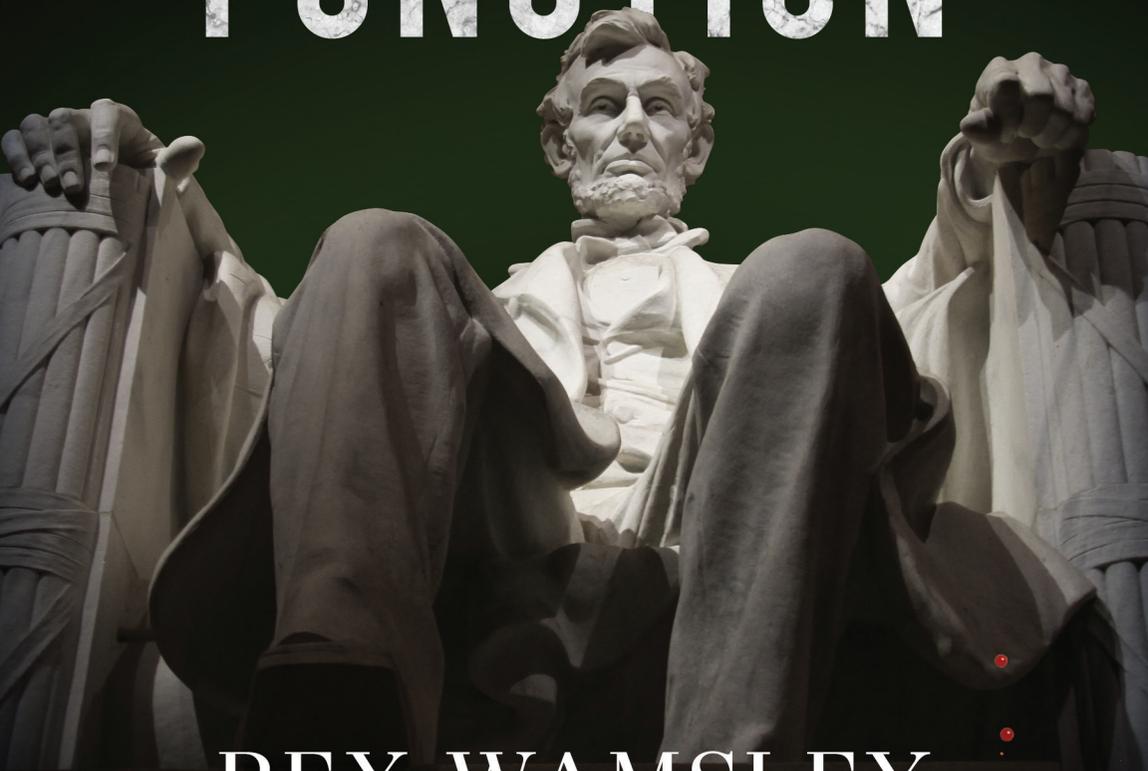


*The*  
**SECOND  
ESSENTIAL  
FUNCTION**



**REX WAMSLEY**

**BOOK TWO OF THE SNOW LEOPARD TRILOGY**

— The Futures America Chronicles —



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by  
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This is a work of fiction. Names, places, characters, and incidents either are a product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual organizations or persons, living or dead, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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The information in the book reflecting the number of terrorist attacks in the United States and worldwide, along with the national debt, trade deficit, and immigration statistics are current as of the date of publication.

Futures America is a not-for-profit organization whose goal is to help ensure the futures of America's people, government, businesses, and industry remain eternally free and prosperous.

\*National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 51/Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 20 is used as the reference for the title of this book because it included the first identification and use of the eight National Essential Functions.

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*For all the hardworking and dedicated  
military and government employees who  
struggle every day to defend and maintain  
our constitutional democracy.*

## THE SECOND ESSENTIAL FUNCTION

Providing leadership visible to the Nation  
and the world and maintaining the trust and  
confidence of the American people.

