

# THE DYING TIMES: NADENE'S STORY

THE SURVIVOR CHRONICLES: BOOK #1



BY BRIAN KITTRELL





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*First Edition*

Special Thanks to my good friend  
Dawn Mays for proofreading.

***For Elizabeth***

*You are always at my side.*



What others are saying:

*“This book is a genuine masterpiece of this type of genre...You won't be disappointed.”*

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*“I hope he will keep writing and developing his skills as he does have a talent for storytelling.”*

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[Additional quotes from secured reviews will appear in this space]

*Chapter 1* from  
*The War of the Dead: Andy's Story*,  
the next book in the series by Brian Kittrell,  
is included at the end of this book.



## CHAPTER 1

*November, 2013*

NADENE STEPPED UP onto the narrow stairs of the school bus and looked back past her shoulder-length brown hair to her mother. She smiled. She was halfway through the school year, and everything was going fine. She had good grades – better than the rest of the seventh grade class. Her mother tutored her in the morning and on the weekends, whenever her restrictive schedule would allow. Nadene's mother, Pamela, worked the night shift at the local diner to pay the bills since Nadene's father, James, sought a divorce last August. Now he lives with his new wife in a big, fancy house across town, leaving Pamela and Nadene to fend for themselves.

They didn't mind much; Pamela was a happier woman for the separation. She no longer had to worry about James's infidelity or

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his never being around. She no longer had to sit up late at night crying to herself while her world was crashing down around her, and her marriage was falling apart. Pamela felt a sense of liberation in knowing the truth – James had been unfaithful, and now he was gone. Nadene was doing well despite the circumstances. Her grades fell sharply during the divorce, but she was back on track and doing better than ever in school.

The bus slowly lurched forward. Pamela waved to Nadene with a quiet smile on her face which reflected the deep satisfaction of seeing her child succeeding and growing up, as if she could see a bright future through the fog that had not yet been fully revealed. Nadene waved back with her lunch box in hand and took a seat next to her friend, Sally.

Sally was Nadene's best friend – they sat together at lunch, they shared the same teachers and classes, and they enjoyed each other's company between classes and during and after school activities. Sally was tall for her age, with light blue eyes that mirrored Nadene's while having long, flowing blond hair, whereas Nadene had dark brown hair – both her eye

color and hair color being inherited from her mother, Pamela. Sometimes, Nadene would go over to Sally's house after school, on nights when Pamela had to go in to work earlier than usual. Pamela never approved of Nadene being left by herself, even though she was approaching fourteen now.

The bus growled to a halt outside of Grand Bay Middle School. James and Pamela originally moved to Grand Bay because the school system was top-notch, housing prices were reasonable, and the local crime rate was very low compared to Pittsburgh, where James originally grew up, and Baltimore, where Pamela was raised. It seemed to be a great place to raise a child and start a family, especially for James, who was employed by a big-name oil company that operated in the Gulf of Mexico.

Pamela decided to stay in Grand Bay even with the divorce because Nadene liked the area so much – for Nadene, the Mobile-area of Alabama was *home*. Pamela could have easily returned to the Baltimore estate of her parents and lived in the lap of luxury, but she didn't want that for her daughter; Pamela didn't want her daughter to grow up spoiled by great

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wealth. Pamela's parents were rich, but they weren't rich while Pamela was growing up; she felt it was best for her daughter to experience normal living – not too rich, not too poor – to give her a balanced outlook on life, even though their current conditions were starting to deteriorate towards the poverty line.

The day started with English class, Mrs. Owens presiding. She had a certain way of turning the study of nouns, verbs, and adjectives into a truly fun and exciting experience. The class played word games and practiced public speaking on an almost-daily basis. After English came the dreaded Mr. Redfern's mathematics dungeon. Every kid hated math class because of Mr. Redfern's teaching methods. He taught elementary math like a college professor – he started writing notes at the beginning of class and continued writing until the end of class, hardly explaining anything, and then finally issuing a homework assignment that would make a career mathematician blush. Relief, in the form of lunch, came around 11:30 a.m..

Nadene and Sally always sat together at lunch. Nadene pulled out the peanut butter and jelly sandwich and the thermos of apple juice

from her lunch box. The two girls ate lunch and chatted as they had every other lunch time. Suddenly, the school bell started ringing in sequence, indicating a fire alarm.

Mr. Redfern and Mrs. Owens stood up and walked over to the lunch table.

“Everyone stand up and form a line. It's a fire alarm, no pushing,” signaled Mrs. Owens.

