

DONNA VANLIERE

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

THE DAY OF
EZEKIEL'S
HOPE

THE DAY OF
EZEKIEL'S
HOPE

DONNA VANLIERE



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS
EUGENE, OREGON

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Verses marked esv are taken from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Verses marked kjv are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

Verses marked nkjv are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Note: In the novel portion of this book, Zerah, Emma, and the two witnesses read from ESV Bibles, and Elliott reads from an NIV Bible.

Cover design by Faceout Studio

Cover photo © caesart, Marilyn Volan, Volodymyr Burdiak, Vadim Savdoski, FOTOGGRIN, Meysam Azarneshin, Nick Brundle, aspen rock, brettphoto, pjcross, Victor Carretero Barbero / Shutterstock

Interior design by KUHN Design Group

For bulk, special sales, or ministry purchases, please call 1-800-547-8979.

Email: Customerservice@hhpbooks.com

The Day of Ezekiel's Hope

Copyright © 2021 by Donna VanLiere

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97408

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

ISBN 978-0-7369-7881-1 (pbk)

ISBN 978-0-7369-7882-8 (eBook)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: VanLiere, Donna, - author.

Title: The day of Ezekiel's hope / Donna VanLiere.

Description: Eugene, Oregon : Harvest House Publishers, [2021] | Summary:

“In this gripping follow-up to *The Time of Jacob's Trouble*, bestselling author Donna VanLiere explores the end-times prophecies in the journeys of Emma, Zerah, and others who cling to hope even as danger closes in and civilization crumbles on an unprecedented scale”-- Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020042698 (print) | LCCN 2020042699 (ebook) | ISBN

9780736978811 (trade paperback) | ISBN 9780736978828 (ebook)

Subjects: GSAFD: Christian fiction.

Classification: LCC PS3622.A66 D39 2021 (print) | LCC PS3622.A66 (ebook)

| DDC 813/.6--dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020042698>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020042699>

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, digital, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

