

ABBA'S
APOCALYPSE

CHARLES E BUTLER

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this story to the women in my life:
Betty Ann, Gloria Patri, Tiffany Michele, Kristie Dawn,
Clover Lynn, Isabel Rose, & my wife Sandra Lynne.
And, to all my Joeys'

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Prelude

There is a time in every life when we are faced with broken pieces. It's that extraordinary keepsake plate meant for display purposes only. It possesses the ability to link very special memories to our heart. It may be an anniversary gift, or just a souvenir. It's that object of our affection. It bridges time and even death. Special rules and laws guard it. It is bound within a fortress of wood and glass. This cherished possession is kept clean by faithful hands longing to hold that loved one again. But, a careless bump jars it free from its polished prison of protection. Helplessly you watch it roll down a path towards its destruction. Just then, you may experience a second death.

You cannot face another funeral. Your heart will not let the trash can claim its final epitaph. So, you rescue it and fight to revive it back to life. You cry out to God for help. Finally, you come to the realization it's time to give up and accept all those pieces. All you are left with are broken pieces.

Chapter 1: Dungeon of Damnation

I am forever cloaked in this despairing cold night as I peer through this inescapable looming damp dark fog. I hide myself and watch it restlessly devour its submissive shadowy subjects. I am afraid and cold-oh so cold. All my senses tingle with a heightened awareness I've not felt before. Nervous perspiration tingles on my neck as the current of this moist chill eerily moves over me. I reverently remain motionless, hoping to go unnoticed. I dread evil lurks here and will discover me. Its malevolence must be savoring my growing dripping fear. I sense its wicked spirit lurking in the freezing flow that churns this ocean of depression. Waves of empty loneliness crash over me. I observe its terrible essence gobble these night silhouettes so gracefully; as a ballerina skirting across this eternal night stage. It swirls effortlessly and carelessly, brushing its shades of gray strained through the fog. How I pity these wretched tortured souls. Each lonely subject patiently awaits the beast, praying it will make an end to their never ending misery. All welcome this murder's hands by bending their fleshly necks back. They invite death to squeeze the life out of their very existence. But, there is no mercy here. Peace never comes. Oh, the pain of this place. Oh, the loneliness.

Etched in the distance is a tunnel the fog reveals through its

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ebbs and flows. I race to it before it evaporates my escape route. My hasty retreat is slowed by the weighty atmosphere pressing upon me. It pushes and pulls me off course. I struggle with all my might as the coldness cuts me through to the bone. I shake my head repeatedly, shaking lose its choke hold. My heart panics and cries out, "You must continue!" The futility of this place is brutal. I must not stop. For if I do, I'll be swallowed up and forever rooted in this bastion of the eternal unending rest. Something strange comes and comforts me.

An invisible presence hastily pushes me towards my objective. I see a way out-although I do not see my helper. Its touch is an all encompassing beacon of hope. The entity draws me out, as this deep heavy worrisome ocean continues to smashes me on its sea floor. I know without this helper I would be another permanent petrified fixture in this palace of depression within its dungeon of damnation. Invisible hands brush aside the cloak of this concealed menace waiting to pounce upon me. These hands clutch and carry me past this hideous attacker. In a brief moment, there is hope, but this new place brings me no relief.

Time here is a forgotten thought. It's nothing more than a reminder of the constant unending pain. I taste a different agony, but its blessed curse has followed me from the prior essence. Eternity's measurement here forever fans the flames whipping each soul with its perpetual burning stings. I stare through the flames that burn alive these screaming souls, while searching out the prince of pain. I watch their flesh melt, as the roaring blaze tears tender pieces off each suffering victim. This inferno does not consume its captive, but the surrounding darkness does swallow the flames. This is a dark hideous place. I wish no more than to just die. A revolting stench of sulfur precedes Perdition. His poisonous fragrance causes me to convulse. Concealed in the shadows of this dark abyss, he taunts and teases each soul mercilessly. I hear his laughing voice, mocking them on their choice to come here. He reveals glimpses of overwhelming joy that could be, if they'd only chosen differently. His hateful presence is overwhelmingly unbearable. I know he watches over

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his dominion, savoring this treasure they stole from God. I feel his sadistic pleasure, as his Relentless festively feast on each of their screams and miseries. They enjoy straining every morsel of every agonizing scream through their gnashing teeth. Great sorrow wars with unbearable loneliness that competes with the eternal fire. Selfishness drips and oozes a despairing rain everywhere; fueling this undying inferno.