The children stood up and began forming a makeshift line at the door of the cafeteria. Nadene and Sally held each other's hand – they didn't want to get separated, and they were very scared of the possibility of a fire in the school. No matter how many times the fire drills were done, both of the girls became nervous and edgy. They walked in line to the outside courtyard, through the soccer field, to the bleachers on the farthest side of the school's property.

When they reached the edge of the field, the Grand Bay fire engines came around the corner, screaming with sirens. A small pillar of smoke could be seen rising from the cafeteria area. Nadene gripped Sally's hand tightly from all the commotion.

“Ouch!” yelled Sally.

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"Sorry... I just get nervous sometimes..." Nadene said, releasing Sally's hand.

"It's okay. I get scared, too," said Sally.

The firemen made their way into the school as flames rose up from the roof near the cafeteria.

"It doesn't look like a drill this time, Bill," said Mrs. Owens to Mr. Redfern.

"No, it doesn't, Joyce," he replied, turning towards the children. "Everyone go ahead and have a seat on the bleachers," he commanded.

The children clamored over the bleachers trying to find a seat that would suit them and where they could still see the action at the school. Nadene and Sally sat on a quieter side of the bleachers, away from the shouting, pushing, and commotion.

A sudden howling sound was heard in the distance that turned into the whining of a siren. The weather warning system was activated. The teachers looked around in confusion – the sky was blue, the sun was out, and there was hardly a cloud to be found. Mr. Redfern looked at his watch and smirked, "It's the monthly test, no need to get alarmed." It was the first day of November at noon – the sirens were set off on

the first of the month at midday as a test of the emergency warning system.

"I don't feel so good," said Nadene, clutching her stomach. "I feel sick."

"Naddy, it's just your nerves. It will be over soon. No need to worry," said Mrs. Owens, overhearing the two girls. Mrs. Owens pulled a strip of cloth from her purse and wet it from the water faucet sticking out of the ground near the bleachers. Placing it on Nadene's head, she said "You'll feel better soon. Let's cool you off a little."

After what seemed like forever, the principal came walking out towards the field. He spoke to the teachers as school buses started pulling up to the side of the field. When they were finished, Mrs. Owens said, "Since the fire damaged the school and the smoke is in the hallways and most classrooms, we will be sending everyone home on the bus."

The children loaded themselves onto the waiting buses, and they pulled out onto the road away from the school.

"I don't feel right, Sally," Nadene said, still rubbing her stomach. "Something isn't right."

"Naddy, it's over now, we're going home."

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"It's not that, it's something else. I don't know what it is, I just don't feel right."

Nadene had feelings like this that she couldn't explain from time to time. These unexplainable feelings of dread deep in her stomach seemed to come before something bad happened. She was even more confused now, though; she felt the pains *after* the fire instead of before. *Maybe they don't mean anything*, she told herself. *Maybe it is just my nerves.*

The bus arrived at Sally's house. Sally stood up and walked into the aisle. "Why don't you come over to my house for now, Naddy? My mom can fix you something to make you feel better. Your mom probably isn't home yet anyway. It'll be fun."

Nadene nodded and agreed. She stood up slowly and walked into the aisle, following Sally.

Sally's parents had a big house in one of the fancy neighborhoods uptown in Grand Bay. Sally's father, Robert, was a doctor at the largest hospital in town, and Sally's mother, Haley, had a small real estate business while she watched the children. Sally was the oldest and had two younger brothers. Jared, who was five, and Robert, Jr., who would be one next Saturday.

Haley was usually relieved when Sally and Nadene came home from school together, as it was a time when Haley could relax a little more and have some help from the two girls in watching and tending to the boys.

Today, though, Nadene didn't feel much like playing with the boys. She had no time to express her concerns to Sally's mother – Sally had run into the house moments before to brief Haley of Nadene's newly-developed illness.

“I have something that will fix you right up, Naddy. I will get it ready for you. Go out in the lounge and relax in the air conditioning, and I'll bring it to you,” Haley ordered.

Nadene went into the lounge to relax as best she could. The pains were starting to throb and were becoming much more frequent. She laid across the lounge chair in anguish.

Sally watched her little brothers while Haley brought some pills and a glass of strawberry soda to Nadene in the lounge. Haley handed the pills and the drink to Nadene.

“What are these? I've never seen an aspirin like this before,” Nadene asked.

“It's called Midol, Naddy. It will help with the cramping and the pains. Just give it a little

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while and relax. Take a nap if you want. It's been a long day," Haley replied with a smile.

