopatra. Although the

remains of the monastery had been found no such artefacts had yet been discovered and time was running out on this, the third and last dig season.

The team awoke this morning to a strange smell in the air, one of the team thought that someone had cooked eggs for breakfast, but the camp-fire was yet to be lit. Sally Horowitz, the senior conservator, was puzzled and walked to the top of the slight rise that surrounded the small pond. It was evident that the pond was the source of the terrible smell, there was a mist rising from the limpid water that clung close to the ground and had started spilling over the surrounding bank. Sally immediately returned to the camp and found Ryan Jacks the Site Director, "What in hell is that bad smell," he asked straight away.

"It's that stinking pond Ryan, there's some sort of fumes coming off it," Sally told him.

"Really, let me have a look," Ryan said as he walked off in the direction of the pond, with Sally tripping after him, "This looks serious Sally," he said as soon as he saw the pond. "That smell is sulphur Sally and that may be a volcanic vent, come on we'd best get out of here quick."

The two quickly walked back to the camp where the rest of the team were milling around wondering about the smell. "Everybody, break camp as quickly as you can, I think we are sat on the top of a volcano and it may not be long before it blows," Ryan announced loudly. "Bud, can you get the boat sorted and warm up the engine,

everyone else, I want to be off this island in less than an hour, so let's go people."

The team forgot about breakfast and started packing while tents were struck over their heads. Records and the small number of artefacts found, were packed into boxes, and personal effects were stuffed into rucksacks. In forty-five minutes the camp-site was empty and a trail of archaeologists stretched toward the coast of the island. The boat was waiting with the inboard engine chugging away and pumping excess water from the bilges. They were just loading the first load of equipment when the ground shuddered and, looking back the way they had come, a plume of steam was rising into the still air.

"Ryan, feel this water," asked Bud.

Ryan leaned over the tiny jetty and put his hand in the water, it was warm, much too warm to be explained by the warm atmosphere. "I don't like this Bud, let's get a move on."

Bud suddenly pointed out into the lake, "Look at that."

Ryan looked in the direction that Bud was pointing and saw a patch of bubbles breaking on the surface to emit a small wisp of smoke as each bubble broke. "Right forget the equipment, just get on-board, quickly," shouted Ryan.

No one needed to be told twice and within minutes all twenty-one members of the team were on the boat as it chugged out toward Gorgora, some twenty-three miles away.

About an hour into the four hour voyage the water

around around the boat suddenly started to dance, and a second later the sonic boom hit the boat. All eyes turned aft to be greeted by the sight of a column smoke rising into the atmosphere above the island and smoking lava bombs soaring into the air, arching out into the lake. As they watched, and as the minutes passed, the bombs flew higher and further out into the lake. A few minutes later a blast of hot air hit the boat, spinning the vessel in the water, then came the bombs, falling now around the MV Luta. Bud gunned the engine to get as much speed as he could out of the diesel, whilst he swung the tiller left and right in an attempt to avoid the debris falling from the sky. Bud did an excellent job of steering the boat, and it wasn't his fault that a particularly large and glowing lava bomb made a direct hit on the Luta. The boat disintegrated in an instant as the heat and the energy was released into the lake-water. The MV Luta was gone, along with it's cargo of twenty-one human-beings.

Office of the President, Baghdad, Iraq.
Thursday 28th April 2033. 10:30 hrs (local
time).

President of Iraq, Hakim Arif, sat at his very large desk and examined in detail the electronic pad displaying documents in front of him, the index finger of his right hand was working furiously at a small antique calculator that must have been over forty years old. Seated opposite him was the Armed Forces Minister, Tariq Hussein, who had delivered the pad with the latest recruitment figures. After some minutes the President looked up from the pad and stared at Hussein for a few seconds, Hussein felt himself shrinking into the velvet of the chair.

"These figures," started Arif, "very encouraging, well done Tariq, you have done well."

"Thank you Mister President," replied Hussein as he felt himself re-inflate, "we do our best for Allah, praise his holy name."

"I make it close to twenty million volunteers now, has the rate slowed at all of late?"

"No Sir, if anything they are continuing to rise steadily," Tariq ventured.

"Where are they coming from, mainly," asked Arif.

"About thirty percent from here and another twenty-five percent from Iran, thirty-four percent from other Islamic states, the rest are made up of believers from mainly Christian countries, Britain, France, Germany, Spain, etc."

"Are there any problem areas," again asked Arif.

“Just one Sir, Kuwait, we have not had one recruit from there and the Kuwaiti government has advised the population not to volunteer.”

“So, they are still holding it against us are they, the dirty sand-flees,” spat out the President.

“No matter, we will see to Kuwait when the time comes,” Arif added after a seconds thought.

“Mister President, how long do we need to keep up the recruitment Sir?”

“For as long as we can, or until the time comes, Tariq. We are against all of the combined forces of this world's evil empires and our army needs to be of a size that reflects the enormity of of the task. Now to another issue,” said the President as he stood and walked around his desk to the chair next to the Minister. Both Yemen and Oman have received requests from Ethiopia to accept their refugees from that stricken country, Djibouti and Eritrea are in the same situation and have sent their refugees across the gulf, so cannot accept any more. Besides that the Ethiopians are Jews and have no place in Arabia. We need to send some military units, our Navy to be specific, to patrol the gulf coast, some Ethiopians have managed to get across already and Yemen just does not have the resources to repel them. Will you see to that please Tariq?”

“Of course Mister President, it will be an honour, and it will be good to get our Navy some practical training,” replied Tariq. “Has there been any volcanic activity on our side of the Gulf Sir?”

“No, thankfully, Allah be praised, no sign of anything,

Allah is protecting his people and punishing his enemies
Minister, I do not expect that we will have any such
problems.”

“Praise Allah,” added Tariq.

“Yes indeed, well don't let me delay you Tariq, I'm sure
you now have much to arrange.”

“Yes Sir,” said Tariq as he rose to leave, “peace be with
you.”

“Peace be with you also Tariq.”

**The Head Office of Pickles Industries,
Westferry Road, London, UK. Wednesday,
May 4th 2033. 13:40 hrs (local time).**

Rick Pickles' own office was a masterpiece of modern design and was equipped with every gadget and device known to man, and some that had not been imagined yet. The panoramic windows behind his desk that looked out over a very hazy River Thames, was also a wide angle COM-screen that still allowed light to traverse the multi-layer polymer. Rick swivelled his chair to face the window, and ordered, "COM connect Heidi Goldbloom." The window turned opaque and displayed a small graphic that indicated the the connection was in progress, then flickered and was replaced by the Prime Minister of Israel.

"Hello Rick," said Goldbloom, a little subdued.

"Greetings Heidi, just thought that I'd see how you were doing, with all the problems you have over there, still getting grief from the Palestinians?"

"Rick, at this moment in time the Palestinians are the least of my worries."

"Why, what else is there on your mind, anything I can do to help," asked Pickles.

"Nothing I can talk about at the moment Rick."

"Heidi, you know you can trust me, whatever it is, I am not going to tell anyone, remember who kept your secret about the Ark?"

"Well. . . It's that travelling fissure, it's not public knowledge, but it seems the ultimate destination is Mount Moyra, the Temple Mount, and you know what

happened in Crete, the worst thing is, there is nothing we can do about it.”

Rick detected a tear in his friend's eye, and said, “Cheer up Heidi, something will turn up, your God has always seen you through, hasn't he?”

“Yes you are right Rick, I suppose, but this is my city, our Jerusalem, the real 'Eternal City'. Do you know how long this city has stood here, this city is our history, our home.”

“Heidi, I have just had a thought, it may not work but there is just a chance, do you mind if I bring Professor Gwilliam in on this,” Rick asked.

“Is he reliable, this can't get out into the public domain, Rick,” asked the PM.

“Owen can keep a secret, he's had enough practice over the years, and besides, I have him on a non-disclosure contract,” explained Rick, “let me see if I can reach him now.” The window panel next to the one Heidi was on , went opaque and ten seconds later Owen's image appeared.

“Hello, Rick, Madam Prime Minister, what can I do for you,” said Owen.

Rick quickly outlined the problem to Owen, and Goldbloom explained about the need for secrecy. “No problem Prime Minister, I understand what panic would ensue if the population found out.”

“Thank you Owen, and please call me Heidi whilst we are in private.”

“Professor, our ESD, would it be able to protect the Mount, do you think,” asked Rick.

"I have no idea boy," answered Owen in astonishment, "we haven't tested it to its limit, or to be precise, we haven't found its limit yet, and I am not sure how we would test it against geothermal energy."

"What about trying one out on Crete," Rick suggested, "that one is still going, although much reduced, and I believe anyone can approach to within a kilometre now," Rick continued, thinking out loud, "we could send a ESD in on a remote device, a drone or creeper, and switch it on remotely. . . ."

"Well in this case, I'm willing to give it a try Rick, we have to save Jerusalem," stated the Professor. "How long have we got?"

"The latest ETA is about seven to eight weeks, we have to start evacuation in about three weeks, but we can't surely stop the devastation it will cause between the coast and here, so we still need to evacuate," said Heidi.

"Rick, if this works in Crete, I think we need to construct two ESD's with a souped-up power source and that hopefully will give us an increased range," suggested Owen, "We use one where the fissure meets the coast and the other as stand-by at the Mount. Then link it up to the power source we discovered in the chamber underneath the Mount, with the device that is in the chamber we will have, hopefully, a impenetrable force field bubble."

"Brilliant Owen," said Rick Pickles, almost jumping up and down and clapping his hands, "lets do it!"

Department of the President, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Monday, May 16th 2033. 16:11 hrs' (local time).

Berhanu Benti, President of Ethiopia, had booked the call to the Israeli Prime Minister two days ago, and he was now waiting for the call to be connected through the secure network. Since the demise of the archaeological team the situation had gone from bad to worse and a string of volcanic eruptions had burst out all the way south to Lake Malawi from the inlet at Dahlak Island: Dessie, in Eritrea. Addis Ababa itself was under threat and already thousands were homeless. As Benti waited, he watched the latest news on the one national channel, the current picture showed a tented city, then molten lava started to fall, setting fire to the tents and many of the dwellers themselves. Tears started to form in Benti's eyes as he watched the appalling loss of Ethiopian life, his distress was broken by the COM chirping, Benti tapped the accept button. "Good afternoon Sir, this is the intergovernmental secure network, I have your call," said a detached voice, "can I have your pass-code please?" Benti gave the password and his screen briefly showed the Star of David, before switching to the image of Prime Minister Heidi Goldbloom. "Good afternoon Prime Minister, thank you for sparing the time," he said immediately.

"May I offer my sorrow for your situation Mr. Benti and for the huge losses in human life that you have

suffered,” expressed Prime Minister Goldbloom. “Now how can we help?”

Prime Minister we are in need of a safe haven for a number of our citizens, our country is being devastated by volcanoes, the volcanic ash lies deep over much of the populated areas of our country. We have asked for help with our refugee problem from our neighbours, but they are either in a similar situation or have just refused outright, because they regard us a Jews. Is there any way that Israel can help us in our hour of need?”

“I confess Prime Minister Berhanu, that I had expected your request when you requested a talk with me,” admitted PM Glodbloom, “and I have already consulted with my colleagues in the government, we are prepared to accept one-hundred and forty-four thousand people, will that be of help?”

“It most certainly would madam Prime Minister,” Berhanu replied.

“It is possible that we may take many more Mr. Berhanu, once we see how the the first re-settlement goes,” continued the PM, “you are our cousins after all.” Thank you madam, we are in your debt.”

“Welcome back to the the family.”

**The Ruined Site of Agios-Nikolaos, the
Island of Crete, Wednesday May 18th 2033.
09:55 (local time).**

Rick Pickles had insisted on accompanying Professor Gwillam on the experimental trip to Crete to test the effectiveness of the ESD unit. The transport LIMO landed about two kilometres from the glowing crater, now almost thirty meters above the sea-level. The two helped the technicians assemble the half ton Quadricopter and the ESD was loaded onto it, or rather, slung below the little transport. It was difficult to see anything more than a hundred yards for the steam that was being generated from the seawater as it was heated by the fissure.

“We will need to follow it in Rick, so that we can see where to place the ESD,” announced the Professor, “we will have to fly partly by infra-red, but we have to keep line-of-sight with the unit.”

The Quadricopter was started and set to hover at twenty meters, the four climbed back into the LIMO and matched the altitude of the drone. Owen switched the forward screen to IR and then gently pushed the remote control joystick forward, with his left hand whilst he guided the LIMO in the same direction, keeping the drone at a range of fifty meters. Fifteen minutes later they could see the rim of the crater, and Owen started moving the LIMO and the drone to the right, in search of a possible site for the ESD. It took almost a third of the way around the crater to find a suitable ledge for the unit, and Professor Gwillam manoeuvred the drone into

position, then pressed the release button, and the Quadricopter, soared away at the release of the weight.

An assistant took over the control of the drone, whilst Owen gained altitude at full power. The ESD had been fitted with an automatic start-up when dropped, and on an initiation of thirty seconds, whilst not knowing how it would affect the LIMO, they needed to put some distance between them and the ESD. At six thousand feet they saw a slight waver of the light over the area and then nothing. The LIMO hovered for nearly fifteen minutes before they saw any effect, slowly the steam around the crater started to clear. They could now see the small cone quite clearly, the magma was still glowing beneath the water, which was a disappointment, all the ESD had done was to dampen the conversion of heat to steam.

“So, it doesn’t stop the eruption,” sighed Owen, “it won’t work.”

“Well there was always the chance it would work Owen,” consoled Pickles, “lets pick the ESD up and get back.”

“Afraid you are going to be disappointed there Rick,” said Owen, “we can’t fly this machine within the dampening field, only way to retrieve it is on foot, and I’m not going for a stroll around that.”

“I’ll get someone out here with a fire suit,” said Pickles, “in a few days.”

“OK, so, I wonder if you could drop me off at Cyprus on your way back,” I promised Jim Markson that I would

visit for Easter, but I never made it, did I,” explained Owen.

“No problem, I would like to meet the famous Markson family anyway,” replied Pickles, “If you don’t mind.”

“Fine by me,” said Owen.

C.I.A. Satellite Monitoring Centre,
Langley, Maryland, USA. Friday May 20th
2033. 13:49 hrs (local time).

It was almost the end of Graham Tyndall's shift and he had been staring at various satellite images since six that morning. Graham was looking forward to a long weekend of relaxation and recreation, fishing from his boat out in the Chesapeake Bay, as far as Graham was concerned, there was nowhere like the Bay. He had saved hard to buy the converted navel tender, it was almost fifty years old, built back in the nineteen-eighties, but was still sea worthy, and every July Graham took the MV Lauren down the coast to Florida.

His last job of the shift was to check the GSO satellite over the eastern Mediterranean. The image came up on the screen immediately and Graham noticed at once that the leading end of the fissure was no longer in his field of view. He adjusted the zoom and discovered that the fissure had progressed another sixty-two miles since he had last checked it at just before seven that morning. The fissure was on the move again, or more precisely, had accelerated its rate of progress. Graham swung in his chair and tapped out a report, which he sent to his supervisor. That was it for this shift, and it was already ten minutes past two and time he wasn't there.

Somewhere in the coastal strip North West of Be'er Ganim, Israel. Sunday 29th May, 2033. 11:00 hrs (local time).

The Sun was already hot and the sky would have been blue if it had not been for the volcanic haze that hung over the whole of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. The fact was that the haze actually made the heat seem greater and the nights had become almost unbearable, few could sleep well. Construction workers had been working here for the past ten days, building the first of the refugee camps for the Ethiopians, who would start arriving this very day. The buildings were especially designed for the purpose, each had solar-sheet roofs that generated more than enough energy for a family of six and enough left over to charge the bio-batteries contained in the walls. The bio-batteries and the high-yield solar roofs were both developed by the Pickles Organisation. The walls themselves were made of Thermo-rock, a material that shielded the homes from extremes in temperature, an technological extension of fibreglass, developed by the Pilkington Corporation in the UK. Thermo-rock acted as a shield in strong sunlight converting it to energy, and in winter absorbed the light and radiated it as heat on the interior. The buildings themselves came equipped with cooking facilities, seating, tables and sleeping area, and were easily convertible for two, four, six or eight person families.

Jed Fairclough, an Yorkshireman, had worked for the

IFOR organisation for almost twenty years and was due to retire in two years time. Previously Jed had been a construction engineer and had managed high profile building projects from the Gibraltar Bridge to two-kilometre high Breck Tower in Chicago. Jed looked at his watch, 'they're late' he thought, and he was strict on punctuality, the first thousand homes were ready and he wanted them filled. Just as he thought it he heard the unmistakable sound of a transporter heading in from the east. Jed's head tilted up toward the eastern sky, and there, as yet just dots against the white haze, were a swarm of insect-like vehicles. Jed hurried to the landing area, where he found the welcoming party of officials, which were outnumbered by the press representatives.

The first transporter touched down at eleven-fifteen, in a cloud of dust, it took minutes before the dust settled and the hatch opened. The first out was a priest, who had been appointed the official spokesperson, he stepped down and immediately fell to his hands and knees, then kissed the dusty earth in thanksgiving. The junior minister for Home Affairs strode forward and took the priest's hand, then turned to the media.

"It has been several thousand years since our Ethiopian brothers and sisters left us for a new land, but they have never ceased to be a part of the Jewish family, and we welcome you back in this hour of need, with open arms," the minister announced, "Now please follow your stewards to your new, albeit temporary, homes. We trust that you will be comfortable, and find God in this place."

As the minister walked back to the group the other transporters started to land and threw up a sand-storm of dust. The stewards came forward COM-pads in hand, finding their charges and guiding them away to their designated dwellings. Jed would visit some of the families later to get their views on the accommodation that IFOR had provided. As he walked away down one of the avenues he heard a distant whine in the air, he did not need to think about it, he had heard that sound before. Jed turned and ran back toward the landing area, as he ran he shouted. "Get down, incoming rocket, hit the deck now!"

The people around did not react immediately but stood as if stunned. Then all at once everyone reacted as the rocket screamed overhead, and dropped to the ground. The rocket exploded just short of the landing area, for seconds there was complete silence, then the scream and and cries started. Many people were obviously dead and many more injured, among the dead were the priest and two of the officials, the missile had also destroyed some hundred and twenty of the accommodations.

The ambulance-LIMOs were there eight minutes later and three minutes after that the the fighters of the Israeli Air-force screamed overhead heading towards the south-east. A military LIMO landed close to the landing area and set up a Mk 6 Iron Fist unit to protect the site from further attack. The resettlement continued, but with a very nervous first group of Ethiopians, who

despite the assurances, from the military commanders, that there was nothing more to fear, looked forward to several sleepless nights and eyes that constantly scanned the eastern sky.

The Office of the Prime Minister, The Knesset, Sacher Park, Jerusalem, Israel. Sunday 29th May, 2033. 13:20 hrs (local time).

Heidi Goldbloom was furious, she paced up and down her not inconsiderable office space whilst Ben Marks sat and watched drumming his fingers on the heel of his right shoe.

“How dare they attack innocent refugees,” the Prime Minister stormed, “I have had it with these Palestinians, they just want everything their way with no thought for others.”

Over a half hour ago they had placed a call to the Palestinian prime minister and were told that he would call them back within minutes, that was thirty-seven and a half minutes ago and they were still waiting.

“We are most probably dealing with a renegade group and Aiden is hopefully trying to find some information,” suggested Ben.

“You really think that Ben?”

“No, but we have to keep ourselves objective,” he said.

“Huh! I am done with objectivity where those bandits that call themselves a government are concerned,”

Heidi offered.

Just then the desk COM warbled, Goldbloom hit the soft-button like a bullet. "Yes!" she spat.

"Madam Prime Minister, this is Aiden al-Qurashi, I believe you wished to talk with me, my apologies for the delay, but I was involved in something," said the Palestinian Prime Minister.

"Does that 'something' include attacking innocent refugees by any chance," asked Goldbloom with a sarcastic edge to her voice.

"Ah yes, I did see something on CNN about some explosion," Aiden said with an equal amount of animosity.

"What in the name of heaven are you trying to do, turn the world against you yet again, these were refugees from Ethiopia who have lost their homes with the eruptions," Goldbloom said accusingly.

"Yes, refugees, Madam prime Minister, and Jews, all my people see is Israel doing some population building, they see you trying to outnumber our people even more and then claim more land that is by right ours. Can I ask, where will all these people be eventually housed, more settlements?"

"You knew about this attack, didn't you al-Qurashi," she accused, "your answer is just too easy off your tongue."

"Think what you like Madam," sighed Aiden, "you destroy our second most sacred site and you expect us to ask how high you want us to jump."

"You know of course, that our air-force destroyed the launch site and those who launched the missile," Goldbloom informed the Palestinian PM, "and be sure

that any further attempt to attack us will be met with deadly force. Good-day Prime Minister.

Heidi Goldbloom hit the soft-button again and dropped into her chair.

“Ben, get a squadron of Golem V's stationed near the refugee camp full time, as quickly as we can, and a mobile satellite monitoring unit, with all the support personnel and equipment.”

“We can do that,” agreed Ben, “but we may be leaving ourselves a little thin on the ground to protect the borders.”

“If that is the case, I think it's time to call up the reserves, can we get some more fighters out of moth-balls,” Heidi asked.

“We have two squadrons of the Eurofighter-Meteor, but they are seventeen years old and old weapons technology, there is also a limited amount of fuel available, they burn kerosene, not liquid hydrogen.” Ben informed his PM.

“Can we get more fuel from someone?”

“Only the US has kept reserve stocks in any quantity, maybe you could ask President Orwell if he can release some, under the circumstances, he may be open to a suggestion from you.”

“Agreed!”

**European Geological Monitoring Authority,
Via Torre Argentina, Rome, Italy. Monday
30th May, 2033. 09:15 (local Time)**

Georges Russo entered his office out of breath, partly because of the dust and fumes from Vesuvius and partly because he was very late for work this morning by well over an hour. Thankfully his boss Angelo Giordano was not in the office as yet also, time-keeping was not particularly important but he had promised Angelo that he would get a latest report for the European Parliament completed before midday. As second in command he also likes to set an example, but today had been 'one of those mornings'. First there had been an over-night power cut, which had stopped his alarm call from happening, then having rushed out of his eighteenth century house carrying a coffee and his usual breakfast pastry, to find his vintage Ford Taurus would not start. Cleaning the air-filter had taken up another fifteen minutes, plus another five for washing his hands and replacing his now stained shirt.

"Buongiorno," his PA called as he opened his office door, he took a second to consider whether she was being sarcastic or not, but a quick look at her face told him that she was not.

"Where is Angelo," he asked.

The PA shrugged and offered to check his diary, which Georges accepted, making him wait in the doorway to his inner office. "Supposed to be in the office, according to this," she informed him.

With a "Grazie ," Georges continued into his office, flipped on the coffee machine and then his desk COM. Immediately the priority message alarm sounded and any thoughts of a fresh coffee were lost. There was an 'Alert' message flashing angrily on the screen, and Georges tapped the read tab. The message was from the American CIA with a graded access restricted to either himself or Angelo, Georges began to read:

**CIA Satellite Monitoring
Centre, Langley, USA**

Reference Eastern
Mediterranean Fissure
Tracking

Priority Information:
Level 2

The fissure that had almost stopped its progress and was assessed to be travelling at approximately 0.7mph (1.12 kph), now seems to have accelerated to between 11 and 14 mph (17-22.5 kph) sporadic. The mean heading is c110 degrees, which if projected will be a direct heading toward Jerusalem.

The reason for the new activity seems to be a reduction in energy signatures for the Crete volcano and geothermal energy seems to be transferred to opening the lead of the fissure. Best estimate 30 to 40 days until the fissure makes landfall on the Israel coast.

Message ends - serial
#17831577-D-249.

Georges hand instinctively reached for his COM-unit and his finger found the button that called Angelo.

“ Angelo Giordano, ah, it's you Georges, I'm at the Vatican waiting to update the Pope, I got a call as I was leaving this morning, how's the report coming,” he asked.

“It's not, I just found a message from the CIA SatMo; that fissure in the Eastern Mediterranean, it's on the move again,” reported Georges.

“Oh great, how fast?”

“Between seventeen and twenty-two kph at times, and heading toward Israel again.”

“OK, get on to the Israeli department of geology, or whatever it's called,” Angelo instructed Georges, “then that's job done, but you'd better include it in your report,

this is a priority incident. Is it going to be ready by mid-day.”

“Just about, I’ll get on to it, see you later.”

MI6 HQ, Babylon-on Thames, London, England. Wednesday, June 15th 2033 02:17 hrs (local time)

Abe Marks had been reading the latests reports from the British MI6 agents in the Middle east, today there were quite a number and it had taken him since ten in the morning to work through them. He wasn't a slow reader but there were so many questions that needed answers, and so many answers that needed conformation. He still had several reports to read and was starting to feel the rumbles in his stomach that told him that lunch was overdue. 'Just finish this one, and I'll get something from the canteen,' he thought. Before he had time to finish the door opened and Sir James Hennessey's head appeared around the door.

"Something tells me that you haven't had lunch yet Abe," Sir James said.

"Strangely, I was just about to pop down to the canteen, Sir," answered Abe.

"Look, let me take you to lunch, I needed a chat and I've not eaten myself; pint and sandwiches OK for you?"

"Yes Sir, thank you,"agreed Abe.

The two spooks took the lift to the roof and boarded Hennessey's official LIMO. The machine lifted into the air for the short hop over to Whitehall, where it landed on the roof of a public house, that was Sir James' favourite. The Silver Cross pub was quite small but very intimate, the interior was quite dark and those who used the hostelry never complained. The pub had been the

haunt of politicians, civil servants and the crew and cast from the Whitehall Theatre opposite. The interior smelt of stale beer, which was often an appetizing smell for the hungry government official. Sir James chose a booth at the back of the bar and waved a message to the landlord, and they seated themselves with their back to the wall.

“Have you been here before Abe,” Sir James asked.

“No Sir, don't usually drink at lunchtimes.”

“Hmm, What do you make of the latest from Syria?”

“Their recruiting figures have gone crazy over the past few months, I'm not sure what they think they are playing at, if Israel is their target, it's a little OTT. My feeling is that it's posturing.”

Sir James, didn't answer for a couple of minutes as the waiter served their pints of best British Bitter beer and their plate of smoked salmon and fresh shrimp sandwiches.

“Please dig in Abe,” Sir James invited, “That is what I wanted to talk to you about. I have been told, by a very reliable source close to the Iraqi President, that they have started to believe the 'God Tapes' and are recruiting for the final battle, Armageddon.”

“What! They think they can win, if the prophesies are true it's all preordained.”

“Well they see it as the chance to make the whole world one Islamic theocracy, if they can win.” said Sir James.

“Our latest figures estimate that they now have a combined army of well in excess of ten million, and growing, Sir.”

“You may not know because it is not your desk, but we had word last week that Afghanistan and the Islamic countries in the Russian Federation, are sending soldiers down and they are starting to recruit on the streets.”

“Where did this come from Sir?”

“From our Russian assets, that is why you've not heard.”

What's happening in Russia these days, they have been very quiet this last ten years or so, Sir?”

“Been licking their wounds after the Ukraine war, having one of your own nuclear bombs detonate in your own back yard tends to make you stop and think about things. Loosing your capital city is also a little numbing.”

“Yes I suppose so,” mused Abe, “Is there any move to rejoin the global community?”

“Actually there is, they wish to talk to us, not the Americans, and we are sending some diplomats over there to St Peterborough at the end of the month, and I'd like you to go with them, I trust your analytical skills and gut feelings Abe, just suss them out for me. Will you go?”

“So that's what this chat is about,” said Abe with a smile on his face, “yes Sir, I'd love to go.”

“That's settled then.”

Jerusalem. Monday, July 4th 2033 10:00
hrs (local time)

The day was hot and the high cloud of vapour and dust just made the heat worse. Everywhere you looked you saw people with wet shirts, blouses, and dresses, fans were useless as they only moved the hot air around, and air-conditioning units were fetching ten times their retail value. Andrew McKenzie sat in a bar overlooking the Kidron Valley, the bar charged exorbitant prices for their cold beers, but then they had air-conditioning, which made it worth every Euro. Andrew was on secondment to Israel as a technical advisor on defence weapons, but not today. There were so many Americans in Israel these days that the fourth of July had been declared a national holiday, honestly, Andrew would rather have been in his cool air-conditioned office. Andrew had lived most of his life in Britain's north, in the west of Scotland, born in the small village of Mallaig, he had excelled in engineering and had won a place at Edinburgh University, where he had earned a Doctorate. His career had so far been rewarding, working exclusively for British & European Aerospace Corporation, based close to Glasgow. So Andrew was more used to cooler climates, and was starting to regret accepting this first secondment.

