

LARRY S. GEROVAC



THE
ONE PATH

BOOK TWO OF THE GOD CHRONICLES

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LARRY S. GEROVAC

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Book Two of The God Chronicles
(Second Edition)

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This book is dedicated to the memory of those that gave their lives so we may have the freedom to choose our own path.

A book is never published without the help of others along the way. There are usually a few people involved that go above and beyond the norm. With that in mind I'd like to give a special thanks to my wife, Sharon, for all of her support during the writing/publishing process. All writers need beta readers to help identify and correct problems before we publish our stories. With that said, I'd like to thank Debbie Wilds for her honest feedback. Thanks to her I always get an invaluable female perspective of both characters and plot.

Table of Contents

Prologue

CHAPTER 1: Day One in Rome

Prologue

Much has happened to Thomas since the fateful day of his auto accident when a semi ran a red light at an intersection and T-boned him. That was the day his life changed forever. Not because of the accident but of what occurred afterward. Now, don't misunderstand, he was happy when an angel named Raphael saved his life. You can imagine his shock. At first he thought it was a dream.

Thomas got an even larger shock when he told him that he was to be God's last prophet. Thomas knew a mistake had been made. He was a no one. He had no accomplishments and worst of all he was a sinner in the eyes of the church. There were many men and women in the world more deserving than him of being the last prophet of God. Try as he might, he could not convince Raphael a mistake had been made. After all, he was not just an angel, but an archangel working directly for God.

He learned the angel had been at his side most of his life, so Thomas couldn't understand why Raphael still thought he was the right choice. He had seen him at his worst, and you would not be wrong to say there were a lot of bad moments. Thomas finally gave up trying to wiggle out of his new title. He would do his best, but knew he would fall short. How could he, a mere human, win against Lucifer, the greatest angel God ever created?

Could things get worse Thomas wondered? The answer always seemed to be *yes*, it can get worse! He had to stop Lucifer from destroying heaven and earth, and he had to prepare mankind for the final conflict of good versus evil.

No prophet before him had acted alone to perform a task for God. God told previous prophets what to do, where to go, and what to say – not Thomas! As far as he could tell he would have to go it alone.

Thomas believed in God, but not himself. He believed he was the weak link in God's plan. It often made him ill to think the Creator believed in him. Raphael told Thomas that God had given him powers, which he had to discover on his own. So far all he discovered were a few parlor tricks, nothing of any significance.

Demons can create temporary realities. Man cannot tell reality and conjured creations apart. All angels can become invisible and move through walls. They can even shoot pure energy from the palms of their hands. Fallen angels are very powerful and dangerous. How could he possibly stop them on his own?

To build Thomas's knowledge of Lucifer, Raphael showed him the Great Angel War. Thomas learned Lucifer has many desirable traits: leadership, creativity, drive, enthusiasm, confidence, patience, and a genius unlike any other angel, to name only a few. His charismatic appeal is overwhelming. Even with all he has going for him, he has some weaknesses too. Thomas must find ways to exploit Lucifer's overconfidence, challenge his evil plans, and use his arrogance, vanity, and drive against him.

While in heaven Thomas saw Jesus, the angels, and the many faces of God, but now the memories were fading. The only face he could remember was that of Raphael. As promised he was able to recall all the events of the Great Angel War. He remembered every piece of information dealing with the fall and rise of Lucifer.

The One Path is the second book in the God Chronicles and represents the beginning of

Thomas's life as God's last prophet. It is the second book in the account of his efforts to thwart Lucifer's plans.

