

Sample Chapters 1 and 2 from

HALF OF TOMORROW

by Dr Joseph Costa PhD

Book One

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(First 2012 Prediction)

Chapter One

Her head jerked around, her eyes wide and focused on the locked door scratching sounds. The knob jiggled. She looked to the boy sitting at the end of the table. Her finger went to her mouth signaling him to not speak.

Quickly she blew out the small candle under the pan. Putting an empty cereal box over the pan, her eyes jerked back at the door when the locked clicked. At that instant a hand and suitcase followed by the man holding it pushed in. He swirled around quickly, locked the door closed and leaned back on the door. Outside someone was yelling in the hall. Lia knew the yell came from the stairway down to the first floor.

Unconsciously she put her hand on the top of the box. At that instant the man saw her and put a finger to his lips turning his head back and forth. His sight went to the boy and he smiled at him, his finger still at his mouth and head turning to look about.

They could hear someone yell, “I think he went up—we’ll get him on the roof.” Footsteps faded. Lia went to the boy. He could see the fear on her face.

“Sorry for the break-in!” He ducked his head as in apology talking fast to assure her. “I’ll leave soon—after me,” he explained as his head jerked sideways toward the

door. "I'll leave as soon as they go back down." She could tell he had been running and looked at the case he carried. He saw her eyes focus on the case. "Name's Roger—," his eyes went to the stove and the candle under the pan. "What you got there, you got food?" His voice was high as he tried to be friendly. T

here was a pounding as men rushed upstairs from the lower floor to their level.

Loud voices came from the hall, yelling about where he might be. The suspicious fear did not leave the woman's eyes until she realized the men were after the suitcase Roger was holding. Her look went from fear to curiosity then to knowing he had food of some kind. Suddenly she was begging out loud. He tried to quiet her.

Frantic, she fell to her knees and begged, "Please, oh please, I don't care for myself, please—just give me a little for my boy!" She clawed at his legs and grasped at the case.

Doors slammed and voices sounded louder, closer. Roger was desperate, he considered knocking her unconscious. Then the boy started to cry. He shook her off himself and moved to the table. Dropping the case on it he opened it and picked out some beef jerky. He bit off a chunk and put it in the boy's mouth. The child began sucking at the meat immediately.

Roger looked at her, as he was about to put the remainder back. "Oh hell!" he said and pushed the meat at her mouth. She took it and bit into it, then, looking at the boy, she lowered her hand to her bosom to save the food.

Noises came from the next apartment as the pursuers broke into it. Roger had to do something quick. "Which window can I get through—out of," he demanded of her.

Not waiting for her answer, he stepped to the kitchen window. It was a rollout type that was too narrow for him to get his body through. "Damn!" He cursed. "Are all the windows like this?" He knew they were before she could speak. "I'm trapped!" he exclaimed.

Suddenly the woman moved toward the living room, she beckoned him to follow her, saying "Come on!"

Roger followed her to where she pointed to the floor in a corner of the living room, "Lay down right there." She went into an adjacent bedroom.

"I don't get it," he snapped at her.

She called to him, "You will. Just curl up in the corner, I'll be right back."

Roger stood there confused; his gaze went to the door that led to the hall, then back to the bedroom doorway. He heard the sound of a sliding wardrobe door. She came from the bedroom loaded with clothing; dresses, blouses, skirts and coats. As she came toward him he wondered what she was up to and frowned at her.

She scowled at him saying, "Lay down. Quick, lay down as I said!"

As he started to get down she dumped the clothes on him and wheeled around to go back to the bedroom.

Roger sat still at first with clothes half hanging on his head, then she came back with another armload. He lay down as she dumped those on him as well. She made four quick trips, during the last one he could hear her pulling out drawers. After that trip he could feel all kinds of things dropping down on the clothes that covered him.

Roger could hear the boy crying again. The crying came nearer as the woman carried the boy into the living room. She dropped down onto the clothes where Roger could feel her back against his chest. He realized then that she was attempting to hide him. He could feel her rocking the child and her beginning to hum a song.

There was a jolting noise at the front door as it was kicked opened and Roger could hear the burly voiced chaser snap angrily at the woman. "You—bitch! Anybody come runnin' in here?"

Roger could hear the woman sob and the boy cry louder. The male voice was adamant, "You hear me, goddamn it?" There was more sobbing, and an instant later Roger heard the voice say, "Ah, shit!" Then the door was slammed shut and he knew the man had left.

Roger let go the breath he had been holding and began to move to get up. Her elbow poked into his chest savagely. He winced and was about to speak when he heard the door reopen and the voice say, "I'll be back for you, bitch." The door slammed again.

Roger was thankful she had elbowed him and he lay quiet for what seemed a long time. The boy stopped crying, and he could hear him breathing as though asleep. After a while the woman laid the boy on the clothes and stood up. She went to the door opening it, looked down the hall, then closed it.

Walking toward Roger, she spoke to him, "It's safe now. You better leave soon, maybe in the dark. It'll be night in an hour or so."

