

# Prologue

The congregation, sitting shoulder to shoulder in the pews now.

Smiling, he let the curtain drop, stepping back into the vestibule behind the altar. Gently, he took off his gold watch, placing it into the little cupboard. Not that the congregation would begrudge him it, really, but rubbing their noses in it...that would be a mistake, and he seldom made any of those.

Straightening up, he took a deep breath, feeling the energy of the crowd out there. His people. Eager to hear what he had to say, ready to believe – ready to give. Like a trickle he felt that stream of energy, and he pulled it in closer, seductively, teasingly.

Closing his eyes, he parted the curtains and stepped out.

Big, confident strides. Then, hands on either side of the plain wooden pulpit, he drew in even more of their energy with every breath he took.

Silence – for a moment, he let it just hang there, letting the tension build.

“It’s Friday,” he finally said in a voice so low that people in the last row would have to strain to hear. “It’s Friday.” A hitch in his voice and he let the sentence trail off.

The curtain behind him moved ever so slightly, and a pair of dark eyes appeared, watching the preacher, taking in every movement and every single word.

The dark red velvet curtain surrounded him, spilled and pooled over the small bony body, almost swallowing him up as the preacher now slowly raised his hands.

A drumroll slowly built somewhere, like unseen thunder. You didn’t know if you actually heard it or just felt it in your bones. The boy knew it came from several high-tech loudspeakers, cleverly concealed in the decorative woodwork of the room, controlled with a minute switch in the side of the pulpit.

“It’s Friday. Jesus is praying, Judas is betraying – but Sunday’s coming.” The preacher’s voice rose along with the invisible thunder, and the boy could not take his eyes off him. “The crowd is vilifying, but they don’t even know...that Sunday is coming.”

The voice rose, trembling on the high pitches. “Sunday is coming.” A hoarse breath, all eyes in the room on the preacher whose hands stretched toward the crowd, like he was drawing something from them, taking it and drawing it inside of himself.

“It’s Friday – but Sunday is coming,” the boy whispered, trying for the same intonation, the same drama, forming his hands into fists.

A hand landed heavily on his shoulder, pulling him back behind the curtain.

“What are you doing back here?”

His mother put her hand over his mouth and pulled him none too gently into the room behind the altar and the great big plush office behind that.

“Now hush. You can watch it from here.”

With a flick of her hand, she released the grand television screen, carefully hidden behind an

ordinary wooden panel, pushed the boy into one of the plump couches, and pointed her index finger at him. No words were needed; he only nodded and watched the giant screen, where his father appeared once again.

“It’s Friday, people, but Sunday, Sunday is coming.”