Some American friends had invited him to join them for the day as they celebrated their Independence Day. He either had a twenty minute walk or a battle to find a taxi, which were difficult to find in this heat. Andrew steeled

himself and left the bar, determining to start the walk whilst trying to find a ride. Andrew headed out along El-Mansuriya Street, towards his friend's house, as he walked he heard the distant sound of an aircraft approaching, without taking much notice he continued his walk. Ten seconds later, the aircraft grabbed his attention, as a fighter plane, one that he did not recognise, roared overhead at less than three-hundred meters. The fighter banked steeply and turned back along the valley, as two sparks of light sprang from the aircraft's under-wing and headed towards the Temple Mount. Andrew ducked in behind a wall as the air was ripped apart by the implosion and he felt his body being tugged over the wall. Andrew resisted the rush of air and as the effects subsided he looked south to see the tale-tale vortex of an anti-matter warhead, over the Temple Mount.

**Combined Allied Defence HQ, Abu Dis,
Jerusalem. Monday, July 4th 2033 10:17
hrs (local time)**

"Where in hell did that come from?" shouted the duty officer monitoring the microwave scanning screens, as the fighter roared overhead. "There's nothing on the screens at all, "Chuck," he called, "run a diagnostic on the MDS, it just missed an aircraft."

"Roger that Chief," Chuck called back and turned to his bank of screens and detectors. Just then they heard the scream of the Implosion Bombs, "Shit," they both

shouted in unison. All at once the panels lit up in front of them and seven com-units started chiming one after the other. Ginger Levant, the senior duty officer knew which unit to answer first, and grabbed the bright orange com from his control desk.

“Yes Sir,” Ginger said immediately, followed a few seconds later with, “I have no idea Colonel, nothing showed up on our screens and no alarms were triggered until the implosion.”

“Yes Sir, we're running a diagnostic right now, it'll just be a few minutes,” continued Ginger, who stood with the unit in his hand for another two minutes. Finally Chuck came back with the results on a tablet. “Sir, I have the results, there is nothing wrong with our systems they are all green-OK,” the connection went dead, “Well thank you too Colonel.”

“Have we got satellite feed,” Ginger asked.

“No idea, I'll check the download stream, just give me a minute,” Chuck half ran up the stairs to the satellite receiving room and burst in going straight to the Multichannel Recorder that was connected to eight satellite feeds. Chuck looked at his watch and backed the recordings back eleven minutes. Within seconds he spotted a possible target and made a copy of the high definition feed, then sent the download up to the brass. Chuck returned to the monitoring centre with his recording and plugged the device into a HD display unit. Ginger joined Chuck in front of the screen and they viewed the pictures, Ginger isolated a good frame of the fighter and zoomed in onto the machine.

“What in the name of all that's holy is that,” exclaimed Ginger.

“Looks like an alien craft,” offered Chuck.

“Sorry to disappoint you Corporal, but that machine is entirely of human origin,” said Ginger, “and it's from a lot closer than another planet.”

“Where?”

“If I not mistaken, it's Iranian.”

“You're joking, their grand designs don't fly, they are just wood and nails, they have been the laughing stock of the aerospace industry for years.”

“Well Chuck, it looks like they have had the last laugh, I'd better get this upstairs, and quick,” Ginger said as he downloaded the 'still' to his com-unit.

**The Office of the Prime Minister, The
Knesset, Sacher Park, Jerusalem, Israel.
Monday 4th July, 2033. 10:35 hrs (local
time) .**

There were no windows left in the Prime Minister's office, nor were there any left in any of the upper floors of the Knesset, in fact most of central Jerusalem had lost their windows. Most of the fatalities and injuries had been from flying debris. Heidi Goldbloom stood silently at what was once a sheet of bullet-proof plexi-glass, still not knowing what exactly had happened. She was close to tears, at the sight of her beloved city. Heidi took a tissue from her desk drawer and dabbed

her cheeks, just as her desk-com buzzed.

“Yes,” she croaked, then cleared her throat and said, “What is it?”

“Minister Marks is here to see you, madam,” her PA announced.

“Well send him in,” she said much more sharply than she intended. “Ben, what is going on?”

Ben saw the open window and his first concern was for his Prime Minister's well-being. “Are you all right madam Prime Minister?”

“Yes, of course, now tell me what has happened.”

“It seems that we have been attacked by a very sophisticated stealth aircraft, which fired two anti-matter implosion rockets at the Temple Mount. All of the foundations for the new temple are gone, as is some of the Mount itself, casualties are likely to be in the thousands.”

“Who the hell has the capabilities to launch such an attack,” asked the PM, as much to herself as to her minister.

“There, we can make a very good guess, our monitoring and detection unit downloaded some video from one of the American satellites, they seem to think that it was an Iranian plane,” explained Ben Marks.

“What!” blurted the PM, “how have they managed that, I thought they just produced mock-ups.”

“Yes, they did, but it seems they were a subterfuge, they have actually built something that we cannot track, except visually.”

“Visually?”

“Yes we can see it optically, from satellites, visual

observation, etcetera, but none of our early warning systems can detect it, it seems.”

Ben's com-unit chimed and he answered it, “Marks,” he said, then listened intently for over a minute, “are you sure,” another silence, “Thank you General, please keep me informed.” Ben Marks closed his com and placed it on the PM's desk, “It seems that we managed to track the craft back to Iran, despite it making a detour via Libya, Ethiopia, and then across the Gulf into Iran. The machine is extremely fast and our targeting systems are useless, one naval ship fired off two of the old heat seeking missiles, they both went wild and had to be destroyed.”

“This is a threat to the whole western world Ben,” the PM said as she seated herself at her desk, activated her desk-com and jabbed her finger on a button. Within seconds Ben heard the voice of President Orwell.

“Heidi!” Orwell said, “I have just been roused from bed and told that you have a little trouble, what can we do for you?”

“Mr. President, I think we *all* have some trouble ahead,” answered the PM.

“How so, Madam Prime Minister,” asked Orwell.

Heidi Goldbloom and Benjamin Marks both filled the President in on what they knew about the Iranian fighter plane and the President listened in silence, with a facial expression that grew more serious by the minute. Before they had finished briefing President Orwell, more information came through about the flying machine. The air speed was in excess of Mk 10, over seven-

thousand six-hundred miles an hour.

President Orwell was silent for some seconds after Heidi and Ben had finished, then leaned forward toward the com-unit and said, "Be assured, the United States will back you up, as commander in chief I propose to activate a task force immediately, it will take a little time, but the full might of the US Forces will be made available to protect the world against the Iranian state plans. Leave it to me now, I will contact the other heads of state, I can rely on most of the European states and the UK will be the first to help. Keep me informed and I will get back to you later today."

**BBC/EBC News Studio, London Monday 4th
July, 2033. 18:00 hrs (local time).**

"Good evening, this is the news at six," said the newsreader with a serious expression on her otherwise attractive face. "Earlier today Jerusalem suffered and unprovoked attack by an as yet, unknown aeroplane. The flying machine fired two anti-matter implosion devices at the site of the third temple on the Temple Mount, much of the Mount and the foundations for the third temple were destroyed. The death toll has been estimated to be over three thousand souls. Sources indicate that the aircraft is an entirely new concept with advanced capabilities that exceed any known aircraft. The craft was, it seems, followed back to its base in

Iran.”

“The US President addressed the American people just an hour ago and pledged the full force of the US military in protection of the western world and our allies.” The picture cut to a clip of President Orwell.

“America has always stood for freedom and free speech,” said the President, “and although we have our own issues here at home, this threat from an ancient enemy, far outweighs that domestic threat from a lunatic fringe. The FBI will continue to hunt down those of the US-Atheists organisation, whilst our military together with our allies in Europe and now Russia, join together to stand against this aggressor.”

The transmission reverted to the studio and the newsreader continued, “Prime Minister Matthews has just confirmed that a general call-up has been activated for both regular servicemen and the reserve.” The image of the British PM replaced the newsreader's, transmitting directly from the House of Commons.

“I have just spoken to my opposite numbers in four other European states, France, Germany, Spain and Italy, who have all agreed to be our partners in this operation. The Royal Navy already has three fleets in the Middle-east and these will be directed to the Mediterranean and Gulf areas. The Air Force are as I speak, making preparations to re-station in several undisclosed strategic bases, within the week, the British Army will mobilise as soon as possible to join the Air Force and Navy. May God bless our troops.”

**Yavne Yam, on the Israeli Coast. Sunday
10th July, 2033. 21:18 hrs (local time).**

The beaches had been cleared four days previously and both military and civil police had guarded a fifty kilometre stretch of some of Israel's best coastline. As daylight faded, it became obvious that this night would see the open fissure meet with the dry-land. The orange glow could be seen now, within the cloud of vapour some fifty meters from the beach and moving inexorably towards the shore-line. Outside of the police cordon the public had started to gather, whilst above, the media hovered in LIMO's, while camera drones buzzed about like mosquitoes above a swamp. As the fissure approached the shore the cordon had been reduced to forty, then thirty and finally to five kilometres each side of the point where the fissure would encounter the beach.

Inland, a corridor was being hastily cleared, buildings evacuated, and people moved to hotels that had been cleared of tourists for the past week. The corridor was now being patrolled by Israeli and UN troops flying in rescue LIMO's and helicopters; ready to pluck the straggler or obstinate resident from the danger zone. The Israeli Prime Minister was at this moment in one of the military LIMO's, and whilst her eyes were glued to the steaming head of the fissure, her mind was intent on prayer, for her people and her country. Now the fissure

was just twenty meters from the beach, and every breath was held, as the sand in the shallows glowed and turned to glass. Then came the expected event, the beach split and there was smoke in place of the steam and the progress visibly accelerated as the cooling effects of the seawater were lost. The orange gash mounted the beach and proceeded through the sand-dunes to the more solid land beyond. The land opened up like a giant zip-fastener, it was clear that the fissure would reach Jerusalem the following day.

**Jerusalem, Israel. Monday 11th July, 2033.
15:50 hrs (local time).**

The exclusion corridor was extended as the fissure travelled across Israel, but as the danger approached thousands of residents, visitors and media reporters, filled every vantage point in sight of the blade of smoke. There was an almost deafening murmur as those thousands of people discussed the future, and orthodox Jews prayed and chanted, or beat their chests in lamentation. Without warning the murmur suddenly ceased and within seconds the fissure broke through the wall and the Derekh Yerikho road that overlooked the Kidron Valley. The west side of the valley parted as the fissure dived to the bottom of the valley and a huge 'Ooo' went up from the viewing public. There it stopped. The eastern side of the valley did not part and the ancient wall held as the smoke billowed up its face.

Those observing, both official and unofficial, looked at each other in amazement, no one actually understood what had happened. It was no different in the executive LIMO that contained Benjamin Marks and Heidi Goldbloom, that hovered above the Kidron Valley, some thousand meters above the spectacle.

"Has it stopped," the PM asked in confusion.

"It looks that way Madam," answered Randy Cohen, better known as 'Rocky' the principle geologist and Volcanologist at the University of Jerusalem.

Ben Marks was watching the fissure through a pair of military binoculars and was focusing in on the point

were the fissure had seemed to have stopped. “It seems as if the fissure has gone beneath the Mount,” he commented. Ben turned to the pilot and asked, “Can you get us to the other side of the mount, exactly opposite the entry point, please.”

The pilot nodded and the LIMO banked away and over the Mount, but after thirty minutes there was nothing to see, other than the curtain of smoke from the Kidron Valley direction.

“OK,” said PM Goldbloom, “Let's get back to The Knesset, we have observers to watch what's going on here, we have other pressing matters to attend to.”

The Summer Palace (The new Kremlin), St Petersburg, Russia. Wednesday 27th July. 09:00hrs (local time).

Abe Marks had flown in late last night to attend the talks that the Russian Government had requested. His papers stated that he was a legal attaché, and it was true that Abe had obtained a degree in law many years before; however, little of his law education had remained at the forefront of his mind. All Abe knew at this moment of time, was that he was very tired. He was greeted by some functionary at the door to this ornate conference room and was shown to his seat at what once was the dining table of the Tsars. The walls were decked with pictures of presidents of the Russian Union, with some obvious omissions of presidents who would now be seen as embarrassments. There were no pictures of any of the notable figures of the period of the old USSR, many of these had now been classed as enemies of the state, and had been expunged from Russian history books.

Abe's part was to merely observe and report back, not on the proceedings but on the attitudes of the central players, and those things that were not actually said. His portable computer/com-unit had a camera in the lid, not unusually, but it was connected to some very special software. The software, in a hidden sector of the memory, measured minute changes in body temperature, galvanic resistance, measured the frequencies in the minute levels of light that every living

thing emanates, among many other physical factors. When the British diplomats were all seated the Russian delegation trooped in and took their seats at the opposite side of the long table. Every chair was filled, with the exception of one chair, positioned centrally. The participants sat looking at each other across the table, some showed embarrassment, others trepidation, some even displayed open hostility. After some minutes the double doors in the centre of the room opened and Boris Luzhkov, the president of the Union walked in without any sign of recognition of any one in the room.

Without any form of preamble Luzhkov launched into his dialogue. "Welcome to the British and EU diplomats and thank you all for coming, the reason that I have requested these talks is to attempt to pull Russia back into the international community," Luzhkov explained. "As you know the war with the Ukraine caused a rather large rift between the western world and this country and the terrorist nuclear bomb that devastated Moscow brought Russia to her knees. Russia is now prepared to throw herself at the mercy of the European Union, in an application to join. Russia has always had close ties with Britain, from the time of the Tsars, and all through the unfortunate period of isolation that the Soviets brought upon us, we regarded the British people as our cousins. We therefore hoped, fervently, that, as a principle member of the EU, Britain would sponsor Russia's application."

"The time that follows, is left open for discussions of

conditions and I hope that you will help us to construct the document of submission that is needed to join Europe. Although our land stretched across Asia, we are at heart Europeans,” Luzhkov continued in his plea. “The team before you is fully briefed and authorised to negotiate on behalf of myself and Mother Russia, I believe that coffee will now be served, so please mingle and get to know each other, and if there is a God, as recent discoveries suggest, may He bless your efforts.” Luzhkov then stood, made a short curt bow, turned and left the room, again by the double doors that were directly behind his chair.

Jerusalem, Israel. Saturday 30th July, 2033. 09:00 hrs (local time).

It was Saturday, the Sabbath, in the whole of Israel and especially in Jerusalem, the God Tapes, or ‘Cretan Revelation’, or whatever anyone wanted to call it, had caused a mass return to both Synagogue and Church. So here at the epicentre of the Jewish faith Saturdays were a quiet day once more, a day of worship and observance of God's laws, just as it had been for thousands of years. The National Synagogue was full, and the overspill hall had less than twenty vacant seats; the fundamentalist Jews had gathered as close to what was left of the Temple Mount and the Eastern Wall to pray and lament the destruction. Things had gone very quiet since the day the fissure had arrived at the Mount,

and there had been no volcanic activity, not even an after-shock, but the open fissure was still there, cutting across half of the Kidron Valley. Today there was an almost palpable silence hanging over the city, the cloud cover was low, almost oppressive and the smell of sulphur hung in the windless air.

There were few tourists around these days and most of the stalls that sold religious souvenirs had closed and left for more lucrative markets. The famous King David Hotel had been only half full at best for the past year, but today occupation was up, mainly thanks to the hoard of geologists and experts on volcanoes that had flowed into the Israeli capital over the past weeks, all waiting to see what would happen under the Mount. Their wait finished at exactly nine on this very morning. As clocks struck, or beeped, nine o'clock the earth shook beneath Jerusalem. The many geologists grabbed their instruments, cameras, and equipment and dashed out into the street, as did so many others, both residents and visitors. There was little to see at that moment other than the strange movement of the clouds directly above the area of the Temple Mount.

As the crowds grew and the Synagogues emptied the cloud cover above the Temple Mount broke and a roughly round hole of blue sky appeared. The shaking ground gradually increased in frequency until it was more of a deep vibration. Then it happened. From the centre of the Mount, the sacred Mount Morah, the green-blue beam that had been seen years before, shot

vertically through the hole in the cloud, with a scream like a thousand banshees. Around the base, where the beam left the rock of the Mount, the volcanic gasses and fizzing lava bubbled and spat at the cool air, and smoke rose to be dissipated just feet from the surface.

Within minutes the air around the Temple Mount was full of aerial craft, government LIMO's, helicopters and quad-copter drones with their mounted cameras. The international observers also moved in and transmitted their pictures to a dozen authorities. The viewing public was totally silent and stood open-mouthed at the sight of the spectacle before them. Then the scream subsided and morphed into an electric pulsating buzz that everyone within earshot could feel, even to their stomachs.

**JMRT Compound, North of Larnaca, Cyprus.
Wednesday, July 30th 2033. 09:50:00 hrs
(local time).**

The whole family were ensconced at the Cyprus compound, as well as many of their friends and staff member's families. A lazy breakfast was just finishing, and Jim with Carol, were helping to clear the debris away, when the TV caught Jim's attention. "Hey guys, look at this," he called to everyone in general. Owen Gwilliam was deep in some discussion with Peter and took a few seconds to react. "Good Lord, that's the

Temple Mount, isn't it," exclaimed Owen.

"Yes and the blue beam's back," remarked Jim.

"Turn the sound up then man," said Owen with a chuckle.

"...looking at the scene live from Jerusalem, Israel. Just about an hour ago Jerusalem was subjected to earth-tremors, then just minutes ago this beam of light appeared. No one has yet commented on the event but as soon as we have any information on the event we will report it. Meanwhile our cameras will continue to monitor the situation. You heard it first on Euro-news."

"Well there's something we haven't seen for a while," commented Jim.

"Dad, have you seen the TV," said Jo as she and John entered the dining room.

"Yes Jo, we're watching it," answered her brother Peter.

"Do you think that is the same beam that cracked the Temple Mount two years ago," asked Jo.

"Well it looks very much like the one we saw on the video at the time, Jo," said Owen.

"Except that there were no volcanic puddles at the base then," commented Jim.

"Have you seen what's on the news. . ." said Howard Fulton as he entered the dining room almost at a trot, "Ah, I see you have."

"Maybe the energy from the volcanic activity has triggered what ever that beam is," suggested Owen.

"It would be interesting to know what has happened to

the control room under the Mount,” mused Jim.

“Yes,” agreed Owen, “especially with that force-field and the dampening field active.”

“Shush!” called Jim, “some thing's happening.”

“ . . . seems to be something happening on the plateau of the mount, . . . Oh my goodness, there seems to be a figure emerging from the base of the beam. . . they are actually walking on the lava. . . What the hell is happening here, yes it's a man, he's just walked out from the centre of the volcano and he's just standing there with his arms stretched upward, still standing in the bubbling lava, I can't believe this is happening, who is he? People closest to the Mount are starting to bow down to this figure, could this be the second coming of Jesus Christ, Oh my God, are we really witnessing this Bible prophesy? We are trying to move a camera drone in closer but the military are trying to stop us. . . ”

Suddenly Owen stood up and approached the TV screen for a closer look “What in the name of God. . . .Jim that's Rick, Rick Pickles, what the hell is he trying to pull off.”

Sure enough, the zoom lens cut through the hot air distortions, showed the unmistakable face of Rick Pickles, standing there with hands raised like some sort of demi-god, like the Phoenix rising from the ashes.

“I told you there was something wrong with that guy,” said Owen.

“Yes you did Owen,” said Jim, “and I think I know exactly what he's up to.”

“If you're thinking what I'm thinking, I do too,” added Owen.

“Do you think the world will fall for it,” Jim asked.

“Sadly, yes,” answered Owen.

“So now it starts then,” said Jim before going very quiet and then leaving the room.

**In the air above the Temple Mount,
Jerusalem, Israel. Saturday 30th July,
2033. 10:25 hrs (local time).**

Prime Minister, Heidi Goldbloom and her Internal Security Minister Benjamin Marks had once more taken to the air in the executive LIMO belonging to the Israeli Military. The PM was astounded at the site of someone emerging from the lava and the beam, her preliminary feelings were ones of awe and wonder, but the sight of Rick Pickles has changed that. Goldbloom's awe had now turned to anger, she turned to her Minister, “Ben, I want that man arrested, just as soon as he gets clear of that blasted inferno.”

Ben immediately drew his com-unit from its pouch at his waist and tapped the appropriate button. “Major, I assume you have a visual on the Mount, [pause] good, I need you to arrest the man who is now standing on the Temple Mount,” there was another short pause, then, “I

appreciate that Major, but please make the arrest as soon as you can get access, and Major, please do it discretely.”

Five Hundred Meters Away on The Approach Temple Mount, Jerusalem, Israel. Saturday 30th July, 2033. 10:35 hrs (local time).

The British born Major Ethan Davidson assembled his crack security team and moved in a little closer to the Mount, where he could see the man who was even now moving away from the blue beam and onto the actual rock of the Mount. Even here, five-hundred meters away the ground felt warm beneath their feet, like the sand of a beach on a hot, sunny day. Behind them the public were obviously confused, some were kneeling, thinking that the Messiah had at last arrived, others saw it as the second coming, but most did not know what to think. This man, whoever he was, must be super human, maybe he was just what this blighted world needed. Then a shaft of sunlight fell on the figure on the Mount, the hole in the cloud cover was increasing in size, and this was the first time in months that the denizens of Jerusalem had seen blue sky. The effect just added to the surreal scene and did nothing to dissuade some that this was a god.

The security detail spread out along the approach, the route that this man had to use to leave the area of the mount, and Sergeant Goodman had taken up position in

the middle of the access way to arrest this man. Davidson was informed over his COM that the target was on the move towards the security detail; the major relayed the information to his Sergeant.

“Yes Sir. I have him in view,” Goodman replied.

The target reached the point where steps had once marked the entrance and started down the rubble. The buildings that used to stand were now gone and for the next hundred meters it was open ground, and the target walked into what had been Aqbat e-Saraya Street. When he was fifty meters off Sergeant Goodman called a challenge,

“Please halt there, you are under arrest by order of the Prime Minister.”

The figure just kept walking towards the security detail, and the Sergeant issued another challenge. “Stop or we will fire on you, stop there!”

There was no response and the Sergeant lifted his firearm and brought the figure into the sights, he fired a round just over the targets head, without affect, then aimed for the right leg and fired again. Nothing. Twenty meters away the target stopped and held out his right hand and pointed towards the solders.

Without warning there was a flash and the roadway in front of the security detail erupted in a hale of tarmac fragments. The Sergeant dashed for cover, as did the remainder of the detail, as did the Major. From their meagre cover of doorways, garbage bins and small allyways they opened fire as the target walked past them, unaffected by the projectiles that were aimed directly at

him. Then as he passed close at hand the soldier's weapons failed to fire at all, he just looked at the security detail and laughed.

The eyes of not only Jerusalem but the whole world were on one man and what would happen next. The squad of soldiers that had surrounded him now cowered behind any cover they could find, fearing what this man would do next. Then to everyone's surprise he held his hands in the air and walked on toward the Major, then surrendered himself. Major Davidson secured the target with plastic manacles and marched him to the waiting Mk 8 Hummer where he was locked into the armoured compartment in its rear. Suddenly the onlookers started booing and hissing at the soldiers, then stones and building blocks started to rain down on the vehicle as it accelerated away.

**Mossad Headquarters, Jerusalem, Israel..
Saturday 30th July, 2033. 12:20 hrs (local
time) .**

Rick Pickles was booked in, and then allocated to a cell in one of the basements of this faceless building, and the door was locked. Major Davidson and two agents wound their way back to the reception area on the ground floor.

"Major, Sir," said the custody officer, "what are the charges against the Englishman?"

“To be honest, I have no idea, I was just carrying out the orders of the Prime Minister,” he answered, “I can only recommend you speak to Minister Marks, he relayed the order.”

“Thank you Major, I will get General Weiss to contact him.”

Major Davidson joined his troop outside and drove back to their HQ, whilst inside the Mossad building General Weiss was already speaking to Ben Marks.

“. . . but what do we do with him Minister, we need some reason here, the man's an international businessman, we can't just lock him up for a publicity stunt.”

“Well for now, let's just say it's a national security issue,” said Ben Marks.

“Very well Sir, but we will need something more substantial if the PM wants to keep him here for more than twenty-four hours.”

The Office of the Prime Minister, The Knesset, Sacher Park, Jerusalem, Israel. Saturday 30th July, 2033. 14:10 hrs (local time) .

“I want to know what Pickles thinks he's up to, Ben,” said the PM, “who on Earth would pull a stunt like that, anyway.”

“OK, we can keep him for twenty-four hours and I'll get someone to debrief him this afternoon and release him in the morning,” said Ben.

“Go easy on him Ben, after all he is a friend, or maybe I should say 'was' at this point.”

“I'm told that he seems to be taking everything very easy, seems to be totally unconcerned about things,” Ben stated.

“Well at least he's not trashing the cell,” said Goldbloom, with a rye smile. Just then the desk intercom chimed and the PM touched the button, “What is it?”

“We seem to have a situation Madam Prime Minister.”

“What sort of situation,” asked the PM.

“Outside, Ma'am, we have a very ugly crowd,” said the PM's secretary, “seems they are demanding the release of the, you won't believe this, the 'Messiah.'”

“They think Pickles is the Messiah based on a publicity stunt,” asked the PM incredulously.

“It would seem so Ma'am,” answered the PA.

“Thank you John,” said the PM as she touched the off button, “this could be interesting Ben.”

“Interesting, yes, but what do we do about it,” questioned Ben.

“We just tell the truth, reveal it as a stunt,” said the PM, “we know he's developed that energy field, with the help of Professor Gwilliam, we can even demonstrate it.”

“We will also need to explain that laser-beam that came from his hand, I think we need some luck with that one,” commented Ben.

“You'd better get the army in to disperse the mob before there is trouble,” said Goldbloom. As if by some unheard cue, there was a sudden crash and the sound

of breaking glass. The PM crossed to the newly replaced picture window behind her desk and looked down to the street and garden below. "My life! Ben they are trying to break in."

"Impossible, we have top security on this building," answered Ben.

Just then intruder alarms started sounding throughout the building and two security men entered the PM's office.

Apologies Ma'am but security has been breached, come with us please," said one of the security men, "you too Minister."

The two officers made for the door to the outer office and pushed a small decoration on the wall to the right. The teak panel beside it immediately slid to one side, revealing an elevator. The officer motioned for the two politicians to enter the lift and then followed them in. The small compartment shot up four floors and opened onto the roof, on the LIMO pad was a vehicle of the Security Forces with engines running and doors open. The two were ushered inside and the security men closed the door then returned to the elevator and disappeared.

The LIMO took off immediately and headed south-east toward the Mossad building, where there was heightened security measures. The building was built like a fortress and dated back to the earlier conflicts with Israel's Arab neighbours. On the roof the LIMO moved directly into an armoured hanger, the roof was protected by four anti-aircraft cannon and had an electrified mesh

covering the entire room, which was always active when there were no personnel on the roof. The bomb-proof doors closed behind the LIMO and the PM, together with her Minister were guided to another elevator, which this time dropped the forty-nine floors to Israel's command centre.

In the command centre the video screens showed the feed from cameras placed around The Knesset building. True enough the mob around the building had broken into the ground floor, but had been held by the army and the Security Force to that floor. However the video showed that the reception area had been totally wrecked. Reports that were coming in suggested that there had been several fatalities, and a series of ambulances were now taking the many injured to various hospitals.

"OK, enough is enough," stated the PM with more than a little anger, "get Pickles in here, now!"

One of the senior officers left the room, almost running, and five minutes later returned with Rick Pickles in manacles,

"Take those things off," commanded Goldbloom, the officer complied and snipped the strong plastic with safety cutters.

"Heidi, thank you, so nice to see you," said Pickles, "how have you been?"

"No better for your stunt this morning, do you realise what you have started," spat the PM.

"It was just a demonstration, I want to help sort things out, the Arabs will listen to me, I have enormous

influence in the Islamic world, many of my companies are based there,” explained Pickles.

“Well look at the video feed here,” The PM indicated the main screen, “at what your *demonstration* has started,” Pickled turned to view the video screens.

“My god,” stuttered Pickles as he saw the destruction and the placards demanding his release, “but why?”

“Because Rick, they believe you are the Messiah, see,” said the PM pointing to another screen. “They don't know your little trick with that gizmo of yours was just technology, they think you came out of the fire on the Mount.”

Rick Pickles was silent for what seemed like an age, but his mind was working faster than ever. “Well, why not let them think it, it will be to our advantage if they are fools enough to believe that. Think about it Heidi, how much more power and control that will give us in dealing with the Arabs.”

It was the PM's turn to be silent as she paced the room, “I must be mad, but you may be right, we *can* use this to our advantage. But the first thing is to stop this insanity at The Knesset, and prevent more people from being killed unnecessarily.”