After a while, the pains subsided, and Nadene drifted into a nap. She began to dream of far away places, of strange, interesting people, and of great cities. She laughed and played through the streets of the great cities, smiling and giggling with the people outside. Suddenly, though, the sky turned dark, as if a storm had rolled in. Flames began to lick the clouds. She turned and looked at the faces of the people, and they had changed. What were once cheerful, happy faces were now transformed into hideous monstrosities that had lost their human demeanor. They were covered in torn flesh with gnashing black teeth, and they chased Nadene. They tore at her dress and tried to grab her. She woke up covered with sweat, and she began to cry.

Haley ran into the room and knelt down beside Nadene. "What's wrong, Naddy?" she asked. Without a word, Nadene grabbed Haley around the neck and hugged her. "It was just a dream, Miss Nelson. It just seemed so real. *So real...*" Nadene said, still frightened.

Haley hugged Nadene for a long time and finally said, "Why don't we get something to eat? I fixed some pork chops with applesauce glaze. Come on, let's have some dinner."

Nadene held Haley's hand all the way to the kitchen. The smell of baked apples and steamed vegetables flooded the air. Nadene's mood was suddenly lifted. Her stomach grumbled, but this time it was from being hungry. She had very little of her sandwich at lunch before the fire alarm, and she hadn't had an afternoon snack due to the pains.

Haley carefully prepared Nadene's plate and placed it on the kitchen table. Nadene tried to maintain some composure, but it was difficult. She was starving. She gobbled up the food and laid back with a full feeling.

Haley switched on the small television in the kitchen and leaned over the counter to watch the evening news. The day had drawn to a close, and the sun was setting. Nadene went over to the kitchen phone and dialed her home number. *No answer.* She dialed the diner where her mother worked. *No answer.* Nadene called her house again and left a message, that she was staying over at Sally's house and about what

happened at school. Nadene started wondering to herself, *Surely momma had heard about the fire at school. Why hasn't she called looking for me?*

Nadene hung up the phone and walked over to the counter to join Haley and Sally. The news was talking about a war between some warlords in Africa.

"What are *biological* weapons?" Nadene asked Haley, having a little trouble repeating the word.

"They make people sick, Naddy. They spread the flu or chicken pox, or whatever else they can put in the bombs."

"Why would anyone make a bomb like that?"

"I don't know, honey. It doesn't make sense to me, either, but there are evil men in the world who would want to hurt people however they can find a way," Haley said.

"I think that's dumb to make a bomb that makes people sick," Sally commented.

"I do, too, honey. I wish they didn't make bombs at all, but biological bombs are the worst ones of all," Haley said.

They continued watching the news. There was a lot of talk about this warlord threatening

one thing, the other one saying another, and the United Nations condemning all of it. The news said that the United States was sending an aircraft carrier and a task force to the region to stabilize the situation.

“Why are we getting involved in this?” Haley said in a disappointed tone. “We are always getting involved in things that don't involve us.” She looked at her two sons playing in the applesauce that they had been served for dinner with a concerned look. “I hope that *they* get things under control before my boys get old enough. I don't want *my* kids dying in some pointless war...” she said and paused. “I'm sorry, girls. I didn't mean to ramble on.”

Haley's brother had been killed overseas before she and Robert were married. She always blamed the politicians for it, and she didn't trust the government anymore. She always made comments to Sally about “Uncle Billy”, that she wished he had been there at the wedding, that he had been there to meet his nieces and nephews, or that he had a chance to make a family and a life for himself.

Haley's eyes teared up for a moment, and she looked away from the two girls. “I'm sorry,

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sometimes I just start rambling on about how crazy the world is. I just wish things were different."

Sally walked over and hugged Haley. "I know, momma. It's not always easy."

Haley petted Sally's head and nodded. She began clearing off the kitchen table. "I have to get the boys cleaned up and put to bed. Why don't you stay over, Naddy? I'm sure your mom won't mind. I don't want you to go home and be by yourself."

Nadene nodded. She went into the bathroom to change for bedtime. Nadene had a spare set of pajamas at Sally's house just for these occasions. She changed into her pajamas, went into Sally's room, and hopped into the bottom bunk bed.

Sally leaned over the side of the top bunk and gave Nadene an upside-down smile.

"G'nite, Naddy," she said.

"G'nite, Sally," Nadene replied. Soon, the girls were off to sleep.

