

# *CHAPTER 5*

## *Nuclear War in 2008*

Vinni @ 48 returned to 2008 and V-41 slid back to 1994. The latest member of their team, Vinni @ 34, had begun his adventures and had passed through to 1987. An irreversible chain of time-altering events had been set into motion.

Vinni @ 48 was now sitting at the control panel of an elaborate network of computers researching the changes as they unfolded before his eyes, but because he had actually lived through it all, each change was complimented by a corresponding memory of normal everyday occurrences. The overwhelming sense of power and the ability to manipulate world events was beginning to enthrall him.

Suddenly and without warning, a bright red warning light on an

overhead terminal activity began to flash. Since that particular monitor tracked global nuclear weapons activity, Vinni was confused and very disturbed by the only conceivable probability. Moments later, an emergency siren near his secluded complex began to sound. "Oh, my God," he said in frightened astonishment, "this can't be happening!" He began flipping various switches to monitor a variety of screens, the same screens being observed by high-level military personnel in shelters around the country. "Oh, my God!"

He toggled several other switches to observe the displays on various public television stations. Emergency Broadcast System bulletins filled each and every screen. **"Move calmly and in an orderly fashion to the nearest fallout shelter in your area,"** one announcement declared.

"Shelter my ass," Vinni blurted in response. He flipped another switch to view several local security cameras that monitored the nearby community. People in the city streets were running ramped, clearly bemused and in disoriented confusion. In the distance, he saw the first nuclear missiles as they were launched from subsurface silos. He could only observe in utter astonishment as they pierced the ocean surface and began rocketing into the sky.

Another monitor that accessed the military's nuclear missile

tracking system began to look like a shower of colored streaks racing in an array of directions across the continents and throughout the globe. Another displayed live television coverage of utter chaos in the congested streets of major metropolitan cities like New York, Los Angeles and Paris. Colliding vehicles quickly created a collage of mangled steel that barricaded traffic on all roadways. Citizens of every nation were racing on foot around and over them in a distressing panic. People were running at a feverish pace with no real direction, each seeking their own warped vision of a means of potential escape.

"This just can't be happening, not now...not ever."

Vinni glared at the inconceivable menagerie of multiple warheads that began to shower out over the United States from each of the incoming missiles. Even in all of the confusion, he managed to note that only certain remote far-north regions in Alaska appeared to be the only locations on the planet that weren't directly targeted by the incoming strikes. Time, the one commodity he thought he had an unlimited supply of, was quickly running out. Within minutes the lethal weapons of mass destruction would begin pelting the surface like a shower of nuclear meteors. He continued to observe the melee as he backed toward the mirror and watched in terror as several incoming warheads appeared on the horizon near the

perimeter of his estate. Just as a bright flash filled the screen, he dived through the portal and into the pure spiritual silence of 2001.

He could only stare in amazement as the window to his world closed. In a fleeting moment, a wave of molten rock and fiery debris whisked the plummeting portal along the exploding path of nuclear annihilation and into absolute obliteration. Like matter colliding with anti-matter, the tremendous energy from fragments of invisible debris surged through the portal and dissipated through the walls of V-41's vault. In an instant, the world he left behind was gone. Slowly, the glow of molten steel began to fade until nothing but virtual pitch-black darkness could be seen on the other side. In a matter of seconds, life in his physical world was over.

He sat quietly in stunned astonishment, reflecting on life prior to the portal and all that had transpired in the period of one week. As invisible tears flowed, he began to consider the life he would now be forced to endure, life in a spirit-form living in the past. There was nothing else to do and certainly nowhere else to go. Rather quickly, the thoughts of a world eradicated by nuclear war began transforming into anger and desperate aspirations. Instinctively, visions of a conceivable rescue mission began to culminate. Scenarios as to how his influence might somehow prompt a

means of averting the inevitable disaster from ever occurring began to fill his head.