The weight of my fear balances the crushing pain, precisely trapping me. I think about a father's compassion or mother's love, neither comforting these dear babes cries ever again. My eyes suffer through my tears as I notice a gate. I sense it is the entrance, and the only way out.

Hung on this ancient hinged gate is a rusted decrepit sign. It hangs and swings in the current of screams these tortured souls exhaustively exhale. I realize this is the only thing ever leaving this place. The sign holds what looks like a warning that slowly creaks and squeals the true name of this place. But, it's rather a final futile insulting gesture to its new eternal inhabitants. This one word plunges a dagger deep into the reader's heart, and then twists its horrifying message. For once this sign is read, it's too late. Roars of shouts repeat the only agonizing thing agreed upon here. The multitude knows this place as totally and eternally "Hopeless!" I scream out in one final attempt, "God, dear Jesus!," but my tortured soul knows it is past the time of rescuing. For, I know inside my spirit it is hopeless.

Suddenly, I am awoken and feeling great relief. His wonderful glory blasts my eyes with brightness and rescues my restless spirit. As His presence departs, streams of consciousness begin pouring through the cracks in my bedroom window the protective plywood fails to cover. Its illuminating power thrusts me up to a golden shower bathed in warmth. I feel I've drowned, but am now being revived with that first life giving gulp of air. As I gasp, my racing heart realizes I am being given the greatest gift-another chance. I sit motionless for a moment, enjoying this pardon from the prior doom as my pounding heart subsides. My hands proceed to rub the remnant of tear made crust and this night away. I

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continue massaging relief into my opening eyes that gradually restores the realization of this world.

As I compose myself, I convince myself this past night's experience was nothing more than a nightmare. Or, was it?

Every night I travel through this hell; living out a new section, a new chamber, and a new sensation. Each night is vividly written in my soul's diary. Each experience ends with a rescue from that damned place. I don't know why I am being tortured so. For, I am one of God's elect.

My name is Joseph, but known by all my friends as Joey. I've been having these dark dreams since shortly after New California left the former United States of America. It's been over four years since the first nightmare. This one is by far the worst. I'm afraid to sleep because of this constant terror torturing me. Maybe, just maybe, that's what's keeping me alive. I retain the heightened sense coming from this hellish fear keeping me alert to the slightest chance of approaching danger.

I leave my bedroom and quietly descend to my dim kitchen. My coffee cup trembles as I stare into the hypnotizing waves my nervous hands create. Gradually my mind settles. It drifts off and reminisces about my previous life. That's when I lived in the greatest country the world has ever known. How does this happen? How did it come to this; just surviving day to day? I am an Army vet and a college educated man who had such dreams. I owned my own trucking company. Now, nothing makes sense. I notice the lumps of rubble filling the shelves in my display hutch and feel its pain. Each distinct pile holds such memories. Each lump is someone I love. Every one of their mementos broke the day they disappeared. For three days after, I just sat and stared at those broken plates remembering each of them with my broken heart.

All of a sudden, I hear the sound of pressure bending my rear entrance door. I dare not make the slightest noise till I find out who or what's causing it. Every part of me becomes sentient, preparing for what may happen next. "Is it Demons?"

Quickly, I use my hand to cover my cup and muffle its

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swishing. I scoot down hiding my possible silhouette from being broadcast to the intruder(s). I slide my feet perfectly and methodically away from the noise encroaching on my home.