## CHAPTER 2

**N**ADENE WOKE UP RATHER SUDDENLY from Sally shaking her. “Naddy, wake up!”

In a daze, Nadene sat up in the bed, the bed sheets around her legs covered in blood. She gasped in shock, holding her blood-covered hands up in the dim light in front of her. Sally ran out of the room and retrieved her mother.

Haley returned with Sally and looked over the bottom bunk. She reached down and hugged Nadene and said, “It’s okay, Naddy. Everything is fine, everything is fine.”

“It’s not fine. There’s blood everywhere,” Nadene said, still shocked somewhat by all of the blood.

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"Nothing is wrong with you, Naddy. It's completely normal," Haley said, trying to comfort Nadene.

"Mom talked about a change that I should be expecting, but I didn't think it'd be anything like this," Nadene replied.

Haley held Nadene closely for a while, then she took Nadene by the shoulders and stroked her forehead. She explained, as she had explained to Sally, about that certain time each month that happens to girls, and that it starts happening when young girls reach Nadene's age. Nadene's look of shock turned to a more calm demeanor as Haley's explanation continued. Haley took Nadene to the bathroom and helped her get cleaned up and changed into a different set of pajamas.

"You'll also start needing these," Haley said, holding out a paper wrapper. She demonstrated how to use it with the instructions on the package. "It will help keep 'accidents' like these from happening. You can use some of Sally's until you get home and we can explain to your mom what is going on."

"Has momma called?"

“Yes, she called a little while ago. I explained what all was going on with the school and with you. She apologized for not being able to call from work. She was too busy to call. She said she received a call from the school, but that everyone had been sent home safely. She assumed you were at home, so she called a couple of times when things weren't as hectic, but she had only a little time to make phone calls.”

“When is she coming home?” Nadene asked.

“She said she would be home in the morning. She has to pull a double today, so she might not be back home until around nine or ten tomorrow morning. It's late, now, Naddy. I will change the sheets and make the bed again for you. Go to the kitchen and have a glass of milk. It always helps me.”

Nadene went to the kitchen and poured a glass of milk. After a couple of sips, she heard the front door open and close, and a few heavy footsteps on the wooden floor right inside the house.

“Hello?” beckoned Nadene into the darkness. “Who's there?”

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No one replied. All she could hear were footsteps coming down the wooden floor towards the kitchen. Robert Nelson stepped around the corner, and Nadene made a small gasp, then felt relieved when she recognized Sally's father.

"Hey, there, Nadene. I didn't know you were staying over. Why is everyone up at this hour? It's nearly four in the morning," he said.

Not wanting to reveal anything *delicate*, Nadene simply said, "I had a bad dream. It's my fault, Mr. Nelson. I was just having a glass of milk to calm myself down." A lie, but a necessary one in Nadene's opinion.

"Oh, I see. Well, I just got home from the hospital, so I hope you won't mind if I watch a bit of the news and have a bite to eat?" he asked with a smile.

"It's your place, do what you want," Nadene said back with a smile.

Robert was a tall, slender man in his early thirties, a resident emergency room doctor at the Grand Bay Memorial Hospital, and quite a handsome man as the average goes. He was still in the final years of medical school when he and Haley were married and had Sally. He was still

wearing his hospital scrubs when he arrived home to eat supper and catch some sleep before his next shift in the morning.

Robert turned on the television and the screen was filled with information about the situation in Africa.

“It looks like your school is closed tomorrow,” said Robert, pointing to a scrolling marquee across the bottom of the screen. Sometimes the local news would hijack a small portion of the TV screen to broadcast local happenings. “There was a fire today?” he asked with a mouth half-full of leftover pork chops.

Nadene nodded and indicated that no one was hurt. Robert acknowledged this information and continued watching the news. The late night news anchor was talking about the situation in Africa.

*“...It is still unclear as to the intentions of the Zaire Liberation Front and General Mumbatu. They have threatened both the United States and the government of Zaire with biological weapons if either government attempts to disrupt activities in their training camps. The USS John C. Stennis task group is approaching the African coastline. We will*

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*keep you informed as we receive more information on this ongoing situation."*

Robert continued watching the news program. Nadene stood up and walked off so as not to interrupt him. She returned to Sally's room where Haley was just finishing up making the bed.

"All done, Naddy. Sweet dreams, hon. I'm going back to bed." Haley kissed both girls on the tops of their heads and walked back out towards her bedroom.

The two girls talked briefly about a girl's 'special time of the month' until both of them fell back to sleep again.