CHAPTER 1: Day One in Rome

There was no moon out tonight. The only light Thomas could see as he walked down one of the many old passageways of Rome was the dim light that shown through the curtains of closed windows. Thomas felt a little uncomfortable being the only one out for a stroll this evening. As he walked, he could hear footsteps behind him every now and then, but each time he turned, he would see no one. Thomas was becoming a bit nervous because he felt he should have reached his hotel by now. He thought, *I must have taken a wrong turn down one of these many narrow passageways, which make up some of the ancient parts of the city.*

When Thomas heard the echoing of footsteps bouncing off the walls behind him, he picked up his pace from a brisk walk to a jog. Now he heard the feet of his stalkers change from a walk to a run. Thomas had to see who was following him, so he stopped quickly, turned around, and saw two figures coming into view. One looked about average height, and the other looked like a giant. Thomas knew the two figures running toward him were up to no good. Although his legs were feeling a bit weak, the natural defensive mechanism of fight or flight took over. Thomas began to run pumping his legs as fast as he could.

As Thomas ran, he could hear the feet of his assailants hitting the ground much faster than his own feet were moving. As Thomas turned to evaluate how far behind him the threat was, he noted the two shapes chasing him were beginning to take on a rather bizarre form. When the acuity of his vision improved as his attackers continued to approach him, he realized that they were demons that looked like they had just stepped out of a horror movie. Fear gripped Thomas, and he started to scream for help. He looked down the dimly lit walkways and up at the dark windows, eager for any sign of assistance as he continued to scream for help.

Vincenzo, an Italian architect living in the old town area of Rome, had woken up and couldn't get back to sleep. He decided to get out of bed and have a late-night snack. As Vincenzo walked to his refrigerator, he could hear a man crying for help, so he ran over to the window and peeked out. In the well-lit street below, he saw a pretty woman and a young boy chasing a middle-aged man. The man was dressed in casual clothes.

It was as if Thomas was now looking through Vincenzo's eyes. He felt a little vertigo because he could see himself looking up at Vincenzo. He saw himself as having graying hair, a receding hairline, brown eyes, bushy eyebrows, a well-trimmed beard, and

wrinkles above his cheeks, earned from many years of smiling. Instead of demons, Vincenzo saw a very pretty-looking woman in a short red dress, and what should have been the giant of a demon was now a young boy clinging to a toy airplane as he ran toward the man that was really himself.

As Thomas snapped back into his own body, he knew the scene that Vincenzo observed looked like a family playing as they walked home. He watched Vincenzo as he closed the curtain, probably not wanting to appear too nosy. There was no doubt in the mind of Thomas that there would be no human aid coming to help him tonight. As he reached the end of the alleyway with no avenue for escape in sight, Thomas turned once again to confront his assailants. He knew that he must come face-to-face with his greatest fears – confronting Lucifer or his demon followers.

The two demons chasing Thomas slowed their approach as they neared. He could see both demons clearly, although they seemed to be bathed in a red-orange fog. One demon had green- tinted skin with yellow highlights, a pronounced forehead, sunken eye sockets, and instead of whites of the eyes with pupils, he had only yellow glowing eyes of energy with no pupils. He had two ridge like subcutaneous antlers running the length of his hairless head. On his back were two small mutilated wings attached to a slightly muscular body. The most unsettling thing was that he had a black forked tongue, which seemed to flick uncontrollably in and out of his mouth much like a snake's tongue, only much thicker.

If such a thing were possible, the second demon was even more formidable-looking than the first. It was massive, about seven feet tall, with a body so well muscled that it looked as though it could only be possible in a cartoon. Unlike the first demon, this one had red-tinted skin with no hair on his body, pronounced ridges where his eyebrows should have been, red glowing eyes with black pupils, and two sharp horns that looked similar to a bull's except that each horn had large rigid circular rings running perpendicular to its length. His shoulders had lumps and protrusions, which had the appearance of an alligator's skin. His large black wings had tips that curled threateningly forward, and on the end of each dark wing was a single black hooked talon.

As the demons slowly approached Thomas, he noted that they appeared to be moving very cautiously, as though he somehow represented a threat to them. The demons were now close enough that Thomas could see the drool dripping from their mouths, and he was beginning to smell the horrible stench of decaying flesh. All of a sudden, Thomas's stomach began to quiver, and he vomited violently all over his shoes while his body jerked with minor tremors. He was too scared to move.

