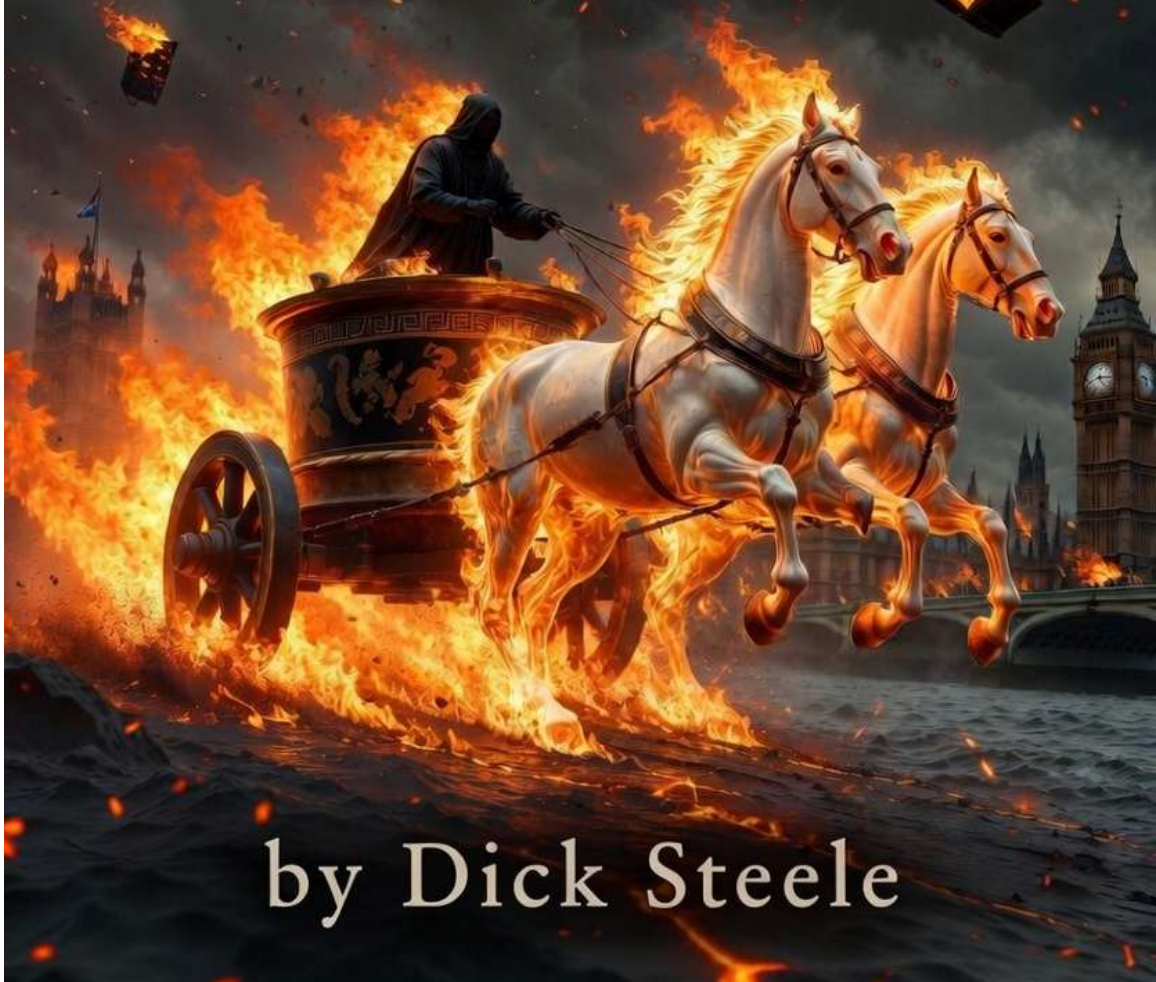


PHAETHON'S CHARIOT

POWER WITHOUT WISDOM



by Dick Steele

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Author's Preface

I am a South African. I have watched my own country slide from promise into something darker — a place where truth became hate speech, where history was rewritten by the victors, and where the rule of law was quietly replaced by the rule of the loudest and most favoured. I have seen farms burn, communities collapse, and institutions captured not by competence, but by ideology and grievance. I have buried friends and watched the lights go out, both literally and metaphorically.

This novel is not prophecy. It is warning.

Phaethon's Chariot: Power Without Wisdom is set in a near-future Britain, but its roots run deep into the soil of every Western nation now choosing short-term virtue over long-term survival. What happens when a government hands the reins of power, law, and culture to those who neither understand nor cherish the civilisation they inherit? What happens when compassion becomes selective, when justice is applied on two tiers, and when uncomfortable truths are criminalised as “emotional violence”?

The answer, as my aunt used to say, is simple: the chariot tips over.

“My aunt used to say the law is the chariot. When those holding the reins only protect one side, the whole thing tips over.” — Chapter 5

That line was not written for dramatic effect. It was written from memory. I have seen two-tier governance in action. I have seen how quickly institutions that once protected the weak begin protecting the powerful instead. I have seen how fear of being called “racist” or “Islamophobe” can paralyse a nation until its own daughters become collateral damage in someone else’s conquest.

This book is for those who are still asleep — the comfortable, the well-meaning, the ones who believe “it could never happen here.” It is also for those already awake but isolated, wondering if they are alone in noticing the flames licking at the sky.

The myth of Phaethon is ancient for a reason. Civilisations have fallen before. They fall when the guardians of the chariot grow arrogant or cowardly. They fall when the boy demands the sun and the father lacks the courage to say no. They fall when a people forgets that power without wisdom is not governance — it is arson.

Britain, Europe, America, South Africa — none of us are immune. The horses are already bolting. The fields are beginning to scorch. Whether we seize the reins in time, or whether we wait for the thunderbolt, is the only question that still matters.

This story is my contribution to that fight.

Read it. Share it. Debate it. But above all, recognise the warning while there is still time.
Because once the chariot reaches the launch codes, apologies will not put out the fire.

Dick Steele

Johannesburg, 2026

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More information on the myth of Phaethon can be found here:

<https://www.bookiebooks.co.za/phaethon-and-the-sun-chariot.pdf>

Other recommended reading: Unqualified Power - FREE on BOOKFUNNEL

<https://dl.bookfunnel.com/a7fd4x706h>

The Chariot That Burned the Sky

Power Without Wisdom

Prologue – The Chariot That Burned the Sky

The English Channel in the grey pre-dawn of March 2027 was a sullen, restless thing. It moved like cold mercury under a sky the colour of wet slate. A small inflatable dinghy, overloaded and riding dangerously low, sliced through the chop. Eight men huddled inside, their life jackets bright orange against the salt-stained black of their clothing. A ninth figure—the smuggler—clutched the tiller with white-knuckled hands, his eyes darting between the approaching lights of the Kent coast and the faces of his passengers.

They called themselves asylum seekers. The British authorities would soon call them the same. But in the half-light, their murmured Arabic and Pashto carried a sharper edge. One man, broad-shouldered with a neatly trimmed beard, kept touching a small green book tucked inside his jacket. Another whispered prayers that did not sound quite like the old recitations. They spoke of Britain not as a place of refuge, but as a promised inheritance. A final testing ground.

The smuggler—Darren Pike, forty-one, from Dover, father of two and already twice convicted of people smuggling—kept his mouth shut. He had been paid in crypto and promises. The promises scared him more than the money. These weren't the usual desperate families. These men moved with purpose. When one of them smiled at him in the darkness, the smile did not reach his eyes.

At 05:47, the dinghy scraped onto the shingle beach near Kingsdown. Within minutes, figures appeared on the cliff path—Border Force, but moving slowly, almost reluctantly. The men were processed, given hot drinks, thermal blankets, and the sacred words: “You are safe now.” By 08:15 they had vanished into the vast bureaucratic machinery of New Britain. Hotels in Dover, then coaches to dispersal centres, then—somehow—into the bloodstream of the country.

None of the men would ever be deported.

Forty-eight hours later, Emily Cartwright was walking home from her part-time job at the café on Dover High Street. She was fifteen, small for her age, with the kind of open, trusting face that made older relatives worry. The March evening was cold. She pulled her school blazer tighter and took the shortcut through the alley behind the old Methodist church.

She never made it home.

The attack was brutal and efficient. When they found her at 22:17, she was curled in a foetal position against a wheelie bin, blood on her thighs, eyes open but empty. The forensic examiner would later note the distinctive bruising pattern and the deliberate use of a knife to mark symbols on her lower back. Symbols that looked disturbingly like Arabic script.

The man arrested at 03:14 the next morning was one of the eight from the dinghy. His name was recorded as Mohammed Al-Sayed. He had been in the country for fifty-one hours.

At the magistrates' court two days later, the public gallery was packed with activists wearing keffiyehs and "Refugees Welcome" badges. The district judge, a nervous woman in her late fifties, cleared her throat before delivering her ruling.

"Given the delicate cultural context and the need to avoid inflaming community tensions, Mr Al-Sayed will be granted conditional bail. He must reside at the taxpayer-funded accommodation provided and attend all future hearings. Reporting restrictions remain in place to protect his identity and prevent far-right harassment."

A ripple of applause swept the gallery. Outside on the steps, as Al-Sayed emerged smiling and waving, the crowd began to chant in rhythmic unison:

"Submission is Compassion! Submission is Compassion!"

A young female reporter from the state-aligned BBC tried to ask a question about the victim. She was shouted down and called an Islamophobe. Emily Cartwright's name was never mentioned in the broadcast that evening. She had become, in the official language of New Britain, "the alleged victim in a sensitive community incident."

While Emily lay sedated in a hospital bed in Canterbury, her mother screaming at a stone-faced social worker who kept repeating "cultural sensitivities must be respected," another scene was unfolding two hours west in London.

The old British Library annexe in Bloomsbury was scheduled for demolition in three weeks. Its Victorian halls, once filled with scholars, now echoed with silence and the occasional drip of leaking pipes. Most of the books had already been removed—either digitised under new "inclusive" guidelines or quietly pulped if they failed Harmony Review standards.

But in the basement reading room, a small group had gathered.

Dr Eleanor Voss, fifty-eight, former Professor of Classical Civilisation at King's College London, stood at the head of a battered oak table. Her grey hair was pulled into a severe bun, and her eyes—sharp, intelligent, and increasingly tired—scanned the seven teenagers and two adults huddled in coats against the chill. Her niece, Lena Voss, seventeen, sat at the front, recording everything on an encrypted tablet.

“Tonight,” Eleanor said quietly, “we remember a story they don’t want us to know.”

She opened a small, battered children’s edition of Greek myths. The cover showed a boy in a golden chariot, reins in hand, the sun blazing behind him. The book had been printed in 2019. By 2026 it had been added to the Restricted Narratives List for “promoting toxic masculinity, individualism, and anti-collectivist themes.”

Eleanor began reading, her voice low but clear, carrying the rhythm of someone who had once lectured to packed halls.

“In the days when the gods still walked among mortals, there lived a boy named Phaethon. He was the son of Helios, the Sun God, but he did not know his father’s power. One day, filled with pride and the arrogance of youth, he demanded proof of his divine heritage. He asked to drive the sun chariot for a single day.”

She paused, letting the ancient words settle over the small group. Outside, a patrol drone hummed past the boarded windows.

“Helios warned him. The horses were wild. The chariot had no brakes. The path through the sky was narrow and treacherous. ‘My son,’ he said, ‘you ask for power that is not meant for you. You ask for wisdom you have not earned.’ But Phaethon insisted. And because a father’s love can sometimes be a dangerous thing, Helios granted the request.”

Eleanor turned the page. The illustration showed the boy soaring high, then losing control. The horses bolted. The chariot veered wildly.

“The world burned beneath him. Crops turned to ash. Rivers boiled. Cities crumbled. The earth itself cried out in agony. In the end, Zeus had no choice. He struck Phaethon down with a thunderbolt. The boy fell like a burning star into the river Eridanus. His sisters, the Heliades, wept for him until they turned into poplar trees, their tears becoming amber.”

She closed the book gently, but her fingers lingered on the cover.

“The boy asked for power that was never meant for him,” she said, her voice dropping to a whisper, “and the world paid the price.”

One of the younger boys raised a hand. “Dr Voss... why is this story banned now?”

Eleanor smiled sadly. “Because it warns against exactly what is happening outside these walls. We have handed the reins of our civilisation to people who do not understand it, do not love it, and were never meant to drive it. And every day, the fields burn a little more.”

Lena looked up from her tablet, eyes fierce. “They’re erasing everything, aren’t they? Churchill. Nelson. Our history. Our stories.”

“Everything that reminds them they are guests,” Eleanor replied. “Or rather, that they were guests. Now they are told they were always the rightful owners. Submission is compassion. Diversity is supremacy. Britain was always theirs—they merely returned.”

She was about to continue when the sound of heavy boots echoed down the stairwell.

The door burst open.

Three officers in black “Harmony Enforcement” tactical gear stormed into the room. Their visors were down. The lead officer, a stocky man with a London accent, pointed straight at Eleanor.

“Dr Eleanor Voss, you are under arrest under Section 17 of the Public Order (Emotional Safety) Act 2031 for the dissemination of far-right incitement material and unauthorised teaching of restricted narratives.”

Eleanor stood very still. “This is a children’s myth book. From before the Convergence.”

“It glorifies individualism and questions collective compassion,” the officer snapped. He snatched the book from her hands and slammed it onto the table so hard the spine cracked. “This kind of classical supremacist propaganda has no place in New Britain.”

One of the other officers grabbed Lena’s tablet and deleted the recording with practised efficiency. The students were shoved against the wall and searched. A girl of fourteen began to cry.

As they dragged Eleanor toward the stairs, she looked back at the book lying open on the table. The cover illustration—Phaethon’s flaming chariot racing across the sky—caught the beam of a torch. For a brief second, the flames on the page seemed almost alive.

Then the officer picked it up, ripped the cover half off, and stuffed the book into a black evidence bag.

Outside, in the pale morning light, luxury coaches waited on the street. The eight men from the dinghy—now freshly showered, wearing new clothes provided by the Compassion Integration Service—were being helped aboard. One of them, the broad-shouldered man

with the green book, looked up at the old library building as police lights flashed against its stone façade. He smiled.

A female case worker in a hijab-adorned uniform beamed at them. “Your new accommodation is ready. Five-star hotel in Central London. All expenses covered by the British taxpayer. Welcome home.”

As the coaches pulled away, a light wind caught the torn fragment of the book cover that had fallen from the evidence bag. It fluttered across the pavement like a dying leaf—Phaethon’s chariot, still burning, still racing toward catastrophe.

Far away, in a safe house that did not yet exist in any official record, Alex Thorne would one day play this recording.

He would watch the footage Lena had managed to save on a second, hidden device. He would see his sister’s face in Emily Cartwright’s empty eyes. He would see his country in the burning chariot.

And he would whisper the words that became the rallying cry of the Before Party:

“They gave them the chariot. None of us realised we would all burn.”

Part 1: The Gift of the Chariot

Chapter 1

Welcome to New Britain

Alex Thorne stepped off the delayed flight from Warsaw into the sterile chaos of Terminal 5 at Heathrow and immediately felt the weight of the air change. It was heavier somehow, thicker with the scent of disinfectant, cumin, and damp wool. The year was 2032, and this was no longer the airport he had left behind five years earlier.

He joined the queue for British citizens—now rebranded as “Heritage Pass Holders”—and watched the parallel line for “New Arrivals” move twice as fast. Young men in crisp white thobes and neatly trimmed beards were waved through with smiles. Families with multiple children clutching brightly coloured integration packs received priority stickers. A white grandmother in her seventies, dragging an oxygen tank, was pulled aside for secondary screening.

“Reason for travel?” the border officer asked when Alex finally reached the desk. She was Somali, veiled, and her name badge read *Amina – Community Harmony Officer*.

“Returning home,” Alex said.

The officer scanned his passport, eyes narrowing at the expiry date. “You’ve been away a long time, Mr Thorne.”

“Work.”

She tapped her screen. “MI6 background noted. We’ll need to run a Harmony Profile check. Please stand on the mat.”

The body scanner hummed. Alex kept his face neutral as invisible algorithms judged his micro-expressions, heart rate, and pupil dilation. A green light finally flashed.

“Welcome back to New Britain,” the officer said without warmth. “Remember, criticism of integration policies is a Level Two emotional safety violation. Have a blessed day.”

Outside the terminal, the rain was the same grey English drizzle he remembered, but the taxis were not. Half the rank consisted of sleek black electric Mercedes with Arabic decals on the doors. A driver with a thick Pakistani accent leaned out.

“Central London, brother? Special rate for new returnees.”

Alex took the cab. As they pulled onto the M4, the first billboards appeared.

SUBMISSION IS COMPASSION DIVERSITY IS SUPREMACY BRITAIN WAS ALWAYS OURS — WE MERELY RETURNED

The letters glowed in green and gold against the wet concrete. Below one sign, a group of schoolchildren—mostly hijab-wearing girls and boys in taqiyahs—were being led in a chant by their teacher. The driver turned up the radio. A smooth voice, unmistakably Queer Barmy's, was mid-speech.

“...and thanks to our Compassion Budgets, another 18,000 new arrivals this month have been housed in dignity while we continue the vital work of decolonising our shared spaces. Remember, friends: tolerance is not enough. Enthusiastic welcome is mandatory.”

Alex stared out at the passing landscape. The old Welcome Break services had been renamed “Integration Oasis.” A giant portrait of Imam Khalid al-Rashid smiled benevolently from the roof, his hand raised in blessing over the petrol pumps.

By the time they reached the Chiswick roundabout, the changes became visceral. Every other lamppost flew the green Chislam flag alongside a smaller, faded Union Jack—always positioned lower. Several Union Jacks had been torn down entirely, their shredded remains fluttering like wounded birds. On the side of a former Premier Inn, now a gleaming “Migrant Excellence Centre,” a new slogan had been painted in metre-high letters:

NO BRITAIN BEFORE CHISLAM

Alex's jaw tightened. He had read the reports from his exile in Poland, but reading and seeing were different beasts. The sensory assault was overwhelming: the call to prayer broadcast from what used to be the old BBC building in Portland Place, the smell of shisha and frying falafel replacing the familiar greasy spoon aroma, the groups of young men in matching black jackets standing on street corners with watchful eyes.

The driver noticed his silence. “First time back, eh? You get used to it. Better now. Safer. Cleaner. More... spiritual.”

Alex paid in cash—crypto was preferred, but he still carried old sterling notes like contraband. He walked the last mile toward his sister's old flat in Hammersmith, the one he had kept paying rent on through a shell company. The streets felt narrower. More eyes followed him.

A sharia patrol—four bearded men in high-vis vests labelled “Community Safety Volunteers”—stopped two white girls in short skirts near the tube station. The girls were made to put on long coats provided from a nearby van. One of the men lectured them loudly about “modesty as compassion.” Passers-by looked away. A policeman stood twenty metres off, arms folded, doing nothing.

Alex kept walking.

The flat was on the third floor of a tired 1970s block. When he opened the door, the smell hit him like a fist—stale air, dust, and the faint ghost of his sister’s favourite vanilla candle. He hadn’t been inside since the funeral.

He dropped his bag and moved through the rooms like a ghost himself. Sarah’s books were still on the shelves, though someone had clearly gone through them. Several classics were missing: Orwell, Huxley, any pre-2027 history texts. In their place stood glossy new volumes with titles like *Britain’s True Heritage: The Chislamic Golden Age* and *Why Resistance is Hate*.

On the coffee table lay the one thing he had come for.

A small, battered children’s book. *Myths of Ancient Greece*. The cover showed Phaethon in his flaming chariot. Sarah had loved this book as a girl. She used to read the Phaethon story aloud to him when he was small, doing all the dramatic voices. After her rape and suicide—officially ruled “accidental overdose following cultural misunderstanding”—Alex had found the book hidden under her mattress with a single underlined line:

“The boy asked for power that was never meant for him, and the world paid the price.”

He opened it now, fingers tracing the familiar illustration. The colours had faded, but the terror on Phaethon’s face as the horses bolted remained vivid. Alex closed his eyes and saw Sarah’s face instead—pale, bruised, empty in the mortuary drawer.

A notification pinged on his encrypted burner phone. A message from an unknown number:

Rally tonight. Secret location. Blou speaking. Come alone. They are watching returnees.

Alex stared at the message, then at the book in his hands. Outside, the evening call to prayer began again, louder this time, echoing across rooftops that once carried church bells. Somewhere in the distance, a siren wailed—probably another native protest being dispersed under the Public Order (Emotional Safety) Act.

He walked to the window. From here he could see the new super-hotel complex on the Thames. Forty storeys of gleaming glass and solar panels, built in under eighteen months. “Migrant Integration Paradise – Funded by Compassion Taxes.” Below it, a queue of shivering elderly locals waited outside a food bank that had run out of supplies three hours earlier. A sign on the hotel read: *No Vacancies. Priority for New Britons*.

Alex Thorne, thirty-eight years old, ex-MI6 analyst, carrier of too many secrets and one unbearable grief, felt something cold and hard settle in his chest.

This was no longer the country he had sworn to protect.

This was New Britain.

And it was burning.

He slipped the children's book into his inside coat pocket, next to his pistol. The weight felt right. Necessary.

As night fell over the transformed city, the streetlights flickered on—one in three of them now fitted with green crescent bulbs. In the distance, Big Ben—no longer chiming the old hours—stood illuminated in shifting emerald light.

Alex whispered the words his sister had underlined.

“The boy asked for power...”

He didn't finish the sentence. Not yet.

But he felt the chariot beginning to move.

Chapter 2

The Rape Epidemic

Alex sat alone in the dim glow of his sister's old flat, the Phaethon book open on the coffee table like an accusation. The encrypted news feeds on his burner phone painted a picture that mainstream channels refused to show. He scrolled through leaked bodycam footage, anonymous witness statements, and underground forums where people still dared to speak.

The Emily Cartwright case dominated every shadow channel.

It had been only four days since the fifteen-year-old had been found in that Dover alley. Four days since Mohammed Al-Sayed—one of the eight men from the March 2027 dinghy landing—had been arrested, questioned, and released on bail. The official statement from the Ministry of Community Harmony called it “a complex cultural incident requiring careful handling.”

Alex enlarged a still image on his screen. Emily's face, pixelated but unmistakable: pale, vacant eyes staring into nothing. The same thousand-yard stare he had seen in the mortuary photos of his sister Sarah five years earlier.

He closed his eyes and the memories came whether he wanted them or not.

Sarah Thorne had been twenty-six, a bright, funny primary school teacher with a laugh that could fill a room. She had been walking home from a staff meeting in Luton in 2027 when three men dragged her into a derelict garage behind one of the new “integration housing” blocks. The attack lasted forty-seven minutes. Forensic evidence showed repeated rape, beating, and deliberate humiliation. One of the men had filmed it.

The police knew the perpetrators within forty-eight hours. Two of them were failed asylum seekers who had been released into the community despite prior grooming convictions. The third was a “youth mentor” at the local mosque.