\* \* \*

Nadene awoke with a feeling of refreshment. She quickly checked the sheets again and felt quite relieved when they were still crisp and clean. She laid back in the bed and made herself comfortable – the kind of comfort everyone feels from laying in the bed after waking up, before getting up and having to rush off to the day's activities.

It was 9:00 a.m. She was not accustomed to waking up this late on a Friday. Usually, she would be in Mrs. Owen's classroom by now hearing about the wonders of the English language. Not today, though. Her mind was awash with memories of the fire from the day before at the cafeteria, the bad feelings in her stomach, the bad dreams, and the fears she had almost the entire day yesterday. She got out of bed and wandered towards the kitchen.

Haley was up cooking breakfast. Eggs, bacon, and pancakes would be the fare of the morning. Nadene followed the scent to the kitchen.

"Good morning, sleepy-head," Haley called out to Nadene. "It looks like you're finally able to join us this morning."

Nadene made a grumbling sound and joined Sally and the boys at the kitchen table. She began toying with the eggs and pancakes on her plate, taking small nibbles from different items as it suited her. The news was tuned to the same station as last night and blared the ongoing drama into the morning air.

*"...The government of Zaire and of the United States have made a resolution to stop the Zaire*

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Liberation Front *from continuing its terrorist activities in the region. In a statement earlier to the press, the President stated, "We will not stand idly by while a group of terrorists threatens world peace, especially with biological weapons. We cannot stand by and do nothing while an enemy of peace is threatening genocide."*

Nadene looked up from her eggs and over at Sally. She saw Sally concentrating on the television as the news was repeating those words. Nadene looked over to Haley and remembered what happened last night and the sadness she saw in Haley's eyes when she was talking about her brother Billy. Now, though, it was only a blank stare, as if it was unbelievable.

*"...The President has just released information to us that the USS John C. Stennis has begun surgical air strikes in southeastern Zaire. It is believed by the military that these are the missile bases where General Mumbatu has been storing his biological weapons. We take you now to Wallace Hoskin, somewhere off the coast of west Africa."*

The news station flashed over to the scene of an aircraft carrier with planes being launched from the deck behind a small-framed woman frantically holding her petticoat around herself.

*As you can see behind me, the navy jets are taking off, en route to their missions in southeastern Zaire at this time. Wait...*

She placed her hand up to her ear closely, trying to listen to her ear piece.

*"We are receiving reports from the captain that rockets are being fired from the central-western part of Zaire. It is not clear at this time if the rockets are from the Zaire government or –"*

Suddenly, the screen went black, then flashed to a red and white screen displaying "NAWAS – National Warning System" in a plain type with a monotonous tone sound.

"We are sorry to interrupt the regularly scheduled program with an important announcement," stated the television.

Everyone in the room stopped eating their breakfast and began watching the television. After a few moments, the President appeared on the screen in the Situation Room of the White House.

*"My fellow Americans, I come to you today to warn you of the possibility of a biological attack on the United States by the Zaire Liberation Front, a terrorist group that many of you have been following through the media for the past few weeks. Yesterday,*

*this terrorist group threatened the release of biological weapons on the United States if we and the government of Zaire did not yield to their demands. The United States will not negotiate with terrorists, and we will continue to ensure world peace. We will not be held hostage by tyrants and warlords. We are unsure as of this moment whether or not the missiles that have been acquired by these terrorists have the capability of reaching the continental United States. General Cormac will be able to comment on that issue when he has completed his briefing with military intelligence. I am also issuing an executive order mandating all media stations to remain locked on the emergency broadcast system until this incident has been fully resolved, and we will maintain a state of martial law, effective immediately. I will now turn the podium over to the Surgeon General, Dr. Westerfield. Dr. Westerfield?"*

The President walked away from the podium and out of the side door amidst a bombardment of camera flashes and questions from the press staff that he did not answer. Dr. Westerfield stood up and walked over to the podium with a stack of papers in his hand.

*“Good morning. We have been studying the Zaire terrorists for some time in various circles of our government. We believe the most probable agent that they will be using in the missiles is called Ebola. The symptoms of the Ebola virus are comparable to the flu, malaria, or dysentery, and may resemble these diseases if it is contacted. The best advice we can give is to stay in your homes, lock your doors, and maintain an independent water supply and food supply by filling sinks and bathtubs with fresh water and rationing your current food supplies. The Ebola virus is not airborne, and is delivered via an aerosol-type gelatin mist delivery system. The Ebola virus can remain active in or on exposed water, food, and surfaces for several days. We recommend closing off all doors and windows and sealing any obvious openings in your home with wet towels to reduce the possibility of infection. We recommend you do not attempt to go to shopping centers or stores at this time, as the missiles will only take moments to arrive. I will now turn the podium over to General Cormac who will give you some information regarding the situation.”*

Dr. Westerfield scurried away from the podium as rapidly as he could. Again, the press fired questions and snapped photos of another

official who did not acknowledge them. A highly-decorated four-star general stood before the waiting journalists and the eyes of a nation in the grip of fear.