He sat up and thanked her, she took advantage of this saying, "and you can show that by leaving Billie something to eat. He is so hungry and there's nothing."

Roger reacted, "No? What have you got in the kitchen you were hiding from me?"

She looked at her hands, "Nothing, not really, it's not much."

Not trusting her, he went into the kitchen. There was a pan over a candle warmer with a small amount of brownish water in it. It was getting dark, but he could see two strips of something in it.

She had followed him and before he could ask she told him, "Water with a little piece of rind. And a piece of leather."

Roger felt embarrassed, "How long since you had real food?"

She answered slowly, "Three days ago we ate the last of a can of cat food we had. The cat's been gone several days, maybe."

Roger looked at her and made a face, "You mean you ate your..."

She interrupted him, "No, I mean he just disappeared."

He did not know what else to say so he gave her his name, “My name’s Roger. What’s yours?”

“Lia,” she told him. “Billie’s my son.”

He nodded and went to the kitchen window. The blinds were blocking out what little light was left of the day. He sat on a chair and peeked out between the slats. There was nothing to see. The corner of the building hid the sidewalk and street. He didn’t look at her when he said; “I’ll leave you something before I go.”

Turning from the window, he faced her. The frail-bodied blonde ducked her head in a kind of acknowledgement. She started to say something, but instead expressed a jerky little smile as the corner of her mouth twitched upward.

Roger’s eyes went to the “V” of her dress, and he felt guilt for looking at what must be tiny breasts. Turning back to the window, his thoughts accosted him about it. Anger suddenly flared in his own breast, he heard his thoughts saying, “God-damn it—she’s half starved.” He could not look back at her. He did turn around as he heard her move back into the living room. A whimpering sound was coming from the corner. He could hear the rustling of her dress and the soft sound she made as her nurturing voice sought to sooth the boy.

Roger’s thoughts went to the suitcase under the clothes in the corner, but he soon could tell she was not touching it. Once again he had a twinge of guilt for his thoughts. He watched as they moved to the bedroom.

Alone, Roger thought about the woman and her son. The boy, Billie, was about the age of his own son. Thinking of his son caused him anxiety. He once again looked out the window even though there was nothing to see. A smoky haze flooded the space between the buildings. It made him think about all the fires he had passed. The dead, the carnage and the chaos he had been witness to over the last several days made him shake his head sadly. He had reached the apartments where his ex-wife and son had lived and found it burned to the ground.

Sound came into the room before she did. Roger was thinking about the two of them as they came into the kitchen. He knew they could not live much longer without food and water.

Lia sat on the other side of the dinette table from him with Billie in her lap. Her large brown eyes centered on him as she spoke, “I—Billie and I are grateful for what you can give us.”

He felt awkward saying, “It’s O.K.—err, Lia—it’s O.K., I don’t have much. It won’t last long.” He hunched his shoulders in apology.

“Anything?” She said it and smiled genuinely at him, but it faded into a sad look. She nodded toward the window, “Is there any hope? Will somebody come? Isn’t there a National Guard or something? The Army maybe?” The nails in her right hand dug deeply into her left palm as her eyes looked down to Billie’s face.

She went on talking, “I tried to find us food out there for a couple days, then the mobs got worse, there was a lot of shooting and killing. We have stayed inside since. The fire is close at times.”

Her big eyes flashed up at him and back at Billie. “I—I know this is—is—we’re going to die here, I know it!” Her voice was raised in a half panic way.

Lia suddenly stood upright, staring down at Roger, “I don’t care about myself. It’s my baby—my Billie! My God! Oh, please—please take him out of here. He has a chance with you! Please, oh please!” She shoved the boy at him. The boy squirmed back toward her and started to shriek.

Roger stood up. He watched the panic build and take possession of her features. Lia began to screech, “Please, God—I don’t want him to die!” Her body began to shake, and then her eyes began to roll back in her head.

Roger could see the faint coming and slapped her in the face. Grasping both her arms, he shook her and shouted, “Stop that! Stop that! Damn it—I’ll take you both out of this!”

Lia fell against his chest and he held her there. Roger was speaking to himself, “What the hell am I saying? What can I do? What could I do if I found my own?” He suddenly realized he was reacting as though this were his ex-wife and his son.

A feeling of protectiveness swarmed over him, a feeling he had lost years ago. Reality brought a grin to his face as he told himself, “I need them like a boar needs tits.”

He pushed her away and said, “Come on, we have work to do to get the hell out of here! Go get some of yours and the boy’s things and bring them in here!” He wanted them busy. He pointed at the table.

Lia wiped her eyes with both hands. Turning away, she said, “Hold Billie and I’ll get our things. She left the kitchen with hope in her heart.

As she searched in the half-light, she heard Roger quiet Billie down and had him talking. She suddenly collapsed to the floor and cried, with her face muffled in clothes, this time she knew she was crying for a different reason. Roger was going to save them, she was sure. She heard Roger ask if she said something. “Nothing important,” she called out.

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