

DOWN AND RISING

SIX DAYS IN A RUINED WORLD

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For more information on this book:
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DEDICATION

Mother, your work ethic.



FREE PREVIEW

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FREE PREVIEW

FREE PREVIEW

The world has fallen...

FREE PREVIEW

Their society had been built to fail. Dynasties of power and parties of authority had on retrospect, staged countless renditions of the same play. Granted, an evolution had occurred. But the story unfolded the same way.

The regressions of man's dingy core had corrupted communities across their world. It was inevitable, blossoming darkly in the poison which they'd fed so richly without care or foresight.

Many saw it coming. It was the same message that had been cried among the woken.

However, several years into a fallen world, criticisms of the past no longer found a place in conversation. For those who'd survived, concern and purpose had shifted elsewhere.

The position of drifter had become Arav Mandhav's occupation. Fatigue was his greatest enemy and a potential root for his demise.

At forty-one, his knees had suffered from pounding the roads of several lifetimes, threatening to falter beneath the weight of duty.

Under the title of drifter, this widowed father had assumed responsibility for his eight-year-old daughter.

His worn body was her shield. The glory of her heart was his elixir. Through the bond of blood and promise, they'd managed to sustain each other.



For those who had strived to nourish and advance young futures in overflowing classrooms, came a reward of abandonment by their governing bodies.

These guides and trusted educators were forced to work into their withered years.

Burned out, they'd grown resentful towards a system that had betrayed its purpose.

It was somewhere in the halls of a school, where the incandescent ruckus that had once defined a horde of youth, shrunk into the deep ravine of silence among its sleeping bodies.

In a classroom, fifty-one-year-old, Tom Turner was playing watchman. He sat by a broken window where a sheet was draped over to provide the illusion of safety, more so for the others whom he'd inadvertently donned the role of protector for.

In their tries to escape into transient dreams of better times and pray for the revival of First World problems, Tom held *Julius Caesar* in his hands and mimed classes of the past. Classes, he'd proudly taught over the years.

His light source each evening was gifted through the tiny effort of lifting ever so slightly, the corner of the draping. It was the only positive relationship the man had with the night.



Having edged towards their dark destiny, the young were no longer treated as innocent and full of vigour. Just unreservedly lost.

Conceived in a free-for-all of reckless and insatiable greed, they'd failed to satisfy their hunger. It'd offered an entire generation of unfulfilled potential and lost ambition, the cruel absence of meaning.

In a post-fall grassland, a geometric collage formed of a 747 had fallen from the sky. The artist wasn't pretentious, but rather misguided.

The new installation at this open field gallery was part of the global *End Days* exhibition. The rot that had already set in, suggested that it'd been running for at least several years.

Movement at this stoic site was only found when two young stragglers emerged from the trees after a long haul trek.

Gavin James, a sixteen-year-old Caucasian, had gestured to Utari Kami, his twelve-year-old companion from Indonesia, to wait outside while he entered the wreckage.

Standing mute, she held her small suitcase with a teddy bear keychain attached to the handle. It was a novelty of comfort for the soul of an adolescent, who since her infancy, lived with a mental condition.

In the same vein, her protector laboured to fight off overwhelming fears about the seconds that lied ahead, craving items of sustenance along with the memories he'd lost through trauma.



In all of this deranged haze, a minority of people believed in another form of perseverance.

They'd wanted so desperately to seek contentment following the dark paths imposed upon them, so that they, too, could withdraw from this poor excuse of a civilisation and leave with whatever peace they could salvage, sewn to their minds.

Across the waters of the North Sea, a funeral parade sailed with stacks of handmade coffins. They were accompanied by their mourners, who'd set out with the solemn purpose of sending the departed away with the last shreds of dignity.

On the deck of dead cargo, the dreadlocks of Layla Powell frolicked in the sea breeze.

In her forty-fourth year, she'd yet to abscond from the war of a life that even before the fall of order, had suffered immeasurable hardships from an early age.

A veteran in the volatile game of psychological struggle, she'd found herself arriving at the ultimate crossroads in her life. A choice to either sink or swim.



For many others, the decision was simpler. Whether weak, tired or hopeless, each one had given in.

Baring the dread of future resolve, they'd embraced the overwhelming circumstance to confront their endgame.

However, some of these troubled spirits roamed with only the guilt on their conscience, free to violate any moment of rest. An abiding damnation for their misdeeds.

On the lower decks of the funeral sea parade, Jared Thomas felt fifty-nine was the right number. A feeling he felt for each passing year and consistently so.

His mouth was wide open, ready to drink from a barrel. As for the metal taste, it'd become uninspired like a plain cold porridge enclosed in a morning chore.

He sat barefooted with his big toe on the trigger, twitching in the chill of doubt, and although the sequence was familiar and the narrative was the same, up until this point, he'd failed to reach the reveal.

Surrounded by an array of company in wooden casings, the pressure was always peak, even with an audience of silent flesh. Particularly one with whom he'd shared a history.



While others contemplated, the twisted were optimistic, enraptured by the prospect of the fallen world bestowing upon them the dark delights.

