

The Historical Adventures of Mommy Swank: The Beginning

By Katie Swank

Chapter 1: The Acadia Departure

The ink on Mommy's undergraduate degree from Acadia University was barely dry when she packed everything she owned into a single canvas internal-frame backpack. It was the early 2000s, an era defined by physical paper airline tickets, bulky guidebooks, and the liberating feeling of being completely off the grid. Armed with a graduation gift of three thousand dollars, a fistful of traveler's checks, and a continuous European Eurail pass, the twenty-three-year-old left the quiet, coastal beauty of Nova Scotia behind. She was heading across the Atlantic for her very first international journey.

For Mommy, this trip wasn't just a post-graduation luxury; it was a desperate, hard-fought escape from a life defined by isolation and fractured boundaries. Up until she crossed the stage in her cap and gown, her world had been incredibly small, quiet, and guarded. Her childhood had been swallowed by a torrid family history, completely crippled by her parents' bitter, explosive divorce years earlier. The fallout had acted like a slow-burning fire, ripping through her immediate family until the relationships between her siblings were entirely torn apart, scattered by taking sides and years of toxic silence. With her home life completely unraveled, she had withdrawn into herself. Her only glimpses of the world outside her academic bubble had been short, quiet trips to Connecticut to visit extended family—brief pockets of normalcy where she could sit on a porch, look at old books, and pretend the storm back home wasn't happening.

Because her reality had been so heavy, she had spent her college years at Acadia burying herself in the one thing that never lied to her: history. While her classmates memorized dates simply to pass exams, she looked at historical records as blueprints to a massive, unfolding puzzle. She had spent her years in Wolfville tracking the migration of ancient texts through Europe, fascinated by how the preservation of truth kept humanity from sliding into absolute tyranny. History was stable. History had a structure. It was the only place where she felt she could control

the chaos.

Now, all of her hope was riding on this new adventure. This wasn't just a vacation; it was the definitive opening of a brand-new chapter, a deliberate act of rewriting her own timeline. Stepping onto that plane with nothing but her backpack, her 35mm SLR camera, and her research binder, she felt the crushing weight of her family's broken past finally begin to lift from her shoulders. She was heading into the great unknown, determined to find a purpose that belonged entirely to her, completely unaware that her search for historical truth was about to put her directly in the crosshairs of a war for the fate of time itself.

She wasn't a time traveler yet. She was just an insatiably curious young historian who looked at the world differently. If anyone had ever tried to talk to her about temporal anomalies or chronal rifts, she would have laughed right in their face. To her mind, time travel was the ultimate fiction, a silly concept meant for cheap pulp paperbacks and Hollywood movies. She was too deeply trapped inside the cold, unyielding walls of reality to ever allow her imagination to go there. Reality was all she had ever been assaulted with her entire life; it was a series of hard facts, broken promises, and the concrete finality of a shattered home. Imagination was a luxurious gift, a whimsical playground for people who hadn't been forced to grow up too fast. She simply couldn't afford it. Instead, she anchored herself to what could be proven, documented, and held in her hands.

While her classmates at Acadia had memorized dates simply to pass exams, she looked at historical records as blueprints to a massive, unfolding puzzle. She had spent her college years tracking the migration of ancient texts through Europe, fascinated by how the preservation of truth kept humanity from sliding into absolute tyranny. If a ruler could alter the records of the past, they could control the minds of the present. For Mommy, protecting the integrity of history was a fierce, personal calling. She had seen how lies and rewritten narratives could destroy a family; she was determined to make sure the same thing didn't happen to the story of mankind. Now, armed with her rail pass and her camera, she wanted to see those uncorrupted sources firsthand.

The flight from Halifax to Frankfurt was a long, exhausting journey through a restless Atlantic night. Mommy sat cramped in her coach seat, the rhythmic, low-frequency hum of the Boeing 747's engines vibrating straight through her worn sneaker soles. The cabin was dim, illuminated only by the faint overhead reading lights and the ghostly blue glow of the bulkhead flight tracker screen. While most passengers slept under thin airline blankets, Mommy remained wide awake. She stared out the scratched oval window into the absolute blackness of the ocean below, her physical research binder open on her tray table. Her mind was a storm of nervous anticipation and lingering exhaustion, the ghosts of her family's broken past still whispering in her ears.

During a turbulent stretch over the mid-Atlantic, the passenger in the seat next to her woke up and noticed her intense focus. He was an elderly gentleman with kind, deeply lined eyes and a thick, wool cardigan that smelled faintly of pipe tobacco and old paper. He introduced himself simply as a retired professor of antiquities from Basel, Switzerland, who was returning home after a brief lecture tour in Canada.

Seeing the maps of the Holy Roman Empire and the photocopies of 16th-century texts spread across her lap, the professor smiled warmly. "A student of the deep past, I see," he noted, his voice a low, raspy whisper that didn't disturb the sleeping rows around them. "A rare pursuit for someone so young in these fast-moving times."

"I like things that stay put," Mommy replied quietly, adjusting her glasses. "History doesn't change its mind. It's the only thing that's completely real."

The professor let out a soft, melancholic sigh, his eyes drifting to the darkened cabin ceiling. "We like to think so, don't we? We rely on the ink on the parchment to be an unmovable anchor." He leaned a bit closer, his tone turning serious, almost cautious. "But Europe's past is full of shadows, young lady. There are whispers in the old alpine libraries—tales the official textbooks chose to bury centuries ago. They speak of a secret brotherhood that has operated in the margins of our history for generations. The Faction, they called them."

Mommy smiled faintly, her rigid academic mind instantly categorizing the statement as local folklore. "Sounds like an early political conspiracy theory."

"Perhaps," the professor murmured, his gaze locking onto hers with a sudden, intense gravity that made her breath hitch. "But the old scribes in the monasteries wrote of something far more terrifying than a mere political plot. They wrote of a singular figure. A dark man who walked through the centuries without ever aging. A man who possessed the unnatural ability to warp the local timeline, freezing events and erasing truths at his absolute will. They claimed that if a king, a scientist, or a reformer threatened to bring too much light into the world, this man would simply appear in the fog, slide their reality away, and replace it with a lie. He didn't just conquer nations; he curated what humanity was allowed to remember."