*“I am General Cormac of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I have been asked to brief you on our contingency plan for this attack and the steps that will follow after the attack has been completed. Firstly, we have just identified the missiles that have been launched from Zaire as the Dnepr mobile launch vehicle based on the Soviet SS-18 'Satan' ICBM. It has a range of approximately 11,000 to 16,000 kilometers, which places the entire eastern seaboard well within its range. It is still unclear as to how these missiles were obtained, although it is well-known that they were converted for commercial use for launching civilian satellites. Using information from the original ICBMs, these missiles have the capability of dropping around seven to ten multiple independent re-entry vehicles – which means that you have one warhead through launch until the target is reached, then the missile splits off into seven to ten separate warheads that fall to their targets.”*

*“Information is hazy at this point as to what is inside the warheads, but, as Dr. Westerfield said, we*

*believe them to contain the Ebola virus in a gelatin-mist delivery system. We have already launched a missile attack to counter these missiles, and we will report on the effectiveness of this counter attack when we have those details. We are counting four missiles inbound to the eastern United States at this time, and we believe the most probable targets to be New York, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and Miami according to the current trajectories."*

The general turned a page on his papers and stood there, quietly reading the information for a few moments.

*"It is estimated at this time that approximately 40 million citizens will be effected in some way by this attack on the Atlantic coastline. It is imperative to stay in your homes or secure yourselves in your place of work. Attempting to flee the major cities and being in the open air will only increase your risk of being infected by the biological agents."*

The general finished his statement, gathered his papers together, and walked away from the podium. An intermediary White House staff member walked up to the podium and began reading a canned statement that summarized what all had been said. He ended his statement with, *"We will now begin replaying the past few*

*minutes of news coverage on all stations until we have further information to report."*

Nadene turned around and noticed that Haley was no where to be found. She went towards the back of the house where she heard running water. Turning the corner into the guest bathroom, Nadene saw Haley filling the bathtub.

"We have to get ready if we're going to survive this. There's no telling where those rockets are going. Even if they do hit the northeast, it could still get into our water," Pamela said frantically. "We have to get ready. Naddy, watch this tub and turn it off when its full. I have to call Robert."

Haley ran out of the bathroom towards the kitchen. Nadene continued to watch the bathtub and make sure it didn't overflow. The gravity of what was going on still had not set in fully to Nadene. The information presented by everyone on the television was confusing. *How is a thirteen-year-old girl suppose to know about ICBMs and virus bombs?* she thought to herself.

The bathtub eventually filled up. It seemed to take forever, but the water finally rose to the lip of the porcelain. Nadene turned the water

spigot off and closed the glass sliding door. She returned to the kitchen to see Pamela walking back and forth in a frenzied state attempting to dial a number on her hand held phone.

"I can't get through to anyone! The lines are completely clogged up!" she screamed. She threw the phone down on the kitchen counter. Sally ran into the kitchen from the other side of the house.

"I'm almost finished filling up the plastic jugs and the bathtub in your bathroom, momma," Sally said with an eager look on her face. She was trying to help out as much as she could.

"Go around the house and check all the windows and make sure they're closed and locked," Pamela said. "Naddy, will you help Sally?"

Nadene nodded and went around with Sally inspecting all of the windows of the house. If there was a window open, they closed it and latched the lock.

"We have to make sure the windows are tightly closed, Naddy," said Sally with some sense of experience in the matter.

"How do you know that will even help? Have you had a virus bomb dropped on you before?" Nadene retorted.

"Daddy always said that. He said that the windows in the hospital are closed up tight to make sure the diseases don't spread all over the hospital or outside," Sally replied. "A virus is a disease, so it will help keep it out."

Nadene just stared at Sally. The surreal nature of the events transpiring around them were becoming difficult for her to bare. She didn't nod, she didn't shake her head, nor did she speak. She took solace in simply inspecting the windows as the two girls went along through the house. After a while, they arrived at the window they started at, and thus, they were finished. They returned to the kitchen.

