

**MICHAEL KEYTH**

A . S . A . T .



ANTI-SUPERNATURAL ASSAULT TEAM

**BOOK 0**

A.S.A.T

Anti-Supernatural Assault Team

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<http://asatthebook.com>

Book 0- Fresh Blood

### SUMMARY

A.S.A.T. (Anti-Supernatural Assault Team) is a special group created by a billionaire Arthur West. They consist of 6 best people Arthur could find. Their main aim is to find 5 pieces of the Seal of Solomon so they can stop the demon that is responsible for the end of the world in 2012.

Book 0 tells the history of each member and how they become members of A.S.A.T.

### THIRD EDITION

#### **Book 0- Part 1- Arthur West**

*It all started with him.*

**December 14, 1995**

#### **1.**

It was a cold evening, the sky was full of thick, black clouds and it looked like it would rain. Arthur West was working on his computer in the office which was situated in the south part of the city. He was of medium height, slim and in his early forties. His brown hair had only just started to turn grey.

Arthur looked at the clock sitting next to the computer screen. It was 9:58pm.

“Just two more minutes and you’re free,” he murmured to himself staring at the tiny clock in the bottom-right corner of his screen.

The day wasn’t an easy one, as always. Being over forty and still having to work for 10 hours on a computer, made his job mundane and tiresome. Yet, the money was good and it was the only thing that kept him coming there over and over again. The time changed to 9:59pm.

“I’m done.” he mumbled enthusiastically, shutting down the program he was working on and then standing up.

There was only one woman inside the building working a few boxes further away. She looked at him and asked,

“Why so early Arthur?”

He looked at her with indifference.

“I’m done for the day thank god” came the bored answer.

“I have to stay until eleven. I have way too much work to do!” complained the woman as she got back to her work.

Arthur walked up to a hanger beside the door, grabbed his jacket, put it on and turned his head towards his colleague, saying,

“Bye Jane, see you later.”

"See you tomorrow Arthur," the woman called as Arthur was reaching to turn the door knob.

He simply opened the door and left. However, at that time they both didn't know that Arthur was here for the last time.

## 2.

The office was situated inside a tall skyscraper with a gigantic underground parking area. Arthur was walking along a lane in the parking lot heading towards his car; an old white mustang - his dream car. He put his hand in his pocket to take out his keys. They weren't there. He nervously tapped himself in all the places and pockets where the keys might be, yet he found nothing.

"Not again," he said with disappointment.

Arthur had no choice but to return to his office.

Of course they were there. Where else could they be? It happened a few times that month but he still didn't learn his lesson. Not thinking much, he immediately turned around and rushed back to the lift. When he got back to the office, Jane was still working on her computer.

"Did you forget your keys again?" she asked raising her head from the keyboard.

"Yeah, as always."

Arthur went up to his desk and his eyes scanned it carefully. The keys were next to an old printer. He picked them up and put them away into the inside pocket of his jacket.

"Bye again," he said to Jane.

"Bye," the woman answered with a silent laugh.

## 3.

Three minutes later Arthur got downstairs to his car. He opened it briskly and threw his suitcase onto the back seat. Then he got in shutting the door behind him. Although it was London, the white mustang had the steering wheel on the left side. He had bought it while he was in the USA in late 70's to do some menial jobs. It was a clean renovated car with no scratches on it. The owner must have taken good care of it and he did too. Twice or three times a week, Arthur would polish and wax it. He loved this machine.

Arthur fastened the seatbelts and turned the key causing the engine to start with a loud, typical roar. Afterwards, he pulled back, switched the radio on, and headed for the exit.

"And here is the weather forecast for the British Isles," a nice soft woman's voice on the radio announced. "The wind is getting heavier that may result in a heavy storm with thunders," the gentle voice continued.

"Storms in December, that's weird," Arthur said under his breath as his car emerged from the underground parking lot. "Forget this, I'm gonna listen to some music," he yawned as he pressed a small button on his car radio to change the station.

Some sad song was being played.

"No, not this one," he grumbled while pressing the button again.

A new station was playing some old rock song.

"Yeah, that's more like it, oh yeah," he said joyfully.

Arthur drove through the city then headed west outside London to get quickly to his village.

It was an addictive trend for the new rich to move outside London to the villages nearby. They needed to run away from all the city noise to the peaceful and quiet cottages. Although they lived in their desired silence, they still spent way too much time on getting to their jobs. Arthur was one of them.

As he was turning into the motorway, he spotted some dark clouds coming from the west. The tree branches started to wave faster and faster rustling with the remains of the leaves that hadn't been taken by Autumn. A few minutes later, he was driving along a narrow

country lane listening to some old rock hits. The darkness of the upcoming clouds covered the light of the rising moon. Suddenly, it started to pour. Big, heavy, thick raindrops attacked the windscreen.

“Fuck!” He screamed angrily frowning his high forehead.

Heavy drops of rain were banging against the car body and the strong wind was rocking the speeding Mustang. The bright flashes of lightning struck the trees of the forest around. The man focused his eyes upon the road ahead and slowed down. He could barely see anything through the wet windshield of his car. The windscreen wipers were flickering from right to left making the road visible only for a while, before the raindrops dripped it over. Suddenly, a massive tall tree that had been struck by lightning fell to the ground. Arthur pulled the wheel to the left as hard as he could trying to avoid the limb. Two tyres felt the rough gravel and the car skidded past the tree, skimming its branch and eventually got back on the road.