After a very long sixteen hour period of restless abandon, Vinni @ 41 finally materialized through the mirror and quickly made an observation. "Ah, I've got company," he said gleefully.

"And how did you know that?" 48 replied despondently.

"I just finished rigging up an infrared detector for V-34 that registers traces of increased energy levels. You, my friend, now have an infrared signature. I've even got a team working on way to give your body of energy a form of visibility using a small field of infrared lasers. You'd have to be positioned directly in the field, but it looks as though it will work. Pretty cool, huh?" There was a moment of dead silence. "Well, what do you think?"

"Great."

"You don't sound so good. What's up?"

"Well, they finally did it Vinni. They actually did it."

"Who...did what?"

"Nuclear war. They just had a nuclear war in 2008."

"You're shitting me?"

"I wish I was. Luckily, I was home and in the vault when it took place. I had to dive through the portal to escape the obliteration. As far as I could tell, the whole world was on the brink of complete destruction. I don't see how anything could have survived. My God Vinni, it was incredible. Instant annihilation, virtually everything around me was gone in a flash. No film or simulation you've ever seen even comes close to depicting the actual effects of a nuclear blast. You really can't even imagine. It was the most incomprehensible display of extraordinary power I've ever seen...unbelievable."

"My God."

"My world is gone...kaput," he emphasized with a verbal whistle.

"What the hell caused it? What made 'em do it?"

"I don't know Vinni. I didn't have a lot of time to research

the subject. I'm not even sure where the first strike came from. There weren't any tell-tale signs...I mean it's not like we were at war or anything. There was a little heated tension between the United States and China, but they've been cautious to approach any differences from an economic perspective. Actually, global trading between the two was at an all-time high and they were in the process of negotiating terms of a new trade agreement for Christ's sake. So I don't think China was any sort of threat. But we've known that terrorist groups have had access to nuclear capabilities for a long time and it's conceivable that they might have orchestrated an attack in a manner that instigated a second strike. That's really the only thing that makes any sense at all. There just weren't any real warning signs."

"But somebody had to fire first."

"From what I could tell, it looked to me like the United States may have been the first to retaliate, but I'm relatively sure they didn't initiate it."

"Terrorists are the ultimate kamikaze warriors. They believe that their despicable acts serve the will of Ala and think they are ridding the world of democratic impurity. They wouldn't have hesitated to use a weapon like that."

"If that is what happened, it worked. Whoever launched first sent the rest of the world into extreme panic. Probably out of fear of annihilation, every country that had nuclear weapons started firing back at every adversary. It was as though every nation that had a grudge against another took advantage of this opportunity to resolve it. Missiles were fired in all directions and from every continent. Since it was a war that no one could win, I guess they made damn sure no one country did. They just started blowing each other up."

"The portal provided me with an escape route, but there's no telling what happened to it. I don't even know if it still exists," he said as he stared into the void on the other side. "I can't see a damn thing on the other side."

"Have you tried going back through?"

"Are you nuts? There's no telling where I'd come out or if I would come out at all. Even if the portal is still intact, it's apparently buried in a mountain of nuclear rubble. Even if I could pass through, the radiation levels have got to be off the charts. I can't take that chance, at least not right now."

"So what are you going to do?"

"What do you mean...Me? This is a WE thing. The question is; what WE are going to do."

"Hey, my world's just fine. Yours is the one that got wasted."

"Oh yeah. Well, what's mine is eventually yours. This is your future we're talking about here."

"Yeah I know. Sorry," he said in concession. "So, what are WE supposed to do about it?"

"Well, we know what's going to happen and when, and we supposedly have the ability to prevent it. So that's what we're going to do. As far as I know, we're the only ones who can save it. If we don't, the world is up shit creek and I'm trapped here forever."

Vinni @ 41 sat back and ran his fingers through his hair. "I see your point, but I wouldn't have a clue how the hell to pull something like that off."