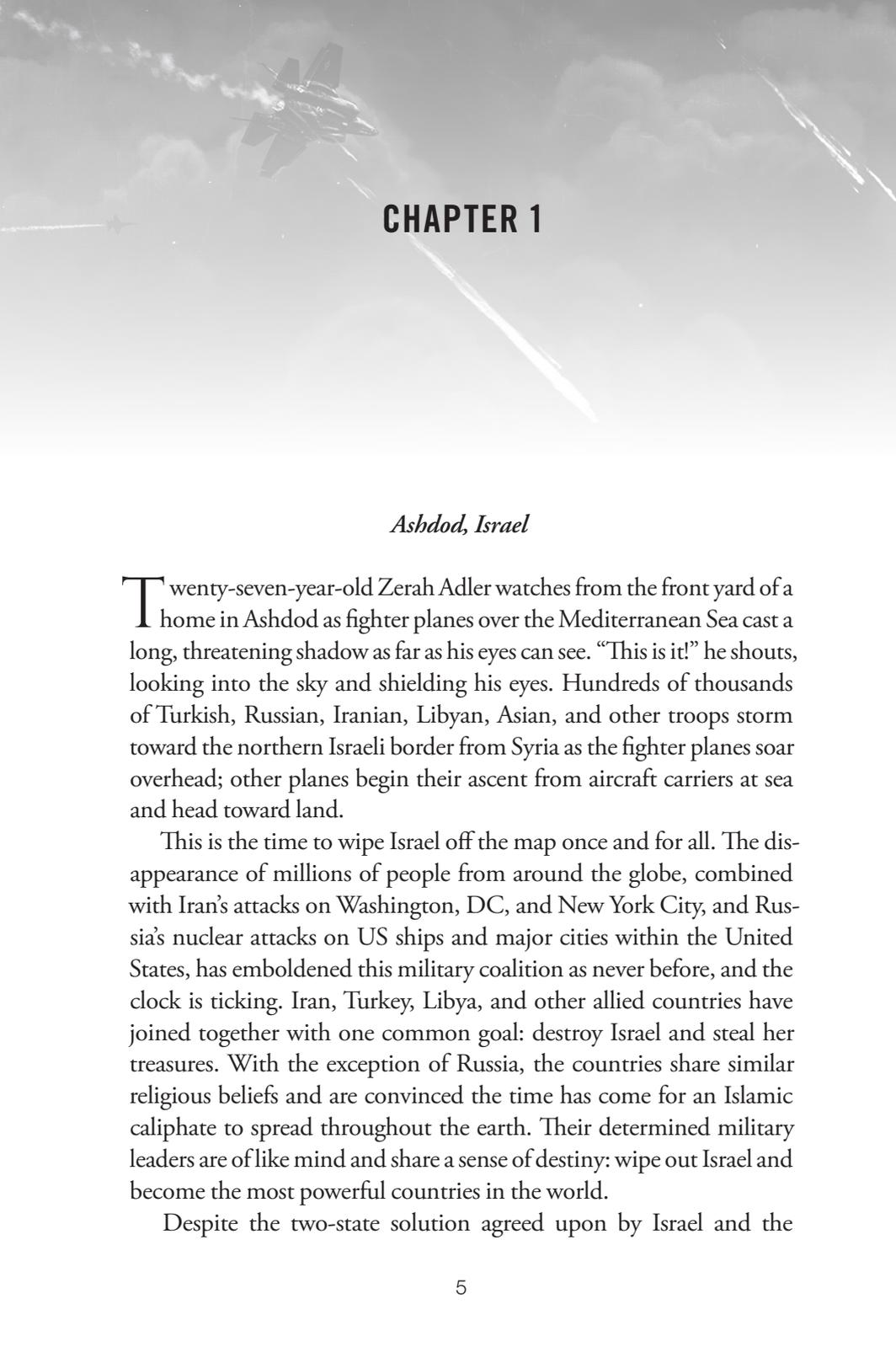
Printed in the United States of America

21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 // 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

For Jme Medina, my longtime friend who is looking up
and my first encourager for this series of books!

*“About the times of the End, a body of men will be raised up
who will turn their attention to the prophecies,
and insist upon their literal interpretation,
in the midst of much clamor and opposition.”*

SIR ISAAC NEWTON, 1642–1747



CHAPTER 1

Ashdod, Israel

Twenty-seven-year-old Zerah Adler watches from the front yard of a home in Ashdod as fighter planes over the Mediterranean Sea cast a long, threatening shadow as far as his eyes can see. “This is it!” he shouts, looking into the sky and shielding his eyes. Hundreds of thousands of Turkish, Russian, Iranian, Libyan, Asian, and other troops storm toward the northern Israeli border from Syria as the fighter planes soar overhead; other planes begin their ascent from aircraft carriers at sea and head toward land.

This is the time to wipe Israel off the map once and for all. The disappearance of millions of people from around the globe, combined with Iran’s attacks on Washington, DC, and New York City, and Russia’s nuclear attacks on US ships and major cities within the United States, has emboldened this military coalition as never before, and the clock is ticking. Iran, Turkey, Libya, and other allied countries have joined together with one common goal: destroy Israel and steal her treasures. With the exception of Russia, the countries share similar religious beliefs and are convinced the time has come for an Islamic caliphate to spread throughout the earth. Their determined military leaders are of like mind and share a sense of destiny: wipe out Israel and become the most powerful countries in the world.

Despite the two-state solution agreed upon by Israel and the

Palestinians under US president Thomas Banes's administration, which gave 80 percent of the West Bank and nearly half of Jerusalem to the Palestinians to establish their own country, the Palestinians, along with the terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah, had already spent several days screaming for the blood of the Jews, attacking Israel from within and at every border. Israel's weapons held back the terrorist armies, but also gave the Russian, Iranian, and Turkish coalition forces the time needed to move into action. Once Israel had diminished her armament, this murderous military front would move in for one massive final strike intended to annihilate the Jewish nation.

The Israel Defense Forces have been ready for this coalition attack for decades, equipping advanced fighting forces and amassing thermonuclear weapons in anticipation of her enemies pushing her to the verge of mass extermination. Every active and nonactive IDF soldier has been called into action. Israel's defense minister, deputy minister, the national security advisor, Mossad director and deputy director, and chiefs of staff from the Israel Defense Forces stare at the wall of computers and screens inside the Ministry of Defense headquarters in Tel Aviv as the coalition moves toward the border of Israel. The Defense Minister does not take his eyes from the screens as he issues the command to engage. "Go!"