The demon with the snakelike tongue, in a voice that sounded like ten different people saying the same thing at once but slightly out of sync, said to his partner, "Look, Abbadon, he's scared of us. I will wager he wets his pants like a frightened little man-child!"

The demons both began to laugh as they approached Thomas with a newly found confidence. Thomas could hear a voice in his mind, very low in the background, trying to get his attention as the large demon named Abbadon pushed the smaller ugly demon aside and moved toward Thomas.

As the large demon advanced menacingly, he said, "Merihim, this weak little prophet will be mine to rip apart!"

Merihim cackled. "Before you kill him, I would like to torture him a little first.

Where is your God now, Thomas?”

Thomas was frozen in fear as Abbadon reached for his throat. In the instant Abbadon grabbed Thomas by the throat, the voice in the back of his mind finally broke to the forefront and said, “Please place your seats in an upright position. Flight crew, prepare for landing.”

Thomas opened his eyes as he looked around, trying to get his bearings, and realized he was still sitting on the plane covered in sweat. Thomas thought the chase was so real that it must be a warning or a premonition of things to come. If it was a premonition, Thomas knew that he was in deep trouble— his first conflict, and he lost the battle and possibly his life. What caused the demons to slow down? He was missing something important. Were they aware of it, and he was not? Then there was the thing still nagging at Thomas about this whole visit from Raphael identifying him as God’s last prophet. It was something Raphael said, but he just couldn’t put his finger on it.

The elderly lady sitting next to Thomas felt him tossing and turning in his sleep for the last hour. Sensing he was having problems she debated waking him up. When his whole body suddenly jerked, and he opened his eyes, she could see the fear. Thomas was glistening in sweat as though he had had been running. As the old gray-haired woman watched him, he finally realized where he was.

The elderly lady asked, “Are you all right, young man?”

Thomas looked at her with a little fear still in his eyes over the ordeal that he had just experienced and said, “I’m all right. I just had a nightmare.”

She gave Thomas a worried look and patted him on the thigh as she said, “Whenever something bothers me, I work on the problem until I resolve it. I never go to sleep with unsolved issues.”

“That’s very good advice, but I just can’t seem to put my finger on the important thought. I can feel it subconsciously, but I can’t bring it to my conscious mind.” As Thomas tried to relax, he noted the flight crew was walking up and down the aisles, counting the passengers and checking the bathrooms.

A person near Thomas asked the stewardess, “Excuse me, ma’am. Is there a problem?”

“We can’t find a passenger that was in first class,” she said.

Thomas immediately thought about little Ethan and asked the stewardess, “The missing person isn’t a little boy named Ethan, is it?”

“No, sir. It’s a middle-aged blonde woman in a blue top.”

“Lilith?” asked Thomas.

The stewardess replied, “Yes, sir. Have you seen her since you left first class?”

“No, I went to sleep almost as soon as I sat down.”

“After you left first class, she got out of her seat and walked toward the bathroom. That’s the last time anyone can remember seeing her. We just need to find her and make sure she hasn’t experienced some kind of problem.”

Weird, he thought. He began to wonder if this too was somehow linked to him.

The old lady sitting next to Thomas said, “My name’s Margaret. Are you on vacation, or are a work-related trip?”

“Nice to meet you Margaret. I’m Thomas. I’m traveling to Vatican City for a talk with the pope.”

Margaret smiled as she said, “You and ten thousand other people. I hope you have an

appointment.”

Thomas shook his head no and said, “I hope the Vatican will see that my message represents a threat so great that I will be allowed to discuss it with the pope.”

Margaret wiggled in her seat, smiled innocently, and repeated herself, “So do ten thousand other people.”

Maybe Margaret is right, thought Thomas. I'm just another face who thinks that he has something important to tell the pope. I have at least three strikes against me: I don't have an appointment, I'm not a Catholic, and I don't practice a religion. I'm sure the Vatican turns away thousands of crazies coming to see the pope. My wife was right. Now I'm one of the crazies who I used to laugh at. Oh God, what have I done? How am I going to do this?