Mommy shook her head, a cold wave of skepticism rising within her. "That's a fascinating myth, Professor, but it's just fiction. People invent monsters to explain the things they can't control. Reality is fixed. You can't rewrite what already happened."

The old man looked at her for a long, silent moment as the plane jolted slightly through a cloud bank. "I used to believe that too," he whispered softly, pulling his blanket up to his chest as he prepared to go back to sleep.

"But keep your eyes sharp as you walk through Germany and Switzerland, child. Sometimes, the fiction we reject is simply the truth we are too afraid to face."

Mommy dismissed the conversation, closing her binder and leaning her head against the cold plastic wall of the fuselage. She would have laughed if anyone seriously expected her to believe in a time-warping ghost. Her imagination didn't work that way. But hours later, as the plane broke through the heavy grey clouds over Frankfurt, the professor's chilling words remained lodged deep in her mind, a dark foreshadowing of the exact man waiting for her in the shadows.

Chapter 2: The Starnberg Discovery

The wheels of the Boeing 747 struck the Frankfurt tarmac with a deafening screech and a violent forward jolt. Armed only with her dog-eared guidebook, a heavy paper rail schedule, and a fistful of traveler's checks, she navigated the cavernous Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof. She showed her physical paper Eurail pass to a stern, uniformed conductor, boarded a sleek red regional train, and watched the industrial landscape give way to rolling green hills as she headed south into Bavaria.

Her destination wasn't a major tourist hub, but a tiny, ancient village nestled on the shores of Lake Starnberg, just south of Munich. When she stepped off the wooden train platform, the crisp, biting alpine air lunged into her lungs, instantly rinsing away the stale, recycled cabin air of the transatlantic flight.

Starnberg was a postcard frozen in time. The village square was a maze of narrow, winding cobblestone roads that rattled the soles of her sneakers with every step. Towering over the pristine, mirror-like blue waters of the lake was Schloss Starnberg, (Starnberg Castle). It was the oldest castle located directly by Lake Starnberg, with its original foundations dating back to the 11th century. Its ancient stone fortifications and steep gables cut a majestic, brooding silhouette against the gray Bavarian mist, looking out over the water just as it had for nearly a thousand years.

For lunch, she stopped at a small, wood-paneled gasthaus with low ceilings and a roaring hearth. She ordered her very first authentic German meal: a steaming plate of thick, savory spaetzle noodles smothered in rich, melted mountain cheese and crispy fried onions, paired with a dark, crusty rye bread that tasted heavily of caraway and woodsmoke. It was hearty, real, and grounded—the exact kind of unyielding reality she craved.

That afternoon, following a obscure footnote she had uncovered back at Acadia University, she sought out the town's oldest archive: a small, forgotten historical library attached to a centuries-old monastery near the water's edge. The interior was a cavern of cool, damp stone arches, smelling intensely of beeswax, damp granite, and decaying leather.

Mommy sat alone at a long, scarred oak table beneath a high, narrow stained-glass window. She carefully unbuckled her canvas backpack and pulled out her heavy mechanical 35mm SLR camera, ready to document the uncataloged regional texts. The local archivist had left her with a stack of heavily dust-coated, 16th-century ecclesiastical ledgers.

Deep within the crumbling pages of a handwritten 1534 magistrate's record, she found it. The manuscript detailed a local trial overseen by a special imperial investigator named *Marcus*.

She paused, squinting through her reading glasses at a tiny, hand-inked sketch of Marcus drawn in the margin by a terrified court scribe. The investigator had a strikingly cold, geometric jawline and dark, calculating eyes.

A cold sweat broke out across her neck. She reached into her binder and pulled out a polaroid photograph she had taken just days prior during a layover museum visit—a photo of a late-medieval oil painting from forty years prior to the document. Standing in the background of that painting was the exact same man. Same cold eyes. Same un-aged jawline.

"That's impossible," she whispered into the silent stone room. "They're separated by four decades. He looks exactly the same."

As the memory of the mysterious professor's warning on the plane flashed through her mind—whispering of a dark man who could rewrite history at will—Mommy reached deeper into the manuscript box. Her fingers brushed against something hidden beneath the false bottom of the crate. It was a completely separate volume: a small, unusually heavy book bound in weathered, non-descript dark leather, its edges completely un-stamped by the library.

The moment her bare fingers made contact with the cover, the rigid, unimaginative walls of her reality violently cracked.

A sudden, ethereal golden glow bled out from the edges of the ancient parchment pages, rippling across her hands like warm liquid sunlight. The light didn't just illuminate the dim room; it vibrated with a deep, harmonic hum that she could feel straight in her chest. The written text

on the pages began to shift, translating itself before her eyes into flawless, glowing English. It was a supernatural flare of absolute truth, blinding in its purity.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" a smooth, chillingly calm voice murmured from the dark aisle between the book stacks directly behind her.

Mommy spun around, her heart violently slamming against her ribs. Standing in the dim shadows of the stone arches was a tall man wearing a perfectly tailored, dark charcoal suit. Her breath caught in her throat as she looked from the polaroid on her desk up to his face. It was him. Marcus. The Archivist was standing right in front of her, and his eyes were fixed hungrily on the glowing book in her hands.

Chapter 3: The Starnberg Escape

The absolute silence of the stone-vaulted archive inside Schloss Starnberg, shattered as Mommy's fingers gripped the unauthorized leather book. The heavy, unyielding reality she had wrapped around herself like armor cracked. A vibrant, warm golden illumination bled from the ancient parchment pages, radiating over her hands like liquid sunlight. It was a supernatural flare of pure truth, humming with a deep acoustic frequency that vibrated right through her rib cage.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" a smooth, chillingly calm voice murmured from the dark space behind her.

Mommy spun around, her heart violently hammering. Standing between the ancient stone arches was a tall man in a perfectly tailored charcoal suit that looked entirely out of place in the 11th-century room. His face was an exact, flawless match to the 1534 sketch on her table. He hadn't aged a single day.

"You have a dangerous habit of looking too closely, young lady," the Archivist said, taking a slow step forward. "I am the Curator of history. I cannot allow you to leave this vault with that book."