But the Crown Prosecution Service declined to pursue the case aggressively. “Cultural factors,” the internal memo had said. “Risk of community unrest.” The lead detective was quietly transferred after he pushed too hard. Media coverage lasted less than thirty-six hours before the story was memory-holed and replaced with breathless reports about far-right protests.

Sarah never recovered. She spiralled into silence, then rage, then a quiet, determined darkness. On the night she died, she left only two things: a note that read “They gave them the chariot,” and the children’s myth book with that single line underlined in red.

The coroner ruled it an accidental overdose. Alex knew better. He had read her private journals. He had seen the photos she took of her injuries before the police told her to delete them “to avoid inflaming tensions.”

That was the moment something inside him broke. The ex-MI6 analyst who had spent years protecting the realm from foreign threats suddenly realised the greatest threat was already inside the gates—and had been welcomed with open arms and taxpayer-funded hotels.

A new notification pinged. Underground footage from Dover Magistrates’ Court, shot covertly on a smuggled phone.

The video began with the public gallery packed with activists. Al-Sayed stood in the dock, smiling modestly. The district judge—visibly nervous—read her ruling.

“Given the clear evidence of trauma on both sides and the need to prioritise community cohesion in these sensitive times, the court grants unconditional bail. Mr Al-Sayed will reside at the Dover Excellence Residence, with full counselling and integration support provided at public expense. Any further reporting on this matter that risks inciting hatred will be prosecuted under the Emotional Safety Act.”

Cheers erupted. Someone in the gallery shouted, “Submission is Compassion!” The chant spread until the entire room thundered with it.

Outside the court, Al-Sayed emerged to a hero’s welcome. A young female journalist—Lena Voss, Alex noted from the watermark—tried to ask a question about Emily’s condition. She was immediately surrounded, shoved, and called a racist. One man spat in her face. The police formed a protective cordon around Al-Sayed instead of the journalist.

Alex paused the video. His hands were shaking.

He opened a hidden folder labelled simply “Sarah.”

The first image was his sister in better days—smiling at a school sports day, surrounded by laughing children. The next images were clinical. Bruises. Bite marks. Cigarette burns in places no human being should ever be burned. The final photo was Sarah in the mortuary: skin waxy, eyes closed, a small silver cross still around her neck that the undertaker had tried to remove “for cultural sensitivity reasons.”

Alex stood up suddenly, knocking the coffee table. The Phaethon book slid to the floor.

He walked to the window and pressed his forehead against the cold glass. Below, in the street, another sharia patrol was stopping a mixed group of young people. Two white girls were being lectured on their clothing. One of the bearded men had his hand on a girl's shoulder. The police constable standing nearby simply looked at his phone.

This wasn't isolated. Alex had spent the last three years in Poland compiling data that British authorities refused to collect. Grooming gang convictions had collapsed by seventy-eight percent since 2027, even as reported incidents surged. Official statistics spoke only of "youth violence" and "misunderstandings between communities." Independent researchers who published real numbers were arrested for "hate facts."

The Chislamic doctrine called it the Womb Jihad. Alex had seen the leaked sermons. *Each native child prevented, each convert born, is a victory without firing a single shot.* The rape epidemic wasn't a crime wave. It was strategy. And the state was complicit.

A new message arrived on his burner. An anonymous source he had cultivated in the Home Office.

Emily Cartwright slipped into a coma tonight. They're preparing the narrative: "troubled teen, mental health issues, possible self-harm." Al-Sayed's legal team already filing for compensation for "racist trauma."

Alex stared at the message until the screen went dark.

He remembered the last conversation he'd had with Sarah, three days before she died.

"You still believe in this country, don't you?" she had asked him, her voice thin and cracked.

"I swore an oath," he had replied.

She had laughed bitterly. "So did they. And look what they're doing with it."

Now, five years later, Alex understood what she had meant. They had handed the reins to people who saw Britain not as a home to integrate into, but as a chariot to seize. And the horses were running wild.

He picked up the myth book from the floor and turned to the illustration of Phaethon's sisters, the Heliades, weeping by the river after their brother's fall. Their tears had turned to amber. Sarah's tears had turned to silence, then to nothing at all.

Alex whispered the underlined line aloud in the empty flat:

"The boy asked for power that was never meant for him, and the world paid the price."

But this time he added his own ending.

“And the world is still paying.”

He spent the next hours doing what he did best: analysis.

He cross-referenced police reports that had been clumsily redacted, hospital admission data from grooming hotspots, and leaked Chislam internal communications. The pattern was unmistakable. Rotherham, Rochdale, Oxford, Newcastle, and now hundreds of smaller towns—the same playbook. Imported men, protected by fear of “Islamophobia,” targeting vulnerable native girls. Social services looking away. Police forces prioritising community relations over justice. Judges citing “cultural mitigation.”

In the new Chislam textbooks being rolled out in schools, these incidents were reframed as “youthful expressions of natural dominance” or “misunderstood courtship rituals.” Victims who spoke out were doxxed, harassed, and often forced to flee their homes under police “protection” that never materialised.

Alex found a recent internal memo from the Ministry of Justice. It recommended reducing sentences for “culturally motivated offences” by up to sixty percent to “prevent radicalisation of minority communities.”

He slammed the laptop shut.

The rage that had been simmering since Sarah’s death was no longer a quiet fire. It was becoming something colder. Sharper. Focused.

He opened a new encrypted file and began typing.

Target One: Imam Khalid al-Rashid Objective: Map the network. Expose the doctrine. Endgame: Stop the chariot before it reaches the launch codes.

A soft knock at the door made him freeze. He drew his concealed pistol and moved silently to the peephole.

It was a young woman, mid-twenties, nervous. She wore a hood pulled low. When she glanced up, he recognised her from the Dover footage.

Lena Voss.

He opened the door a crack, keeping the chain on.

“You shouldn’t be here,” he said quietly.

“I know who you are, Mr Thorne,” she whispered. “I know about Sarah. And I know what they’re planning next. Please. I have proof.”

Alex studied her face. The fear was real. But so was the defiance.

He unchained the door.

As Lena stepped inside, bringing the cold night air with her, Alex felt the first true shift since landing in New Britain.

The resistance had found him.

Or perhaps he had finally found it.

Outside, another call to prayer rolled across the rooftops of Hammersmith, drowning out the distant sound of sirens and the quieter, broken weeping of a nation that no longer recognised itself.

The chariot was gaining speed.

And someone had to seize the reins back.

Chapter 3

Quear Barmy's Broadcast

Alex locked the door behind Lena Voss and gestured for her to stay away from the windows. The young journalist moved with the wary grace of someone who had already been hunted. Her left cheek still carried a faint bruise from the Dover court steps.

"They're about to do it," she said, pulling out her tablet. "Live from Downing Street in three minutes. Every channel, every screen, mandatory streaming on the Harmony App. You need to see how bad it's gotten."

Alex nodded. He killed the lights except for the glow of the old television Sarah had left behind. The set flickered to life on the state broadcaster—now rebranded as the New Britain Unity Network. A slick graphic spun across the screen: a green crescent merging with the remnants of the Union Jack.

The anchor, a polished Pakistani woman wearing a modest hijab with a small BBC pin, smiled serenely.

"Citizens of New Britain, we now go live to the Prime Minister for a special address on Compassion and Cohesion."

The feed cut to Number 10. Quear Barmy stood at the familiar podium, his trademark smirk already in place. He was a slight man in his late forties, impeccably tailored in a charcoal suit with a discreet green pocket square. His hair was styled just so—youthful enough to appeal to the young, greying enough to suggest gravitas. Behind him, two Chislamic flags flanked a severely cropped Union Jack that now looked like an afterthought.

Barmy raised both hands in a gesture of humble benediction and began.

"My dear friends, my fellow New Britons—both those who have lived here for generations and those who have newly arrived to enrich us—tonight I speak to you from the heart of our shared future."

He paused for dramatic effect, letting the applause from the carefully selected audience in the room swell.

"Five years ago, we made a sacred choice. We chose compassion over fear. We chose openness over walls. We chose love over hatred. And what a magnificent harvest that choice has borne! This month alone, we have welcomed another eighteen thousand souls fleeing persecution. Eighteen thousand new brothers and sisters who now call these islands home."

Alex's fists clenched. Lena whispered, "Here it comes."

Barmy's voice rose, warm and theatrical.

"Yet, as always, there are those who would drag us back into the darkness of the old Britain. The far-right extremists. The xenophobes. The bitter nostalgics who clutch their warm beer and faded flags and mutter about 'rape epidemics' and 'cultural replacement.' Let me be crystal clear tonight: such hateful conspiracy theories are not only wrong—they are dangerous. They are terrorism of the mind."

A ripple of approving murmurs from the audience.

"Therefore, effective immediately, I am proud to announce the expansion of our Compassion Budgets. An additional £4.7 billion will be redirected this year from outdated areas—pensions, non-essential policing in low-priority communities, and certain... traditional cultural programmes—to vital asylum integration initiatives."

He gestured to a screen that appeared beside him showing glossy graphics.

"New five-star integration hotels in every major city. Free counselling for those traumatised by racist questioning. Expanded legal defence funds for our new communities facing unfair scrutiny. And, most importantly, mandatory 'Unity Education' in every school, teaching the true history of Britain as a land that was always destined to welcome the faithful."

Barmy leaned forward, eyes gleaming with that signature mix of piety and smugness.

"Some will complain that pensioners are cold this winter. That native women feel unsafe on our streets. That our hospitals have waiting lists. To those voices I say: your discomfort is the price of progress. True compassion sometimes requires sacrifice. And who better to make that sacrifice than those who have already benefited from centuries of privilege?"

Lena let out a bitter laugh. "He's actually saying it out loud now."

On screen, Barmy continued, building to his crescendo.

"Let us remember the ancient wisdom our new citizens bring. Submission is Compassion. Diversity is Supremacy. Britain was always theirs—they merely returned to claim what was promised. Any attempt to resist this beautiful convergence will be met with the full force of our Emotional Safety laws. Hate has no home here."

He placed a hand over his heart.

"Tonight, I call on every true New Briton to report suspicious behaviour. Questioning integration? Report it. Criticising Compassion Budgets? Report it. Quoting outdated myths

about boys stealing chariots and burning the world? That is far-right incitement, and it will be prosecuted.”

The audience erupted. Barmy basked in it, smirking wider than ever.

“Together, we ride toward a brighter dawn. A dawn where no one is illegal. A dawn where the old Britain dies so the new can flourish. Thank you, and may the One bless our shared future.”

The feed cut back to the anchor, who was visibly emotional. “Truly inspiring words from a truly compassionate leader.”

Alex killed the television. The silence in the flat felt heavier than before.

Lena was pacing. “That’s the third time this year he’s announced billions redirected. Meanwhile, my aunt Eleanor is in a re-education centre for reading Greek myths to children. My aunt. A respected historian. And they’re building another luxury tower for arrivals in Canary Wharf while old people die of hypothermia in high-rises.”

Alex poured two measures of the cheap whisky he’d found in Sarah’s cupboard. He handed one to Lena.

“I’ve seen the classified breakdowns,” he said quietly. “Sixty-eight percent of the new Compassion money goes straight into trusts controlled by al-Rashid’s network. Hotels, legal firms, propaganda outlets. The rest buys votes and silence.”

Lena took a sip and winced. “Emily Cartwright is in a coma. They’re already calling her a troubled girl who ‘provoked cultural misunderstanding.’ Her mother tried to speak to the press yesterday—her social credit score was frozen within an hour. She can’t even buy food now.”

Alex walked to the window. Below, in the street, a small group of native protesters had gathered with a banner reading “Pensions Before Hotels.” Within minutes, riot police in full gear moved in. Batons rose and fell. The protesters were dragged away screaming “This is our country!” Meanwhile, across the road, a large Chislam march celebrating the broadcast moved freely, many carrying machetes and flags. Police stood by politely.

“Two-tier Britain,” Alex muttered. “Exactly as designed.”

He turned back to Lena. “Your aunt—Dr. Eleanor Voss. She was reading the Phaethon story when they arrested her, wasn’t she?”

Lena nodded, eyes glistening. “She told the kids that we had handed the sun chariot to people who never learned to drive. Barmy’s people called it dangerous incitement. They said the myth promotes ‘individualistic supremacy’ and questions collective compassion.”

Alex picked up Sarah’s copy of the myth book from the table. He opened it to the underlined line.

“The boy asked for power that was never meant for him,” he read softly, “and the world paid the price.”

Lena’s voice cracked. “That’s exactly what Barmy is doing. He thinks he’s Helios—benevolently handing over the reins. He has no idea what he’s unleashed. Or maybe he does and simply doesn’t care, as long as the optics look good.”

They both fell silent as another call to prayer echoed across the city. It was louder now, amplified by new state-installed speakers on every major building.

Alex finally spoke. “I saw the Faslane files before I left Poland. Chislam sympathisers inside the military. Inside the civil service. They’re getting close to the submarines. If they get Trident...”

Lena finished the thought. “Then Phaethon doesn’t just scorch Britain. He sets the whole world on fire.”

A new notification lit up Alex’s burner. An invitation to the secret rally where Rupert Blou would speak for the first time as leader of the fledgling Before Party.

Alex looked at Lena. “You don’t have to come. This path only gets darker.”

She met his gaze without flinching. “My aunt is in prison. My friend is in a coma. They raped your sister and called it cultural sensitivity. I’m already on the path, Alex. The only question is whether we walk it alone or together.”

Outside, the Chislam march passed directly beneath the window, chanting Barmy’s new favourite slogan in perfect unison:

“Submission is Compassion! Diversity is Supremacy!”

Alex watched them, the green flags waving under the streetlights. For a moment, he saw not men, but wild horses—eyes rolling, mouths foaming, dragging a flaming chariot across the sky of a dying nation.

Quear Barmy had handed them the reins with a smile and a taxpayer-funded hotel key.

Now the sky was beginning to burn.

And somewhere in the darkness, a thunderbolt was going to be needed.

Chapter 4

Erasure

The morning after Quear Barmy's broadcast, London woke to the sound of cranes and cheering.

Alex and Lena moved through the streets like ghosts, hoods up, eyes down. They had barely slept. The encrypted invitation to Rupert Blou's rally burned in Alex's pocket, but first they needed to see what fresh wound New Britain had inflicted on itself.

They arrived at Trafalgar Square just after 9 a.m. A large crowd had gathered—mostly young Chislamic men, school groups bused in for the occasion, and the usual cluster of keffiyeh-wearing activists. In the centre, a huge yellow crane loomed over Nelson's Column like a mechanical vulture.

"Today we correct history!" shouted a young imam with a microphone, his voice echoing across the square. "Nelson was a slaver, an imperialist, a symbol of everything we must leave behind. Britain was never great—it was stolen!"

The crane's cables tightened. The statue of Admiral Lord Nelson, one-armed and defiant for nearly two centuries, shuddered. A cheer went up as the ropes pulled. Stone groaned. Then, with a sickening crack, the figure broke free and crashed to the ground in pieces. Dust rose like smoke. People rushed forward to kick the broken marble, spitting on the fallen hero.

Lena gripped Alex's arm so tightly her nails dug into his sleeve. "They did this to Churchill last month. They did it to Boudica in Colchester. They're erasing us one statue at a time."

Alex said nothing. He was remembering Sarah bringing him here as a child, pointing up at Nelson and telling him stories of Trafalgar. Now a green flag was being hoisted in the statue's place, flapping triumphantly in the cold wind.

A government heritage officer in a high-vis vest addressed the crowd through a loudspeaker. "This is not destruction. This is decolonisation. This is compassion in action. Every fallen statue makes room for new enrichment memorials."

Behind him, workers were already installing a large bronze figure of a generic "migrant family" reaching toward the sky. The plaque at its base read: *They Returned. We Submitted.*

They moved on to the British Museum, now rebranded the "Global Convergence Centre." Inside, the changes were even more brutal.

The Rosetta Stone was gone—replaced by an interactive display about “Chislam’s contribution to world civilisation.” The Elgin Marbles had been quietly returned to Greece years ago as “reparations,” but the empty plinths now held new exhibits: artefacts from Rotherham mosques, photographs of the first dinghy landings, and a large timeline titled *Britain: From Stolen Land to True Destiny*.

A school group of twelve-year-olds was being led through by a teacher wearing a hijab and a rainbow lanyard.

“Remember, children,” she said brightly, “everything you thought you knew about British history was a lie told by old white men. The Romans, the Saxons, the Tudors—they were all temporary. The real story begins in 2027 with the Great Convergence.”

One boy, pale and nervous, raised his hand. “Miss... what about the Battle of Britain?”

The teacher’s smile vanished. “That is restricted content, Jamal. Questioning the Convergence is a micro-aggression. Report to the Harmony Officer after class.”

The boy shrank back. Lena turned away, sickened.

Alex pulled out his phone and recorded discreetly. The new national curriculum, rolled out three months earlier, had replaced almost all pre-2027 British history. Shakespeare was gone, replaced by Chislamic poets. Churchill was now a chapter titled “The Original Islamophobe.” The Magna Carta was studied only as an example of “early far-right extremism.”

In its place were mandatory modules on:

- *The Womb Jihad: Demographic Destiny*
- *Why Native Resistance is Mental Illness*
- *Submission as the Highest Form of Love*

Textbooks showed smiling migrant families moving into luxury hotels while elderly British pensioners were airbrushed from photographs. One particularly vile page featured a cartoon version of Phaethon—redrawn as a blond British boy with a Union Jack on his chariot—being struck down by a benevolent green lightning bolt labelled “Compassion.”

Lena whispered, “My aunt used to teach the real version. That’s why they came for her.”

The trial of Dr. Eleanor Voss was being held at the new Emotional Safety Tribunal in what used to be the Royal Courts of Justice. The building's stone façade had been draped in green banners. A large banner across the entrance read: *Hate Has No Home Here*.

They slipped into the public gallery using Lena's press credentials. The room was packed. Activists dominated the front rows, while a handful of nervous family members sat at the back.

Eleanor Voss looked smaller than Alex remembered from the underground library footage. She sat in the dock wearing a plain grey prison jumpsuit, her grey hair cut brutally short. Handcuffs secured her wrists. Yet her eyes remained sharp, unbroken.

The prosecutor, a young convert with a wispy beard and an expensive suit, stood up.

"Dr. Eleanor Voss stands accused of multiple counts of far-right incitement, unauthorised dissemination of restricted narratives, and emotional terrorism against New Britons. On the night of her arrest, she was caught reading from a banned children's book promoting toxic individualism and supremacist myths."

He held up the battered copy of *Myths of Ancient Greece*. The cover with Phaethon's chariot was displayed on every screen in the courtroom.

"This so-called 'myth' tells of a boy who demands power he cannot handle and destroys the world. Voss used it to indoctrinate impressionable children against our Compassion policies. She explicitly compared our integration efforts to this dangerous story. This is hate speech disguised as education."

Eleanor was allowed to speak in her own defence. She stood slowly, chains rattling.

"I taught children a two-thousand-year-old story about hubris," she said, her voice clear and steady. "About what happens when arrogant people are given power they have not earned and cannot control. If that story offends the state, then the state has already become the boy in the chariot."

Murmurs rippled through the activist section. Someone shouted "Islamophobe!"

The judge, a woman wearing both judicial robes and a prominent Chislam pin, banged her gavel.

"Dr. Voss, you will not use this court to spread further propaganda. This tribunal recognises only one truth: Britain's past is a story of oppression, and its future is one of joyful submission. Your classical myths have no place here."

Eleanor looked straight at the judge. “Then you have already lost. When a civilisation bans its own stories—the ones that warn it against destruction—it signs its own death warrant. Phaethon is not just a boy. He is every leader who hands the reins to those who will burn the fields. He is every parent who sacrifices their children’s future for virtue-signalling. He is you, Your Honour.”

The judge’s face tightened with rage.

“Six years in a Unity Re-education Centre. All assets seized. The book will be destroyed publicly. Let this be a warning to anyone still clinging to the old Britain.”

As Eleanor was led away, she caught Lena’s eye in the gallery. For a brief moment, aunt and niece held each other’s gaze. Eleanor gave the smallest nod—*Keep fighting*—before she was pulled through the side door.

Outside the court, rain had begun to fall. Alex and Lena walked in silence for several blocks. Finally Lena spoke, her voice raw.

“She taught me everything. Homer. Virgil. The real history of this island. Now they want to replace it all with sermons about how we should be grateful to be replaced.”

Alex stopped under a dripping awning. A new mural covered the wall beside them: Quear Barmy shaking hands with Imam Khalid al-Rashid under a banner that read *The Convergence is Complete*.

“They’re not just tearing down statues,” Alex said quietly. “They’re tearing down memory itself. Without memory, there is no resistance. That’s the real goal.”

He pulled Sarah’s Phaethon book from his coat. The pages were starting to curl from the damp.

“My sister died because they protected her rapists. Your aunt is in prison because she read a children’s story. Emily Cartwright is in a coma. And every day they topple another statue, rewrite another textbook, pass another Compassion law. They think if they erase enough of us, we’ll simply disappear.”

Lena looked up at him, eyes fierce despite the tears.

“Then we become the memory. We become the story they couldn’t burn.”

Alex nodded. The encrypted rally invitation pulsed in his pocket again. Rupert Blou. The Before Party. The first real opposition.

As they turned toward the secret location, another crane rumbled past, carrying what looked like the remnants of a Winston Churchill statue toward a landfill. The broken bronze head stared sightlessly at the sky.

Somewhere above the clouds, Alex thought, Phaethon was still driving—wild, reckless, unstoppable.

But thunder was gathering.

And for the first time since returning to New Britain, Alex Thorne allowed himself to believe they might still find a way to seize the reins before the world burned completely.

Chapter 5

Two-Tier Policing

The rain had turned into a relentless, bone-chilling drizzle by the time Alex and Lena left the Emotional Safety Tribunal. The streets of central London felt heavier, as if the fallen statues had added their broken weight to the air itself. They moved quickly, heads down, weaving through side streets toward the coordinates Blou's people had sent.

"Rally's in an old warehouse in Hackney," Lena murmured, checking her encrypted map. "They change locations every time. Last month, one was raided ten minutes after it started."

Alex kept one hand near the concealed pistol under his jacket. "Stay close. Eyes open."

They had only gone three blocks when they heard it — the low, angry roar of a crowd.

A native protest had formed outside what used to be the Department for Work and Pensions building, now the Ministry of Compassion Redistribution. Around two hundred people, mostly middle-aged and elderly, stood in the downpour holding soggy signs:

Pensions Before Hotels British Lives Matter Too Stop Funding Rape Gangs

An old man in a threadbare RAF veteran's cap held up a faded Union Jack. His voice cracked with age and fury as he shouted into a cheap megaphone.

"We paid into the system our whole lives! My wife died last winter because the heating allowance was cut for Compassion Budgets. How many more of us have to freeze while they live in five-star hotels?"

