

Visit Tyndale's exciting Web site at www.tyndale.com

Discover the latest Left Behind news at www.leftbehind.com

Copyright © 2003 by Jerry B. Jenkins and Tim LaHaye. All rights reserved.

Cover photo copyright © 1995 by Mark Green. All rights reserved.

Cover photo copyright © 1987 by Robert Flesher. All rights reserved.

Left Behind is a registered trademark of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Published in association with the literary agency of Alive Communications, Inc., 7680 Goddard Street, Suite 200, Colorado Springs, CO 80920.

Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

Edited by Curtis H. C. Lundgren

ISBN 0-8423-5791-2, mass paper

Printed in the United States of America

08 07 06 05 04 03
9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

What's Gone On Before	ix
1. Into the Great Tribulation.	1
2. Wildfire	13
3. Wall of Fire	25
4. The Chase.	37
5. Chased by the Dragon	49
6. Zeke's Trouble	61
7. Maggie's Story	75
8. Tsion's Letter	89
9. Changing Course	101
10. Natalie's Plan	113
11. Natalie and Charlie.	123
12. The Rescue	135
About the Authors	



ONE

Into the Great Tribulation

JUDD Thompson Jr. wiped sweat from his forehead, aware that he was watching the beginning of the end of the world. For the past three and a half years he had studied biblical predictions about the Antichrist and the false prophet. There was no doubt in his mind that Nicolae Carpathia and Leon Fortunato, Carpathia's right-hand man, were the evil men described in Revelation 14 through 20.

The sun baked the crowd, still scurrying to greet the potentate. GC personnel in roving carts warned people that the courtyard was filled. "If you want to stay and watch the risen potentate greet others, feel free to do so. Otherwise, please exit the area. Thank you."

The gigantic screens showed Carpathia smiling, energetic, and full of life. Minutes

WILDFIRE!

earlier the crowd had wept over the man entombed in his glass coffin. Now, as the Bible had predicted, Carpathia stood in the midafternoon New Babylon sun and beamed. Like moths to a flame, the crowd worshiped their risen hero.

Judd felt drawn too, but for another reason. Carpathia's final words shocked him. The once-dead potentate had urged his enemies to join the Global Community. Then with menacing eyes the man spoke directly to believers in Christ and warned them not to attack him or the harmony he had worked hard to create. The look on Carpathia's face reminded Judd of the look on his face at the execution of the two prophets, Moishe and Eli. No doubt, Carpathia had the same in mind for other followers of Christ, but how would he try to kill them?

As Judd passed through the crowd, he overheard several people talking about Carpathia. "This is the greatest political comeback in history," a man said.

"There's nothing political about it," another said. "This is a religious experience! He's god!"

Judd shook his head as he headed for the courtyard. A GC guard with a bullhorn asked people to move away from the entrance.

Judd pulled out the special pass he had been given when he accompanied Z-Van backstage and held it high above his head. The guard didn't pay attention until Judd came closer. The man inspected the pass, eyed Judd warily, and motioned him through the gate.

"Why does he get to go through?" a woman yelled. "That's not fair."

The gate clanged shut and Judd moved past the line. He looped around the huge speakers and equipment at the front of the stage and found the narrow backstage stairs. He flashed his pass to another guard and the man waved him through.

Invited guests and dignitaries who had planned for a funeral watched in awe of Nicolae. Judd noticed some ashes behind the stage, the remains of the three regional potentates Leon Fortunato had struck with fire. Judd glanced at the statue of Nicolae, a perfect replica. Puffs of smoke lingered, and Judd shuddered as he recalled the voice that had thundered from it.

Judd walked through a series of curtains and almost tripped over Z-Van's wheelchair. A leg cast stuck out from under a velvet curtain. He pulled back the curtain and gasped when he saw Z-Van lying facedown, his hands raised in front of him. His guitar-

WILDFIRE!

ist, a skinny man known as Boomer, sat beside him, equally overcome.

Judd touched Z-Van's shoulder and the man turned, his eyes red. "Don't bother me. This is a holy moment."