From his coat pocket, he pulled a sleek silver metallic cylinder that began to hum with a high-pitched, electronic whine. In the early 2000s,

this technology defied everything she knew to be real. Her mind flashed back to the old professor's warning on the plane: *A dark man who could rewrite history at will.*

Mommy didn't wait to find out what the silver weapon did. Relying on sheer survival instinct, she raised her heavy mechanical 35mm SLR camera, spun the manual shutter speed dial to its maximum exposure setting, and slammed her thumb down on the physical flash button.

FLASH!

A blinding, explosive burst of artificial white light illuminated the dim vault like lightning. The high-intensity bulb caught the Archivist completely off guard. He hissed in pain, throwing his charcoal sleeve over his eyes as his dilated pupils burned. The silver cylinder dropped from his fingers with a hollow clatter, pulsing with a harmless wave of blue static across the stones.

Mommy shoved the glowing book into her canvas backpack, snatched her research folder, and bolted into the shadows. She sprinted down a narrow spiral service staircase, burst through a heavy wooden service exit, and lunged out into the rain-slicked cobblestone alleys of Starnberg. She ran straight toward the distant, echoing whistle of the central train station, her hand reaching into her pocket to grip her physical paper Eurail pass. She needed to escape Germany immediately.

Chapter 4: The Border Crossing to Austria

Mommy sat huddled in the corner of a dimly lit compartment on the overnight train cutting through the dense mountain passes of the Austrian Alps. The rhythmic *clack-clack, clack-clack* of the metal wheels against the steel tracks offered no comfort. She had pulled the window shade down completely, terrified that a cold face in a charcoal suit would appear at any station platform.

On the small wooden tray table in front of her sat the leather book. It was completely silent now, its golden glow resting in a quiet, dormant

hum. She stared at it with a mixture of awe and absolute dread. Her rigid, analytical mind was completely fracturing. Her entire life had been assaulted by harsh, immovable facts—her parents' bitter divorce, her siblings' broken relationships, the quiet isolation of her academic studies. She had rejected imagination because reality was all she could afford. Now, the absolute fiction of a time-defying man was hunting her down.

She reached into her canvas bag, pulling out her leather travel wallet. To avoid leaving a digital footprint or a paper trail for the Archivist, she knew she couldn't use credit cards. She carefully tore out a physical, one-hundred-dollar traveler's check, signing it with a trembling hand by the light of the dim overhead bulb. She would cash it at a local bank in Salzburg using a paper passport, operating completely off the grid.

Suddenly, the air pressure inside the train compartment dropped violently. The temperature plummeted, and her breath turned to white plumes of condensation. The leather book in her lap began to thrum again, the text on its pages shifting into a series of jagged, glowing geometric coordinates.

The train gave a horrific, unnatural jolt. The metal tracks underneath began to scream as if being twisted by a massive, invisible hand. Mommy clutched the book to her chest as the windows of the train compartment suddenly frosted over with deep blue rings of static. Reality buckled, and she felt the sickening, weightless sensation of falling through infinite space, the mountains of the early 2000s vanishing into a dark, roaring vacuum.

Chapter 5: The Descent into 1944 Austria

With a bone-jarring, structural slam, the world solidified around her. The smooth motion of the train was gone, replaced by the violent, chest-rattling vibrations of a massive military bombardment.

Mommy opened her eyes and choked instantly on a thick, toxic fog of sulfur, pulverized concrete, and burning gasoline. She was no longer on a train. She was standing in the middle of a ruined, rubble-strewn street lined with bombed-out Baroque buildings. Overhead, the grey sky was choked with the heavy silhouettes of vintage fighter planes, and the distant, rhythmic *thud-thud-thud* of anti-aircraft artillery split the air.

She checked her clothes; her modern canvas backpack and mechanical camera were still with her, but the air felt completely different. The book in her arms flared a deep warning red, its translated pages anchoring her to a specific, terrifying point in time: **Salzburg, Austria — October 1944.**

"Achtung! Fliegeralarm!" a voice screamed from the smoke.

Through the shifting curtains of gray dust, a chaotic wave of people flooded the cobblestone plaza. They were dressed in the heavy woolen coats, worn leather boots, and tattered civilian garments of the 1940s. But something was horribly wrong. It wasn't just a standard wartime evacuation; it was a devastating scene of absolute psychological confusion.

People were running in erratic circles, screaming violently at one another, their faces twisted in blind rage and terror. Yet, as Mommy listened closely through the translation of the book, she realized they had no idea what they were actually shouting about. One man yelled about an incoming air raid, while another argued frantically about a bakery order; a group of soldiers screamed contradictory commands, completely ignoring the bombs falling a block away.

It was a living manifestation of the spiritual blindness described by the Apostle Paul in the scriptures—a scene where minds were so utterly dark and confused that they spoke in a madness of tongues, completely disconnected from the actual reality around them. They were trapped in a war of total delusion, driven by an invisible force that had stripped them of their sanity.

Chapter 6: The Shadow of Hitler's Enforcers

Before Mommy could navigate the crumbling alleyway, a sharp click echoed directly behind her ear.

"Stay exactly where you are," a cold voice rasped in German, translated instantly by the book into English.

She turned slowly to find herself staring into the dark barrel of a Mauser pistol. Holding the weapon was a young, stern-faced officer wearing the crisp, grey-green uniform and death's-head insignia of Hitler's elite enforcers. But as he stepped closer through the smoke, his eyes glinted with an unnatural, gold-tinted reflection that didn't belong to the 1940s.

"The Inspector said a foreign woman would fall through the rift," the officer hissed, his fingers tightening on the trigger. "Give me the volume you hold."

The Archivist hadn't just followed her; he was actively using the brutal, authoritarian structure of the Nazi regime as a weapon to hunt her down. He couldn't manipulate the future directly, but his powers of deception allowed him to infiltrate the minds of historic figures, using their existing cruelty to enforce his absolute control over the past.

Mommy's heart pounded against her ribs. She looked down at the ancient book, which was pulsing with a fierce defensive heat. She remembered the long flight across the Atlantic and her deep desire for history to be an unmovable, unchanging anchor. But here, the past was a fluid, terrifying weapon.