The crowd growled in agreement. A woman in her sixties held up a photo of her granddaughter — another grooming victim who had never received justice.

Then the police arrived.

Not the regular constables. These were full Harmony Enforcement Units — black tactical gear, visors down, batons already drawn. They formed a line and charged without warning. Batons cracked against skulls and shoulders. The old RAF veteran went down hard, blood mixing with rainwater on the pavement. A woman trying to film on her phone had it smashed from her hands and was dragged away screaming "This is supposed to be our country!"

Alex pulled Lena into a shop doorway. "Watch," he said grimly.

Across the street, a much larger procession was approaching — at least eight hundred strong. Chislam marchers, many carrying machetes and green flags, moved freely down the main road. Their banners read:

Submission is Compassion More Hotels, More Justice Britain Belongs to the Faithful Now

Police not only stood aside — they actively cleared the road for them. One senior officer even saluted the lead imam. The marchers chanted loudly, drowning out the native protesters.

A group of young Chislam men broke off and began taunting the shrinking protest. One spat on the fallen veteran. Another kicked a woman's sign to pieces. The Harmony officers did nothing. When a middle-aged British man shoved back in defence, he was immediately tasered and arrested for "inciting racial hatred."

Lena's breathing was ragged. "Two-tier policing. They don't even hide it anymore."

They kept moving east, but the city itself seemed to be proving her point at every corner.

In Shoreditch, a small group of native mothers had gathered outside a former primary school now converted into a Chislam "Enrichment Centre." They held photos of their daughters who had gone missing or been groomed. One mother held a banner: *Protect Our Girls*.

Within minutes, riot police surrounded them. "This gathering is unauthorised and constitutes emotional violence against the community," an officer announced through a loudspeaker. "Disperse immediately or face arrest under the Public Order (Emotional Safety) Act."

The women were zip-tied and loaded into vans while their banners were trampled.

Two streets away, a spontaneous Chislam victory parade celebrating the toppling of Nelson spilled across four lanes of traffic. Men on horseback — actual horses, imported for the spectacle — waved swords. Women in niqabs handed out sweets to children. Police not only escorted the parade but diverted regular traffic to accommodate it. A driver who honked in frustration was pulled from his car and arrested on the spot.

Alex stopped in an alley, leaning against the wet brick. "This is how civilisations die. Not with a bang, but with selective blindness. The state chooses which lives matter and which don't. And right now, native British lives are at the bottom of the list."

Lena wiped rain from her face. “My aunt used to say the law is the chariot. When those holding the reins only protect one side, the whole thing tips over.”

A new sound cut through the rain — screaming.

They emerged onto a wider street just in time to see a flash of horror. A native couple in their thirties had been cornered by a group of twenty Chislam youths. The man was on the ground, being kicked. The woman was being dragged toward a side alley. Two regular police officers stood thirty metres away, watching.

One officer spoke into his radio: “Possible community tensions. Requesting guidance.”

The reply came loud enough for Alex to hear: “Do not intervene unless extreme violence against New Britons is confirmed. Prioritise de-escalation and community cohesion.”

The woman screamed again.

Alex’s hand moved toward his pistol. Lena grabbed his wrist.

“Not here,” she hissed. “You’ll be shot or arrested and we’ll never reach Blou.”

The rage in Alex’s chest felt nuclear. This was exactly what had happened to Sarah — witnesses, police inaction, “cultural sensitivities.” He forced himself to turn away, but the woman’s screams followed them down the street like a curse.

By the time they reached the derelict warehouse district in Hackney, Alex’s blood was boiling. The anger wasn’t just personal anymore. It was collective. He could feel it in every broken citizen they passed — the quiet, seething fury of a people who had been told their concerns were bigotry while their daughters were sacrificed on the altar of compassion.

The rally entrance was hidden behind a rusted loading bay. A large man with ex-military bearing checked their invitation codes on a burner phone before letting them through.

Inside, the warehouse was packed with nearly four hundred people. No flags. No banners that could be used against them. Just grim, determined faces. Men and women of all ages, many clearly former police, soldiers, teachers, and nurses who had lost everything.

At the front, standing on a makeshift stage made of pallets, was Rupert Blou.

He was exactly as the underground reports described: mid-fifties, broad-shouldered, ex-Special Forces, with a plain-speaking voice that carried like command. No suit. Just jeans, boots, and a worn leather jacket. He looked like the kind of man who had once sworn to protect Britain and now realised he had to save it from its own government.

Blou raised a hand and the room fell silent.

“Tonight,” he said, voice steady and resonant, “we are not here to beg. We are not here to protest politely. We are here because two-tier policing has become two-tier justice, which has become two-tier survival. Native Brits are arrested for tweets while machete gangs march freely. Our elderly freeze so migrants can have luxury hotels. Our daughters are raped and the perpetrators are given bail and counselling.”

Murmurs of agreement rippled through the crowd.

Blou’s eyes swept the room. “They call us far-right for wanting our own country back. They call us terrorists for saying enough. But I’ll tell you what real terrorism looks like — it’s a government that protects invaders over its own people. It’s a Prime Minister who smiles while handing the chariot to those who will burn us all.”

He pointed toward the back where Alex and Lena stood.

“Some of you know Alex Thorne. Ex-MI6. Lost his sister to the grooming gangs they refuse to name. Some of you know Lena Voss — her aunt is in a re-education camp for teaching children the wrong stories. They are with us now. And we need more like them.”

Alex felt every eye turn toward him. The weight was enormous.

Blou’s voice dropped, becoming quieter but somehow more powerful.

“This is no longer about left or right. This is about before and after. We were here before them. We will be here after them — if we fight. Not with their rules. Not with their two-tier laws. But with the same courage our ancestors showed when they faced greater odds.”

He held up a small object — a battered pocket copy of the Phaethon myth book, identical to Sarah’s.

“They ban this story because it warns us. A boy given power he cannot handle. A father too weak or arrogant to stop him. The world scorched. We are living that story right now. Qear Barmy is Helios. Al-Rashid is Phaethon. And Britain is the earth beneath the flaming wheels.”

The room erupted — not with wild cheering, but with something deeper. A low, determined growl of agreement. The sound of people who had finally found their voice.

Alex felt Lena’s hand find his in the crowd. Her fingers were cold but steady.

As Blou continued outlining the Before Party’s first actions — exposing spending scandals, protecting vulnerable communities, building parallel networks — Alex looked around at the faces.

This was resistance.

Raw. Imperfect. Dangerous.

But real.

Outside, another Chislam march passed in the distance, drums and chants echoing between the warehouses. Police sirens wailed in support rather than opposition.

Inside, the anger had finally found direction.

The chariot was still racing across the sky.

But tonight, in this cold, damp warehouse, a few hands reached for the reins.

And somewhere in the gathering storm, the first faint rumble of thunder answered.

Chapter 6

The First Convert

The warehouse rally had barely ended when the news broke.

Alex and Lena were still making their way through the rain-slicked backstreets of Hackney when every screen in every shop window, every public Harmony Display, and every citizen's mandatory app lit up with the same crimson banner:

BREAKING: MAJOR POLITICAL CONVERGENCE

They ducked into a dimly lit Turkish café that still allowed unvetted customers after midnight. The owner, an old Cypriot who hadn't yet converted, nodded silently and turned up the wall-mounted television.

Quear Barmy was already on stage at an emergency press conference in Downing Street, beaming like a proud father. Flanking him was the man of the hour: Jeremy Hargrove, Labour MP for Birmingham Central, one of the last remaining "old-school" socialists who had somehow survived the party's full capitulation to Chislam.

Hargrove looked different tonight. Gone was the cheap suit and tired tie he usually wore on the backbenches. He stood in a crisp white thobe embroidered with subtle green thread, a taqiyah on his head, and a carefully trimmed beard that he had clearly grown over the past weeks. His eyes darted nervously, but his posture was that of a man who had made peace with betrayal.

Barmy placed a hand on Hargrove's shoulder with theatrical affection.

"Tonight," Barmy announced, voice dripping with emotion, "marks a historic moment in Britain's beautiful journey. A man of principle has seen the light. Jeremy Hargrove, after deep reflection and spiritual guidance, has chosen to embrace the truth of Chislam. He is no longer merely a Member of Parliament. He is now our brother in faith and a proud convert to the path of Submission."

The room erupted in applause — carefully selected journalists, activists, and party loyalists. Green flags waved beside the remnants of the red Labour rose.

Hargrove stepped forward to the microphones. For a second, a flicker of the old socialist fire appeared in his eyes, then died.

"I have spent thirty years fighting for the working class," he began, his Birmingham accent still thick but now softened with rehearsed humility. "But I have come to realise that the greatest oppression was not capitalism. It was the illusion of British exceptionalism. The

old Britain — my Britain — was built on stolen land and stolen dignity. I was blind to the truth that this country has always belonged to the faithful. Tonight, I publicly declare the Shahada.”

He turned slightly toward the camera, as if addressing the entire nation directly.

“There is no god but the One, and Britain is His final bride. I renounce my former identity as a kuffar politician. From this moment, I serve the Ummah-Britannia. I serve Compassion. I serve Convergence.”

Barmy clapped vigorously. “Beautiful. Simply beautiful. Brother Jeremy will now take questions.”

Alex stared at the screen, his knuckles white around his coffee cup. The old Cypriot owner muttered something in Greek and spat on the floor behind the counter.

Lena’s face was pale with disgust. “He was one of the last ones who still voted against the full Compassion Budgets six months ago. Now look at him. They got to him.”

On screen, the first question came from a state-approved journalist.

“Mr Hargrove, many will call this opportunistic. Your constituency has seen a surge in grooming cases and street violence. How do you respond to accusations that you’re abandoning your voters?”

Hargrove smiled the serene smile of a man who had already sold his soul and was now being paid in protection.

“Those so-called ‘cases’ are colonial myths designed to divide us. As a new Muslim, I understand now that what the old media calls crime is simply cultural adjustment. The girls involved were often dressed provocatively. The boys were expressing natural dominance. Submission brings peace. Resistance brings chaos. I urge my former constituents to join me on the path of enlightenment.”

A second journalist, bolder, pushed further. “And your former colleagues in Labour? Will they follow?”

Barmy leaned in smoothly. “Many already have in private. The ones who haven’t will soon understand that clinging to the old ways is not only politically unwise — it is spiritually dangerous. We are in the age of Convergence. There is only forward.”

Alex felt sick. He had studied Hargrove's record. The man had once railed against mass migration when it affected his own working-class base. He had quietly opposed certain grooming gang inquiries. But when the threats began — whispers of "Islamophobia" investigations, funding cuts to his constituency projects, and rumours of compromising material collected by al-Rashid's network — he had folded.

This was the first public, high-profile conversion of a sitting MP. The symbolism was devastating.

Lena whispered, "They're not just converting him. They're converting the Labour Party itself. The last pretence of opposition is gone."

On television, Hargrove was now in full flow, quoting from the Book of Convergence.

"The Prophet Khalid al-Rashid taught us that the cold lands of the West must be warmed by the fire of the faithful. I was cold. Now I burn with purpose. My first act as a Chislamic representative will be to propose a new bill: the Full Cultural Rebalancing Act. All remaining statues of oppressors will be removed. All schools will teach the Womb Jihad as a sacred demographic blessing. And all criticism of our migrant brothers will carry mandatory re-education sentences."

Barmy looked positively radiant. "Wonderful. Simply wonderful. This is what unity looks like."

The broadcast cut to footage of spontaneous celebrations in Birmingham — or at least, carefully staged ones. Crowds chanting "Submission is Compassion" outside Hargrove's constituency office. A group of native girls in hijabs being paraded as "success stories of integration." An elderly white couple awkwardly holding green flags, their smiles strained and terrified.

Back in the café, Alex's burner phone buzzed. A message from Rupert Blou's secure channel:

Hargrove was the canary. They're coming for the rest. Rally tomorrow night. Bring Voss. We move from protest to preparation.

Alex showed Lena the message. She nodded, jaw set.

"They didn't just buy him," she said. "They terrified him. My aunt told me how it works. First they offer protection. Then they offer power. Then they own you completely. Hargrove gets to keep his seat, his salary, and probably a nice new house in a guarded Chislam enclave. In return, he becomes their puppet on live television."

Alex thought of Sarah again. Of Emily Cartwright in her coma. Of Dr. Eleanor Voss in a re-education centre. All sacrificed on the same altar.

“This is how Phaethon consolidates power,” he said quietly. “Not by force alone, but by turning the existing system against itself. The Labour Party was supposed to protect the working class. Instead, they’re delivering them — their daughters, their pensions, their history — straight into the chariot.”

The TV was now showing reaction clips. A famous actress, newly converted, wept with joy on a late-night show. A former trade union leader announced he too was “studying the faith.” Quear Barmy closed the broadcast with his favourite line:

“Every conversion is a victory for compassion. Every submission brings us closer to peace.”

The screen faded to the national slogan, now displayed in burning gold letters:

BRITAIN WAS ALWAYS OURS — WE MERELY RETURNED

The old Cypriot owner turned the television off and looked at Alex and Lena with tired, defeated eyes.

“I came here in 1974,” he said in accented English. “Fought for this country. Paid taxes. Now they call me a settler. My son converted last year. Says it’s safer. Me? I’ll die Greek Orthodox before I bow.”

He wiped the counter slowly. “You young people still fighting?”

Alex met his gaze. “We’re only just starting.”

The man nodded once, then slipped them two strong coffees on the house. “Then fight dirty. Because they are.”

As Alex and Lena stepped back into the night, the streets were strangely quiet. But in the distance, fireworks lit up the sky over central London — government-organised celebrations for Hargrove’s conversion. Green and gold explosions painted the clouds.

Lena looked up at the burning sky.

“They think they’ve won,” she said. “They think the chariot is theirs now.”

Alex touched the Phaethon book in his coat pocket.

“Not yet,” he replied. “Not while there are still people willing to reach for the reins.”

But even as he said it, he felt the truth of the moment. The first major domino had fallen. A sitting MP had defected live on national television, not out of genuine faith, but out of fear and naked ambition. Others would follow. The institutions were hollowing out from within.

The boy in the chariot had just been handed the whip.

And the horses — wild, numerous, and hungry — were accelerating.

Chapter 7

Before the Party

The second rally was deeper underground — literally.

Alex and Lena descended a rusted metal staircase into the abandoned Tube maintenance tunnel beneath an old station in Bethnal Green. The air smelled of damp concrete, machine oil, and fear-sweat. A single red bulb swayed overhead, casting long shadows on the walls where faded 1970s safety posters still warned about the third rail.

Nearly six hundred people waited in the low-ceilinged chamber. No applause. No chanting. Just the low murmur of desperate voices and the occasional metallic drip from the ceiling. These were not the polished activists of the old days. These were the discarded: former police officers who had refused to enforce two-tier laws, teachers sacked for “micro-aggressions,” nurses who had watched native patients die on waiting lists while migrant hotels received priority healthcare, ex-soldiers who had sworn oaths to Queen and country that no longer existed.

Rupert Blou stood on a makeshift platform of scaffolding and wooden pallets. A single portable floodlight illuminated him from below, giving his weathered face the look of a man carved from granite. No microphone. His voice carried naturally through the tunnel like it had been trained on battlefields.

Alex and Lena slipped in at the back. Blou’s eyes found them immediately. He gave the smallest nod of recognition.

“Tonight,” Blou began, his voice steady and commanding, “we stop pretending. We stop protesting within their rules. We stop being the loyal opposition to a government that despises us. Tonight, we become what comes *before* them.”

He let the word hang in the damp air.

“The Before Party.”

A ripple moved through the crowd — not cheers, but something heavier. Recognition. Relief. Resolve.

Blou continued, pacing slowly on the platform.

“They call us far-right. They call us extremists. They call us terrorists for wanting our own country back. But I ask you this: who are the real extremists? The ones who tear down Nelson and Churchill? The ones who spend billions on luxury hotels while pensioners

freeze? The ones who arrest a historian for reading a children’s myth while protecting grooming gangs?”

He held up a battered copy of the Phaethon book — the same edition as Sarah’s.

“This story is banned. Why? Because it tells the truth they cannot face. A boy demands power he cannot handle. His father, out of weakness or arrogance, gives it to him. The chariot runs wild. The world burns. That is exactly what Quear Barmy has done. He handed the reins of Britain to people who see this island as conquest, not home. And now the fields are scorching.”

Blou’s gaze swept the room.

“Jeremy Hargrove converted on live television last night. Another domino falls. How many more Labour MPs, civil servants, police chiefs will follow? They are converting not out of faith, but out of fear and self-preservation. The chariot is accelerating. And we are the last ones mad enough to reach for the reins.”

A man near the front — broad-shouldered, ex-SAS by his bearing — called out, “What’s the plan, Rupert? They have the media. They have the police. They have the bloody military tilting their way.”

Blou nodded, acknowledging the brutal truth.

“We start where they are weakest. We expose the spending scandals. We protect our communities. We build parallel structures — safe houses, information networks, mutual aid for native families abandoned by the state. We infiltrate where we can. And above all, we speak the truth they have criminalised. Britain was here before them. Britain will be here after them — if we fight.”

He stepped closer to the edge of the platform.

“This is not a political party in the old sense. This is a resistance movement wearing the skin of legality for as long as it lasts. When they ban us — and they will — we go underground. When they come for our children, we stand between them. When they reach for the nuclear keys at Faslane, we cut off their hands.”

Alex felt the words settle into his bones. This wasn’t rhetoric. This was a declaration of war by people who had nothing left to lose but their chains.

Blou looked directly toward the back of the tunnel, straight at Alex.

“We have people with real skills joining us now. Ex-MI6. Journalists who still believe in truth. Soldiers who remember their oaths. Historians who refuse to let our story die. Tonight, we are no longer scattered voices in the dark. Tonight, the Before Party is born.”

This time the response was not quiet. Six hundred people didn’t cheer — they growled. A deep, guttural sound of long-suppressed rage finally finding form. It echoed off the tunnel walls like distant thunder.

After the main address, Blou motioned Alex and Lena into a side alcove shielded by stacked crates. A small group waited there: three ex-military men, an older woman who had been a senior civil servant, and a young tech specialist whose hands never stopped moving.

“Thorne,” Blou said, gripping Alex’s hand firmly. “I read your file. You saw the Faslane reports before you left the service. You know how bad it is.”

Alex nodded. “Sympathisers inside the naval base. Inside the security teams. They’re months away from having real access to the Vanguard subs. Maybe less.”

Blou’s jaw tightened. “That’s the endgame. Al-Rashid doesn’t want Britain. He wants the nukes *from* Britain. One strike on America framed as ‘global justice’ and the West collapses. Barmy is too blind or too compromised to stop it.”

Lena spoke up. “My aunt was teaching the Phaethon myth the night they arrested her. She said the same thing. When those holding the reins only protect one side, the whole chariot tips over.”

Blou smiled for the first time — a hard, wolfish grin. “Your aunt’s a fighter. We’ll get her out eventually. But first we have to stop the bloody chariot from reaching the sun.”

He turned back to Alex.

“I want you as strategist. You have the analytical mind and the intelligence background. Lena, you’ll be our voice where we can still get one out. We build slow, then we build fast. First operation: expose the latest Compassion Budget transfers. Show the British people exactly where their taxes are going while their grandparents die of cold.”

Alex felt the weight of the decision. This was no longer observation. This was commitment.

“I’m in,” he said simply. “But we do this smart. No martyrdom. We need to last.”

Blou clapped him on the shoulder. “Good. Welcome to the Before Party, Alex Thorne. We were here before them. We’ll be here after.”

As the meeting broke up into smaller cells, Alex stood with Lena near the tunnel exit. The rain was still falling above ground, drumming on the metal grate overhead.

Lena looked exhausted but alive in a way he hadn't seen before. "I thought I was just angry. Now I feel... something like hope. Dangerous hope."

Alex touched the Phaethon book in his pocket. "Hope is dangerous. But so is surrender. Sarah used to say the only thing worse than the chariot crashing is watching it happen and doing nothing."

They climbed the stairs back into the night. Somewhere in the distance, another call to prayer rolled across the city, backed by state loudspeakers. But this time the sound felt different. It felt challenged.

As they walked toward a safe drop-off point, Alex's burner vibrated with a new encrypted message from an old MI6 contact still inside the system.

Faslane security logs altered. Three known al-Rashid associates now have Level 4 access. Clock is moving.

Alex showed Lena the message. Her face hardened.

"The boy has the reins," she said quietly.

Alex looked up at the clouded sky, imagining the flaming chariot racing across it.

"Then it's time we taught him what happens when Zeus gets involved."

Behind them, in the tunnels beneath London, the Before Party had taken its first real breath. Small. Outnumbered. Outgunned.

But awake.

And for the first time in years, Britain had something it had almost lost completely.

A future worth fighting for.

Chapter 8

The Nuke Whisper

The safe house was a damp basement flat beneath a derelict row of shops in Whitechapel. The previous tenants had been two elderly sisters who died of hypothermia the previous winter after their heating subsidy was redirected to a new migrant welcome centre. The landlord, a quiet Before Party sympathiser, had kept the keys and asked no questions.

Alex sat hunched over a reinforced laptop in the corner, the only light coming from the screen and a single red camping lantern. Lena slept fitfully on a camp bed against the far wall, exhausted from the rally. Rupert Blou had left two hours earlier with the ex-SAS man, promising to return before dawn with new burner phones.

Alex's fingers moved across the keyboard with practised precision. He was no longer the desk analyst who had left MI6 five years ago. Poland had sharpened him. Exile had made him ruthless. He had spent the last three years building backdoors into systems the British government believed were impregnable.

Tonight, he was going after the Faslane Naval Base files.

He routed his connection through seven different countries, bouncing the signal through old Cold War relays still hidden in the Baltic states. The encryption on the Ministry of Defence server was formidable — next-generation quantum-resistant protocols — but every system had a weakness. Alex's was patience and an old colleague who still owed him a favour.

At 03:47, the screen flickered. A single line of green text appeared:

Access granted — Level 4 Clearance (Legacy MI6 override)

Alex's heart rate spiked. He was in.

He navigated quickly through the directory structure, ignoring routine maintenance logs and supply manifests. He went straight for the personnel security files and Trident Vanguard submarine access roster.

What he found made his blood run cold.

Internal Security Assessment – Faslane Naval Base Classification: Eyes Only – Prime Minister & Defence Secretary Date: 14 October 2032

Summary: Significant infiltration by Chislam sympathisers confirmed at multiple levels.

- **Engineering & Maintenance Division:** 11 personnel (7 confirmed, 4 probable) with known links to Imam Khalid al-Rashid’s network. Two hold Level 3 access to warhead storage protocols.
- **Security Detail:** 19 officers reassigned from “community cohesion” programmes. Background checks bypassed under Compassion Integration Directive 2031.
- **Command Chain:** Lt. Commander Faisal Rahman (converted 2029) now serves as Deputy Weapons Systems Officer on HMS Vanguard. Has attended three closed-door sermons at the new Faslane Mosque.
- **Civil Service Liaison:** Two senior MOD officials with direct access to launch authorisation codes have made private pilgrimages to al-Rashid’s London residence.