With the floodgates officially open, no law of man could dissuade one's barbarity. The monitors of self-control had been stripped away and trashed for the sake of a warped and liberated mind.

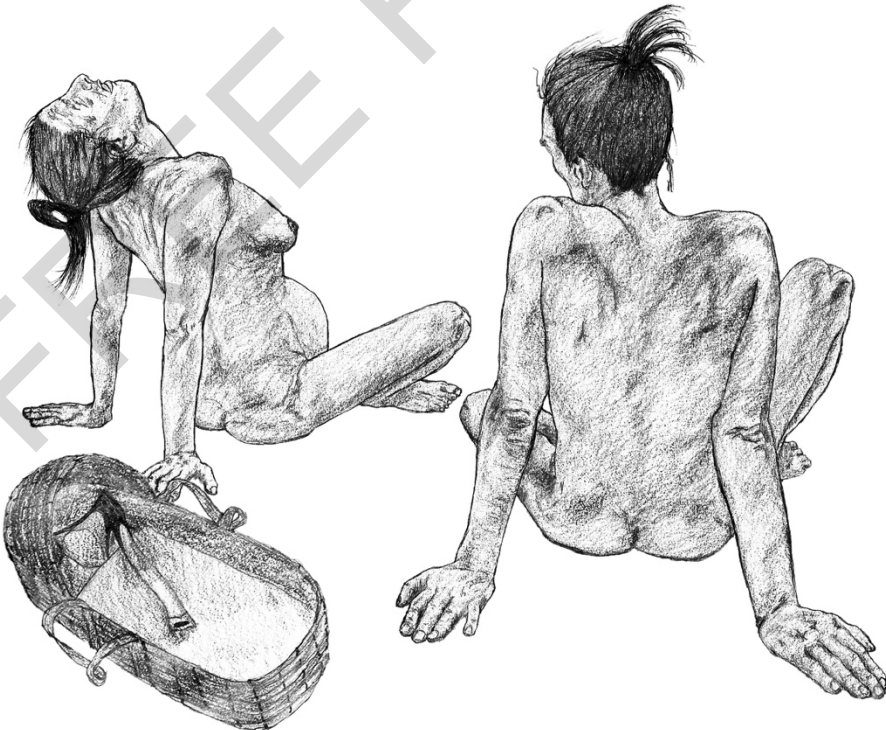
The lone house narrowly standing in a farm village, sheltered the twins. They sat on the peeled lino floor of the kitchen with their backs resting against the saucepan cupboard, encapsulated by the frayed décor of the '90s.

It was the same space where they'd played when their father slow danced with their mother while the potatoes boiled.

But at twenty-five, the siblings were now watching two sets of dangling feet move to a different tune.

This final soiree encircled a couple of Wellington boots coated in earth and seasoned with manure. They'd been hanging next to a pair of lemon chiffon sandals, where one barely clung to the left foot.

While Hattie Webb held her swollen belly, her twin brother, Henry chaperoned her hand with his. Almost in trance, they gazed at the sight of their parent's last dance.



Searching for those adrift in the sea of man's apocalypse, a handful were holding on to what had been considered a punchline to the bleakest of jokes. Hope.

Battle-worn and duly tested, these few had endured the depravity of sick strangers cloaked under helpless faces.

Overcoming insurmountable odds, these hopefuls trudged with fixated aim. An aim compounded by sacred ties and the honour of nurturing.

The wasteland that was once a pasture, played host to both a decayed bovine and the violinist from a thousand volcanic islands, who still had plenty of tears in reserve.

Twenty-eight-year-old, Angela Kami sat outside her tent with a violin in hand. She performed a closing fiddle of the evening to the vision of a daughter whom she believed still lived.

Beside her wearied form was her detached prosthetic right leg, decorated with an explosive not yet tested.

It was a concern that for some time had weighed heavy on the mind. But none more so than the fate of her only child.



Months following the national revolt, the reputation of the Liberation Zone had swiftly eradicated.

The former nerve centre of rebellion, hope and sanctuary, had become infamous for the real-world reconstructions of the darkest corners of their collective thoughts and impulses. A nest for the scared, hateful and aimless.

Located in an area around the greater west of what was known as London, Sofia Rusev was twenty-nine and remembered Bulgaria.

As she clutched on to the memories of regret, a man known to be part of the gang called the Zoners, spat on his hand and massaged his penis till it stood erect.

He was ready to disturb this natural beauty's thoughts of her birth home, and return her to the ramshackle launderette of the Zone.

On the floor nearby, a grimy plastic carrier bag had been lying with a tabloid magazine half out. The cover was worn and the colours had seen better days.

As for the woman centred on it, she was once a reality television personality, who now gave her body to the night, because as much as she wanted to, she was terrified of plunging a knife into her own heart.



FREE PREVIEW

PROLOGUE

In some capacity, they were once civilised. Once peaceful.
But now they know, they were just tolerating each other.
Waiting.

Some years ago...

School children at their designated tablet devices, sat in awe as a repulsive video streamed across their holographic screens.

It was the rape of a woman. The trend of the time, where numerous versions of these desecrations were being performed, documented and exhibited on a platform accessible to billions.

