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**ROBERT
LUDLUM**

**THE
APOCALYPSE
WATCH**

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WATCH

ROBERT LUDLUM

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of the original hardcover edition.
NOT ONE WORD HAS BEEN OMITTED.*

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A Bantam Book*

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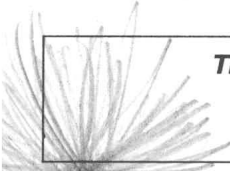
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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

I've rarely written a dedication longer than two or three lines. This current one is different, the reason self-evident.

To my lovely and compassionate bride, Mary, of forty-plus years; and our children, Michael, Jonathan, and Glynis, who displayed strength, determination, and unfailing good humor (a mainstay of our family) throughout everything. They could not have been finer, nor could I ever express my love and gratitude sufficiently.

"Your father's off the operating table and on the recovery floor."

"Who's going to pick him up?"

To the brilliant cardiologist Jeffrey Bender, M.D., and the superb cardiothoracic surgeon Dr. John Elefteriades, as well as the surgical crew and all those in the CTICU of Yale-New Haven Hospital, whose skills and concern passeth all understanding. (Although it could be argued that I was a glorious patient—unfortunately, not very convincingly.)

To our nephew, Dr. Kenneth M. Kearns, also an extraordinary surgeon, who puts up with his less than saintly uncle with a tolerance known only to martyrs. And, Ken, thanks for the "Listerine." And to brother Donald Kearns, Ph.D.-Nuclear Medicine.

(How did I ever marry into such an accomplished family?) Thanks, Don, for your daily calls and visits. And to their medical associates Doctors William Preskenis and David "the Duke" Grisé of the pulmonary team. I hear you terrific guys, and I'm doing my damndest to behave.

To our cousins I. C. "Izzy" Ryducha and his wife, Janet, who were always there when we needed them.

To Doctors Charles Augenbraun and Robert Greene of the Emergency Clinic at Norwalk Hospital, Connecticut, and all those wonderful people who made a pretty sick stranger feel as though he might see another sunrise. No mean feat.

Lastly, despite all efforts to keep the event under wraps, to those scores of people, friends, and those I've never met but whom I certainly consider friends, thanks for all the cards and notes expressing your good wishes. They were gratefully received and avidly read.

Now, let's lighten up; there's always something funny even in the worst of times. During a perfectly normal sponge bath a day or so after surgery, a kindly nurse turned me over and with great dignity, as well as a glint in her eye, said: "Not to worry, Mr. L., I'll still respect you in the morning."

Amen. And to all once again, my deep thanks. I'm ready to run in a marathon.

To any sane person there has always been an unfathomable mystery about the systematic evil the Nazi regime perpetrated. Like a moral black hole, it seems to defy the laws of nature while being part of that nature.

DAVID ANSEN

Newsweek, December 20, 1993

THE

APOCALYPSE WATCH

PROLOGUE

The Alpine pass, high in the Austrian Hausruck, was swept by the winter snow and assaulted by the cold north winds, while far below, a valley sprouted crocuses and the jonquils of early spring. This particular pass was neither a border checkpoint nor a transfer post from one part of the mountain range to another. In fact, it was not on any map issued for public scrutiny.

There was a thick, sturdy bridge, barely wide enough for a single vehicle, that spanned a seventy-foot gorge several hundred feet above a rushing offshoot of the Salzach River. Once crossed, and passing through a tree-notched maze, there was a hidden road cut out of the mountain forest, a steep, twisting road that descended well over seven thousand feet to the isolated valley where the crocuses and the jonquils grew. The much warmer flatland was dotted with green fields and greener trees . . . and a complex of small buildings, the roofs camouflaged by slashing diagonals of painted earth colors, undetectable from the skies, merely a part of the mountainous terrain. It was the headquarters of Die Brüderschaft der Wacht, The Brotherhood of the Watch, the progenitors of Germany's Fourth Reich.