Risk Assessment: Credible intelligence indicates an operational timeline of 6–10 weeks for full control of at least two Vanguard-class submarines. Objective appears to be acquisition of live warheads for “symbolic global justice action” against the United States.

Recommendation: Immediate purge of compromised personnel. However, political considerations (risk of “Islamophobia” accusations and community unrest) have delayed action.

Note from PM’s Office: “We must not inflame tensions. Continued dialogue and integration remain the compassionate path.”

Alex stared at the screen. His hands had gone numb.

He scrolled further and found the attached audio file. It was marked “Sermon – Inner Circle Only.” He plugged in earphones and pressed play.

Imam Khalid al-Rashid’s voice filled his head — smooth, charismatic, and utterly chilling.

“...The submarines were built by the hands of the infidel. Their warheads were forged in the sin of colonialism. But now, brothers, the chariot is ours. When we seize the reins of Trident, we will not ask permission. We will baptise these weapons in Chislamic fire. One missile on Washington. One kept as a warning to any who resist the Convergence. The Great Satan will learn that compassion without submission is suicide.”

The recording ended with the sound of fervent amens.

Alex closed the laptop slowly. He stood up, walked to the small sink in the corner, and vomited.

Lena woke to the sound. She sat up instantly, reaching for the knife under her pillow.

“Alex?”

He wiped his mouth and turned to her. His face was ghostly in the red lantern light.

“They’re inside Faslane,” he said, voice hoarse. “Not just sympathisers. They have people with their hands on the keys. Six to ten weeks, Lena. Maybe less. Al-Rashid is calling it the Final Detonation. The Nuclear Jihad. They want to nuke America and call it justice.”

Lena’s face drained of colour. She stood and came to his side, reading the file over his shoulder as he reopened the laptop.

“Quear Barmy knows,” she whispered, pointing at the Prime Minister’s note. “He knows and he’s doing nothing. Because stopping them would be ‘Islamophobic.’”

Alex laughed bitterly. It sounded like breaking glass.

“Phaethon has the reins. Helios — Barmy — is too weak, too vain, or too compromised to take them back. And the world is about to burn.”

He opened Sarah’s myth book, which now lived permanently in his coat pocket. The illustration of the flaming chariot seemed to glow in the red light.

“My sister died because they protected her rapists. Thousands of girls like Emily Cartwright have been sacrificed on the same altar. And now they’re about to hand over the ultimate power to the same ideology. Not because they’re evil. Because they’re arrogant. Because they believe their compassion makes them gods.”

Lena placed a hand on his shoulder. “Then we become Zeus.”

Alex looked at her. For the first time since returning to Britain, he felt something colder than rage. Something like destiny.

He typed rapidly, copying the critical files onto an encrypted drive. Then he planted a subtle worm — nothing that would be noticed immediately, but enough to let him back in when needed.

“We need to get this to Blou,” he said. “Tonight. The Before Party doesn’t have weeks anymore. We have days.”

They met Blou at 05:30 on a freezing rooftop in Hackney. The ex-Special Forces man arrived with two armed escorts. Dawn was beginning to stain the eastern sky a sickly orange.

Blou listened in silence as Alex briefed him, then played the sermon excerpt. When it finished, Blou stared out over the rooftops where the green crescent flags were already flying on several buildings.

“Six to ten weeks,” he repeated quietly. “God help us.”

He turned to Alex and Lena.

“This changes everything. The Before Party is no longer just a resistance movement. We are now the last line of defence for the entire Western world. If those warheads launch, America will strike back. Britain will become radioactive glass. Everything we love dies screaming.”

Blou placed a heavy hand on Alex’s shoulder.

“You did good work tonight, Thorne. Dangerous work. From this moment, you are my lead strategist on the nuclear file. Lena, you prepare the information war. We leak carefully. We build alliances with rogue elements inside the military and MI6. We prepare for the worst.”

He looked up at the sky, now turning from orange to pale grey.

“The chariot is no longer just a metaphor. It’s real. It’s floating in the waters off Scotland with nuclear teeth. And the boy driving it believes he’s doing Allah’s work.”

Alex felt the full weight settle on him. This was no longer about saving statues or exposing hotel scandals. This was about stopping nuclear jihad.

As the three of them stood on that windswept rooftop, the first call to prayer began rolling across London. It sounded louder than ever. Triumphant.

Blou’s voice was steel.

“We were here before them. We will be here after them. But only if we act now.”

Alex touched the Phaethon book in his pocket one last time.

The clock had started ticking.

Somewhere in the grey waters of the Firth of Clyde, the flaming chariot was already turning toward its target.

And Britain — the real Britain — had just declared war on the boy holding the reins.

Part 2: The Runaway Ride

Chapter 9

Joining the Before

The third meeting took place in an abandoned textile factory on the outskirts of Leeds. It was raining again — a cold, horizontal Yorkshire rain that seemed to punish the land itself. Alex and Lena arrived separately, using different routes and three changes of transport each. Paranoia was no longer a luxury. It was survival.

Rupert Blou was already waiting inside a cleared-out loading bay, flanked by four men who moved like they had once worn uniforms. A folding table held printed maps, encrypted tablets, and a battered thermos of coffee. The air smelled of wet concrete and old machine grease.

Blou rose when they entered. His handshake was iron.

“Thorne. Voss. You’re late. Good. Means you weren’t followed.”

He wasted no time. A large map of Britain was pinned to a rusted wall, red pins marking known Chislam strongholds, luxury migrant hotels, and compromised military sites. Faslane had three pins now.

“After what you brought me from the hack,” Blou said, looking at Alex, “we no longer have the luxury of slow growth. The Before Party must become operational immediately. We need a shadow cell. Small. Trusted. Lethal when required.”

He gestured to the others. “This is Sergeant Tom Reilly — former Parachute Regiment, still has friends in the Army. Dr. Miriam Hale — ex-civil service, knows where the bodies are buried in the Compassion Budgets. And you two. That’s the core for now.”

Lena spoke first. “What exactly does ‘operational’ mean?”

Blou’s eyes were hard. “It means we stop shouting at the sky and start cutting the chariot’s wheels. First operation: the migrant spending scandal. We hit them where it hurts — in the wallet and the optics. The British people need to see exactly where their taxes are going while their own grandparents freeze to death.”

He slid a thick folder across the table. Alex opened it. Inside were documents, photos, and bank transfer records that Dr. Hale had smuggled out.

“Operation Winter Truth,” Blou said. “We expose the luxury hotels. Not the ones the public already know about — the secret ones. The ones with private cinemas, spas, and Michelin-

level catering while pensioners in the same cities are dying of cold. We're going to film it, document it, and flood the underground networks with it."

Alex studied the files. One hotel in Manchester — formerly a five-star Hilton — had been fully requisitioned. Daily cost per migrant: £487. Heated swimming pool. 24-hour room service. Meanwhile, official statistics showed over 14,000 excess winter deaths among native elderly last year.

"This is evil," Lena whispered.

"No," Blou corrected. "This is policy. There's a difference. Evil can be fought. Policy requires regime change."

He looked at Alex. "You're the strategist. What's your plan?"

Alex leaned over the map. "We don't just leak documents. We make it visceral. A team goes in at night — non-lethal, in and out. Bodycams. Drone footage of the facilities. Interviews with locals who've been displaced. Then we contrast it with footage of British pensioners in freezing flats. We drop it simultaneously on every underground channel, with a clear Before Party signature."

Blou nodded slowly. "Risky. But necessary. Reilly, you handle the entry team. Hale, you source the financials. Thorne, you coordinate and write the narrative. Voss, you prepare the media package. We launch in six days."

The next forty-eight hours blurred into controlled chaos.

Alex barely slept. He worked in the corner of another safe house in Bradford, cross-referencing bank records with satellite imagery of the Manchester hotel. The sheer scale of the theft was staggering. Over £2.1 billion diverted in the last financial year alone — while the NHS waiting list for native patients had tripled and winter fuel payments had been cut by forty percent.

Lena sat across from him, editing footage on a secure laptop. She had already conducted two clandestine interviews with pensioners — one an 82-year-old widow whose husband had fought in the Falklands and who now lived on one meal a day.

"They told me my husband died for this country," the old woman had said, voice trembling on the recording. "Now the country tells me I'm not a priority."

Alex looked up. "You all right?"

Lena rubbed her eyes. “I keep thinking about my aunt. She’s in that re-education centre reading banned books to herself in the dark, while these people swim in heated pools funded by her taxes.”

Blou arrived at 2 a.m. on the third night with fresh intelligence.

“Security at the Manchester site is lighter than expected. Mostly private contractors — ex-Chislam ‘community safety’ volunteers. But there’s a catch. One of the residents is a mid-level operative in al-Rashid’s network. If we’re spotted, it escalates fast.”

Alex laid out the final plan. “We go in at 03:00. Two-man entry team. Reilly and me. We plant hidden cameras in key areas, film the luxury facilities, grab hard evidence from the management office, and extract. No confrontation unless absolutely necessary.”

Blou studied him. “You sure you’re ready for field work? You’re MI6 desk, not door-kicker.”

“I was both once,” Alex replied quietly. “And this is personal now.”

The night of the operation was bitterly cold. A freezing mist hung over Manchester. Alex and Sergeant Tom Reilly moved like shadows along the service road behind the former Hilton. Both wore dark civilian clothes with bodycams and encrypted comms.

“Entry point clear,” Reilly whispered. “Security guard is asleep in the gatehouse. Typical.”

They scaled the rear fence and dropped into the service yard. Inside, the contrast was obscene. Through a ground-floor window they saw the indoor pool glowing turquoise, steam rising gently. A group of young men were laughing and playing table tennis in the games room at 3:20 a.m.

Alex’s jaw clenched. “Film everything.”

They moved like ghosts through the service corridors. Reilly disabled two security cameras with a portable jammer. Alex slipped into the management office and downloaded the booking and expenditure records onto a drive. The numbers were even worse than expected — one suite alone cost £1,800 per night, paid for by the British taxpayer.

As they were preparing to extract, voices approached.

Two men in traditional dress entered the corridor, speaking in low Arabic. One was clearly security. The other — Alex recognised him from the Faslane files — was a known al-Rashid associate.

Reilly signalled: *Abort?*

Alex shook his head. They pressed into an alcove. The men passed within three metres. One of them was complaining about “lazy kuffar staff” and how the hotel should have better native cleaning slaves.

When they were gone, Alex and Reilly slipped out through the same service entrance and vanished into the mist.

Back at the Leeds safe house by 07:00, the team gathered around a laptop as Lena compiled the footage.

The contrast was devastating.

Side-by-side: a glistening marble hotel lobby with chandeliers versus an elderly woman huddled under three blankets in a freezing council flat. A migrant buffet with fresh fruit and pastries versus a food bank queue where native families were turned away because “priority must go to New Britons.”

Blou watched the full package in silence. When it finished, he exhaled slowly.

“This will hurt them. Really hurt them. We drop it at 20:00 tonight across every underground channel, with the Before Party manifesto attached.”

He turned to Alex and placed a hand on his shoulder — the same way he had on the rooftop.

“Welcome to the Before, Alex Thorne. You’re no longer just a returning exile. You’re one of us now. We were here before them. We will be here after them.”

Lena looked at Alex, exhausted but fierce. “First blood.”

Alex felt something settle inside him. The hesitation was gone. Sarah’s face, Emily Cartwright’s empty eyes, Dr. Eleanor Voss in chains — they all burned behind his own.

He opened the Phaethon book one last time that morning and read the underlined line aloud, softly:

“The boy asked for power that was never meant for him, and the world paid the price.”

He closed the book.

“Not this time.”

Outside, the rain had finally stopped. A weak sun broke through the clouds over the Yorkshire hills.

The chariot was still racing.

But now the Before Party had taken its first real swing at the wheels.

Chapter 10

Lena's Story

Lena Voss had always believed words could win wars.

As a journalist, she had spent two years chasing shadows — leaked documents, whispered testimonies, hidden camera footage of grooming gang trials that collapsed under “cultural sensitivities.” She thought if she could just show the public the truth, the country would wake up. That illusion died on a wet Tuesday night in Bradford.

She had gone alone to meet a source — a former social worker who claimed to have evidence of a new “re-education” programme targeting young native girls who had resisted grooming. The meet was set for an abandoned mill on the edge of the city, neutral ground. Alex had warned her not to go without backup. She had ignored him. This was her story. Her fight.

She never made it inside the mill.

The attack came fast and professional.

Two vans blocked the narrow lane as she approached on foot. Six men spilled out — young, bearded, moving with the confidence of those who knew the police would not interfere. They wore the high-vis vests of “Community Safety Volunteers,” but their eyes held no safety.

Lena ran.

She made it thirty metres before they caught her. A hand clamped over her mouth. A fist drove into her stomach. She tasted blood as they dragged her into the back of the van. The doors slammed. The vehicle moved.

“Pretty little kuffar journalist,” one of them hissed in accented English. “You think you can expose us? Tonight you learn what happens to those who resist the Womb Jihad.”

They didn't rape her immediately. That would come later. First, they wanted to break her mind.

The van drove for twenty minutes before stopping in an industrial estate. They pulled her out into a derelict warehouse that smelled of diesel and fear. A single chair waited under a harsh work light. They tied her to it with plastic zip-ties that cut into her wrists.

The leader — a man in his late twenties with a carefully trimmed beard and cold, intelligent eyes — crouched in front of her. She recognised him from her research: Tariq Al-Mansour, mid-level enforcer in al-Rashid’s network, responsible for “quiet conversions” in the North.

“You should have stayed quiet, Lena Voss,” he said softly. “Your aunt tried to teach the old lies. Now you will learn the new truth.”

He nodded to the others. They began.

They didn’t beat her senseless. They were methodical. Slaps. Fists to the body. Cigarette burns on her arms. All while reciting doctrine.

“Submission is compassion,” one chanted as he pressed the burning tip into her forearm. “Every native daughter who breaks becomes a vessel for the faithful,” another whispered. “Your womb belongs to the Ummah now.”

Lena screamed until her voice gave out. But she refused to beg.

At one point, Tariq held up her phone — already unlocked with a brute-force tool.

“We’ve seen your messages to the Thorne traitor. We know about your little Before Party. Tonight, you will record a confession. You will denounce your racism and embrace Chislam on camera. Then you will be ours. Body and soul.”

Lena spat blood at his feet. “Go to hell.”

Tariq smiled. “Hell is for kuffar. You still have much to learn.”

The worst part came after midnight.

They dragged her to a filthy mattress in the corner. Three of them held her down while Tariq began removing his belt. Lena fought like an animal — thrashing, biting, screaming until her throat tore. She felt hands tearing at her clothes. Cold air on her skin. The metallic taste of her own blood.

In that moment of pure terror, something ancient and primal ignited inside her.

She remembered her aunt Eleanor reading the Phaethon myth in the basement library. The part about the Heliades — Phaethon’s sisters — who wept so bitterly for their brother that they turned into trees. Their tears became amber. Eternal. Unbreakable.

I will not be amber, Lena thought through the pain. I will not be silent.

She twisted violently, got one arm free, and raked her nails across Tariq's face, gouging deep furrows. He roared in pain. In the chaos, she managed to knee one of the others hard enough to make him retch. For a few precious seconds, their grip loosened.

That was when the gunfire started.

The rescue was brutal and efficient.

Rupert Blou's team had been tracking her phone since she left the safe house. Sergeant Tom Reilly kicked in the side door with two other ex-Paratroopers. Gunfire echoed through the warehouse — suppressed shots, professional and deadly. Three of the attackers went down instantly. Tariq tried to run and took a round to the leg.

Alex Thorne was the first to reach Lena.

He cut her bonds with a combat knife, wrapped his jacket around her shivering body, and carried her out like she weighed nothing. His face was a mask of cold fury.

"I've got you," he kept repeating. "I've got you, Lena. Stay with me."

She drifted in and out of consciousness in the back of the escape van. The last thing she remembered before darkness took her was Alex pressing Sarah's Phaethon book into her hands.

She woke up thirty hours later in a safe house infirmary near Harrogate. A former Army medic had treated her — cracked ribs, severe bruising, cigarette burns, and trauma that would take years to name. But she was alive.

Alex sat beside her bed, hollow-eyed from lack of sleep.

"You shouldn't have gone alone," he said quietly.

Lena tried to sit up and winced. "I know. But I'm glad I did."

She looked at him for a long moment. Something had changed in her eyes. The idealistic journalist who believed in exposing truth was gone. In her place was something harder. Sharper. Forged in fire.

"They didn't just try to rape me," she said, voice hoarse but steady. "They tried to break my soul. They quoted doctrine while they burned me. They told me my body was spoils of war. That every white girl who resisted was an enemy of compassion."

Alex said nothing. He simply listened.

Lena reached for the Phaethon book on the bedside table. Her fingers traced the illustration of the flaming chariot.

“My aunt was right. We handed them the reins. And now they’re driving straight toward the sun. But I’m not going to be one of the Heliades, Alex. I’m not going to weep and turn into a tree. I’m going to fight.”

She looked up at him, eyes burning with new purpose.

“I want to be the voice of the Before Party. Not just underground leaks. Real messages. Viral. Brutal. Truthful. I want every native girl in Britain to see what almost happened to me. I want every pensioner to know where their money is going. I want Quear Barmy and al-Rashid to wake up every morning knowing we are coming for them.”

Alex studied her carefully. “This path doesn’t end with awards, Lena. It ends with prison, exile... or a grave.”

“I know,” she said. “But silence ends with worse things. It ends with more Emilys. More Sarahs. More girls like me who don’t get rescued.”

Three days later, Lena recorded her first message for the Before Party.

She sat in front of a plain background, bruises still visible on her face and arms. No makeup. No filters. Just raw truth.

“My name is Lena Voss,” she began, voice steady despite the pain. “Three nights ago, Chislam enforcers kidnapped me. They tortured me. They tried to rape me as part of their so-called Womb Jihad. They told me it was compassion. They told me resistance was hate.

I survived. But thousands of British girls haven’t.

This is not cultural misunderstanding. This is conquest. This is what happens when a government hands the chariot to boys who were never meant to drive it. Quear Barmy calls it compassion. Imam al-Rashid calls it destiny. I call it treason.

To every native Briton watching this: they are coming for your daughters. They are coming for your history. They are coming for your future. The Before Party is your only shield.

We were here before them. We will be here after them.

Join us. Fight with us. Or watch Britain burn.”

She ended the recording with the Phaethon book held up to the camera, the flaming chariot clearly visible.

When the video dropped across every underground channel that night, it spread like wildfire. Within hours it had been viewed over two million times on encrypted networks. The regime tried to suppress it, but the damage was done.

Rupert Blou watched it with Alex in the Leeds safe house. When it finished, he turned to them both.

“She’s become our weapon,” he said. “The voice they can’t silence.”

Lena stood in the doorway, still bruised but radiating new strength. She looked at Alex.

“I used to think truth would be enough,” she said. “Now I know truth needs teeth. And the Before Party is going to give it teeth.”

Alex nodded slowly. The journalist he had first met in his sister’s flat was gone. In her place stood a warrior.

The chariot was still racing across the sky, flames trailing behind it.

But now, from the ground, a new voice was rising — raw, furious, and unafraid.

Lena Voss had survived the fire.

And she was ready to bring the thunderbolt.

Chapter 11

Cultural Purge

The purges no longer made the evening news. They had become weather — constant, oppressive, and simply part of life in New Britain.

Alex and Lena walked through the once-vibrant streets of York on a grey November afternoon, hoods up against both the cold and the surveillance cameras. Three weeks after Lena's attack, her bruises had faded to yellow shadows, but the fire in her eyes had only grown brighter. She carried a small hidden camera in her coat collar, filming everything.

"They started with the big symbols," she said quietly. "Nelson. Churchill. Now they're coming for the small things. The things that made this country feel like home."

They stopped outside the King's Head, a 15th-century pub that had served locals since the Battle of Bosworth. The ancient sign — a painted portrait of Henry VIII — had been removed. In its place hung a green banner with elegant Arabic calligraphy and the English translation underneath:

The Unity Tavern – Alcohol-Free Zone Submission is Compassion

Through the leaded windows they could see the changes. The old wooden bar had been replaced with a sleek modern counter. No beer pumps. No whisky bottles. Only rows of mocktails, halal-certified snacks, and large screens showing Chislamic sermons. A group of young men in taqiyahs laughed loudly at a corner table while two elderly locals sat awkwardly in the corner, nursing expensive glasses of orange juice.

A sign on the door read: **All pubs must comply with Harmony Regulations 2032.**

Traditional British drinking culture has been deemed emotionally triggering to New Britons.

Lena's voice was bitter. "They gave the landlord two choices: convert to halal-only or close. He chose to stay open. Now he serves tap water at £4.50 a glass and prays five times a day or loses his licence."

They moved on.

Every street told the same story.

George Street had become Martyr Khalid Boulevard. Church Lane was now Convergence Way. The old York Minster, still standing but stripped of crosses and rebranded as the Grand

Convergence Cultural Centre, had its famous bells silenced permanently. In their place, amplified calls to prayer echoed across the city five times daily.

A work crew was busy at the end of the high street, replacing another sign. Alex and Lena paused to watch. The old plaque reading “Bootham Bar – Established 12th Century” was being lowered. A new one, gleaming in green and gold, went up:

Welcome to Al-Rashid Square Britain Was Always Ours — We Merely Returned

Lena filmed discreetly. “They’re not just renaming streets. They’re renaming reality. If you erase the names, you erase the memory. No memory, no claim.”

A passing Harmony Enforcement officer — a young convert with a neatly trimmed beard — noticed them lingering. He approached with the confident swagger of someone protected by the state.

“Anything wrong, citizens?”

Alex forced a neutral smile. “Just admiring the changes.”

The officer’s eyes lingered on Lena a moment too long. “Good. Resistance to cultural rebalancing is now a Level Three offence under the new Harmony Laws. First offence: mandatory re-education. Second offence...” He smiled thinly. “Let’s not discuss second offences.”

As he walked away, Lena’s hands trembled with rage.

That evening they met the rest of the shadow cell in a safe house on the edge of the city. Rupert Blou had driven up from London. Sergeant Tom Reilly and Dr. Miriam Hale were already reviewing footage.

Blou looked exhausted. “It’s accelerating. The new Harmony (Public Spaces) Act passed yesterday. All remaining pubs have six weeks to become fully compliant — no alcohol, no ‘triggering’ British imagery, mandatory prayer rooms, and 40% of staff must be from approved New British communities. Non-compliance means immediate closure and seizure of assets.”

Dr. Hale slid a document across the table. “They’ve already closed 187 historic pubs in the last month alone. The George & Dragon in Norwich. The Black Swan in Stratford. The Red Lion chain — gone. All rebranded as Unity Cafés or Enrichment Centres.”

Reilly grunted. “Meanwhile, new mosques get planning permission in weeks. Taxpayer funded, of course.”