With a surge of adrenaline, she swung her heavy mechanical camera upward, slamming the metal casing directly into the officer's wrist. The gun discharged wildly into the air, the bullet chipping the stone archway above them. Mommy spun on her heel, her boots slipping on the dusty debris as she dove beneath a half-collapsed iron gate, escaping into the chaotic belly of the war-torn city.

Chapter 7: The German Ancestors

Mommy ran blindly through the winding, smoking streets of Salzburg, the deafening roar of the air-raid sirens drowning out her own ragged breathing. She turned into a narrow, stone-walled courtyard behind a ruined cathedral, looking for a place to hide.

Inside the courtyard, a dramatic conflict was unfolding. A small group of German civilians had barricaded themselves inside a basement entryway, their bodies positioned defensively in front of a terrified Jewish family—a mother clutching her weeping children. The civilians were armed with old hunting rifles and iron bars, their faces pale but set with a fierce, noble determination.

As Mommy watched from the shadows, her breath caught. She looked closely at the leader of the civilian defenders—a young German woman with the exact same striking blue eyes and sharp jawline that Mommy saw in her own mirror every morning.

They were her ancestors.

A profound wave of emotion washed over her. In her own time, her family had been completely crippled by divorce, her siblings' relationships ripped apart by taking sides and toxic silence. She had felt entirely alone in the world. But here, in the darkest hour of human history, her own bloodline was standing as a shield for the innocent, risking their lives to preserve the light of humanity. For the first time, she saw a blueprint of courage in her own DNA—a legacy of standing for truth when the world fell into absolute madness.

"Hold the line!" her ancestor shouted, raising her rifle as the heavy iron boots of Hitler's enforcers began to batter the courtyard's outer wooden gates. "They will not take them while we still draw breath!"

Chapter 8: The Modern Sodom and Gomorrah

But the relief of finding her ancestors was instantly shattered as Mommy moved deeper through the hidden tunnels beneath the cathedral to find an exit. The historical records she had memorized at Acadia University had painted a black-and-white picture of the war, but the unedited reality before her eyes was far more devastating and complicated.

The underground catacombs had been transformed into a grotesque, chaotic marketplace—a 1940s version of Sodom and Gomorrah thriving directly beneath the terror of the bombs. The air was thick with the suffocating smell of stale alcohol, burning opium, and cheap perfume. High-ranking officers and corrupt local collaborators were locked in an ongoing display of utter debauchery, drinking heavily and dancing wildly while the city above them burned.

Worse than the hedonism was the cold, calculated commerce happening in the shadows. Mommy watched in absolute horror as desperate, corrupt individuals were actively turning on their own kind. Wealthy collaborators were bartering with the enforcers, using stolen gold and silver coins to buy and sell terrified, weeping children onto a dark black market, trading innocent lives for safe passage out of the country.

"Two hundred marks for the boy!" a man shouted, his face twisted in greed as he held a child by the collar.

The scene was a war of total spiritual confusion. People were screaming, weeping, and fighting over scraps of wealth, their hearts completely hardened to the atrocities happening right next to them. Mommy felt a physical wave of nausea hit her. This was the raw, unedited truth of human nature when the light of God's word was systematically removed and replaced by human greed and deception. The absolute depravity made her knees buckle. Her rigid historical blueprints hadn't prepared her for a reality this dark, and a heavy, suffocating doubt began to seep into her own soul.

Mommy stumbled away from the grotesque, subterranean black market beneath the Salzburg cathedral, her leather boots sliding on the damp granite floor. The air was thick with the suffocating stench of cheap perfume, stale alcohol, and the cold metal of stolen coins. She clutched

the ancient book to her chest, her breathing shallow and ragged as the absolute depravity of the scene reeled in her mind.

She leaned her head against a damp stone pillar, a heavy, freezing tide of doubt rising in her throat. Her rigid historical blueprints from Acadia University had completely failed to prepare her for this level of raw, unfiltered horror.

She looked down at the leather-bound book in her hands, her voice a cracked, desperate whisper over the distant thud of bombs. "Where is the Bible in all of this? If the Word holds the light of life, where was it when Germany crumbled under Hitler? Why is Austria completely devoid of morality right now? Where is God?"

As if responding to the raw agony of her question, the ancient volume began to thrum with a quiet, deep vibration. The pages didn't flare with a blinding light this time; instead, a soft, sorrowful golden ink began to bleed across the parchment, shifting and translating into a precise historical blueprint of the era.

The book wasn't showing her a picture of an absent Creator. It was revealing a systematic, deliberate execution of silence.

Through the golden text, Mommy saw the truth of the Reich's spiritual campaign. The Bible hadn't vanished by accident; it had been actively, violently suppressed. The Archivist had worked through the shadows of the regime to orchestrate a complete distortion of the Word. They had created the "Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life." They had systematically rewritten the scriptures—stripping away the Old Testament entirely, erasing the genealogy of Christ, removing all concepts of mercy, compassion, and grace, and replacing them with a cold, militarized gospel of racial performance and human supremacy.

The true Bibles had been locked away, confiscated from pulpits, and burned in public squares alongside the independent thinkers who dared to read them. The people who were screaming at one another in the streets above, completely blind to their own madness, were starving. Their morality hadn't failed because the Bible was weak; it had rotted because the true Word had been completely removed from their sight,

leaving them trapped in an engineered psychological vacuum where human authority became the only god. But then, the book's text shifted, moving deeper into the shadows of the 1940s.

A warm, steady light illuminated a different set of names—the *Bekennende Kirche*, the Confessing Church. The script mapped out hidden basement rooms, secret printing presses in Berlin, and remote alpine cabins where small, unyielding groups of believers risked the guillotine to smuggle unedited, forbidden copies of the true scriptures across the borders. It showed men like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who refused to let the light of life be replaced by a swastika, standing firm on the unmovable Rock even when the gallows loomed.

Mommy's hand stopped trembling as she read the glowing lines. The Bible wasn't dead in 1944 Austria. It was exactly where it had always been during the darkest epochs of human history: operating in the catacombs, hidden inside the coats of smugglers, and living in the hearts of a fierce, noble remnant who refused to bow to the deception.