“Yes,” said pickles immediately, “can we go there now?”

The Prime Minister turned to the security detail and ordered, “Get Mr. Pickles to The Knesset roof and give him every assistance to make himself known, but anything other than restoring peace, I want him back here in manacles. *Understood*,” she said to both Pickles and the security detail.

The roof of The Knesset, Sacher Park, Jerusalem, Israel. Saturday 30th July, 2033. 16:00 hrs (local time).

The LIMO containing Rick Pickles, AKA 'The Messiah', landed on the roof almost on the stroke of four o'clock. Pickles left the LIMO and told the solders to keep out of sight, and then he approached the parapet of the building. Standing on the very edge he shouted down at the mob below, but no one heard. Lifting his hand he pointed at a piece of open land just beyond the mob and a beam of light shot down and exploded at the rear of the crowd. Pickles switched on his personal ESD and jumped from the parapet; he dropped like a stone, and just hoped that the ESD would absorb the energy of his fall. This had never been tested before and Pickles steeled himself for the landing that may end his life. The device worked twenty meters from the ground he felt his acceleration fall off and he slowed to a landing no heavier than the settling of a snowflake.

The crowd gasped, and formed a ring around Rick. That act certainly dispelled any doubts about his Messiah-ship, 'wasn't Jesus once challenged to throw Himself down from the temple' Pickles thought. Just one person in the front row started to bow an kneel, then one more, then another, and another, it was like a wave as around three thousand people knelt before him. Rick assumed his best, most friendly smile and

told everyone to rise.

“My friends, brothers and sisters, I need you to stop this senseless violence and go to your homes,” declared Pickles, “I want peace not violence, not war, not arguments, I want obedience, now go home and you will hear from me again, very soon.”

Slowly at first the mob broke up into large groups, then smaller ones, chattering and discussing the latest development, within fifteen minutes the area was deserted, except for the police, army and security officers, who all stood in amazement at what they had seen. Even some of those officers started to wonder, was this really the Messiah?

**The London Times - On-line Sunday 31^{tst}
July, 2033. 07:00 hrs (local time).**

Jessica
Stafford –
Staff
Reporter
Yesterday
(Saturday
30th July)
seems to
have been
a
momentou
s day in

Jerusalem,
with a
succession
of strange
events
taking
place
within an
eight hour
period.
No one
with
access to
any news
media
could miss
the
appearanc
e of what
seems to
be some
sort of
laser beam
reaching
skyward
from the
Temple
Mount.
This event
seems to
have

heralded
the
seemingly
miraculous
appearanc
e of the
British
entreprene
ur Rick
Pickles,
from
within the
beam and
the lava-
pool,
which now
crowns the
sacred
Mount.
Mr.
Pickles
was almost
immediate
ly declared
the saviour
by many
onlookers,
and called
the
Messiah
by huge

numbers
of Jews.
After his
arrest by
Israeli
Security
the Israeli
seat of
governme
nt, The
Knesset,
was
besieged
by Israelis
demanding
the release
of the
Messiah.
The
governme
nt building
was
broken
into and
some
thousands
of Euros
of damage
caused to
the
reception

area,
despite the
presence
of Israeli
Security
Forces and
the Army.
Eleven
people
were killed
in the
demonstration,
and
some two-
hundred
people
injured.

The siege
was ended
when Rick
Pickles
appeared
on the roof
of the
Knesset
building
and to the
amazement
of the
crowds

below,
threw
himself off
of the
seven
story
building.
To the
further
amazemen
t of the
crowd
occupying
the
concourse
area in
front of
the
building,
Mr.
Pickles
landed
safely
without
any injury.
Pickles did
not seem
to be
wearing
any jet-
pack,

safety
harness or
other
device to
break his
fall. The
amassed
crowd
took this
as a
further
sign of this
man being
the
Messiah.
Mr.
Pickles
returned to
his hotel
later,
where the
now
growing
crowd of
worshippe
rs have
been
holding
vigil over
night,
whilst

army and
security
officers
look on.

The big
question is
now, who
exactly is
Richard
Pickles? A
spokespers
on for the
Judaic
Faith told
me last
night that,
“It is the
feeling of
the
modern
Sanhedrin,
that this
individual
may well
be the long
awaited
Messiah,
coming as
it does
almost

two-
thousand
years after
the death
of the
prophet
Jesus. The
timing
seems
significant
and fits
closely
with the
prophesy
of Jesus.
However
we shall
reserve a
final
decision
until we
have had a
chance to
speak to
Mr.
Pickles
and gain
further
informatio
n.”

Archbisho
p Jonathan
Benn,
Archbisho
p of
Canterbur
y and head
of the
Anglican
Church,
told me
earlier this
morning,
“We have
been
warned
about false
messiahs
many
times in
the Bible
and we
have been
warned
about
someone
who will
appear as a
saviour of
the world,
doing

amazing
acts to
convince
people of
his power,
and at this
time we
will be
viewing
Mr.
Pickles
with some
scepticism
and
caution.”

I asked the
Archbisho
p, “Do you
regard Mr.
Pickles as
possibly
the 'Beast'
mentioned
in the
Book of
Revelation
?”

Archbisho
p Benn
answered
by saying:

“I do not discount that, however we must be cautious in assigning labels to people, we have had many people in the past who we thought to be the Antichrist, or more accurately, “The Opposer. I have met Mr. Pickles a number of times and I have always found him to be a

personable
man, who,
despite his
lack of
faith; that's
Christian
faith: has a
certain
love for
his fellow
man.”

No one
from the
Islamic
faith was
available
to
comment
at this
time.

Messiah or
Beast,
saviour of
mankind
or
Antichrist,
we will
wait and
see how

future
events
unfold,
either way,
there are
some
interesting
times
ahead.

**Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces
Logistics, Tehran, Iran. Wednesday 10th
August, 2033. 11:00 hrs (local time).**

In the over ornate office of the Minister of Defence for Iraq, Hooshy Ar Karimi, the overhead fans and the air-conditioning units were running at full capacity. In the office, sat around the giant marble and glass conference table were Mehrzad Behzadi, head of the 'Sazeman-e Ettela'at va Amniyat-e Keshvar', the Iranian secret service, General Uday Bani Lam, head of Iraqi military intelligence unit, and Dirar Abu Sitta, Palestinian, and the leader of the PLO, now a wanted terrorist.

Minister Karimi gave a forced cough, and the general talk stopped, as if a radio had been switched off, "Thank you for coming gentlemen, and a special welcome to Abu Sitta, we have not seen exactly eye-to-eye in the past but, as they say, the enemy of my enemy is my friend." The others nodded their heads and muttered greetings to Sitta.

"Thank you my friends, it is good to find allies in these times," replied Sitta.

"It seems that we have a new problem in the shape of Mr. Richard Pickles, I am sure you have all heard and seen the events of ten days ago," everyone nodded again. "The fact is gentlemen, that the tricks that Mr. Pickles has performed has given our eternal enemies renewed hope and patriotism. Our sources inform us that recruitment to the Israeli military had more than doubled in the past week, we need to discuss what can be done to eliminate this threat."

“I am nor sure what we can do Hooshy,” said Behzadi, “this man seems to be invincible, I have studied the video of all the events of seven-thirty-one, he can walk through this beam, whatever it is, walk through volcanic magma, throw energy bursts at will, throw himself off of buildings without harm and is impervious to bullets.”

“MehrzAd, my friend, do not be fooled by these infidel tricks, these things you speak of are not possible,” said Karimi, “I have seen similar things in the westerners movies.”

“With the greatest respect Minister,” started Sitta, “my people were there and were witnesses to these things. I am convinced that the powers are connected to the Tabut Sakina, the artefact they call he Ark of the Covenant. We also had people present when the Tabut was discovered; none of our weapons would operate in the cavern.”

“That is interesting, my friend,” said Karimi.

“Minister, we seem to have forgotten what history teaches us,” interjected General Uday Bani Lam, “this artefact is a Heavenly treasure chest, which was used as a weapon of war by the Prophets, including Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, and even by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alaihi wa aalihi wa sallam). The Holy Quran states:

‘And their Prophet said to them: “A Sign of his authority is that there shall come to you the Ark (Tabut), and in it Sakina with (a Covenant) therein of security from your Lord, and the relics left by the family of Moses and the family of Aaron,

carried by angels. In this is a symbol for you if ye indeed have faith"

All this is in al Baqara, v.248, for all to read"

"You should have been a Mullah General," commented Minister Karimi, with a touch of sarcasm.

"My father was, and I was supposed to enter the priesthood," answered the General, "This Ark was the assurance of help in ancient times, from the unseen and victory over enemies, in the form of Prophetic relics. These relics contained in the Ark were connected to prophetic authority, which represented the Vicegerency of God on earth by His Prophets and Messengers, and as such, assured victory over disbelief to the possessor of the Ark. We ignore these things at our cost Minister."

"Hmm," said the Minister, "is that the feeling of you all?" All three visitors nodded. "Then we have two objectives; regain this 'Tabut' and eliminating Mr. Pickles."

"Minister, could we not utilise one of our Qaher-317's again," asked Behzadi, "with good intelligence we can take him out easily."

"That seems to be like using a pneumatic drill to open a walnut." said Sitta.

"Then what do you suggest Mr. Sitta," asked the Minister.

"If you have another of those implosion devices, I think I can deal with Mr. Pickles," suggested Sitta, "I have people who are willing to sacrifice themselves for the greater good."

"A suicide bomber?"

"If you wish to call them that" admitted Sitta, "we prefer

'sacrificial freedom fighter' in Palestine."

"That still leaves us with the problem of the 'Tabut'," stated the General, "Mr. Sitta mentioning the implosion device gave me an idea. If we can get reliable information on the location of the Tabut, and if the traditions are true, the detonation of the device in its vicinity would leave the Tabut untouched, if it is destroyed then our enemy does not have it either."

"And if the thing is untouched," asked the Minister.

"Then we take control of the area, and walk off with the Tabut."

"But this Ark may protect a sizeable area around the Tabut, what then," asked Behzadi.

"If we have the very best commandos, they should still be able to take the Tabut," the General replied.

"Just walk off with it? You don't think the Israelis would not have other ideas," asked Behzadi.

"Not if we have a crack commando team there quickly, dressed in Israeli uniforms," answered General Bani Lam, "I am sure Mr. Sitta here has access to some uniforms."

"I can furnish uniforms General, no problems."

"Well, we seem to have a plan, thank you gentlemen, I will leave the planning details to you," said Minister Karimi with some finality, "thank you all for attending."

Residence of the UK Prime Minister, 10 Downing Street, London. Monday, August 29th 2033. 20:07 hrs (local time).

Abe Marks had been to ten Downing Street once before, and this occasion was just as disconcerting as the previous occasion had been. This certainly was not the sumptuous surroundings that the US president lived in; the British Prime Minister's residence had not changed extensively since the days of Sir Robert Walpole, way back in the mid eighteenth century. It certainly had not been redecorated since David Cameron in the twenty-teens, and the walls were now looking quite dated. Abe was sat in the anti-room between the private secretary's office and the Cabinet Room, his chief, Sir James, was already in the Cabinet Room with the PM and other high ranking officials. It was like sitting outside of the headmaster's office, Abe thought.

Things were really coming to a head in the middle-east, with the latest attack on Jerusalem by Iran, the continued high recruitment rate for the combined Islamic Jihad Army, and now this farce with Rick Pickles; it was just getting more complicated. The question was, why would Iran attack Jerusalem with a stealth aircraft that everyone thought was a joke, and reveal their hand, Abe thought. What has Iran gained? He was deep in thought when the door to the Cabinet Room opened and Sir James placed his hand on Abe's shoulder, "Can you come in now Abe," he said quietly.

Sir James Hennessey led Abe into the Cabinet Room where he found the Prime Minister, Fredrick Matthews, Home Secretary Henry Harden and Field Marshal Sir Alan Robinson.

"Hello Abe, nice to see you again," said the PM by way of greeting, "please take a seat." Abe took the chair opposite the Home Secretary, and said, "Thank you Prime Minister, how can I help?"

"You are our expert on the Middle-east," the PM told Abe, "Sir James thought that your knowledge would be better than having a report to go by, we just need your expertise and gut-feelings about what's going on out there. Firstly this Army of the Islamic Jihad, that is our main concern, can you fill us in on this?"

"I know that recruitment is off the scale, their strength already makes it the largest army in history, latest intel' places it at around twelve million." Abe reported, "However that does not include the two million or so sleepers that we received intel' about a few months ago."

"Ah yes," the Prime minister started, "we have been screening for possible placements, how is that going Alan?"

"Slowly, Sir. We have been screening by polygraph and by background. The background research is time consuming and we need a legitimate reason for putting someone on a polygraph, and that is not easy if this remains a covert operation," said the Field Marshal. "How effective is the background screening," asked Harden.

"About ninety-two percent, we've detected around two-

hundred people across the armed forces that on further investigation have proved to have connections to Islamic paramilitary units.”

“Abe, is there any indication that our investigations have been picked up by the Islamic authorities,” asked Matthews.

“No Sir, not yet at least,” answered Abe, “none of our contacts has reported anything suspicions, and they have been briefed.”

“Once we have identified these sleepers, what are we going to do with them,” asked Henry Harden.

“We need to single them out and restrict where they go and what they do,” suggested the Field Marshal, “I’m just not comfortable with leaving them where they are without some control.”

“Point taken, Alan,” said the PM, “does anyone have any ideas?”

“As a matter of fact, Prime Minister, I had a feeling we would come to this point,” said Harden. “I’ve had an idea, can we introduce sub-dermal implants of some kind for the military and government employees. We could implant covert codes to restrict where they can access or include tracking, to monitor their movement, I’m not an expert on this, but I believe that there is one commercial bank that operates something of the like for their employees.”

“Good thinking, Henry,” commended Matthews, “who is our current security contractor?”

“I believe it’s Anglo Security Electronics p.l.c, Sir,” offered Abe.

"That's also a part of the Pickles Corporation," stated Harden, "I'm not sure I'm happy, under the current circumstances, with Pickles' involvement with this Messiah business."

"Don't be alarmed, Henry," said the PM, "I have spoken to Prime Minister Goldbloom, and she assures me it's a subterfuge to help control some of what is going on out there. We all know your views on organised religion," the PM laughed.

"We'll see, Sir, we will see."

"Alan can you liaise with ASE to get something going, *fast*," asked Matthews.

"I'll get onto it Sir," answered the Field Martial.

"What are your impressions about the Messiah issue, Abe" asked Sir James.

"There are several schools of thought in the Middle-east, Sir. The mainstream Israelis seem convinced that Pickles is the Messiah and they are prepared, so far, to follow him. The Jewish Orthodox Church has grave reservations about him as do most Christians, who are basing their opinion of Biblical prophesy. The Islamic block thinks it's a stunt to frighten them into submission. Finally the general 'non-religious' public in Europe and the USA are starting to regard Pickles as some sort of saviour of the world, and that seems to be the opinion of the Israeli government. In a way the Muslims are correct, although they think that the July thirty-first events were Hollywood illusions. In a way, we need to take some of the blame for this situation, Sir."

"How so," asked the PM.

"We classified the device, Sir, so we cannot tell the world that it's just an electronic gizmo, we can't stop him using it, he and that Professor Gwilliam own the patent."

"Dam!"

"My feeling is that whatever happens, there will be a great deal of conflict," added Abe.

"And I bet it will be these bloody Christians at the centre of the conflict," interjected Home Secretary Harden.

"What of these stealth fighters that Iran seems to have built," asked Matthews, "do we have anything on that?"

"Yes Sir," answered Abe, "the intelligence informs us that so far they have built three, with one more due to be finished by the end of the year. I believe the attack on Jerusalem's Temple Mount, was a system's test in real circumstances, the Iranians were certainly celebrating after the attack. We are trying to locate the factory where the planes are made and we have a joint operation in place with the CIA. We assume that the factory is somewhere in the desert, so we will need a lot of luck to find it from satellite, but then we did find the missile and training base. What I do not understand, is what Iran gained from making the attack, their secret fighter is out of the bag."

"Hmm, interesting," said Sir James, "maybe it was intended as intimidation."

"If it was for intimidation, it didn't work, from what I hear Israel is furious and seems to be gearing up for war, but I can't think that is what they want," added Abe.

"Maybe that's what Iran wants," mused the PM.

"In which case, we'd best get our security issues sorted

quickly.” stated Home Secretary, Harden.

UK Ministry of Defence, Horse Guards Parade, SW1, London. Tuesday, August 30th 2033. 08:10 hrs (local time).

Field Martial Sir Alan Robinson sat at his desk waiting for the com to chime; he had booked the call the previous day for eight sharp. Like most military people the Field Martial was a stickler for punctuality and Rick Pickles was already ten minutes late, which did not enhance his reputation in the Field Martial's mind. At twelve minutes past the hour the com-unit chimed and his adjutant told him that Mr. Pickles was calling. Robinson tapped the soft button and Rick Pickles appeared on the desk screen.

“Good morning Mr. Pickles, thank you for agreeing to speak to me at this early hour,” Robinson said with a touch of sarcasm in his voice.

“No problem, Sir, sorry for the delay, demands of business you know,” retorted Pickles, “so what can I do for you?”

“Firstly I must warn you that the content of this call and everything we discuss is covered by the Official Secrets Act, which you have already signed up to as a MOD supplier.”

“Of course,” agree Pickles.

“We have a security situation to which we need a covert answer, in that we have, and are, identifying certain people who are a security risk, and need to be excluded from certain operations and positions in the military

service, or in government service,” explained the Field Martial. “The problem is that we dare not give these individuals any idea that we are on to them.”

“Hmm!” remarked Pickles, “that could be tricky.”

“Indeed Mr. Pickles, however, it has been suggested that you may have a solution in the use your sub-dermal implant you use within your organisation, which replaces access cards. We wondered if this could be adapted to our purpose.”

“Well you have certainly done your homework Sir,” said Rick, “yes, I am sure we could set up a system along those lines. We already have the technology, but won’t that cause issues with personal rights?”

“It may well do so, but we would bring the system in across the board, no exceptions, if they refuse, then they are terminated from their jobs or the service.”

“We can give an alternative to the SDI, that’s a sort of tattoo, but it has to be renewed on a yearly basis, some of our staff opted for that, it comes as a company logo, but it can come in any design, regimental badge, ship’s badge, or any decorative design for the civil service.”

“I think we would stick to the SDI for the forces, but that is certainly a good idea for our civilian people,” agreed the Field Martial. “One more thing, this is urgent Mr. Pickles, how quickly can you get it up and running?”

“We won’t have the development run-up, so it’s just a matter of getting your people to give me the programming, I’ll send over the matrix later this morning, and then we can get into production,” explained Rick.

“You will need the programmers so that you can

personalise each implant. As an estimate I would say you will be processing the first personnel at the end of September.”

“That will do nicely Mr. Pickles; I will send you the contact names and secure addresses within the hour. Thank you, we will speak again no doubt.”

“No problems, pleasure to help, Field Martial,” and the line went dead.

BBC/EBC News Studio, London Sunday, 11th September 2033. 18:00 hrs (local time).

“Good Evening, here is the news from the BBC studios in London, England. We have just heard within the last few minutes that President Garai Ahmad of Egypt has been shot. We have few details as yet but it seems that President Ahmad was shot whilst watching a soccer match in which his son was playing. Over now to our Egyptian co-respondent: Miles Cochran.”

“Yes things are rather in chaos here in Cairo with police cars screaming around with their lights flashing, a full lock-down of the city is in place and the population are shocked. I am here outside of the main hospital along with most of the world's media, we were told about forty minutes ago that the President is in a very serious condition,” someone out of shot passed Cochran a note, which the reporter quickly read, then he looked back at camera, “I have just been handed a note that tells me that the outlawed organisation, The Muslim Brotherhood, have claimed responsibility for the shooting. More information as we get it.”

“As Miles said, we will keep you up to date with the situation, in Cairo as it develops.” said the anchor woman in London. “Now the rest of today's news,” she continued, “In the USA the civil liberties organisation ‘US for Us’ has told the government that they will fight the intent by the US military to follow in the steps of the British Ministry of Defence in bringing in sub-dermal bio-passes for all government employees. A demonstration,

the size of which has not been seen since the Vietnam demonstrations of the nineteen-sixties and seventies took place earlier today. Over two-hundred thousand people, mostly government employees, crowded into Washington. Here in the UK the implants have been condemned by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Jonathan Benn, who drew the Prime Minister's attention to Biblical prophecies about a similar system, Archbishop Benn said, 'I consider this the thin end of a very thick wedge indeed'. In Paris last night an agreement. . . . One moment we have breaking news, it's back to Miles Cochran in Cairo."

"You have joined us just as a spokesman from the hospital is about to make a statement," the shot changed to a picture of a man, dressed in a white cover-all,

"Ladies and gentlemen it is my sad duty to announce that President Ahmad died six minutes ago at 20: 07. President Ahmad suffered major trauma to his abdomen and catastrophic damage to his spine from a large calibre high power weapon. We mourn the President's loss with all of Egypt."

There was a total stunned silence as the man in white returned into the hospital, then the silence exploded into a fury of activity, as camera crews started to pack up equipment and reporters attempted to put words together to describe the scene and the feelings of a nation. Cochran returned to camera, and continued, "Well there we have it, President Ahmad, the most moderate of moderates, is dead, and Egypt finds itself in

something of a political vacuum. We have to ask now, what will be the next step, from The Muslim Brotherhood, if any, time will undoubtedly tell. Back to the studio, in London.”

UK Ministry of Defence, Horse Guards
Parade, SW1, London. Monday September 19th
2033. 11:32 hrs (local time).

Today was the day when Operation Fire-guard was launched in all of the UK military services, the day when the sub-dermal implants started being implanted in all military and civil-service personnel. The program had gone well and the launch was only a week behind the estimate given by Pickles Industries, two full weeks before it was realistically expected. Field Martial Sir Alan Robinson sat in his office feeling very self-satisfied with the way he had managed the operation, indeed, he had not felt like this since his promotion to general, many years ago. His wife had still been alive then and her pride in her husband had been obvious. Since her death in two-thousand nineteen, his duty to the crown had taken over his life completely, the one thing that gave his life meaning. So many people died in that flue epidemic, the man-made strain that escaped the laboratory. All known antibiotics were useless, the human body had become resistant to them through a combination of the over-loading of animal feeds and certain agriculture sprays used to keep fruit and vegetables healthy. Close to two million people were lost from the UK alone.

The com-unit's trill sound interrupted the Field Martial's daydream into the past and it took several seconds for him to shake himself out of his thought train and back to reality.

“Yes?” Robinson spat as he prodded the soft-button to answer the call.

“This is Major General Russell Sir, I am afraid we have a problem developing with Fire-guard, it seems that about thirty percent of the personnel are refusing to have the implants.”

“Isn't it a little early to be making assumptions like that Russell, the programme has only been going a little over three hours,” commented the Field Martial.

“Well maybe Sir, however at some bases we have some sort of picket line operating,” Russell told his boss, “there are civilians as well as military people in the blockade.”

“Blockade?” screamed Robinson, “Blockading a military base is totally illegal, get the word out, any military personnel who refuse will be arrested, this is mutiny and we are within our rights to shoot mutineers.”

“Sir, with the greatest respect, we just have not got enough military police to arrest everyone,” said Russell, “and then there's the problem with the civilians.”

“Get off you backside man and call the police in,” said the Field Martial, “I'll contact the Home Secretary and let him handle the civilians.”

“Yes Sir,” Russell said in a tone that was a little too begrudging.

Two minutes later the Field Martial was speaking to Henry Harden the UK's Home Secretary, and quickly explained the problems.

“Yes, I have heard,” said Harden in a voice that betrayed the fact that he was already angry, “from what I hear, it's

those bloody Christians again.”

“I don't know who they are Henry, I just want them gone, said Robinson, “can you sort it?”

“I am already onto to it Alan, I have troops on the way to all bases where a disturbance has been reported.”

“What will you do with them; if you just move them on they will come back later or change target to another base.”

“Don't worry Alan I have that in hand as well, I have invoked some emergency powers of arrest, we have been expecting something like this and I have been opening up half a dozen mothballed Army and Air-force camps, and the old prison ship down at Portland. They will find that we have plenty of luxury accommodation for them.” Harden chuckled as he told the Field Martial to relax and have a good day.

**Longcross Barracks Internment Centre,
Chertsey, Surrey, UK, Wednesday,
September 21st, 2033. 14:45 (local
time)**

The Reverend Kenneth Woods, sat in his hotel-type prison cell that he had shared with two other Christians for the past two days, reading charge sheets. Two days ago he had been arrested under the emergency Protection from Terrorism act, whilst protesting against, what saw as the start of the Biblical prophesy concerning the mark of the beast. He'd seen worse prisons, as a pastor he had visited local prisons often,

and this was luxury in comparison. This shared cell was not locked, and contained comfortable beds a private bathroom desks, easy chairs, a TV screen, and everything a hotel may offer, except contact with the outside world. The installation had been built almost seventy years before to accommodate military security people who were to protect a near-by government research establishment in the years of the Cold War.

More people were arriving every hour as the protests continued at most of the military bases around the UK. In two days over fifteen hundred people had been arrested, the majority seemed to be Christians, the remainder mostly civil rights people. For some reason the arrestees were being separated, this centre contained purely Christian or religious protesters. It had been rumoured that some were being consigned to old prisons and the hell that was the prison-ships converted after the Second World War and refurbished during the prison population issues in the nineteen-nineties. These ships were now leaking rust-buckets that until now had been more tourist curios than anything else. In the north-west of the UK, the Victorian prison on the edge of Liverpool, one that had been served as a museum for the past fifteen years, had opened up the unused wings. In the north-east Durham Prison, also a museum for some years, had reopened its disused wings in expectation of new interns.

The Reverend Woods had always been a strictly 'Biblical' Christian, with strong religious principles, and it

was those principles that had led him to take part in the demonstration outside of the British Army Headquarters at Aldershot in the county of Hampshire. It had been a peaceful demonstration, many of the Christians standing in groups praying against what was happening beyond the high wire fence. At just after nine in the morning soldiers started to wander out of the base and join the people demonstrating, saying that they were refusing to accept the implants. These soldiers were greeted as heroes by those outside. At just before mid-day MP's (Military Police) had streamed out through the main gate and arrested every soldier they could find. Generally the soldiers gave no resistance and were marched away in plastic manacles, to the "boos" and hisses of the civilians. At around twelve-thirty more than ten blue buses arrived, followed by a stream of vans. Hundreds of police officers flooded out of the buses and started to make arrests. The civilians were piled into the many caged vans and driven away to unknown destinations. Each person was processed and charged with 'Inciting to Mutiny', and here they were, waiting for what would happen next.

Apartment 507, 21 Ahmed Oraby Street,
Cairo, Egypt. Tuesday October 18th,
2033. 21:42 (local time).

There was a knock on the door of the apartment just as the evening news was finishing. Claus Schultz looked at the security screen next to the door to see two men in suits, one was holding a clip-board, thinking it was some sort of survey he opened the door. As the door opened two other men dressed in paramilitary fatigues and masks, kicked the door fully open and forced their way into the hallway.

“How many of you live here,” asked the male with the clip-board.

“Vas ist dis,” shouted Claus.

“Answer the question!” demanded one of the paramilitaries, pointing an automatic pistol at Claus' head.

“Four, my wife and I and our two girls,” stammered Claus.

“Bring them into the main room,” the clip-board ordered. Claus, still under the sight of the pistol went to his daughter's bedroom and woke his two daughters. His wife had been watching the news with Claus so was already in the living room, when the men entered the room followed by Claus, their two daughters, and the gunman.

“You are foreigners?”

“Ja, we are German citizens,” answered Claus.

The man with the clip-board continued, “Why are you in Egypt,” he asked.

"I am an archaeologist, I work with your department of antiquities," Claus told them.

"How long have you lived in this country," the man asked.

"Five, years," came the answer.

"How old are your daughters?"

"Seven and four," Claus told him.

"Are you intending to stay here," the clip-board asked.

"Yes, of course, this is a wonderful country and Egyptology is my specialism," explained Claus.

"Are you Christians?"

"No, we have no faith," answered Claus.

"Sit down," clip-board told Claus, "you are no doubt aware that the Muslim Brotherhood has recently taken over the country, are you?"

"Ja," agreed Claus.

"Then you will not be surprised when I tell you that we are making Egypt into a truly Muslim state, which means we are insisting that all residents of this very Egypt are Muslims."

"I . . .," started Claus.

"Please now, give me your names and resident registration numbers," the man demanded.

"Can I see some form of identity or official authorisation, please," asked Claus.

The question was answered by one of the gunmen, who again waved his pistol in Claus' face, "This is my authorisation, infidel." The clip-board waved for the gunman to back off, and the gun was holstered. Claus took the hint and supplied the information required.