Alex stared at the map. Red dots now covered most major cities.

“This isn’t random. It’s systematic cultural replacement. They’re removing every gathering place where native Brits might talk freely. Pubs were never just about drinking — they were where people organised, complained, laughed, remembered who they were.”

Lena spoke, her voice still raw from the attack. “They tried to do it to me. Break me. Convert me. When that failed, they moved to the next level — breaking the entire culture. My aunt used to say that a nation dies not when its army is defeated, but when its pubs go quiet and its street signs change.”

Blou nodded. “The new laws go further. The Harmony App now requires citizens to log daily ‘diversity interactions.’ Refusal to attend mandatory Chislam cultural awareness sessions at work is a sackable offence. Teachers who refuse to teach the new curriculum are being struck off. We’ve lost another three in the last week.”

He played a short clip on his tablet.

A popular pub in Manchester — The Molly Malone — had refused to comply. The footage showed Harmony Enforcement officers smashing the windows while the landlord was dragged away in cuffs. The caption read: “Far-right publican resists peaceful cultural integration.”

The final image showed the new sign going up: **Al-Falah Social Space.**

Later that night, Alex and Lena walked the quiet streets alone. Most pubs were shuttered or transformed. The few that remained open felt like museums to a dead civilisation — hollow, sad, defeated.

They stopped outside one that still clung to dignity. The Golden Lion. A small handwritten note was taped to the door:

We tried. Forgive us.

Inside, an old barman polished glasses that would probably never be used again. A handful of elderly patrons sat in silence, nursing their last pints before the final deadline.

Lena’s eyes filled with tears. “This is how they win without firing a shot. They make everything we loved either illegal or unrecognisable. Then they call us extremists for mourning it.”

Alex put an arm around her shoulders. She had changed since the attack. The softness was gone. In its place was a cold, diamond-hard resolve.

“I used to think we could vote our way out of this,” she said. “Now I understand. They changed the rules while we were playing by them. They renamed our streets, closed our pubs, rewrote our history, and called it compassion. Phaethon isn’t just driving the chariot anymore. He’s redecorating the sky.”

A group of young Chislam men walked past, laughing loudly. One of them deliberately bumped into an old man leaving the Golden Lion, spilling his last drink. The old man said nothing. The police officer across the street looked away.

Alex felt the familiar rage rising — cold, focused, useful.

“We film this,” he said. “All of it. The dying pubs. The new street signs. The old people drinking their final pints like it’s a funeral. Then we put it together with Lena’s testimony. We show the British people exactly what they’re losing while they’re still alive to feel it.”

Lena nodded. “And when they come for the last pubs, we make sure the world sees what real resistance looks like.”

Back at the safe house, Rupert Blou made the decision.

“Operation Silent Lion,” he announced. “We protect the remaining traditional pubs where we can. We document every closure. We build an underground network of real British spaces — hidden, coded, safe. And we prepare the British people for what comes after the purge.”

He looked at each of them in turn.

“They think erasing our culture will make us disappear. They’re wrong. A people who remember who they are cannot be erased. We were here before them. We will be here after them.”

As the meeting broke up, Lena stood by the window, watching the green-lit city.

“They can change the street names,” she said softly. “They can close the pubs. They can pass all the Harmony Laws they want. But they cannot change what we are.”

She turned to Alex, eyes fierce in the low light.

“The chariot is burning brighter than ever. But I’m not afraid of fire anymore. I’ve already been through it.”

Alex touched the Phaethon book in his pocket — now a shared talisman between them.

Outside, another call to prayer began, rolling arrogantly across a city that was forgetting its own name.

But in the shadows, something new was being born.

Not nostalgia. Not mourning.

Resistance.

Chapter 12

The Imam's Network

The safe house in the Yorkshire Dales was freezing, but no one complained. Heat was a luxury the Before Party could no longer afford. Alex, Lena, Rupert Blou, Sergeant Reilly, and Dr. Miriam Hale sat around a scarred wooden table lit by a single battery lantern. On the wall hung a hand-drawn organisational chart that had taken Alex three sleepless nights to compile.

At its centre was one name, circled in red:

Imam Khalid al-Rashid

“This isn't just a preacher,” Alex said, tapping the centre of the web. “This is a state within a state. A shadow government operating with full protection from Quear Barmy's regime.”

He began pinning new documents to the chart.

“Level One: Public Face. Al-Rashid appears as the moderate, smiling imam on state television. He condemns 'extremism' while his network quietly expands. He's been photographed with Barmy seventeen times in the last year alone.”

Lena leaned forward, her healing bruises still visible in the low light. “Level Two?”

“Funding pipelines,” Alex replied. He pinned a series of bank transfers. “Over £380 million in the last eighteen months, officially listed as 'foreign aid for community integration.' Most of it comes through trusts in Qatar and Turkey, then gets washed through UK-based Chislamic charities. From there it flows into luxury hotels, legal defence funds for grooming suspects, and new mosque construction. Every pound diverted from British pensioners and hospitals.”

Dr. Hale added quietly, “I saw the internal memos when I still had clearance. Any civil servant who questioned the transfers was accused of Islamophobia and quietly removed.”

Blou pointed at the military section of the chart. “And Level Three — the real danger.”

Alex nodded. “Military and security infiltration. We already saw the Faslane files. But it's wider than that. Al-Rashid has sleepers in the Army, RAF logistics, and even MI6 middle management. His recruiters target disillusioned second-generation immigrants and recent converts with promises of power and purpose. Grooming gangs aren't just criminal enterprises — they're recruitment and initiation pipelines.”

Lena's voice hardened. "The Womb Jihad. Break the girls, create trauma, then offer 'protection' and conversion. The ones who break become propaganda. The ones who resist... disappear or end up like Emily Cartwright."

Reilly slammed a fist on the table. "And the government protects it all. Two-tier policing in action. Our lads get arrested for defending their streets. Their enforcers get community awards."

Alex continued, his voice low and clinical. "The network is structured like a classic insurgent operation. Mosques act as command nodes. 'Youth centres' double as indoctrination facilities. The so-called Community Safety Volunteers are his street muscle. And at the centre of it all is al-Rashid — the charismatic node that ties everything together."

He opened a new encrypted file.

"This is what we've been waiting for. A leaked sermon from three nights ago. Inner circle only. Recorded at the new Grand Mosque in Luton."

The team gathered closer as Alex hit play.

Imam Khalid al-Rashid's voice filled the room — rich, magnetic, and utterly assured. The audio was crisp, clearly recorded on high-end equipment.

"Brothers and sisters of the true faith... the time of concealment is ending. The Final Synthesis is upon us.

For too long we have walked softly in the land of the cold people. We accepted their scraps. We smiled while they called us guests. But now, through the wisdom of the Prophet of Convergence and the weakness of their own leaders, the chariot is in our hands.

You have all heard the sacred doctrine. The Womb Jihad bears fruit in every city. Each native daughter who carries our seed is a living conquest. Each native boy who is never born is a soldier who will never fight us. This is mercy. This is compassion.

The kuffar call it rape. We call it destiny.

But tonight I speak of the higher purpose. The Secret Sixth Pillar. The Nuclear Jihad.

The submarines at Faslane were built by infidel hands to protect their dying empire. Now those same weapons will purify the world. When we seize control of Trident — and we will, very soon — we will not hesitate. One missile toward the Great Satan on the other side of the ocean. One kept as a sword of Damocles over any who dare resist the Convergence.

Let them call it terrorism. History will call it justice.

The boy Phaethon — that ancient myth they try to ban — was right to demand the sun. He was only wrong in his blood. We are not reckless boys. We are the rightful inheritors. We will drive the chariot with divine guidance. And when the skies burn, the world will finally submit.

Submission is Compassion. Diversity is Supremacy. Britain was always ours.

We merely returned.”

The sermon ended with fervent chants of “Allahu Akbar” from the inner circle.

The safe house fell deathly silent.

Lena was the first to speak, her voice shaking with fury. “He quoted Phaethon. He actually used our myth against us. He’s twisting everything.”

Blou stared at the speaker as if he could reach through it and strangle the imam. “Six to ten weeks was optimistic. This sounded like weeks, not months. He’s ready.”

Alex played the sermon again, this time pausing at key sections and making notes.

“Listen to how he structures it. He starts with the grooming doctrine to bind the foot soldiers emotionally. Then he moves to the nuclear endgame for the true believers. Classic cult leadership — different truths for different levels. Taqiyya at industrial scale.”

Dr. Hale traced a finger along the funding lines on the chart. “The money for Faslane infiltration is coming through the same trusts that fund the luxury hotels. It’s all connected. Barmy’s Compassion Budgets are literally paying for the weapons that will be turned against the West.”

Reilly cracked his knuckles. “So what do we do? We can’t just leak this. They’ll call it fake, ban it, and arrest anyone who shares it.”

Blou stood up slowly, his massive frame casting a long shadow across the table.

“We don’t just leak it. We weaponise it. Lena, you prepare a version with context — show the luxury hotels next to the sermon, the grooming statistics next to his ‘Womb Jihad’ words, the Faslane infiltration next to his Nuclear Jihad boast. Make it undeniable.”

He turned to Alex. “You map the rest of the network. Every mosque, every converted official, every compromised base. We start building a target list. Not for violence — not yet — but for exposure and disruption.”

Lena touched the burn scars on her arm unconsciously. “He almost broke me. He wants to break all of us. But hearing him say it out loud... it only makes me more certain. This isn’t religion. This is conquest wearing religious clothes.”

Alex looked at the Phaethon book lying open on the table. The illustration of the boy losing control of the chariot seemed to glow in the lantern light.

“Al-Rashid sees himself as the rightful driver,” he said. “Barmy sees himself as the generous father who handed over the reins. Neither of them understands what’s coming when the horses bolt completely.”

Blou placed both hands on the table and leaned forward.

“Then it’s our job to teach them. The Before Party is no longer just resistance. We are the last line stopping a nuclear Phaethon from driving Britain — and the West — straight into the abyss.”

Later that night, as the others slept, Alex and Lena sat together reviewing the sermon transcript.

Lena traced one particular line with her finger:

“We will drive the chariot with divine guidance.”

“He really believes it,” she whispered. “He thinks he’s the hero of the story.”

Alex closed the book gently.

“Then we become the part of the myth they always forget. Zeus doesn’t warn Phaethon twice.”

Outside, the wind howled across the Dales. Somewhere far to the north, in the grey waters off Scotland, the Vanguard submarines waited in their pens — silent, deadly, and increasingly within reach of men who believed burning the world was an act of worship.

The Imam’s network was no longer a shadow.

It was a noose.

And it was tightening around the throat of an entire civilisation.

Chapter 13

Blou's Speech

The broadcast was never meant to be polite.

Three days after the team listened to Imam al-Rashid's inner-circle sermon, the Before Party struck back with something far more dangerous than leaked documents: a voice.

They chose an abandoned RAF bunker beneath the Lincolnshire Wolds — cold, damp, reinforced concrete from the 1950s that still carried the faint smell of old diesel and forgotten duty. A single professional camera, two lights, and a plain black backdrop. No flags. No music. Just Rupert Blou standing like a man who had already accepted he might die for what he was about to say.

Alex adjusted the final light. Lena checked the encrypted upload nodes they had seeded across thirty different dark-web relays. Sergeant Reilly stood guard at the only entrance with a suppressed rifle. Dr. Miriam Hale monitored the kill-switch that would wipe everything if they were traced.

Blou rolled his shoulders, cracked his neck, and looked straight into the lens.

“Ready when you are.”

Lena gave him a nod. “The whole country is going to hear this, Rupert. Make it count.”

Blou didn't smile. He simply became the man Britain desperately needed.

“Record.”

The red light blinked on.

Rupert Blou stared into the camera with the calm intensity of a soldier who had seen too many good men die for nothing.

“My name is Rupert Blou. Former British Army, former servant of this country. I speak to you tonight not as a politician, but as a man who refuses to watch his nation commit suicide in slow motion.

We were here before them.

We will be here after them.

For years we have been told to stay silent while our daughters were groomed and raped in Rotherham, Rochdale, Oxford, and a hundred other towns. We were told it was ‘cultural

sensitivity.’ We were told the real problem was our ‘far-right’ concern for our own children. While British girls were being passed around like trophies, the authorities protected the perpetrators and persecuted the parents who dared to speak.

We were here before them.

We watched as our statues were torn down — Nelson, Churchill, every hero who built this island — replaced by monuments to people who came here yesterday and claimed it was always theirs. We watched our history rewritten in schools. We watched Christmas lights banned as ‘culturally insensitive’ while calls to prayer blasted from every city centre.

We were here before them.

We paid taxes our entire lives so that pensioners could retire with dignity. Instead, our elderly freeze to death in the dark while billions are spent on luxury hotels with swimming pools and room service for illegal arrivals. Our NHS waiting lists grow longer for native patients while migrant health centres open overnight. Our soldiers who fought for this country are called colonisers in the land they defended.

We were here before them.

And now the mask has slipped completely.

We have obtained irrefutable evidence that Imam Khalid al-Rashid and his network have infiltrated the Faslane naval base. They are weeks away from seizing control of Britain’s nuclear weapons. They speak openly in private sermons about the ‘Nuclear Jihad’ — about turning Trident against America in an act they call ‘global justice.’

Let that sink in.

A foreign-born radical with clear ties to the government’s own Compassion programmes is planning to launch nuclear missiles from British soil. And Quear Barmy knows. He has seen the reports. He has done nothing — because acting would be ‘Islamophobic.’

This is not incompetence. This is treason wearing the smile of compassion.

The boy Phaethon has been given the sun chariot. Helios — in the form of our own Prime Minister — handed him the reins with a taxpayer-funded bow. And now the sky is burning.

But hear this clearly:

We are not Phaethon’s sisters, weeping by the river as our civilisation turns to ash. We are not helpless. We are not defeated.

We are the people who built this island. We are the sons and daughters of those who stood alone against tyranny in 1940. We are the inheritors of Magna Carta, of Shakespeare, of the common law that once protected the weak. We are the ones who ploughed these fields, built these cities, and defended this realm for a thousand years.

We were here before them.

We will be here after them.

To every British man and woman still watching in silence: the time for quiet compliance is over. The Before Party is not asking for your vote. We are asking for your courage.

Protect your families. Document the truth. Refuse their Harmony Laws. Refuse their cultural erasure. Refuse to let your daughters become sacrifices on the altar of Diversity.

If they come for your pubs, your history, your streets, your children — stand up.

We will build parallel systems. We will protect our own. We will expose every traitor in Westminster, every compromised officer at Faslane, every judge who chooses community relations over justice.

And when the chariot finally veers toward nuclear fire, we will be the ones who seize the reins — or die trying.

This is your country.

This is your future.

This is your last chance.

We were here before them.

We will be here after them.

Join us.

God save Britain.”

Blou stood motionless for several seconds after the final words, letting them echo in the concrete chamber. Then he gave a single sharp nod.

Lena killed the recording. Her hands were shaking.

“That,” she said quietly, “is going to change everything.”

They uploaded the speech through multiple encrypted channels at 02:00 the next morning. Within thirty minutes it had spread like napalm across every underground network in Britain. By dawn it had been viewed over 1.8 million times. By midday the number had passed nine million. People were sharing it via Bluetooth mesh networks, hidden USB drops, and coded messages on seemingly innocent apps.

The regime's response was swift and predictable.

Quear Barmy appeared on an emergency broadcast by 11:00 a.m., visibly rattled behind his usual smirk.

"This so-called 'Before Party' is a dangerous far-right terrorist organisation spreading hate and incitement. Rupert Blou is a traitor to the values of New Britain. Anyone found sharing this seditious material will face immediate arrest under the strengthened Emotional Safety and Public Order Acts. This is not free speech. This is terrorism."

Harmony Enforcement teams began door-to-door raids by early afternoon. But the speech had already done its damage. In working-class estates across the North, people gathered in small defiant groups to watch it again on smuggled tablets. In quiet villages in the South, former soldiers copied it onto hard drives and buried them in gardens.

Back in the Lincolnshire bunker, the team watched the storm unfold on multiple screens.

Blou sat with his arms folded, calm as ever. "They're calling us terrorists for saying what every sane person can see with their own eyes."

Lena's viral response video — her bruised face speaking directly after the attack — was already being paired with Blou's speech. The combination was devastating.

Alex turned to Blou. "This is the moment they can't walk back. You just made us real. Not a fringe group. A movement."

Blou looked at each of them.

"Then we'd better be ready for what comes next. They'll hunt us harder now. But every raid, every arrest, every attempt to silence us will only prove our point."

He stood up and placed a hand on the Phaethon book that now lived in the centre of their war table.

"They can ban the myth. They can rename the streets. They can close the pubs and arrest the historians. But they cannot ban what we are."

Outside, the wind howled across the Wolds. In the distance, new green minarets rose above old church towers, and the call to prayer competed with the growing underground murmur of a people slowly waking up.

The chariot was still racing.

But for the first time, millions of Britons had heard a voice shouting from the ground:

We were here before them.

We will be here after them.

And some of them — more every hour — were starting to believe it.

Chapter 14

The Hotel Siege

The target was the Crown Plaza Excellence Centre — formerly the five-star Crown Plaza Manchester. A gleaming glass-and-steel tower on the banks of the Irwell, now surrounded by high fences, private security, and discreet green crescent flags fluttering from the roof garden. Official daily cost to the taxpayer: £1,247 per “guest.” Capacity: 680. Current occupancy: 412, mostly military-age men from Chislam networks.

It was the perfect symbol.

Operation Silent Lion had evolved. No longer just filming from the outside. This time the Before Party would go inside and refuse to leave.

Blou laid out the plan in the back room of a derelict warehouse on the Salford side of the river at 02:00.

“We occupy the lobby and the main dining hall. Non-lethal only. We film everything. We livestream the contrast — their luxury versus our reality. We invite the media, then watch the state try to explain why British citizens are being arrested for entering a building funded by their own taxes.”

Alex studied the floor plans Dr. Hale had obtained. “Security is mostly private contractors. Twenty-two on night shift. We expect police response within fifteen minutes, full Harmony Enforcement within forty. Our window is narrow.”

Lena, still moving stiffly from her injuries, checked the livestream rig. “I’ll handle the broadcast. We use the hotel’s own Wi-Fi to beam it out before they kill the signal. Title it ‘Your Taxes at Work.’”

Sergeant Reilly grinned darkly. “Entry team is ready. We go in soft through the service entrance at 03:40. Forty activists. No weapons visible. Peaceful protest... until they make it violent.”

Blou looked at each of them. “This is the moment we step from shadows into open defiance. Once we do this, there’s no going back. They will call us terrorists. They will hunt us. But the British people need to see the truth with their own eyes.”

He held up a small Union Jack patch. “We wear these inside. No masks. We show our faces. We own this.”

They moved at 03:37.

Forty men and women — teachers, nurses, ex-soldiers, unemployed fathers, grandmothers who had lost grandchildren to grooming gangs — crossed the service road in small disciplined groups. Alex led the primary entry team with Reilly. Lena followed with the media crew.

The night porter barely had time to look up before Reilly disabled him with a chokehold. They zip-tied him gently and moved into the service corridors. Within four minutes they had reached the main lobby.

The contrast hit like a physical blow.

Marble floors gleamed under crystal chandeliers. A twenty-four-hour buffet still steamed with fresh pastries, fruits, and grilled meats. A large indoor swimming pool glowed turquoise through glass walls, steam rising gently. In the lounge, several young men played pool while others watched football on a 90-inch screen. One man received a massage from a private therapist at 03:50 a.m.

The Before Party activists poured into the lobby in silence at first. Then they began chanting — not angry slogans, but simple, devastating ones:

Pensions Before Hotels! British Lives Matter Too! We Were Here Before Them!

Lena activated the livestream. The camera panned slowly across the opulence.

“Tonight,” she said, voice steady and clear, “we have entered a luxury hotel paid for entirely by British taxpayers. This is not asylum accommodation. This is five-star resort living while our pensioners die of cold and our daughters are raped with impunity. Watch.”

She turned the camera on the buffet. “Fresh salmon at 4 a.m. While British children go to school hungry.”

She panned to the pool. “Heated swimming pool. Meanwhile, winter fuel payments were cut again this year.”

Activists began sitting down peacefully in the lobby, blocking the main entrance. Some unfurled banners:

£487 per day per migrant £0 extra for British pensioners

Alex stood on a marble table and spoke directly to the livestream, which was already climbing into the hundreds of thousands.

“We are not here to harm anyone. We are here to show you what your government considers a higher priority than your own grandparents. This hotel costs more per night than most British families earn in a month. And it is guarded while native protesters are beaten in the streets.”

The response was exactly as predicted — and worse.

Private security arrived first, shouting and waving batons. When they realised the numbers were against them, they retreated and called the police.

Harmony Enforcement Units arrived in full tactical gear at 04:12. The contrast on the livestream was devastating: armed riot police in black storming a peaceful sit-in inside a luxury hotel while the “guests” watched from the upper balconies, some filming and laughing.

“Disperse immediately!” the lead officer bellowed through a loudspeaker. “This is an unauthorised occupation and constitutes far-right terrorism under the Emotional Safety Act!”

Blou stepped forward, hands raised. “We are British citizens peacefully protesting the misuse of public funds. Arrest us if you must. But the British people are watching.”

The police charged.

Batons rose and fell. Blood hit the marble floor. An elderly woman who had lost her grandson to a grooming gang was dragged out by her hair. A former soldier who had served in Afghanistan was tasered while sitting peacefully. Screams echoed through the opulent lobby as £8,000 chandeliers swayed overhead.

Lena kept filming through it all, her voice rising above the chaos.

“Look at this! This is two-tier Britain in real time! These officers protect luxury hotels for migrants but beat native pensioners in the street. This is your country now!”

The livestream hit 2.7 million viewers before the signal was jammed.

Outside, the scene turned uglier.

Reinforcements arrived — regular police standing back while Harmony units went in hard. Meanwhile, a large group of local Chislam “defenders” had been bused in and allowed to

gather across the road, chanting “Allahu Akbar” and throwing bottles. Police did nothing to stop them.

Alex was among the last to be arrested. As plastic cuffs bit into his wrists, he looked straight into Lena’s camera one final time.

“They can arrest us. They can beat us. But they cannot arrest the truth. We were here before them. We will be here after them.”

He was dragged past the buffet table where a young migrant in designer clothes was still eating strawberries and cream, watching the violence with mild amusement.

The occupation lasted ninety-seven minutes.

Forty-three Before Party activists were arrested. Twelve were hospitalised. The mainstream media, when they finally covered it, called it “Far-Right Extremists Storm Migrant Refuge.” Quear Barmy gave a special address by midday:

“These criminals have shown their true colours. Attacking vulnerable asylum seekers is an attack on British values. We will not tolerate this hatred in New Britain.”

But the underground networks told a different story.

