



# The WITNESS

A novel by **Josh McDowell**



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*The Witness*

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PART ONE

# 1

HIS DAUGHTER WAS DEAD. His wife was missing. And now Rafeeq Ramsey clearly feared for his own life.

“We have only two more days,” the old man said, pacing the sumptuous living room of his palatial flat on the shores of Monte Carlo and chain-smoking like a man who might rather die of lung cancer than a car bomb or an assassin’s bullet. “I received a new note just before you arrived. If I don’t wire them more money by Friday, they say they’ll kill Claudette and come after me. So please, Mr. Accad, I beg of you—tell me you have good news, because I don’t think I can take much more of this.”

“How much are they asking for now?”

“Twenty-five million,” Ramsey said. “On top of the 11 million euros I’ve already paid.”

It was an enormous sum of money—at least it would be for a mere mortal. But the seventy-nine-year-old Ramsey was no mere mortal. Six months earlier, he had sold his company—Blue Nile Holdings, founded with his late brother back in 1963—to a French conglomerate for a cool €563 million. He was now one of the wealthiest men in Egypt and a living legend among the business elite throughout North Africa and the Middle East.

Marwan Accad sat a few meters away on a long couch made of rich Italian leather and took in the moment. In so many ways, Ramsey was the perfect client—old, rich, and terrified. It was men like this for whom Marwan had launched his executive security business in the first place.

But this case had left the vilest taste in his mouth. Greed. Corruption. Blackmail. Murder. Everywhere he looked, every stone he turned over, he found himself face-to-face with the depravity of men's souls. He certainly did not have any words of solace for this wretched old man, now bereft of the two women he loved most in the world, and he began to wonder if it was time to get out of this business—once and for all.

Marwan finished his espresso and stared out over the glistening Mediterranean and at the reflection of the late-afternoon sun in the windows of the other luxury apartments nearby. He wondered what his parents would have thought of the life he now lived—the jet helicopters and the Humvees, the Armani suits and the Kevlar vests. The more risks he took, the more money he made. Wasn't that just good business?

He knew what his mother would say. She had begged him to get out of Beirut after his army service and become a doctor or an engineer and move to Paris. She had longed for him

to live a safe and quiet life, to have sons and raise them to be men of peace, men of science, men of accomplishment. But like a fool, he had not listened. Could she see him now? Did she know how much time he spent helping the rich buy their trophy wives back from blackmailers and drug lords? Did she see how much time he spent jetting clients in and out of Baghdad and Mosul and Fallujah? Did the dead cry themselves to sleep?

“I do have news,” Marwan Accad said at last. “But I’m afraid it is not good.”

“What have those animals done to Claudette?” Ramsey demanded. “I’ll kill them. I swear to you, Mr. Accad. I will not rest until I hunt them down and make them suffer.”

Marwan shook his head.

“It is about Claudette, but it’s not what you think. Please, have a seat.”

“Just tell me what you know.”

“I will, Mr. Ramsey. But please, sit, and then I will tell you everything.”

A corpulent man whose health had been slipping fast over the past two weeks, Ramsey slumped down in a large overstuffed chair and nervously lit another cigarette. His eyes were red and moist and filled with anxious expectation. He leaned forward. “Please, Mr. Accad, don’t toy with me.”

Marwan nodded. “Mr. Ramsey, what does São Paulo mean to you?”

The old man looked confused. “You mean the city, in Brazil?”

“Right.”

Ramsey shrugged. “Nothing; why?”

“Nothing?” Marwan insisted.

“No. Should it?”

“Did Blue Nile Holdings have any offices or factories there?”

“No.”

“Were any of your senior management team from there?”

“No.”

“Were any of your employees from there?”

“I don’t think so.”

“Have you ever been to São Paulo on business?”

“No, I tell you.”

“Have you ever been there on vacation with your wife?”

“Who has time for vacations?” Ramsey sniffed. “I am a busy man.”

“Has Mrs. Ramsey ever been to São Paulo alone for any other reason?”

“No, of course not.”

“You’re absolutely sure?”

“I don’t see what you’re trying to—”

“Are you sure, Mr. Ramsey?” Marwan pressed. “*Think.*”

Rafeeq Ramsey got up from the chair and began pacing around the room again, taking long drags on his cigarette.

“Well, actually, come to think of it, I think she did,” he said after a moment.

“Tell me about it.”

“There’s not much to tell,” Ramsey said. “Claudette’s second cousin once married a Brazilian. It lasted about six months before they got divorced.”

“Did you go to the wedding?” Marwan asked.

“No, but Claudette did. She hated it—São Paulo, that is.

Too crowded. Too noisy. New York without the charm, she said.”

“When was the wedding?”

“I don’t know, maybe three or four years ago,” Ramsey said, mixing himself a drink at the bar by the windows. “Why? Where are you going with all this?”

Marwan reached down, opened his briefcase, pulled out a large manila envelope, and held it out to Ramsey.

“What is that?” the old man asked. He sipped his martini.

“Open it,” Marwan said. “You’ll see.”

Ramsey stared at Marwan for a moment, then set down his drink, walked over, took the envelope, and opened it slowly.

As he pulled out an eight-by-ten black-and-white photograph, all color drained from his face, and a look of profound confusion filled his eyes.

In Ramsey’s hands was a photograph of his wife, date-stamped less than forty-eight hours earlier. Unlike the previous photos that had come with the ransom notes, in this one she was not bound. She was not gagged. Instead, she appeared to be sitting in an office, in front of a desk, talking to a clerk or manager of some kind.

“I don’t . . . I don’t understand,” Ramsey finally managed to say, though his voice was weak and his hands were trembling. “What is this? Where was this taken?”

“It was taken by a surveillance camera inside a bank in São Paulo,” Marwan explained. “Your wife withdrew funds from the money you wired for her ransom.”

Ramsey was clearly having trouble processing the image in his hands.

“What are you saying, Mr. Accad?” the old man said at last.



“That my wife . . . you think she planned this whole thing? You’re saying this is proof that she betrayed me?”

Marwan said nothing. He waited for the painful truth to sink in before he offered his client a plan of action. But he never got the chance. The plate-glass windows suddenly exploded around them. The noise of two shots filled the room. The old man crashed to the floor. His blood formed a slowly growing pool on the carpet.

Rafeeq Ramsey was dead, and Marwan Accad feared he might be next.

## About the Author

**Josh McDowell** received a master's degree in theology from Talbot Theological Seminary in California. In 1961, he joined the staff of Campus Crusade for Christ International. Not long after, he started the Josh McDowell Ministry to reach young people worldwide with the truth and love of Jesus.

Josh has spoken to more than ten million young people in eighty-four countries, including more than seven hundred university and college campuses. He has authored or co-authored more than seventy books and workbooks and has sold more than 51 million copies worldwide. Josh's most popular works are *More Than a Carpenter*, which has been translated into over eighty-five languages and sold more than 15 million copies, and *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, recognized by *World* magazine as one of the twentieth century's top forty books. Josh continues to travel throughout the United States and countries around the world, helping young people and adults bolster their faith and scriptural beliefs.

Josh has been married to Dottie for more than thirty years and has four children. Josh and Dottie live in Dallas, Texas. Visit his Web site at [www.josh.org](http://www.josh.org).