“Now I need to inform you that you have seventy-two hours to either embrace Islam or leave the country,” the man with the clip-board told the family. “After three days we will return to see if you are gone or have converted to Islam.”

“And if we haven't accepted Islam and are still here,” asked Clause.

“Then we will arrest you, that may mean that you will get the death sentence, your youngest daughter, as she was born in Egypt, will be taken into care and brought up as a Muslim, your eldest daughter *may* be extradited to Germany, maybe.”

The four men started to leave, and as they passed through the door the gunman turned and said, “We be back to see, in three days, I look forward to *knowing* your daughters.” He winked, and Clause knew he was grinning under the mask, as they disappeared from view.

Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics, Tehran, Iran. Tuesday 1st November, 2033. 15:03 hrs (local time).

Minister of Defence for Iraq, Hooshy Ar Karimi welcomed his two guests to his office in central Tehran, the low table was loaded with coffee and sweetmeats and the atmosphere was congenial. Opposite Karimi was General Uday Bani Lam, head of Iraqi military intelligence unit, and Dirar Abu Sitta Palestinian leader of the Hamas.

“How are your preparations going Dirar,” asked Karimi.

“Well Sir, we are almost ready,” replied Sitta, “we have good intelligence on the Ark’s location and your people have promised a device.”

“Good,” said Karimi, “when can we expect the operation to proceed?”

“Minister, may I make a suggestion that we mount the raid on December twenty-fifth,” continued Sitta, “it will be least expected at that time and Israel will be full of Christian tourists, another plus.”

“Wonderful,” Karimi exclaimed as he clapped his hands once, “what is that western saying, two birds with one rock.”

“Stone, Sir,” corrected Bani Lam.

“Rock, stone, it is all the same,” said the Minister, “but that is a master stroke Dirar, your reputation does you justice. However, what of Mr. Pickles?”

“On this we have not been so successful, we have not been able to get near him, he has increased security and wears his suppression device whenever he goes out in public,” explained Sitta, “It may be that we have to take out a large area to get him but his house has a device, as does his vehicles and he is surrounded by guards wherever he goes. But we will get him.”

“Well we have some good news for you,” announced the Minister, “General will you fill us in please.”

“Let me tell you that the recruitment for the Great Jihad has just passed through the fifteen million, it is now the greatest army ever assembled, praise Allah,” announced General Bani Lam.

“Praises to his name indeed,” agreed Minister Karimi.

“However,” continued Bani Lam, “we have a plan. Now we have a date for your operation, I can say that we will mobilise a million of our army who will assemble along the borders of Israel at the beginning of next month, it will mean a build up over several weeks. We will do nothing but to stay in readiness, this will also divert attention from your squad when the time comes. Depending on how successful your raid is we may invade or not, but we will be ready to move.”

“That will be useful,” agreed Sitta.

“Let us now deal with the details of this plan,” suggested Karimi, “then with Allah's will, we can rid the world of the Israeli curse once and for all.”

Surry Crown Court, Penrhyn Road,
Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey, UK.
Wednesday, November 9th 2033, 10:00 (local
time)

It took fifteen large forty-seat transporters to take the internees to court, all five court rooms had been appointed to try the offenders, the normal hearings and trials had been postponed or suspended for the day. There were nearly six-hundred people appearing today, all from the Longcross Centre. Kenneth Woods sat in the third transporter waiting for his group to be called, the court were dealing with detainees in groups of six and none of the people from this transport had yet been called. It was a chilly damp day outside but the transporter had been left with its heat pumps running, so its occupants were comfortable. Several passengers had split into groups to pray, whilst others had opted to quietly read their Bibles. Then someone at the back started to sing a Christian song and within seconds the whole forty occupants were singing. The transporters on each side also burst into song on hearing the melodic strains, and this quickly spread to all fifteen transports.

One hour later Kenneth and five others were called out and escorted to the court room. It was immediately obvious that this was no trial; there were no jury members or defence lawyers, just three crown court judges, a stenographer, and two ushers present. The six people were asked to stand in a line before the

bench and then asked to confirm their names and addresses.

The judge in the centre then stated, "You people are accused of attempting to incite military personnel to mutiny, in contravention of article forty-two of the Security of the Nation Act, two-thousand and twenty-five, Section four. How do you plead?"

Each of the accused answered 'not guilty' in turn, and the Justice continued.

"Does anyone have anything to say in mitigation of their behaviour," he asked.

"Yes," stated the Reverend Woods, "I would like to make a statement and a plea, Sirs."

"Very well," said the centre Judge, "you are allowed four minutes, continue."

"Thank you your worships," started Kenneth, "I would first like to point out that no one here actively incited anyone to mutiny, the protest was against the Ministry of Defence and the current government for it's action in forcing citizens to accept sub-dermal implants. This was for two reasons, firstly I, and the majority of those arrested consider this action to be a crime against human rights, and secondly, because this violation has been prophesied in our Bible and our faith instructs us to resist evil where ever it may be found. In other words, your worships, we were following our conscience and the articles of our faith, and also exorcising our right to free speech and opinion, in line with the bill of human rights."

As the Reverend paused in his statement the judge on

the left, thinking him to have finished, said, “Thank you Mr Wood, is there . . .”

“With respect Sir, I have not finished yet,” interrupted Kenneth, the judge lifted both arms to shoulder height in a frustrated manner and signalled the Reverend to continue. “As to the charge of incitement, I believe this to be a false charge, as you will see from the video taken at the time, we were 'supporting' the solders who had refused the implants, not inciting them to refuse a legal order. There is also an issue about the order; I would suggest that the order made by the Ministry of defence was in actuality an illegal order under the human rights convention of two-thousand and twenty-one, section seven, subsection twenty-five, and paragraph eleven. Thank you your worships.”

The Judges looked at each other is some dismay, before the senior judge then said, “Thank you for illuminating us on the law Mr. Woods, however a national emergency overrides those rights you so eloquently quoted. We have concurred that the case against you has been proved,” the other two justices looked very uncomfortable with this decision and the senior justice’s words. “You have been found guilty as charged; the sentence is as follows,” the justice continued, “we are handing down a sentence of twelve months, suspended for that duration, providing that during that period you accept a sub-dermal tag for the full twelve months. You are dismissed from this court.

Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics, Tehran, Iran. Monday 14th November, 2033. 09:01 hrs (local time).

Abu Sitta had made the trip to Tehran once again, not trusting to the network connections or satellite connections; he preferred face to face meetings. He had no appointment set with Minister Hooshy Ar Karimi, and had merely called him as he was leaving Palestine to say he needed to speak, urgently. Karimi was not used to people demanding to see him with such short notice, however the association with Sitta was an important one, and he was subject to the courtesy laws of Iran. He would just have to grin and bear it. Sitta had arrived at the Ministry before the Minister and was now waiting in the anteroom sipping a strong coffee.

At twelve minutes past nine the Minister strode through the room and beckoned Sitta to follow him into his office with a nod of the head. Sitta stood and carried his drink into the inner office and Karimi closed the door.

“What is so urgent Dirar,” asked Karimi before Sitta had a chance to sit down.

“We have a problem,” Sitta stated in a totally flat tone.

“Please, sit; now tell me what this urgent problem is.”

“My sources have informed me that the Israelis have the Ark stored beneath the Temple Mount, in that cavern that they found,” Sitta said.

“Yes, and so,” responded the Minister.

“So, in case you haven't watched the news lately, there's volcano pumping up lava from below the Mount and as if that wasn't bad enough, there's that dam laser-

beam shooting into or out of the lava.”

“Ah yes, I see what you mean, that may be a problem, is there no way to get in,” Minister Karimi asked.

“The access from the top of the Mount is currently flooded with bubbling lava; the tunnels that those archaeologists cut have been well sealed with solid concrete. There is another way in, if the Ark has not been destroyed,” explained Sitta.

“So what is the problem, use that way in?”

The problem is, I don't know where it is,” explained Sitta, “when the archaeologists found the Ark, we had some one planted with them, and we had a unit that found her and went to her assistance, out in the wilderness somewhere, a long ways from the Mount, an ancient tunnel I guess.”

“So, ask your people, they must remember where the entrance was.”

“I can't, many of the unit were killed in a fire-fight with the Israeli army, and the ones that weren't killed are locked up somewhere, you know what Israeli security is like.”

“Is there no one else that knows where the access point is,” asked the Minister.

“Only the archaeologists that found the Ark,” answered Sitta.

“Well find one of them; do you even know where they are?”

“No,” said Sitta.

“Listen my friend,” said Karimi, “you must do better than this; you need to think with that brain of yours. These

archaeologists, they are famous people, no. The famous are always easy to find, they leave a trail behind them and they always have a path laid out in front of them. Go, and find these people, get one of them to show you where the entrance is.”

“Yes,” Abu Sitta hesitantly mumbled, “I should have thought of that.”

“Yes, you should, now good morning Mr. Sitta.”

Roof of the King David Hotel, Jerusalem
Tuesday 29th November 2033 12:13 hours
(local time)

Rick Pickles, strode off his luxury LIMO as if he owned the whole of Jerusalem, let alone the King David Hotel on which he had just landed. Pickles and his staff entered the elevator and went directly to the suite that had been previously reserved. One of Pickles' staff continued to the reception to complete the paperwork, whilst Rick relaxed and started dealing with the messages that were waiting for him. One of the messages was from Heidi Goldbloom, asking him to contact her as soon as he arrived. Two minutes later he was speaking to the Prime Minister.

“Rick, thank you for calling me, I need your help, if it's possible,” said Heidi.

“Anything I can do to help, what is it?” Pickles replied.

“We need someone to retrieve something from under the Temple Mount, the lava has blocked our access and I wondered if your energy suppression device would allow you to enter the Mount through the lava, I would not ask but we are desperate,” explained the PM.

“I am not sure if it would work, but I will give it a go,” said Rick, “I'll get someone to make a test tomorrow, what is it you need getting?”

“I'll let you know after we know if it works; it's a matter of national security. I hope you understand that.”

“Sure, we will also need security at the Mount, can that be arranged for, say, around eleven tomorrow,” Pickles

asked, "I don't want to let the secret out, it may be of more use if people believe in miracles."
"Certainly Rick, I will get Ben to arrange it."

**The Access Point, Atop the Temple Mount,
Jerusalem Wednesday 30th November 2033
06:30 hours (local time)**

The government LIMO had collected Rick Pickles from the King David Hotel at six-twenty on a very dark and cold morning. Rick shivered as he stepped out of the official transport and yawned for the tenth time, his body gathering oxygen for the task ahead. A screen had been set up at a good distance from the access point and floating screens were suspended above to frustrate any nosy vehicles that might happen to pass overhead. Although the blue beam was dazzling to the eyes at this distance, it shed little light on its surroundings, so flood-lights had been set up, which dulled the bubbling lava that oozed from the stair well.

Even from a distance of twenty meters the heat from the lava was fierce and cut through the morning chill. Rick returned to the LIMO and donned a heat insulating suit, something that his organisation had developed years earlier for fire-fighters and racing drivers. The suit was silver and almost perfectly reflected light, using a unique micro-thin layer of liquid mercury. Built into this suit was a version of the energy absorbing device, it also had a small, but efficient, air conditioning unit. Dressed like some alien invader, Pickles once more approached the access point. The suit was working effectively and Pickles reached the top of where the steps should be without any adverse effects, the lava splatter fell away, seemingly in mid air. Rick felt with his right foot to find

the first step, and found it. He found the second step without difficulty, and then the third. The lava was now up to his thigh, looking down he could see the two inch gap around his legs, so he took the next step, the fifth and the sixth. Then it happened, he could not reach the seventh step, for no matter how much he pushed his leg would not go down any further, it was like trying to force two south pole magnets together. After another five minutes of straining, Rick gave up and reversed back up the steps.

Outside of the burn area Ben Marks was waiting near the official LIMO, "What happened Mr. Pickles, you seemed to be doing well when you stopped," Ben asked.

"Not sure," Rick answered with a puzzled look on his face, "could be a buoyancy issue, or some magnetic effect, that is what it felt like, but I just couldn't move past that sixth step, no matter what I did."

A Secret Location in Ramallah, Israe's West Bank. Sunday 4th December 2033 14:45 hours (local time)

Dirar Abu Sitta, had been searching the super-net for several days looking for any hint of the movements of either Jo or Jim Markson or the notorious Doctor Wade, the three people who knew the location of the alternative entrance to the cavern under the Haram ash-Sharif. Their informant had identified this as the place where the Ark was being stored, under guard, some days earlier. It seemed to Sitta that his twin objectives could be achieved in one operation, if they could find the location of James Markson, they could extract the information before killing him. However that was proving to be a more time consuming job than he had at first thought.

Sitta was rather in a daydream when his com-unit chirped, startled, he stabbed at the accept button, the screen came to life with a message 'NO VIDEO', "Yes" he said in Arabic.

"This is the Apple Eater here, I have a message for Sword," a heavily disguised voice came in reply.

"Go ahead Apple Eater, this is Sword," replied Sitta.

"Message reads, the archaeologist will be taking his Christmas presents to Cyprus in three days time," said the voice.

"Has the message been verified," asked Sitta.

"Yes, conformation has been received, the professor will be there also a few days later."

“Thank you Apple Eater, our usual arrangement will commence in one hour,” said Sitta as he cut the connection. “Got you Mr Markson, make peace with your maker,” he said out loud to himself. Sitta pressed another button on his com-unit and a face appeared, “We have Markson, get ready to take a squad to Cyprus in five days, and I want a full assessment on their compound by tomorrow night.”

“Yes Sir,” the face said.

**JMRT House, Cyprus. Thursday December 8th,
2033. 15:20hrs (local time).**

The Markson family had arrived early for the Christmas holidays, it was a tradition that all the Trust's staff gathers together and celebrate the holiday together, with their families. Carol had spent the last two days supervising the clean up operation and getting the decorations in place. Despite all the world's troubles everyone seemed to be in jubilant mood and there was an air of expectation as other team members arrived, or were due to arrive. The weather had been warm for the past few days and the greenhouse effect was beginning to take hold of the world's climate, adding to the climate change that had been progressing for the past four decades.

The research at the Crete 'control room' was almost complete and Jo and John were planning on leaving Crete finally, in a few days time. The UN team would be on the site for some time to come, it would take many years to transcribe the millions of hours of video recordings that constituted the 'God Tapes'. Jo had kept her father updated on their process, rather against the secrecy rules imposed by the international committee responsible. Her father, Jim, was now forever trotting around Europe and often further a-field to speak at church and scientific gatherings, so he was rather thankful that the Christmas holidays were here, although there was nearly two weeks yet to the day itself. Tomorrow, his son Peter and Owen Gwilliam were

due to join them, the university now closed for what they insisted on calling 'Thee Mid-winter Holiday', despite the 'revelation' of the existence of God. Jim Markson was at last starting to wind down, so it was with a sigh that he greeted the chirping of his Com Unit.

"Jim Markson," he said half a second after he pressed the 'accept' button.

"Mr. Markson, it's Heidi Goldbloom here, how are you," she asked.

"Good," came the reply, "just trying to relax and looking forward to a few days off at Christmas."

"Well I think I may be about to ruin that for you, Jim," Goldbloom answered.

"Really, I knew that this was too good to last, what can I do for you Prime Minister."

"You have seen the situation at the Mount I suppose," the PM asked.

"Yes, of course," replied Jim.

"We thought, no, hoped, that the blue beam and the lava were transient events, but it seems that they are not going to disappear any time soon. The problem is that we stored the Ark of the Covenant in the great cavern and we cannot get in," Heidi told Jim.

"Well I guess that it will be as safe there as anywhere," ventured Jim.

"True enough, but we need to get it out, Jim. Firstly, we had promised to put it on display over the holiday period, our people need to be encouraged, and I guess that the Christians need some encouragement too, the

Ark means as much to you as to us."

"Madam Prime Minister, I am not sure what I can do to help, if that is what you are asking," stated Jim.

"Jim, you were one of the little group that discovered the Ark, and you found it by following that tunnel, you worked out how to avoid all the traps," explained Heidi, "So what I am asking is, would you take a group of our people back through the tunnel to see if we can retrieve our precious artifact. I am also worried that we will loose the Ark again in the magma."

"I'm not sure what to say, Madam Prime Minister," said Jim, "can I have a few days to think about it?"

"Please call me Heidi, Jim," said the PM, "by all means, think it through, but we need to act soon, before the holiday, you are our last resort I'm afraid."

A Secret Location in Ramallah, Israe's West Bank. Friday 9th December 2033 19:55 hours (local time).

Sitta's com-unit sprang to life just as he was starting to doze in front of the olive-wood fire; he was immediately awake and alert, "Yes?" he said into the microphone end of the com.

"This is Eric Henkle here papa, I have to report that the package is here on the island, security is in excess and the package contained and we have no access. Can you please advise," Henkle asked, referring to Jim Markson.

"If the package is safe then wait and keep guard, be careful not to damage the package unless instructed."

**JMRT House, Cyprus. Saturday, 10th
December, 2033. 09:45hrs (local time).**

Owen and Peter had arrived late the previous evening, and after a few drinks had gone straight to bed. Breakfast was over and Jim had retired to his office with Owen.

“So then, what's the great mystery Jim,” Owen said as he seated himself with his customary mug of coffee in hand.

“Had a call from an admirer of yours a few days ago, Mrs Goldbloom.”

“Really, a bit unusual isn't it, she must have wanted something.”

“She wants us, well me really, to go back through the tunnels from where we found the Ark, they need a guide so that they can retrieve the Ark from under the temple Mount,” explained Jim.

“What! Have you seen what's bubbling up from under that Mount?”

“Yes, yes, I have Owen, but I think that the Ark may have kept the area around the lift safe from the magma, you know what power that thing has, God would not allow it to be destroyed after all that's happened.”

“I guess what you are asking is, would I come with you, isn't it?”

“Yes Owen, we may need your knowledge of physics, and I know how much you like adventures,” Jim chuckled.

“What can I say Jim, count me in,” laughed Owen, “when do we go?”

“Soon, I think, I'll need to get back to Heidi, and then

they will make the arrangements.”

A Hill above JMRT House, Cyprus.
Wednesday, 14th December, 2033. 18:20hrs
(local time).

The man who's code name was Eric Henkle was huddled with his five-man squad in a small cave that overlooked the JMRT compound. It had been a cold and wet five days and the damp was finally getting to all six mercenaries, and tempers were becoming a little tattered around the edges. They had been in a state of high alert and ready to move at a moments notice for the whole of that time, living on their nerves. They had just finished their improvised meal when the duty lookout called back from the observation point that there was activity in the landing area of the compound. A quick look through his night-vision binoculars confirmed that 'The Package' and one other person were preparing to take off very soon. Henkle grabbed his com-unit and pressed the red button that connected him with Sitta. "Papa, this is Eric Henkle, the package and one other are preparing to leave the security area, Sir." The voice on the Com that they knew only as Papa said, "Thank you Henkle, we think they are heading home, in order to retrieve the box, give them fifteen minutes lead and return to base." "Yes Sir," Henkle replied and cut the connection. He turned and called out to his squad, "Pack up mien freunde we are returning to base."

**Soreq Ravine Six Miles from Jerusalem.
15th December, 2033 09:30hrs (local
time).**

The rain from the previous evening was still draining down the floor of the ravine and the rocky sides were slick. The muted light reflected like diamonds off of the facets of the rock, where the water glistened as it drained to the tiny stream below. Jim had refused to let his daughter join him on this escapade, after her previous traumatic experience in this gully. Professor Owen Gwilliam had agreed to accompany Jim and Major Davidson, even though he had not been with them when they had discovered the Ark. Jim had thought that Owen might come in useful through his knowledge of physics and the possible traps they may encounter. The two LIMO's, the second with a unit of Israeli troops, which would deal with the security, slowly descended to the area where the battle with the terrorists had previously taken place. The site seemed larger in daylight and rather different, Major Davidson turned towards Jim, and stroking his chin asked, "Do you remember where the entrance is."

"No, not really, it was dusk when we got out of the cavern, and we were a little distracted."

"We all were, my friend, all I remember is that it was on the north side," said Davidson, "Pilot, can you do a slow hover down the north side, look for a small cave about half way up the wall."

The LIMO swung around and nosed-down moved crab-wise along the rocky wall, on the second pass they

spotted the entrance, the pilot came along side and allowed the Major, Jim and Owen to step out onto the ledge. The small group stood to one side so that the unit in the second LIMO could be off-loaded. The soldiers set up their abseiling equipment and the Major, with his Captain, were the first to enter the cavern, the remainder were quick to drop down, leaving the sergeant on the ledge to help the civilians. A security cordon was established in the cavern and the lights and generator cell were installed. At a shout from the Major, Jim and Owen were fitted in their harnesses and lowered to the cavern floor. Every thing in the cavern was just as they had left it, except for the empty plinth where the Ark had rested. Owen, who had just seen the cavern for the first time, immediately went off to explore.

It had been decided that Jim, Owen and Davidson, with two of the soldiers, would form the expedition team and the army personnel busied themselves getting the equipment sorted into packs. After about twenty minutes Owen rejoined the group carrying an earthenware jar containing some odd looking sticks or batons. These sticks were about thirty centimetres in length and between two centimetres and ten centimetres in diameter, with a curious glass-like attachment at the thicker end. Jim immediately grabbed one of the sticks, "What have you found, Owen," Jim asked, and dropped the stick when it started to buzz. Owen laughed, "That's what I just did, I don't know what they are but they must have some significance."

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Outside of the cavern, some ten-thousand meters above them, a single micro-drone hovered, its cameras trained on the exact place where the Israeli soldiers accompanying Jim and Owen, had disappeared into the cliff-side. The drone's invisible IR beam quickly calculating the GPS position and transmitting it back to the West Bank. The drone, now regarded as 'old technology' was purchased in the late two-thousand and tens by an intermediary for the Palestinians and had never yet been used. Developed by the United States military and abandoned as public opinion turned away from the use of drones, it has both microwave and stealth technology.

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Five hundred meters into the tunnel the five searchers were making progress toward their goal. Fifteen meters later they approached the first decision point, the tunnel split into three. Jim immediately started to examine the walls of the three passageways and pointed to a faint mark on the wall of the left branch, "This is the way, Jo marked it in case we needed to retrace our steps, see, here's the 'JM' mark." The five continued for over a kilometre before they encountered a real trap. Before them was what seemed like a chasm. Jim could not remember having anything like a chasm to cross on their first navigation of these tunnels, so he found it strange that one should now appear.

“Are you sure this was the correct tunnel Jim,” asked Major Davidson.

“Yes Major, there is no doubt of that, I showed you Jo's initials on the wall.”

“Nevertheless Jim, we have a void in front of us that we have no equipment with which cross,” stated Owen.

Jim, curious to find out how deep the chasm was approached the edge of the precipice with one of the high-powered lamps. As he switched the lamp on something happened to the chasm, the perspective changed. Tentatively he placed a foot over the edge and lowered it into what he saw as the void, his foot hit solid ground where there should have been a void. “It's just an optical illusion, there is no chasm here at all,” Jim called to the others.

“A darn clever one then,” said Owen, as he also tried the solidity of the ground with a pebble he had acquired from the ground. The stone skidded across the tunnel floor and into the semi-darkness beyond.

“OK,” said the Major, “best foot forward then, let's push on.”

“I guess we didn't see it last time as we were coming the other way and we only had small torches,” explained Jim, “and I think other things may be a little different coming in this direction.”

Two kilometres later things were in deed different, one of the solders, Mark, felt something move beneath his foot and was immediately alert. Nothing seemed to change, until he rounded one of the few bends in the

tunnel, there they discovered a sparkling wall of energy barring their way. Jim thought that it was similar to the curtain of energy that protected the dais in which the fake Arc had rested. Owen tried to probe the barrier with his hiking stick, but the stick was unable to penetrate the curtain of energy.

The Major gave orders to his troops, "Start searching every inch of the walls for some kind of switch; a recess or loose rock, anything that might turn this barrier off."

Over thirty minutes of finger-tip searching revealed nothing and Davidson was becoming more, and more stressed by the event. "There has to be some way of deactivating this thing," looking at Jim and Owen.

"All we did in the Mount's cavern was to disrupt it with wooden poles, they reacted like curtains," mused Jim, "your hiking stick isn't wood Owen, it's a composite, and we need some wood."

"Which means going all the way back to the LIMO's and fetching poles," Davidson said angrily, "which would mean coming back tomorrow."

"Just one moment," interjected Owen, "what about those batons that I found hidden back there, I wonder if they would work."

"Well let's try," said Jim, "there is little to loose other than a few more minutes. As you said Owen, they must have a use."

Each of the five opened their individual backpacks and withdrew the strange batons; Owen took one of his in his right hand and gently pushed the stick into the barrier. This time the experiment worked and a

triangular breach appeared. Owen took a second baton from Jim and joined the two together and slowly moved them horizontally apart, this formed a rectangular window.

“Well done Professor,” shouted Davidson, “Mark, Ruben, can you take over from the Professor and maintain a doorway to let us through please, “ he ordered.

The two soldiers each took one of the batons and opened a larger breach then both stepped through, then held the window open for the other three to pass through. Once through they continued along the passage, they had not progressed more than twenty meters when they heard a '*whoomph*' sound; they turned to see the barrier had completely disappeared.

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Above ground Eric Henkle's mercenaries were approaching the area of the entrance to the tunnels. Their transport, which had followed the drone at a distance, had dropped them about a half mile away from the target area coordinates and they were now closing in unseen by the Israeli military. However Abu Sitta was watching intently via the stealth drone's camera and guiding his men through the best route.

The six man squad each found themselves fox-holes from which to observe the entrance to the cave and 'Papa' ordered them to wait and stay covert until such time as the expedition returned. All members of the team were equipped with heat dissipating suits, which

would hide them from any infer-red and body-heat detection that the Israelis had installed. Two of the mercenaries, both ordnance experts, were charged with placing and setting implosion devices that they hoped would destroy everything other than the 'Tabut', the Ark.

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After another four tunnel tri-junctions the expectation finally reached the chamber, under the Temple Mount, that had been christened 'The Control-room' with some relief, and had settled in the seats so as to eagerly consume their rations. They hoped it would soon be merely a case of lowering the lift that formed the dais on which the actual Ark had been placed, and that made them feel more relaxed. The food consumed and a well earned fifteen minute rest over, they took up stations behind the seat that Owen was occupying. Owen scratched his head, looking at the controls that were laid out in front of him, "I just need a few moments to remember what each control does," he explained.

First he managed to power up the video screen to obtain a view of the cavern above them. There was the Ark on its dais and around it the energy curtain, but around it were red-orange glowing walls of molten lava that the Ark was keeping at bay, protecting itself from total destruction. It was then that almost everyone realized how warm the room was; certainly Jim and Owen felt this having experienced the Control-room previously.

Owen identified the control for the dais lift and with a silent prayer he pressed the domed crystal that activated the lift. They all held their breath for several seconds and in unison let their breath exhale as the lift slowly started to move downward. As the lift, with the Ark, sank into the floor of the cavern the lava also sank ominously down, then the video from the cavern above suddenly went to white noise. Owen turned his head to look at Jim, and received two raised eyebrows in return. "Is that lava going to flood this room and the tunnels," asked Major Davidson with a very worried look on his face.

"I am sure it will, eventually, at least," answered Owen, "we will just have to hope that it will hold it back until we get out."

They heard the hum of the lift stop suddenly and rather tentatively opened the steel doors that had been fitted to protect the Control-room. The passage was clear. The group made their way to the lift and found it on the dais, brightly illuminated by the orange glow from overhead. Davidson ordered Mark and Ruben to get on the gold encased wooden poles and to carry the Ark off the lift and into the Control-room. Once in the room the steel doors were closed and locked. "I am not sure how long that door will last against the heat of the lava," said Owen.

"It may just give us the lead we need, Professor," Davidson said over his shoulder as the Ark disappeared out of the door into the tunnel, "and we still have the protection of the Ark's field; now let's get out of here."

16:42 hrs (local time)

The journey back to the entrance took a little over three hours with no hold-ups other than three, five minute rests for Mark and Ruben. There had been no sign of the barrier and the chasm caused as little problem as the remainder of the tunnel. The lava had illuminated their way through the tunnel and the high-power torches were almost redundant. The Major in particular had been worried about the lava catching up with them, the two sets of doors had held for some quarter of an hour before the orange light had appeared behind them. However the lava had stayed some hundred or so meters behind them, but they all knew that the big problem was yet to come when they moved the Ark into the entrance cave and then out into the open. Owen was trying to remember if the entrance was higher than the top of the Mount, which may allow the lava to find its own level, however he was unsure of how much pressure lay beneath, in the magma chamber. The security detail was waiting in the cave and had already rigged a pulley system and widened the entrance to ensure the safe passage of their precious Ark. Outside dusk was beginning to fall and flood-lights had been set up, which disrupted the low-light capabilities of the surrounding mercenaries.