The Archivist hadn't proven the Bible was a fiction; his desperate, violent obsession with rewriting it proved that the true Word was the only thing he actually feared. The truth didn't fail because the world fell into darkness; the light of life was the only thing capable of breaking through it.

"I see it now," Mommy whispered, her striking blue eyes clearing as she pushed herself away from the stone pillar, her faith locking into place with a definitive, structural snap. "You can't extinguish the Rock. You can only try to hide it."

Chapter 9: The Battle for Truth

"It is a beautiful display of human nature, isn't it?"

The smooth, venomous voice cut through the underground noise like a

knife. Mommy turned to see the Archivist stepping out from behind a stone pillar, his charcoal suit completely pristine despite the subterranean dust. The gold-lighted rings of his temporal gauntlet were spinning slowly around his wrist, casting a sickening distortion across the room.

"You look at this horror and you wonder how a loving Creator could allow it," the Archivist mocked, his eyes locking onto her pale face. He didn't use force; he used his ultimate power—the power of absolute deception and psychological manipulation. "Your precious Bible claims that humanity is made in His image. But look around you. This is their true form. The truth you fight for is a lie designed to keep you subservient. Yield the book to me, and I will give you a history where none of this ever happened. I will rewrite their minds so they feel no pain, no doubt, and no despair. I will be their peace."

Mommy staggered backward, the ancient book heavy in her arms. The Archivist's words hit the exact fractures in her soul. She thought of her own broken childhood, her parents' explosive divorce, and the utter cruelty she was witnessing in this 1944 vault. The weight of doubt was crushing. *If reality is this broken*, she thought, *how can the Bible be true?*

"No..." Mommy whispered, her voice trembling as she clutched the book tighter.

The moment she resisted, the ancient pages flared with a brilliant, blinding golden light that cut straight through the underground gloom. The words of Galatians and the eternal truths of scripture lifted off the parchment, projecting a warm, defensive shield around her. The golden light washed over her mind, clearing away the Archivist's psychological fog. She realized his trap: he wanted to make her believe that human performance and human failure dictated God's love. But the Bible taught that grace was a free gift, precisely because humanity was too broken to earn it. The truth wasn't a checklist of human perfection; it was the light of life that held her together when reality unraveled.

"The truth doesn't change because people are blind!" Mommy roared, her blue eyes flashing with a fierce, newly discovered authority. "You

don't want to save them, Marcus. You want them to bow to a lie so you can be their god!"

Chapter 10: The Swiss Confederation — December 1944.

The Archivist's face twisted into an expression of pure, fanatical rage as his deception failed. "Then you will be buried in the ruins of their history!"

He raised his temporal gauntlet, unleashing a massive, localized chronal collapse. The stone arches of the catacombs began to violently fracture and age centuries in a matter of seconds, columns turning to sand as the ceiling began to cave in. The violent wave of displaced air created a vacuum that threatened to crush Mommy's lungs, pulling the screaming crowd into a vortex of falling stone.

Mommy didn't look back. Guided by her brilliant, instinctive historical mind, she focused entirely on the golden light of the book. The pages turned at a blinding speed, reacting to her fierce acceptance of the truth. A massive, swirling vortex of pure silver and deep blue energy erupted directly in front of her.

The silver-blue vortex didn't drop Mommy onto a battlefield, but onto a snow-dusted stone terrace overlooking the breathtaking, crystalline expanse of Lake Lucerne. The violent, chest-rattling concussions of the Austrian bombardments vanished, replaced by an eerie, heavy silence. The crisp alpine wind whipped through the mountain passes, carrying the scent of pure pine, cold granite, and distant woodsmoke.

She checked the ancient book in her arms. The translated text on the glowing parchment pages anchored her to a starkly different reality: **The Swiss Confederation — December 1944.**

As Mommy cautiously made her way down from the mountain terrace into a small alpine village, she was struck by a profound historical paradox. All of Europe was currently engulfed in a raging, apocalyptic war of absolute confusion—cities were burning, nations were screaming, and millions were falling into despair. Yet here, nestled securely inside the jagged stone walls of the Alps, Switzerland stood completely untouched. The streets were brightly lit, the shop windows were filled

with fresh cheese and chocolate, and the local citizens walked with a calm, unbothered serenity.

Through the supernatural translation of the book, she listened to the conversations in the village square. They were the only nation in the entire theater of war that had fiercely refused to take a side. They had drawn a hard line in the alpine snow, weaponizing their jagged geography and building an impenetrable network of mountain fortresses known as the National Redoubt. They chose absolute isolation over the chaos of the global conflict.

But as Mommy leaned against a stone wall, her rigid, analytical mind began to process a deeper, more troubling spiritual truth. This forced neutrality wasn't just a political strategy; it was a perfect mirror of her own life back in Nova Scotia. Ever since her parents' explosive divorce had ripped her siblings' relationships apart, she had chosen to live like Switzerland. She had built high walls around her heart, refusing to take a side, refusing to engage, and choosing absolute isolation to protect herself from the emotional wreckage of her family. She had thought keeping herself isolated was a sign of strength. But looking at the brightly lit Swiss village turning its back on a burning continent, she realized that neutrality could also be a mask for deep fear and self-preservation.

Chapter 10: The Architect of Doubt

"An impressive fortress of isolation, isn't it?"

The smooth, chillingly calm voice cut through the alpine silence like a razor blade. Mommy spun around, her heart violently slamming against her ribs.

Stepping out from the long shadows of a timber-framed clocktower was the Archivist. His modern charcoal suit was completely pristine, his cold, calculating eyes fixed directly on her. The gold-lighted rings of his temporal gauntlet were spinning slowly around his forearm, casting a sickening, distorted ripple across the mountain air.

He didn't use physical weapons this time; he used his ultimate power—

the power of total deception, aiming straight for the fractures in her soul.

"You look at this nation and you see yourself," the Archivist mocked, a sinister, knowing smile creeping across his sharp jawline. "You think you can remain neutral in a world this broken. You think that by hiding inside your books and your rigid facts, you can protect yourself from the finality of a shattered home. Your precious Bible claims that love can heal all things, but your own history has taught you that reality is nothing but a series of broken promises. Look at your parents. Look at your siblings. The truth you cling to hasn't saved your family, and it won't save you."