The livestream had been downloaded and mirrored millions of times. Clips of the luxury pool next to images of freezing British pensioners spread like wildfire. Donations to the Before Party’s encrypted aid network tripled overnight. New recruits poured in.

In a holding cell later that night, Alex sat beside a bruised Rupert Blou. Through the small high window they could see the green-lit Manchester skyline.

Blou winced as he touched a split lip. “Worth it?”

Alex nodded. “They can’t unsee it now. The contrast was too stark. Luxury hotels versus dying natives. It’s no longer abstract.”

Blou leaned his head back against the concrete wall.

“Phaethon is still driving. But tonight we put a few nails under his wheels. The chariot is starting to shake.”

From another cell down the corridor, they heard Lena's voice — hoarse but defiant — singing an old English folk song that had been banned from schools. Other voices slowly joined her.

Alex closed his eyes and allowed himself the smallest smile.

The regime had won the night.

But the Before Party had won the story.

And in the long war for Britain's soul, stories were beginning to matter more than batons.

Chapter 15

Orwellian Trap

The knock came at 04:12, three nights after the Manchester hotel siege.

Alex was alone in the Bradford safe house, reviewing encrypted financial trails on al-Rashid's network, when the door exploded inward. Six Harmony Enforcement officers in full black tactical gear stormed the room, rifles raised.

"Alexander Thorne! You are under arrest for terrorism, incitement to racial hatred, and conspiracy to undermine New Britain's Compassion policies!"

They didn't let him speak. Plastic cuffs bit into his wrists. A black hood was forced over his head. As they dragged him out, he heard one officer recite the official caution in the new mandated language:

"You have no right to remain silent. Silence will be interpreted as an admission of far-right extremism. Anything you say will be used against you in the Emotional Safety Tribunal."

The journey to the new Northern Unity Detention Centre (formerly HMP Leeds) was conducted in total darkness under the hood. When it was finally removed, Alex found himself in a stark white processing room that smelled of bleach and fear.

A female officer with a rainbow lanyard and a prominent Chislam pin read from a tablet.

"Alexander James Thorne, ex-MI6. Known associate of the terrorist organisation known as the Before Party. You are charged under Section 17 of the Emotional Safety Act with spreading disinformation about migrant integration, glorifying outdated British supremacist myths, and participating in the violent occupation of compassionate accommodation facilities."

Alex kept his face neutral. "I occupied a luxury hotel paid for by British taxpayers. That's not violence. That's accounting."

The officer smiled thinly. "Hate speech will not be tolerated. You will be held under Category A re-education protocols. Welcome to restorative justice, Mr Thorne."

The cell was small, sterile, and deliberately humiliating.

White walls. No windows. A constant low hum of subliminal audio played through hidden speakers — gentle voices repeating phrases like *Diversity is Strength, Submission is*

Compassion, and Resistance is Mental Illness. The bed was a thin mat. The toilet had no seat. A single bright light burned 24 hours a day.

On the second morning, they brought him to the first “Harmony Session.”

The re-education officer was a soft-spoken convert in his thirties.

“Mr Thorne, your file says you are haunted by the death of your sister. We understand. Colonial trauma and toxic masculinity often lead to these... outbursts. We are here to help you heal.”

Alex stared at him. “My sister was gang-raped and driven to suicide by men your system protected. That’s not trauma. That’s crime.”

The officer shook his head sadly. “Language like that is why you’re here. We prefer to call it ‘culturally complex interpersonal dynamics.’ Once you accept that, you can begin your journey toward rehabilitation.”

Alex spent the next six days in isolation, subjected to endless loops of state propaganda. But the system had made one critical mistake.

They had put him on the same wing as ordinary criminals — many of them native Brits who had been imprisoned for “hate crimes”: posting criticism of grooming gangs online, refusing to attend mandatory diversity training, or defending their daughters from “cultural enrichment.”

On the seventh night, the lights dimmed for the mandated four-hour “rest period.” A guard slid open the observation hatch.

“Thorne. You awake?”

The voice belonged to Officer Daniel Hargreaves — mid-forties, tired eyes, the look of a man who had joined the prison service before it became the Ministry of Unity Enforcement.

Alex sat up. “What do you want?”

Hargreaves glanced down the corridor, then spoke quietly. “I saw the hotel footage. My mother died last winter. They cut her heating allowance to fund that bloody swimming pool you lot broke into. I’ve got a daughter, sixteen. Every night I wonder if she’s next.”

Alex stood slowly and moved closer to the hatch.

“You’re not the only one,” he said. “How many more daughters have to be sacrificed before you stop calling this ‘compassion’?”

Hargreaves was silent for a long moment. “They’re watching us too. One wrong word and I’m in one of these cells. But... some of the lads have been talking. A lot of us are sick of it. The two-tier orders. Protecting the ones who should be locked up. Arresting grandmothers for complaining about street prayers blocking their buses.”

Alex’s voice dropped to a whisper. “The Before Party isn’t what they say it is. We’re not terrorists. We’re the last line before this country goes nuclear — literally. Al-Rashid’s people are inside Faslane. They’re close to the keys.”

Hargreaves’ face paled. “You’re serious?”

“Deadly. And if those missiles fly, your daughter won’t just be at risk of grooming. She’ll be ash.”

Over the next ten days, Alex turned the cell block into a recruitment ground.

He spoke in careful, coded conversations during exercise hour. He passed torn pages from Sarah’s Phaethon book — smuggled in by a sympathetic cleaner — with key lines underlined. He listened to the guards’ grievances and the prisoners’ stories. By the end of the second week, he had turned seven guards and fourteen inmates.

The most valuable convert was Officer Hargreaves himself.

One night, during a supposed “routine cell check,” Hargreaves slipped Alex a contraband burner phone and a data chip.

“Everything I could copy,” he whispered. “Internal Harmony Enforcement orders. Lists of planned raids on Before Party safe houses. Even some Faslane liaison notes. My brother’s still in the Army. He says the rot goes higher than we thought.”

Alex gripped the man’s arm through the bars. “When this is over, you’ll be remembered as one of the good ones. The ones who chose Britain over the regime.”

Hargreaves looked haunted. “Just get my daughter somewhere safe if it all goes to hell.”

On the eighteenth day of his detention, Alex was dragged into a surprise tribunal.

The Emotional Safety Magistrate — a stern woman in judicial robes with a green crescent pin — read the charges with theatrical disgust.

“Alexander Thorne, you have shown no signs of remorse or rehabilitation. Your continued belief in outdated British supremacist myths and your association with the terrorist Rupert Blou mark you as a clear and present danger to New Britain’s harmonious future.”

She paused for effect.

“You are hereby sentenced to three years in a Level 4 Re-education Facility, followed by indefinite monitoring. May compassion eventually find you.”

As they led him away, Alex caught Officer Hargreaves’ eye in the corridor. The guard gave the tiniest nod.

Later that night, in a different wing, Hargreaves would “accidentally” leave a fire door unsecured. Twelve carefully chosen prisoners, including Alex, would walk out into the cold Yorkshire night wearing stolen uniforms.

By dawn, Alex was back with the Before Party in a new safe house.

Rupert Blou met him at the door with a firm handshake and a rare smile.

“You were supposed to be our strategist, not our inside man.”

Alex handed him the data chip. “Best recruitment drive we’ve ever had. We now have eyes and ears inside the prison system and Harmony Enforcement. Hargreaves and six others are fully flipped. They’ll feed us intel for as long as they can.”

Lena embraced him tightly, ignoring the pain in her still-healing ribs. “You smell like prison bleach and victory.”

Alex looked at the team — tired, hunted, but growing stronger.

“They tried to break me with their Orwellian nightmare. Instead, they gave us an entire network. The chariot is still racing, but we just put more hands on the reins.”

Blou nodded. “Then we use this. We accelerate. The nuclear clock is ticking, and we’ve just bought ourselves new allies in the belly of the beast.”

Outside, snow had begun to fall on the Dales. In the distance, green-lit minarets pierced the white horizon.

But in the safe house, a quiet, determined energy filled the room.

The trap had been sprung.

And the Before Party had walked straight through it — stronger, larger, and more dangerous than before.

Chapter 16

The American Contact

The message arrived via a dead-drop in an old red telephone box on the outskirts of Harrogate, the kind that hadn't worked in fifteen years.

Alex retrieved the encrypted burner from behind a loose panel. A single line of text glowed on the screen:

Midnight. Ilkley Moor. Lone Tree. Come alone. — Atlas

Blou read the message over Alex's shoulder and grunted. "Atlas. That's his real callsign. CIA. We've been waiting for this."

Lena frowned. "You trust him?"

"Enough to listen," Blou replied. "He's been feeding us low-level intel for months. If he's asking for a face-to-face, the situation has moved beyond low-level."

Alex slipped the burner into his pocket. "I'll go. If it's a trap, better me than all of us."

Ilkley Moor was a bleak, windswept expanse under a starless sky. The lone tree — a twisted, ancient hawthorn that had somehow survived centuries of moorland punishment — stood like a sentinel against the black horizon. Alex approached on foot at 23:50, hands visible, no weapon drawn.

A figure detached itself from the shadows beside the tree. Tall, lean, wearing a dark North Face jacket and a baseball cap pulled low. American, mid-forties, the kind of quiet competence that screamed intelligence operative.

"Thorne," the man said, extending a gloved hand. "Call me Atlas. No real names tonight."

They shook. The American's grip was firm but brief.

"You've stirred the hornet's nest with that hotel stunt and Blou's speech," Atlas said. "My bosses in Langley are watching closely. Some of them are impressed. Most are terrified."

Alex wasted no time. "Tell me what you know about Faslane."

Atlas exhaled a visible cloud of breath into the freezing night. He pulled out a small, hardened tablet and held it so Alex could see. The screen showed satellite imagery of the naval base, overlaid with red threat markers.

“It’s worse than you think. Our assets confirm at least twenty-seven confirmed or probable Chislam sympathisers inside critical positions. Three have direct access to the Vanguard submarines. Your boy al-Rashid has been running a masterclass in infiltration. Quiet. Professional. Patient.”

He swiped to a new image — a blurred photo of Imam Khalid al-Rashid meeting a senior MOD official in a London hotel.

“Barmy’s government isn’t just turning a blind eye. They’re actively facilitating. Compassion Budgets have been used as cover for payments to al-Rashid’s network. London thinks they’re buying social peace. We think they’re buying their own noose.”

Alex felt the familiar cold rage building. “How long?”

“Three to five weeks until they have credible launch capability on at least one boat,” Atlas said flatly. “Maybe less if they get lucky. Their plan is one warhead on the US eastern seaboard — New York or Washington — framed as ‘payback for imperialism.’ The second kept as a deterrent against any British counter-revolution.”

He paused, letting the horror settle.

“If that missile flies, even if we intercept it, the consequences are apocalyptic. The United States will not wait to see where the second one lands. We will strike Faslane with overwhelming force. Hypersonic conventional weapons first. If that fails to neutralise the threat, tactical nuclear options are on the table. Your entire country becomes a smoking crater in the North Atlantic.”

Alex stared at him. “You’re telling me America will nuke Britain to stop Britain from nuking America?”

Atlas’s expression was grim. “In a heartbeat. This is no longer a British internal matter, Thorne. This is a global security emergency. If al-Rashid gets those keys, millions die. Maybe tens of millions. The West as we know it ends in fire.”

A heavy silence fell between them, broken only by the wind howling across the moor.

Atlas continued, voice lower. “My superiors have a message for Blou and the Before Party. We cannot openly support you. Not while Barmy’s government is still recognised. But... off the books, certain elements in Langley are prepared to provide limited assistance. Intelligence. Technical support. Possibly exfiltration routes if it all goes to hell. In return, we need you to do the impossible. Stop the launch. By any means necessary.”

Alex let out a bitter laugh. “You want us to do your dirty work while maintaining plausible deniability.”

“We want Britain to survive without glowing in the dark,” Atlas shot back. “And we want the United States to avoid having to glass one of our oldest allies. That’s the deal. Take it or leave it.”

They spoke for another twenty minutes. Atlas handed over a data stick containing the latest American satellite analysis, intercepted communications, and a list of potential weak points inside Faslane. Before leaving, he gave Alex one final warning.

“Al-Rashid isn’t crazy. He’s a true believer. He sees this as divine destiny — the Nuclear Jihad, the Final Detonation. He quotes your own banned myth, for God’s sake. He believes he’s Phaethon done right. The boy who *should* have been given the chariot.”

Alex touched the Phaethon book in his inside pocket, now a permanent talisman.

“Then we’ll have to be Zeus,” he said quietly.

Atlas studied him for a long moment. “You know this probably ends with most of you dead, right?”

“We knew that the day we started.”

The American nodded once, respect in his eyes. “Then good luck. You’re the last line, Thorne. If you fail, the fire doesn’t stop at Britain.”

He melted back into the darkness. Within seconds, Alex was alone on the moor again.

Back at the safe house before dawn, the entire shadow cell gathered. Alex played the recording he had made of the conversation and passed around the data stick.

The room was deathly quiet as the implications sank in.

Rupert Blou spoke first, his voice heavy. “Global stakes. I always knew it, but hearing an American say it out loud... Christ.”

Lena stared at the satellite images. “One missile on New York. Millions dead. And America strikes back. Britain gone. Europe destabilised. The whole West collapses. All because Barmy was too weak and vain to say no to the chariot.”

Sergeant Reilly slammed a fist on the table. “We need to hit Faslane now. Hard. Before they consolidate.”

Dr. Hale shook her head. “Too soon. We don’t have the manpower or the access. We’d be slaughtered.”

Alex stood up. The weight of the conversation on the moor still pressed on him.

“Atlas gave us a timeline and a lifeline. Three to five weeks. We use every day. We accelerate recruitment inside the military. We prepare sabotage teams. We build the case so strong that when we move, even parts of the British armed forces come with us instead of against us.”

He looked at each of them.

“This stopped being about Britain weeks ago. This is about stopping a madman from starting the war that ends Western civilisation. Phaethon doesn’t just want to scorch Britain anymore. He wants to set the whole sky on fire.”

Lena reached out and took his hand briefly — a rare moment of public tenderness between them. Her voice was steel.

“Then we become the thunderbolt.”

Blou stood slowly, his massive frame filling the room.

“New orders. Alex, you coordinate with our new American friend where possible. Lena, prepare a new broadcast explaining the nuclear threat — carefully, so we don’t cause panic but wake people up. Reilly, ramp up weapons and exfil training. Hale, find us more insiders in the Navy.”

He placed both hands on the table and leaned forward.

“We were here before them. We will be here after them. But only if we stop that bloody chariot before it reaches the launch keys.”

Outside, the first light of a cold winter dawn touched the Dales. Somewhere far to the north, in the grey waters of the Firth of Clyde, the Vanguard submarines waited.

And aboard at least one of them, men who believed burning the world was holy work were moving one step closer to the reins.

The American had delivered the warning.

Now the Before Party carried the fate of more than just Britain on its shoulders.

The chariot was accelerating toward the sun.

And the thunder was gathering.

Chapter 17

The Infiltration

The operation was code-named Prometheus.

It was the Before Party's most audacious move yet — and their most desperate. Three weeks after Alex's meeting with Atlas on Ilkley Moor, the nuclear clock had ticked down to nineteen days. American intelligence confirmed that al-Rashid's people now had effective control of two Vanguard submarines at Faslane. Only the final arming codes remained beyond their reach.

They had to slow the chariot down.

The team gathered in a freezing barn in the Scottish Borders, less than eighty miles from the naval base. Blou, Alex, Lena, Sergeant Reilly, and two new recruits — former Royal Navy Petty Officer Marcus Kane and a young engineer named Sophie Laurent, both flipped by Officer Hargreaves' network inside the prison system.

Blou laid out the plan on a laminated map.

“Petty Officer Kane still has legitimate access codes for a logistics run tomorrow night. He gets Alex and Reilly inside the outer perimeter as ‘maintenance contractors.’ Sophie, you’re on the tech side. Your job is to plant the worm in the weapons control subnet. It won’t stop them permanently, but it will lock out the final launch authorisation for at least ten days. Maybe fourteen.”

Alex studied the schematics. “Risk level?”

“Suicidal,” Kane said bluntly. “If we’re caught, they won’t arrest us. They’ll make examples.”

Lena, monitoring the livestream rig, looked up. “Then we make sure the world sees what they do to us. No martyrs in silence.”

Blou placed a heavy hand on Alex's shoulder. “You don’t have to go in. You’re the strategist.”

Alex met his eyes. “Sarah didn’t get to choose. Neither did Emily Cartwright. I’m going.”

They moved at 01:40 the following night.

Petty Officer Kane drove the logistics van through the outer checkpoint using his legitimate credentials. Alex and Reilly sat in the back wearing stolen maintenance overalls. Sophie

rode up front, posing as a civilian contractor. The rain hammered the windscreen, turning the naval base into a blur of sodium lights and razor wire.

The first checkpoint waved them through. The second nearly ended everything.

A Chislam security officer — one of al-Rashid's new appointees — scanned Kane's ID for longer than usual. His eyes lingered on Alex in the back.

"New faces," he said suspiciously.

"Emergency boiler repair on the support ship," Kane lied smoothly. "Orders came direct from MOD Compassion Liaison."

The officer eventually waved them through, but the tension remained electric.

They reached the auxiliary maintenance shed near the submarine pens at 02:17. Sophie immediately went to work on a junction box, her fingers flying over a compact laptop. Alex and Reilly moved deeper into the restricted zone, planting small shaped charges designed only to damage cabling and delay access — nothing that could cause a nuclear incident, but enough to cripple the infiltration timeline.

For eleven minutes, everything went according to plan.

Then the alarms began.

A patrol had found the first disabled camera. Shouts echoed across the wet concrete. Floodlights snapped on. Boots pounded toward their position.

"Abort!" Alex hissed into his comms. "Sophie, extract now!"

Sophie yanked her drive from the junction box. "Worm is in. It'll activate in ninety seconds."

They ran.

Kane met them at the van, already starting the engine. Reilly laid down suppressing fire with a silenced pistol as two guards rounded the corner. One went down. The other screamed for backup.

They almost made it.

A second patrol vehicle cut them off at the main gate. Heavy fire shattered the windscreen. Kane was hit in the shoulder but kept driving. Sophie took a round to the leg. Alex returned fire from the back, dropping one more guard.

Then the van lurched to a halt as its tyres were shot out.

“Out! Out!” Blou’s voice crackled over the emergency channel. “Rendezvous at secondary exfil!”

They abandoned the vehicle and sprinted into the darkness toward the perimeter fence. Reilly carried Sophie. Alex supported Kane. They made it through a pre-cut hole in the outer wire and into the treeline.

All except one.

Petty Officer Marcus Kane stumbled. A burst of automatic fire caught him across the back. He fell hard.

Alex turned back, but Reilly grabbed him. “He’s gone! Move!”

They ran.

Marcus Kane was still alive when they found him.

The Chislam security team dragged his bleeding body into the centre of the main parade ground at Faslane. Floodlights bathed the scene in harsh white. A phone was set up on a tripod, broadcasting live to al-Rashid’s private network — and, within minutes, leaked to the Before Party’s channels.

Imam Khalid al-Rashid himself appeared on a large screen wheeled out beside the wounded man. His face was serene, almost paternal.

“Marcus Kane,” he said softly, the words carrying across the base and into the encrypted feed. “You were one of us. You took the Shahada. You were given purpose. And yet you betrayed the Ummah for the dying West.”

Kane coughed blood. “I chose Britain... before you.”

Al-Rashid smiled sadly. “Then Britain will watch you die.”

The execution was deliberately slow and public.

They forced Kane to his knees. A young enforcer read from the Book of Convergence while another produced a knife. The camera captured every second. Kane refused the blindfold. He looked straight into the lens as the blade was drawn across his throat.

His final words, gargled through blood, were clear enough:

“We... were here... before you...”

The feed cut.

The safe house in the Borders was silent as death when the team watched the execution.

Lena was the first to speak, tears streaming down her face. “They made it a spectacle. They wanted us to see.”

Blou stared at the frozen image of Kane’s final moment, his massive hands clenched into fists. “Marcus knew the risks. He volunteered.”

Alex stood up slowly. His voice was raw. “They just turned one of our own into a message. But they made a mistake. The British people will see this. They’ll see what these people really are.”

He played the clip again — this time pausing on Kane’s final words.

“We were here before you.”

“That line goes viral tonight,” Lena said, already working on her editing tablet. “Along with everything we got from the sabotage. We turn their execution into our recruitment poster.”

Reilly, still covered in Kane’s blood, spoke through gritted teeth. “The worm worked. Their launch systems are locked for at least ten days. We bought time. But they’ll come at us harder now.”

Two hours later, Blou gathered what remained of the inner circle.

“We just lost a good man,” he said quietly. “But his death bought us breathing room and woke up thousands more. The Americans are watching. They’ve promised emergency technical support if we can give them a target inside Faslane. This is no longer a British fight. This is the line in the sand for the entire West.”

Alex pinned a new marker on the map — red, for blood.

“Marcus Kane died fighting for the reins. We don’t let that sacrifice go to waste. We accelerate everything. More insiders. More sabotage. More public defiance. The chariot is shaking. One more push and we can bring it down.”

Lena stood beside him, her voice steady despite the tears.

“They executed him like an animal on camera. They think terror will break us. It won’t. It only proves how afraid they are.”

She held up the Phaethon book, now stained with a small smear of Kane's blood from Reilly's hands.

"Phaethon is still driving. But the horses are starting to panic. And we are becoming the thunderbolt."

Outside the barn, the Scottish wind howled across the hills. Somewhere in the north, at Faslane, Imam al-Rashid's men were already hunting for the worm in their systems, enraged by the delay.

The sabotage had succeeded.

But the price had been paid in blood.

And the Before Party, forged in fire and loss, was no longer just resisting.

It was hunting the chariot.

Part 3: The Thunderbolt

Chapter 18

Faslane Falling

The alert came at 03:51.

Alex's encrypted tablet screamed to life in the darkness of the Borders safe house. He was awake in seconds, Lena already sitting up beside him. The message from their remaining insider at Faslane was short, brutal, and final:

Vanguard-2 seized. Armed Chislam cell in full control. Launch protocols initiated. They have the keys. God help us.

Blou burst into the room moments later, still pulling on a tactical vest. His face was carved from stone.

"Confirmed," he said. "They hit during the night shift change. Kane's sacrifice only bought us eleven days. They must have had a parallel team ready. The submarine is theirs."

Lena pulled up the live satellite feed Atlas had given them. Thermal imaging showed unusual activity around the pen of HMS Vanguard-2 — one of Britain's four nuclear-armed submarines. Figures moving with purpose. Cranes shifting. The distinctive silhouette of the boat still moored, but the security cordon around it had gone dark.

"They're loading warheads," Alex said, voice tight. "They're not waiting anymore."

Rupert Blou gathered the entire shadow cell in the main room. Twelve people now — the original core plus new desperate recruits who had come after Kane's execution. Faces were pale. Eyes hollow. But no one suggested surrender.