Meanwhile, a band of masked youths had decided to abort a child of whom its mother had been carrying in her womb. A classic hit-and-run, where a twenty-two-week-old in utero was denied entry to the world.

Just days out, a misunderstood, generally ignored and unemployed man, marched into a London Airport strapped with the bad fireworks.

He'd invited hundreds of the unsuspecting to experience the celebration of a furious deafening inferno. His prime motivation, disillusionment.

That same week, a post-graduate wanting to break the ice at his new job, decided to show some of his colleagues a short excerpt that a friend of a friend had shared.

It was a piece of user-generated content. An interview with a British-Somali man, who'd been holding a blood-soaked knife in the middle of a street.

Unfazed, both hands were drenched in the arterial juice of the dead body lying on the road behind him.

As for the victim, he was later discovered to be a soldier of the British army. A pure coincidence turned into another meal for a credulous and paranoid world.

The instances were many and came at a consecutive rate. But even after months and years of analysis, not one event could be singled out as the point in time in which their world had elected this darkness to power.

It appeared to be an interconnected series of incidents that had sparked trends and ripples, taking advantage of their sheep-like follow the herd nature.

A scent in the air had developed into a potent fume, where they were becoming desperate to mean something. To expose and leave their mark, doing away with public anonymity, compassion and human decency.

Perhaps one of the more influential moments, due to its unsurprisingly high viewership, was the leaked taping of a popular television talent show, where a man had concluded his audition with a smile of pride and naivety.

The revelation had only dawned on him when the laughter that poured from the three judges at the table in front, were actually convulsions aimed to ridicule him.

What shocked viewers most of all, wasn't the man's absence of anger, but the pitiful desperation to continue being part of the format. A format largely designed to mock the vulnerable and brand it as entertainment.

This rang true when the man removed his right shoe, peeling off the sole to detach a blade wrapped with duct tape for handling purposes.

Dropping to his knees, the man begged the judges to say *yes*, just two times. But little did he know, that two-thirds of the judges had next to no credibility in the very arts sector they were passing judgement in.

As security edged forward, the man received only a hushed silence from the trio of assessors, before giving in to his closed mind and running the blade firmly across his throat for a crimson curtain call.

After a generic news cycle, the show was renewed for another three

seasons and drew its highest ratings.

Perhaps the early indicators of the end times were not birthed in these later events. But were rather the symptoms of a fundamental flaw in the human condition.

If history had marked anything, it was the centuries of fires in the developing states around the globe, that had provided powerful whispers as to where they were heading.

The years of colonialism and enslavement of entire races of people. The social and political vacuums left by invading nations. The increasing disparity between the rich and the poor. The misuse of power and more.

If this was true, then the First World had fair warning. They'd ascended to heights in all facets of free enterprise, and it was only a matter of time until their industrialised empires would experience the greatest fall, taking down with it, their entire world.

Whether nature or man-made, the civil meltdown had provided the groundwork for humanity to wipe each other out, leaving behind questions.

Would a new world be born, remodelled and repeated? Or would this serve the few who'd survived, with the ultimate humbling experience?

FREE PREVIEW





FOREVER 8

Present day...

It was on instinct that he navigated between buildings and sprinted across unknown streets, carrying his daughter in his arms.

They hadn't run for weeks, but he was always suspecting it would happen. It's why he'd rehearsed every move in his head for one fluid sequence to ensure his child's escape.

Everything they had was each other and on each other. In the large backpack he carried and the smaller backpack she wore, they held the sleeping bags, the tent, the last of the salvaged food, spare clothes and other miscellaneous items key to their survival.

Not having shaved for weeks, the frizzy growth under Arav's jaw brushed against his daughter's head in rhythm with his abrupt pace.

Instructed as always, she pressed her face against her father's body and felt the pulsation build.

In between a couple of more derelict blocks that were once businesses, Arav and his little girl shot through with minor wind resistance before merging onto another street with no name.

Trashcan fires lit the new urban terrain, where a scarce number of street

residents provided cadaverous shadows that fused into sedated movements for a chilling scenic evasion.

As Arav looked back, he saw the two teenaged boys relentless in their pursuit. One with a hood over his head and the other sporting a cap. They were cycling on their BMX bikes, peddling revolutions at a blistering rate with predatory intent.

Breathing hard and fast, a light wheezing developed in Arav. When it became audible, it prompted his child to look up at him before being reminded otherwise.

He could see in the faint distance ahead, a possible gap. Perhaps an alley. But with multiple streams of thought plundering his mind, one objective remained formidable. To get her safe.

If the gap was there and it was in fact an alley, he would question if there was an exit. But the situation demanded a hasty decision. Especially with the scavengers closing behind.

Looking at it rationally, logic taught him that running straight would only give ample time for his chasers to close the gap and have their way.

What Arav knew for sure was the advantage of turning sharp corners. It would slow the pace of the juveniles for a moment, losing time in regaining their momentum. As opposed to Arav, who'd likely drop speed for just a few brief seconds before picking it back up.

Before he could make a decision as close to conscious, his body made the turn and the alley was the new course. But even with their distance increased, the unknown still remained. Was there an exit?

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