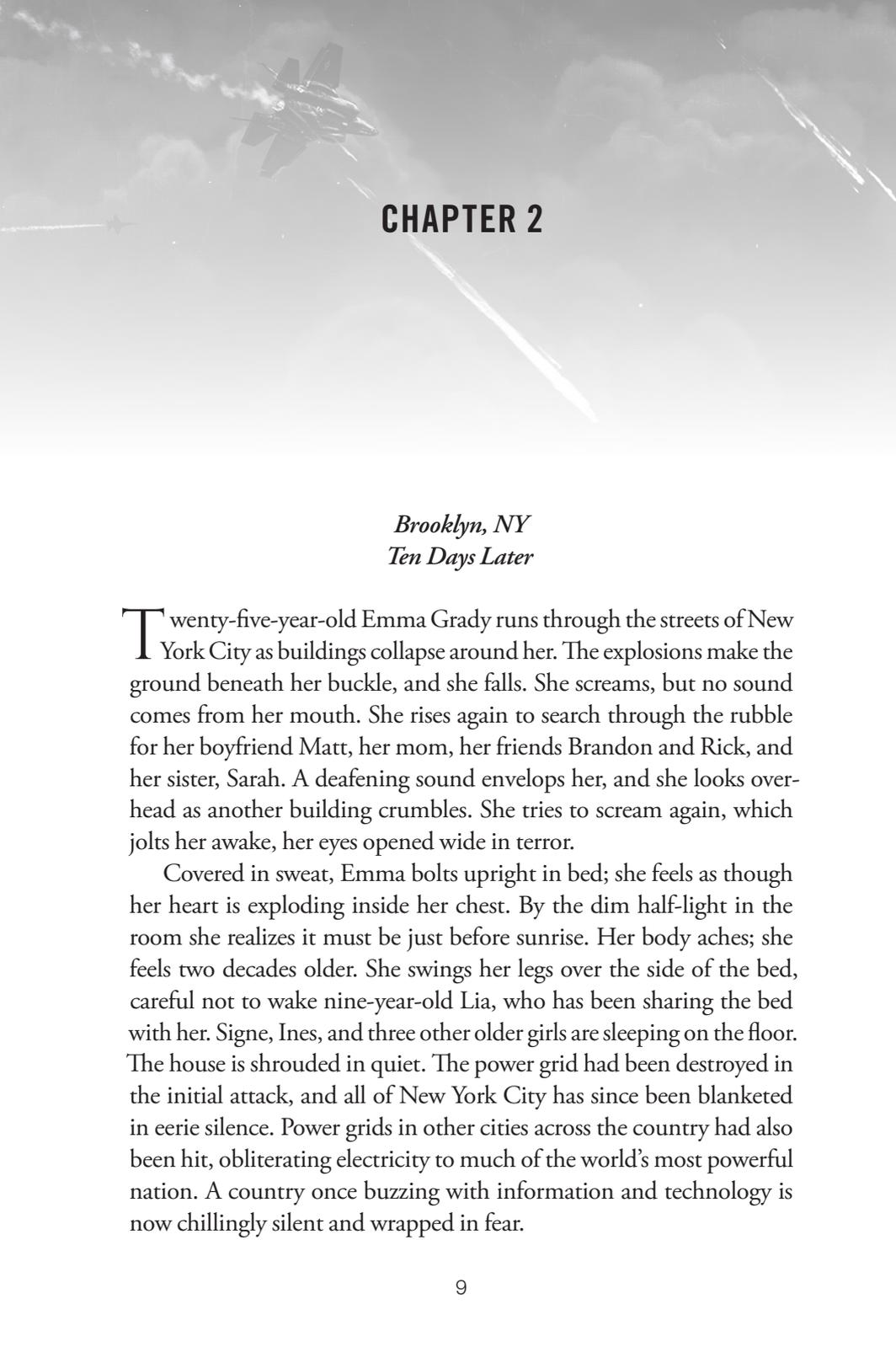
As the words are spoken, a monstrous sandstorm arises and consumes each Israeli fighter jet on the tarmac—blinding the pilots, rendering them unable to find their aircraft through the thick silt. Tanks, artillery, nuclear weapons, and the Iron Dome are all disabled, seizing the entire IDF with fear. Their beloved country is moments from extinction.