"I can't take my eyes off Carpathia," Boomer whispered.

"Don't call him that," Z-Van snapped. "Don't even call him potentate anymore. The term is too low."

Z-Van took a quick breath and covered his face. "He's looking this way. I'm not worthy!"

Judd glanced up in time to catch Nicolae Carpathia staring straight at him.



Vicki's stomach churned as the kids scampered into the shadows of a rocky crag above Darrion's summer house in Wisconsin. The GC had located them through Vicki's phone call, but she could live with that. If she hadn't called her friend Natalie Bishop, they wouldn't have found out about the arrests of Charlie and the Shairtons.

Janie shook her head. "I liked this place. I thought we'd stay here a long time."

Mark cradled the laptop computer and

scanned their hideout below. "We have to figure a way out."

Two GC cars stopped near the driveway. Downed trees prevented them from driving all the way to the house. Radios crackled, then went silent as car doors opened and closed. Vicki couldn't see how many officers there were, but by the rustling of the leaves it had to be more than two.

"Be right back," Darrion whispered.

Vicki grabbed her arm. "What are you doing?"

"There's a path behind this rock that leads down to the driveway. I'm going to get a better look. Maybe I'll grab one of their radios."

Mark shook his head. "It's risky."

"I'll go with you," Vicki said.

Darrion squeezed between a tree and a rock, and the two wound around a tiny path. Vicki chose her footsteps carefully. In several places the path was so narrow that Vicki hugged the rock as she inched along.

"Don't look down," Darrion said.

Vicki glanced over the edge and saw tops of huge trees below. *No one could survive a fall that far*, she thought.

Darrion slipped on a loose rock and fell over the edge. She grabbed a small root and

WILDFIRE!

hung on as Vicki rushed to her. Rocks landed more than a hundred feet below.

Vicki grabbed Darrion's elbow and pulled with all her might. Darrion struggled to get a foothold and finally pulled herself up to safety. Vicki's heart raced like a frightened animal's as the two sat, their backs to the rock.

"Do you think they heard us?" Darrion panted.

Vicki gasped for air. "Let's go back to the others."

Darrion pointed. "Around this curve the cars will be directly below us. Come on."

Before Vicki could protest, Darrion was on the move. Vicki caught up, being careful not to slip. She leaned over the edge and spotted two GC cruisers near a thicket at the end of the driveway.

"Nobody's there," Darrion said. "Let's go."

"I thought you said the path leads down the hill."

Darrion smiled and pulled a rope from a hole in the rock and threw it over the edge. "My dad and I used to rappel down this rock face."

Darrion showed Vicki how to hold the rope and quickly slid down. When she reached the bottom, she waved.

Vicki took the rope like Darrion had shown her. She wasn't able to go as fast as

Darrion, and it felt good when her feet were on solid ground.

They ran to a tree and hid. From there they could see two GC officers outside the open front door of the house. One talked into a radio and gave orders. Darrion tugged at Vicki's shirt, and they crept toward the squad cars.

Darrion peeked inside an open window, grabbed a handheld radio from the passenger seat, and turned it on.

"Negative on the first floor," a man said. "Somebody's definitely been here, though."

One by one guards checked in with reports from inside the house. "This is quite a setup, sir. They've got a huge plasma TV and some pretty sophisticated equipment."

"This was Max Stahley's place," the leader said. "He liked the bells and whistles."

"If it was those kids, how would they have known about this place?" a female officer said.

"Good question."

"Let's go," Vicki whispered.

Darrion shook her head. "We have to think. Maybe we should let all the air out of their tires so they can't follow us."

Vicki glanced at the house again and made sure the officers hadn't moved. Darrion

WILDFIRE!

reached inside the car, pulled a lever, and the trunk opened with a thunk.

"What are you doing?"

"There might be stuff in there we can use."

"We don't need anything. Come on."

The leader barked orders to two guards outside. "We've got negative contact. Get the accelerant."

"What's that mean?" Vicki said.

Darrion hopped inside the trunk and pulled Vicki in with her.