“Holy shit! That was a close one!” he sighed wiping the sweat from his forehead as his heart thumped. Having finished the sentence, he saw a shining sphere falling from the sky on the empty road ahead.

“What...the...fuck?” he wondered to himself pressing the brakes hard causing a loud screeching sound of the tyres that started to get out from under the chassis.

The back of the car started to turn but Arthur was still in control of the vehicle. The unknown, mysterious thing looked like a ball made of light, shooting white bolts in all directions. The sphere was no bigger than a basketball and it moved quickly towards the car.

“You won’t make it,” his mind raced, as he was trying to stop his speeding Mustang. Moreover, he was moving too fast and as a result, the car and the ball bumped into each other with huge speed. The windscreen broke immediately and the ball darted inside making a horrible sound of electrical discharge. The tiny flashes of lightning spattered around penetrating Arthur’s body. He didn’t even have time to scream or to do anything as he had lost consciousness out of fear and shock. At the same, the vehicle made two spins filling the air with loud screeching and stopped on the gravel next to the road. The bolts were visible for a few seconds before the ball diminished and vanished leaving no trace after itself, only the half-destroyed car.

#### 4.

A few hours passed. Arthur slowly opened his eyes and everything was blurry.

“What the hell happened?” he quizzed himself looking around his burnt car.

The seats were soaked. The windscreen was gone and everything was covered with burnt stains. First, Arthur gently checked himself looking for any wounds. His hands touched every part of his body, though to his surprise, there were hardly any bruises. No burns, no wounds, nothing serious.

“What the heck happened to me?” he tried to remember.

Then it hit him. He remembered the storm, the tree, the lightning and the mysterious sphere. But he also saw some sandy dunes and desert in his head. He slowly opened the door of his car and stepped out.

“Not my Mustang!” he whined grumpily contemplating his seriously burnt car.

The left headlight was smashed and the front was covered with leaves and smoke stains.

His precious car, his dream, was destroyed. He had been saving for this particular vehicle since it came out. And now? He would have to spend even more money on it than he spent in 77.

“My wife’s gonna fucking kill me,” he despaired resting his arms over the roof. But then he wiped his eyes and got back into the car. He took a glance at his watch and couldn’t believe it was past midnight.

“No way, I must get back home.” He gently placed his palm onto the key and slowly turned it. The engine started with a roar.

“Phew, she still works,” he sighed with relief, pressing the gas.

Arthur left the gravel and headed back to the road. It was covered with leaves and broken branches but the sky was clear and no cloud was in sight. He still had a few miles to his home but now, he drove slower having his head filled with questions

“What was that thing, and why and how, for God’s sake, I’m not hurt?”

## 5.

The car arrived in the village about ten miles from London. There were only a few houses, and the light was off in almost every one of them.

“Everyone is sleeping, or the storm damaged the power cable,” he thought.

The car stopped in front of an old wooden cottage, surrounded by trees. The neighbours’ houses were far from this one. Arthur got out of the car and glanced over the vehicle shaking his head with sadness. Suddenly, he saw a light turning on inside and remembered that his wife was definitely worried sick about him. He locked the car door and rushed inside the cottage. As he was entering and taking off his coat, he saw a woman standing in the middle of the hall.

“Where the heck have you been? I was so worried!”

Alice, his wife, was a medium-height woman. She was a few years younger than him, but her face had begun to cover with wrinkles in the eye area. Her hair was nicely dyed blond, pinned for a night and her slim body was hidden underneath a green nightgown. Arthur was still in shock and didn’t know what to begin with.

“I-I-I was...” he tried to say something while hanging his wet jacket, covering the burnt hole.

“Are you OK? Did anything happen?”

“Honey...”

“You always call me when you’re late...” the woman interrupted “... always! I called your work, but Jane said you’ve already left. Then the downpour came and you didn’t come home. I thought the worse...”

Arthur spotted a few tears pouring out of her blue eyes. His shock faded. He knew he must tell her something, but what to begin with.

*Alice, calm down. I thought I would be here by eleven, but the storm... the rain was so heavy... there was something on the road, some kind of a ball of light, or something, it hit me and I lost control of the car and... and... No, this version was too hard for her to bare. He couldn’t say it.*

“The downpour... that’s why I’m late, Alice.” Arthur said calmly. “I couldn’t see anything through this thick, heavy rain, so I simply waited at the parking lot until it was gone.”

“Thank goodness you didn’t drive in such awful weather,” Alice smiled wiping the tears off her cheeks and turned around. “Come to the kitchen, I’ll make you something to eat.”

“Good, I’m starving,” he replied with relief.

He was surprised that Alice believed in his lie. She must have been in a small shock too because she couldn’t notice his torn jacket or maybe because it was soaked. Arthur took the shoes off, and then followed her, turning the light off in the corridor.

## 6.

One hour later, Arthur was finishing brushing his teeth in the bathroom. He couldn’t stop thinking about his lovely car and the mysterious sphere.

“What if she sees the car? She would definitely know I lied to her. Hmm... I know...I’ll just go to bed and try to fall asleep. No thinking. No talking. I’ll explain everything tomorrow.”

Suddenly, he heard the clock strike. It was coming from the living room that was situated downstairs. A few seconds later the second strike came filling his ears.

“Just great, 2 o’clock and only four hours of sleep to go.”