*National Security Directive 51/Homeland  
Security Directive 20\**

*“When the people find they can vote themselves money,  
that will herald the end of the republic.”*

—Benjamin Franklin

*The*  
**SECOND  
ESSENTIAL  
FUNCTION**

AL QARYATAYN, SYRIA  
AUGUST 21, 2014

Siraj Tariq moved out of the wreckage of the building where he had been looking for survivors. It was nearly impossible to move through the tangled maze of broken concrete and ancient walls. The fine dust, pulverized by the seemingly never-ending bombs and explosives, hung in the air, making it difficult to breathe. Even after all of this, they had once again turned back Assad's attacks, the bodies of his Hezbollah allies now swelling in the intense sun. As he looked at the others defending this place and those searching for survivors, he knew that volunteers like them would continue to come: thousands of them, from across the Islamic world.

Unlike most of the others, Siraj had not come here to kill, but to save lives. A veterinarian by trade, he now treated the human casualties of the war. His part in this had begun in a small Sunni village just outside Ramadi, Iraq. That seemed a long time ago now.

After the Americans left in 2011, the situation for Siraj and the others in their small village had gotten progressively worse as the new Shiite leadership

in Baghdad began to exert control. Then ISIS had pushed them out, and by necessity he had been forced to help care for the sick and dying humans instead of animals. And he had continued to do so as the war moved from one city to another in the new Caliphate.

As food and ammunition became increasingly hard to supply and the bombings and attacks more intense, he knew their days in this location and many others like it were numbered. They were literally being starved and pushed out, street by street and city by city. Millions were now confined to the desolate refugee camps scattered along the periphery of what had been Iraq and Syria. Many of these people were doing whatever they could to escape the camps for new opportunities in other places.

As he sat down on what had once been the wall of some long-forgotten person's home, he thought back on that brief period of hope, before the Americans left. After his graduation from veterinary school in Baghdad, he had actually been sent to their country for additional study, but shortly after his return, they were gone—literally overnight. And they had left a massive vacuum that was initially filled by the hated Shiites, and then by ISIS.

Now the Americans just bombed, day and night. And that made Siraj hate them all the more for doing all of this to his people. Right now, like the others from their country who were safe in their homes far across the ocean, these planes were beyond their reach—but there was a plan to change that. Tonight, he would leave this place and begin his long journey.

As Siraj looked up at the sky, to the distant planes overhead, he knew it was time that they paid for all of this. As he got up with his small bag of medical supplies, he knew that if they could take the Americans out of this fight, they would win it, as nearly 90 percent of the over 1.5 billion Moslems worldwide were Sunni just like him.

#### PARWAN PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN

Abdul Habibi leaned on his cane and watched them slowly disappear down the trail. The Afghanis they had paid him was more than he could ever have imagined, and would help provide a new beginning for him and his family. He turned and surveyed the now empty pens. He wasn't sure why they wanted his animals, because they were so sick, but they had paid him well, and that was all that mattered.



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# PART ONE

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**1**

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THE SANDHILLS  
KEITH COUNTY, NEBRASKA

Gene Holmes stood on the hill, looking down at the shining water. Thinking back, the pond seemed so much smaller now, but the turtles were still there on the bank, and the cattle standing in the shade of the trees. For him, this is where it had all begun. He smiled as he scanned the horizon and looked up at the contrails of the plane high overhead. *These thousand hills. God's country.*

Thinking back, he remembered hunting ducks along the Platte and looking up to see the distant planes. He had wondered who was up there and where they were going. Well, he had now been up there more than he could have ever imagined back then, and he knew where they went. And he had seen and done things he could never have even dreamed about. *I didn't even know what questions to ask*, he thought, shaking his head.

It had been a great three weeks. After coming home from DC, he was truly enjoying his new freedom. He had no clock, no one to report to, and no staff to worry about. He could finally do just what he wanted. Upon his return, he and his wife had turned off their phones, hooked up their travel trailer, and headed out to have some long overdue time alone, far from the maddening crowds, as they say.