The two figures walking across the bridge were dressed in heavy parkas, fur hats, and thick alpine boots; each turned his face away from the blasts of wind and snow that buffeted him. Unsteadily, they reached the other side and the traveler in front spoke.

"That's not a bridge I'd care to cross too often," said the American, slapping the snow off his clothing and removing his gloves to massage his face.

"But you will have to on your return, Herr Lassiter,"

countered the late-middle-aged German, smiling broadly under the protection of a tree, as he, too, brushed off the snow. "Not to be annoyed, *mein Herr*. Before you know it, you will be where the air is warm and there are actually flowers. At this altitude it is still winter, below it is springtime. . . . Come, our transportation has arrived. Follow me!"

There was the sound of a gunning engine in the distance; the two men, Lassiter behind, walked rapidly, circuitously, through the trees to a small clearing, where there stood a Jeep-like vehicle, only much larger and heavier, with balloon tires of very thick rubber, deeply treaded.

"That's some car," said the American.

"You should be proud, it is *amerikanisch*! Built to our specifications in your state of Michigan."

"What happened to Mercedes?"

"Too close, too dangerous," replied the German. "If you care to build a hidden fortress among your own, you don't employ the resources of your own. What you will see shortly is the combined efforts of numerous nations—their more avaricious businessmen, I grant you, merchants who will conceal clients and deliveries for excessive profits. Of course, once the deliveries are made, the profits become a loaded gun; the deliveries must continue, perhaps with more esoteric merchandise. It is the way of the world."

"I bank on it," said Lassiter, smiling while he removed his fur hat to relieve the hairline sweat. He was a shade under six feet, a man of middle years, his age attested to by streaks of gray at his temples and crow's-feet at the edges of his deep-set eyes; the face itself was narrow, sharp-featured. He started toward the vehicle, several steps behind his companion. However, what neither his companion nor the driver of the outsize vehicle saw was that he kept reaching into his pocket, subtly withdrawing his hand and dropping metal pellets into the snow-swept grass. He had been doing so for the past hour, since they had stepped out of a truck on an alpine road between two mountain villages. Each pellet had been subjected to radiation easily picked up by handheld scanners. At the point

where the truck had stopped, he had removed an electronic transponder from his belt, and feigning a fall, had shoved it between two rocks. The trail was now clear; the honing device of those following would reach the top of its dial at that spot, accompanied by sharp, piercing beeps.

For the man called Lassiter was in a high-risk profession. He was a multilingual deep-cover agent for American intelligence, and his name was Harry Latham. In the sacrosanct chambers of the Agency, his code name was Sting.

The journey down into the valley mesmerized Latham. He had climbed a few mountains with his father and his younger brother, but they were minor, undramatic New England peaks, nothing like this. Here, as their steep descent progressed, there was change, obvious change—different colors, different smells, warmer breezes. Sitting alone in the backseat of the large open truck, he emptied his pocket of every hot pellet, preparing himself for the thorough search he anticipated; he was clean. He was also exhilarated, his excitement under control from years of experience, but his mind was on fire. It was there! He had found it! Yet, as they reached ground level, even Harry Latham was astonished at what he had really found.

The roughly three square miles of valley flatland was in reality a military base, superbly camouflaged. The roofs of the various one-story structures were painted to blend in with the surroundings, and whole sections of the fields were beneath a latticework of ropes fifteen feet high, the open spaces between the ropes and poles filled with stretched, translucent green screening—corridors leading from one area to another. Gray motorcycles with sidecars sped through these concealed “alleyways,” the drivers and their passengers in uniform, while groups of men and women could be seen in training exercises, both physical and apparently academic—lecturers stood before blackboards in front of serrated ranks of students. Those performing gymnastics and hand-to-hand combat were in minimal clothing—briefs and halters; those being lectured were in forest-green fatigues. What struck Harry Latham was the sense of constant movement. There was an inten-

sity about the valley that was frightening, but then, so was the Bruderschaft, and this was its womb.