Margaret reached over and grabbed Thomas by the hand and squeezed it gently. Thomas's first instinct was to withdraw his hand but then he noticed her touch was warm and oddly reassuring. Thomas looked Margaret in the eye as he tried to understand why she grabbed his hand. Thomas was a little worried because he saw a vacant look in her face and was afraid she was having a heart attack.

Margaret's pupils disappeared, leaving only the whites of her eyes. In fear, Thomas tried to pull his hand away from what had become Margaret's death grip. She turned to look at him directly in the face as she whispered softly in a man's voice, saying, “Fear not, last prophet of God, for I bring a message from the Lord. ‘Seek the answers to your questions through he who openly weeps for my son.’”

Finally, Thomas yanked his hand from Margaret's death grip. As Margaret felt Thomas's hand fly out of her grasp, she fearfully asked Thomas, “What's the matter?”

Thomas asked, “Did you just have a seizure?”

Margaret started to look very nervous and said, “You're scaring me, Thomas!”

The people sitting in the vicinity of Thomas and Margaret were now beginning to pay attention to what was going on because of the verbal disturbance.

“Your eyes went white, and you gave me a message from God,” said Thomas nervously as he continued to look at Margaret's eyes for any sign of possession.

“Thomas, I am in Europe to see a specialist. I have a brain tumor, and sometimes, I say strange things. I haven't lost any motor or mental abilities, but I have no memory of what I say when my mind goes wherever it goes. My family says I mostly ramble about biblical things.”

Upon hearing that Margaret had health issues, the people sitting around them began to go about their business once again. But now, Thomas didn't know what to think. *Was this a message from God or not? Obviously, Margaret has some serious health issues. Am I beginning to see everything as a threat now? Doggone it! I knew from the beginning that I am the wrong choice for this job! Why couldn't God and Raphael see what is so obvious to me?* Thomas looked disbelievingly at Margaret, and she in turn, smiled innocently back at him.

This was beginning to scare the crap out of Thomas. He couldn't even tell what was real or not real. What was a threat and what was not a threat? His journey had just begun—Raphael was correct. This would be the most difficult task of his life, and Thomas was not a brave person. Thomas's look of disbelief changed to a smile as he looked at Margaret and thought that he should ease her fears, so he said, “Don't worry Margaret, I'm sure you will be just fine. If God speaks through you, I guess it's our job to

listen to his message and try to understand its meaning.”

“Thank you for being so understanding,” said Margaret as she gave Thomas a smile. Then she asked, “Was your message helpful?”

“I am honestly finding that most things offered from heaven do not represent simple answers. But in response to your question, at this point, I just don’t know.”

The plane landed and it taxied to the terminal where it parked. Before the passengers got off the plane, the Italian police boarded and began to check off every passenger from the manifest as they exited. The first-class passengers were the first to exit. As the coach passengers began to exit, Thomas stood up and helped Margaret get her small shoulder bag out of the overhead compartment. Margaret thanked him and said she would light a candle for him. The couple who had been seated across Thomas told him that what he had done was very nice and that his actions gave them hope that there were still good people in the world. Thomas, amazed at the attention, thanked them and said it was nothing and that he was sure anyone else in a similar situation would also have done the same thing.

The man in front of Thomas extended his arm to shake hands with Thomas. As Thomas reached out his hand, the man said in a heavy Mideast Indian accent, “My name’s Sanjeet. I am Hindi. I believe that those who perform an act of good will shall have bestowed on them an act of even greater good. It would be a great favor to me if you would accept my card and permit me, perhaps one day in the future, to honor you with a favor.”

Thomas smiled at Sanjeet, took his card, and thanked him for the offer. Sanjeet looked at Thomas and said, “This offer I submit to you, I do not make lightly just to have you and me feel good about ourselves, but it embodies a sincere attempt to make the world a better place, one good deed at a time.”