As he began walking back up the hill, he thought briefly about those who had been here back then. Obviously, his parents and other family, but also people like old Tennessee Ernie. Moonlit nights with him listening to and following the coon dogs. Dogs and hunting were an important part of their lives back then. Now he just enjoyed seeing the wildlife.

But back then, it was different. He remembered his grandmother telling him how things had changed during her lifetime. When she was born in 1903, everyone was still using horses and wagons, and there were no cars. Many still lived in sod houses. In her lifetime, men had walked on the moon. In his lifetime, things had changed almost as dramatically, but in different ways.

*Enough reminiscing*, he thought, smiling as he looked up the hill. As he did, he saw his wife waving for him to come over. And she was on her phone. They had agreed not to do that, but he knew she couldn't resist, as she just had to know how the family was doing.

As he walked up to her she said, "Gene, you may want to turn on your phone. Something really terrible has happened."

## 2

### BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS, VIRGINIA

Stu Owen and Jamie Ruger were not having a good day. Even after Stu's publicity success in China with his pharmaceuticals, the *man* had just left and was visibly upset. *And rightly so*, thought Stu as he looked up from reading the latest updates. Surprisingly, even after all their years working for him, this was the first time he and Jamie had actually met the man in person.

Although they were safe in Stu's country estate after their return from Indonesia and Stu's trip to China, the news coming in from the increasingly dysfunctional federal government was bleak. Many of the people they had put into key positions in Washington had become casualties of the rapidly spreading disease, and others were unavailable because they were either sick or taking care of family members who were. It was a mess, but they were working to fix it—as best they could, anyway. Money helped, and they had lots of it. With it came the best medical care for them, their employees, and the replacements that were now being moved into the many newly vacated government positions. Although it was challenging, he knew this situation offered amazing opportunities—assuming they survived the current crisis.

As he reviewed the list of employees, there was mixed news. Obviously, some had been infected by the anthrax by either riding the metro or by others who had been there, or they had been exposed to the disease in one of the airports. However, the rapid medical care they had provided once the attacks were known had saved many who would have otherwise died. Others who were not in their employment were not so fortunate—thousands of others,

but Stu didn't care about them. For him, they were just part of the oil-slick that permeated the government in Washington, and irrelevant.

His immediate concern was with the senior federal employees—the decision-makers who controlled the contracts and money for their offices. Those still on the job had already opened their accounts to the contractors who were supporting the relief efforts. From this early work, he knew the profits from these attacks were going to be huge—beyond huge. Before this was over, the \$600 billion the federal government had spent following 9/11 would be peanuts compared to what they were going to make from this. He also knew they had to move fast to take full advantage of the situation, and that meant quickly filling the many newly vacant government positions with their people.

“With the government now more dysfunctional than ever, I don't see why our people in OPM can't expedite moving all of those on our list into the vacant positions,” said Jamie, handing an updated list of potential employees to Stu. OPM was the abbreviation for the Office of Personnel Management that controlled hiring for the federal government.

“I agree,” said Stu, getting up from his desk and moving over to the window, with its spectacular view of the valley. “Tell Kathy to make it happen,” he said, referring to Kathy Richter, the current head of OPM, who was one of their political employees.

As Jamie walked up beside him, he briefly looked at her and then said, “The money from all the activities to ensure the country never experiences something like this again will be amazing. Beyond amazing! A blank check.”

As they looked at each other, smiling, there was a knock on the door. Kelly Moreman, Stu's executive assistant, stepped into the room.

“Doctor Meiner is here to give you the last of your anthrax vaccinations,” she said. “Is this a good time?”

“Sure,” said Stu, as they began moving toward the door. “The sooner, the better.”

