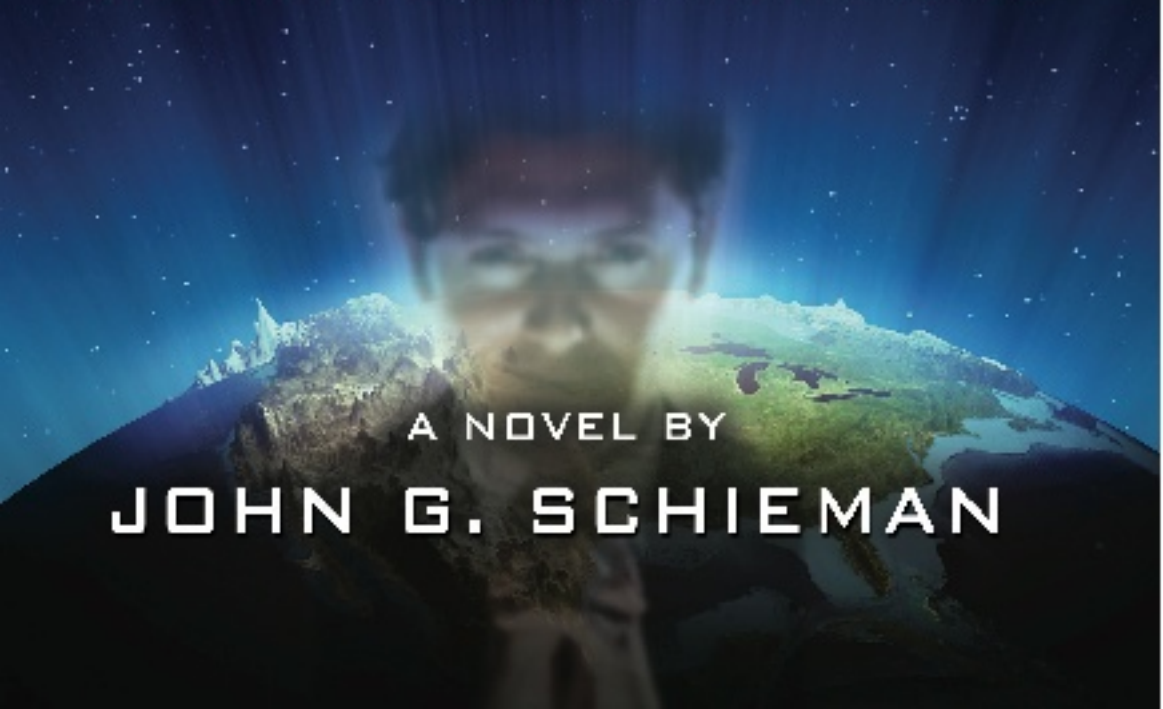




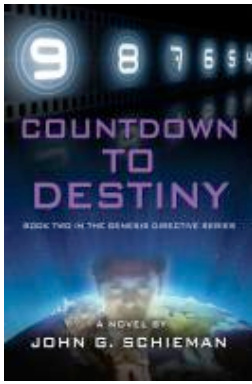
COUNTDOWN TO DESTINY

BOOK TWO IN THE GENESIS DIRECTIVE SERIES

A man's face is superimposed over a view of Earth from space. The man has dark hair and is looking directly at the viewer. The Earth is shown as a curved horizon with green land and blue oceans, set against a dark blue starry background. The man's face is semi-transparent, allowing the Earth and stars to be seen through it.

A NOVEL BY

JOHN G. SCHIEMAN



Genesis' resolute focus of establishing a new world order, with its operatives entrenched in strategic positions of power, appears unstoppable. Cyber terrorism is the Genesis weapon of choice, engendering mistrust among world governments, established institutions, and financial markets while expropriating billions to finance its ambitions. The Genesis Directive looms on the horizon like an immense storm gathering strength. When that storm subsides, the global balance of power will have been altered in unimaginable proportions.

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Book Two in the Genesis Directive Series

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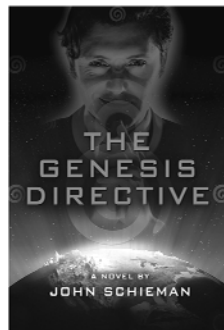
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COUNTDOWN TO DESTINY

JOHN G. SCHIEMAN

Discover how it all began.



The first book in The Genesis Directive series

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First Edition

Chapter 1

Lubricating the Genesis Machine

April 24, 2014: Brian Hunter, Vice President of Worldwide Security Services for International Oil and Natural Gas (IOG) was concluding his remarks at the company's semi-annual Leadership Conference in Jubail, a city in the Eastern province on the Persian Gulf coast of Saudi Arabia. Brian signaled to his Admin of three years, Elena Valdez, requesting her to shut down the LCD projector she had been controlling for him and bring the lights in the room to three-quarter illumination.