My strategy is to exit out the front of my house undetected. I'm careful not to make a sound. Just now, the rear door pops open, but I hear it snap. I realize the security chain is restraining the hell following behind it. My front door is the closest exit, but its reinforced barricade will take too long to open. I slide a little further to the master window. I hear the wooden rear door slowly being crushed by the choking security chain. Gently, so gently, I unlatch the plywood panel which helps keep the evil out. I slide it down with the careful caress of a new born babe. Hurriedly, but attentively, I quietly slide the window up. The stretching door cracks under the extreme pressure squeezing the life out of it. I rise quickly knowing I have seconds before these Demons erupt. Half way outside I hear its wooden spine snap. Frantically, I lean then roll into the front yard. All the while, I intensely listen to the noise following, and to the noise I must not make. I begin leaping away as fast as I possibly can in my crouched position. My heightened sense of fear releases an earthquake of nervous perspiration that rumbles out all my pores. I'm so scared, but so alive.

I hear a yelling whisper repeating the same word twice. I find temporary cover behind a rubble pile a few feet from the side of my house, and then I listen. I remain motionless dedicating all my senses to the perpetrators demand. "Joey, Joey," comes from inside my house, "It's me." Then there is a slight pause followed by the words, "Dave! Where are you Joey?" I swallow my heart as it decides whether to kill or hug him. I cup my hands creating a mini megaphone directing my "Psss, out here." I see the top half of his head peer through the open window. He slides it up so slowly revealing his face an inch at a time. I focus on the shape of his mouth as it whispers, "Are you coming in, or am I coming out?" His eyes shift back and forth like a radar scoping for enemy while waiting for my command. My Army experience decides it best if we abandon this area temporarily. All the noise and

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commotion could have alerted the Demons who lurk day and night.

Just now, a squadron of New California Guard jets screams over. They just miss the tops of the neighboring houses. The commotion gives us the perfect chance diversion we need to escape. I quietly shout, “Rendezvous, ‘Project T’.” Dave hurries and crawls out the window. We move out using our system of “leap frog” to repeatedly run, duck, cover, and observe along our retreat route. This is the safest way to travel, but is very time consuming. The “point man” running ahead acts basically as bait, while the trailing man observes for any hidden enemy waiting to attack. This system also helps prevent both of us from being captured. The enemy would have to spend valuable time deciding which one of us to chase as we escape in opposite directions. We proceed precariously along alert to the possible perils the next alley may hold.

My mind drifts as we journey. I think about our situation and how we got here. I know the New California Guard’s mission. They fly low to avoid detection by the Fed’s while playing a “cat and mouse” game with the neighboring country of Liberty. The jets repeat this maneuver almost daily, racing from Edward’s Air Force Base towards New California’s eastern border. The main reason is to demonstrate New California’s sovereign air power. It’s a warning to the Fed’s and Liberty what they can expect if they try anything. The Guard’s other reason is to look for illegal immigrants avoiding New California border check points. Only those with the proper passports are allowed in. And, only those with the “Trinity” brand get passports. Illegal’s sneak across for the slightest chance at gaining access to one of the last remaining food baskets in the world. It seems food and clean water is all that drives people any more. Oh, and fear! Food has become the most important type of currency. It is used mostly for deposit in your own food bank.

My heart goes out to these intruders. These people were my American brothers and sisters, but there’re now enemies towards my new country’s survival. These people refused “Trinity’s”

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identification brand and are left to starve. They've been named the Irreverent by "Trinity," and classified as enemies of the world. Now they're desperate enough to chance certain death in the desert with their families. They'll brave the extreme heat of the day and intense cold of the night while risking military marshal attack. They'll do all of this just to get some food. Almost all are caught, destroyed, or die in the miles and miles of desolate badlands. Their goal is to try and get to central New California's fertile farm land. They don't stand a chance though. Some think it's their inherent former American pride keeping them going. I know it's something more. It's that hope inherent in each of our soul's to the belief that there must be something more and something better. I know where this divine yearning comes from, and why it urges each one of us to continue on. I am blessed to live in New California, and I am Irreverent.