# 3

WASHINGTON, DC

As Gene Holmes read the latest intelligence update, it was clear that these terrorist attacks were the single greatest disaster in the nation's history. Within a week of the anthrax being dispersed in the nation's largest metros, subways, and airports, tens of thousands of Americans were seeking treatment. As the numbers far exceeded the capacity of clinics and hospitals, triage centers had been set up, along with additional facilities and beds in schools, convention centers, and other locations with showers, restrooms, and spaces for the beds. With the large numbers seeking treatment, the doctors, nurses, and other medical and response personnel were overwhelmed. To make things worse, many of them had also become casualties of the rapidly spreading disease.

From the morning intelligence update, it now appeared that even more cities had been attacked. Reports of people with anthrax symptoms had initially come in from New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, Seattle, and Los Angeles, but now equally large numbers were being reported in Phoenix, Miami, Houston, Detroit, Minneapolis–St. Paul, Boston, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. The widening nature of the attacks was causing major problems for the nation's medical capabilities and the leadership directing medical supplies, and for the law enforcement personnel who were attempting to apprehend those responsible.

Gene shook his head and, setting the report aside, briefly thought about being back here and the chain of events that had taken place in the less than four weeks since the National Security Advisor had dismissed him as Director of Snow Leopard. After turning on his phone, his email, voice, and text

inboxes had been filled with requests to call the National Security Advisor and his office in Washington. When he did, the Advisor simply said that he needed to report back to Snow Leopard. He gave no apology, and no explanation except that the nation was in trouble. The Advisor knew that what was happening across the country said everything else. So here Gene was.

As Gene continued to read the reports, it appeared the attacks were now affecting other areas, too, as people were now coming down with the disease all over the country, and even overseas. The numbers were not as high or concentrated as those in the larger cities, but there were still a lot of people who were being affected, and reports seemed to be coming in from everywhere.

To top it off, many of the drugs that had previously been used for treating diseases like this were no longer effective or less effective because of the abuse of these drugs by what medical personnel were now calling the large industrial farms. Evidently, these people had been allowed to use the drugs to reduce disease in animals kept in horribly unsanitary feedlots and other conditions, resulting in antibiotic resistance in the people consuming the food, as well as the biological agents. As people's immune systems were compromised by the anthrax, the diseases caused by these other biologicals were becoming an increasing problem. Medical personnel were struggling to provide medications for the tens of thousands now affected by the anthrax.

During the morning update, Gene was surprised to hear that the Food and Drug Administration had recognized the risks associated with this as far back as 1977. Evidently, over 70 percent of all medically important antibiotics sold in the United States were used in livestock production—not for humans. And although over two million cases of antibiotic resistance had been identified in Americans as early as 2013, with nearly 23,000 deaths, the FDA had quietly allowed thirty potentially harmful antibiotics, including eighteen rated as “high risk,” to remain on the market as additives in animal feed and water. Now the country was paying a heavy price.

As the nation struggled to provide medical care, the country's largest metro systems and airports were closed. Hundreds of metro cars and planes sat idle at gates and hangars, many of which might never move or fly again. As the numbers of dead and dying continued to grow, and as medical supplies became exhausted, many of the nation's cities began to burn. In just a few short weeks, the country had gone from shopping and football to survival. Americans who had never experienced war were now finding out what it was like.

As Gene set the reports aside, he was concerned about how many more cities would be targeted. There were no leads as to who was responsible, except for what they had identified earlier in Iraq. With the death of Cleric Salid a-Sumaidi and the nine men who now appeared to have been involved in recovering the anthrax, there was no more information other than that the CIA believed the material had arrived by ship in Newark, been transported to a storage facility in Alexandria, and then moved to another one, which was also in Alexandria. These units were now empty. There was no record of who rented them, and there were no witnesses, as the driver who had evidently assisted in moving the drums and the owner of the second storage business were both dead. Their bodies, covered in lime, were the only things found in one of the units. Both of their wives had reported them missing two weeks prior to the attacks. The delivery truck, which was also empty, had been located in a mall parking lot in nearby Fairfax, Virginia, but it offered no clues as to who was responsible.