He quickly left the bathroom and headed for his bedroom where his wife was already lying waiting for him. The bedroom wasn’t too big. There was enough space for a double bed, a wardrobe and a table. The bed was placed against the wall, between the door and the wooden window with old-fashioned curtains.

“Please turn off the light,” his wife asked yawning.

Arthur reached to the switcher and pressed the button. The room became dark. He felt for the bed and laid down.

“I’m really tired after today darling,” he said covering himself with the quilt, “So let’s sleep and we’ll talk tomorrow babe.”

“I’m tired too. Good night then babe.”

“Good night.”

Arthur turned over to the other side and closed his eyes. The thoughts from that night hit him again.

*What was this sphere? Some kind of UFO? Some governmental experiment? Why the hell am I seeing some sands?*

“You know what Arthur?” Alice whispered.

“Why do you always wanna talk when I want to sleep?” he replied angrily to avoid the lie to come out.

“I just wanted to tell you something what happened to me today,” she said calmly.

“Can’t it wait till tomorrow? I told you I was tired.”

“I know, but this was really strange. Just listen, will you?”

“OK...” his attitude changed immediately on hearing *strange*. Maybe it had some connection with what happened to him.

“Something weird happened to me today.”

Even though Arthur had a difficult and a weird night as well, he wanted to hear what his wife had to say. After a moment of listening to Alice’s breath, waiting patiently for the next sentence, he boomed, “Well, what happened to you?”

Alice took a deep breath and said,

“I killed a cat.”

“If you killed it with a spade or something then it would be strange” Arthur laughed silently.

“No!” Alice denied, “I accidentally ran over it when I was coming back home.”

Arthur overturned so he was facing his wife. He knew he had to end the conversation somehow.

“Everyone kills animals in their lifetime. There is nothing weird in it,” he explained casually.

“B-But, when I stopped the car and came up to the cat... to check if it’s alive, I saw that its eyes were different.”

“What do you mean?” Arthur wondered, as his interest rose.

“T-They were not like any normal cat’s eyes. I mean, they were not grey or brown, but red as b-blood.”

Arthur’s breath stopped for a while.

“Red?” he asked in disbelief. “Maybe they were soaked with blood?”

“But the worst thing was... I was getting back to my car and I remembered these two superstitions my grandma used to say.”

*Not again, her grandmother's superstitions. In the beginning of their marriage she was addicted to the superstitions. Don't go under the ladder. If you break a mirror, you will have seven years of misery, or don't open your umbrella indoors. But after her grandmother's death, Alice learnt her way to live without them... well with the help of a psychiatrist.*

“She used to say that if you kill a black cat, Devil will come for you, or you will see Devil before you see another black cat”

Arthur could sense fear in her voice but he was sick and tired of her grandmother's superstitions.

“You know what I think of it right?” he said calmly. “Superstitions do not apply to your life.”

“Hmm, B-But...”

“No buts, Alice! I don't want to go through it again!”

“Me neither, b-but those eyes... I don't know.”

“Alice, please. Can we go to sleep now?” Arthur asked.

“OK!” the woman said irritated turning over to the other side.

“Good night and sleep tight.”

“Good night, you too.”

## 7.

The clock downstairs struck four times. Alice and Arthur were fast asleep. The light from Venus was falling into the room through the window, creating a hardly visible tree shadow on the floor which was gently moving as the wind blew. Suddenly, a sound of footsteps spread around. Alice woke up, turned over and looked at Arthur with her half-closed eyes. He was sleeping like a baby snoring from time to time. Her eyes closed again and she fell back onto a pillow landing back in her dream. Then she heard the silent footsteps again. She opened her eyes rapidly and turned over to the right side of the bed, towards the sound of the footsteps. What she saw worked on her as if she had drunk at least two coffees. Her eyes wide opened. Her heart started to beat twice as fast. There wasn't any light at the bed yet she could see a clear blueprint of some humanlike shape. It was sitting on her side of the bed and was slowly scanning the room. When it turned its head at Alice, the top part of it met the weak light revealing a pale face with large, black holes instead of eyes. Alice immediately started screaming, as her eyes grew wide with terror. The ugly creature stood up and stepped to the shadows near the door. The scream woke up Arthur.

“What the heck happened?” he asked, then noticed the dark blueprint of the monster in the shadows. Arthur tried to get up and do something about it but he couldn't move.

“I can't move!”

Alice didn't stop screaming. She caught her breath every few seconds and kept on shrieking.

“Oh come on!” the very low voice spoke. “Maybe the more familiar nature of mine will not scare you,” he added emerging from the shadows.

To everyone's surprise the shape that came out from the shadow straight away changed into a human one. There were no black holes anymore and it looked like a fifty-year old man.

Arthur couldn't believe his eyes, neither could Alice. She stopped screaming but she still couldn't say anything.

“Who-Who are you?” Arthur asked in a trembling voice. “Do you want money? It's downstairs!”

The man sat back on the bed looking at the bed-ridden couple. He had short dark hair, a long face and reddish eyes. He was wearing a black suit with a black shirt underneath.

“Money? Ha, ha. I don't want your money.”



“A-Are y-you d-death?” Alice whispered in a quivering voice.

“Death?” the creature laughed. “I’m far worse than him.”

Arthur tried to release himself from the mysterious magical boundary that paralysed his every muscle apart from his face. Alice was sitting right next to him, not even being able to turn her head. She was soaked with fear, and deep down she knew what was going on.

“I was sent today on Earth to deliver something important.”