Mommy staggered backward against the cold stone wall, the ancient book heavy and trembling in her arms. The Archivist's words were a direct psychological assault, forcing a suffocating wave of doubt straight into her mind. She thought of the toxic silence back home, the ripped-apart relationships, and the utter isolation she had lived in for years. *If God's truth holds the light of life*, the whisper of doubt crept in, *why is my reality so completely broken?*

"No..." Mommy whispered, her breath forming white plumes in the freezing alpine air.

As she struggled to find her footing, her mind suddenly flashed back to the long transatlantic flight and the bold ink of the 1534 manuscripts. The truth wasn't a guarantee that reality would be easy or perfect; it was an unmovable rock designed to keep her from sliding into absolute darkness *when* the world unraveled. God's grace was a free gift precisely because humanity was fractured. Her family's brokenness didn't make the Bible a lie; it made the light of scripture all the more desperately necessary.

"You're wrong, Marcus," Mommy said, her voice steadying as her striking blue eyes locked onto his with a fierce, newly discovered authority. "Switzerland thinks they are safe because they didn't take a side, but true freedom isn't hiding from the fight. My family might be broken, but the truth of the Gospel is an anchor that can never be rewritten by your deceptions!"

The moment she chose to stand on her faith, the ancient leather volume in her arms erupted into a brilliant, blinding explosion of golden light. The absolute purity of the radiation violently clashed against the Archivist's dark, gold-tinted time-wave. The supernatural collision created a thunderous, atmospheric pop that shattered the glass panes of the nearby clocktower, sending a massive shower of crystal shards raining down into the plaza.

The Archivist snarled in fanatical rage, his gauntlet sparking wildly as the light of life completely overwhelmed his temporal field. He lunged forward to grab her, but he was too late.

The ancient pages turned at a blinding speed, and a massive, swirling vortex of pure silver and deep blue energy ripped open directly beneath Mommy's feet, smelling heavily of ancient cedar wood, stormy oceans, and autumn dampness.

She fell backward into the glowing center of the portal, leaving the freezing mountains of Switzerland and the furious face of her greatest enemy behind. The universe went dead silent as she spun through an infinite tunnel of centuries, her canvas backpack floating off her shoulders as the timeline stretched and compressed all at once.

Chapter 11: The Italian Campaign

The crisp, defensive golden blast of the Swiss portal collapsed behind her, and Mommy didn't fall into safety. Instead, the universe violently threw her out onto the dusty, bone-dry cobblestones of Italy. She hit the ground hard, her canvas internal-frame backpack absorbing the brunt of the impact as she skidded past a row of ancient stone columns.

She choked instantly on a thick, dense cloud of white marble dust and pulverized plaster. The world around her was a cacophony of absolute, wartime violence. Overhead, the screaming whir of Allied bomber engines tore through the skies, and the earth shook violently with the thunderous, bass-heavy concussions of incoming artillery shells.

Wiping the grit from her eyes, Mommy looked up and gasped. Looming

through the gray smoke was the unmistakable, gravity-defying marble structure of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. But it wasn't the pristine tourist destination from her early-2000s guidebooks; the white columns were heavily chipped by shrapnel, and barbed-wire blockades lined the historic plaza.

"Raus! Schneller!" a soldier screamed from the dust.

Mommy scrambled behind a shattered stone balustrade as a column of armored military vehicles roared past. The ancient book in her lap flared a deep, warning purple, its shifting geometric ink anchoring her to the timeline: **Pisa, Italy — July 1944.**

Before she could process the historical reality, the air pressure around her dropped drastically. The smell of burning rubber and ozone filled the space, and the distant explosions suddenly went dead silent, frozen mid-air like static background noise.

"You are fighting a losing battle," a smooth, venomous voice whispered.

Mommy spun around. Standing perfectly calm amidst the falling plaster was the Archivist. His charcoal suit was immaculate, his fingers lightly resting on a heavy, obsidian-rimmed temporal device at his waist. He stepped closer, his eyes narrowing into cold, calculating slits.

"Look at this peninsula," the Archivist said, gesturing with a slow wave of his hand toward the ruined street. "You think your faith in a higher power can heal this world? Rome is burning. Pisa is falling. The very texts you traveled to Europe to find are being turned to ash by the greed of men. The Gospel you cling to promises grace, yet reality only delivers destruction. Surrender the book, settle into my design, and I will freeze this chaos. I will give you a fixed, orderly world where your family never fractures and history never bleeds."

Mommy's breath hitched. The psychological weight of his deception lunged directly at her deepest vulnerabilities. Her rigid reliance on pure reality cracked under the weight of his manipulation. She thought of her parent's bitter divorce, her siblings' ripped relationships, and the absolute isolation that had defined her youth. The temptation to just

give up, to let someone else erase the pain of a broken world, was intoxicatingly heavy.

"No..." Mommy rasped, her hand shaking as she pressed it against the leather cover of the book.

The crisp, defensive golden blast of the Swiss portal collapsed, and Mommy didn't fall into safety. Instead, the universe violently threw her out onto the dusty, bone-dry cobblestones of Italy. She hit the ground hard, her canvas internal-frame backpack absorbing the brunt of the impact as she skidded past a row of ancient stone columns.

She choked instantly on a thick, dense cloud of white marble dust and pulverized plaster. The world around her was a cacophony of absolute, wartime violence. Overhead, the screaming whirl of Allied bomber engines tore through the skies, and the earth shook violently with the thunderous, bass-heavy concussions of incoming artillery shells.

Wiping the grit from her eyes, Mommy looked up and gasped. Looming through the gray smoke was the unmistakable, colossal stone framework of the Roman Colosseum. The ancient arena was heavily chipped by shrapnel, and barbed-wire blockades lined the historic plaza. The book in her lap flared a deep, warning purple, its shifting geometric ink anchoring her to the timeline: **Rome, Italy — August 1944.**

"Stop her!" a cold, commanding voice echoed through the ancient arches.

Mommy spun around. Bursting through the dust was the Archivist, flanked by a squad of fascist enforcers with drawn weapons. His modern charcoal suit was immaculate, completely contrasting with the ruined historic ruins.