Since there were no functional security cameras at or near the storage units or other witnesses as to who rented them and moved the drums, it was as if ghosts had risen out of the desert and invaded America. And no one knew how much anthrax the terrorists still had in their possession. Saddam Hussein had said he had enough biological agents to eliminate all humanity on the North American continent. Gene felt fairly certain that the way the terrorists were dispersing it would not allow them to do that, but they were probably capable of causing additional deaths—maybe a lot of them.

Earlier, the President had provided guidance that to the extent possible, key offices in the nation's capital would remain open to give the appearance of normalcy and show that the leadership in Washington was at work dealing with the crisis. What that really meant was that certain essential personnel, mostly military and ex-military people who had previously been vaccinated, were in the offices, while others had been told to report to locations outside the city, telework from home, or take unscheduled leave until it was safe to return to work. However, as nearly every office in DC had been contaminated to some extent, and with decontamination teams only beginning to mobilize, most felt it would be a long time before the nation's capital returned to normal—a very long time.

As Gene finished reading the reports, he asked John Hall, Snow Leopard's DHS representative, to come down to his office.

“What do we have on the latest numbers from the attacks?” he asked after getting up from his desk and meeting John in the hallway.

“They’re staggering. Because of the numbers of people seeking care, including those not infected by the anthrax, it is hard to get an accurate count, but the Metropolitan Medical Response System staff provided some numbers along with their requests for additional medical supplies,” John replied, handing Gene his latest report.

Both Gene and John were familiar with the Metropolitan Medical Response System, or MMRS, that had been set up by the Department of Health and Human Services following 9/11 to deal with widespread disease and disasters like this. Essentially MMRS was the coordinating system that was set up at the local level to respond to terrorist incidents and other public health emergencies that created mass casualties, especially those requiring unique care. Its purpose was to manage the event until additional state and federal resources were mobilized. It included trained responders, specialized equipment and pharmaceuticals, and enhanced medical transport and treatment capabilities. But as good as preparations had been, both knew these were being severely challenged—and, in an increasing number of cases, overwhelmed—by the attacks.

“It appears that over 60,000 have been infected in DC, and somewhere around 110,000 in New York, with a comparable number in Chicago. The other targeted cities may have at least forty to fifty thousand, too. The medical people think the numbers will continue to grow, and probably be at least twice that.”

“Unbelievable!” said Gene, shaking his head. “What’s the Secretary of HHS telling us about our ability to support ... reinforce the capabilities in these cities and across the country?”

“The federal task force and operations center set up to coordinate the response are doing everything they can. Not only are our medical people and military responding to this here, but also to some other, poorer countries that have been affected, too. It appears most of those infected in those countries flew through the large American hubs, and a large number of them are Americans. With all the areas they are responding to, it’s impressive what HHS and the MMRSs are doing. However, as you know, time is not on our side. The historic mortality rate for anthrax is over 90 percent if untreated, and nearly

50 percent if caught early and treatment is started right away. We have some great new medicines and excellent medical providers, but the numbers are making their work very difficult. There are so many that have to be triaged just to identify those that have been infected. It's really tough. We just don't have facilities readily available to handle these kinds of numbers. Besides the triage centers, hospital beds need to be located and additional places where all of these people can go for treatment need to be found. Because of the numbers, much of this still needs to be set up, and medical equipment and supplies need to be distributed to support it. The disease is not waiting for them to do that, but what we have is far better than what we had before 9/11, and the medical folks are doing their very best to deal with it."

"What else do we know?"

"As I'm sure you have seen in the reports, it appears there were attacks all across the country, based on the numbers of people seeking medical care."

Gene then turned to acknowledge Special Agent Dave Martin, Snow Leopard's FBI representative, who had just walked up to them. "Any new leads on those responsible for this?"