As the lights brightened, Brian began his concluding remarks.

"Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your attention and active participation today. I have surmised from your facial expressions, body language, and provocative questions that the focus of my speech resonated with you. Worldwide terrorism, both physical and cyber, are accelerating at an alarming rate. IOG is in good stead. It is incumbent on each of us to remain vigilant."

"Our security infrastructures are second to none. Over the past two years we have experienced numerous, major incursions worldwide that resulted in little or no disruption to our operations. Allow me to reiterate what I said during my opening remarks. I doubt we have seen the end of the attempts to derail our operations, but with your help, we will persevere."

Hunter's remarks were greeted to a standing ovation from the top twenty-five IOG senior leaders responsible for worldwide security.

Some individuals rely to drugs or alcohol to get high. Brian Hunter was a "presentation junky". He thrived on standing in front of an audience. He had excellent delivery skills and he knew it. By all accounts, Brian was a rising star at IOG. At age thirty-seven, he was

the youngest associate to have attained his present level of responsibility. He had been hired away from a competitor company five years earlier in a contentious bidding war for this talent. His star shone brightly as he continually demonstrated his ability to be the right man to countermand every security breach that arose at IOG.

“Thank you and please be seated. Let dinner be served,” said Brian as he stepped from behind the podium.

Brian assumed his rightful position at the head of table one as Elena dutifully broke down the presentation equipment and packed his electronic tablet. A few minutes later, she was escorted to her reserved position at table two as Brian offered her a glancing smile of appreciation from afar. Elena Valdez wore a dark blue, pin striped pants suit, matching vest, and a white shirt open slightly at the collar. Despite her best intentions to “dress for success”, her business attire was unable to conceal her curvaceous body. Elena’s lipstick was a muted brownish-red hue. She wore very little, visible make-up enabling her natural beauty to show through. Her radiance attracted the glancing eyes of all the single men in the room that evening, maybe even some of the married men.

Mr. Hunter was a citizen of the United States as were twenty of the twenty-five participants at the conference, many of whom considered Texas their home. Of the remaining attendees, two others were Saudis, one Russian, one an Argentinian, and the final member of the group called Paris his home. Elena, his administrative assistant, was Brazilian.

The IOG semi-annual conferences rotated among the attendees’ home countries. The next conference was slated for Las Vegas in the fall. Two thousand fifteen sessions had not yet been scheduled due to the increasing unrest in Russia and the impending Argentine financial default situation.

Following dinner and dessert, Hunter gathered his briefcase as he prepared to retire to his suite at Compound number three. Immediately upon entering his suite, Brian threw his briefcase on the bed and made a beeline for the bar in the living room. He poured a double shot of Johnnie Walker Blue Label scotch into one of the crystal glasses positioned on the mirrored counter. He sat down in one of the finely upholstered side chairs, savoring the aroma of the scotch and allowing it to glide softly down his throat. It was, without doubt, his favorite liquor.

As Brian was enjoying his second glass of scotch, his relaxation was disrupted by a loud, persistent knock on the door.

“Good evening, Mr. Hunter you did an outstanding job this evening,” said an enticing Elena Valdez.

She was still wearing the pin stripped pants suit and the vest, but the shirt and under-garments were gone. Only a blind man could have overlooked her beautiful, abundant cleavage. Her lips sported a glistening, bright shade of red lipstick, giving the appearance that her lips were extremely moist.

“Thank you Ms. Valdez, I couldn’t have done any of it without your excellent support beneath me,” responded Hunter as Elena advanced, planting a warm inviting kiss on his lips.

She took his double entendre as a sign of encouragement.

“Umm tasty,” said a smiling Hunter, licking his lips, as he backed away from his mistress of fifteen months.

He attempted to continue speaking, but she kissed him once again, only much more sensually.

"Elena, I'm drained. You know how I get before an important presentation. I'm an adrenaline junky. Once the sessions are over, I really let down. Do you mind if I pack it in early tonight?"

Disappointment was written all over Elena's face as she responded abruptly, "Sure, I understand. It's your loss. I had something very special planned for this evening. It would have driven you crazy. Good night Mr. Hunter."

Understanding was not one of Elena's strong suits especially when she was in as horny a mood as she was that night. She leaned forward, kissing him on the cheek with an air of sarcasm. Without uttering another word, she turned, and sensually glided across the hallway to her room which was directly opposite Hunter's.