The expedition now reached the end of the tunnel and laid the Ark down just inside of the tunnel entrance, the Major called the troops together and explained the problem. "We have a small issue with the lava," he

understated the issue, “the Ark has held the lava back from us all the way through the tunnel, but we do not know what will happen when we bring it out into the cave or out into the big world. I would suggest that we all stay close to the Ark until we are safely in the air.”

“I think we will be OK until we exit this cave,” suggested Jim, “the dampening field covered the whole cave the last time we were here.”

“Nevertheless,” said Davidson, “I would not want to take any chances. I want everyone out of the cave before we haul the Ark up, is that clear?” Everyone indicated their assent. “Jim I want you and the Professor outside first.”

Owen went up the steel ladder first, and then Jim quickly followed, the security detail then brought the Ark to a position below the entrance. The lava moved to the tunnel’s opening and remained there, now that it was no longer moving it seemed to be cooling and the orange glow slowly turned to grey. However this gave the Major little respite from his fears as the glowing orange could still be seen through cracks in the grey cinder.

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Outside the entrance all eyes were now alert having seen two men, not in uniform, appear from the small cleft. Their view was not as clear as they would have hoped; the flood-lights had disrupted the low-light goggles. Henkle signaled his senior explosives man to stand by and detonate on his signal, and thumbs hovered over the firing buttons. As Henkle watched

more figures appeared on the small plateau, one knocked against one of flood-lights so that it shone directly toward their position, Henkle was to all intent now blinded. "We need to move," Henkle whispered into his microphone, "I can't see a thing here, pull back quickly."

The area where the mercenaries had gone to ground was now flooded with light and as Henkle crept out of the recess than had hidden them he stepped onto nothing and fell two meters onto another ridge. Resting in the ridge he froze, knowing that any movement would be spotted by one of the Israeli troops, "Curse those lights."

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The Major had been the last to appear on the ledge outside of the entrance and now in the open air, he had just started to relax. Davidson gave the order to haul the Ark up the ten or so meters to the entrance when there was a noise. Ruben turned and thought he saw movement opposite.

"Sir, I think we have company, there was some definite movement over on the opposite side of the gully."

"I heard it Sergeant," replied the Major, "are the pilots awake?"

"Yes Sir, I was chatting about twenty minutes ago," answered one of the security detail.

"Tell one of them to take a turn around the ravine and report back, ordered the Major," Now let's get the Ark out of the cave."

All of the military personnel put their strength to hauling the precious artefact up to the opening and then manhandled it out onto the ledge. The second LIMO, the larger transport, rose up from the bed of the ravine and took position alongside the ledge, and the Ark was quickly slid inside. The LIMO that had taken off to reconnoitre the area reported in just as the Ark was being secured.

“Sir, I can detect no individuals in the area, but they may be wearing heat absorbing suits, because I have several pieces of metallic clutter that seem to move on their own, and a small power source, compatible with a radio detonator,” reported the pilot.

“Thank you Captain, can you.” Davidson's words were cut off by a flash of light that illuminated the ravine in stark detail. Everyone dove to the floor as the rock around them disappeared and they all seemed to go into free-fall for some feet, like the Earth had suddenly been pulled away from under their feet.

Fortunately the other LIMO was outside of the implosion zone, but three of the mercenaries were not, among the casualties was their leader Eric Henkle. The three mercenaries that remained immediately activated their escape procedure and quickly tried to return to their vehicle some half kilometre away. The three men abandoned their special suits, to enable them to move faster, so the LIMO now had little trouble tracking them. The pilot spotted the waiting vehicle and used an EMP blast to disable it, then opened a com-link to his base in Jerusalem for a squad to come and make the arrests.

Back at the cave site no one was any worse for wear, the Ark's energy damper had protected them all, including the LIMO containing the Ark, although they now sat at the bottom of a crater with magma starting to flow into it from the opposite side.

"Everyone into the transport, PDQ," shouted the Major as soon as he had checked that there were no injuries. The whole group crowded into the machine and the LIMO, because of the extra weight, struggled into the air. As they rose, the lava poured into the newly created crater, but thankfully found its own level and did not overflow into what was left of the ravine. The two LIMOs met up at a safe distance from the crater and the extra personnel were then transferred, making the return to base without further incident.

**Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces
Logistics, Tehran, Iran. Sunday 18th
December, 2033. 11:40 hrs (local time).**

Minister Hooshy Ar Karimi, depressed the switch to talk to his personal assistant in the outer office, "Get me Abu Sitta immediately," he said abruptly. The Minister was not in a good mood, one of his contacts had just reported that the Tabut Sakina remained in Israeli hands and had been saved from the volcano at the expense of Sitta's mercenaries, some of whom were now in custody. The worse thing was that they were most probably being interrogated by the Mossad, who he

knew could break almost anyone. This Palestinian had failed him badly and after all the financial support Iran had given him. If Sitta had been one of his people he would have had him executed for this failure. A female aid entered the office with his third cup of coffee of the morning, she was just placing the cup on Karimi's side table when his Com-unit chirped. "Get out," he screamed at the aid, who ran toward the door and disappeared.

"Mister Sitta, I have been awaiting a call from you," said Minister Karimi, sarcastically.

"Of course, Minister, I have been trying to find out what happened, Sir," he said hesitantly.

"Mister Sitta, I could have told you what happened if you had called me, what happened was that *you failed me*, that *is* what happened, and now I suppose, I have to listen to your excuses."

"I have no excuses Minister, because I do not know what happened as I cannot find my people," Sitta told Karimi.

There was a silence that seemed to last minutes, finally Karimi broke the silence, just as Sitta was about to check if he'd lost the connection. "Are you telling me that you do not know that three of your, 'experts' are in the hands of the Mossad and the other three are very dead?"

Now it was Abu Sitta's turn to stay silent, "I'm not sure what to say Minister."

"I would advise you to say nothing," said the Minister, "I am relieving you of your commitment, I shall assume

the responsibility from here on in, good bye Mister Sitta.”

A Secret Location in Ramallah, Israel's West Bank. Monday 19th December 2033 08:10 hours (local time).

Abu Sitta was still fuming the next morning about the treatment he had received at the hands of Minister Karimi, *'it was all well and good him sitting in his grand office whilst others did his dirty work'*, he thought. *'He needs to be taught a lesson in diplomacy, and I am the one ordained to do so, but how?'* Then the idea suddenly struck him, one way he could show the arrogant Karimi who was really running the show. Sitta leaned forward to pick up the Com-unit that lay on the plastic table that served as his desk, but then stopped and had another discussion with himself. What he was about to do went against everything he had ever stood for, but maybe, it could be a way of getting inside as a double agent, he justified his actions. Without hesitation this time he leaned across and activated the com.

The Office of the Prime Minister, The Knesset, Sacher Park, Jerusalem, Israel. Monday 19th December 2033 09:20 hours (local time).

Prime Minister Goldbloom was feeling very pleased with herself and very satisfied that the Ark of the Covenant was once more in the hands of Israel, and was now safe. However interrogation of the three mercenaries had revealed nothing about the operation to steal the

Ark, other than, as expected, the Palestinians had been involved. The winter holidays, in the form of Hanukkah, were nearly here and she was looking forward to a break as well as the celebration, which had also been designated Ark Day by the Israeli government, the following week. It was planned that the precious artifact would be paraded through the streets of Jerusalem, to the site of the new Third Temple to the side of the Temple mount. A special vehicle had been constructed that would allow a full view of the Ark by the people, whilst protecting it within state-of-the-art security. The mobile security enclosure had been designed by Pickles Industries especially for Israel and the Ark, and of course her friend Rick Pickles would be there to oversee everything.

Heidi was roused from her thoughts by her intercom buzzing, "Yes," she said, "What's up?"

"Madam, Minister Marks is here, says he needs to speak to you urgently."

"OK, send the Minister in please," she instructed her PA."

Ben Marks entered the PM's office with what could only be described as a very worried look on his face, which was a deathly grey. "What's up Ben," the Prime Minister asked immediately.

"I have just had a very interesting conversation Madam prime Minister, one that I cannot even now believe that I have had."

"Sit down Ben and tell all," Heidi said.

Ben seated himself across the desk from his boss and

took a deep breath, "I have just been talking for the past half hour with Abu Sitta." explained Ben.

"Abu Sitta! Abu Sitta the terrorist?"

"None other," confirmed Marks.

"What the hell did *he* want?"

"It seems that all is not well within the Arab camp, he didn't give any details, but I could tell that there is a breakdown between his organization and Iran, who, incidentally, Sitta tells me has been funding the Palestinian terror program. However, getting to the core of the conversation; he wanted to warn us that Iran will be staging an attack on Jerusalem on the twenty-fifth of this month."

"What!" The PM stood and walked around to the other side of the desk and occupied the other chair next to Ben Marks. "Do you believe Sitta, or is he just making trouble?"

"Yes he is making trouble, but I also believe him. He admitted that the attack on the Ark rescue party last week was down to him, and several other operations against us in the past couple of years, which puts him on our wanted list. It seems that the plan is to detonate another implosion device, a very big one this time, and knowing the self protection system of the Ark, it alone will be left untouched. Mercenaries, dressed as Israeli uniforms, are then to move in and take the Ark. It seems its totally Iran's plan, which Minister Hooshy Ar Karimi is at the centre of it."

"So, we must assume that the attack is an official act of war by the Irani state," stated Goldbloom.

"I would class it as a pre-emptive strike, Mam," stated Ben, "If we declare war on Iran then we will be seen as the aggressor, but if we do nothing they will destroy us."

"Let me see if I can contact Minister Karimi," proposed the PM. Heidi opened her Com-unit and accessed the secure section with a password, after a few seconds it was answered by a man speaking Arabic, "Office of Minister Ar Karimi."

In English Goldbloom asked, "Please put me through to the Minister, this Prime Minister Boldbloom calling." There was silence for some forty seconds.

"I am sorry the Minister is unavailable," said the man, now in English.

"When will the Minister be available please," asked Goldbloom.

"The Minister says that he will not be available to you until after the western New Year," the voice replied just before the connection was cut.

"Well, I'd say that settles the matter, Ar Karimi is obviously there and I think that was a snub, Mam," said Ben, summing the situation up. "What do you propose Prime Minister?"

"I propose that we call a full cabinet meeting, I will be recommending a declaration of war, again," stated Goldbloom with not a little sorrow, "seems like it's a return to the bad old days. Do I have your support Ben?"

"Certainly, Prime Minister," said Ben, "meeting this afternoon?"

"Yes," answered Heidi, as Ben made for the door, with his hand on the door-handle he stopped, and turned.

“Oh, by the way, I just heard, Russia's request to join the European Union, it was turned down by a large majority, shame that.”

“Thank you Ben.”

MI6 HQ, Babylon-on Thames, London, England. Monday, December 19th 2033 16:30 hrs (local time)

The secure ‘red’ com-system receiver buzzed urgently on the desk of Sir James Hennessey's desk. He looked at the receiver with trepidation; it was always bad news when that happened. “Hennessey!” he said and he listened for fifteen seconds and then exclaimed two words, “Oh crap!” After another ninety seconds and a curt “OK,” he replaced the receiver and sank into his leather swivel chair. The internal communication system was something out of a museum, but at least they were secure, which was more than could be said for the digital systems that 'leaked' data. Sir James lifted the telephone, handset, another museum piece, and punched in the extension for Abe Marks' desk. When Marks answered, Sir James asked, “Abe, can you get up here straight away, the bloody Israelis have declared war on Iran.”

Abe Marks was in Hennessey's office within sixty seconds, “What happened,” he asked before he was

through the door.

"I don't have all the details as yet but it seems Iran is, or was planning an attack on Jerusalem on Christmas day," explained Sir James, "you may want to talk to your cousin about that. However as one of Israel's allies this may have far reaching implications."

"I'll put in a call now Sir, if I can use your com?"

"Please, be my guest," said Sir James nodding toward the main console. Abe took a seat at the com and punched in his personal code and then the direct code for his cousin Ben, within seconds Benjamin Marks appeared on the screen.

"Abe, I thought I may get a call from you, call it premonition," Ben laughed.

"Nice to see you too Ben; family OK?"

"Sure, but what you really want to know is what is going on here, right?" asked Ben.

"Right Ben, I'm here with Sir James Hennessey, we just heard about your declaration of war, what's the story," Abe asked. Ben Marks spent the following ten minutes briefing Abe and Sir James on the situation.

"Are you one-hundred percent sure about the accuracy of Sitta's intel," asked Sir James, "we know him as a master of deception."

"We are Sir James, but in the end it's take a chance that our knowing will have dissuaded the Iranians, or taking control of the situation," explained Ben.

"Under the circumstances, I will recommend to the PM and the European Security Council, that we support you Mister Marks, historically we have a commitment to Israel. It was us that championed the State of Israel

after World War two, after all.”

“Thank you Sir James, I will convey that to Mrs Goldbloom,” concluded Ben Marks.

BBC/EBC Newscast, London. Tuesday 20th
December, 2033. 09:00hrs (local time).

“Good morning, here is the nine o'clock news from London. Top story this morning is that there exists a state of war between Israel and Iran. The Israeli Ministry of Information released the news at six o'clock CET this morning. All border crossing points have been closed and a state of martial law has been declared across the nation. So far Tehran has failed to make any official statement concerning the declaration of war. However a spokesperson in the Iraqi government said that it was typical sword waving behaviour from Israel and the Iraq government is not expecting the situation to deteriorate into armed conflict.”

“The European Security Council is meeting later today in Brussels to discuss the situation. President of the Russian Union, Boris Luzhkov has expressed his disappointment over Russia being refused membership of the European Union yesterday. Mister Luzhkov stated that the New Russia had much to offer and sooner or later the EU would rue the day they refused to accept Russia as a full partner.”

“With the Christmas, or Mid-winter Holiday just four days away Christian churches around the world are preparing for record numbers of attendees this year following the revelation of the God Tapes and the subsequent discoveries in Crete. The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Right Reverend Jonathan Benn, told

Newsnight that the 'Revelation' is only a part of the picture, the current state of the world, the volcanic eruptions, the restoration of the Ark of the Covenant, the rebuilding of the third Jewish temple and the situation in the Middle-east, have all contributed to people turning back to the church and Jesus Christ."

"Home Secretary Henry Harden has appealed to the Christian community to restrict their outpourings of faith to appropriate places, within buildings dedicated for that purpose. He added that anyone expressing Christian or other faith views in public will be arrested. The Home Secretary added that he wished everyone a Merry Christmas."

The Office of the Prime Minister, The Knesset, Sacher Park, Jerusalem, Israel. Wednesday 21st December 2033 14:15 hours (local time).

“Good news,” said Ben Marks after he broke the connection, “The European Security Council have voted to support us Madam Prime Minister.”

“That's good,” concluded Israeli Minister of Finance, Moshe Oppenheimer, “the UN and the US have also made commitments to support us, but they are not the ones picking up the tab, we just cannot afford a full all out war.”

“Well we will just have to afford it Moshe, unless you want to see millions of our people murdered,” said the Minister of Defence.

“Gentlemen, please,” interrupted Prime Minister Goldbloom, “The US will supply whatever weapons we need, if required, and the EU has offered loans.”

“Need I remind everyone that we have the Ark,” commented Ben Marks, “in our history we have always prevailed when we were in possession of the Ark. That is the reason the Muslims have been trying to steal it from us, they fear us when it is in our possession.”

“Indeed Ben, they regard . . . ,” started the PM, but was interrupted by the intercom buzzing, “one moment please. Yes, what is it?”

“Madam Prime Minister, Mr. Richard Pickles is here, he is insisting on seeing you,” said the voice from the outer office.

"I will come out to see him," Goldbloom said, flicking the intercom off, "Please excuse me for a few minutes Ministers, it seems that I am wanted outside." The PM exited her office and left her senior ministers to talk among themselves.

"Rick, nice to see you again, what can I do for you, we are a little preoccupied at the moment so I can't spare more than a few minutes," the PM explained.

"Madam Prime Minister, I think it's what I can do for you this time," stated Pickles.

Five minutes later Goldbloom was taking Rick Pickles back into her office to meet her Ministers.

"Gentlemen," she announced, "I'd like you to meet Rick Pickles, saviour of Israel."

It took another hour for Rick Pickles to outline what he was offering Israel. Twenty years ago Rick had set up a covert division his organization, code named 'Red-onion' it had become the Pickles Defence Development Division, known to its employees a 'Triple D'. Over the two decades Triple D had developed some very sophisticated weapons, based on microwave and energy projection. In all cases there had only been limited field tests, Pickles knew they worked but had little information on practical use and capabilities.

"What I propose," went on Pickles, "is a seven year contract, during that time my organisation will provide weaponry that will guarantee the safety of Israel, totally free of charge. In return I need the Israeli military to feed back some data on performance, capabilities, ease

of use and accuracy, stuff like that. Triple D will provide training and a help and advice service, on-site. Do we have a deal," he asked.

Moshe Oppenheimer looked delighted, and Pickles thought that he may start jumping up and down whilst clapping his hands at any minute. Everyone, other than Ben Marks were very happy with the offer, but Ben seemed a little subdued.

"Are you not happy with this offer Ben," asked the PM.

"It's just that it seems too good to be true, and if that is how it seems, then all too often it is, too good to be true, that is."

"Minister, it is very simple, you have a desperate need for defensive and offensive weaponry and I have a need to prove my products on the battlefield," Pickles explained.

"Maybe so, may be not," commented Ben, "however we are not in a position to refuse."

"Good, it's settled then," said Rick, "I have the contract here." Rick opened his briefcase and extracted a multi-page document, which he placed on the PM's desk.

"I will need to let our legal department review this contract," before I sign it," stated Goldbloom.

"OK, but we have little time to negotiate, Heidi," said Pickles with a smug look on his face, "I have my first consignment waiting off Cyprus, we only have two days, if my sources are correct, and we need to get the weapons set up to protect you. I'm afraid to say, if we fail to stop the attack because we have no time to set things up, the deal is off."

The Prime Minister looked shocked, she glanced around the room at her senior Ministers, and there was silence for almost half a minute. "I don't see we have any alternative Madam Prime Minister," said Oppenheimer, the others quickly nodded their assent.

"Are we all agreed then," asked PM Goldbloom.

Every one confirmed their support, except for Ben, who said, "I'm still not happy, but I guess we are between a rock and a hard place."

Heidi Goldbloom, Prime Minister of the most powerful state in the Middle East, flipped through the twenty pages of the Pickles contract, took a deep breath and signed the document that was placed in front of her.

"Thank you Prime Minister," Pickles said through the smirk that hung on his face, he took a Com-unit from his jacket pocket and thumbed a button, "Captain, this is Rick Pickles, authorisation seven, delta, six, six, six, beta, Romeo. You can proceed with the delivery of the Christmas present to the port of Ashdod. Make every haste captain, full speed. I will meet you there in three hours." Pickles closed the connection and turned to the assembled Ministers and said, "Now if you will excuse me there is much I have to do," and headed for the door. The door was open when he turned, "By the way, I assume the Ark Parade on the twenty-fifth is still to go ahead," he asked, "that was a rhetorical question by the way, I'd like to take part in that parade, see you all on Sunday then," he waved and the door closed, leaving everyone staring at the closed door.

The Dining Room, JMRT House, Cyprus.
Friday, 23rd December, 13:12 hrs (local
time).

The dining room had been decorated for the Christmas festivities and there was a warm feeling in the air, as Jim sat with his family enjoying lunch. "Your friend Heidi Goldbloom seems to be in some trouble with this war looming, Owen," Jim Markson said.

"Are you still going over to Jerusalem on Christmas day," Carol Markson asked.

"I don't know yet, I have been invited down to RAF Akrotiri to speak at their Christmas day service as well," answered Jim.

"I think Akrotiri is the safest bet, at least you would be on British territory," said Carol, "what if there's trouble at the parade, you know how much the Arab block wants the Ark."

"I don't think Iran would try anything at the parade Jim," said Owen, "the Ark will be too well protected for another grab. If you do go, I wouldn't mind tagging along, if you don't mind."

"You'd be very welcome Owen, but I would rather spend the day here, with the family, that's why I'm in two minds."

"Why don't we all just go to the 'cathedral' at Akrotiri," said Carol, "that would be really nice."

"The service is at ten-thirty and the parade is at two, so I could easily do both, I do not like letting Mrs. Goldbloom down, she said they wanted to present us with something to say thanks for retrieving the Ark, again,"

said Jim. "I may give her a call tomorrow to suss out the situation.

Jerusalem, Israel. Saturday, 24th
December, 12:18 hrs (local time).

The first of the seven freighters had docked in Ashdod soon after eight-thirty the previous evening and by nine o'clock a hundred of the transport version LIMO's had started airlifting large containers to scores of locations around Israel. The ATS (Atomic Turbine Ship) Goldmine had fully unloaded its cargo by just before midnight, all this time the northern dock was being cleared of shipping so that the other six ships could dock as one unit. Under military authorisation the entire northern dock was given over to the ships and a security barrier had been set up around the perimeter. Through the night the transports had flown in and out of the dock, lifting containers and technical teams to their appropriate locations. By eleven AM all the ships had been off loaded and four ships had set sail back into the Mediterranean Sea, on the other three, guns, missile launchers and energy weapons had magically appeared on their decks.

Below deck in one of the ships Rick Pickles now sat before a bevy of soft-screens and communications equipment. In this cabin, that had once been the crew's games room, were some twenty or so other personnel, all setting up the already installed electronic modules. Above their heads on the ships superstructure more technicians were busy erecting scanners, antenna and dish-aerials. This ship, as well as the other two, were owned by the Pickles Corporation, and the ATS Global

Monarch had been adopted as the flag-ship of the little fleet. Satellite pictures were already coming in from the Pickles Corporation communications satellite. The satellite was one of four, launched back in the twenties by one of the space planes that Rick Pickles has developed for commercial uses that never really materialised. All four satellites could be moved in their geosynchronous orbit, to view whatever part of the globe he wanted. PICSAT 2 had just arrived on station over the eastern border of Israel, and was now being programmed to monitor and detect both atmospheric and low orbit air traffic.

As the morning had worn on, one by one the microwave projectors were coming on line. These projectors would, by tonight, create a defensive curtain that only authorised vehicles would be allowed to penetrate. All air traffic from midnight on would need a transponder code from Pickles Corporation in order to cross into or out of Israeli territory. The code would then be recognised by PICSTAT 2, which would momentarily drop a small section of the microwave curtain. The second function of the projectors was to project EMP pulses toward any approaching air traffic that did not present a valid code, or presented a plain and current threat. Also coming on line were the more accurate and deadly energy weapons, these were upgraded and redeveloped laser projectors that used the same technology as Rick's very effective ring. The big difference was that these energy projectors were powered by suit-case sized fusion reactors, originally

developed to provide cheap energy for the third world. Next week the mobile units will arrive.

**Jim Markson's Office, JMRT House, Cyprus.
Saturday - Christmas Eve, 24th December,
15:15 hrs (local time).**

Jim entered his office and seated himself at his desk as he switched on his desk-Com, he tapped the key-pad and opened a connection to Heidi Goldbloom.

"Hello Jim," Heidi said as the connection opened, "how are you?"

"Well, thank you, I'm just calling about tomorrow; I appreciate your invitation, but are things safe, Carol is quite worried about me attending?"

"What do you want Jim, the official line or a personal view," the PM asked.

"At this point I think I would prefer your personal view."

"Honestly, I would not come within a hundred miles of Jerusalem," Heidi said, "but you never heard that from me. Do you wish to give me your official apologies Jim?"

"I think I do, in that case, thank you for your candour," said Jim.

"No problem, Israel owes you Jim, have a happy holiday, and say the same to Carol and the family."

"And to you and yours, Heidi," concluded Jim.

JMRT House, Cyprus. Saturday - Christmas Day, 25th December, 08:45 hrs (local time).

It seemed that everyone had gathered in the dining room for Christmas Day breakfast, many of the staff had brought their families to Cyprus this year; one could not blame them as the UK was not the place to be. The discoveries that the teams had made over the last few years had affected most of the excavation teams and so many had seen their long-dead faith renewed. Others had gained a faith where none had existed previously, Owen Gwilliam was one of the latter group, he had almost been the first to be affected. It had taken Jim much longer to realize the implications of what they had found, but he now had a very strong unshakable faith in God. His wife Carol had always been a believer, and in the past he had found her faith a real support when times were difficult. The two Markson offspring, Jo and Peter, had just accepted the Christian faith, just as they accepted everything for which there was proof.

Today there seemed there would be a mass exodus from the compound down the English Anglican church, that the Air-force personnel called 'the Cathedral', in the British Sovereign Territory that was the base at Akrotiri. Jim had never seen so many LIMO's in the parking area, and the cooks, supervised by Carol, had found a full time job catering for the staff and their families. This breakfast time was a very jolly occasion, despite the state of the world and the prophecies that were hanging

over everything. Carol said that she was so thankful that they had purchased the toast machine; otherwise they would never have been able to cope, as it was, there was a queue. At just after nine Jim left the dining room to get ready for the church service, he had readied his best suit for the occasion, and once dressed he again reviewed his notes, for maybe the tenth time. At nine-thirty Jim walked over to the dining room, where he found everyone ready to depart, Jim, Carol, Jo, John, Peter and Owen trooped over to the parking area and got into the family LIMO. Everyone waited until their LIMO was away to the south-east, before wandering to their own vehicles in twos and four or fives.

Ten minutes later the Markson family was being greeted by the Anglican Bishop of Cyprus and taken into a small coffee-bar at the side of the modern church building. The family was provided with drinks of choice and the Bishop made small talk until at ten-twenty, it was time to move into the main church. The family was shown to chairs on the front row and on the left of the church, for five minutes they were besieged by various airmen wanting to shake hands and ask questions. A half hour later, following prayers, and the singing of several Christmas carols the Bishop rose to introduce Jim.

“Brethren, it is fitting that on this special day, we have a very special guest speaker, someone who is virtually a resident of this island these days, please give a warm welcome to Sir James Markson.”

There was a small explosion of applause, and as Jim

faced the congregation, for the first time he realized how many people were in the church. "Thank you Bishop, and let me say that it is an honor to be invited this morning. It is ironic, that we are gathered here today, and in countless places across this planet, to celebrate the birth of the one who started the Christian faith, ironic because we are meeting so close to the end. Do you realize, this may well be the last time we meet to celebrate the mass of Christ? If the prophesies that we uncovered a few short years ago are true, and I believe them to be so, then my friends there is little time left. On that island that lies less than five-hundred miles from this spot, there are pictures in stone, carved thousands of years ago, that depict, the very events that are happening today." Jim spoke about the discoveries and the way they had affected him and his family, and their many friends and employees, he spoke more about the prophetic carvings and the visions of John the Evangelist as recorded in the so called 'God Tapes'.

"So, in conclusion," Jim continued, "for the first time in over two-thousand years, we have proof before our eyes that, not only is God real, but that He was the instigator and creator of His Son Jesus. Only twice has God actually created, the first time He created matter, the universe and living things. The second and last act of creation was creating the seed in His handmaiden, a seed that became Jesus, an act that is equal if not greater than the creation of the universe. Most of us are like Thomas, the disciple, we need proof, well here is that proof, hard evidence, accept it or reject it, that

decision is yours, and the outcome is yours also.”

There was a brief silence before the applause started again; the service ended with another carol, then it was a dash to the back of the church for coffee and mince pies. It seemed that everyone wanted to talk to Jim or one of the family or staff, and queues formed for each visitor. It was close to one-thirty before Jim and Carol made their excuses and left the church for their quick hop back to the compound. Back in the dining room the Catering staff started to serve the traditional Christmas lunch of roast turkey, followed by Plumb Pudding and cream. At a few minutes before three o'clock, one of the kitchen staff opened the door to the dining area and shouted, “All hell has let loose in Israel, and it’s on the news.”

Owen was the first to jump up and switch on the wall screen.

“These were the scenes a short while ago in Jerusalem as the holiday was marked by a parade celebrating the custody of the Ark of the Covenant by Israel. Eyewitnesses have reported that a suicide bomber activated an implosion grenade as the Ark passed by. Thousands are reported to have died in the attack, including many Christians who were in the Holy Land to celebrate Christmas. Spokespersons from government sources have confirmed that the Ark was undamaged and is now in a safe location. Other sources report that there has been some sort of conflict close to Israel’s eastern border, where aircraft have been seen

exploding or just falling out of the air, these reports are unconfirmed. More news as it comes in. . . “

**Sulla Strada, Central Jerusalem, Sunday
25th December. 15:20 (local time).**

Rick Pickles sat on the side of the carriage on which the Ark had been conveyed, looking around at the devastation that started some hundred meters away. Where a half hour ago there had been buildings and a power substation, roads and crowds of people, now there was nothing but a doughnut shaped crater. The entire honour-guard nearest to the Ark had escaped, just as the open vehicle containing the Prime Minister had, all saved by the Ark's energy dampening field. It was obvious that the incident had been a part of a general attack; indeed the bomber had shouted something about Allah and Islam, just before the implosion. He needed to get back to the Global Monarch, and quickly. Pickles stood and, a little shakily, walked toward the ground vehicle where Heidi Goldbloom sat stunned, protected by her security unit, who barred his way. Goldbloom waved the soldiers back to allow her friend Rick access.