"Nothing yet. We are reviewing video from cameras in the areas we think were targeted. But as you can imagine, a lot of people—literally hundreds of thousands—use the metros, subways, and airports each day, and many act suspiciously when going about their normal business. We have found paper sacks that the terrorists evidently used to dispense the spores in some of the subways and metros."

"Paper sacks? You mean the most devastating attack in our nation's history used paper sacks?"

"Apparently. They were coated with some kind of wax to keep the anthrax inside," said Dave, handing Gene pictures of one of the sacks. "This one was found at the L'Enfant Plaza metro stop here in DC."

Gene looked at the pictures and then out the window of his office at all the blue and red flashing lights around the White House compound and shook his head. "How about the other locations?" he asked.

"In addition to the ones found here in DC, we found similar sacks in the subways and metros in New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, and Miami. I'm fairly confident we'll find more in the other places that were attacked, too. Many were probably picked up by custodial and maintenance people, as there

is a several days or longer time lag between when people are exposed to the anthrax and when they begin showing symptoms.”

“And our sensors never picked up on any of this?” asked Gene incredulously.

“Eventually they did,” said Dave. “But that takes time, and a whole lot of people were infected before then.”

“But shouldn’t this have been picked up at the security checkpoints at the airports?”

“It’s not clear how they got this into the airports, or why security never picked up on it. Someone will have a hard time explaining that, I’m sure. We do know there are large concentrations of the weaponized anthrax in many of our largest airports. It now appears that Atlanta, Chicago O’Hare, Los Angeles, Miami, Dallas/Fort Worth, Denver, JFK, and San Francisco International Airports were attacked. We are now getting reports from Charlotte, McCarran in Las Vegas, and Phoenix Sky Harbor that they were hit, too. I’m sure there are more. We are finding lesser amounts of spores—probably residual—in many smaller airports. It’s likely much of this was brought in by the passengers flying through the hubs, but obviously we have more work to do to confirm that. Until we do, most of the nation’s mass transit systems are shut down. We do know that hundreds of planes have been infected, and the numbers will probably go higher. How long it will take to disinfect all of this and get the transportation systems up again, we just don’t know at this point. Some of this maybe never, as the weaponized spores are so small they permeate everything from the air handling systems to carpets, counters, and baggage handling equipment.”

Gene thought about the effects of this when moving medical personnel and supplies. “How about our military aircraft? Any reports on whether they were affected, too?” he asked.

“No reports of any yet,” Dave replied. “It appears the attacks were only on the commercial airports. The military is continuing to ramp up its efforts to deliver medical supplies to the hardest-hit locations. The problem is that there are just so many of them. The President has activated National Guard units in all the affected states and territories along with Reserve medical and transportation units. The military is sending personnel who have previously been vaccinated for anthrax into the hardest-hit areas. They are also setting up triage and treatment centers, but as fast as they are moving, the numbers

just keep growing. A large number of these people are in desperate need of immediate care. Many are dying.”

“Any idea how many have died?”

“Unfortunately, not at this time. We know many have. It’s one of the key items of information HHS is requesting so they can better allocate medical supplies and other resources.”

After John and Dave left to get any new information that may have come in, Gene sat down and looked out his window at the many vehicles and their blue and red flashing lights across the street. He knew that he and the others who had been relocated back here to DC were relatively safe, as they had been previously vaccinated for the disease. But he wondered if the terrorists had other plans to execute. *What next?* he thought.

As he looked out his window at the flashing lights and empty sidewalks next to the White House, he thought again about why he had come back. He knew the administration was struggling to deal with the situation and was in trouble because of its failure to identify the threat and provide support for the many people affected. As they struggled to explain the breakdown of the intelligence and immigration systems that had allowed this to occur, he knew they could not afford to have someone like him telling the media that he had warned them repeatedly about this, and that he had been ignored and then removed as the Director of Snow Leopard because of his concerns. So the best way to keep him quiet was to bring him back and once again make him part of the Administration. There were just too many people who knew he had repeatedly warned the Administration’s senior leadership about this to keep it quiet if it were to come out. It was a classic example of the old adage “keep your friends close, but your enemies closer.”