The dimmed light covered his eyes with shadow so neither Alice nor Arthur knew who he was talking to.

“... and you with your fancy car just ran over this body.”

“T-The ball of light?” Arthur stuttered still trying to free his body from the invisible force.

“The ball of light? What? No!” came a surprise answer.

“I didn’t come here for you,” the creature told Arthur, “I came here for her,” he added pointing at Alice.

“You know, Alice,” he moved closer to the scared woman. “Your grandmother was right”.

Her jaw dropped but nothing more could she do.

“Surprised Alice? Huh?”

The girl only nodded and her breath sped up.

“Don’t you know Alice,” the old man asked, “That devil will come for you if you kill a cat?”

Alice was trembling with shock. Arthur couldn’t believe his eyes and ears. “Isn’t that what she used to say?”

“A-Are y-you D-Devil?” Alice asked with a stuttering voice.

“Not THE devil, but A devil yes. Well, actually a demon but many a person calls me devil so I got used to it” he answered casually. “But you know, Alice, the cat you killed was one of my special ones.”

“What are you saying?” Arthur hissed.

“Let me explain this simply: There’re many kinds of demons,” he started to talk fast as if he was saying it for the hundredth time, “Some of them are stronger than the others, blah, blah, blah. But those who’re weak can’t possess a human so they have to use animals, in that case a cat, blah blah blah. Anyway, when you hit me, you made me leave the cat’s body and I had to start over again. And you don’t even realize how long one has to wait in a queue to be sent here again. Luckily, I know a few powerful demons.”

“I-I’m sorry,” Alice wept.

“Leave her alone!” Arthur yelled with anger.

“Who asked you for your opinion?” the creature said irritably.

He pointed his dirty finger at Arthur while his red eyes became even redder for a split second, then they became large and black which caused Arthur to be pushed away with a magical force. Arthur landed on the floor between the window and the bed knocking over the table. He could feel that the magical force got stronger and paralysed his every muscle fixing his eyes on his wife and the demon. He tried to focus his thoughts but the same images popped into his head; the sphere, the unknown desert and his Mustang. Alice started to scream again.

“No way!” the creature complained rolling his reddish eyes. “You want to be silenced too?”

Alice shook her head and stopped screaming as her tears were running down her smooth, shaky cheeks.

“So please shut up already!”

Arthur wanted to do something but his whole body was paralysed. He couldn’t move and his eyes were frozen on Alice and the creature.



“P-Please l-leave us a-alone” Alice stuttered.

“Hmm I don’t think I can” the man replied indifferently. “You see, I was waiting for ten months to be sent on Earth. A cat was the best I got then. But on the other hand, if it hadn’t been for you, I wouldn’t have got this body. Anyway, I don’t like you. Alice, I think you deserve some punishment.”

Alice was shaking her head crying silently “No, n-no.” Arthur could do nothing, not even move a muscle.

“I-I’m sorry, I’m so sorry.”

The man rolled his eyes again, “Typical behaviour.” He sounded as if he was having fun doing what he was doing.

Alice was staring in disbelief and stuttered her last sentence,

“B-But it was an-an accident.”

“B-B-B-But” the demon mocked her, pointing his finger towards Alice, then moved it quickly towards the wall.

The mysterious force raised and pushed the woman’s body and smashed it against the wall with the power so huge that it could be compared with the rushing train. The whole body splattered and blood trickled everywhere covering the whole room in stains.

“Oh, that was also an accident,” the monster said amusingly.

Arthur was forced to watch it without a blink. The mysterious creature looked at him and said.

“If anyone asked, I wasn’t here.”

Then he pulled back into shadows, turned around and left. Simultaneously, the mysterious force that was restraining Arthur from making any move vanished. He burst out with tears. He cried and howled releasing the sorrow accompanied by grief dwelling inside of him. He immediately stood up from the bed and rushed outside. The man was nowhere to be seen. As soon as he ran through the front door, he fell down on his knees leaning his hands against the ground. The tears were running down his cheeks like a stream.

“Alice!” the man’s scream combined with weep and howl spread around filling the area.

Yet, there was no one who could hear him. His voice echoed among the nearby trees. He couldn’t do anything at that point. Witnessing his wife brutal death was unbearable experience. But not only this, he was also a witness to supernatural activities and he learnt that demons were real.

## 8.

Another few hours passed and the sun began to rise. Arthur was lying cringed in front of his house. It was very cold but he didn’t feel it. His eyes were closed and he was asleep, unaware of the cold that was making him pale. He slowly opened his eyes and looked around. Suddenly, the memories of the previous night tragedy stroke his mind. He sprang up, went to his house, grabbed some money from jar in the living room, took out the car keys from his jacket and put another jacket on. Then he rushed outside and looked back at the window of his bedroom only to see that it was covered with blood stains. For a moment he closed his eyes to see the images again: Alice greeting him the previous night, making him supper, then being brutally turned into leaking pieces of meat and blood. He also saw the sandy desert again. Arthur opened his eyes and got into his car, started the engine and took off forgetting to shut the house front door. In fact, he didn’t even call the police or anyone else for that matter. He just simply left.

**February 3, 1996**

## 9.

Arthur found himself in Botswana, Africa. The sun was in the zenith and the heat was unbearable. He was driving an old jeep across Kalahari Desert. There was an old lane or rather a path that connected the two towns. Next to him, there was sitting a black man; a typical one for the region.

“Why exactly are we here?” the black man shouted in order to break his voice through the noisy sound of an old engine.