Haley was still trying the phone with no luck.

"Why isn't the phone working, momma?" asked Sally.

"Everyone is on the phone right now trying to call their families, too, hon. The phones can't handle everyone in the country using it at the same time," Haley replied. "We'll just have to wait for our turn, I guess."

Haley continued trying to dial out on the phone while Nadene, Sally, and the two boys sat at the kitchen table watching a replay of the White House announcement. It had looped several times since they had first watched it. Nadene thought to herself. *I guess they have to keep playing it so everyone will get the news. I wish momma were here with us. I hope she's okay.*

The television announced in the same monotonous tone from earlier, "Please stand by for an important announcement." The same staffer was on the television, but this time he was by himself.

*"We regret to inform you that our attempts to intercept these incoming missiles have had only marginal success. We have stopped one missile over Africa and another was shot down in the eastern Atlantic; however, there are still more missiles coming, and it is the belief of the military that these missiles may not be able to be stopped. We are still attempting to shoot them down with every resource available in our arsenal. We will update you when we have more information on this developing situation."*

## THE DYING TIMES: NADENE'S STORY

*There's a chance, then, Nadene pondered. There's a chance that they will get them all. I hope they get them all.*

Suddenly, a thunderous roar was heard outside. Nadene and Sally immediately ran to the door, opened it, and ran outside, all the while Haley was yelling for them not to go out. The girls looked up at the sky and saw several white lines – rocket trails. One very long trail seemed to go as far as the eye could see from the shore, traveling behind a faint dot of light in the morning sky. The other clouds streaked across the long cloud. Then, the whole picture came into focus.

The one long cloud was a missile coming from Zaire. The other clouds were from missiles coming from the United States. They were trying to shoot it down. Several small flashes of light would appear at the ends of the shorter rocket trails – the interceptor missiles exploding – but the rocket kept flying towards its target, wherever that may be. Somewhere to the northeast.

“They keep missing it,” Haley said with a discouraged look on her face. She placed her arms around Nadene and Sally. “Let's go back

inside. There's no telling where it's going to go off, and we don't want to be outside when that happens."

They began walking back inside as the weather sirens began winding up in a long howl in the distance. They weren't warning anyone about weather, though; these were missile attack sirens, and the attack was on. Suddenly, an explosion echoed across the air – the missile was struck and burned brightly against the evening sunset. One more missile down, several more inbound.

Everyone gathered around the television again, waiting for some news as to what was going on out there. Finally, after a long wait, the television flashed with a special bulletin. This time, it was an army general at some military base.

*"This is General Anderson at the North American Aerospace Defense Command. We have attempted to intercept the remaining missiles inbound to the United States, but our interceptor missiles have failed. We have now confirmed detonations in the area of New York, Washington, D.C., central-southern Virginia, and southern Florida, including the areas of Fort Lauderdale*

*and Miami. The President, the Cabinet, and key government and military personnel will be arriving here at NORAD and at other installations for the preservation of our government during this crisis."*

*"At this point, we are insisting that everyone stay in your homes and wait out the virus. We will broadcast further information as we receive it. Anderson out."*

"So, this is what the government does when things get bad. They go tuck their tails and hide in their holes that millions of people like me had to pay for. Where is my hole in the ground that my family gets to hide in?" Haley said to the television in a cynical tone of voice.

Nadene looked up at Haley, but she couldn't find any words to comfort or console her. *What can you say to help after seeing all of this?* Nadene asked herself. She thought to herself for a while, every so often taking a glance to the television repeating General Anderson's last statement.

They sat still and quiet for a very long time, contemplating to themselves what all had occurred in such a short amount of time. The seconds turned to minutes, the minutes to hours, and, in what seemed like an instant, the sun began to set on the horizon. Still, General

Anderson's message was being repeatedly broadcasted.

"I guess I had better start supper in case Robert comes home earlier," Haley said with a sense of purpose. She began pulling out ground hamburger meat, some seasoning, and a pan. "What do you think tonight, girls? French fries or mashed potatoes?"

In the midst of all that was going on, Sally and Nadene simply stared at Haley, as if in a sort of shock. *She was asking if we wanted French fries or mashed potatoes during a missile attack, and millions of people were sick or dying?*

"Well?" asked Haley, demanding an answer to her previous question.

"French... fries... I guess..." said Sally in a slow voice.

Haley pulled the French fries from the freezer and turned the counter-top fryer on. She pulled parts of meat from the mound of ground hamburger, rolled them into meatballs, and began flattening and seasoning the patties.