Gene knew that even though he was back, there were many in the Administration who were not his friends, but he didn’t care about that as long as he could do the job he was brought back to do: identify and deal with issues like this. In this case, this wild card (as he liked to call them) was at least partially known. At least the part about what they had been planning. Knowledge that had obviously come at a very high cost. But the real challenge, the thing that had really brought him back was, what next? Even with the ongoing tragedy the borders remained virtually open. As they struggled to belatedly close them and get a handle on all the illegal aliens and others that had already

moved in and set up shop he knew that closing the barn door after the horses had already moved through it, as the old saying went, was pointless. This new enemy was now here among them. There were potentially many of them, and many more with similar beliefs who could become enemies if this wasn't handed properly.

Gene knew from his earlier coordination with law enforcement organizations across the country that since 9/11 they had been aware of terrorist sympathizers in nearly every State. Many of them were American citizens, but others were here illegally and had been protected by the lawyers and organizations advocating for free, unlimited immigration—and, unfortunately, the current Administration. There were massive backlogs in the courts that were required to rule on their cases before they could be sent back to where ever they had come from—if they ever were. He also knew that one of the reasons the country had not been attacked from within when the rest of the world was experiencing literally thousands of these attacks was that these sympathizers were able to raise amazing amounts of money to support those responsible for those attacks, and be paid by the government to live here while they did. If they attacked the Americans supporting them, the resulting reaction would seriously hinder or even stop them from doing that. And they had been really smart and careful about how they raised and distributed the money so as not to get caught. Obviously, some now felt comfortable enough with their situation to move to the next level in this country, too.

However, what really brought Gene back was his knowledge that there was simply no adult leadership in this town capable of dealing with what was happening. Well, that wasn't completely true—there were *many* really talented people capable of dealing with it, but they were buried by all the layers of incompetents and others who had been brought in to help with taking the money. But he also knew that the senior politicians who were ultimately responsible for what was happening here in DC were not stupid and had convinced a whole lot of Americans they were loved and that they were here to ensure they got all the goodies they deserved. Well, maybe not deserved, but that had been made available through the many government programs. So as bad as it was, this Administration wasn't going anywhere any time soon. Even if the President was forced to leave, the Vice President was even more incompetent. If he left too, the Speaker of the House would have to step up

and take over an Executive Branch in complete disarray. All of this, if it were to happen, would take time, and time was not on their side.

He had made a promise many years ago to do whatever he could to bring those in his care home safely, and he was going to do that. Making the rounds on the networks wouldn't solve any of this. For the immediate future, the planning and support for this was going to play itself out right here in river city, and as it did, he would do his very best to do his part to find those responsible. So when called, he had chosen to walk back in the gate, figuratively picked up his buttons and broken sword, and returned back to the office. As he turned back to the reports on his desk, he turned up the volume on what he felt was truly one of the best songs ever: *On the Outside Looking In* by Little Anthony. Gene smiled. Whether the young superstars in the Administration liked him or not, he would do his job. The last boy scout was back.

As he scanned through the latest on his computer, he sub-consciously clicked on the [usdebtclock.org](http://usdebtclock.org) website. As the numbers began coming up, he was surprised. Some were hardly moving, and others moved at blinding speed. The nation was shutting down, and it appeared that whoever loaned the government money to keep it running was turning off the spigot, but the Federal Reserve printing presses were wide open. Quantitative easing had become a quantitative enema.

# 4

## RURAL WEST VIRGINIA

While Stu, Jamie, and Gene Holmes were struggling with their Washington bureaucracies, Dr. Chamine, Rakeem, and their gifting associates were watching the national news and having a private celebration.

Upon completing the deliveries, Rakeem directed that they all meet at a large private house he had rented in rural western West Virginia. It was some distance from where he and Dr. Chamine were staying, as he did not want any of their associates to know of that house or location. As they celebrated their successes, Rakeem stood up and asked they give their attention to Dr. Chamine, who had been so important in making all of this possible.