Arthur took a glance at a small picture attached next to the wheel. There was a young blonde woman in it, Alice. He glanced back at the man.

“Something tells me that here I would find what I am looking for,” he replied.

“Which is what?” The man asked again doubtfully.

Arthur looked ahead.

“I don’t know yet, Kubey. But I do know it’s near.”

Suddenly, Arthur spotted something in a distance.

“Look! Can you see it Kubey?”

The tall black man with short curly hair and a wide mouth screwed up his eyes trying to see what his colleague was seeing.

“You mean the trees?”

Arthur pressed the gas harder and the white jeep accelerated. They both felt a stronger wind on their sweaty faces.

“No, below the trees, those huge rocks,” he said eagerly.

“What rocks? I see only sand, no rocks,”

They were getting closer to the trees where a sandy desert transformed into a semi-desert.

“You must be having a mirage,” Kubey shouted.

“No, I’m not,” he said casually, “I know what I see.”

They stopped the car near the trees. Arthur jumped out of it.

“Give me the shovel,” he shouted.

“What?”

Kubey didn’t believe what Arthur was saying.

“The shovel, fast!”

Kubey got out and went to the boot. He opened it and took out a spade.

“Don’t tell me that you’re gonna dig here.”

“Of course I am and you’ll help me,” Arthur replied with a smile.

He grabbed the spade and started to dig in the sand. Kubey grabbed the second one and unwillingly started to do the same.

## 10.

A few hours later when the sun was approaching the in the west horizon, the men were still digging. They had their shirts taken off and there was a half-empty bottle in the shadow of the jeep. They had made quite a huge hole in the sand.

“Are you ready to stop and go back to the village?” Kubey asked wiping out the sweat off his forehead.

“No, it’s here,” came the answer. “It must be here!”

“But can’t you see, Arthur, that it’s no use. There is nothing there.”

“Stop grumbling, we’re almost there,” Arthur said patiently. “I’ve been seeing this exact spot for three months now and I need to know what is there.”

“I tell you, you will find nothing here apart from the sand. Let’s go back,” Kubey insisted.

“No, I have to stay and keep digging,” Arthur shouted.

Suddenly the spade hit something hard. Both men looked at it in wonder. Arthur kneeled and started digging with his hands, getting rid of the sand from the hard object.

“Strange” Kubey said looking at his colleague as he was maniacally brushing off the dirt.

Finally, the sand was removed revealing a shiny object.

“It can’t be,” Kubey said looking in disbelief at the crystal piece of rock.

“I told you I saw something,” Arthur replied happily.

“I have never seen such a huge diamond,” Kubey shouted as he kneeled and started to help Arthur to unearth the diamond with his strong hands.

Finally, they managed to take out the object.

“Oh my God! It must weigh at least fifteen pounds,” Kubey said happily.

Arthur looked at him and smiled. “There is more,” he said casually.

“More? How do you know this?” Kubey said with a huge grin.

“I can see it, /” came the answer.

“You must be a god or something. And from now on you’re certainly my god.”

Arthur pushed the diamond farther towards the car.

“Kubey, go for the satellite phone and call the others. I think we’ll set up a mine here.”

Kubey ran as fast as he could to the jeep and grabbed the satellite phone. Arthur grabbed the spade again and started to make another hole.

## **July 21, 1998**

### **11.**

Two years have passed. In the very place where Arthur had dug out the diamond now there was an enormous mine, fully operating on the desert of Botswana. Many a building has been built around it, as well as the facilities for workers. Dozens of trucks took the mined diamonds to the nearby airport and then were sold worldwide. The biggest diamonds were given to museums or sold to the private collectors. The success of founding up a mine made Arthur one of the richest men in the world.

It was boiling hot, but the workers were used to working in extreme conditions. A helicopter appeared in the sky and slowly landed on a special H-shaped, concrete place. The door opened and Arthur stepped out of the machine. He was wearing a white suit and glasses. His hair was completely grey. A few people wearing suits were already waiting for him. Kubey was among them.

“Arthur, nice to see you here,” Kubey shouted, as the propeller was slowing down deadening regular speech.

“Kubey, so how is the work going?” Arthur asked.

They entered the two-storey building.

“The deposit is fifteen miles deep,” one of the men said while they were going along the corridor.

On both sides there were workers grinding the mined diamonds. The condition they were all working in were absolutely fantastic; air-conditioned interior, everyone had their own table with superb tools, coffee machines were in many places and everything was illuminated by natural, white light.

“So how many years will the mine operate?” Arthur inquired.

“About twenty” came the answer from the second man. “The ore is bigger than we expected.”

“I told you. Any more news?”

“No, sir. Everything is going according to plan.”

Arthur stopped.

“Well then, if anyone is looking for me, I’ll be in my office,” he announced and turned right into a short corridor leading to the leather door.

“OK, and we are going for the meeting with some diamond collectors,” Kubey said. *Phew, finally left alone. I hate these business meetings. No wonder why I have people to do this.*

Arthur entered his office. It was a spacious room with a window as big as the wall. The spotlights in the ceiling were illuminating the whole interior. The sun never disturbed Arthur, as the window was facing north. There was a desk in the corner with a few monitors and numerous buttons. In one sentence, it was a very modern office as for the year 1998. Arthur went towards the desk and sat on a large leather seat. There was a framed article on the wall behind him. The headline said: *Man struck by a lightning finds a diamond ore in the dessert.* There were also colourful pictures of the biggest diamonds that had been dug here. He took out a satellite phone from his white tuxedo and dialled a number.