"It is spectacular, *nicht wahr*, Herr Lassiter?" shouted the middle-aged German beside the driver as they reached the bottom road and entered a corridor of roofed rope and green screening.

"*Unglaublich*," agreed the American. "*Phantastisch!*"

"I forget, you speak our language fluently."

"My heart is here. It always has been."

"*Natürlich, denn wir sind im Recht.*"

"*Mehr als das, wir sind die Wahrheit.* Hitler spoke the truths of all truth."

"Yes, yes, of course," said the German, smiling with neutral eyes at Alexander Lassiter, born Harry Latham of Stockbridge, Massachusetts. "We'll go directly to the *Oberbefehlshaber*. The *Kommandant* is eager to meet you."

Thirty-two months of grueling serpentine work were about to bear fruit, thought Latham. Nearly three years of building a life, *living* a life that was not his, were about to come to an end. The incessant, maddening, exhausting travels throughout Europe and the Middle East, synchronized down to hours, even minutes, so he would be at a specific place at a given time, where others could swear on their lives that they had seen him. And the scum of the world he had dealt with—arms merchants without conscience, whose extraordinary profits were measured by supertankers of blood; drug lords, killing and crippling generations of children everywhere; compromised politicians, even statesmen, who bent and subverted laws for the benefit of the manipulators—it was all finished. There would be no more frenzied funneling of gargantuan sums of money through laundered Swiss accounts, secret numbers, and spectrograph signatures, all part of the deadly games of international terrorism. Harry Latham's personal nightmare, as vital as it was, was over.

"We are here, Herr Lassiter," said Latham's German companion as the mountain vehicle pulled up to a barrack door under the roped green screening high above. "It is much warmer now, much more pleasant, *nicht wahr?*"

"It certainly is," answered the deep-cover intelligence officer, stepping down from the rear seat. "I'm actually sweating under these clothes."

"We'll take the outerwear off inside and have yours dried for your return."

"I'd appreciate it. I must be back in Munich by tonight."

"Yes, we understand. Come, the *Kommandant*." As the two men approached the heavy black wooden door with the scarlet swastika emblazoned in the center, there was a whooshing sound in the air. Above, through the translucent green screening, the large white wings of a glider swooped in descending circles into the valley. "Another wonder, Herr Lassiter? It is released from its mother aircraft at an altitude of roughly thirteen hundred feet. *Natürlich*, the pilot must be extremely well trained, for the winds are dangerous, so unpredictable. It is used only in emergencies."

"I can see how it comes down. How does it get up?"

"The same winds, *mein Herr*, with the assistance of disposable booster rockets. In the thirties, we Germans developed the most advanced glider aircraft."

"Why not use a conventional small plane?"

"Too easily monitored. A glider can be pulled up from a field, a clear pasture. A plane must be fueled, be serviced, have maintenance, and frequently, even a flight plan."

"*Phantastisch*," repeated the American. "And—of course—the glider has few or no metal parts. Plastic and sized cloth are difficult for radar grids to pick up."

"Difficult," agreed the new-age Nazi. "Not completely impossible, but extremely difficult."

"Amazing," said Herr Lassiter as his companion opened the door of the valley's headquarters. "You are all to be congratulated. Your isolation is matched by your security. Superb!" Feigning a casualness he did not feel, Latham looked around the large room. There was a profusion of sophisticated computerized equipment, banks of consoles against each wall, starchy-uniformed operators in front of each, seemingly an equal mix of men and

women. . . . Men and women—something was odd, at least not normal. What was it? And then he knew; to an individual, the operators were young, generally in their twenties, mostly blond or light-haired, with clear, sun-tanned skin. As a group they were inordinately attractive, like models corralled by an advertising agency to sit in front of a client's computer products, conveying the message that potential customers, too, would look like this if they bought the merchandise.

"Each is an expert, Mr. Lassiter," said an unfamiliar, monotonic voice behind Latham. The American turned abruptly. The newcomer was a man about his own age, dressed in camouflage fatigues and wearing a Wehrmacht officer's cap; he had silently emerged from an open doorway on the left. "General Ulrich von Schnabe, your enthusiastic host, *mein Herr*," he continued, offering his hand. "We meet a legend in his own time. Such a privilege!"