"You cannot run from your timeline!" the Archivist hissed, raising his silver temporal gauntlet.

Mommy didn't hesitate. She scrambled to her feet and bolted into the dark, labyrinthine underbelly of the Colosseum. She sprinted through

the ancient hypogeum, her boots kicking up centuries-old dust as she ducked beneath crumbling stone archways. Behind her, the Archivist fired a sweeping fan of jagged violet energy. The beam tore through the ancient masonry, instantly aging the stone columns until they collapsed into rubble, blocking her path.

Relying on sheer adrenaline, Mommy scaled a half-collapsed brick staircase, lunging out onto the upper tiers of the arena. Below her, the Archivist manually rewound the air pressure in the corridor, creating a violent vacuum that sucked the oxygen right out of her lungs. Gasping for air, she swung her heavy mechanical 35mm SLR camera upward, slamming the metal casing directly into the face of an oncoming guard who tried to cut her off. The enforcer tumbled backward down the stone steps, and Mommy used the distraction to sprint down a hidden service ramp, bursting through a ruined exit gate into the sudden, blinding freedom of the Roman streets.

Pantings and covered in dust, she spotted a vintage black-and-tan Fiat taxicab idling near the curb, its driver frantically preparing to flee the incoming air raid. Mommy lunged into the back seat, slammed a fistful of traveler's checks into the driver's hand, and shouted, "Vaticano! San Pietro! Go!"

The driver slammed on the gas, the tiny car screeching across the cracked, debris-strewn cobblestones as bombs detonated a few blocks away. They tore through the chaotic streets of Rome, dodging military checkpoints and fleeing civilians until the massive, breathtaking silhouette of St. Peter's Basilica loomed ahead.

Mommy threw open the taxi door before the car even came to a complete halt. She ran up the massive, empty stone steps of the piazza and burst into the cavernous, silent sanctuary of the cathedral. The air inside smelled intensely of frankincense and cold marble. She didn't stop to admire the towering statues; she ran straight for the narrow, winding stairwells leading up to the great dome designed by Michelangelo.

It was a brutal, dizzying climb. She sprinted up the tightly spiraling stone steps, the walls tilting inward as she ascended higher into the

architectural masterpiece. Her muscles burned, and her breath came in ragged gasps, but she kept moving, climbing all the way out onto the high, circular observation deck at the very top of the dome.

The view was staggering. Through the blinding sheets of grey smoke and autumn mist, the entire historic expanse of Rome stretched out beneath her—the winding Tiber River, the distant ruins of the Forum, and the sprawling rooftops of the eternal city, all caught in the grip of a devastating world war.

Clack. Clack. Clack.

The slow, rhythmic clicking of heavy boots echoed from the narrow exit door behind her. Mommy turned, her back pressed against the iron guardrail of the dome's peak.

The Archivist stepped out onto the narrow ledge, a sinister, knowing smile creeping across his sharp jawline as his temporal gauntlet gathered a lethal purple charge. "There are no more stairs to climb. Your rigid little reality ends at the top of this dome. Surrender the book, or I will drop your timeline into the abyss."

Mommy staggered, looking down at the terrifying drop below, then back at the ancient book clutched tightly to her chest. The psychological weight of his deception lunged directly at her deepest vulnerabilities. She thought of her parent's bitter divorce, her siblings' ripped relationships, and the absolute isolation that had defined her youth. The temptation to just give up, to let someone else erase the pain of a broken world, was intoxicatingly heavy.

"No..." Mommy rasped, her striking blue eyes locking onto his with absolute, immovable conviction.

She realized his ultimate trap: he wanted her to believe that the brokenness of reality made the promises of God a lie. But the true Gospel wasn't a guarantee that human history would be perfect; it was an unmovable anchor precisely because the world was fractured. Christ had paid the ultimate price to offer an unconditional grace that saved souls out of the darkness.

"My faith doesn't depend on your version of history, Marcus!" Mommy shouted, her voice echoing over the roaring city below. "The truth of the Bible is a fortress that no human empire, no war, and no time-warping liar can ever shake! I am anchored to the Rock!"

The moment she secured her faith, refusing to bow to his deception, the ancient volume erupted into a brilliant, blinding supernova of golden light. The radiation was pure, unedited truth. It tore through the Archivist's localized time-freeze like a physical shockwave, shattering his temporal device into a thousand sparking fragments. The Archivist screamed in absolute, fanatical rage as the golden aura physically repelled him, throwing him backward against the heavy stone dome.

The golden shockwave detonated against the apex of St. Peter's dome, fracturing the localized time-lock with a thunderous, atmospheric boom. The Archivist crashed hard against the stone balustrade, his temporal gauntlet shattering into smoking, useless pieces of obsidian and wire. The brilliant silver-and-blue vortex tore open right on the narrow ledge, its gravitational pull howling into the Roman wind.

Mommy began to fall backward into the swirling center of the portal, her fingers slipping from the iron guardrail. But before the rift could pull her entirely out of the 1940s, the space inside the vortex buckled.

Marcus didn't stay down.

With a low, guttural snarl of pure, fanatical resilience, the Archivist lunged forward through the golden visual afterimages. He didn't use a device this time. He used his bare hand, his fingers locking onto the thick canvas strap of her internal-frame backpack with a grip like an iron vise. The sheer weight of his anchor stopped her descent into the rift, suspending her precariously half-in and half-out of the infinite tunnel of centuries.

"You think a localized flare of energy changes your nature?" Marcus hissed. His charcoal suit was torn, and blood dripped down his sharp jawline from a deep laceration on his forehead, but his dark, calculating eyes burned with a terrifying, absolute clarity.

The air pressure between them polarized, crackling with an erratic, toxic purple static that bled from his clothing. He was forcing his own physical molecular frequency to fight the portal's trajectory, turning the observation ledge into a raw crucible of psychological warfare.

"Look down at your hands!" the Archivist roared over the screaming wind of the vortex. "You clutch that book like a child clinging to a blanket in a storm! You speak of an unmovable Rock, yet your whole life has been a slow slide through shifting sand! Where was your Rock when your parents' marriage exploded into a toxic war of words? Where was your fortress when your brothers and sisters turned their backs on one another, leaving you alone in a silent house with nothing but old papers to keep you warm?"