“Hello, this is Arthur West. I’m calling you to finalise the deal on Maldito Castle...

Yes... When can I move in?... OK, so I’ll be there next week.”

Then he put back his phone into the pocket and turned on his computer. The screen showed an article with a headline *Ghosts and spirits.* The man looked at it closely and started to read the article with interest. Suddenly, his phone rang. He took it out and answered.

“This is Arthur West.”

Then after hearing something on the phone his eyes grew wide and his jaw dropped

“Really? Mr. president wants to meet me?... I will be in San Francisco next week... All right then... No, the honour is mine.”

He put the phone back, rubbed his eyes and went on working on the computer.

*It must be really huge that the president himself wants to meet me. Does he know about my discovery?*

## **July 30, 1998**

### **12.**

Next week, Arthur went to San Francisco to his new castle situated on an island approximately three miles from the shore of Pacifica. It was an enormous Spanish building. It was a tall tower was visible even from Golden Gate Bridge. The whole building was magnificent and spectacular. There were two black helicopters in the middle of the courtyard, and a few people wearing black suits around it. Every one of them was looking around and scanning the area. Two men were sitting at the table on the balcony above the courtyard. One of them was Arthur, the second one was a middle-height man, with black hair. From his face, one could deduce that he was in his late forties. There were also several people wearing black suits and black sunglasses behind a thick glass door of the balcony. On the table, there were two glasses of coffee, freshly made, and a few cookies.

“Mr. West, I wanted to talk to you about this matter for a long time,” the man said. His serious face didn’t show any emotions.

“But Mr. President,” Arthur tried to explain himself, “I do not have any idea what you are referring to.”

The man looked around the beautiful view of the sea.

“I think you do. I am talking about the project you have been working on.”

Arthur squinted his eyes pretending to be thinking about something.

“Do you happen to mean the second mine, sir?” he said hoping it would be the answer. “Mr. West. Of course not,” the president smiled. “Do not play games with me, please. I am talking about the project connected with paranormal entities you have been working on for the last two years. And I mean not only the supernatural beings, but something much more fearsome that you must have found out by now.”

“21<sup>st</sup> December 2012,” Arthur whispered.

“That is correct.”

“H-How do you know that, sir?” Arthur said with a little shock although he knew the answer deep inside.

“We have got Echelon,” the man said proudly. “Thus, we have caught one of your calls with some hunter,” he added.

“All right, sir, I admit I have been gathering numerous information regarding paranormal and supernatural beings as well as 21<sup>st</sup> December 2012. Do you want me to stop working on this, sir?” Arthur asked with uncertainty.

The president looked around if neither of his Secret Service Agents were listening.

“No Mr. West, I want you to continue working on this and make sure the project will be completed as soon as possible.”

Arthur felt both satisfaction and relief. His secret project, the one that had started with the death of his wife, is now officially approved by the president of the United States.

“Mr. West, have you found the solutions to stop the end of the world?”

“I came about some information about the Seal of Solomon but I don’t know anything more about it.”

“We have had people working on that for several years now. The Seal is real. It has been broken into five pieces and spread around the world. However, we do not obtain the whereabouts of either of the pieces.”

“I can help.”

The president frowned. “Hence, I am here, Mr. West. I want you to form a team and find those pieces. The end of the world must be stopped. I’m choosing you because you have managed to accomplish more in two years than we have in a decade”

“B-But sir, even if I form the team now, it may take years to find the pieces.”

“I know. You will be given full support from the government. We can also provide you with our best people.”

Arthur raised his hand a little bit, as if to show his disagreement.

“Please sir, leave selecting people to me.”

“All right then.” the president said standing up, “All the necessary information, as well as the access to the latest technology, will be provided. So do not worry,” he added.

“However, I will not be the president in 2012. I will make sure all my successors will put their heart into it.”

Arthur stood up and smiled.

“Thank you for your support Mr. President.”

The man looked at Arthur for a split of second and nodded smiling, then headed for the thick glass door. One of his Secret Service agents came closer and opened it. Arthur followed them to the courtyard. They stepped out from the main door and walked towards the helicopter.

“Good bye Mr. West, we will be in touch,” the president said as he was approaching the machine.

“Once again, thank you for your approval and good bye, sir.”

The men boarded one of the helicopters and took off. Arthur went inside the castle.

### 13.

Arthur was walking along an obscure corridor. *So much work to do.* The corridor inside was in bad condition. The walls needed to be restored, the floor was covered with some old rug, and the ceiling was cracked. He went up the stairs that led to the tallest tower. His office was on the last floor, where an old observatory used to be. The large room was full of boxes and suitcases. In the middle there was a vast desk with several computer monitors on it, as well as a few schemes of various things. The wall on the left had a wide corkboard; at least twenty feet long that was covered with posters. One of them showed some kind of a ring. The

other one showed some mysterious creatures. Arthur sat down, looked at his wife's photo on the desk and said to himself.

“So let's get started.”