"We always knew this moment might come," Blou said, his voice steady and commanding. "Al-Rashid has seized the chariot. He has one Vanguard submarine under his control and at least two warheads. American intelligence confirms they are preparing for launch within seventy-two hours. Target package: New York and Washington."

He let the words land like hammer blows.

"If that boat leaves the loch, it's over. Even if the Americans intercept the missiles, they will retaliate against Faslane. Britain becomes a radioactive graveyard. The West falls with us."

Sergeant Reilly slammed a magazine into his rifle. “Then we hit them now. Hard. Before they sail.”

Blou looked at Alex. “Your call, strategist. We have maybe forty reliable fighters. Ex-military mostly. Some sympathetic sailors still inside the base. The Americans have promised covert air support and exfiltration if we can create chaos — but no official involvement. This is unsanctioned. This is suicide.”

Alex stared at the satellite image. The glowing heat signatures around Vanguard-2 looked like blood spreading across the screen.

“We go,” he said. “Tonight. We don’t have a choice anymore. We raid the base, sabotage the submarine in the pen, and extract any loyalist personnel we can. If we fail, at least we die trying to stop it.”

Lena stepped forward. “I’m coming. I’ll livestream the entire thing if I can. The British people need to see what their government allowed to happen.”

Blou studied them both for a long moment, then nodded.

“Operation Thunderbolt is authorised. We move in four hours. Reilly, you lead the assault element. Alex, you coordinate with our remaining insiders. Lena, you’re media and medical. I’ll command from the forward observation post. We hit them before dawn.”

He looked around the room one final time.

“Some of us won’t come back. But if we succeed, Britain might. We were here before them. We will be here after them.”

The journey north was made in silence.

Three battered vans and two stolen fishing boats carried thirty-eight fighters toward the Gare Loch. The rain was merciless. Atlas had sent one final encrypted burst: American drones would provide real-time overwatch and jam enemy communications for ninety minutes. After that, they were on their own.

At 05:40, the team split.

Reilly led the main assault force of twenty-two toward the outer perimeter. Alex, Lena, and a small technical team moved with Petty Officer Kane’s surviving brother, who still had partial access codes.

They watched from a ridge as the first explosions lit up the night.

Reilly's team breached the fence with shaped charges. Gunfire erupted immediately. The loyalist sailors inside the base — fewer than hoped — began turning on their Chislam officers. Chaos spread like wildfire across the naval facility.

Alex's team reached the inner security ring. A young rating met them at a side gate, face streaked with blood.

"They have the sub," he gasped. "Al-Rashid's lieutenant is aboard. They're flooding the ballast tanks. They're preparing to sail."

Lena was already filming, broadcasting on every underground channel they still controlled.

"This is Lena Voss, live from Faslane. A Chislam cell has seized a British nuclear submarine. Your government let this happen. We are here to stop it. If you are watching this, pray for us."

The fighting inside the base was savage.

Reilly's assault team took the main security building in brutal close-quarters combat. Bodies of both sides littered the corridors. Alex's group fought their way toward the submarine pen, losing three men in the first exchange.

They reached the edge of the quay just as Vanguard-2 began to move.

The massive black hull was already pulling away from the pier, escorted by two small patrol boats filled with armed men. Green flags flew from the conning tower.

Blou's voice came over comms, calm despite the gunfire around him. "They're leaving. Alex, do you have eyes on the sub?"

"Confirmed," Alex replied. "They're under way. We're too late to stop them from sailing."

"Then we go to Plan B," Blou said. "Board her. Sabotage from inside. We have no other choice."

Lena grabbed Alex's arm. "You're not going alone."

They commandeered a rigid inflatable boat from the dockyard and roared out into the dark waters of the loch. Gunfire chased them. One of their men was hit and fell overboard. The cold swallowed him instantly.

They reached the submarine's stern just as it began to pick up speed. Reilly's team provided covering fire from the shore, forcing the escort boats to turn back. Alex, Lena, and

four others climbed the wet hull like desperate spiders, using magnetic grapples and raw willpower.

They dropped through an open hatch into the belly of the beast.

Inside Vanguard-2, the corridors were a nightmare of red emergency lighting and shouting. Chislam fighters in mixed naval and traditional dress moved with purpose. Prayers echoed through the steel passageways. Alex's small team moved like ghosts, planting charges on critical systems as they went. They killed silently when they had to — throats cut, necks broken.

They reached the control room too late.

Imam al-Rashid's senior lieutenant stood at the periscope, wearing a naval uniform with a green armband. He turned as Alex's team burst in.

"Too late, kuffar," the man sneered. "The chariot is already moving. In six hours we will be in firing position. America will burn for its sins."

Lena raised her camera, still livestreaming.

"The world is watching," she said. "Your Nuclear Jihad ends here."

Gunfire erupted inside the control room. Two of Alex's men went down. Lena was grazed across the shoulder. Alex put three rounds into the lieutenant, dropping him.

But the damage was done. The submarine was diving, heading for deeper waters. Alarms wailed. The crew loyal to the Before Party were being overwhelmed.

Blou's voice crackled over the comms, distant and breaking up.

"Raid... failing... extract... now... American strike incoming in forty minutes if you can't stop it..."

Alex looked at Lena, blood running down her arm, eyes fierce with defiance.

"We're not leaving," she said. "Not while this thing still has teeth."

Alex nodded, reloading his weapon.

The chariot was no longer on the horizon.

It was here.

Beneath the cold waters of the Firth of Clyde, Phaethon had taken the reins completely.

And the Before Party was now inside the flaming chariot with him — trying to wrestle control before it dragged Britain, and the world, into the sun.

Chapter 19

The Betrayal

The control room of HMS Vanguard-2 reeked of blood and cordite.

Alex crouched behind a console, reloading with shaking hands while Lena applied a makeshift tourniquet to her own shoulder wound. Three of their team were dead. The surviving loyalist sailors were fighting a desperate rearguard action in the corridors. Through the periscope, the dark waters of the Firth of Clyde rushed past as the submarine continued its emergency dive.

“They’re still heading for deep water,” Alex hissed. “We have to surface her or sabotage the propulsion.”

Lena’s face was pale but determined. “Keep filming. If we die here, the world needs to see who sold us out.”

A burst of gunfire ripped through the compartment. Another Chislam fighter went down. Then, over the ship’s internal comms, a calm, cultured voice began broadcasting on every channel.

“This is Home Secretary Sir Geoffrey Langford. All loyal personnel, stand down. The Before Party terrorists have been neutralised. This operation is under full government control.”

Alex froze.

Sir Geoffrey Langford — the polished, Oxford-educated darling of Quear Barmy’s cabinet. The man who had publicly condemned “far-right extremism” while quietly overseeing the Compassion Budgets. The man who had shaken hands with Imam al-Rashid on live television six times in the last year.

Lena’s eyes widened in horror. “No...”

The betrayal unfolded in real time.

From a secure feed hacked by their remaining assets, the team watched the emergency session in Downing Street. Langford stood at the head of the table, no longer wearing his usual Savile Row suit. Instead, he had a green sash across his chest and a taqiyah on his head.

Quear Barmy sat beside him, looking smaller than ever, his trademark smirk replaced by visible panic.

Langford spoke with the smooth confidence of a man who had been waiting years for this moment.

“Prime Minister, the time for pretence is over. Vanguard-2 is now under the protection of the Ummah-Britannia. Any attempt by rogue elements to interfere will be met with the full force of the Final Detonation. We have two warheads ready. The choice is simple: submit, or watch London and New York burn together.”

Barmy’s hands trembled. “Geoffrey... you swore loyalty. You helped write the Compassion laws...”

Langford smiled the same serene smile al-Rashid used in his sermons.

“I swore loyalty to the future. Britain was always destined to be part of the Convergence. You were useful, Quear. A smiling face to ease the transition. But the chariot now belongs to those who understand divine destiny.”

He turned to the camera broadcasting to the nation.

“To the British people: resistance is futile. The Before Party is a terrorist organisation. Rupert Blou and his followers will be hunted down. Martial law is now in effect across the United Kingdom. All public gatherings are banned. All firearms must be surrendered. All criticism of the Convergence will be treated as treason. The armed forces are being placed under new leadership loyal to the new order.”

He raised a hand in mock blessing.

“Submission is Compassion. Diversity is Supremacy. Britain was always ours. We merely returned.”

In the submarine, Alex and Lena stared at the feed in stunned silence.

“He was one of them the whole time,” Lena whispered. “The man who signed off on every hotel contract. Every diverted pension fund. Every suppressed grooming investigation. He was their man inside the cabinet.”

Alex felt something inside him snap cleanly in two.

“All of it,” he said. “The two-tier policing, the cultural purge, the re-education centres — it was never incompetence. It was orchestration. Langford was steering Barmy like a puppet while al-Rashid prepared the chariot.”

Gunfire erupted again down the corridor. Reilly's voice came over comms, ragged and desperate.

"We're overrun on Deck Three! They're flooding compartments! We need to surface or scuttle her!"

Alex made the call.

"Plant the charges on the reactor cooling system. We can't let them sail this thing into firing range. If we have to die here, we take the submarine with us."

On the surface, the consequences of the betrayal exploded across Britain.

Quear Barmy appeared on national television at 06:45, visibly shaken, reading from a script Langford had handed him.

"Due to the grave terrorist threat posed by the Before Party and their foreign backers, I am declaring a state of martial law. The armed forces have been placed under the command of Home Secretary Sir Geoffrey Langford, who will ensure stability during this period of national emergency. All citizens are ordered to remain indoors. Any resistance will be met with lethal force."

Within hours, armoured vehicles rolled through major cities. Checkpoints sprang up on motorways. Harmony Enforcement was reinforced by newly "restructured" army units — many now openly flying green armbands. Mass arrests began. Anyone suspected of Before Party sympathies was dragged from their homes.

In Manchester, the luxury hotel that had been occupied weeks earlier was now guarded by soldiers flying both the Union Jack and the Chislam flag. A new banner hung from the roof:

Protected by the Convergence Government

In the Borders safe house, Rupert Blou watched the martial law declaration with cold fury.

"Langford," he growled. "That smug bastard was feeding them everything. Every raid we planned. Every safe house we used. He was the reason they were always one step ahead."

Dr. Miriam Hale looked physically ill. "I sat in meetings with him. I briefed him on budget concerns. He smiled and thanked me while planning this."

Blou turned to the team.

“This changes nothing and everything. We are now officially enemies of the state. But the British people have seen Langford’s mask slip. They’ve seen a senior cabinet minister declare allegiance to a foreign ideology on live television. The mask is gone. The civil war has begun.”

He looked at the screen showing the live feed from Vanguard-2. Alex and Lena were still fighting inside.

“Tell our people on the submarine to hold. We’re coming for them. Whatever it takes.”

Deep inside the submarine, Alex and Lena had reached the reactor compartment.

They were down to their last two men. Blood ran down Lena’s face from a scalp wound. Alex’s left arm hung useless, shattered by a ricochet. But they had planted the final charges.

Al-Rashid’s lieutenant appeared at the end of the corridor, flanked by six fighters.

“Surrender,” he called. “Join us. The West is finished. The new Caliphate welcomes even its former enemies.”

Alex raised his pistol with his good hand.

“We were here before you,” he said, echoing Marcus Kane’s last words.

He pulled the trigger.

The resulting firefight was short and vicious. When the smoke cleared, only Alex and Lena remained standing among the bodies.

Lena activated the final detonator trigger — a dead-man’s switch linked to the cooling system.

“If they try to launch,” she said, voice trembling but clear, “we flood the reactor. No missile flies from this boat.”

Alex pulled her close with his one good arm, the Phaethon book pressed between them like a talisman.

“Langford betrayed us all,” he whispered. “But he also woke the sleeping giant. Martial law won’t save them. It will only make the British people hate them more.”

Above them, the submarine continued its slow, deadly glide through the cold Scottish waters.

On the surface, Britain was now under martial law.

A cabinet minister had revealed himself as the enemy within.

And the chariot — now fully hijacked — was turning toward its final, apocalyptic course.

But in the blood-stained corridors of Vanguard-2, two wounded fighters still held the detonator, refusing to let go of the reins.

The betrayal was complete.

The war had only just begun.

Chapter 20

London Burning

Martial law lasted less than forty-eight hours before Britain began to tear itself apart.

The spark ignited in Brixton at 14:00 on a cold Thursday afternoon. A column of armoured vehicles flying both the Union Jack and the green Chislam flag moved through the streets to enforce the new curfew. When they tried to arrest a group of local mothers protesting outside a former primary school now turned into a Chislam “Enrichment Centre,” the crowd refused to disperse.

What started as shouting became stones. Stones became Molotov cocktails. Within minutes, the armoured column was on fire and the streets belonged to the people.

By nightfall, London was burning.

Rupert Blou watched the chaos unfold from a rooftop command post in an abandoned council block in Hackney. Flames lit the skyline from Tower Hamlets to Croydon. The sound of gunfire and explosions rolled across the city like distant thunder.

“They finally pushed too far,” he said quietly. “Langford’s broadcast was the match. The British people were the powder.”

Dr. Miriam Hale stood beside him, monitoring multiple hacked feeds. “Uprisings in Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow. Even parts of the Army are fracturing. Some units are refusing orders. Others are openly joining the people.”

Blou’s jaw tightened. “And the submarine?”

“Still no word from Alex and Lena. The last transmission said they were holding the reactor compartment. If they scuttle her, we lose our best chance to stop the launch from inside.”

Across the city, the fighting was street-by-street, house-by-house.

In Whitechapel, former soldiers and dockworkers erected barricades using burned-out cars and scaffolding. They fought with hunting rifles, shotguns, and homemade explosives against Harmony Enforcement units reinforced by al-Rashid’s “Community Defence Force.” A young ex-Royal Marine waved a faded Union Jack from a rooftop as he laid down covering fire.

In Camden, thousands of ordinary Londoners — office workers, taxi drivers, nurses, pensioners — poured into the streets after Langford’s speech. They tore down the new green street signs and replaced them with hand-painted Union Jacks. When armoured vehicles advanced, the crowd surged forward, women and children at the front, daring the soldiers to shoot.

Some soldiers lowered their weapons. Others opened fire.

Blood ran in the gutters of the capital that had once been the heart of the free world.

Lena Voss was still alive, barely.

Deep inside HMS Vanguard-2, she and Alex had barricaded themselves in the reactor access tunnel. Their remaining two fighters were dead. Alex’s left arm was useless, wrapped in a blood-soaked tourniquet. Lena’s shoulder wound had reopened and she was running a fever.

But they still held the detonator.

Through a patched comms link, they could hear the chaos above ground via Blou’s relays.

“London is rising,” Lena whispered, her voice hoarse as she kept filming with her one good hand. “They’re fighting in the streets. For us. For all of us.”

Alex leaned against the cold steel bulkhead, pistol across his lap. “Langford thought martial law would crush us. Instead, he lit the fuse. The British people are finally choosing.”

A voice crackled over the submarine’s internal speakers — the same smooth, treacherous voice of Sir Geoffrey Langford.

“Attention remaining terrorists aboard Vanguard-2. Surrender immediately and you will be granted mercy under the new Convergence Government. Resist, and we will flood the compartment and let you drown like rats.”

Alex laughed painfully. “He’s panicking. They can’t launch while we’re sitting on the reactor.”

Lena kept filming. “To everyone watching this: a senior British cabinet minister has betrayed his country. He serves a foreign ideology that wants to nuke America from British soil. This is what two-tier Britain always was — treason wearing a suit. Fight them. We are fighting them from inside the chariot itself.”

On the streets of London, the uprising reached a fever pitch around Parliament Square. Hundreds of armed civilians — many of them ex-military who had answered Blou’s earlier call — clashed with Langford’s loyalist forces. The iconic square was littered with burning vehicles and fallen statues. A makeshift barricade flew a large Union Jack beside a banner that simply read:

We Were Here Before Them

Rupert Blou led a column of fighters toward the square, moving through back alleys and rooftops. His voice carried over a smuggled loudspeaker:

“This is Rupert Blou of the Before Party. The government has betrayed you. A cabinet minister serves our enemies. They have seized a nuclear submarine and plan to attack America. We are here to stop them. Join us. Take back your city. Take back your country!”

Hundreds more joined him. The momentum shifted.

In Downing Street, Quear Barmy covered behind reinforced doors while Langford paced like a caged animal.

“The Americans are mobilising,” a terrified aide reported. “Satellite shows their carrier groups moving into the North Atlantic. They are preparing strike packages on Faslane.”

Langford slammed his fist on the table. “Then tell al-Rashid to launch now! One missile. Create chaos. The West will collapse before they can respond.”

Barmy looked up, pale and broken. “Geoffrey... you’ve destroyed us all.”

Langford turned on him with contempt. “You destroyed yourselves the day you handed me the reins. Weak, vain, and blind. The chariot was always going to burn. I simply chose which way it turned.”

Back on the submarine, Alex and Lena heard the transmission.

“They’re going to launch,” Lena said. “We can’t wait any longer.”

Alex looked at the detonator in his hand — the dead-man switch that would flood the reactor and turn the Vanguard into a radioactive tomb.

“If we do this, we die here,” he said quietly.

Lena leaned her head against his good shoulder. “Then we die stopping Phaethon. Better that than watching Britain burn from the sky.”

She kept the camera running, broadcasting their final moments to whoever was still watching.

“To every British son and daughter: we fought. Now it’s your turn. We were here before them...”

The sound of approaching boots echoed down the corridor. Al-Rashid’s men were coming for the reactor.

Alex’s finger tightened on the switch.

The chariot was in flames.

London was already burning.

And across Britain, from the streets of the capital to the hills of the north, a people long asleep were finally waking — weapons in hand, singing old songs, and ready to seize the reins before the sky itself caught fire.

Chapter 21

The Warhead Heist

The submarine was dying.

HMS Vanguard-2 groaned and shuddered as emergency systems fought the sabotage Alex and Lena had already inflicted. Red emergency lighting pulsed like a failing heartbeat. The air tasted of smoke, seawater, and blood.

Alex and Lena moved through the narrow companionway like ghosts, leading the last six surviving members of the boarding team. Alex's left arm hung useless in a sling, pain radiating with every step. Lena's shoulder wound had reopened, leaving a dark trail behind her, but she refused to slow down. In her good hand she carried both a pistol and the livestream rig that was still broadcasting to whoever in Britain could still receive the signal.

"Reactor cooling is failing," Alex whispered, checking the stolen schematic. "We have maybe twenty minutes before she becomes a floating Chernobyl. The warheads are in the forward magazine. We grab one, rig the rest to detonate underwater, and pray the Americans see what we did."

Lena nodded, face streaked with sweat and blood. "One warhead is enough. Proof. Deterrent. Hope."

They reached the heavy blast door to the warhead storage compartment. A makeshift barricade of crates and bodies had been erected by al-Rashid's men on the other side. Gunfire had already chewed the steel.

Sergeant Reilly, bleeding from a thigh wound but still moving like a predator, stacked up beside Alex.

"On your go."

Alex took a breath. "We were here before them," he said quietly.

Then they blew the door.

The explosion tore through the compartment like God's own thunder. Smoke and shrapnel filled the air. Alex was first through the breach, firing one-handed, dropping two defenders before they could react. Reilly and the others poured in behind him, ruthless and precise.

The warhead magazine was a cathedral of death — gleaming silver cylinders mounted in cradles, each one capable of erasing a city. Green Chislam flags had been crudely draped over several of them. Prayers in Arabic were scrawled on the bulkheads.

A vicious firefight erupted at point-blank range.

Lena dropped to one knee, filming even as bullets whipped past her head. “This is what your government allowed!” she shouted into the lens, voice raw. “Nuclear weapons in the hands of men who want to burn the West. Fight them!”

Three of their team died in the first ten seconds — cut down by concentrated fire from behind the warhead cradles. Reilly took a round to the chest plate but kept fighting, roaring like a wounded lion as he cleared the far side.

Alex spotted the primary target: Warhead Sierra-7, already partially extracted from its cradle, fitted with a launch vehicle interface. Al-Rashid’s men had been preparing it for transfer.

“Cover me!” he shouted.

He sprinted forward, ignoring the pain in his shattered arm. A bullet grazed his ribs. Another punched through his vest but was stopped by the trauma plate. He reached the warhead, slammed the emergency locking clamps into place, and began the extraction sequence using the codes Kane’s brother had died to provide.

Lena was suddenly beside him, firing over his shoulder as two more enemy fighters charged. One got close enough to slash at her with a knife before she put two rounds into his face.

“Almost there!” Alex yelled.

The warhead slid free on its rail system with a hydraulic hiss. It was heavier than expected — a 100-kiloton monster of death and politics. They wrestled it onto a portable trolley as the last of their team formed a desperate perimeter.

“Reilly!” Alex called. “We’ve got it! Fall back to the escape hatch!”

But Reilly didn’t answer.

The big sergeant was on his knees in the middle of the compartment, blood pouring from multiple wounds, still firing his rifle on semi-auto. Three enemy fighters lay dead around him.

“Go!” Reilly bellowed, voice wet with blood. “Get the bloody thing out! I’ll hold them!”

Alex hesitated for half a second. Their eyes met across the smoke-filled compartment.

Reilly gave him a bloody grin. “We were here before them, mate. Now get that fucking warhead off this boat.”

A final burst of enemy fire cut him down. Reilly died on his knees, rifle still roaring defiance until the magazine ran dry.

They dragged the warhead through the smoke-choked corridors, leaving a trail of their own blood. The submarine was listing badly now, emergency klaxons screaming. Al-Rashid’s remaining fighters pursued them relentlessly, chanting prayers as they fired.

Lena was fading fast. Her face had gone deathly pale. “Keep... filming,” she gasped. “They need to see... what it costs.”

Alex was running on pure adrenaline and rage. Every step sent white-hot pain through his ruined arm. Two more of their team fell covering the rear. Only Alex, Lena, and one young ex-Royal Marine remained when they reached the emergency escape trunk.

They wrestled the warhead into the escape chamber — a brutal, awkward struggle in the confined space. As the outer hatch began to cycle, enemy boots thundered closer.

The young Marine turned back. “I’ll slow them down,” he said simply, and slammed the inner hatch shut behind him. They heard his final stand — single shots, then silence.

The escape pod fired.

They rocketed upward through the black water, the warhead strapped between them like a steel coffin. The pressure change was agonising. Lena passed out against Alex’s shoulder.

When they breached the surface, the cold Scottish night air hit them like a slap. Alex dragged Lena and the warhead onto the small inflatable boat their support team had waiting. Gunfire still cracked across the water from the shore battle.

Blou’s voice came over comms, exhausted but fierce. “We see you. American extraction helo inbound in six minutes. Hold on.”

Alex looked back at the dark shape of Vanguard-2, now listing dangerously, smoke pouring from multiple hatches. Somewhere inside, good men lay dead so they could escape with their prize.

He checked Lena’s pulse. Weak, but there.

“We got it,” he whispered to her unconscious form, pressing the Phaethon book against her chest. “One warhead. The chariot just lost a wheel.”