Then the passengers in front of Sanjeet started to move forward. Thomas stuck the card in his pocket and thanked Sanjeet one more time. Everyone started to make their way to the front of the plane to check in with the police before they could exit. When Thomas was next in line, Mario, the cabin steward who had helped him arrange the seat swap with Eve and little Ethan, handed Thomas his luggage. Mario said, “Mr. Mumin, you’re a good person. I hope to see you again.”

“I would like that, Mario. It’s nice to see someone with an attitude as wonderful as yours!”

After Thomas exited the plane, he made his way to the taxi stand, and he noted lots of birds of every variety, including many crows, swooping down to pick up breadcrumbs. A rather dingy- looking taxi driver, who had shooed away several fares, made eye contact with Thomas and asked politely, “Do you need a ride, sir?”

Thomas looked at the dingy cab driver and then noted the contrast between the driver and his cab, which looked new and well-kept. The number 9 was nicely displayed on the cab’s door, so Thomas asked, “How far to hotels near Vatican City?”

The driver wiped spit from his lips with the sleeve of his dirty shirt as he replied, “No hotels in Vatican City. You must stay in Rome.” He pointed his hand to the distance as he said, “Rome is twenty-five kilometers from here.”

“All right, I’ll take a ride, but only if you can drop me off at a nice but not too expensive hotel. My name’s Thomas. What’s yours?”

“I am called Milosh. I will take you to a nice hotel.” Milosh got into the cab and

waited for Thomas to load his own luggage into the open trunk.

As Milosh drove away, Thomas noted the unusual tattoo on Milosh's right hand, located on the web of skin between the index finger and his thumb. The tattoo was about the size of a quarter and looked like a wagon wheel.

Thomas said, "Milosh, that's an unusual tattoo. Does it have any meaning?"

Thomas saw Milosh's dark-brown pupils looking at him in the rearview mirror as he answered rather smugly and said, "I was young and stupid when I got the tattoo. It has no meaning. I just liked the looks of it."

Thomas, sensing that Milosh was upset, apologized, saying, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend you. I just thought it was unusual."

"You do not offend Milosh. Milosh works hard to please his boss."

Thomas thought that was an unusual statement but wrote it off to Milosh's rather broken English.

When Milosh arrived at the hotel, Thomas couldn't believe it was a hotel. It looked more like a rundown building in a bad neighborhood. There was a broken hotel sign, garbage strewn outside the door, and crows perched on the rooftop as if waiting to be fed. "You go," said Milosh.

This wasn't Thomas's first time around the block, so he told Milosh, "I said cheaper, not run-down. Please take me to another hotel."

Milosh huffed in disgust and said, "I must make call." Milosh dialed a number and spoke in what sounded like Bengali. He and the other person were obviously arguing.

Watching Milosh's body language as he spoke on the phone, Thomas knew that Milosh was trying to explain something as if it weren't his fault.

Milosh told Thomas, "We wait. My friend calls to make sure hotel has room."

Thomas just nodded his head and wished he had been more selective of his taxi driver, but the car had looked well cared for.

Milosh's phone rang about two minutes later. When Milosh spoke this time, it was obvious that he was speaking to someone superior. There was no arguing, only acceptance of what he was told. Milosh looked at Thomas in the rearview mirror and said, "I take you to good hotel. You like."

With that, he drove off, and about ten minutes later, they arrived at a nice-looking hotel. Not top-of-the-line but nice. This was more like what Thomas expected.

Milosh seemed anxious to get rid of Thomas as he said, "You go now. Milosh must have meeting." Milosh was so upset that he didn't even ask for his fare. Thomas had to ask how much he owed him for the transportation. Milosh shrugged his shoulders as if he hadn't thought about the fare and said questioningly, "Fifteen euros or twenty US dollars?"

Thomas dug a twenty-dollar bill out of his wallet and said, "Wow, that seems more than reasonable." He handed it to Milosh.

Milosh looked very nervous as he snatched the money and said, "Go. Milosh must leave now!"