From the war room in Syria, the presidents of Russia, Turkey, and Iran, along with Iran's ayatollah, who have come to watch Israel's final destruction, curse and cheer when they see the Israel Defense Forces are defenseless. "Allah is great!" Iran's supreme leader, the Ayatollah Behnam Mahdavi, shouts amidst the clamor. "Today, my friends, the sea will run red with the blood of the Zionist pigs!" He looks into a news camera and encourages his followers: "I call upon you to join the soldiers of the caliphate, attacking Jews and slaughtering them, killing them wherever they can be found!"

Beneath his feet, Zerah feels a mild tremor and he lifts his hands over his head. "O Hashem, you are our Savior and Redeemer!"

At that moment, the ground shakes beneath the enemy armies, disrupting their plan of attack. The earth emits a powerful, ear-splitting moan as mountains are overthrown and cliffs topple, border walls collapse, and the Western Wall in Jerusalem crumbles. The armies cry out in terror as the quaking grows more violent and fissures split the ground open, swallowing thousands of troops into canyon-deep crevices. Smoke, dust, and ash rise as the trembling continues, blinding the remaining troops. They wail and scream in their many languages, throwing each other into greater confusion and panic. They turn their weapons against one another, masses perishing at the hand of their allies. Painful boils break out on the once-healthy skin of each soldier and their curses and violence intensify.

Zerah's heart beats against his ribs as he watches the heavens burst open over Israel's enemies and a torrential deluge of rain and hailstones pours forth, beating and drowning all the hostile forces. As the rain and hailstones fall, fire pours down as well on the enemy aircraft, surrounding each plane in brilliant balls of flame. The entire sky over Israel glows orange and red, the infernos falling and lapping up the enemy armies.



CHAPTER 2

*Brooklyn, NY
Ten Days Later*

Twenty-five-year-old Emma Grady runs through the streets of New York City as buildings collapse around her. The explosions make the ground beneath her buckle, and she falls. She screams, but no sound comes from her mouth. She rises again to search through the rubble for her boyfriend Matt, her mom, her friends Brandon and Rick, and her sister, Sarah. A deafening sound envelops her, and she looks overhead as another building crumbles. She tries to scream again, which jolts her awake, her eyes opened wide in terror.

Covered in sweat, Emma bolts upright in bed; she feels as though her heart is exploding inside her chest. By the dim half-light in the room she realizes it must be just before sunrise. Her body aches; she feels two decades older. She swings her legs over the side of the bed, careful not to wake nine-year-old Lia, who has been sharing the bed with her. Signe, Ines, and three other older girls are sleeping on the floor. The house is shrouded in quiet. The power grid had been destroyed in the initial attack, and all of New York City has since been blanketed in eerie silence. Power grids in other cities across the country had also been hit, obliterating electricity to much of the world's most powerful nation. A country once buzzing with information and technology is now chillingly silent and wrapped in fear.

Emma glances toward the window and can make out an enormous blood-red moon through the curtain; it's appeared red both night and day for the last five days in a row. She hears bells ringing in the distance and knows the death wagon is coming down the street. Since the attack on the city and the violence that has erupted in the aftermath, there have been countless bodies that need to be carried away each day. Many ambulances were destroyed in the attack and simple box trucks are used to drive up and down streets at all hours picking up anyone who has died overnight from the virus that's spreading, from murder, suicide, overdose, or any other reason. Rather than use a horn that would confuse it with a regular truck, the death wagons are distinguished from other box trucks in that bells jangle from each side, alerting everyone to bring out the dead.

As fingers of light stretch across the room, Emma can see the photo of Mr. and Mrs. Ramos and their family sitting on the chest of drawers. It still feels so strange to be inside the Ramos's home. Less than three weeks ago, she and Mrs. Ramos were talking and laughing during Mrs. Ramos's physical therapy on her torn meniscus. Emma closes her eyes, attempting to shut out the memories. Her mind flashes back to putting her hands on Mrs. Ramos's shoulders and then stumbling through the air onto the therapy table. Mrs. Ramos, like millions of others within the city and around the world, had disappeared.