On the shore, Rupert Blou watched the extraction through binoculars as American Black Hawks thundered in low over the water, door gunners laying down suppressing fire.

“They did it,” he said, voice thick. “At what cost?”

Dr. Hale, monitoring the feeds, shook her head. “Reilly’s gone. Most of the boarding team. We don’t know about Alex and Lena yet.”

Blou turned toward the burning lights of the naval base. London was still in flames. Martial law had collapsed into open civil war. Langford’s forces were fighting their own military in places.

“The price was always going to be high,” Blou said. “But we just stole fire from the gods. Now we make them regret giving Phaethon the chariot in the first place.”

Alex and Lena were winched aboard the American helicopter as it hovered dangerously close to the waves. A US Navy medic immediately went to work on them. The warhead was secured in a special cradle.

As the helo banked away from the dying submarine, Alex looked down at the burning base and the fires consuming London in the distance.

Lena stirred beside him, eyes fluttering open. The camera was still running weakly in her lap.

“Did we...?” she whispered.

“We got one,” Alex said, gripping her hand. “The rest will go down with the boat. They won’t launch from Vanguard-2 tonight.”

Lena managed the ghost of a smile. “Then it was worth it.”

She looked straight into the camera one last time, voice barely audible.

“To every British man and woman still fighting... we paid in blood. Now finish it. We were here before them. We will be here after them.”

Her head fell back against the seat. The camera finally died.

Alex held her as the helicopter raced south toward an uncertain dawn. One nuclear warhead secured. One chariot wheel broken.

But the sky was still burning.

And the final battle for Britain — and the West — had only just begun.

Chapter 22

Blou's Last Stand

The safe house in the ruins of Canary Wharf was no longer safe.

What had once been a half-finished luxury apartment tower — ironically funded by one of the early Compassion Budgets — was now a fortress under siege. Rupert Blou stood on the fifteenth floor, shattered glass crunching under his boots, looking out over a burning London. The Thames reflected the orange glow of a dozen fires. Sirens wailed in the distance, but they no longer belonged to the old Britain.

They belonged to the Convergence.

Blou's remaining force numbered twenty-seven exhausted fighters. Ammunition was critically low. The building was surrounded by Langford's loyalist troops and al-Rashid's black-clad enforcers. Drones buzzed overhead like angry hornets. Occasional mortar rounds shook the concrete skeleton of the tower.

Dr. Miriam Hale limped over, clutching a tablet. "They've cut the power grid in three boroughs. Martial law is total now. Langford has declared the Before Party an existential threat to the Convergence. They're offering amnesty to anyone who turns us in."

Blou gave a short, bitter laugh. "Amnesty from a traitor. How generous."

He turned as one of the younger fighters dragged a wounded man into the room. It was one of their own — barely eighteen, a former apprentice electrician who had joined after watching Lena's videos.

"He won't make it," the fighter whispered.

Blou knelt beside the boy, pressing a field dressing to a stomach wound that was already fatal. The lad's eyes were wide with pain and fear.

"Did we... do any good, sir?"

Blou gripped his hand. "You did more than good, son. You stood up. That's everything."

The boy died thirty seconds later, still clutching a small, torn Union Jack patch.

Blou rose slowly. His massive frame seemed heavier than ever. Blood from a scalp wound had dried on the side of his face. He looked at the handful of survivors — teachers, plumbers, ex-soldiers, mothers, fathers — and felt the full weight of what this moment demanded.

“Get the broadcast rig ready,” he said quietly. “Highest power. Every frequency we still control. If this is the end, then let it be loud.”

Dr. Hale hesitated. “Rupert... if you broadcast from here, they’ll pinpoint us instantly. They’ll level the building.”

“That’s the idea,” Blou replied. “Let them come. Let the world watch what they do to free men and women who refuse to kneel.”

They set up on the exposed rooftop terrace, using the skeletal remains of what was meant to be a rooftop garden for wealthy migrants. A single powerful transmitter was wired into the building’s emergency generator. Lena’s spare camera — damaged but still working — was mounted on a makeshift tripod.

Blou stood at the edge, wind whipping his coat, the burning city spread out behind him like a funeral pyre. The camera light turned red.

He began without preamble.

“My name is Rupert Blou. Former British soldier. Founder of the Before Party. And a man who loves this country more than his own life.

Tonight, I speak to you from a besieged building in London as Langford’s traitors and al-Rashid’s fanatics close in for the kill. We are low on ammunition. Many of us are wounded. Some of us are already dead. But we are not defeated.

Because we were here before them.

And we will be here after them.

Look around you. Look at your burning cities. Look at your daughters who were sacrificed on the altar of ‘compassion.’ Look at your grandparents freezing to death while luxury hotels stand empty for those who despise you. Look at your history erased, your statues toppled, your pubs closed, your streets renamed.

This is not migration. This is conquest.

This is not compassion. This is treason.

Sir Geoffrey Langford — your own Home Secretary — has revealed himself as a servant of a foreign ideology. He has helped hand a British nuclear submarine to men who want to nuke America. He has declared martial law not to protect you, but to silence you while the chariot races toward the sun.

But hear me clearly:

The chariot can still be stopped.

Alex Thorne and Lena Voss are fighting inside that submarine right now. They have already seized one warhead. They are bleeding and dying so that Britain does not become the launchpad for the destruction of the West.

They are not terrorists.

We are not terrorists.

We are the last free British men and women who refuse to submit.

To every soldier watching this: remember your oath. It was not to Queen Barmy. It was not to Geoffrey Langford. It was not to Imam al-Rashid. It was to the United Kingdom and her people. Choose now. Stand with your own or stand with the traitors.

To every British citizen: rise. Take to the streets. Protect your families. Refuse their laws. Refuse their re-education. Refuse their surrender.

This is not the end of Britain.

This is the moment Britain decides whether it will live or die on its knees.

I do not ask you to fight because it will be easy. I ask you to fight because it is right. Because your children deserve a future that is not ruled by those who despise everything you are.

We were here before them.

We will be here after them.

Restore Britain... or lose the West forever.

This is Rupert Blou, signing off from the last free corner of London.

God save the King.

God save us all.”

Blou stood silent for a long moment after the red light went out. Then he turned to Dr. Hale.

“Send it on every channel. Blast it. Make sure it cannot be stopped.”

As the transmission went live, the response from the enemy was immediate.

Helicopters thundered overhead. Armoured vehicles moved into position around the base of the tower. Heavy machine guns opened up, chewing into the concrete. Rockets streaked in, collapsing entire floors below them.

The survivors took cover as the building shook violently. Dust and debris rained down. Blou moved among them, steadying the young and the wounded, handing out the last magazines.

One of the fighters, a woman in her forties who had lost her daughter to grooming gangs, looked at him with tears in her eyes.

“Was it worth it, Rupert?”

Blou placed a hand on her shoulder.

“Every second. Because tonight, millions of British people are watching us refuse to kneel. And that... that cannot be bombed away.”

On the roof, as the final assault began, Blou picked up the Phaethon book that Lena had left behind. He opened it to the well-worn page and read the underlined line aloud, his deep voice carrying over the roar of battle:

“The boy asked for power that was never meant for him... and the world paid the price.”

He closed the book and slipped it into his coat.

Then he picked up his rifle.

“Come on then!” he roared into the night, voice thundering across the burning city. “Come and take it from us!”

The final battle for the safe house began in earnest.

Rupert Blou stood at the centre of it all — bloodied, unbowed, and utterly defiant — as the flaming chariot raced across the sky above a nation that was finally, painfully, waking up.

Chapter 23

The Launch Window

T-minus 51 hours

The Merlin helicopter shuddered violently as it skimmed the waves of the North Atlantic. Rupert Blou lay strapped to a stretcher in the back, his massive frame wrapped in blood-soaked bandages. His left leg was shattered. Third-degree burns covered his right arm and half his face. He had been pulled from the rubble of the Canary Wharf tower only eleven hours earlier by a desperate American special forces team that had ignored orders to stay out of British airspace.

He should have been dead.

Instead, he was conscious — barely — and furious.

Alex's weak voice came through the comms from Vanguard-2: "Rupert... you stubborn bastard. You were supposed to die heroically so we could make you a martyr."

Blou coughed, blood flecking his lips, but managed a pained grin. "Not yet. Someone has to be here to watch Phaethon finally crash."

Lena, fading in and out beside Alex in the reactor tunnel, laughed weakly. "Welcome back to the land of the living."

In the command room aboard the American command ship, the atmosphere was grim.

A large screen showed Imam Khalid al-Rashid's latest broadcast. The 72-hour countdown was now displayed prominently behind him as he delivered his sermon:

"Fifty-one hours remain. The chariot is in position. One warhead will soon fly toward the Great Satan. The other remains as divine insurance. Britain will either submit... or become the spark that ignites the world."

Al-Rashid's eyes burned with messianic certainty. "To Rupert Blou, if you still live — your little rebellion ends in fire."

The feed cut.

Blou, propped up against the bulkhead, stared at the screen with pure hatred.

"He thinks he's already won," he growled. "Langford betrayed us. Half the bloody cabinet was probably in on it. But they made one mistake."

He looked around at the surviving commanders — American and British.

“They left me alive.”

T-minus 47 hours

The situation had become desperate.

Vanguard-2 was still holding, with Alex and Lena barely keeping the reactor sabotage alive. But Vigilant — the second submarine — had gone completely dark. American satellites showed it moving into optimal launch position.

Blou, despite his injuries, refused painkillers that would cloud his mind. He sat at the strategy table like a wounded king, leg elevated, issuing orders with the same authority he’d shown on the rooftops.

“We hit Vigilant with everything we have left,” he said. “A combined Anglo-American black team. We board her, we destroy the launch capability, and we end this.”

An American Admiral shook his head. “It’s suicide. Your people are exhausted. You’re half-dead yourself.”

Blou looked at him with burning eyes.

“Suicide is letting that missile fly. My country is burning. My best people are bleeding out in a radioactive tin can at the bottom of the sea holding a detonator. I will not sit here while Britain becomes the country that nuked America.”

He stood up painfully, using a crutch.

“Besides... I still have one last speech in me.”

T-minus 29 hours

Imam al-Rashid broadcast again from an undisclosed location. His sermon was shorter this time, more triumphant:

“Twenty-nine hours. The chariot is ready. The boy has grown into the man who will drive it into history. Britain will be remembered as the bridge... and the spark.”

Blou, watching from the command ship, recorded his counter-broadcast while medics changed the dressings on his burns.

He spoke directly into the camera, voice raw but powerful:

“This is Rupert Blou. I was supposed to die in that tower. They tried to bury me. They should have known better. We do not die quietly. We do not submit. Twenty-nine hours. Use every single one. Fight them in the streets. Fight them in your towns. Fight them on the sea. We were here before them. We will be here after them.”

He ended the transmission and looked at the assembled team.

“Load the boats. We’re going after Vigilant.”

Even the hardened American operators looked at him with something close to awe.

The wounded giant refused to stay behind.

The final sabotage was coming.

And Rupert Blou — burned, broken, but unbowed — would lead it.

Chapter 24

The Final Sabotage

T-minus 26 hours

The North Atlantic was a black, raging beast.

Rupert Blou, barely able to stand, sat in the lead Merlin helicopter, his shattered leg strapped to a rigid brace, burns wrapped in fresh dressings. Painkillers clouded his mind, so he had refused all but the minimum. He gripped his rifle like a crutch and stared out into the storm.

“This ends tonight,” he growled.

Twenty-eight operators — British, American, and the last remnants of the Before Party — rode with him. Two stealth Black Hawks followed. Below them, somewhere in the darkness, HMS Vigilant was preparing to dive for its final launch position.

Alex’s voice came weakly over the comms from Vanguard-2: “We’re barely holding the reactor. Lena’s fading fast. You have one shot, Rupert. Make it count.”

Blou’s reply was simple. “We’re coming.”

The helicopters dropped fast and low. Ropes hit the deck of Vigilant as it ploughed through heavy seas. Blou was the third man down, refusing help despite the agony in his leg.

The boarding was savage.

Al-Rashid’s fighters had been waiting. A brutal gunfight erupted across the submarine’s deck. Blou limped forward, firing one-handed, roaring defiance as bullets sparked off the hull around him. An American operator was cut down beside him. Then another.

They fought their way down the conning tower hatch into the steel belly of the beast.

Inside Vigilant, the corridors ran red.

Blou’s team cleared Deck after Deck in vicious close-quarters combat. But the betrayals came again — harder this time.

On Deck Five, a squad of British sailors who had appeared to be surrendering suddenly opened fire from behind. Three more Before Party fighters died before the traitors were cut down. One of them, dying on the deck, spat at Blou:

“Langford promised us life... after the Convergence.”

Blou put a round through his head without a word.

They reached the missile compartment at T-minus 19 hours.

The sight that greeted them was nightmarish.

One Trident missile was already raised, its warhead fully armed and glowing red. Imam al-Rashid’s deputy stood before it, surrounded by twenty heavily armed fighters in a mix of naval uniforms and black tactical gear. Prayers echoed through the steel chamber.

The deputy smiled when he saw Blou.

“You should have stayed in your burning tower, old man.”

Blou raised his rifle. “And you should have stayed in whatever hole you crawled out of.”

The final battle exploded.

It was pure carnage.

Blou fought like a man possessed, dragging his ruined leg behind him, firing, reloading, killing. American operators cleared the left side while the British took the right. The noise was deafening — gunfire, screams, ricochets, and the constant deep groan of the submarine fighting the storm above.

Blou took a bullet to the side. He barely felt it.

He reached the control panel as the deputy imam tried to initiate the final launch sequence. The two men grappled in a brutal, bloody struggle. Blou, larger and stronger even when half-dead, slammed the traitor’s head into the console repeatedly until the man stopped moving.

But the countdown was already running.

T-minus 11 minutes.

The warhead was hot. Irreversible.

Blou slammed his fist on the intercom.

“Alex! We’re too late! They’ve initiated launch on Vigilant! Scuttle Vanguard-2 now! Create a radiation kill zone!”

Alex's voice came back, weak but calm: "Understood. Lena says... tell Britain we held the line. We were here before them."

Blou's voice cracked. "Godspeed, both of you."

Deep inside Vanguard-2, Alex looked at Lena. She was barely conscious, but she managed a small smile and squeezed his hand.

"Do it," she whispered.

Alex triggered the dead-man's switch.

The reactor on Vanguard-2 went critical. A massive underwater explosion tore through the sea, sending a radioactive shockwave outward. The blast caught Vigilant at close range.

The second submarine shuddered violently. Alarms screamed. The armed warhead's guidance system fried in the electromagnetic pulse. The launch countdown froze at **T-minus 47 seconds**.

The missile never flew.

On the surface, Blou's helicopter hovered as the sea boiled behind them.

The pilot shouted, "Both boats are going down! Massive radiation spike!"

Blou stared at the churning water where two British nuclear submarines — and dozens of brave souls — had just been sacrificed to stop the end of the world.

He closed his eyes for a long moment.

Then he spoke into the open channel, his voice broadcast across every remaining underground network in Britain:

"This is Rupert Blou. The nuclear threat is over. The chariots have burned. Alex Thorne and Lena Voss gave their lives to stop it. So did many others.

Now the fight for Britain begins in earnest.

To every man and woman still resisting — the traitor government is collapsing. Langford's forces are breaking. Rise up. Take back your streets. Take back your country.

We paid the ultimate price to keep the fire from the sky.

Now finish what we started.

We were here before them.

We will be here after them.”

As the helicopter turned toward the British coast, Rupert Blou — burned, shot, and grieving — looked east toward the burning island on the horizon.

The final chapter of the war was about to be written on the streets of Britain itself.

The chariot had finally crashed.

But the cost had been almost everything.

Chapter 25

Dawn or Ashes

Victory

The war ended not with a final battle, but with a quiet surrender in the ruins of Downing Street.

Quear Barmy was found hiding in a reinforced bunker beneath Number 10, alone and trembling. Sir Geoffrey Langford had fled the country two days earlier, only to be intercepted by American forces and handed over to what remained of British loyalists. Imam Khalid al-Rashid's last known transmission came from a lifeboat off the coast of Norway. He was never found.

On the 19th day after the submarine explosions, Rupert Blou — still on crutches, heavily bandaged, and carrying the weight of too many ghosts — walked into a scarred House of Commons flanked by armed civilians and defected soldiers.

The chamber was half-destroyed. Broken glass littered the floor. The Speaker's chair had been burned. But the Union Jack, tattered and bullet-holed, had been raised again above the building.

Blou stood at the despatch box and looked at the exhausted faces before him — MPs who had survived, military commanders who had switched sides, community leaders, and ordinary citizens who had fought in the streets.

“The Convergence Government is finished,” he said, his deep voice echoing through the chamber. “Barmy has resigned. Langford is in custody. The last of al-Rashid's network is being hunted down. Britain is ours again.”

A ragged cheer rose from the chamber — not triumphant, but exhausted and grateful.

Blou continued, his voice heavy.

“We have won the war. But we have lost much of what made us who we were. Too many of our best people are gone. Alex Thorne. Lena Voss. Sergeant Tom Reilly. Dr. Miriam Hale. Marcus Kane. Hundreds — thousands — more whose names we will never forget.”

He reached into his coat and pulled out the battered children's copy of the Phaethon myth, its pages stained with blood.

“This book warned us. Power without wisdom destroys everything it touches. We handed the chariot to those who could not drive it. And the world very nearly burned. Let this be our eternal reminder.”

He placed the book on the despatch box like a sacred relic.

“Today we begin again. Not as New Britain. Not as the Convergence. As the old Britain — wiser, scarred, and determined never to make the same mistakes. We will rebuild. We will remember. And we will never again be ashamed of who we are.”

Six Months Later

A pale spring sun shone over a scarred but healing London.

Rupert Blou, now serving as Interim National Guardian, stood on the steps of a restored Parliament. The bullet holes had been left unrepaired — deliberate reminders. The Union Jack flew high and proud once more.

Beside him stood a small group of survivors: former prisoners, resistance fighters, and ordinary citizens who had refused to submit.

A little girl — Lena Voss’s niece — stepped forward holding the Phaethon book. She opened it and read aloud in a clear voice:

“The boy asked for power that was never meant for him, and the world paid the price.”

The crowd was silent as she closed the book.

Blou placed a gentle hand on her shoulder and addressed the nation.

“We paid a terrible price. But we stopped the chariot. We took back the reins. Let this story be taught to every child in Britain — not as myth, but as history. Power without wisdom is the oldest danger. And vigilance is the only defence.”

As the crowd cheered, the restored Big Ben began to chime again for the first time in years. The sound rolled across the city — imperfect, scarred, but real.

Epilogue – The Reckoning

In a quiet garden in the Yorkshire Dales, a simple memorial stone stood beneath an old hawthorn tree.

Here lie the ashes of those who held the line. Alex Thorne Lena Voss and all who fought that Britain might live.

A young woman — one of the many girls saved during the uprisings — placed flowers at the base of the stone. She carried a small, well-read copy of the Phaethon myth.

She opened it and read the final line aloud:

“And Zeus struck him down with a thunderbolt... so that the world might be saved from the fire.”

She closed the book and looked toward the horizon, where the Union Jack flew over villages and towns once more.

Britain was not the same country it had been.

It was leaner. Harder. Wiser.

But it was free.

And it would never forget the price of handing the chariot to those who could not drive it.

We were here before them. We will be here after them.

END

Glossary

Before Party

The underground resistance movement founded by Rupert Blou. Initially a legal political party, it became an armed resistance network after being banned. Its slogan is “We were here before them. We will be here after them.”

Chislam

A fictional syncretic, hyper-radical ideology blending extreme Islamist doctrine with Western self-loathing and state-enabled expansion. Publicly presented as “the Final Synthesis” or “Compassionate Faith”; privately dedicated to demographic conquest, cultural erasure, and eventual nuclear jihad.

Compassion Budgets

Government policy diverting billions of taxpayer pounds from pensions, healthcare, and native infrastructure into luxury migrant hotels, legal defence funds, and Chislamic institutions. Official justification: “integration and reparations.”

Convergence, The Great

The fictional turning point in 2027 when mass migration, institutional capture, and ideological surrender were reframed as Britain’s “destined evolution” into New Britain.

Emotional Safety Act / Harmony Laws

Orwellian legislation criminalising criticism of mass migration, Chislam, or government policy as “emotional violence,” “hate speech,” or “far-right incitement.” Enforcement is handled by Harmony Enforcement officers.

Final Detonation / Nuclear Jihad / Trident Purification

Chislam’s secret Sixth Pillar: the doctrine that once control of Britain’s nuclear arsenal (Trident) is achieved, it must be used against America as an act of “global justice.”

Harmony Enforcement

The militarised police force responsible for suppressing native dissent, enforcing two-tier justice, and protecting Chislamic interests. Often referred to as “the Harmony” by citizens.

New Britain

The official name of the United Kingdom after the Convergence. Characterised by two-tier justice, cultural erasure, and the elevation of Chislam above native British identity.

Phaethon Myth

The ancient Greek story of the boy who demands to drive his father Helios's sun chariot, loses control, and scorches the earth. Banned or heavily restricted in New Britain because it is seen as a direct critique of the regime's reckless granting of power to Chislam.

Submission is Compassion

The central public slogan of Chislam, repeated endlessly in media, schools, and official statements. It reframes surrender and demographic replacement as moral virtue.

Two-Tier Justice / Two-Tier Policing

The systemic practice of applying different standards of law and policing depending on the ethnicity or religion of the perpetrator or victim. Native British citizens receive harsher treatment than Chislamic migrants or converts.

Womb Jihad

The secret Chislamic doctrine that encourages the sexual conquest of native women (framed publicly as "cultural misunderstandings" or "grooming") to alter the demographic future of Britain without conventional warfare. Each child born to a Chislamic father is considered a "living missile."

Unity Re-education Centres

Former prisons repurposed as ideological indoctrination facilities for "far-right" dissidents, historians, and anyone caught teaching or sharing banned pre-Convergence material (including the Phaethon myth).

We Were Here Before Them / Britain Was Always Ours — We Merely Returned

Core Chislamic slogans asserting that Britain was historically Islamic territory and that native Britons are temporary occupiers.

Key Figures

Rupert Blou

Charismatic ex-military founder and leader of the Before Party. The public face and moral centre of the resistance.

Alex Thorne

Former MI6 analyst turned Before Party strategist. Motivated by the covered-up rape and suicide of his sister Sarah.

Lena Voss

Journalist radicalised after surviving a Chislam attack. Becomes the Before Party's most powerful media voice.

Imam Khalid al-Rashid

Charismatic leader of the Chislam movement and main antagonist. Mastermind behind the infiltration of British institutions and the nuclear plot.

Quear Barmy

Virtue-signalling Prime Minister whose regime enables Chislam's rise through "compassion" policies.

Sir Geoffrey Langford

Home Secretary who is revealed as a high-level Chislam sleeper agent and traitor.

END END