The words slammed into Mommy's mind with the physical force of an artillery shell. The Archivist was bypassing her academic defense and striking directly at the unhealed fractures of her childhood. The memory of the explosive divorce, the years of isolated silence in Nova Scotia, and the agonizing pain of her torn-apart family surged up in her throat, choking her breath.

"The Gospel you fight for tells you that love is sovereign," Marcus mocked, his face inches from hers, his cold eyes boring into her soul. "But the reality you were assaulted with proves it is a fiction you cannot afford! If your Creator is a God of order and grace, why is the primary unit He designed—the family—the very first thing to shatter under the weight of human performance? Look at the truth of your own life! You are a broken branch from a dead tree. Settle into my design. Let me take the book, and I will erase the memory of the kitchen table where your family unraveled. I will give you a history where the promises never broke!"

A heavy, suffocating cloud of doubt pressed down on her chest. The temptation was an absolute, crushing weight. The fractures in her soul screamed for relief. It would be so easy to let go of the straps, to hand over the heavy leather volume, and to let a timeless curator rewrite the narrative of her pain. Her rigid, analytical mind wrestled with the paradox: *If the blueprint was perfect, why was her home a ruin?*

Marcus saw the hesitation in her eyes and smiled—a cold, triumphant curl of his lip as he pulled her an inch closer to the ledge. "Yield, child. Your faith is nothing but an engineered delusion to hide from the facts."

"No," Mommy whispered, her lips cracking in the freezing alpine wind bleeding through the rift.

She closed her eyes, but she didn't see the broken kitchen table in Carlsbad or the ruins of Rome. She saw the cross. She saw the ink drying on the pages of Galatians that she had tracked across the continent.

In a sudden, blinding flash of absolute, unshakeable comprehension, she understood the ultimate deception of the Archivist. Marcus wanted her to believe that God's truth was dependent on human perfection. He wanted her to think that because her family failed, the blueprint failed.

"You're wrong, Marcus," Mommy said, her eyes snapping open, her striking blue pupils flashing with a fierce, immovable light that completely eclipsed the purple static around them. "The Gospel doesn't say people are perfect. It says people are desperately broken. My parents' divorce, my siblings' silence, the wars in these streets—it doesn't prove the Bible is a lie. It proves the Bible is *right*! Grace isn't a reward for an orderly life; it's a free, unconditional rescue line because we are too fractured to save ourselves! My family didn't break the Rock. The Rock is the only thing keeping me standing while the family breaks!"

The moment she secured her faith in its rawest, most steadfast form, she didn't just trigger the book—she became the catalyst.

A fierce, localized supernova of pure, blinding golden light erupted directly from her chest, surging down the canvas straps of her pack. The radiation carried the absolute weight of eternal life. The moment the golden fire touched the Archivist's hands, his skin blistered with a supernatural heat. His fingers violently spasmed, his iron grip on her backpack snapping like brittle glass.

Marcus screamed—a raw, fanatical sound of pure spiritual agony as the light of life completely rejected his deceptions. The golden shockwave physically repelled him, launching him backward across the observation

deck where he crashed heavily into the stone dome, his dark charcoal suit smoking with temporal feedback.

With his grip severed, the silver-and-blue vortex roared with an absolute, un-hindered velocity. The Roman sky, the burning city below, and the furious, defeated face of the Archivist vanished instantly into a silent, spinning tunnel of centuries. Mommy fell completely into the center of the timeline, her faith locked, her heart healed, and her unmovable anchor securely cast into the deep unknown of eternity.

The ancient pages turned at a dizzying speed, the ink flashing with a new set of coordinates. Before the German soldiers could recover, a massive, swirling silver-and-blue vortex ripped open directly beneath her. Mommy fell forward into the center of the portal, leaving the smoke of World War II behind as she launched through the infinite tunnel of centuries.

Chapter 12: Return to Reality

With a dull, solid thud and a sharp gasp for air, Mommy hit a smooth, polished surface. The deafening roar of the Italian bombardments and the howling winds of the time-rift vanished instantly, replaced by the profound, heavy silence of an empty building.

She lay perfectly still for a moment, her muscles aching from a series of physical bumps and purple bruises she had collected across her chaotic leaps through history. Her clothes were damp, covered in a mixture of Bavarian mist and Italian marble dust.

Slowly, she opened her eyes and looked around. The high, narrow windows, the stone-vaulted arches, and the long oak tables confirmed her location. The book had deposited her directly back inside the restricted archives of Schloss Starnberg, (Starnberg Castle). The afternoon sun was casting peaceful, amber shadows across the empty room, looking exactly as it had when she first stepped inside.

The Archivist was gone. The gold-tinted fog had vanished.

Mommy sat up, pulling her canvas internal-frame backpack onto her lap. Resting quietly on top of her research folders was the ancient, leather-bound volume. Its edges no longer glowed; it rested in a calm, dormant hum, its secrets safely tucked away beneath the weathered binding.

She looked down at her hands, which were still trembling slightly. Her rigid academic mind had completely changed. If anyone had talked to her about time travel before this trip, she would have dismissed it as cheap fiction. But she had just lived through it. She had witnessed history firsthand, faced a timeless tyrant, and come out the other side with a steadfast, unmovable faith. She knew she was holding a dangerous, world-changing artifact, but she also knew she was no longer defined by her family's broken past. She had a purpose now.

"It's time to go home," Mommy whispered to the quiet archive room, a confident smile touching her lips.

She carefully shoved the book deep into her backpack, zipped it shut, and buckled her straps. She adjusted her heavy 35mm SLR camera over her shoulder, picked up her folded paper map, and walked out of the castle gates into the crisp German afternoon, ready to board a train back to the Frankfurt airport to return to her reality.

She felt a deep sense of peace as she began embracing a faith that was slowly becoming much more personal, completely unaware that her timeline was already shifting. She had no idea that her next unexpected leap through history wouldn't happen in Europe, but would take her all the way across the Atlantic to the rugged, windy landscapes of Calgary, Alberta. The path ahead was bound to have its own share of mechanical bumps and bruises, but as she walked toward the station, she knew she was ready for whatever life threw at her next.