Before the vanishings, she always reached for her phone first thing in the morning to scroll through her social media accounts, check texts, and read her e-mail. It sits on the nightstand now, dead and useless without electricity and cell service. Emma turns to pick up the Bible on the nightstand; she found it in Mrs. Ramos's bag and has been reading it since. "I would always be happy to talk with you about God," Mrs. Ramos had said. "I love to talk about what Jesus has done for me." Emma looks down at the Bible. If only she had paid more attention to what Mrs. Ramos and her mom had told her. She flips open the cover of the Bible and pulls out the picture of her mom in between Emma and her sister, Sarah. Her throat catches as she looks at her mom, remembering again the horror of Sarah's voice screaming through the phone that their mom was gone. Emma's heart aches as she wonders

whether her sister is safe in Indiana and if her streets are filled with bloody violence and chaos too.

As she slips the picture back into the Bible, she feels Lia's hand on her back. "Is it morning time already?"

Emma turns and pulls the blankets up to Lia's chin. She had found Lia in an alleyway just days after the vanishings, hiding next to a dumpster with heaps of garbage around her. Her mom dropped her off there following the disappearances, saying she would come back to get her. It was a lie; she never returned. "It's not time to get up. Go back to sleep," Emma whispers.

"Are you going out again today?" the young girl asks, squinting. "Are you still looking for stuff?"

Emma runs her index finger back and forth over Lia's forehead. "I don't know."

Lia reaches for Emma's arm, grabbing it. "I don't want you to go."

"One of us will be here with you. I promise," Emma says. "We are not going to leave any of you alone." She tucks the blankets around Lia again and leans over, kissing her forehead. "You need to get some more sleep. It's way too early to get up."

When Lia closes her eyes, Emma heads to the bathroom to get ready for the day. The small window above the toilet provides just enough light to see by as day breaks. Has the city been without power for three weeks now? It feels like a decade. When Emma ran from the rehabilitation room immediately after the vanishings, she grabbed Mrs. Ramos's bag to return it to her family and tell them that she was gone—only to discover that Mrs. Ramos's entire family had been snatched away.

Emma has now made peace with coming to Mr. and Mrs. Ramos's home and tracking down the homes of their children to round up food, extra mattresses, clothes, supplies, medication, and money. Very few food and supply trucks have made their way into the city since the pandemonium created by the vanishings and the attack, which had left the great metropolis staggering. All the major government and business buildings—including the United Nations—had been hit, obliterating the city. What the enemy hasn't devastated, residents have; looters have emptied and destroyed nearly every grocery and retail store, homes are

threatened at every turn, and the streets are bloody from vicious attacks by roving street gangs. It has been frightening to see how quickly fear has created a mob mentality in cities all across the globe. Fright and anger have turned every city against itself, filling the streets with anxiety, grief, and helplessness.

An exact number has never been given, but it is believed that some 50 million Americans disappeared when Jesus snatched away his followers, rupturing the workforce and sending the economy into a wild downward spiral, causing the dollar to collapse. The fall of the US stock market caused loan institutions to crumble, and America's losses triggered a ripple effect around the world. This, in turn, crippled nations that were already struggling to keep their countries afloat, toppling their financial markets, creating rampant inflation, and throwing the world into a great depression.

As the United States fell, so did all other nations. With a national debt exceeding 52 trillion dollars and the labor force struck by the disappearances and the devastation caused by the attacks, it is impossible for the country to recover economically and maintain its position as the world's financial leader. With the US military hanging by a thread because so many members of the armed forces had disappeared, coupled with the missile strikes on US military bases in many parts of the world, the US leadership in NATO is finished as well. The country's role as superpower of the world is over.

Without electricity, Emma and her friends Brandon and Kennisha have relied on the shortwave radio they found in the Ramos's garage to bring them updates from around the globe. Keeping up with the news has been mind-numbing. The world is in upheaval, with little hope of improving. Before so many people had vanished, an election or a medical situation like the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 would cause mayhem, emptying grocery store shelves, spurring fighting and looting in the streets, and inciting people to scream at each other on TV or social media, but boundaries were still in place. Law enforcement had kept the disorder from turning into all-out anarchy—but not this time. Lawlessness didn't merely creep in after the disappearances; it flooded in, deluging the world with chaos and rebellion.