Thomas grabbed his own luggage out of the trunk, and the second the trunk slammed shut, Milosh sped away. As Thomas began to walk up to the hotel, a burly but kind-looking doorman greeted him. "Do you need some assistance with your luggage, sir?"

Thomas smiled, saying, "No, thank you. I only have this one bag."

"Just walk straight into the hotel and check in at the desk on your right. If you need

anything, my name's Stefano."

Thomas extended his hand and said, "My name's Thomas. Tell me, Stefano, what's the distance to Vatican City from here? Can I walk?"

Stefano accepted Thomas's hand in greeting and said, "You can walk to Vatican City from here using the old passageways. It's about five kilometers, so it should take you about forty-five minutes to an hour. It's a very nice walk."

Thomas had a shiver run down his back as he remembered his premonition on the plane. Perhaps he would walk there and take a taxi back to the hotel to change the possible future of being chased by demons. Thomas said, "One more thing. Do you know how long it takes to get a meeting with the pope?"

Stefano asked, "Do you hold a position as a head of state? Are you a cardinal, a celebrity, or a businessman associated with church activities?"

"No." Thomas frowned as he began to see the writing on the wall.

"Then you must fill out a papal visit form about two to three months in advance of your arrival to have a private session with His Holiness. And after that, they offer no guarantee that you will be allowed to see him. Do you have business of a critical nature?"

"Yes, I have to see him!"

"Do you mind me asking why you have to talk with him?"

Thomas was nervous, but he knew honesty was always the best policy. Thomas said, "I need to talk to him about the end-times, Armageddon, and the coming of God's last prophet."

Stefano smiled and laughed a little until he saw that Thomas was serious.

Thomas said, "I know I sound like one of the crazy religious zealots. Shoot, I made fun of them myself just weeks ago. I have had a life-changing event, which has given me insights to a threat to our existence. I have to see the pope!"

"Thomas, I am a realist. At this point in my life, I neither believe nor disbelieve based on the lack of evidence on both sides. I have seen many faults with the church over the five decades of my life. It should not be my place to judge your need to see the pope. But if you were in my position, hearing what you just told me, what would you think?"

"Stefano, a couple of weeks ago, I would have been laughing at your side. Look around you. You say you have witnessed many faults within the church over the last five decades. Now step back and tell me what has happened to the world itself in the last five decades. Let's suppose, and I'm just saying, suppose God has been observing us for thousands of years, and the Bible speaks the truth for the most part. How much longer do you think he would put up with the chaos of our lives? If God does not exist, we just keep heading down our current path. But if God does exist and he really created us as his children, do you think he would try to save us and prepare us for the final battle, or just leave us to fend for ourselves?"

"All right, Thomas, I can see some logic there. Maybe it is time I reevaluate my views on God. Now, if I were to pretend I were you, this is what I think I would do. Tomorrow morning, I would go to Vatican City and explain to the bishop's office your need for an audience with the pope." Stefano shrugged his shoulders and said, "It's the best advice I can give you based on what I know of the Vatican."

Thomas shook Stefano's hand one more time as he said, "Thank you very much. It's at least a starting point, and more than I had when I first arrived."

Thomas sat in his room that first evening in Rome and went over everything that

happened to him. He tried to remember all the things Raphael told him, and then it hit him. Raphael said that the near proximity to demons should cause the opposite affect of that wonderful sensation he had when he could feel all the angels of God around him. That opposite feeling had to be the gas-like upset stomach he kept experiencing. Thomas also noted that there was a distinct difference between a feeling of fear and what he had felt several times on the trip.

Thomas felt so stupid. Raphael had taught him so much during their time together, and what did he do? He immediately ran out and forgot everything that he was told. For supposedly being so smart, Thomas thought he sure was stupid!

Methodically, he began to go over every piece of the trip, writing down each event that occurred. Then he marked each time that he felt a queasy stomach. Raphael said, "Know your enemy." *It's hard to do that when you run around the battlefield blindly.* Raphael had told him, "Make no mistake, Thomas. This is a war, and lives are at stake." Thomas promised himself this would not happen again. Next time, he would be aware of his surroundings and his senses.