"You're far too generous, General. I'm merely an international businessman, but one with definite ideological persuasions, if you like."

"No doubt reached by years of international observation?"

"You could say that, and not be in error. They claim that Africa was the first continent, yet, while others have developed over several thousand years, *Afrika* remains the Dark Continent, the black continent. The northern shores are now havens for equally inferior people."

"Well said, Mr. Lassiter. Yet you've made millions, some say billions, servicing the dark and darker skins."

"Why not? What better satisfaction can a man like me have than by helping them slaughter each other?"

"*Wunderbar!* Beautifully and perceptively stated. . . . You were studying our group here, I watched you. You can see for yourself that these, every one, are of Aryan blood. Pure Aryan blood. As are those everywhere in our valley. Each has been carefully selected, their bloodlines traced, their commitment absolute."

"The dream of the Lebensborn," said the American quietly, reverentially. "The breeding farms—estates actu-

ally, if I'm not mistaken, where the finest SS officers were bred to strong Teutonic women—"

"Eichmann had studies done. It was determined that the northern Germanic female had not only the finest bone structure in Europe and extraordinary strength, but a marked subservience to the male," interrupted the general.

"The true superior race," concluded Lassiter admiringly. "Would that the dream had come true."

"In large measure it has," said Von Schnabe quietly. "We believe that a great many here, if not a majority, are the children of *those* children. We stole lists from the Red Cross in Geneva, and spent years tracing down each family where the Lebensborn infants had been sent. These, and others we shall recruit throughout Europe, are the Sonnenkinder, the Children of the Sun. The inheritors of the Reich!"

"It's incredible."

"We're reaching out everywhere, and everywhere those selected respond to us, for the circumstances are the same. Just as in the twenties, when the stranglehold of the Versailles and Locarno treaties led to the economic collapse of the Weimar Republic and the influx of undesirables throughout Germany, so has the collapse of the Berlin Wall led to chaos. We are a nation in conflagration, the lowborn non-Aryans crossing our borders in unlimited numbers, taking our jobs, polluting our morals, making whores of our women because where they come from it's perfectly acceptable. It's totally *unacceptable* and it must stop! You agree, of course."

"Why else would I be here, General? I have funneled millions into your needs through the banks in Algiers by way of Marseilles. My code has been *Frère—Brüder—I* trust it is familiar to you."

"Which is why I embrace you with all my heart, as does the entire Bruderschaft."

"So now let's conclude my final gift, General, final, for you will never need me again. . . . Forty-six cruise missiles appropriated from Saddam Hussein's arsenal, buried by his officer corps, who felt he would not survive. Their warheads are capable of carrying massive explosives as

well as chemical payloads—gases that can immobilize whole areas of cities. These are included, of course, along with the launchers. I paid twenty-five million, American, for them. Pay me what you can, and if it is less, I will accept my loss with honor.”

“You are, indeed, a man of great honor, *mein Herr*.”

Suddenly the front door opened and a man in pure white coveralls walked into the room. He glanced around, saw Von Schnabe, and marched directly toward him, handing the general a sealed manila envelope. “This is it,” the man said in German.

“*Danke*,” replied Von Schnabe, opening the envelope and extracting a small plastic pouch. “You are a fine *Schauspieler*—a good impersonator—Herr Lassiter, but I believe you lost something. Our pilot just brought it to me.” The general shook the contents of the plastic bag into his hand. It was the transponder Harry Latham had shoved between the rocks of a mountain road thousands of feet above the valley. The hunt was finished. Harry swiftly raised his hand to his right ear. “Stop him!” shouted Von Schnabe as the pilot grabbed Latham’s arm, yanking it back into a hammerlock. “There’ll be no cyanide for you, Harry Latham of Stockbridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A. We have other plans for you, brilliant plans.”