## **Book 0- Part 2- Tokutei**

*Second to nothing*

**September 25, 2012**

*87 days remaining*

### **1.**

The sun was slowly disappearing between huge skyscrapers in Tokyo. The sky was clear and soon the brightest stars started to emerge. You couldn't see them in the city, as the lights of everything dimmed even Sirius, which is the brightest star in the night sky. A couple of miles from the last house of Tokyo, the sky was more beautiful than ever. No additional light could dim it, nor any passing car. The Milky Way was cutting the night above a widespread bamboo forest. Among the thick trees a dark shape passed really fast, then another, and another. Twelve of such black figures quickened inaudibly through the forest. They seemed to be rushing somewhere, yet, they did not move in a straight line. Three of them occasionally jumped on bamboos then leaped back to the ground performing a front flip or other twisting moves. Others pushed their knees hard to the mossy soil, and ejected high in the sky over the uprooted plants. Suddenly, the one who was leading them stopped, pulled his hand strongly to the back like a karate chop, and opened it in a flat palm manner.

“Cease.”

Everyone stopped running, and crouched scanning the area.

“We've attained our destination,” he added, pulling his arm back.

Now it was clearly visible that these figures were people dressed in black ninja-like attires. They had curved swords on their backs, and several small shiny metal things attached to their belts. In front of them was a huge old Japanese castle, or rather some ruins of it. It seemed to have been built in the forest, hidden from everyone. Further from the truth.

In the seventeenth century the area was a small village with a beautiful castle where ronins had their dwelling. These people were samurais who had themselves for their masters. They didn't want to serve for the country, and certainly they didn't want to obey the ruler's orders. Hundreds of them hid in the castle, and fought the emperor's soldiers. In late spring of 1608, the emperor Tokugawa Ieyasu sent ten thousand soldiers to dispose of ronins once and for all. The soldiers were lead by general Hakizama who was in possession of a legendary katana sword; the sword made of a meteorite. The legend had it that this sword could cut through anything, as it had been made from the element not known on Earth. This element was harder than carbon fibre, lighter than lithium, and because of its unnatural blue color, it was named bluenium. On 5<sup>th</sup> June 1608, the soldiers attacked the castle. Their orders were to kill everyone. The inferior ronins had no chance of winning, but they never gave up. Having fought for over 8 hours, the last ronin was killed. After the battle, the castle was left with blood-covered walls and floors, and also with thousand dead bodies, both of ronins' and soldiers', including general Hakizama. The villagers buried only ronins, and abandoned their home forever. Since then, no one lived there, and the nature covered the village with a bamboo forest. The almighty meteoritic katana has never been seen again.

The ninjas were slowly approaching the remains of the castle. The building had three floors. The walls were creaked, and the roof was covered with trees that had made their way through the structure.



“There was supposed to be a village around the castle. I can’t see anything,” one of the men said.

“The forest buried everything.”

They walked towards two statues covered with green grass and leaves. The statues showed two samurais standing at attention. The first one was cut in the middle, with the second part lying behind it while the second samurai had only small holes and creaks made by time.

“The myth says that Hakizama was killed on the second floor, near the north terrace,” said one of the men.

“The villagers left his body as well as the weapon among other soldiers of Emperor Tokugawa Ieyasu,” The other one added.

The leader pointed to several men.

“Idaki, Sato, Tanaka, fetch it.”

Three men ran towards the building. The first one amazingly jumped onto the first floor, then onto the second one. The others *flew* inside through the window. The walls inside were badly destroyed, but to their surprise the pale stains of blood were still visible. The floor was covered with hundreds of human bones, rusty samurai swords, as well as remaining of the clothes and uniforms. They all met upstairs. The room, as everything else looked like an open cemetery, with all the bones covering the whole floor. There was a large collection of weapons hanging on the left wall. Opposite to it, were two low tables and dozens of broken plates and pottery.

“How will we recognise the katana among all these swords?” one of them asked picking an old blade.

“Bluenium does not fade, nor does it decay or rust,” said the second man looking around the corridor. “Yet, at night, its colour is very weak, and one can only see it by pointing it towards some source of light.”

“Like the stars.”

“We have to separate, and find it,” ordered the first ninja.

The men spread into different directions around the room and corridor. Each of them grabbed a sword from the dusty ground, looked at it carefully, and threw it back among the skeletons. Most of the weapons were rusty, broken, or completely destroyed.

A few minutes past, and the sword was nowhere to be found.

“It must be somewhere here,” one of them shouted angrily, throwing another regular katana onto the floor.

“Look!” the other one exclaimed pointing at the glowing object in the corner of the corridor. “This must be it.”

They slowly walked towards it. As they were approaching, they saw a headless skeleton lying on the floor. It had still an upper armor on it, and a large helmet lying nearby. The shiny, light-blue object was half-covered by some piece of metal. The ninja crouched, pushed away the metal piece, and picked up the glowing item. It was a three-foot long, curved sword with a navy handle and a silver-blue blade. He could easily see his masked face reflecting in the steel. The other men were gazing at it with amazement.

“It’s beautiful.”

“I could easily change my Katana for it.”

“No time for reflections. Let’s go back,” the ninja holding the sword ordered.

The warriors rushed quickly to the terrace, and leaped out of it landing silently on the ground.

## 2.

Eight other ninjas were squatting near the two statues. No one said anything. They were only waiting for the others to come back.

“They’re returning,” one of them said.

The person carrying the sword ran up to the leader.

“Here it is, master,” he announced handing out the weapon.

The black ninja took the sword, and scanned it carefully, while the others gathered around, and stared at it with astonishment.

“At last, after 400 years, the almighty katana has been found.”

Suddenly, the ground started to shake, and a horrible high-pitched howl came from the forest. Everyone looked around with concern. The shake lasted for a split of second, which could be felt like a thud rather than like a shake.