Thomas documented his queasiness with several events. It all started in Istanbul at the airport when Thomas was in line to board his flight to Rome the first time. Thomas replayed the event when the Istanbul security team nabbed him as he was boarding the plane for being a terrorist. He remembered having stomach pains while he waited at the gate to board the plane. In his mind, he pictured the photographers standing at the gate area as if waiting for an event to occur. As Thomas recalled the events in his mind's eye, he remembered a woman standing with the photographers in the slinky blue top. It was Lilith.

Now, without all the distractions, it was easier to understand everything that had hampered his trip. Thomas recalled what a good feeling he had when he boarded the flight to Rome. He had made a new friend in Aydin Petuel, the high-ranking Turkish military officer who found the computer glitch that caused Turkish security at the airport to think Thomas was a terrorist.

The next point Thomas felt uneasy was when Lilith sat next to him. *Oh my God*, thought Thomas. Raphael said that demons could take on any living form—man, child, animal, or woman! Lilith was a demon! At the time, he hadn't thought much about it, but in retrospect, when Thomas moved from first class to coach after giving up his seat to the traveling military wife and her son, his stomach settled down.

Now things began to make sense. *The demons failed to get me locked up in Istanbul, so they plotted to do something on the plane before I got to Rome, but they hadn't counted on me trading seats with someone.* On the plane, Thomas had felt that Lilith was overly risqué in exposing her breasts to his view. As she bent over and talked, she hoped to give Thomas a few covetous looks—it may have been an attempt to attack his morality. *It all falls into place now. With me trading seats, there was no need for Lilith or whatever the demon's name was to stay onboard the plane. I must remember that I am at war. I have engaged the enemy at least twice without even realizing it.*

Thomas continued to play the events out in his mind: the weird taxi driver with the odd tattoo and the crows watching the events transpire at the airport. Thomas recalled that in many horror stories, crows were depicted as the devil or representing evil. Thomas had felt uneasy when the taxi driver took him to the dump of a hotel. Then he remembered the crows perched on the roof of the house. He thought, *Oh God! Could*

things get any worse? Thomas knew that he must become more aware of his surroundings, or it would be the death of him. Rightly picked by God as the last prophet or not, he did not want to die or fail in this task given to him.

That night as Thomas slept, he began to dream. He tossed and turned as the dream locked him into its web. Thomas was looking out the rear window of a car as it moved down an old dirt road in the middle of the night. In the reflection from the window, he could see he was now a teenage boy. His face and posture told him he was either very unhappy or extremely bored.

The young boy turned to look at the man driving the car. Thomas heard the words, “Otac, koliko dulje?” Thomas didn’t know how, but he understood. “Father, how much longer?”

The father replied, “Thirty minutes.”

Then as Thomas saw the father’s right hand in the glow of the dashboard light, he could just make out the tattoo the young man was now staring at—a wheel with spokes. Then the young man looked down at his own hand and could see one section of the wheel with only one spoke. The teenager looked out of the window again, and Thomas could see that tears were beginning to form in the corners of his eyes. A sense of hopelessness overcame Thomas as he awoke with a jerk. Like the sensation you get when you are falling in a dream and wake up just before hitting the ground.

When Thomas got his bearings once again, he found himself covered in sweat. He looked at the clock, and it was 5:27 a.m. Time to get up and get ready for a long day. Thomas still didn’t know if these were dreams or premonitions. The events seemed so real, he feared they were premonitions. The question in the back of his mind was, *do these things have to happen, or are they only a possibility of what could happen? Do the premonitions represent a gift from God? How can I possibly use this knowledge to my advantage?* Then he realized that he had already used it by changing his plans of returning to the hotel this evening via taxi instead of walking. These premonitions might be able to give him an advantage over the demons. *Can I control a possible future identified in one of my premonitions?*

Thomas got himself ready as he pondered dozens of possibilities. He went downstairs to the restaurant and got himself a nice simple breakfast: cereal, fruit, a sweet roll, and coffee. He would eat nothing that could upset his stomach this morning. If there were demons near, he wanted to be aware of it. He obtained directions from the front desk for his walk to the office of the bishops.