The sound of her door crashing against the jam was Brian's signal that the evening had, indeed, come to a conclusion as far as Elena was concerned. He closed the door to his suite and proceeded toward the briefcase he had thrown on the bed minutes earlier. Brian methodically rearranged its contents, removed his tablet, and placed it on the night table. He untied his necktie and hung his business suit in the closet. With the same fluid motion, Brian grabbed a pair of black denim pants, a grey tee shirt, and black Converse tennis shoes from the closet. Hunter checked his wrist watch, noting the time was approaching nineteen hundred, local time.

Brian activated his tablet and accessed the company's e-mail function. He jotted a brief, generic thank you message to each of the twenty-five executives who had attended his presentation earlier that evening. He activated the automated e-mail notification function, scheduling one e-mail to be sent every ten minutes. Brian had calculated the entire process would take approximately four hours to complete.

Halfway around world in Colorado Springs at the Air Force Satellite Control Network (AFSCN), the master console flashed red as sirens blared overhead indicating a serious network incursion had occurred. AFSCN provided support for the operation, control, and maintenance of a variety of United States Department of Defense and even some non-Department of Defense satellites. Those satellite systems were responsible for continual execution of telemetry, tracking, and command operations. In addition, AFSCN provided prelaunch checkout and simulation, launch support, and early orbit support when satellites were in initial or transfer orbits. AFSCN often maneuvered the satellites into their final orbit.

Buzzers continuously resounded throughout the control center as additional red strobe lights signaled potential, impending danger. Five of the seventy-five large video monitors surrounding the room at ceiling level had just wavered and then went dark.

The officer-in-charge perched high above in the command center, shouted across the room via loudspeaker, "Listen up people, I want to know what's going on right now. Speak to me ladies and gentlemen. What's happening?"

His duty officer responded promptly from his position on the floor, "Sir, the two stationary satellites positioned over Saudi Arabia have gone dark. We are analyzing every active system to determine the cause of the outage. Our secondary, back-up systems are in the process of being activated."

"Ladies, tell me what I don't already know. What's the cause of the outage?" demanded the officer-in-charge, shouting across the com in a stern voice.

"We should know the cause of the failure within two hours," said an officer with a degree of trepidation.

“Hell no, two hours is too long. Shit! In this real time world, two minutes is one minute, fifty-nine seconds too long. Get those satellites back on active status ASAP. Tell me why this happened and what needs to be done to prevent future occurrences,” demanded the officer.

“Yes sir! As soon as I know, you will know sir,” responded the duty officer absent any sense for the remedy.

No matter how loud the officer-in-charge shouted from that point forward, the satellites would remain offline for another two hours and thirty-two minutes. The cause of the outage would never be determined.

“Com Con, our birds have gone dark over the entire UAE. More to follow,” stated the transmission sent from the officer-in-charge to the AFSCN Command and Control Center, location unknown.

At the Saudi Arabian compound, Brian Hunter dialed the operator requesting a wake-up call for zero six hundred hours. Seconds later, Hunter exited his domicile. Elena had remained standing near the door to her suite listening for any indication that Brian might be leaving his room. She pressed her right eye against the peep hole in the door and observed Brian advancing down the rear service corridor toward the service elevator.

Brian glanced overhead noticing the blinking red lights on every video surveillance camera in the entire hallway were inoperable. He entered the service elevator, glancing down the hallway one last time as the door closed. Brian pressed the first floor button. When the doors reopened, Brian was facing the Compound’s Emergency Exit. The sign to his right stated, “Opening this door will trigger an emergency alarm at the point of origin and at the Central Security Command Center”. Brian proceeded to open the door. Neither security action resulted.

Brian closed the door behind him and proceeded toward the compound's security gate that led to the outside world.

As Elena backed away from the door to her suite, she removed a personal smart phone from her purse. Elena authored and sent a brief text message that said, "The mission is underway. He's on the move."

The lone guard on duty at the compound's security checkpoint had received an encrypted message seconds earlier, instructing him to shut down all surveillance equipment in the immediate area. The guard's actions enabled Mr. Hunter to exit the compound without being detected or visually recorded. Hunter walked through the gate without making eye contact with the guard. He proceeded down the narrow walkway between two storage units in the general direction of Abdullah Street where he rendezvoused with a tan Humvee. Brian entered the vehicle without uttering a word to the driver.

Once the vehicle was safely underway, Hunter instructed the driver to proceed to Expressway Six-Thirteen South toward Dhahran. The well paved, completely flat expressway snaking through the desert consisted of three lanes in each direction, separated by a sand berm containing tower lighting. For as far as the eye could see to the East or to the West, there was sand, nothing but sand. In less than one hour, Brian's vehicle arrived at the world's largest proven crude oil reserve and processing operation. Conservative estimates for the oil reserves were an impressive two hundred sixty billion barrels.