“Look!” the ninja who brought the sword whispered pointing at the castle.

The building began to wobble, and seconds later it collapsed with a huge boom. When the debris hit the ground, a great cloud of ash rose into the air covering everything. The ninjas were observing it, but they did not feel any fear, only wonderment. What is more, none of them ran away or even moved.

“What’s going on?” one of them asked.

“Aught,” the leader said in a manner as he knew exactly what had happened. He shook his head, placed the sword on his back, and ordered, “Withdraw. Now!”

“We’d better return to the base before someone comes here,” one of them suggested.

Not waiting any longer, the crouching warriors stood up, and started running into the forest. No sooner had they passed the first bamboo trees, than the ground shook again. However, now, the quake didn’t seem to be similar to the previous one, and certainly it didn’t last as short as that one. The soil moved in dozens of various places in the area. Everyone stopped, and took a look at it. The ground in those places fractured. The slits were around thirty inches long, and they were getting bigger and bigger. One man drew out his sword, and stood in the readiness.

“What is it?” One of the warriors asked scanning the fractures, which now, were almost everywhere.

“I don’t know. Something evil is looming,” came the answer.

The ninjas were looking around stopping their eyes on every fracture.

“Master, you seem to be hiding something from us,” someone asked.

The leader didn’t know whether to tell them the truth or try to escape as quickly as possible. He made a decision.

“You must prepare to fight,” he whispered.

“Fight? What?” came another answer.

“The dead, the evil that dwells here.”

“What evil?”

“What are you talking about, Master?”

The leader made a small step to the left, as a fracture appeared right between his feet.

“The legend is true. This ground is cursed. I did not believe it, until now.”

“There was nothing about the curse in the legend.”

“I have failed to inform you about the last piece of the Blue Sword story.”

The cracks stopped spreading, and the soil around them began to move.

“I did not believe it was relevant,” the leader continued louder as the others were preparing for the unknown. “The legend also says, that whoever steps on this cursed ground, will bring all the dead back to life. This land should not be entered. He was right, and I did not listen. What a disgrace to me.”

All of the sudden, something emerged from the ground, it looked like a grey tip of a stick, but another appeared next to it and another. Three of these grey-looking sticks were emerging from the ground. Just when they were two inches long, the ninjas saw that they are connected to some root-like thing of the same colour. The men quickly realised it was a palm without any skin or muscles, only bones. Then another came from the ground. The osseous

hands were getting higher and higher. One of them grabbed a nearby root of a plant, and pulled itself up revealing bones of arms and the skull. The moving skeleton was rising from the ground. It happened in every place where the fractured had occurred. Nevertheless, the ninjas weren't scared by this fact, even though they were surrendered by hundreds of skeletons raising from the ground.

"I knew we wouldn't escape from here so easily," one of the guys said.

"We wouldn't have been hired if it weren't for an extra dangerous mission, would we?," the second one added gazing at the nearest skeleton that was slowly walking towards him.

"They seem to be either soldiers or ronins who fought here," another ninja deduced.

"Or both," yet another added.

All the undead creatures snaffled old metal things, which were inside their graves, and ran towards the ninjas. The leader replaced his sword on the back with the recovered one, and took a defence position.

"Remember, Dragons," he shouted to everyone addressing them by the names of the legendary creatures, "Never surrender."

"We'd better make our way through them," one of the ninjas exclaimed drawing his samurai sword, and preparing for the inevitable encounter.

Hundreds of angry skeletons were rushing towards twelve ninjas. The warriors were standing next to one another, tightly holding their swords.

### 3.

These ninjas belonged to a Japanese special group called *Dragons*. It consists of twelve, well-trained, finest and masterful men of the Japanese islands. They all had been taught secrets of martial arts since they were little. Most of them came from poor families that couldn't afford raising a baby. The rest were orphans after their parents had died, or had been killed. Each and every one of them had to master fifteen martial arts style, including secret pressure point techniques, and also weapon techniques. They all have been raised in strict conditions. Their daily routine consisted of training, food and sleep. There was no time for any pleasure, play or love. The group had been formed in order to perform the hardest tasks and missions. For instance, eliminating bosses of yakuza, hostage rescue, or retrieving legendary objects that were stolen from museums or disappeared long time ago. In this case, the meteoritic sword. The twelve members of the group fear nothing, and always prevail. Their unique techniques, as well as extraordinariness, make them very useful in impossible tasks. In 2002, the American government wanted to use the Dragons in Afghanistan to seize Osama Bin Laden. The Japanese government refused, for they didn't want to get involved in that case. They have taken part in many impossible missions so far, but they have never faced any supernatural activates.

### 4.

Rotten skeletons were running towards the ninjas. In the darkness of the forest, one could see only the blueprints of the warriors holding glossy blades. One of the angry-looking skeletons, holding a katana sword only in one hand, as the second limb was missing, was in the front. He was aiming for the ninja standing the farthest on the left. The warrior took a defending position, raising his sword over his head. The skeleton erected his katana, and cut aiming at the head of the ninja, who placed his blade diagonally down to the right. The blades met. The skeleton's 400-year old sword didn't withstand the power of the fast cut of his opponent's, and broke into half. The brave warrior turned over his sword just above the ground, so now the sharp edge was facing up, and cut diagonally up to the left, snipping the opponent's spine and two ribs. The bones fell limply on the dry soil, and stopped moving.

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