“Madam prime Minister, I need to get back to my control base at Ashdod, as soon as possible, I think we may be under attack,” Pickles explained with urgency in his voice.

The Prime Minister turned to the Lieutenant in

command, "Get a LIMO in here directly for Mr. Pickles, please."

"Yes Madam," responded the Lieutenant, and relayed the order through his still crackly radio. Six minutes later a government LIMO descended through the chaos followed by the PM's official LIMO and an armoured carrier that would take the Ark to safety. The Palestinian squad dressed as Israeli soldiers had not materialised, as per Sitta's warning, but still the carrier crew were double checked before the Ark was allowed to leave. From the air everyone could see the extent of the devastation, and not for the first time, tears formed in the PM's eyes. Pickles was the first away and made the short hop to Ashdod in under ten minutes.

**The Control Cabin, ATS Global Monarch,
North Dock, The Port of Ashdod, Israel.
Sunday 25th December 2033. 15:36 hrs
(local time) .**

Rick Pickles burst into his command centre and threw out a generic question to no one in particular, "What's happening?"

"So far, we've had three attempted incursions, one was taken down by one of the laser projectors over Balqa, the other two hit the microwave curtain, they were all old Mig 35 fighters. The pilots of two aircraft that hit the curtain ejected," Rick's Senior Controller, Jeremy Foster, told him.

Pickles turned to the satellite feed section, "Is there any

activity from the east now?"

"Nothing Sir, just commercials, all of which have access codes being transmitted."

"It may be all over bar the shouting Rick," suggested Foster.

"Don't believe it Jerry," Pickles said with a laugh in his voice, "this thing hasn't even got off the ground yet, Iran has only had a few days to respond. My feeling is that they were just testing our defences today."

"Are you OK Rick," Jerry asked, "We saw the incident on the monitor, and you had a near miss there."

"Yes I'm fine," assured Pickles, "that's why I chose to ride on the Ark's carriage, that box has some power to it, no wonder the Arabs want to get hold of it, I wouldn't mind nabbing it for myself."

Just then an alarm sounded, interrupting the conversation, the whole crew jumped to their tasks, "Incoming!" Satellite Monitoring shouted over the noise of the alarm. "Single missile, coming in from low orbit."

"What's the destination point," asked Pickles.

"Just coming in. . . . trajectory termination point is approximately thirty-one, forty-six, by thirty-five, twelve," reported the monitoring station, "impact in one minute - ten."

"Three projectors are tracking," reported Jerry, "acquiring target in eleven seconds."

There was a silence, then, "three, two, one, target destroyed!"

"Well done people, lets keep on our toes," shouted Pickles to everyone.

MI6 HQ, Babylon-on Thames, London, England. Wednesday, December 26th 2033 09:30 hrs (local time).

Abe Marks tapped lightly on the open door to Sir James' office, carrying two fresh coffees, "Good morning Sir, coffee?" he said as he entered the inner sanctum of the chief spook.

"Come on in Abe," said Sir James, "Have a good holiday?"

"Not bad Sir, except watching that fiasco in Jerusalem on Christmas day," answered Abe.

"Take a seat Abe, what can I do for you?"

"I just thought you would want to know, Israel has signed an agreement with Pickles for the entire defence of the state, seems to have cut the middle-east's most powerful military right out of the picture."

"What," exclaimed Sir James, "how in God's name did he pull that one off?"

"Rick Pickles seems to be regarded as a bit of a super hero by the Jewish populace already with that stunt a while ago, some call him the new Messiah."

"Yes I read about that, so what's he doing for them," Sir James asked.

"From the reports that were on my desk this morning, pretty much everything," reported Abe, "he's set up a command and control base somewhere, we are trying to locate that, and he's been knocking down Iranian aircraft, ten to this point, and one missile, it seems, since Sunday. What's worrying me is that he has installed some very sophisticated weaponry, which he

must have been developing covertly and funded himself.”

“What do you mean by sophisticated weaponry,” asked the chief spook.

“I only have sketchy reports, so I will contact Ben again later, but he seems to have energy weapons and some sort of energy shield. He has informed all the main airlines and air traffic control centres that they need an access code added to their transponder beacons, which they have to pay a fee for, *of course*. British Airways Traffic Controller tells me that any air vehicle that does not transmit the code gets knocked out of the sky, automatically. You have the code and you just fly through.”

“Why do you suppose he has kept all this to himself,” asked Sir James, “our military has been asking munitions developers to produce an energy weapon for years; they have all said that it is not possible, science fiction British Aerospace called it.”

“That's the question Sir, he could write his own contract price within Europe, but he has kept it secret, why?”

Global Monarch, North Dock, The Port of Ashdod, Israel. Wednesday 27th December 2033. 11:40 hrs (local time).

Rick Pickles was working in his state-room when the ship's internal intercom buzzed, "Pickles," he stated, he listened for a few seconds and said, "OK, ask the port master to clear the central dock of commercial shipping and set up an exclusion zone of, say a kilometre landward and ten to seaward. Get the small units off first and over to the Syrian border ASAP."

Pickles then lifted his com-unit and selected the direct connection to the Prime Minister.

"Hello Rick," said Goldbloom, "is everything OK?"

"So far so good, I just wanted to bring you up to date, so far the defence system has taken out eleven Iranian attack aircraft and the missile you know about on Sunday, we have also recorded two unmanned reconnaissance drones flying along the other side of the border. I have just heard that our mobile ground attack vehicles have arrived at Ashdod and are docking as we speak. I'm moving some of them directly to the Jordan and Syrian borders, which we see as the danger areas, but we have much more in reserve. After what Iran has thrown at you over the last few days, I would recommend a surgical attack on Iran, Israel can no longer be accused of making a pre-emptive strike, we are the defenders here."

"I will need to get the agreement of my inner cabinet," Goldbloom told Pickles.

"Fair enough, but we need to strike fast, and hard

Heidi.”

Air Crew Ready-room, The ATS 'Century Mirage', Ashdod, Israel. Sunday January 1st 2034. 10:12 hrs (local time).

Jack Davis had never flown in anger, yes he had flown for eight years with the Royal Air-force, driving fighters, transports, bombers, the lot, but he had never fired a missile or gun at a living target. Now he was the captain of this three man crew supposed to be flying the most advanced aircraft the world had ever seen, and soon would be going into the attack. The 'P7' (Mirage) had been developed in Britain over six years, with the assembly and testing taking place in a secluded area of northern Spain. The plane is equipped with full 'Chameleon' circuits, thousands of microscopic cells complete with cameras that feed their light signals to the opposing cell on the other side of the craft. The result, the plane is almost totally invisible, and because the cameras react to the full light spectrum, the aircraft is invisible to all forms of detection. The weaponry is also the most advanced on the planet, together with the targeting and evasion systems; it is the ultimate killing machine.

Despite all this, Jack was scared, war was, or should have been, a thing of the past, it was not the thought of flying the aircraft that scared him, as the chief test pilot, he had flown it many times. What was scary was having to purposely take human lives, it made him feel sick. Being a fighter pilot was supposed to be fun. Trying to take his mind off of what was surely to come,

he picked up one of the dozens of magazines and started to read, it didn't work. It didn't work because within three minutes of picking the magazine up, the public address system summoned all crews to the briefing room. There were seven crews and Jack was flight leader, that responsibility also weighed heavy on him, and he was supposed to set an example.

The briefing took thirty minutes and the crews were each given a programmed card with the targets specified on it that would be uploaded to the weapons, there was no room for any error. Each crew consisted of the captain (the pilot), an e-weapons person and a navigator who was also the co-pilot, Jack's crew had been flying together for two years and were the best of friends. The test crew had spent the last two months training the other six crews and a feeling of comradeship had begun to develop. Sortie launch time was twelve noon, the first of possibly many missions against Iran.

BBC/EBC Newscast, London. Monday 2nd
January, 2034. 09:00hrs (local time).

“Reports are coming in of a retaliatory attack on Iran yesterday by Israel. This attack followed an abortive attack on the twenty-fifth of December, on the Jerusalem parade in which the ancient Ark was nearly destroyed. The attack on the Celebration Parade was followed by several air attacks and, unconfirmed reports say a missile was involved, all of which were stopped and destroyed by Israeli defence forces. Israel have been slow to respond but yesterday mounted an air attack which involved several stealth aircraft. [Pictures from Iran sources shown with voice over] Iranian sources have confirmed that the raids took place but say that no military targets were hit and that civilian casualties have been heavy.”

“The Israeli Prime Minister, Mrs. Heidi Goldbloom, held a press conference two hours ago and stated that the raid had been a total success with all designated targets destroyed, with no civilian targets hit.”

The video switched over to a shot of Goldbloom behind a small podium, stating that, “Yesterday's raid on Iranian control & command centres and known air bases and launch sites, was a one-hundred percent success and all targets were destroyed. The raid took place in retaliation to the several attacks, during what was to be a celebration day, by a cowardly and evil regime. The current death toll from the implosion device detonated

here in Jerusalem has now climbed to above three-thousand, mostly civilians and tourists; yesterday's raid was restricted to military targets. Although Israel declared a state of war with Iran, which was based on intelligence received, we did not make the first attack, Israel will respond to any and all threats by hostile foreign powers. Thank you."

Malcolm Reece from 'Jane's Aircraft' is with us to comment on recent events, Malcolm, thank you for coming in. Reports are suggesting that the Israeli air-force is using some new stealth aircraft, accounting for their seemingly total success."

"Yes the video that I've seen does suggest that not only are there new state of the art aircraft involved but some very new weapons. [the video showed pink flashes of light emitting out of nowhere both by day and by night] believe it or not this is the best pictures we have. The aircraft is better than stealth, it seems to be totally invisible both to detection systems and to the eye. I find it incredible that Israel has been developing this sort of craft in total secret."

"Are the flashes we saw rocket exhausts?"

"No, there is no exhaust trails and the flashes are in the form of a line when viewed in slow-motion, this suggests that someone has developed an energy weapon, something thought impossible."

"Thank you Malcolm. Also in Israel, there have been calls for the well known industrialist Rick Pickles to be co-opted onto the Israeli government following another seemingly miraculous escape from the attack on the

celebration parade. This together with his earlier supernatural feats has led many to claim that Mister Pickles is the long awaited Messiah, Mister Pickles has never denied this."

In Brussels at the European parliament, concerns have been expressed at Russia's reaction to the refusal to admit Russia to the European Union, after President, Boris Luzhkov used threatening language toward the EU, saying that 'the Union would live to regret the rebuff.'

"In London the Prime Minister delivered his New Year statement to the country yesterday, Fredrick Matthews assured . . . "

MI6 HQ, Babylon-on Thames, London, England. Monday, January 2nd 2034 09:15 hrs (local time).

Abe Marks sat watching the BBC's nine o'clock news with Sir James Hennessey and Prime Minister Matthews, there was silence for some seconds after Marks had turned off the sound. "What do you make of Boris Luzhkov," asked Matthews, "I believe you have met him Abe."

"A very cool character Sir, the bio-scan showed hardly any emotion at all, he's business-like and came across as very professional. I would think that he does not suffer fools lightly and means every word he says, not

taken to empty threats,” said Abe.

“So, if he says that Europe will regret the membership refusal, we can bet he will do something,” The PM summed up.

“Yes Sir,” responded Abe.

“Any feelings as to what that action might be,” asked Sir James.

“Not really, much too soon to pick up any murmurs,” answered Abe, “has our embassy any intel?”

“No nothing, however they have noticed increased security outside almost all EU member embassies,” Sir James informed them.

“So something is in the wind,” stated the PM, “they could cut off oil and gas supplies.”

“If they wanted to bankrupt the country,” offered Sir James.

“Cutting off gas or oil wouldn't hurt Europe that much now,” said Abe, “we are not as reliant as we were back a few years. Of course it's possible they may attempt to try take back one of several republics that were once Russia's, but I don't think Luzhkov is that stupid.”

“I don't suppose we still have bugs in their London embassy do we,” asked Matthews.

“No, we stopped that several years ago,” laughed Sir James.

“Yes but those bugs are still there Sir, old tech, but they are passive and may respond to a signal, if we still have the equipment,” suggested Abe.

“There's a lot of old equipment in the basement,” said Sir James, “it may well be there, but it might also be a

tad illegal.”

“You let me worry about the legality; we need to know what the Ruskies are planning,”

“I’ll get someone to dig around down there,” said Sir James, I’ll tell them we’re collecting for a museum.”

Office of the President of the Russian Commonwealth. The Summer Palace (The new Kremlin), St Petersburg, Russia. Tuesday 10th January 2033. 13:290hrs (local time).

Boris Luzhkov paced his office, as he had been doing for some minutes, the room was full with the haze of cigarette smoke, Boris always chain smoked when there were decisions to make, and there had been many of them over the past few years. Luzhkov pined for the old days when Russia meant something in the world, like most ideologies the break up of the Soviet Union had come swiftly. Then at the end of the twenty-teens the long running dispute with the Ukraine had ended in a nuclear device devastating Moscow, the hard thing to swallow was that it was one of Russia's own devices. The government had been wiped out in one stroke and Russia had for eight years acted like a headless chicken, almost slipping into a feudal system. Anatoli Nisselovich, a Ukrainian Russian, had brought Mother Russia together, uniting the several factions under one flag. Now the country was civilised again, at least, but the world regarded her as an outcast.

'Was not Russia European?' Boris thought, 'so why are we being rejected, they fear us still,' he decided at last. Luzhkov opened the outdated Com-unit on his desk and tapped an entry from the list. The connection opened, "Minister Ar Karimi," he asked, "this is Boris Luzhkov, president of Russia."

"I know who you are President Luzhkov," Minister Karimi said with some boredom in his voice, "what can I do for you."

"It maybe more what I can do for you Minister," said Luzhkov, "I have a proposal for you."

"And what might that be Sir."

"We have a mutual enemy Minister, and that enemy seems to be annihilating you,"

"We are not beaten yet Mr. President," answered Karimi.

"No, but I think you may benefit from the direct support of my country," suggested Luzhkov.

Suddenly Minister Karimi was much more open to Luzhkov's approach, "What are you proposing Mr President, we have one of the largest armies the world has ever seen, so, although very welcome, mere support is not helpful."

"We can of course provide extra manpower," said Luzhkov, "but we have an army of specialists, numbering one and a half million, we also have a great deal of attack and defence hardware, and I know you are now limited in that area as so much has been destroyed by Israel in the last week. We do have missiles left, and our launch sites could be at your disposal. Can we form an alliance Minister?"

"I am sure we can Mr. President, I'm sure we can."

Boris cut the connection and immediately contacted his Armed Forces Minister, Dmitrij Utkin, " Dmitrij, that possibility we were discussing; it is a go, can you set the wheels in motion."

“Da, Boris, I have already placed our forces on stand-by, we should be able to fly the first ground troops in by the beginning of next week.”

“Can we get the air support in any sooner,” Luzhkov asked.

“Three days, maybe, but I fear that our aircraft are no match for the Israeli Air-force.”

“I am hoping,” said Luzhkov, “that if we can get other states to align, with Iran, the sheer weight of numbers will force Israel to capitulate. I am going to call in some favours, there are many in that part of the world that owe us Dmitrij.”

MI6 HQ, Babylon-on Thames, London, England. Friday, January 13th 2034 11:37 hrs (local time).

Abe Marks tripped on the top stair of the staircase that led to the floor on which the chiefs had their offices, such was his haste to get to Sir James Hennessey's office. Out of breath, he knocked upon the office door and at the same time pushed, without waiting for the customary, 'Come'. “What is it Abe,” asked Sir James, looking up from his endless paperwork.

“Sir James, we got something from the bear's ear, (which was the code name for the Russian Embassy bugs) they've thrown their lot in with Iran.”

“Since when,” asked Sir James.

“Must have been in place for a week or so, seems that they have started to move troops and aircraft in already, but that's not the worst of it, the Russians are getting other middle-eastern states to join them, or at least that's what they are proposing.”

“This is serious Abe,” said Hennessey, as he tapped the button that gave him a direct connection to the Prime Minister's office.

“Sir James, what can I do for you,” asked Frederick Matthews.

“On the subject Abe Marks and I discussed with you last week, we have some dire news,” said Sir James, “I think it may be necessary for us to pop over to meet with you Prime Minister, if that is convenient.”

Matthews recognised the code word 'convenient', the signal that this was an urgent request and answered, “Of course, do come over immediately.”

The two spooks were conducted directly to the Prime Minister's private office to the rear of ten Downing Street. Matthews ordered coffees and indicated two easy-chairs for his guests, “Now what's the panic,” he asked.

“The floor is yours Abe,” said Sir James.

Marks explained to his Prime Minister about the information they had gained from the bugs in the walls of the Russian embassy, when he had finished, Matthews asked, “Implications?”

“I haven't had a chance to analyse it yet Sir,” explained Abe.

“Fair enough, but until you do, what do you think, just off the top of your head” asked the PM.

“I think it is becoming a very dangerous situation, the Israeli’s have no ambition to conquer the world, and they just want to live and let live. On the other hand the Iranians and most of the Islamic block *do* have that world domination ambition, always have had, they win and it's usually convert to Islam or die. If Boris Luzhkov does persuade most of the Muslim states to join in, it may just turn the tide against Israel.”

“What are his chances of doing that,” asked Matthews.

“Very good Sir, we think that Iraq is already involved, and it will not take much to sway Syria, Russia has always supported them and they have a score to settle with the west and Israel. Other Islamic states are more moderate, however, no matter how much they fight among themselves, you attack one and they all become brothers. We also need to consider the intel we have about Islamists that have infiltrated the west, we know they are here but we just don't know how many there are. If the word goes out to activate the sleepers, well. .

“

“I thought we'd caught most of them in Britain,” commented the Prime Minister.

“No Sir,” corrected Sir James, “we detected some twelve-hundred or so, but intel suggests there are hundreds of thousands spread throughout Europe and the US, maybe even millions. However Sir, I do not believe that they will activate them until they have wiped Israel of the face of the Earth, that is their first priority.”

“Well that's encouraging news,” said the PM shaking his head, “what's your threat level?”

“At the moment it's at six, but depending who joins the party, that could easily rise to eight,” suggested Abe.

“OK gentlemen, thank you for the heads-up,” said the PM as he stood, “I will need to take this to cabinet, which just happens to be here as we speak, I need to brief the full cabinet and then have discussions with security and armed forces committees. Can you hang around Sir James; I may need to call you in. Good work Abe let me know immediately if you get anything else.”

Middle-east Section, C.I.A. H.Q.,
Langley, Maryland, USA. Wednesday,
January 18th 2034 11:37 hrs (local time).

On the seventh floor of the Criminal Intelligence Agency headquarters building the atmosphere had been a little tense ever since the British MI6 had called the previous Saturday with the information about the middle-east war. Now the Brits had pushed up their threat level to seven, after the news that Syria, Libya, Ethiopia, and Turkey, had since been persuaded to join the forces of Iran, Iraq and Russia, against Israel, and now Pakistan had joined the new axis, things were looking bad. Henry S. Luther, Director of the CIA, sat in his office and stroked the ample beard that had started last summer on a three week trip to the Yukon. Was this the time to inform President Orwell of the worsening situation, he thought. The President had enough on his plate dealing with domestic unrest, so he really did not wish to add to Orwell's troubles. A knock on the door shook Luther out of his thought chain, "Yea, come in," he shouted. It was one of his Deputy Directors from the Satellite Monitoring Facility, Richard Zimmerman. "Hi Rich, you got some more bad news for me," the Director laughed."

"I guess I have Director," Zimmerman confirmed, "just letting you know, we have a very large movement of Russian forces from bases all over Russia. Large transports and troop carriers taking off with max loading all heading south-east, my guess they will swing west after the Caspian Sea into Iraq and Iran."

"So it starts," mused Luther, "OK thanks Rich keep me

posted.”

As Zimmerman, exited the office Luther leaned forward and hit the button that made a direct connection to the Oval Office. “Henry, what’s happening,” asked the President.

“There may be a huge problem developing in the Middle-east,” Luther proclaimed, “you will remember that a state of war exists between Israel and Iran.”

“Sure, you told me that a couple of weeks ago, and as far as I can see the Israelis are doing just fine,” said Orwell.

“Well Mister President, Russia seems to be moving into the region on the side of Iran, and,” continued the Director, “Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Ethiopia, and our friends, Turkey have joined the cause.”

“Turkey!” exclaimed the president, “why for goodness sake,” it was a rhetorical question that needed no answers, indeed there was no answer at that time.

“The Brits warned us yesterday, so we thought we’d have a look, the satellite images show a massif troop movement across Russia, troop carriers and transports, all heading south-east, down the eastern side of the Caspian Sea, we think they will swing west after that to Iran or Iraq,” Luther continued.

“Don’t we still have bases in Turkey,” Orwell asked.

“Yes Sir,” but just a token presence, we’ve been winding them down over the past twenty years, there are three bases, with about a hundred personnel at each.”

“Have our embassies made contact yet,” asked President Orwell.

“Ankara and Islamabad have asked for instructions, we haven't been able to contact Damascus or Tripoli; it looks as though they have blocked transmissions.”

“Right Henry, send everything you have to myself and the NSA, by secure digital,” said the President, “I will call a meeting of the Joint Chiefs.”

“Within the hour, Mister President.”

BBC/EBC News Broadcast, Thursday 19th
January, 2034, 18:00 hrs (London/Lisbon
time)

"Good evening, here is the six o'clock news from the BBC in London, England. Top stories tonight. The United states has confirmed that as of midnight tonight, US forces will be joining those of Israel, the UK and the European Union, in opposing the combined forces of Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, Libya, Ethiopia, Russia and Turkey."

"The UK Prime Minister, Frank Matthews, has welcomed the news, and stated today that twenty-thousand British troops are on their way to the middle-east."

"President of the E.U, Wolf Schneider, has condemned the actions of both Russia and the part European country of Turkey in their alignment with Iran, and has committed thirty thousand land troops to the coalition."

"Church leaders have warned that the current conflict is exactly as prophesied in the Christian bible and in the frescoes found in Crete a few years ago. The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Right Reverend Jonathan Benn, said that he confirms that the conflict was predicted over two-thousand years ago."

"Richard Pickles has been commended by all European heads of state for his prompt action in the defence of

Israel, President Schneider stated that Mr. Pickles' actions has saved Israel from an almost certain catastrophe."

"Despite recent events the latest polls suggest that close to eighty percent of Europeans do not believe in the end of the world, or that the event will happen soon, of European government officials, some thirty-five percent believe that the, so called, rapture and tribulation, is immanent. More on those items later."

"As from midnight tonight the U.S. military will be formally engaged in the middle-eastern conflict. [visuals] Today long-range stealth bombers have taken off from several USAF bases and troop carriers have also been recorded leaving army-air force bases. The United States has promised that over one hundred thousand military personnel will be in the middle-east by the end of this month . . ."

British Army Central Operations Centre,
Main Gate Guard House, Aldershot,
Hampshire, Friday 20th January, 2034,
11:01 hrs (Local time)

"Time for a brew Sarge?" asked Private Ronnie Diggs (Diggie to his friends).

"Why not, Diggie, make it a strong one, I need something hot and strong today, we won't get much sleep tonight."

"OK Sarge, coffee or tea," asked Diggie.

"Tea, and give me three sugars," the Sergeant answered.

"I'll have a coffee if you're asking Diggie," called Corporal Lewis from outside the guard house.

Diggie shouted some mild abuse at the corporal and disappeared into the small kitchen behind the guard room. The illicit kettle went under the cold water tap and was filled to the 'max' level. As he opened the door back into the guard room the windows imploded and an invisible hand hit him like a steam-driver. Following that there was complete silence and he felt a trickle of blood coming down the side of his face from his ears. Outside there was cacophony of sound, burglar alarms, vehicle alarms and the Claxton sound of the camp's emergency system, all of which was unheard by Diggie. When he regained his senses he saw that his sergeant was lying dead in the centre of the guardroom, of Corporal Lewis there was no sign. Staggering to the window he saw that there was little left of what was once the largest army facility in Britain, hovering above the area was a

cloud of dust and smoke.

Diggie wasn't sure how long later, but he managed to see several blue flashing lights approaching the gate from the civilian side. No one needed to raise the barrier; it was not there any more. A minute later two paramedics stumbled over the rubble into the guard-house and gently led Diggie out of what was left of his post and over rubble into a waiting ambulance. Through the open doors of the ambulance Diggie could see the total devastation that was Aldershot barracks, there was another explosion as a tongue of flame shot a hundred feet into the air. As he watched several fire appliances rushed passed, followed by rescue units, then the paramedics closed the doors and the vehicle took to the air and headed toward the Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital.

Diggie could now hear faint background noises, like murmuring voices and the far-away noise of the engines; by the time they reached the hospital he had regained about fifty percent of his hearing. The ambulance landed next to the A&E department and he was quickly wheeled inside. The Accident and Emergency department was in chaos, there were gurneys everywhere, occupied by injured people, both civilians and military people. Out of nowhere a nurse appeared and made a quick examination of Diggie, "Do you know your name," she asked.

"Course I know my name," said Diggie.

"What is it?"

" Private Ronnie Diggs, serial number 71768280," he

replied.

"OK Private Diggs, we may be some time getting to you, you don't seem to be seriously injured."

"That's fine," said Diggie, "do you know what has happened?"

"It was a bomb," the nurse replied as she continued to complete the admittance form, "there are bombs going off all over the country, Portsmouth has been hit bad, out west, Yeovilton and Caldrose down in Cornwall have gone, RAF High Wycombe and Northolt seems to have been wiped off the map, and we have heard that half of the Houses of Parliament is gone. I'll put you in the waiting room, there's a TV in there."

"Thanks," said Diggie

When Diggie arrived in what used to be the outpatients waiting room, which now seemed to be a triage area, the TV displayed only white noise. Diggie found himself parked next to a captain, not from his unit, but he had seen him around. "How are you Sir," he asked.

"Not too bad," the captain replied, "Military Police, aren't you Private?"

"Yes Sir, bit of a mess ain't it Sir?"

"It certainly seems so, bombs have gone off all over the country, there must be thousands dead or injured, we lucky ones need to get patched up and get back out there, the country needs us Private."

"Yes Sir, I'm with you there, Sir."

**Residence of the UK Prime Minister, 10
Downing Street, London. Friday 20th
January, 2034, 12:27 hrs (Local time)**

"We have a total of forty-eight bombs exploded so far Prime Minister," said Sir James, "plus the one we stopped in Downing Street gates, making forty-nine in total."

"Do you think that's the lot?"

"I do Sir, all the bombs seem to have been timed for around eleven o'clock, that is from the timing of the suicide delivery bombs," explained Sir James, "and I think forty-nine is a significant number as it is seven times seven, significant to both the Jews and Islam."

"So you are saying that the number is a signature number."

"Yes Prime Minister, I am," said Sir James, "can I suggest that we contact President Orwell immediately, I am getting a signal that bombs have gone off across Europe, all it seems at eleven o'clock local time. We can assume that the same will happen in the U.S., so we have about three and a half hours warning to give them."

"I agree, we'll do it now," Prime Minister Matthews immediately hit the soft button on his desk com that connected him directly with the President of the United States.

The Oval Office, the White House,

**Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington DC, USA.
Friday 20th January, 2034, 07:31 hrs
(Local time)**

"Yes Fred, I am up and working, is there a problem," the President asked.

"You could say that James, at eleven o'clock this morning forty-nine bombs were detonated across the British Isles, forty-eight exploded, we have thousands of fatalities here and we have reason to believe that you may suffer the same fate at eleven your time. Hundreds of bombs were detonated across the E.U. also at eleven o'clock. By the way the one that didn't explode was meant for Downing Street."

"Glad they missed you, Fred, now you will excuse me, I guess I have a few executive orders to make," concluded President Orwell, "Thanks for the heads up, I'll speak to you later." The President broke the connection and picked up an old style white telephone and punched in a three digit number. "AI?" He asked, "This is FARMER, its happening, activate Code SHIELD, immediately, time of threat eleven-hundred hours today, God go with you."