The oil refinery was massive, encompassing more than ten square miles. Enormous building structures, glistening hundred-foot high cylinders, and a maze of interlocking piping consumed the skyline. Every inch of the exterior structures contained bright lights the shown day and night. Many cylinders emitted steam into the dry desert air while others spewed bright orange flames into the evening sky, fed by escaping natural gas.

Hunter's vehicle came to a halt at twenty-one twenty hours directly adjacent the rear security checkpoint. The pavement directly in front of the gate contained fourteen solid steel cylinders embedded below the surface of the road that could be raised or lowered at a moment's notice. The steel barriers were currently in the raised position, preventing vehicle entry or exit.

Hunter leaned forward as the driver handed him a package wrapped in dark brown paper which he promptly placed in his briefcase. Hunter checked his watch as he exited the Humvee. He proceeded through the rear, secondary entrance where the security cameras had been disabled twenty-two seconds earlier as part of a fifteen minute scheduled maintenance procedure.

Neither he nor the guard on duty at the local security station made eye contact or exchanged greetings. Security protocols required that the guard contact Central Security Services before allowing anyone entrance. The guard initiated no such action. It was almost as if Hunter was a ghost, silently and invisibly passing through the security check point.

Hunter opened his briefcase, removed the package that had provided by the driver, and secured it adjacent a large aluminum conduit connecting the oil storage unit to the refinery. He promptly retraced his steps, exiting the oil complex as the security guard turned his back to him. Hunter instructed the driver to return to the Compound.

As the Humvee approached the drop-off point, one block from the Compound, Hunter caught the attention of the driver.

"Saad, go directly to the warehouse. Make sure no one sees you enter the facility. Remain with the vehicle. Attempt no outbound communication. I will require your services again in approximately five hours. I will summon you by phone. Are we clear?"

Saad responded, "Sir, I know the routine by now. I will remain diligent."

As Hunter approached, the security guard on duty once again temporarily disabled the video security systems. Brian Hunter quietly reentered his room, noticing that eighty-five percent of the time-synced e-mails had been delivered. He undressed and called his wife back in the states. He wishing her a good day and then went to sleep.

Hunter's wake-up call arrived as schedule, forty-five minutes later. As he was dressing, a sharp knock came on the door that didn't stop until he yelled, "I'm coming."

As Brian opened the door, an officer with panic written all over his face stood before him. The officer informed Brian that an explosion had rocked the Dhahran oil processing plant.

The colleague in the doorway blurted out, "Early reports indicate that the security guard on duty at the secondary entrance had been killed along with other twelve workers. The entire complex has been put on full alert. It has been closed until further notice. There are no estimates for when oil production will resume."

The annual production at that complex exceeded three billion barrels of oil.

"I want a helicopter in the air inside of fifteen minutes," demanded Hunter.

"Nothing doing, the entire area has been declared a 'no fly zone'," responded the officer.

"Then order me up a car and a driver who's not afraid to break the land speed record. I want to be on the scene within the hour," shouted Hunter.

The officer darted down the corridor to commandeer the most expert driver at the compound while all the time admiring Mr. Hunter's desire to be at the scene of the explosion. Most executives at his level would have managed a crisis like that at arm's length, fearing for their own safety. Not so with Brian Hunter. He had a long standing reputation for staring fear in the face, never backing down from any situation, and always seeming to find a swift solution. Personal traits like those contributed to Brian Hunter's meteoric rise in the Company.

The topology between the compound and the oil field was extremely flat enabling an unobstructed view to the horizon from Hunter's limo. As soon as Hunter's vehicle cleared the compound's WIFI security network, he activated his private satellite phone. The signal bounced from the limo to a private satellite, to a com station in China, then Japan, then Belarus, then Iran, and finally to the Jubail Security Police Department.

The Jubail police department's primary responsibility was thwarting acts of terrorism. Failure to perform was directly translated into the number of Western companies deciding against relocating in Saudi Arabia. This morning's explosion represented a serious blow to their reputation. Heads would likely roll throughout the entire department.

Hunter cautiously texted a brief message, "Terrorists responsible for today's bombing are currently located at the following warehouse on the eastern outskirts of the town." Hunter included the exact address for the warehouse in his message.

Hunter looked toward the driver through the dark, smoked glass separator, checking to make sure he wasn't being observed through the driver's rear view mirror. He was confident that the driver was oblivious to his actions.

