

Three Threads casts three strangers from opposite sides of the world on distinct journeys. Driven by external forces and clandestine missions, each must overcome unique challenges to converge on a land and its people, beset by strife.

Three Threads

By Randal R. Jones

Order the book from the publisher [BookLocker.com](https://www.booklocker.com)

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/12928.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

The image features a dark background with a world map at the bottom, rendered in a dotted or pixelated style. Three white, wavy lines, resembling threads, rise from the map and curve upwards, passing behind the title text. The title 'Three Threads' is written in a large, white, serif font, with 'Three' on the top line and 'Threads' on the bottom line.

Three Threads

Randal R. Jones

Copyright © 2023 by Randal R. Jones

Paperback ISBN: 978-1-958877-53-1

Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-958877-54-8

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-88531-323-0

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Three Threads is the fictional sequel to Jones' historical fiction novel *Pendulum*. The events and characters in *Three Threads* are purely fictitious and not intended to represent specific persons, individual attitudes, traits, or characteristics. The character relationships are fictional as are the missions and storylines.

Department of Defense (DoD) Office of Prepublication and Security Review and the Intelligence Community (IC) approved *Three Threads* for release / open publication. Concurrence for release does not imply DOD/IC endorsement or factual accuracy of this material.

Cover Design by Alyssa M. Luongo
Review and Edit by Katherine E. Adams

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Trenton, Georgia.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Jones, Randal R.

Three Threads by Randal R. Jones

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022915553

Printed on acid-free paper.
Booklocker.com, Inc

Table of Contents

Part I - The First Thread.....	7
Part II - The Second Thread.....	103
Part III - The Third Thread.....	181
Part IV - The Three Threads.....	205
Epilogue.....	367
Character List	371

Part II

The Second Thread

Chapter 1

Chimkent, USSR

1977

Theirs was not a journey of convenience but necessity. The hope of a new life free of oppression offset the concern for the treacherous route and the many dangers along its way. Thirteen-year-old Sulundik's family was determined to depart their homeland of Chimkent, the Kazakh Soviet Republic, for the religious freedom they sought in Afghanistan. Chimkent had been their home for centuries, but they were of Afghan origin with strictly Muslim heritage. Now, the atheistic government of the Soviet Union had yet again increased its efforts to suppress religion in the region. It considered Islam a threat and inconsistent with communist doctrine. As a result, the central power imposed varying degrees of repression throughout the Central Asian republics, especially in Chimkent.

The beautiful city was a crossroad connecting European Russia and Western Siberia with Central Asia; a city that blended the cultural influences of each of the regions as their people passed through or traded in its center. It was this intersection of cultures that concerned Soviet apparatchiks. They perceived the cross-pollination as a threat and were concerned that Islamic influences in Chimkent might take greater hold among the population at the expense of Russian dominance.

Historically, Chimkent was one small stop of many on the crossroads comprising the old Silk Road of the Far East. It was in these towns and along these routes that legitimate business thrived between the country villages and larger settlements. But another economy operated in the shadows. Age-old roads and trails, largely unknown to outside populations, emerged from the Silk Routes. These ran adjacent and parallel to the well-traveled trade routes. As old as the Silk Routes themselves, they afforded black marketers, thieves, and robbers a means of cloaked approach to vulnerable caravans as well as an ideal means to elude pursuit into the mountains.

It was these lesser-known routes that Sulundik's family traveled to find a new home in Afghanistan.

In Kunduz, in the northeast region of Afghanistan, they would join other family members who previously settled there in the hope of escaping religious persecution. Kunduz was a place where they could practice their *Hanafi* school of Islamic faith without repression. Hanafi regarded far broader considerations for Sharia than other forms of Sunni teachings. Their faith recognized the Koran, the teaching and practices of the Prophet, consensus, legal analogy, juristic views, customs, and culture in determining their practice of Sharia. The Afghan government was inclined to leave the tribes and peoples to their beliefs without interference.