My heart bleeds for these abandoned souls. Most of the infiltrating Irreverent come to New California from the former United States. They attempt to sneak in via the sovereign country of Liberty (which is the combined former states of Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, and most of Utah). These states were some of the first to succeed from the union. There are several reasons why this happened. The first reason was all three branches of the federal government battled over power while trashing the people's constitutional rights. New tyrannical leaders were appointed by the executive branch bypassing the checks and balance system of congress. These leaders introduced their own laws and rules to govern the people according to their ideological beliefs. This is not what their forefathers believed in, but just the opposite. Their idea of justice lacks mercy and is cruel. Well, government grew too big and bureaucratic for its citizens to fight back. The Judicial branch decided to take its bite out of the people's contract, further disabling its citizens. The U.S. Supreme Court savored every chance to chew off the last dangling shreds holding the holy document together.

"Tolerance" drooled down their foolish faces as they legislated to what they thought was right. Their ruling wisdom

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constantly opposed the majority of the people. In the end, these judges' wicked hearts redefined what was good and godly. What was traditionally regarded as good became intolerable and against the law. Those with power shouted "Victory," while true liberty drowned under their thunderous applause.

The next reason came through moral decay leading to ignorance and want. People did what was right in their own eyes, proudly justifying their actions through the pulpit of the media. Pleasure and pride were their two major commandments. They worshiped themselves and the lustful things of this world. Hearts grew cold and selfish as ambition turned into laziness. Over half the country decided it was better to have fun and let others supply their needs. The politicians used this as their tool to get elected and reelected. The government bankrolled these unproductive patrons in exchange for their entitled votes. Every candidate protected their voting bloc under the liberal law of tolerance for those less fortunate. The infestation of division festered over the land. Hard working people were punished while the mostly lazy and covetous were rewarded. I learned one thing about greed; it has a self destruct mechanism built in to it. Once it starts eating it never knows when to stop. Eventually, it will lead to its own demise. Taxes shot up along with government regulations. The protected poor demanded more entitlement, but the national debt and workers couldn't handle any more load.

The last straw came as our President began selling portions of the country to those foreign countries holding our enormous debt. Little sovereign countries were allowed to form inside the states without any legal recourse. More than half the states decided this was enough! The states started subsidizing from the United States before the growing debt crushed them, and before the President destroyed each states sovereign right. The states also realized the federal government was looking for any excuse to use marshal law and bury their last chance of true democracy. The destructive catalyst came right after "Harpazô Day." That day all blessing fell away from the United States, and chaos began its reign. It happened a little over fours ago.

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California was the first former state to close its borders. The governor declared one day after the catastrophic event to enact all military guard to defend against the fear of more mass disappearances. A third of its population vanished in a second on "Harpazô Day." A week later California's leadership decided to succeed from the former United States. It did this while proclaiming its sovereign right under "New California." It was a feeble attempt to protect its assets and limited natural resources. Next, marshal law followed. It governed the state until "Trinity," its LD, and Demons took over power. They are the law now!

Many come from the remaining alliance of the U.S. known now as the Fed's. Some professional experts and laborers are allowed passports to come in. This new country needs help replacing the workforce needed to harvest its resources and maintain military stability. Only those with the brand-that is.

Others try coming from around the world to sneak in. They make attempts at entry through abandoned sea ports and airports. New California hides many of these through its sheer size, vast deserts, and inability to monitor them all. There are two categories of culprits. The first are those whom have taken the brand, but denied pass ports. These caught are "Demonized" by permanently relinquishing their bodies to the will of these unholy hosts. Not all LD sporting the brand has a Demon, but they do give them the right of passage to occasionally occupy their body. The demonic occupation process seems to cause extreme pain, which the LD overwhelmingly enjoy. I still have not figured out why brothers of the brand would turn on each other. I guess it is their evil selfish nature to enjoy pain no matter what its source.

The infiltrating Irreverent are a different story. They do not have the brand. They have either evaded the branding process, or refused it and ran from the brand. If caught, they are given one last chance to accept the brand and sacrifice their souls and be slaves to these spirits of evil. Refusing souls are usually kept alive and fed a constant staple of torture. Hideous Demon spirits enjoy swirling around their scared prisoners' just for the pleasure of their pain. They get great satisfaction devouring Irreverent cries

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