He then established a communication “hot spot”, utilizing his satellite phone. Once the connection was secured, Hunter removed his personal electronic tablet from his briefcase. He activated a video application that enabled him to view four simultaneous video feeds. The upper left quadrant showed Saad obediently seated in the Humvee. The upper right quadrant provided a view into the warehouse. The lower left and right quadrants focused on the warehouse exterior, monitoring movement to and from the building.

In less than two minutes, Hunter observed that both roads leading to the warehouse were swarming by Jubail Security Services’ vehicles. Hunter had no interest in expanding the collateral damage. Enough innocent people had died already. As he hit a ‘command’ button on the tablet, multiple explosions occurred inside the warehouse, eradicating all evidence of Saad and his Humvee.

Hunter closed the app, looked toward the driver, and yelled, “How much longer?”

“We are thirty miles out sir,” responded the driver.

Hunter peered through the front window of the limo noticing a gigantic black cloud filling the early morning sky. Beneath the huge cloud, the blinding yellowish-orange glow from the fire partially obscured the horizon.

As the limo approached within five miles of ground zero, the roar of the fire could be heard inside the vehicle although all the windows were tightly sealed.

At two point five miles from the fire, the limo driver jammed on the brake pedal causing the limo to fishtail all over the road before coming to an abrupt halt.

Hunter yelled, “What the hell is going on? Why are we stopping?”

The driver pointed with his index finger to the hood of the limo. The paint was beginning to blister from the extreme heat emanating from the fire.

Hunter thought for a moment then said, "Alright. Turn the car around. Head back to the Compound."

Two minutes later, Hunter received a secure call on his company cell phone, "Brian, how bad is it?"

"Archibald, it's very bad. Initial reports indicate at least twelve personnel have been killed. I'm a little over two miles away from ground zero on the highway. The heat was so intense my driver had to turn around. Right now, we are driving back to the Compound. I'll make another attempt to breach the oil complex later this afternoon to assess the damage."

"Are you nuts? Look, I appreciate your commitment to our organization, but I need you to be around, not dead. Don't try to be a hero. Be cautious, let the experts put out the fires and declare the scene 'safe' before you return," said Archibald Cummings, CEO of International Oil and Natural Gas.

"Will do sir, I plan to stay on site an extra few days. Circumstances will dictate how long I remain. When the fire is under control, I anticipate visiting every local family who suffered a loss of a loved one due to this tragedy," responded Brian.

"I agree. Be safe. I have a few additional calls I must make. I'll call you again once I'm finished," said Archibald.

Archibald Cummings was the seventy-eight year old CEO of International Oil and Natural Gas. He was instrumental in the hiring of Brian Hunter. They instantly became best of friends and were both recognized as outstanding assets at the organization contributing the superior stock price valuation.

At the Air Force Satellite Control Network in Colorado Springs, the Master Sargent shouted out loud as the darkened satellite monitors suddenly illuminated, "Can someone tell me what the hell just came on the screen?"

"Sir, the Dhahran oil processing plant experienced a major explosion this morning. We are only now receiving assessments of the damage. I guess they assumed we had eyes on the scene," said the control manager.

"You think? Of course they should have been thinking that," said the Sargent as he raised his voice another fifty decibels, "People, I don't believe in coincidence. Someone darkened our 'birds' to obscure that act of terrorism. If you thought it was critical that we find out what happened to our birds before; determining what happened is now the highest priority we have. The shit is going to hit the fan very soon. I need to have my shit together first."

The Master Sargent would never discover the cause of the outage. If he had, he still would have been incapable of comprehending the potential implications of the series of incursions. Left unchecked, the cyber incursions would be the precursor that would eventually threaten our way of life and place the social, political, and economic underpinning of the entire planet at risk.

The following day, Al-Jazirah News Services reported:

International Oil and Natural Gas (IOG) Terrorists Killed in Explosion

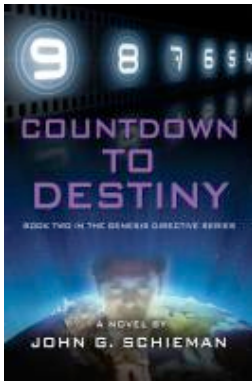
Acting on reliable information, the Jubail Security Police Department surrounded the headquarters of the terrorists who had taken credit for the bombing at the IOG Oil Refinery. After an extensive gun battle, the terrorists set off an explosion demolishing the building and killing everyone inside.

John G. Schieman

IOG Vice President Brian Hunter expressed his appreciation for the decisive action. Hunter stated that the swift action of the Jubail Police Department undeniably averted the potential of additional terrorist activity.

More information to follow as it becomes available.

So much for the accurate reporting of world news!



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