Stefano was right. It was a beautiful walk. When Thomas arrived at the Pontifical North American College, he immediately went straight to the bishop’s office. As he entered the office, what he observed shocked him. There were people with aliens on their T-shirts. One person dressed like Jesus. A few people were dressed like monks, and there was an elderly lady pushing a dog in a doll’s stroller. It looked like a loony bin. An old nun was sitting at the receptionist desk. She had a well-wrinkled face and looked to be about eighty to ninety years old. Even with all the crazies around her, she had a very friendly smile. Stunned by what he saw, Thomas walked up to the desk, looking at the strange scene all around him.

Seeing the shock on his face when he entered, the sister quickly brought Thomas back down to earth as she smiled happily and said with more energy than he thought possible, considering her old-looking body, “Hello, my name is Sister Mary Francis. May

I help you?"

"Hello, Sister. My name is Thomas Mumin."

Upon hearing his name, Sister Mary Francis became surprised and said, "Ah, how unusual. I have only read of your last name in ancient scrolls. Do you know what it means?"

"I have been told just this week that it means believer."

"You are right, Thomas. But not just believer, it is a name of great honor bestowed only to the truest believers in Christ. Mumin was not apostles. You could think of them as more like the warriors of God. They were a secret organization that protected the early Christians who attended the teachings of the then young Jesus. Now, how is it that I can help a man with so honorable of a name?"

Thomas took to Mary Francis immediately. He couldn't believe that the church stuck her here in an office of such obviously low importance. In response to her question, he said, "I would like to arrange for a private audience with the pope. I recently received some critical information that the church should be aware of. I came from the US, and I didn't have time to schedule a meeting in advance. But before we talk about me, why did the church stick you here?"

Mary Francis laughed and spryly said, "You are the first person to ask me such a question. That means either you are very perceptive, or it has finally got to me, and I look like..." She nodded her head in the direction of the crazies.

Thomas looked into the smiling face of Mary Francis and couldn't help but laugh.

"It turns out that I am too inquisitive for my own good. I'm a bookworm, always have been. I had been sneaking into the secret ancient papal archives for decades and just recently got caught. The cardinals decided this would be my punishment for reading the secret documents without the pope's authorization. Actually, it's how I found out about the Mumin, and so much more that it would make your head spin."

Thomas said, "I would love to pick your brain."

"Not much there anymore. I am afraid my memory is finally starting to fade."

"I'd never know it, talking to you," said Thomas.

Mary Francis looked Thomas straight in the eye and said, "Thomas, I won't lie to you. Odds are, you will not get a short private audience with the pope."

"What can I do?" asked Thomas.

Mary Francis looked at Thomas with sadness in her eyes as she said, "The bishop's office has never granted a personal meeting with the pope except through previously scheduled events, no matter what the urgency of the request." She looked at the disappointment on the face of Thomas and couldn't stand it, so she stuck her neck out and asked, "Why do you have to see the pope?"

Thomas knew his story would sound a bit hokey to anyone who heard it, but he believed in honesty. Then he thought of something Raphael told him, and he asked Mary Francis, "Are you familiar with the writings of Mary of Magdala?" Thomas kept his fingers crossed as he waited for her response.

Mary Francis said proudly, "Very few eyes have read the true writings of Mary Magdalene. Yes, I have read her writings."

Thomas said, "There shall come a time when what is right shall become wrong and what is evil shall become acceptable. There shall be a great battle on the plains of Megiddo, and the battle shall be called Armageddon. Prior to Armageddon, God shall

send a great leader to assist man in the war against Lucifer. That man shall be God's last prophet."

Sister Mary Francis looked nervously at Thomas as she made the sign of the cross and kissed her rosary as she asked, "Who are you?"