

A TRAVIS BROCK THRILLER

FATAL DOMAIN

NATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR

STEVEN JAMES

Praise for Steven James

“Steven James writes pulse-pounding novels with chilling storylines and shocking twists that always leave me wanting more. If you like thrillers that actually thrill, you’ll love Steven James.”

D.R. WALKER, US Department of Homeland Security/FLETC Senior Instructor/Firearms Division (retired)

Fatal Domain

“No one ratchets up the tension better than Steven James, and *Fatal Domain* is a thriller tour de force. High stakes only work when the reader is invested in the characters, and James is deft at creating realistic, flawed, deeply human characters through whom we all see ourselves. *Fatal Domain* is proof that James is a master storyteller at the top of his game.”

CARTER WILSON, *USA Today* bestselling author of *Mister Tender’s Girl*

Broker of Lies

“A taut, page-turning thriller exploring good and evil. Tense, twisty, and an edge-of-your-seat ending. James is a master of suspense.”

ROBERT DUGONI, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Her Deadly Game*

“Master storyteller Steven James delivers with *Broker of Lies*. You’re going to love Travis Brock!”

DON BENTLEY, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Forgotten War*

“*Broker of Lies* offers all of these James trademarks, while carving out a slightly different niche. This is a cerebral thriller, mixing politics, espionage, and technology. It feels like a fresh new direction—and with a major final surprise.”

ERIC WILSON, *New York Times* bestselling author of *American Leftovers*

“*Broker of Lies* rockets out of the gate like a flame and never cools.”

THE THRILLER ZONE

“The true successor to Vince Flynn.”

BOOKANON

Synapse

“This is a remarkable novel, perceptive and thoughtful. *Synapse* challenges the reader in the same way as Isaac Asimov’s *I Robot* or Frank Herbert’s *Destination Void*. We don’t use the comparison lightly. Steven James’ provocative and landmark book reeks of becoming a classic. Simply outstanding.”

W. MICHAEL GEAR and KATHLEEN O’NEAL GEAR, *New York Times* bestselling authors of *Lightning Shell*

“*Synapse* is a thoroughly audacious thriller that weaves both science and religion into its suspenseful plot. Steven James explores one of the most fascinating questions of our technological age—can a robot have a soul?—and answers it brilliantly.”

MARK ALPERT, internationally bestselling author of *Doomsday Show*

“A tense thriller . . . unique and thought-provoking.”

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Singularity

“The story is well researched, a hallmark of Steven James’ novels, and by the time it reaches its climax, one may wonder if *Singularity* is fact or fiction.”

NEW YORK JOURNAL OF BOOKS

“Steven James knows how to tell a story that gets under your skin and challenges the way you think as only the most talented writers can. If you’re looking for a mind-bending tale, strap in and take the ride with *Singularity*. I can’t recommend it highly enough.”

TED DEKKER, *New York Times* bestselling author

“Readers are introduced to a spider web of thrills.”

SUSPENSE MAGAZINE

Placebo

“The characters are utterly alive, the story memorable, gripping and intense, it will keep you on the edge of your seat until the last page.”

GAYLE LYNDY, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Hunt for Dimitri*

“The writing, pacing and plot lines are impeccable.”

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

“Fascinating, gripping, and thrilling—love this book. The Master Storyteller has woven another spell in *Placebo*, where the lines of science, reality, and fiction blur into one compelling tale. Intelligent and absolutely unputdownable, you will lose sleep over this one.”

TOSCA LEE, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Long March Home*

The Queen

“James is a master storyteller and doesn’t disappoint in his latest installment in the Bowers Files.”

RT BOOK REVIEWS

“This fifth book in James’s Bowers Files exhibits all of the page-turning, tightly woven plotting and whiplash pacing of the others in the series.”

LIBRARY JOURNAL

The Bishop

“Heart-pounding. As thrilling and unexpected as any five-star action movie.”

JOHN TINKER, Emmy Award-winning screenwriter

“Steven James sets the new standard in suspense writing.”

JOHN RAAB, editor of *Suspense Magazine*

“A fine thriller, featuring a strong compassionate protagonist, and a couple of pretty scary villains (imagine if Bonnie and Clyde were serial killers and if they were completely mad). James . . . clearly knows how to spin a yarn.”

BOOKLIST

The Knight

“Exquisite.”

FICTION FANATICS ONLY

“You won’t find a thriller with more thrills, a novel with more action, a crime story with more twists and turns.”

WINDOW TO MY WORLD REVIEWS

“I’m a retired homicide detective and love diving into Steven James’ novels. The stories are very engrossing, suspenseful, and not predictable. It’s always hard to find books that combine creativity and realism in a way that is believable to me, but Steven James writes just such books.”