The long journey covered eight hundred kilometers over hazardous terrain that deliberately cut the seams of the borders of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. It traversed the shortest route along Tajikistan to the Kunduz region just across the Soviet border into northeast Afghanistan. Sulundik's family joined an uncle and two of his sons on this journey.

Uncle Bolat was a half-brother to Sulundik's mother. A likable man, tall and lean with a thin mustache and easy smile, his neighbors greeted him enthusiastically whenever he joined a gathering. A trader who plied his wares, some legitimate, some illicit, along the Kazakh-Afghan route every four months and was, therefore, familiar with the peoples and dangers along the way. The dangers were often unique to the region as tribal and clan factions with historic ties or animosities required a careful eye and art of negotiation, compromise, or reason and as a last resort, force.

Armed with a hidden knife, Sulundik escorted two older sisters and a younger sister everywhere in public or away from home. On this journey, as in Chimkent, Sulundik's role was simple but came with its own set of dangers, to protect the sisters. They could move nowhere by themselves and their whereabouts were known and secured throughout the journey. The threat of bride kidnappings was a constant in their travels.

This was a concern especially in the Kyrgyzstan region as young males sought out future brides, sometimes by violence. Sulundik was adamant this would not happen.

Uncle Bolat's eldest son, Erasyl, was anything but the "noble hero" his name implied. Indeed, those outside the immediate family referred to him as the "lazy one." Sulundik often found Erasyl lurking about and near the sisters' safe zone; far enough away to deny an allegation, but close enough for Sulundik to consciously reach for the knife hidden in the loose-fitting tunic and to maintain a wary eye on him. Rumors persisted that Erasyl had a particular interest in young boys; more than one matriarch scurried her children inside when Erasyl was in the area.

Sulundik's Uncle Bolat, seeing a future opportunity, had a secondary and discrete mission on this journey. He directed Sulundik to learn the route; not only to memorize the terrain features in front of the group but look rearward often and pick out distinct and key landmarks. This would assist in navigation while returning along the same route. At one stop he pointed to a bent branch along the trail. The branch was bent but not completely broken and had grown downward.

"You must watch for these limbs," he said, taking hold of it. Looking around he pointed to three rocks stacked away from the trail. "You should always be on your guard on the route. A tree branch bent toward the ground indicates danger and caution should be taken. If you see three rocks stacked nearby it indicates a violent confrontation occurred here."

Sulundik didn't see the rocks at first. Uncle Bolat pointed again and warned, "Three rocks always mean a confrontation even if there is no bent limb. When you have an issue with the local tribes or individuals along the trail, ensure you bend a nearby branch. If it results in violence or the locals are violent you should stack the rocks to warn others. However, if we establish a good relationship and the bent branches or rocks say otherwise, you should cut the limb and kick the rocks

apart. We don't want to approach local populations in a hostile manner because of old trail markings. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Uncle."

"Good," he replied. "Now take your knife and cut the bent branch off the tree and go kick over the rocks. I have established a working relationship in this area, and they are no longer hostile." Sulundik quickly did as told and returned to relieve the family patriarch of the protection of the three sisters.

The caravan moved slowly along the trail, relying on an established infrastructure of support. Usually, they walked. Each person carried their personal as well as Uncle Bolat's trade goods on their backs. Stooped and moving slowly they eased their way along the rocky trails of craggy mountains with open areas and sections of interspersed pine. Each new member searched the trail ahead for a road and where a truck might appear, while the experienced watched for bent branches, stacked rocks, or the threat of robbers who might be lurking along the narrow passes.