Judd locked eyes with Carpathia and trembled. Could this man read Judd's thoughts? If Satan indwelt him, would he be able to see the mark of the believer on Judd's forehead?

Carpathia's face and body looked the same, but there was something different about his gaze. He seemed even more intense than before, as if some unearthly power surged through him. Nicolae turned and glanced at a woman in the receiving line. He smiled and spoke softly, reassuring her that he was alive and well.

Judd studied the back of Carpathia's head. There were no signs of the death wound inflicted by Dr. Chaim Rosenzweig at the closing night of the Jerusalem Gala. Judd

relived the scene, remembering how Nicolae fell backward on Rosenzweig's razor-sharp sword. There should have been a huge scar on Nicolae's head, but hair had grown over it. Judd would have loved to inspect the wound closer, but he slipped behind a curtain out of Carpathia's sight. God's arch-enemy was only a few yards away, and the world worshiped him as if he were the creator of the universe.

Judd looked at Z-Van, still flat on the ground, groveling at the image of Carpathia. Judd heard Z-Van whisper something and he leaned closer.

"Victory to you, our lord and risen king, ruler of the world, head of everything," Z-Van said. "We bow and give you praise; once dead, you're now alive. May peace forever reign with you, our sovereign, Nicolae."

Judd closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

Z-Van turned and said, "If this doesn't make you a believer, nothing will."

Judd winced. He wanted to challenge Z-Van, tell him the truth again, but this wasn't the time or the place.

"Look at him," Z-Van continued. "He's got unbelievable power, even over death. When

I'm onstage and people scream my name and sing my words, it's an energy rush. But that's nothing compared to this." He looked at Nicolae again, his lower lip trembling. "This man is pure power, and I know he's back to help us."

Judd pulled the curtain back slightly and looked at the long line of people waiting their turn to greet Carpathia. He couldn't wait to get to Lionel and leave New Babylon.



Vicki scrambled inside the trunk, and Darrion pulled the lid down, making sure it didn't latch. A thin strip of light showed around the edge of the trunk lid.

"What if they're coming for this car?" Vicki whispered.

"Accelerant is like gasoline or something flammable. There are no cans in here."

"What will they do?"

"They're probably going to torch the house."

Footsteps hurried by and someone opened the other trunk, closed it, got in, and drove the car a few yards past them, gravel crunching under the tires. As Darrion started to lift the trunk to climb out, the officer in charge barked another order. "Move those fallen trees and bring the other car up here!"

"Told you we should have gone back," Vicki whispered.

As the GC guards groaned under the weight of the trees, Darrion fiddled with the trunk latch. "We'll wait until they start the fire and take off while they're not looking. But we've got to figure out a way to—"

Someone ran to the car and opened the driver's door. The car dipped to the left as someone sat. As the engine started, a warning buzzer sounded. The car sped toward the house and slid to a halt. Vicki thought she was going to fly through the backseat.

A man cursed as he slammed the front door. "Wonder who left this open?" The trunk lid slammed shut.



Mark Eisman scooted to the edge of the cliff and looked at the house. A GC officer handed two containers to the others, and the three went inside. Another car raced up, barely skidding to a stop before it smashed the other car. The man got out, slammed the trunk that was slightly open, and went inside.

Shelly crawled beside Mark. "Janie just came back. She said there's no sign of Vicki and Darrion."

WILDFIRE!

Mark gritted his teeth. "We'll have to leave without them."

"No, I won't—"

Mark clamped a hand over Shelly's mouth. "Pretty soon they'll come looking for us and they won't be alone. We have to leave."

"But what if they're hurt? They could have fallen . . ."

"Let's find a safe place and regroup," Mark said. "Tell everybody we'll head along the trail Vicki and Darrion took. Maybe we'll find them back there."

As Shelly crawled away to alert the others, breaking glass shattered the morning stillness. Someone shouted and GC officers ran from the house.

Then Mark saw it. Smoke poured out of the windows of the Stahley home. Soon, flames licked at the walls. The GC officers were using their weapon of fire again. As the Stahley home went up in flames, Mark wondered what the GC's next weapon would be.