Just days after the vanishings, President Banes, speaking from a safe house, declared the country, "Under a state of emergency." His words rang throughout the world. "To keep our citizens safe, with the help of the United States military, I am imposing martial law. Every individual must be in their home or sheltering in place an hour after sunset until sunrise. Those working must have all necessary paperwork to permit your presence in the streets. Additionally, in order to maintain peace, all firearms will be confiscated."

Emma was surprised at how many civilians were willing to give up their right to bear arms; they felt it was a small price to pay to feel safe with the military patrolling the streets. But Emma doesn't feel safe. Not for a moment. In the face of fear, the atmosphere in the city has not been one of unity and of safeguarding a neighbor. She has discovered that fear makes people angry, belligerent, hostile, selfish, hateful, and murderous. In New York and throughout the country, streets have turned into war zones as factions who were already against one another use the chaos of the disappearances to fight and kill their enemies.

Countries were rising up against each other as well. Though World War III did not unfold in the Middle East as pundits predicted prior to the invasion against Israel, wars had broken out all over the globe, resulting in deaths numbering into the millions. Earthquakes and famine conditions have followed, bringing further devastation. Transportation, businesses, hospitals, and governments around the globe are reeling. A new and unnamed virus is making its way around the world, which is attacking people's respiratory systems, making it hard for the infected to breathe. As patients gasp for breath, so does the world. There are times when Emma has to turn off the shortwave radio, unable to take in anymore.

She makes her way downstairs and finds her longtime friend Brandon in the kitchen, poring over the Bible opened in front of him. The countertops, cabinets, floor, and space against the wall are covered with supplies and canned foods. Packaged foods like rice, noodles, crackers, and cereal are kept in garbage cans with lids to keep rats out in case they somehow enter the house. After their arrival at the Ramos home, Emma and Brandon had written out the names and addresses

of people in Mrs. Ramos's phone before it died. They reasoned that if Mrs. Ramos was snatched away by Jesus, then surely some of the people in her cell directory were believers as well.

Sure enough, they had found several empty homes and apartments, and secured as many goods as possible for their expanding family before looters had a chance to enter those places. Among their finds were children's clothes, propane for the gas grill, bottled water, pantries full of food, a portable camping grill, medical supplies, money, cans of gasoline, a solar phone charger, and bedding of all sorts. Emma despises the thought that they are like any other thieves out on the streets, but this is their means of survival. At least for now. With so few grocery stores open, and with goods at exorbitant prices, they have determined that they will get by on one meal a day until food trucks are making their way into the city again on a regular basis. That's what Emma prays will happen.

"Morning," she says, looking at Brandon. His eyes are tired like hers, and a dark stubble spreads over his usually smooth-like-milk-chocolate face. She realizes that until the last few weeks, she had always seen him clean-shaven. In the days following the snatching away, Emma had left the apartment she shared with her boyfriend, Matt, and Brandon left Rick, his partner. They ended up befriending Kennisha, a young, almond-skinned woman whose sister and niece had vanished. The children who were upstairs—Lia, Micah, Signe, Ines, and the others—were all discovered in the aftermath of the disappearances, and Emma, Brandon, and Kennisha had continued to scour the streets for other children who had been abandoned or were in danger of kidnappers who wanted them for trafficking.

Each time they found a child, they put word out through the members of their home church and other home churches in Brooklyn. So far, they had found homes for more than 60 children, and hoped to find more for the children who were asleep upstairs. While Emma, Brandon, Kennisha, and all the children were still new to one another, Emma felt as though they had known each other for a lifetime.

"What are you reading today?" Emma asks.

"I'm reading Revelation and Daniel again," Brandon says. They've

read the books many times together, to the children and with their home church friends and visitors, who meet each morning at five.

“Has anything changed?” she says, trying to muster a smile.

“No. But we still win in the end.” Sometimes the thought of what the ensuing years will bring is more than Emma can bear. Brandon notices her face. “Remember, we *do* win in the end.”

She forces a nod. “Come on. Let’s get to the streets.” Brandon is wary. She looks as exhausted as he is. “Brandon,” she says, sensing his hesitation. “We have to go now.”