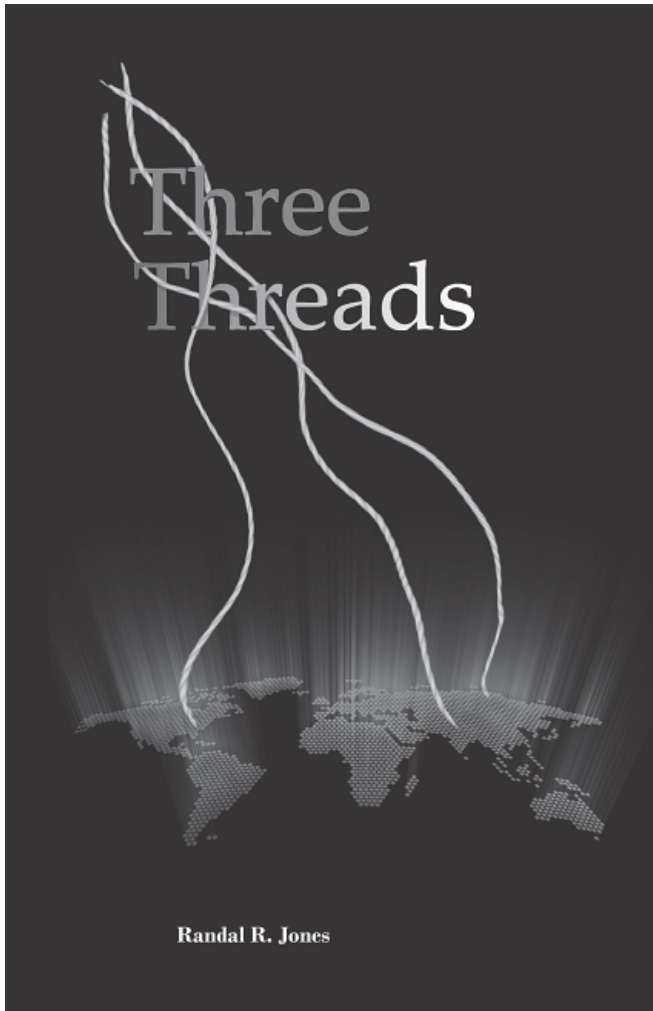
Occasionally, Uncle coordinated for a truck to transport the group. Sitting in the back of the truck was a respite from so much walking. They huddled together and fell asleep immediately. The group took on the appearance of a single mass bouncing along the narrow dirt roads. After the truck transported them over the mountains, the caravan members unloaded and shifted the cargo to waiting horses or donkeys as Uncle paid the truck driver in saffron, tea, and a small brick of an unidentifiable brown substance.

The group spent their evenings rearranging packs and eating the tiny rations of food. They spent their nights curled around a campfire that provided barely enough heat. Guards armed with knives and rifles stood at the approaches to the camp.

Uncle Bolat occasionally stopped the group at pre-established trading points located off the main trail. He and the experienced travelers bartered for the finer cotton on the Uzbek border, leafed tobacco in Kyrgyzstan, and sheets of aluminum and canisters of oil in Tajikistan.

This pattern of life continued until, eventually, a waiting family member met them near the Afghan border. Loading into a creaky truck the caravan rode the final ten bumpy kilometers around the KGB border positions and across the porous border to Kunduz. There, they excitedly greeted and embraced family members as others apportioned cotton to the waiting matriarchs. They divided and distributed oil, silk, tobacco, and saffron to the other relatives, leaving the sheets of tin and remaining products for Uncle Bolat to trade locally.

By any measure, the feats of Sulundik's family to escape communism were extraordinary and born of necessity if they were to worship freely. They proved that in times of necessity, extraordinary is simply remarkable, and remarkable isn't given a second thought as unimaginable challenges must be overcome if aspirations are to be fulfilled. Driven by necessity, the family proved the desire for freedom surmounted all obstacles.



Three Threads casts three strangers from opposite sides of the world on distinct journeys. Driven by external forces and clandestine missions, each must overcome unique challenges to converge on a land and its people, beset by strife.

Three Threads

By Randal R. Jones

Order the book from the publisher [BookLocker.com](https://www.booklocker.com)

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/12928.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**