“Marhaban bikum. Insha’Allah. Welcome. If god wishes it to be,” said Dr. Chamine as he got up to address the men. “I would again like to thank all of you for the great work. What you have done is simply unbelievable. And special thanks for sending the drivers who accompanied you on their way to paradise. This reduces any threat of our being discovered.”

“Any problems with switching the license plates, as we discussed?” asked Rakeem, now standing up beside Dr. Chamine.

Each of the men said no.

“For your information, it appears Shuneal was stopped in Nevada before he was able to complete his deliveries, and so as not to compromise our operation is now in paradise,” continued Rakeem. “So all of us must be especially vigilant. Make sure you remove anything from your vehicles that shows where you traveled. Did all of you pay cash for your rooms and fuel as we directed?”

All said that they had.

“Good. Make sure your cars and the containers where you stored the sacks are cleaned with bleach, as we discussed earlier,” said Dr. Chamine.

“Once this is done, we will dispose of them,” said Rakeem. “I have a friend who handles scrap metal, and this includes crushing old cars, which are then sent to China. One of these ships is scheduled to depart in the next couple of days,” continued Rakeem, who then provided them with instructions on where and when to deliver their vehicles.

“You are again to be congratulated for your work,” said Dr. Chamine as they began to wrap up their small celebration. “The men in this room did more damage to the United States in a week than all of their enemies combined over their nation’s history. With some dust, a few paper sacks, and roller bags, we brought the evil monster to its knees.”

As the others began to go back to their rooms, Rakeem turned to Dr. Chamine and said, “Shuneal’s death could be a problem. Even after the explosion, I am sure the Americans will identify him, as I know he had been picked up and then released on at least three occasions by their immigration people, with the last time being with the so-called Dream Act business. The good news is that he was last released in California, with its millions of other new arrivals. However, I am sure they will trace the car back to Maryland, as they have amazing ways to identify things like that. So even though the car was purchased with cash, we need to be vigilant.”

Chamine nodded. “I agree, and have already made plans to leave the country. I cannot return to Iraq, as they may be looking for me there, so I have decided to seek another place with a large number of believers. There is a huge population of people like us who need medical care, and much of it is very remote. But before I go you must have this,” he continued handing a small note to Rakeem. “It’s an international phone number to my friend who provided the funding for our operation. I know you will need more money for any future operations here, so when you do, just call the number, tell the person that answers the six-digit code that identifies me, and the amount you need. Nothing more as they know what to do. You can then pick up the money at the address on the paper. It will be in unmarked boxes. Needless to say, do not share this information with anyone else.”

Standing up, he reached out his hand to Rakeem and continued, “Ma’aasalaama, Rakeem. I have truly enjoyed our brief association and friendship.

Once this settles down, I will try to let you know where I am, in case I can be of further assistance.”

As he picked up his coat and left the room, Rakeem briefly looked at the note Chamine had given him and then thought of his future. Aadil had mentioned something to him about others doing things like what they had just done, and he was anxious to find out more about this. So as the men began to go back to their rooms, Rakeem gestured for Aadil to join him.

“As-Salaam-Alaikum, peace be upon you,” said Rakeem as Aadil walked up to him.

“Wa-Alaikum-Salaam, upon you be peace,” Aadil replied.

“Have you had any additional contact with your Texas friend who asked you to assist with his deliveries?” asked Rakeem.

“With all of the things we have been doing, I have not talked with him,” replied Aadil. “However, I still have his phone number.”

“Do you still feel your friend is totally reliable and dedicated to our cause?”

“I do,” said Aadil. “Absolutely.”

“It may be in our interest to meet him, then,” said Rakeem. “Perhaps we can assist him in some way. Can you set up a meeting with him?”

“I will contact him. It will probably mean we have to drive somewhere for that.”

“No problem. With our recent success, we have all the time in the world.”