Within minutes the general alarm sounded around the White House and every military and government building and installation across the United States. No sooner had the alarm started than four secret service agents entered the Oval Office and escorted the President to the control and command bunker deep below the building. Very much the same thing was

happening in every government building, staffers were quickly evacuated and senior staff were transferred to bomb shelters, where communications lines had been installed. At military bases every aircraft was scrambled and placed in pre determined stacking patterns out of harm's way. Naval vessels were ordered to sea and at army bases officers and men were efficiently evacuated to areas designated as safe areas. The whole operation SHIELD took just two hours, in the hour or so that was left to the east coast time zone, specialist teams went in with detectors to locate the bombs.

Several bombs were found at Annapolis Naval Base and Edwards USAF Base, these were dropped into suppression wells drilled deep into the Earth's crust especially for such emergencies; no other bombs were found in time. In the first wave, the Eastern Time zone, forty-seven bombs detonated. Fortunately, thanks to the warning many lives were saved, unfortunately four-hundred and twelve lives were lost, most by heroic acts of trying to find the bombs until the last minute. The whole West Wing of the White House was lost together with a third of the Pentagon and severe damage to the Capitol Building; the Washington Monument was now a pile of rubble. As eleven o'clock came and went in the time-zones further west, less, and less bombs exploded, and more were found. In California only nine bombs detonated with zero loss of life. The President emerged from the bunker and ordered a re-establishment of the West Wing offices and services to the undamaged parts of the house and to other buildings that were unscathed.

**European Union Security Council Chamber,
Brussels, Belgium. Monday 23rd January
2034, 09: 55hrs (local time).**

The chamber was packed to capacity this Monday morning, not only by European heads of state and their security chiefs, but President Wolf Schneider had invited all those heads of state that had suffered from the Friday bombings. Presidents from the Eastern Alliance [China Japan, Korea, Viet Nam, etc], Antipodeian Commonwealth [Australia and New Zealand] and the South American Confederation, as well as President Orwell. The only delegate that was not a head of state or a recognised member was Rick Pickles, who had been co-opted by the Prime Minister of Israel. The session was set to begin at ten and delegates were continuing to arrive, however private meetings had been going on for close to an hour.

President Schneider was first to speak, "Welcome on behalf of the European peoples and indeed the western world," there was some clattering and many background noises as delegates took their seats, "Almost all our countries have suffered atrocities over the past few days and my heart-felt sympathies go out to all those who have lost dear ones, family and friends, and those delegates that this council has lost. For which we will observe two minutes silence." The chamber suddenly became deathly silent, heads of state and government officers stood with heads bowed, the military personnel stood to attention, heads up in the attitude of salute. It

was President Schneider who broke the silence at the end of the two minutes. "However we are not here to lick our wounds and bemoan what we have lost but to decide on what collective action we should take to remove the menace of the aligned Islamic states once and for all. Whatever action this council decides upon, it will not be in revenge, but must be in defence of this Earth of ours, and its peoples. We of the free world have an obligation to protect those who are oppressed and enslaved, To our continued shame Nazi Germany, The Berlin Wall and the evil empire of the USSR, Saddam Hussein, Bashar Hafez al-Assad, the Islamic State, and Russia's conflict of oppression over the Ukraine, the list goes on, all have been removed by the collective efforts of the free peoples. From talking to most of you I gather that we are of one mind, that something needs to be done. It is now up to you to decide what that 'something' is."

Rick Pickles was waiting to the side of the podium and had been asked to brief the council on the current situation in Israel. Pickles gave a ten minute briefing of what had, and what was happening, along the eastern borders, but then surprised the delegates by proposing a strategy for the combined forces of the allies. Many of the heads of state stared at each other in amazement and bewilderment as the Pickles' plan was unfolded, 'Who was this individual' many asked, and whispers echoed around the chamber carrying abbreviated bios of Rick Pickles. As Rick revealed his plan heads started to nod in agreement and the amazement at his audacity

turned to amazement at the value of his plan.

At three that Monday afternoon a vote was taken on several proposals that had been seconded. The proposals were eventually filtered down to just two alternatives, and at just after five in the afternoon the final vote was taken and an overall majority gained on direct, swift and decisive action. Every country, union, commonwealth and coalition committed there and then to form an alliance that would completely surround the Islamic states involved. The military had their mandate and the commanders, generals and strategic planners went away to formulate their plan, the 'Pickles Plan', which was to become 'Operation SNUFF'.

**Allied Headquarters, Eastern Sovereign
Base Area, Cyprus. Wednesday 15th
February 2034. 06:00 hrs (local time)**

Dhekelia, Eastern Sovereign Base Area, had been in the possession of Britain since nineteen-sixty, when Cyprus had attained independence from the British Empire. The two areas, one in the west and one in the east of Cyprus had been granted sovereign status by the treaty of independence. The RAF maintained a base at Akrotiri and the British Army maintained the base where the allies had established their HQ, both bases would be heavily involved in the western attack force. The eastern secondary base had been established in Sri Lanka, who had distanced itself from

the Islamists and from India. Here the forces of the Eastern Alliance and the Antipodean Commonwealth, together with the US Pacific fleet and Western USAF units were amassed.

Friday, March 3rd had been designated 'D-day' or in this case code 'COLD BLOW'. All ships and aircraft had been equipped with the energy dampening devices, for which Pickles Industries had been producing at high volume, incidentally making Rick Pickles a fortune beyond even *his* wildest dreams. Other munitions manufacturers had also been producing at more than full capacity since January twenty-third, missiles, stealth drones, energy weapons, and conventional bullets and shells were also making people fortunes. There seemed to be an endless logistics stream from the various munitions manufacturers to the many bases around the Pacific and the Mediterranean Sea.

At Dhekelia the commanders were gathering, and the airspace above Cyprus had been closed from midnight the previous night, to all but allied military traffic. Marshal (OF10) Sir Alan Robinson, had arrived the previous day in order to welcome the western world's commanders. The next two weeks would be dedicated to holding the huge forces of the Islamic Axis (IA) in stalemate, whilst the commanders moved troops and machines around in readiness for 'COLD BLOW'. Every available surveillance satellite had been moved into position over enemy territory. The latest estimates of the size of the IA army came to around twenty million, information that was a little disheartening to the allied

military. However the allies had their secret weapon,
Rick Pickles.

**The Middle-east. Friday, March 3rd 2034.
00:03 hrs. (UTC+3 Russian Time)**

All Russian and Indian surveillance satellites had been disabled over the past two weeks by ENP blasts from low-orbit spy-planes, effectively blinding the Islamic Axis. Slowly and under cover of night the allied forces had spread themselves out along the borders of the member enemy states. The main force of the enemy had amassed along the western boundaries of Syria, Russia and Turkey, from which the main western thrust was expected, mainly supported by disinformation. Several known photonic line taps had been used to misinform Russia of troop movements and air traffic. Specific Air Traffic Control centres had been used to feed false radio communications and images to the axis. All western airlines had cooperated by temporally changing communication frequencies to military encrypted systems, whilst actors had taken over the normal 'Air-bands'. It was hoped that enough had been done to fool the Axis states, and the latest satellite images had suggested that the subterfuge had been successful.

At ten minutes after midnight the coded signal went out to all divisional commanders, COLD BLOW. Seconds later the troops started to move forward, their theoretical destination, Tehran. At the same time thousands of weapon equipped drones took off from warships and land bases around Europe and North Africa, their aim was to take out all the command and control installations that had previously been identified by the

various satellite images. The work of the drones, most of them the new stealth type ZP22 from Pickles industries, or built under licence by General Electric, and Lockheed, was being monitored from the Long Term Manned Space Station (LOTERMS) a joint project between Europe and the US.

**The Middle-east. Friday, March 3rd 2034.
02:00 hrs. (UTC+3 Russian Time)**

On the western front the laser projectors and the microwave curtain projectors had now become mobile and started moving east into Syria, whilst European units moved from north-east and south-east Europe into Russia. The push into Russia was achieved without much resistance, and what resistance they encountered was dealt with quickly with the new energy weapons causing panic in Russian defenders. By two in the morning most western Russian defenders has surrendered, the remainder fleeing eastward, abandoning their uniforms as they went. At the same time Ukrainian troops also moved forward with gusto, there being little love of the Russian regime, sadly they took very few prisoners, most Russian defenders falling in battle.

By two-thirty AM the drones were heading back to their various bases for refuelling and re-arming, after a 97% successful sortie, and a zero percent loss. LOTERMS

reported seven C&C centres active, where drones had malfunctioned; ten drones were en-route to level the score. In Cyprus and Israel, air crews were prepping their aircraft and completing last minute checks, whilst waiting for the signal to take off. In the east, India and Pakistan had already succumbed to Allied forces, thanks to the help of Sri Lanka, India's Space Centre, which was equipped to launch long range missiles, had been destroyed by the Sri Lankan Air Force in a surprise attack within ten minutes of the COLD BLOW signal going out.

**The Middle-east. Friday, March 3rd 2034.
03:00 hrs. (UTC+3 Russian Time).**

By three in the morning Swedish, Finish and Norwegian forces had arrived at St Petersburg. The skeleton forces left to defend the capital were again, soon over powered and most solders surrendered. Just before three-thirty-five the New Kremlin had been secured and seventeen minutes later the government had been placed under arrest. The Swedish Commander supervised as the president was forced to send a signal to the Russian command, ordering a full retreat and surrender.

Over Iran three squadrons of stealth fighters and bombers approached Iran's missile bases that had been identified from the launch instructions sent during the initial advance of Allied forces into Syria. Satellite images had confirmed that the rockets in their silos were being fuelled and primed. The areas were also

marshalling areas for some of the elite Iranian regiments. These areas were blanket bombed with smart bombs impacting in a triangular pattern, the missile bases themselves were treated with anti-matter implosion devices with controlled yield. It was estimated that close to eight-hundred thousand lives were lost during these raids, with zero casualties on the Allied side.

**The Middle-east. Friday, March 3rd 2034.
04:20 hrs. (UTC+3 Russian Time).**

The first hiccup came eighty miles to the other side of the Syrian border, the line of energy canon and microwave curtain projectors had made good progress, until this point. The Microwave Curtain Projectors (MCP), worked in two ways, the projectors each consisted of three high powered microwave emitters that worked like windscreen wipers, each in opposition to each other with a cycle time of point zero two of a second. The effect was rather like waving a torch from side to side on a dark night, but with three phased torches. Firstly the projectors detected any object that passed through the beams, relayed the information to the energy cannon which fired on the object; the whole process took place at eighty-seven percent the speed of light. Secondly the high energy microwave beams disrupted the electronics of aircraft, and that was often all that was required, the whole system was controlled by an AI (Artificial Intelligence) unit. Unfortunately the

MCP's left a triangular shaped Achilles Heel that extended about twenty feet above the ground. Unfortunately the Syrian surface to surface missile commanders figured this fact out.

The opposing missiles were quickly configured for low level horizontal trajectories, several missiles were destroyed by the landscape before the first hit was scored, but that first hit destroyed three mobile MCP units, which opened up the hole in the defensive shield, through which more missiles were aimed. During that time one hundred and sixteen soldiers were killed, mainly from the Israeli and British armies. It took only four minutes to bring replacement MCP's into the gap, but the principle held and more surface hugging missiles were fired at the same section. The Israeli commander quickly called in air support and with the loss of only one more MCP, the mobile missile unit was destroyed.

In North Africa, Libya was isolated quickly and the president, Moha Hassan Ayman was arrested and taken to a secure facility in Israel. The army seemed to welcome the arrival of the American and Egyptian forces and the population responded by cheering the invading, or was that liberating, troops, as the land machines travelled toward the presidential palace, through the streets of Tripoli. The so called Presidential Guard immediately laid down their weapons as soon as the United States commander arrived at the gates.

The Middle-east. Friday, March 3rd 2034.

07:30 hrs. (UTC+3 Russian Time) .

By dawn the northern allied troops had reached Mosul in Iraq, south of Lake Urmia in Iran, the south-eastern point of the Caspian Sea. The southern British and US naval force had taken control of the Persian Gulf, and Americans with those of Australia and New Zealand (ANZAC) were aligned along the Northern Borders of Saudi Arabia, who had insisted in staying neutral. Whilst the US army supported the State Defenders of Kuwait who were more than happy to see Iraq invaded once more. They now faced the massed armies of Iraq and Iran.

The resistance was stiff here, simply by weight of numbers, around eight million axis soldiers surround both Tehran and Baghdad at a distance of some hundred and fifty to two hundred miles. Progress was slow and as the allied line pressed on toward Tehran a division somehow hid in the Ali-Sadr Cave System, it was an error of the British commander not to check out the cave system. That error became evident when just after eleven the small Iranian unit attacked from the rear, whilst the retreating troops turned and attacked from the front. Fortunately the rear guard, that was some ten miles behind, were able to move in and catch the Iranian unit itself between allied forces, then were able to 'mop up' the remnants of the unit who would be eventually be transported back to Cyprus.

It was not until three in the afternoon that allied forces

reached Baghdad, and almost five before Tehran was reached. The two cities were secured by being totally surrounded. The final push into the two cities would take place the following day; none of the commanders were keen on fighting their way, at close quarters, to the government centres in darkness. Continual observation was maintained over-night, both from satellite and from stealth drones, many of which they were able to attach to principle individuals and map their movements. It had been an almost twenty-four hour day for most of the allied troops and the over-night rest was a welcome respite. Every one of the land-troops was issued with one of the new energy weapons from Pickles industries, a point-n-shoot weapon that was not affected by wind or gravity. The only settings to be made were the power/range dial, as over long distances the weapon still dissipated in its strength, and using the high setting for short ranges wasted stored energy. However the weapon used sunlight to generate the energy bolts, through synthetic crystals, which were augmented by internal photonic storage devices. They all hoped for the minimum loss of life, although that hope seemed a far one.

The Middle-east. Saturday, March 4th 2034. 06:00 hrs. (UTC+3 Russian Time).

General orders were called before dawn and breakfast being a pre-packed instant high protein affair; the allied troops were ready to move out by six-thirty. Under the cover of darkness the army moved into position along

the city limits, and as the first light crept up the sky the order went out for the final push, that signal was: SNUFF.

The streets of both cities were crammed with fighters, almost every window, balcony terrace and rooftop held snipers, machine guns and people who were throwing grenades. The quiet streets of the surveillance pictures had gone, people who had been hiding in buildings, under tarpaulins or in cafes, were now on the streets as fighters. The Narmak district of Tehran was the first to fall; the city's airport was captured soon after, and was established as the base of operations. The allied troops proceeded along Shahed Boulevard towards the city centre. From the airport in the east of the city the drones were launched and to a great extent cleared the path and the areas around it of fighters. From Shahed Boulevard the allied army quickly took the Aliabadi Javad - Imam Ali Highway then the Mojahedin-e-Eslam to the Iranian Government complex. Allied soldiers from the west also captured the Mehraabaad International Airport then fought their way along Azadi Street toward the city centre. By Midday the government buildings were surrounded and an hour later the buildings were secured.

Baghdad was possibly an easier option mainly because the US troops had all the intelligence gained some twenty years earlier. The new presidential palace, built by the United States back in two-thousand and eighteen had been constructed with some safeguards, not only listening devices but two secret back-doors had been

designed into the building. As the majority of Iraqi troops had been transported to the presumed 'front line' the city, and indeed the country were largely defenceless. Troops met with only token resistance and after the initial skirmishes started to surrender in the face of insurmountable odds. In less than eighteen hours all enemy territories had been secured, and with the exception of Russia had handed governmental control over to the United Nations.

**Moscow, Russia. Sunday, March 5th 2034.
17:40 hrs. (UTC+3 Russian Time) .**

European Union troops had taken most of the day to track down the President of Russia, Boris Luzhkov, but track him down they did. Something that would not have been possible without the aid of the Russian people, people who had just lost sons, husbands and brothers, for no apparent reason other than to assuage Luzhkov's need for revenge. Now they were some twenty miles outside of Moscow in thick spruce forest approaching one of the old dachas from the days of the old politburo. As they moved silently through the undergrowth a dim light came into view, flickering between the trees. The light became the target and the Special Forces, led by a captain of the British Special Air Services (SAS) moved with stealth to surround the dacha and secure every window and door. At a pre-arranged time a fire door was blown open and ten of the squad dashed into the building, opening doors and throwing 'flash-bangs' into each room. They found Luzhkov hiding under a bed in the attic, a room that had once been occupied by a servant, the bed was overturned and Luzhkov physically dragged out, taken down the stairs and formally arrested.

A radio message brought the transportation in to land on the overgrown front lawn. Within thirty minutes Luzhkov was in the air and being transferred to Geneva to face a special court for his war crimes, together with the leaders of the other countries that had joined the Islamic axis. The world was once again free from war, but not

conflict.

Meeting of the full United Nations, New York, USA. Friday 10th March, 2034. 10:00 hrs (local time).

The world needed to come together, and so the full meeting of the UN was called, and every nation under the sun had sent its ambassador or representative to the meeting, every desk was occupied and many gathered on the walkway at the rear of the chamber. The Sec General opened the session with a key-note speech, outlining the reason for this extraordinary meeting.

“On behalf of the United Nations, let me welcome all delegates and visitors. Over the past week the world came to within an hour of total annihilation or subjugation, fortunately, thanks to some rather fine new technology and the actions of one man in particular, the world was saved from both. I can now tell you that all of the involved Islamic states have placed themselves under UN control and management, with the exception of Russia, who is now under occupation by European troops. However I have received a communication from Russia's southern commonwealth members. These are mainly Islamic semi-autonomous states who have suffered greatly under both Soviet and Commonwealth rule. These states have requested to be also placed under UNCAM, I have responded to their request in the positive.” The Sec General continued for some time, outlining the conditions pertaining to each state, in some detail. Some forty-five minutes in, he returned to the

subject in hand.

“We now come to our problem, we, the United Nations, do not have the personnel or the facilities and resources to manage so many nations, as well as commanding the occupation forces needed for a country the size of Russia. We must find an alternative system, ladies and gentlemen. We cannot allow another incident of the like to happen again. I will now open the floor to any delegate who has a workable suggestion for the future of our planet. Before that we will take a short break and reconvene at eleven o’ clock.”

The delegates immediately rushed to confer with their geographical neighbours or allies. The assembly was reduced to a multitude of small, medium or large groups, scattered around the chamber. One notable group included the US Vice President, The British Ambassador together with Sir James Hennessey, and the Israeli Minister of Internal Security, Ben Marks. This group seemed to grow as members seemed to grab other delegates as they walked past. At two minutes to eleven a discrete bell rang and the delegates made their way back to their country's allotted desk. At the stroke of eleven the Sec General called for the first speaker. It seemed that everyone gasped as Ben Marks rose from his front row desk and walked toward the speaker's podium.

“Fellow delegates,” started Marks, “let’s be under no

illusion, we have all arrived here today with preferred options from our governments. Many of us have already discussed possibilities, between ourselves over the past, very tense, few years. Some time ago we all listened as Rick Pickles addressed the European Parliament on the subject of world government, an idea that has been rejected by so many, so many times.” Ben took a moment to look around the chamber, trying gauge the combined feelings of the assembly. “Now I would ask, is there any alternative? Can the world survive under the current system, a system that brought us to *this* point? The world needs to be united in so many ways, yes we all have different beliefs, different faith systems, we are all different colours and many continue to speak different languages, but we are all human. There are so many reasons to unite, so many wasted resources and so many people in need of those resources. But above that, we need to unite against the maniacs who would seek to destroy other humans, because of other belief systems, because of their misguided emotions. Delegates, may I propose the general idea of world government be accepted by this assembly. I see no other solution to the issues we have and the issues outlined by the Secretary General, I humbly submit my government's proposal.”

The Sec General stood and asked if there were anyone to second the proposal, there was an audible gasp as the US ambassador stood and confirmed that the American Administration would back the proposal. The next stage would be to ask for any alternative proposals,

after that a discussion period, and discussions often went on for days or weeks. At the end of the process a vote would be taken, usually after amendments had been tabled, after consultations with each government. What happened next took the Sec General by surprise. "Can I now ask for any alternative proposals," he called through the address system. There followed a palpable silence, and despite waiting for some three minutes, no delegate rose to the invitation. "The assembly accepts and acknowledges that there are no further proposals, I feel that we need to adjourn proceedings in order that delegates may consult."

The session was reconvened at two that afternoon. It is always amazing how long it takes governments to move on proposals that are a part of their own policy documents. Sometimes this process takes years to make it into law. So it was with some surprise that the proposal for world government progressed so quickly with only minor amendments proposed, and these were in the form of various safeguards about sovereignty. By the end of that Friday the vote had been taken and accepted as the next step. As the Sec General was about to close proceedings for the day, an early end at barely eighteen-hundred hours, Ben Marks again rose and made his way back to the podium.

"Mr Secretary General, fellow delegates, I am gratified that our proposal had been accepted so readily, and it seems that we have all accepted that there is indeed no

other way forward.” Ben took a deep breath, “Israel’s feeling in this matter is that we need to move quickly and we recognise that the UN was not set up to deal with a project of this magnitude. I will now propose that we need to designate someone to take on this task, someone with already demonstrated abilities in administration and decision making, with a flair for the protection of those weaker communities. The assembly may well have guessed that the person we are proposing for this task is Rick Pickles. I would like to suggest that the assembly vote on this, and that if we all agree, the Secretary General contact Mr. Pickles; I know that he is in Washington at the moment; in order to discuss the proposal. If Mr. Pickles is open to taking on the job, he can be invited here tomorrow, so that he can be confirmed as the World President Designate for an initial period. Once the administration is constructed, naturally fair elections would follow. I would also propose that the UN oversee the processes involved.”

The assembly went directly to a vote and the proposal was accepted with a huge majority, with no nation censuring the motion. The Sec General used the audio sharing system to let everyone hear the call to Rick Pickles, who was indeed in Washington discussing contracts with the war department. “Mr. Pickles?”

“Yes this is he, who is this,” answered Pickles.

This is General Secretary Watson here Mr. Pickles. I am speaking on behalf of, and at the behest of, the

entire assembly of the United Nations; we have a proposal to put to you.” The Gen Sec quickly outlined the proposal to Pickles, but never saw the smile that crept across his face (the call was audio only because of security regulations). “So Mr. Pickles, would you be open to discussing the job,” Watson asked finally.

There was a pause before Pickles responded, “Well as I was the one who declared his support for a world government, the least I can do is come along tomorrow to discuss it Sir.”

“Thank you Mr. Pickles,” concluded the Gen Secretary.

Meeting of the full United Nations, New York, USA. Saturday 11th March, 2034. 12:00 hrs (local time).

Once again the chamber of the general assembly was full to capacity, with even more people wishing to witness this momentous moment in world history, a united planet, with one government. Outside of the United Nations Building protesters had gathered, mainly Christian groups judging by their placards, which proclaimed how this moment had been prophesied since ancient times. The arrival of Rick Pickles caused a stir outside as he dismounted the LIMO that had brought him from Washington DC, landing on the concourse rather than the roof parking area, presumably for effect. One protester attacked Pickles with her banner and was immediately arrested. Pickles sustained a small cut on the forehead, but didn't seem to notice. Rick was conducted through the lobby and directly into the chamber, at his arrival the whole assembly rose to its feet and burst into a spontaneous and lasting round of applause. Pickles stood like some pop star or demigod with his arms raised, whilst he slowly revolved himself to see every person in attendance. As the applause died away he was shown to the seat normally reserved for guest speakers. The Sec General rose and thanked Rick for attending, then continued.

“Mister Pickles I would also like to thank you and your

organisation for the assistance you provided to both Israel and the western world over these past two weeks, without you and your technologies the war would have surely lasted much longer. The lives that saved are innumerable, the world thanks you Sir. We all owe you a great debt.” Pickles nodded slowly, acknowledging the compliments. “Mr. Pickles yesterday we passed a resolution to adopt a world wide administration with which to govern world affairs, this is an enormous task, and it has been suggested and adopted that we ask you if you would be at all interested in forming the first administration, with the title of President Designate, until formal elections can be held,” the Gen Secretary concluded.

Rick Pickles stood as the usher bid him to respond at the podium, “Mr. Secretary General, distinguished delegates, ministers, ambassadors and guests. Mulling over what this job involves, has in honesty, it frightened me. I awoke this morning with a different view of things, my mother always told me, 'nothing ventured, nothing gained', and her saying kept returning to me. I made my mind up early this morning to refuse the offer, however with the dawn and my mother's advice ringing in my ears that resolve melted away. Mr. General Secretary, delegates, it would be my honour to serve the world. This world has been good to me; I have an income to rival the GDP of a not so small nation, so maybe its payback time. Maybe this will let me pay back some of what has been given to me. So, what I suppose I am saying is yes, thank you all for your confidence and the

opportunity.”

“We must now swear you in as President Designate,”
stated the Gen Secretary.

The Front Lawn of the White House,
Washington DC, USA. Saturday 18th March,
2034. 11:00 hrs (local time).

One week later Rick Pickles found himself on the steps of the residence of the President of the United States of America, who once was termed as the most powerful person on the planet. Rick smiled, not in friendship to those around him but at the irony that he would now usurp that title and the previous holder was handing that title over willingly. The UN had decided that the White House would be the most appropriate place for the inauguration, James Orwell had willingly agreed and it was rubber-stamped by the Senate. The great and good from around the world were now gathered on the lawn in witness of this great and momentous occasion, some were excited by the future prospects, others, those with doubts, looked on with something approaching trepidation. The host, President Orwell, stepped up to the cluster of microphones, and looked up at the swarm of hover-cams that buzzed around like demented hummingbirds.

“My friends, colleagues, heads of state,” started The President, “It is my pleasant duty to welcome you all here to day to this emblem of government that is this historic house. Today we are gathered to witness another historic event, an event that will surmount all other events of its kind. At last the world is coming together as one, one race, one planet, and one mind. It was once felt that the one reason for the world to come

together like this would be an invasion from space. I am glad that this is not the case; so let me now hand you over the General Secretary of the United Nations, Franklin Watson.”

There was a short, polite, round of applause as Gen Sec Watson came to the lectern and looked up at the throng of people before him. “Thank you Mr. President, this is indeed a great day for our planet. For the first time in history the nations of the world have all agreed on one action, and that action is to come together as one. One people, under one banner, and eventually one government. We are here today to install our first World President Designate. In this respect we have no president to guide us, however any President must be sworn in and we have consulted with a several national leaders who have Presidents and ultimately with the Senate of the United States. We have taken the oath that President Orwell himself took just a few short years ago and we have adapted it to suit this new situation.” Watson turned to where Pickles was seated, “Mr. Pickles will you join me please?”

Rick Pickles rose from his seat and stood to Watson's right, “Raise your right hand and read the oath on the prompt screen,” Watson said quietly. Pickles raised his right hand and looked to the small screen. “I do solemnly affirm that I, Eric John Pickles, will faithfully execute the Office of World President and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend any such Constitution that will in future be agreed by the United Earth Government or such body that will eventually be

formed. I so affirm.”

The applause started as Pickles readied himself for his big speech. At first it was indiscernible from the applause; it was a low rumble almost below the audible frequencies and was felt rather than heard. The light grey clouds that had covered the blue skies of Earth for so long now suddenly turned to black over the local area of the White House, as the rumble turned to a roar. Every head looked heavenward as the clouds seemed to part and reveal a glowing red and orange fire, then the screams started as the guests on the lawn scattered in all directions. Then the howl started, at the end of which a bolt of plasma shot out from the fire and headed for the front steps of the White House. Pickles saw it coming just in time to jump over the balustrade into a small rose garden; he rolled into a corner just as the plasma hit the podium where he had been standing a second before. Where the small group had been standing there was just a black stain on the white stone, the US President, his first lady, the UN General Secretary, and several senior Senators were all dead. Another ball of plasma whistled from the burning cloud overhead but this time it disappeared over the White House, heading south-east. Within seconds there was a huge explosion and a plume of smoke was seen to rise into the air. Someone shouted, “The Capital's been hit!”

The scene was one of chaos, and suddenly Pickles felt himself being grabbed by four strong arms, that lifted him from the rose bed and almost carried him up the

steps and inside the White House. He stumbled and was forced to run down several corridors to an elevator that waited, doors open. He was forced into the lift where several people, obviously, Secret Service agents were waiting, and the doors quickly closed followed by that sinking feeling you get from an express lift descending. As the doors opened, somewhere below the White House, the agents became visibly more relaxed, and they allowed Pickles to walk unaided. As the doors to the bunker closed the whole room shook, as if shaken by an earthquake. "What the hell is going on," Pickles asked of one of the agents.

"We're not sure sir, we just assume that we are under attack," he explained, "President Orwell is dead and the Vice President is in Seattle being protected as we speak. As you are World President, we thought it would be best to protect you Sir."

"Thank you," Pickles said with some feeling.