The television flashed with the all-too-familiar "Please standby for an important announcement." Haley put the patty she was pressing on a plate with the others and wiped

her hand with a towel hanging from the dishwasher handle.

The President was on television again, this time in a makeshift office. He sat at a desk that appeared to have been made in the 1950s, with the American flag behind him – a faded flag with subdued colors. He held a stack of papers that had obvious scribbles of notes and comments on all sides of them. He began to speak.

*“My fellow Americans, we are receiving reports from all over the country that our information and intelligence on these missiles was incorrect. Medical facilities are reporting that this is not a strain of the Ebola virus. The symptoms are similar, but the virus is unknown to us. The doctor who discovered this information, Dr. Alfred Kemper, has created the name ‘Kemper-A virus’ for it until it can be compared against all known strains of viruses available to us. For the time being, we must make you aware that this virus is highly infectious through blood and fluid transmission. We are insisting that you not have any unnecessary contact with infected persons. The initial symptoms of the virus encompass all of the symptoms of the flu and can include other diseases. The virus is a known*

*immunity-inhibitor, meaning that it will make human beings less resistant to other diseases. The best advice we have is to remain inside your homes and places of business and do not let anyone that is showing symptoms of the virus to enter your safe place. We will be releasing the media stations to their regular broadcasting within the hour since the missile attack itself is over. God bless you all and good luck."*

"God bless and good luck," Haley said out loud in a sarcastic tone of voice. She shook her head. The television went black for a short time until it lit up with a scene of the news room with empty desks. After a few moments, some news anchors came out and sat down at the desks to begin reporting the information they were receiving.

*"We have been off the air for some time now, and we will begin reporting the news items as we receive them that pertain to this ongoing crisis. The first item that we have received is a record number of vehicle accidents on the interstates leading away from the affected cities. The only advice we can give at this time is that everyone remain inside your homes, and stay away from anyone showing signs of infection."*

## THE DYING TIMES: NADENE'S STORY

The television cut away to scenes of the highways outside the major eastern cities. Thousands of cars were lined up on the interstate out to the horizon. In some places, the cars were arranged in a variety of different ways while people were scrambling to find a way through the traffic. It was like a rope with hundreds of little kinks and tangles all the way through it, leading off into the sunset.

The camera zoomed in on different groups of people who were obviously arguing with each other, each one in turn demanding that someone move their car out of the way. All in all, it was a very large mess that had no semblance of order – a total and complete breakdown of society in the middle of the freeway.

Nadene sat and watched the television set. *They said to stay in our homes. They said we'd be safe there.* Nadene thought to herself. *If people would just do what they're told, they'd be better off. Why can't they listen to anybody?*

"I can't help but think of those people that got hit. What kind of misery has been let out in the cities? It's not going to stay there forever, either. No, it will spread everywhere. It will

come here. We have to get ready to leave," said Haley.

"Where will we go, momma? Will we go without daddy?" Sally asked. "I don't want to go without daddy."

Haley looked down at Sally and caressed the side of her face. "We won't leave without him."

Night crept over the landscape surrounding the house. It was still and silent outside with the light of a full moon glowing in the dark sky. The children sat at the table in the kitchen, watching Haley as she served the evening meal. Everyone was quiet, hardly able to speak after the day's events. The silence was broken by a loud banging on the door from outside.

Haley reached into a drawer and grabbed a small, 38-caliber revolver. "They better not want trouble. I've got plenty of trouble for them," Haley said as the banging continued.

She slowly approached the front door of the house with the revolver in hand. Pointing it at the door, she unlocked the dead bolt. Just as soon as she turned the knob, the door burst open and in fell Pamela.

"Pam?!" Haley shouted, half from fright and half from surprise.

"Yeah... close the door back..." she said, her voice ragged from fatigue.

Haley hurriedly closed the door and locked it back. She helped Pamela to her feet.

"Mommy?" inquired Nadene from down the hall. Nadene slowly walked down the hallway to where the two women were standing.

"Yeah, honey, it's me. I tried to get here as fast as I could. The roads are clogged with people trying to go west," Pamela replied.

Pamela dusted herself off from falling on a hardwood floor that had been neglected from being swept or mopped for a couple of days. Haley secreted the revolver away behind her back and placed it in her back pocket. *I'm too paranoid about all of this*, Haley thought to herself.

Haley helped Pamela to the kitchen table and prepared a plate. "Tell me what it's like out there, Pam."