MICHAEL PUSATERE, 11-year veteran homicide detective (retired)

The Rook

“Steven James has mastered the thriller.”

THE SUSPENSE ZONE

“James’ ability to use modern, up-to-date investigative techniques to solve his criminal mysteries places him at the forefront of current mystery writers.”

SPECIAL AGENT E. CLEON GLAZE, FBI (retired)

The Pawn

“Steven James combines 21st-century high-tech law enforcement techniques with 18th-century Sherlockian deduction to craft an exciting, suspense-filled story.”

DR. KIM ROSSMO, internationally known geographic profiler

“A killer plot—complex and riveting, it had me guessing, reeling, sweating, and hanging on for dear life at the end of every single chapter. There is nothing not to like.”

THE SUSPENSE ZONE

FATAL DOMAIN

A TRAVIS BROCK THRILLER

FATAL DOMAIN STEVEN JAMES



Tyndale House Publishers
Carol Stream, Illinois

Visit Steven James online at stevenjames.net.

Tyndale and Tyndale's quill logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Ministries.

Fatal Domain

Copyright © 2024 by Steven James. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise noted, cover images are the property of their respective copyright holders on Depositphotos.com, and all rights are reserved. Underwater bubbles © vitaliy_sokol; city skyline copyright © Jktu_21; metal © kokoroyuki; grunge brush strokes © Olga_C; redaction background © Sergey Nivens/Shutterstock.

Author photo by Mallory Zynda, copyright © 2021. All rights reserved.

Designed by Ron C. Kaufmann

Published in association with the John Talbot Agency, Inc., a member of The Talbot Fortune Agency, LLC, 180 E. Prospect Ave. #188, Mamaroneck, NY 10543.

Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, *New International Version*,® *NIV*® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Fatal Domain is a work of fiction. Where real people, events, establishments, organizations, or locales appear, they are used fictitiously. All other elements of the novel are drawn from the author's imagination.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at csresponse@tyndale.com, or call 1-855-277-9400.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-1-4964-7335-6 (HC)

ISBN 978-1-4964-7336-3 (SC)

Printed in the United States of America

30 29 28 27 26 25 24
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CHAPTER 1

THURSDAY, MAY 19

HIGHWAY 17

FIFTEEN MILES NORTHEAST OF CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

12:17 A.M.

Søren Beck told himself that it was a dog, or maybe a deer. The thud. He stopped the car and got out.

Darkness, apart from the narrow beams of his headlights slicing through the fog-enshrouded night.

For some reason, he found himself speaking, his words sounding hollow along the edge of the woods, here on this lonely road: “Hello? Anyone here?”

No reply.

Of course there was no reply.

Because there was no one else around.

This is what he told himself.

He clicked his phone’s flashlight function on.

Kneeling close to the front of the car, he found blood on the bumper and a wretched dent crunching up the left headlight. Light still streamed out of it, but it was splintery and skewered because of the shattered plastic. A mangled beam of light. Part of it lanced off to the side.

A dog.

It must’ve been a dog.

But there was no fur in the grille on the front of the car.

He’d been texting an associate at the architectural firm where he worked

when it happened, when the impact occurred, and now he swallowed a dry gulp of guilt.

You should've known better. You do know better.

He searched for an injured animal along the edge of the road and in the ditch just beyond the shoulder, but saw nothing. Crickets chirred loudly. Somewhere in the distance, an owl made its presence known in the night.

The other side of the road. Search over there.

Scrambling out of the ditch, he made his way across the road to the other shoulder and swept the phone's light before him. A thick clutch of bushes and undergrowth lined the road, clinging tenaciously to the edge of a steep ravine.

There was no sign of an animal.

Of course, with the force of impact, its body might've been hurled deep into the underbrush.

Søren was nearly forty years old but kept in shape. He knew he could make it down the incline and back up, but would it be worth it? He told himself that there was no need to investigate.

Blood on the bumper, though.

There was blood on the bumper.

It was probably dead.

Probably.

In truth, he didn't really want to go down there. Not now. Not at night. Not like this.

For a long moment he stood there beside the shoulder, studying the leaves but finding no sign of blood.

At last, he returned to the driver's seat of his car, turned off the phone's light, and tried to figure out what to do.

To calm himself, he pressed his shaking palms against his thighs.

He would go home. Yes. He had another car he could drive for the time being until he sorted all this out.

At least no one was present. No one had seen what had happened. At least there was that.

Just in case it had not been a dog or a deer.