"I've had some time to think about it while I was waiting for

you to get back and I have a few ideas." He was silent for a moment. "There was one thing I did notice. It looked like northern Alaska would have suffered the least amount of direct hits. So I think we should get V-34 started on construction of a secure facility in one of the remote mountain regions. Once that is in place, we'll need to relocate the mirror to a vault in that facility. That would insure that we at least preserve the portal so I can pass back through to inspect the damage. We'd have to stock it with all supplies necessary to survive the aftermath and several years of nuclear winter."

"Then what, are you going to live alone like some sort of hermitical freak in eternal exile?"

"Maybe, but at least I'd be alive. Unless you have you got a better idea, I don't see too many options here." His train of thought quickly began to change as he began postulating. "Maybe we could recruit a small group of people to live up there and manage the facility. At least when I went back, I'd have some company. Even if we don't find a way to prevent the catastrophe, mankind would still have some chance of survival."

"And what, replenish the world like some sort of Adam and Eve?" He shook his head. "There's got to be a better way."

"If there is, we'll figure it out, but I sure don't want to live alone for the rest of my life," he said in an angry tone that expressed all too well his desperation.

"Hey, you'll always have me."

"Believe it or not, that's somewhat reassuring...at least I'd have someone to talk to. That would be weird though, to be stuck in your world like some sort of spirit floating around watching you relive my life. The wealth and all of those luxuries are great, but I don't need any of it. I'd be perfectly content just to get my old life back."

"Well," Vinni @ 41 began to rationalize, "at least from my perspective, this war of yours doesn't take place for another seven years. I haven't lost my world yet and I'm kind of enjoying the new lifestyle."

"You can't be serious," 48 said with an air of astonishment. "You wouldn't have any of this if it weren't for me. Have you forgotten who provided you with the means of obtaining all of those luxuries?"

"Hold it right there, Vinni. Don't try to come across as some sort of martyr. Everything I've obtained, you have tenfold. I did all of the work and you reaped all of the benefits. Your world may be gone, but mine isn't. I'm alive and thriving in mine."

"You're right," Vinni @ 48 solemnly admitted, "everything I brought to you benefited me more. But don't forget, you'd still be a half-assed carpenter struggling to pay the bills if it weren't for my decision to include you."

"That's not fair."

"Fair?" he reiterated with an air of shock. "Let me tell you what's unfair. My world and the only life I've ever known, including a physical body is gone, but I'm still very much alive and more importantly, what I am now is what you'll eventually become. Mine is your inevitable future. If you were to die tomorrow, I'd cease to exist. What I am at this very moment is what you've got to look forward to if we don't find a way to stop this thing. Like it or not, buddy boy, we are all for one and one for all...one in the same. All I want is what you've got and there's no reason why we can't both have our lives to live. You owe me at least that much."

"Wait a minute. This the weirdest conversation a person could

possibly have. I can't even believe we're having it. Let's back up a little." He took a deep breath as he hesitated to reconsider the circumstances. "Look Vinni, I truly want you to have your...our life back. I really do. You know that I'll do whatever I can to help, but we're exploring unknown territory here. This is phenomenally weird."

"I couldn't agree more, but at least you're starting to see the whole picture."

"Yeah, I see it alright and I don't like it much either."

"Regardless how much you may despise the thought, remember this; every time you touch a flower, enjoy the taste of a fine wine or take a bite of succulent lobster, every time you hold a beautiful woman in your arms...those are all things that I will never be able to experience again. More importantly, these are things that you and everyone else in the world will eventually lose. As it stands, Earth is destined to become another desolate planet subjected to another multi-million year period of evolution."

Vinni @ 41 sat silently for what seemed like the longest time and then finally spoke with overwhelming compassion, "Don't worry Vinni, we'll think of something...we'll find a way. I promise."

"Remember what Dad used to tell us; don't make promises you can't keep."

"We'll find a way!" he reiterated with profound optimism. "I know we will."

"God, I hope so."

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