"You survived because of your quick reactions Sir," said agent Elizabeth Mainwaring.

"I don't think that was my reactions, it was as if someone threw me off the steps," explained Pickles.

"Adrenaline can make us do some amazing things at times, Sir," explained, Mainwaring, "would you care for a coffee Mr. President?"

"Please," answered Pickles looking to the large screen at the head of the table.. A mug of coffee was placed in front of him on the long table just as a com-call came

through. One of the agents accepted the call, and another agent appeared.

“Do you have President Pickles there,” the agent asked.

Mainwaring, who now seemed to be agent-in-charge, responded, “Yes Sir we have him in the bunker safe.”

“We have extensive damage to the Capital Building,” the agent said, “with so far at least two-hundred, thirty fatalities, and the Pentagon has been hit also, no casualty estimates from there yet. However the fire in the cloud seems to have disappeared and the overhead seems to be back to normal. Stay put for the time being until I give the all clear.”

“Affirmative Sir,” said Mainwaring, “what’s happening with the Vice President Sir?”

“Air Force One is on the way to collect *four-square* as we speak, he has been informed”, said the senior agent on the screen.

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Just under an hour later President Pickles was whisked away in a Secret Service LIMO to the new Cosmopolitan Hotel, where the Service maintained a fully a protected suite. Two hours later the suite was visited by the Assistant General Secretary, now Acting General Secretary, of the UN, a British career diplomat, by the name of Tristram Brown.

“Mr. President, this has not been a very auspicious start

to your presidency,” Brown said as he offered his hand, “Sadly I have had to step into Watson's shoes, Sir, and we need to move things forward.”

“Of course,” said Pickles as he shook the rather cold and clammy hand, “please, take a seat.” The two took seats across a low table, “Do we know what happened yet, the attack, I mean.”

“As far as I have been told, it seems to have been a freak natural occurrence,” explained Brown, “there were no aircraft in the area at the time and there is absolutely nothing showing up on radar, I would just forget it Sir. In the mean time we need to find you a base of operations, we have two offers on the table; the EU is offering an extensive complex on the outskirts of Rome, to the north-west, not far from The Vatican. Alternatively we have an offer from Israel, who it seems have a vacant office block that you can have exclusive use of whilst they build a more impressive and purpose-built World Headquarters.”

“Hmm,” said Pickles thoughtfully, “I can see the irony of being jowl to jowl with the other world-wide authority; however, I think Israel may be the more appropriate option, since it was their proposal that landed me in this position. The Israelis, I feel, may be more supportive of the cause.”

JMRT House, Cyprus Saturday 18th March, 2034. 17:03 hrs (local time).

There was a knock on Jim Markson's office, to which he reacted with a single word, "Come!" As the door opened Jim looked up, "Owen, what brings you here, I thought you were in mid-term and heading for exams, not that it's not nice to see you."

"I just had a day off tomorrow so as I'd finished lecturing at mid-day, I thought I'd pop down to see you all, and Manchester is quite depressing at the moment," said Owen Gwilliam. "You head about Rick Pickles?"

"Yes indeed," answered Jim, "the world has gone mad, come on lets get to the sitting room for a drink, I'm due a break." The two crossed the pool area to the main block in the sultry but pleasant warmth of the Cyprus spring, "Who knows you're here?"

"Spoke to John on approach and he came out to meet me, and that's it," said Owen. Jim changed direction and headed for his living quarters to tell Carol who had arrived, then diverted again toward the communal sitting room. He and Owen equipped themselves with a beer each and settled into two armchairs, "I knew there was something going on with Pickles, I told you ages ago, didn't I," Owen said as soon as he'd taken a long draught from the glass."

"Well it's the inauguration today, It'll be on all vision links, if you want to watch, it will be starting around six our time," said Jim. A moment later Carol joined the two giving Owen a sincere hug. The three chatted for some

while and John joined them at around five minutes to six.

“Mind if I switch the TV on, it's that Pickles guy's swearing in, could be interesting,” said John, “Your buddy Pickles seems to be making a name for himself Owen.”

“He's not my buddy, John,” retorted Owen, “the man is a megalomaniac, look at that fiasco in Jerusalem when he jumped off the roof in front of hundreds of people, he just can't help himself being the showman.”

“This a little bit more serious than performing techno-tricks, Owen,” commented Jim.

“Well all I can say is God help the world,” added Owen.

John switched off the mute on the soft-screen as the commentator started the introduction to the swearing in. They watched in silence and then in astonishment as the plasma balls descended upon Washington. The fifteen minute coverage turned into a full hour as the various experts voiced-over the many live shots of the damage caused and the death toll that continually rose. There were very few words spoken in the sitting room until Owen made the first observation, “Well, I think we can take that as being God's message and comment on that inauguration, don't you.”

“On the other hand, it could actually be just freak weather,” said Jim.

“Right,” said Owen, “those plasma balls just happened to hit the three seats of power in Washington. Just like that time way back in the last century when Bishop

Jenkins, in York, announced he didn't believe in the basics of the faith, and lightning hit York Minster.”

“Really, I didn't know about that,” said Carol.

“Look I accept that Jesus is my Saviour,” said Jim, “but I am still not sure of all that stuff in the Old Testament, especially Genesis and all the times God has supposedly intervened in the affairs of man. I can attribute most of them to a gullible Iron Age people.”

Owen jumped in immediately, straining at the leash, “Jim haven't you actually read the Bible, because if you had I am sure you would have noticed that there are plenty of clues scattered through the Old Testament as to who dictated much of it.”

“Not one of these Bible Code nuts are we Owen?” Jim laughed.

“You know me better than that Jim,” Owen scolded him, “look I'm a nuts and bolts man, I deal with the evidence. What would you say if I told you that over three thousand years ago, in the Book of Job, it tells us that the three stars in Orion's belt are moving apart and the open cluster the Pleiades are bound together, we only found that out when Doppler Red-shift was discovered. And in Isaiah it tells us that the Earth is round, that it is suspended on nothing in space and that God made the universe expand, all of which we only found out in the last few hundred years, and this was all thousands of years ago, and there is very much more. Who else other than the creator could know such things?”

“Yes I was reading about this a while back,” interrupted John, “the Old Testament has all kinds of sophisticated scientific information, about the oceans, cosmology, astronomy, physics, thermodynamics, even our atmosphere and weather. I was stunned Jim,”

“You know as well as I do that those people were not as technologically backward as we would think Owen,” countered Jim, “look at all the artefacts we have discovered and the control rooms, they were anything but primitive, surely their astronomy was also advanced.”

“Jim you can't have it both ways, you just called them a, 'gullible Iron Age people',” Owen stated, “in any case, I am fairly sure that all that technology you have been finding has nothing to do with your gullible Iron age people.”

“You have evidence of that Owen?”

“Only circumstantial, admittedly, but it's quite strong,” started Owen, I think that all the technology you've uncovered and, especially the control room technology, is of angelic origin.” Jim opened his mouth to speak but Owen held up a hand, “Let me finish Jim. Firstly, if all that knowledge had been common knowledge, history would have recorded it, and history would have been recorded differently, science would not have wasted centuries on alternate theories. Let's look at the control rooms Jim, look at the seating, why are all the chairs in there so large and high off the ground. When I sat in the principle chair my feet were a foot off the floor and

two normal sized people could have sat there comfortably, just right for me of course,” Owen laughed. “All the controls themselves are a little oversized for us, and look at the height of those doorways. The Crete control room was never above ground Jim, like the temple, the temple, or palace, was built on top of it Jim, John will tell you, he said so when we were digging Jo out, the control complex is actually built below the natural stone, it was never meant for it to be accessed from our world.”

Jim was silent for some minutes, deep in thought, “How did we miss those facts Owen, we are supposed to be professional archaeologists?”

“An easy thing to miss Jim, we were all dazzled by the technology, but I was there for months afterwards with the UN team, I had a lot of time to look at things and reconsider them. The Angels were God's workers, but they were also created beings, like us, but a little above us, the Bible says, so it makes sense that Angels would have manned, if that's the right word, the control rooms.”

“Do you have a list of all these scientific verses in the Bible Owen, I'd like to read them for myself,” asked Jim.

“Sure,” answered Owen, “I'll have to send it through when I get back.”

“I can give you the address of a couple of net sites,” said John, “Lots of information on them by reputable scholars.”

“Thanks John, I'll take both,” accepted Jim, “this takes a

bit of getting used to.”

Ooniversali (Universal) House, Jerusalem, Israel Wednesday 22th March, 2034. 09:00 hrs (local time).

Rick Pickles arrived at his new headquarters building at exactly nine o'clock. Rather than land his executive LIMO on the roof, he pulled up outside the building's main entrance where the media had set up camp two days before, and where thousands of onlookers had also gathered. He alighted from the transportation and waved toward the assembled masses. He gave a few words to the media and entered the building through the bullet-proof glass doors. It had taken the Israeli government just two days to convert and equip the multi story office block, formerly the Ministry of Transportation, into a government headquarters. Pickles took the elevator to the top floor and entered his office for the first time.

The office overlooked the Temple Mount through a full wall of glass, blast and bullet-proof of course. The large desk was at one end, so that Rick to see the magnificent view, and was made of rare hard-woods, including a magnificent walnut surface beneath a topper of hard transparent sheet. The office was some twenty meters long and around twelve meters wide with the windows along the long side equipped with opaque controls to shade against the afternoon sun and privacy. The glass for once was a product of Pilkington Glass rather than the product of the Pickles Corporation. At the opposite end to the desk was an informal area with

a low table and easy chairs and a long couch, which sat upon carpets that covered the polished wooded floor. It was an impressive office.

Rick stood looking out at the scene to the west, lost in his thoughts, when there came a knock on the door, at first he ignored it thinking that his, yet to be appointed, PA would handle the visitor. The realisation that he had no PA prompted him to call out, "Come in." Someone he had never seen before entered the office with a hand outstretched.

"Mr President," said the stranger, I am Edward Cohen, Sir, Mrs Goldbloom has sent me over to act as your PA until you make your own appointment. I have been the Prime Minister's Private Secretary for almost eight years and before that I was in Israel's diplomatic service."

"Good to have you on-board Edward," said the President still shaking Cohen's hand.

"Please, call me Ed, Sir, if you call me Edward no one will know who you are talking about," Ed said, and then got straight to business, "What would you want me to do Mr. President?"

"Straight to work then Ed, I like that. Firstly, we need to start to get some sort of plan together to bring all the nations together, and then we need to assemble an interim council, of maybe twelve representatives from the twelve major nations, or unions. What was your position in the diplomatic service Ed," asked Rick.

"I was a legal attaché, Sir, I obtained a masters in law at

London University and then a doctorate at Cambridge.

“That Ed, will be really useful,” said Rick, slapping Ed on the back. “To make a start, I need you to identify the twelve of the world's most powerful nations and then contact each one, tell them they have seven days to appoint a senator. I want the first senate meeting next Wednesday, the twenty-ninth, at ten in the morning. Any nation that misses the meeting will not be represented, until after the elections of course, but that could take few years to organise.”

“What would be your definition of a powerful nation, Sir?”

“Good question, I suggest you get a formulae together based on sphere of influence in foreign affairs, military strength, commercial level, GDP, standard of living index and any other factors you can think of. Assign a numerical value to each and get a total result.”

“Right Sir,” said Ed, “I'll get right onto it. I assume that is my office outside?”

“For the time being Ed, I will need you close at hand,” said the new President, “by the way, count the UK as one of your twelve, and of course Israel.”

The Cabinet Room, 10 Downing Street,
London, UK. Thursday 23rd March 2034.
11:10 hrs (local time)

Fred Matthews placed his tea-cup down on the table and took a deep breath, "Our next item is to nominate someone to become a Senator – designate, in this world government that we all seem to have agreed to. We received a communication from President Pickles, that really sticks in my throat; asking that we send someone to next Wednesday's meeting or we will be excluded, in honesty I didn't like the tone of the message."

"It seemed to me that it was just to the point and succinct," commented Henry Harden, the Home Secretary, "President Pickles is a no nonsense kind of man, Personally I think the UN made a good choice."

"That may as be, but we, Britain I mean, didn't actually vote," Foreign Secretary Arnold reminded the cabinet, "there was no point it was going to be passed either way."

"Well I know that MI5 and Sir James have serious reservations about this World Government idea, and more so about Pickles," the Prime Minister came back, "It seems that he's rather power mad, his file says, and I quote, 'Eric Pickles seems to have a god complex, he is certainly a control freak who tries to control the lives of his more senior employees.' so I think we should tread very carefully."

"Do you have any preferences as to who our Senator should be Prime Minister," asked Daniel Grieves, the UK Defence Minister.

"I do actually," said Prime Minister Matthews, "Do you know of David Luther," the majority shook their heads,

the remainder made no indication at all, "David is employed by MI5 but has been on detachment to MI6 for several years, he's been stationed at our embassy in Columbia as a legal attaches and has a keen analytical mind. He was my best advisor when I was Foreign Secretary, he's someone I trust. You will find his full CV in your folders, take a few minutes to read it through," the Prime Minister asked. There was silence as the Cabinet read the document, which was marked as 'TOP SECRET' Restricted Access. Slowly a few slow nods started around the table, showing approval of the Cabinet members. Five minutes later PM Matthews asked, "Do we have agreement on this?"

The only dissenting voice came from Henry Harden, who was looking quite angry, "With the greatest respect Prime Minister you cannot nominate a 'spook' for a position like this. Being a Senator is an administrative job, a diplomat, we need someone who will help mould policy not someone who will spy on another President."

"Henry, everyone, except yourself, has some suspicions about our friend Pickles," said the PM, "I for one want to know what's in our World President's mind and I need an analyst on the spot. Besides, Luther is a proven statesman, he has degrees in politics, law, corporate law, and a dozen others. He will do the job Henry and he will not be sucked into Pickles' dreams of god-ship."

"Maybe", allowed Harden, "but I don't think it's fair on Rick, we should be supporting him, he is British after all."

“And we will Henry, as long as he plays the game, but on the chance that he looks like being corrupted by the immense power, I want someone on the inside,” said Matthews, flatly.

**Atarot Airport (New Jerusalem Airport),
Kfar' Aqb, Israel. Saturday 25th March
2034. 05:45 hrs (local time)**

The commercial flight landed seventeen minutes ahead of time, David Luther had been in the air for almost twenty-four hours. The Prime Minister had called him directly early Thursday morning over the embassy's secure link; having been briefed; he used his diplomatic status to get a flight from El Dorado's International Airport, in Bogotá to JFK at New York. After this a flight to London for an in depth briefing from Sir James and to pick up his commission papers (credentials), then onto a British Flight to Atarot Airport, Jerusalem. President Pickles would be using Mosad to check everyone out, that was no problem, as his cover had never been broken. At the airport there was a welcoming committee and a car to take him to the World Government HQ. Pickles was making a point of meeting all the Senators as they arrived, and he was especially keen to meet his fellow Brit.

"Welcome to Jerusalem David, have you been here before," Pickles asked.

"Just the once, I delivered a diplomatic case here when I was a junior, Sir."

"A wonderful City and a wonderfully warm people, despite all the troubles," the President told David, "I encourage you to see the sites and get to know the place, please have a seat, coffee?"

"Thank you Sir, I seem to have lost a little sleep. You

have a wonderful view from here Mr. President,” David said as he wandered across to the panoramic window and wandered back and forth whilst Pickles pointed out landmarks. Luther’s eyes were everywhere, then at the desk end of the office with Pickles still pointing out landmarks, David stood behind him, but David’s eyes were scanning the papers on the desk. David was known also for his extraordinary photographic memory, and a detailed image of that desk-top was now imprinted in Luther’s mind. It was a friendly meeting and Pickles revealed nothing of what was in his mind. After twenty-five minutes Pickles sent David on his way to the British Consulate, where his lodging had been arranged.

**The British Consulate Nashashibi Street,
Sheikh Jarrah Quarter, East Jerusalem,
Israel. Saturday 25th March 2034. 08:20
hrs. (local time)**

Luther went directly to the communications room in the basement as soon as he arrived at the Embassy. He typed out a report for Sir James, and encrypted it, and then sent the package over the high speed data-link from the dish antenna on the roof. The message travelled at the speed of light to a satellite, then down to a similar antenna on the roof of Babylon-on-Thames. The night watch was still on duty, it was barely five-thirty in London. The message was decrypted and the duty officer made the decision to contact Sir James and Abe Marks. By seven-thirty the message was on the Prime

Minister's desk.

**The Senate Room of the World Presidency,
Universal House, Jerusalem, Israel
Wednesday 29th March, 2034. 10:00 hrs
(local time).**

All twelve Senators were in their designated places well before the ten o'clock deadline; David Luther found his seat was right next to the President's seat, which seemed to have more in common with a throne than a conference seat. On the President's left was the UN representative, then the Senator for the United States, the late President Orwell's Chief of Staff, next to the US sat the Senator for South America. On Luther's right was Germany then the EU member, then the Senator from the Antipodeans Commonwealth (Australia and New Zealand), then China and Central Asian Pacific Union. On the opposite side of the table, and next to South America, came South and Central Africa, the Senator for South Africa itself, then Sub Saharan Africa. The final seat was occupied by Ed Cohen, representing Israel as a temporary measure whilst a full time Senator was elected by the Israeli government, which was in recess due to the impending Passover public holiday.

The Room had been equipped with built in cameras, so the world and its friend were watching. Rick had equipped himself with a gavel and on the stroke of ten he hammered on the table to bring the Senate to order. "Welcome to the inaugural meeting of the World Senate, you who sit around this table are making history, and making a template for others who follow you, to

continue. Your allegiance must be to this administration, not, I emphasise NOT, to the governments who nominated you. Our decisions are for the whole world, not in line with local interests. When you are asked to vote on a motion, that vote will take place immediately, there will be no recess to allow consultations with your various governments and communications will be disabled during the voting period. Now we come to the first business of this Senate.” President Pickles opened a file in front of him that contained a wad of sheets of paper, several of which he passed down the table.

“I have not been idle over the past few days; here are a number of edicts that need your consideration and stamp of approval. Firstly, the World decrees that all existing national and union governments are hence to bear the status of 'Local Assemblies'. This is an essential move as they will no longer be dealing with any policy that involves other nations. The Assembly will deal with collecting taxes, and the budgets allocated by this administration within their area of authority. Budgets will be allocated in due course in accordance with population and need.”

“Secondly, following what happened just a few weeks ago ALL military, army, air force, and navies, will from the end of this week, Midnight on Saturday, come under the command of this administration, with me as Commander in Chief. There will be no exceptions.

Thirdly, it will be required that all citizens will be required

to register for world citizenship; we need an accurate census of world-wide population. Eventually all citizens will be fitted with sub-dermal chips and will be expected to swear total allegiance to the World Government. Identities will be important part of managing both finance and resource allocation.”

“Fourth: the financial system. In time all cash and currency will be made extinct and will be replaced by a system of credits, these credits will be managed through the sub-dermal chips, credits will be added over the Earth-net and purchases and services will be subtracted at point of sale using scanners. There will be an end to identity fraud, tax avoidance and robbery. Commerce will be taxed on the same basis as the individual, and taxes on profit will be taken at source at the point of payment. I suggest the new currency could be called the ‘Uni-dollar’ (U\$).

Fifth. In recognition to the help and assistance, not to mention trust that Israel has given me, I am today commissioning the rebuilding of the third temple on the Temple mount. Engineers, the best the world has to offer, have already started surveys of the site, working around the current conditions there, the temple will be built using the already approved design.”

“These then are my first five executive orders, and I now turn to the Senate to approve these measures *unanimously*,” President Pickles then addresses the Senators directly, “the papers you have before you,

merely require your signature and your official seal. You will each find your own personalised seal machine in the pigeon hole beneath the table to your right. I am expecting you to show a unanimous front, discussion will be encouraged but decent will not be tolerated.” The Senators looked stunned, and stared at each other for nearly a full minute. “Come now people, these are measures that are fair and need to be done for the benefit of the world's whole population.” Germany was the first to nod and sign, and slowly all the remainder followed suit. The deed was done.

The Temple Mount, Jerusalem, Israel.
Saturday 1st April 2034. 11:55 hrs.
(local time)

Next week being the Passover Public holiday, and also the start of Easter Week in the Christian world, the Area of the Mount was thronged with visitors, The city itself was starting to fill with pilgrims again, the Via Dolorosa through the old city was crowded with visitors from several denominations, the souvenir shops doing a brisk trade for the first time since December twenty-fifth. One of the main attractions was still there, the so called, laser beam, and the bubbling magma around its base, and today was no different. The barriers were, as usual, being guarded by the specially formed Temple Guard, who ensured the safety of visitors, but at this time there was something different about the Mount, or the beam. The guard stood looking from one to another, not quite knowing what was different, but feeling that something was. After several minutes, everyone was in no doubt about what the difference was, the slight hum that had always been there, just outside of the human audio range, had grown into a heavy buzzing, that could also be felt in the stomach. The buzzing continued to grow in volume and lower in frequency until the very ground was shaking.

Then, just as the onlookers started to run for cover, and on the stroke of mid-day, the rumble stopped, just as if someone had switched it off. People stopped running and looked back, the beam that had become a part of the Jerusalem scene, has gone, disappeared. The

magma was also receding back into the hole, the uppermost layer already cooling to form pumice. Most of the guards had thrown themselves flat on the ground and they now started to climb back to the vertical position, as confused as any visitor. Then someone shouted "Look!" people looked in all directions until they saw the shouter pointing sky-ward. Within seconds every head was craning backward to look at the sky above them, the clouds that had covered all of the Earth for so long, were parting, and parting directly above where the beam and the circle of blue sky, had been. It started as the small round hole, and rapidly expanded. Ten minutes later there was blue sky all the way to the horizon and the sun was shining again, but the Sun looked pink or pale red in colour. Subsequently the light had a rosy hue, giving the scene an ethereal look, almost like looking like one of those old photographic negatives.

**The Principle Control Room, beneath
Knossos Palace, Crete. Saturday 1st April
2034. 10:55 hrs. (local time)**

As usual the transposition of the, so called, 'God Tapes' was continuing as it had for the past several years. The media had by this time grown tired of the daily updates and the only interested parties these days were the academics and Bible experts. Just before eleven o'clock the room started shaking, the chief technician,

who also acted as safety officer, shouted “Earthquake, everyone out.” The UN staff operating the equipment immediately started to leave toward the emergency exit that had been cut just after the UN had taken possession of the site. At exactly eleven o'clock all power was lost to the control room and the emergency lighting came on. The shaking continued and the rock of the roof cracked. Chunks of rock started to fall, crushing the control panels and desks. Only four of the twenty-two staff managed to get out before the total collapse of the facility.

JMRT House, Cyprus Saturday 1st April, 2034. 11:15 hrs (local time).

It was a normal Saturday morning for the Markson family, Peter and Jo were back for the Easter holidays and they had just enjoyed a leisurely family breakfast together. Normal that is; until John Moffat arrived and asked everyone to come outside.

“What’s up John,” asked Jim.

“Come and look for yourself,” was all that John would say. The family trooped out of the dining room in time to see the line of cloud racing away to the west, leaving behind a pure azure sky.

Jim looked at John and then Peter, who read his mind as Jim shouted, “Everyone into the underground archive, quickly.” All five ran as fast as they could as

Jim kept shouting to other members of staff to get below ground. They reached the archive complex and closed the protective steel doors.

“What’s going on,” asked Doctor Wade, who’s domain had long since been the archive together with its laboratory, and who rarely spent time anywhere else.

“It may be,” gasped Jim, trying to get his breath, “an atomic bomb blast.”

“Where, I don’t hear anything,” said Wade.

“We just saw the cloud line chase away to the west, like it was a blast front,” Jim informed the Doctor.

“I should think that if a blast front pushed the cloud back like that it would also have pushed you and anything on the surface back at the same time,” explained Doctor Wade.

“You’re right, I guess we just panicked,” said John feeling rather silly. Everyone made their way back to the surface and gently opened the steel doors. Outside was blue sky and sunshine, however the light had a slightly pink or orange quality, “There’s a site we ain’t seen for a while,” he said, in fact, I don’t ever remember see a Sun that colour.”

“Just in time for the holiday,” added Jim, as he basked in the sunlight. He suddenly realised that the temperature had risen several degrees since they had dashed into the archive. *‘How pleasant’* he thought, as he removed his jacket.

Tuesday 4th April, 2034.

The day started just like any other, except for two things, for the Jewish religious community, the day was the start of the Passover Festival; and around the Earth, Jews were heading toward their nearest community centre or local synagogue. The other unusual thing was that the temperature had risen to an unseasonable thirty-four degrees centigrade. The schools in the western world had closed for the Easter holiday and as the weather had unexpectedly cleared, families were heading to the beach, Disneyland, or other places of amusement. Others were still working but there was a good feeling in the air and there was the weekend to look forward to. In Jerusalem the tourists had increased in number by a factor of at least two, and the streets were just a throng of moving bodies, like a procession of ants.

At the airport, it was the busiest day for years, and flights were arriving full of holiday-makers and pilgrims. At the arrivals control barrier there was a backlog of some forty minutes. Just before mid-day three airliners were on approach about ninety seconds separating them, with more joining the queue from four and five minutes out, but not yet on final approach. The Lufthansa flight from Munich landed at six minutes to twelve and as the German craft turned to clear the runway, Bravo-Lima-Gamma 241 from Brussels was starting final descent. As if by a gust of wind, on the stroke of twelve-hundred hours the aircraft veered off to the left and dipped its port wing. The co-pilot grabbed

the yoke and started to wrestle the plane back to level flight, but over compensated and the aircraft now being too low, the right wing-tip first hit the approach light at the end of the runway and then the grassed area. The wing broke free but not before causing the plane to cartwheel onto the runway and burst into flames from the trail of aviation fuel, ignited by sparks from the metal grinding on the concrete. All three-hundred and fifty-one passengers and crew were lost, or so it seemed.

In the airport an English family were at the entry barrier, the official took their EU passports to stamp and scan, then stacked the small books, and looked up to hand them back. They were no where to be seen, the official rose from his seat to look for the family, and noticed some pockets of confusion and panic in the waiting passengers. One woman was screaming, another was weeping, one man was stood repeating the same phrase over and over, "She just disappeared, she just disappeared, she . . ." Then it dawned on the official that all the children were gone, there was not one child left in the arrivals lounge.

In the Old City the crowds thinned suddenly as nearly a third of the tourists disappeared in an instant, here too confusion and panic ensued with parents looking for children and spouses looking for their other halves. Just a few minutes later the JMRT compound on Cyprus was almost deserted other than Doctor Wade and one other member of staff. Wade would not notice anything was wrong, until he emerged for his evening meal. As the sun reached its zenith around the Earth people

continued to disappear for the next twenty-four hours. The five o'clock news from the BBC reported the incident:

“Good afternoon, here is the five o'clock news. A state of emergency has been declared by both the new World Senate and the United Nations, in response to a world-wide incident where people seem to have been disappearing. The incident started at exactly mid-day today along the thirty-fifth line of longitude, twelve minutes East latitude, which falls exactly on Bethlehem and is close to Jerusalem. The line extends down to the Red Sea and into East Africa along which line thousands of disappearances have been reported. The USA is now bracing itself for the same incidents. Reports are coming in that queues have been forming outside of churches across the US. The Primate of North America, Michael Donahue, stated that we were facing the “long awaited Rapture” and advised all Christians to make their peace with their God. Two hours ago Colin Parks, the Primate of All Britain, stated that he felt that God had left certain people behind to care for those who accepted God in the years to come. The Arch Bishop of Canterbury, the Right Reverend Jonathan Benn, was unavailable for comment as he was on holiday in the Holy Land, no one having seen him since mid-day.”

“The newly installed World President, Rick Pickles told people not to panic as he was sure that the effect was in some-way connected with the strange colour of the sun and the unusually high temperatures that the world has

experienced over the past few days. The British Home Secretary Henry Harden said that he agreed that we should not panic, but thought that it may yet turn out to be a stunt perpetrated by the Christians who have caused so many problems over the past few years. The BBC Directorate said that the disappearances had only marginally affected the BBC and the service will continue as scheduled. In Australia the leader of the Anglican Church, Archbishop Morrison together with the leader of some of the largest independent churches on the continent, made the following statement:”

“What the world is experiencing is quite obviously the prophesied Rapture of the faithful, we are asking all Christians to hold firm and not to panic, God knows who you are and knows your heart, we look forward to our encounter at mid-day.”

“That statement was received in audio only, through the old land lines, as solar activity is currently affecting satellite communication links. However, speaking for myself, it would seem that the warnings from the 'God Tapes' are accurate and that we are experiencing the Biblical Rapture, those of us who are left can only look to the future with trepidation as the Great Tribulation starts, **here and now.**”

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the

tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

[Matthew 24:29-31 ESV]