

# Chapter 1: A New Hell

“Well at least that’s over,” Mrs. Cardino said to Mr. Taylor, one of the parents sitting near her on the bus.

“The kids had a great time though,” Mr. Taylor answered.

“I still remember my sixth grade camping trip,” Mrs. Cardino said to him, grinning as she remembered that trip so many years ago. “This was a lot of work, but it’s something these kids will remember for the rest of their lives.”

“We didn’t go on a camping trip when I finished elementary school,” Mr. Taylor said. “We went on a lame field trip. I remember my cousins school got to go camping, and I was so jealous.”

“This is the first time we’ve done it,” Mrs. Cardino told him. “We’ve always done the lame field trip. This years group of kids was so great and they did such a phenomenal job fund raising we were able to plan something a little bit more extravagant. It also helped that Mrs. Johnson took over fundraising and planned it all, I wouldn’t of had time.”

“They did seem like a really well behaved group of kids,” Mr. Taylor replied. “I had a great time with my group.”

“They are. This is probably the best behaved class I’ve had in twenty years. Even the parents this year go above and beyond. Look at how many parents we had volunteer to chaperone this trip. Six dads and ten moms out of sixty kids is amazing. Especially when almost every parent that went had to take the week off of work or arrange care for their other children,” Mrs. Cardino said.

“There were a lot of parents up at the cabins,” Mr. Taylor said, laughing softly. “We had a good time once the kids went to sleep.”

“Yes,” Mrs. Cardino answered, grinning. “It makes Mr. Connelly and my job much easier when there’s so much parent support. I could hear you a few nights outside, it sounded like fun.”

“You should have come out and joined us,” Mr. Taylor said.

“I didn’t want to ruin your fun in case there were things going on that shouldn’t have been.” She laughed and added, “my mom chaperoned my sixth grade trip and the moms got caught with wine one night.”

“Well,” Mr. Taylor said, laughing softly again, “maybe it’s better you didn’t come out then.”

“That’s what I thought,” Mrs. Cardino said, trying not to laugh as the bus braked quickly, making everyone grab the seat in front of them. “Whoa,” Mrs. Cardino said as the bus suddenly slowed down to an almost stop. “I wonder what’s going on? We’re only a mile from the school and we’re getting back so late, rush hour should be over by now.”

Mrs. Cardino got up from her seat and walked up the aisle, “everyone stay in your seats,” she announced to groups of students and parents. “We should be at the school soon.”

“Hey Dave,” she said to the driver as she sat down in the empty seat behind him. “What’s going on?”

“I’m trying to get someone at the office on the radio, but I’m getting no answer,” Dave told her. “All of a sudden the traffic is crazy. It’s like everyone is trying to get out of town.”

“Can we take one of the side roads and cut to the school that way?” Mrs. Cardino asked. “I know there should be a lot of

parents waiting at the school by now. My daughters are picking me up too. They texted me half an hour ago that they were at the school already.”

“I’ll try. Even the back roads have cars coming out of them,” Dave said. “Look at their faces, it’s almost like they’re in a panic.”

“Get us off this main road,” she told him. “I have a bad feeling about this. I’ll keep the kids calm.”

Dave swung the bus down the first available street that headed in the direction of the school, the bus behind, with Mr. Connelly’s class, followed. Although traffic was still heavy they were able to weave their way through the roads and make it back to the school within fifteen minutes. As they pulled up into the parking lot, parents began running towards the bus.

“We have to get out of here now,” one mom yelled, grabbing her son and his gear and running towards her car. Other parents were doing the same from both busses.

“Mom,” Mrs. Cardino’s daughter Jessica yelled running up to her. “Did you hear what’s happening?”

“No,” Mrs. Cardino answered, “we haven’t heard anything. Why is everyone acting so crazy?”

“The North Koreans have launched a nuclear bomb at us. We retaliated and launched a bunch at them. Now the Russians have sided with North Korea and they’ve launched at us too. We have to get home and take cover.”

“There’s no time for that,” Mrs. Cardino said. Mr. Connelly walked up as Jessica was explaining and heard the whole thing. “We’re going to have to take cover in the school.”

“My family was supposed to pick me up and they aren’t here yet,” Mr. Connolly said, glancing down at his phone. “I can’t get my wife on her cell. It keeps saying all circuits are busy.”

“Did you see the traffic out there? She’ll make it,” Mrs. Cardino said. “Right now let’s see about getting these kids whose parents aren’t here organized and into a safe place.”

“Sharon, Dan,” they heard their names yelled as the custodian that was working came running from the school towards them, “we need to get these kids inside immediately.”

“I know Jim,” Sharon Cardino said to him. “We just heard what’s going on. This school has a basement doesn’t it?”

“Yes,” Jim answered. “It’s only been used for storage the last twenty years, but there’s classrooms, bathrooms and a kitchen down there.”

“Great,” Mrs. Cardino said. Then she turned towards the parents that were still near the busses and the few students whose parents hadn’t shown up yet to pick them up. “Everyone listen up,” she called loudly. “We’ve just heard some disturbing news. It seems that we’re now at war. The North Koreans and Russians are attacking us and we need to get to shelter right away. If your parent is not here yet, come with me to the school. If you’re a parent and you want to stay and shelter here, that’s fine too, but we need to head into the school right now.”

Mrs. Cardino turned back towards her daughter, “where’s your sister?” she asked.

“By the car,” Jessica answered.

“Get her, now. We need to get into the school. I need both of you to help me keep these kids calm,” Mrs. Cardino said. Then she seen the car pulling into the lot. “Dan, I think your wife and kids just pulled in. Grab them and let’s get inside.”

“Mrs. Cardino,” called Mr. Taylor. “I need to run to my house across the street real fast, but I’d like to stay with you here with my son. Can you keep him here till I get back?”

“Of course,” Mrs. Cardino answered. There was no time to ask what was so important that he needed to get home. “Let’s go,” she yelled to the students and parents standing around. “If you’re staying follow me, if you’re going I suggest you hurry.”

“We need to get organized,” Jim said walking beside her. “We could be down in that basement for a long time. If we even survive.”

“I was thinking the same thing,” Mrs. Cardino answered. “I have some ideas, but let’s get everyone in and then go from there.”

Jim quickly lead the group back into the school and down the steps into the basement. They quickly scanned the rooms and picked out the ones that had no windows. They had the students drop their bedrolls and packs onto the floor.

Sharon Cardino was an avid reader and for once in her life the knowledge she’d gained was possibly going to come in very handy. One of her favorite genres was post-apocalyptic fiction so as they walked she thought about all the things she had learned about survival from them.

“Ok everyone listen up,” Mrs. Cardino once again yelled. “We don’t have much time to prepare. Jim did they say how long we had?”

“Probably less than an hour now,” Jim answered.

“Alright then,” Mrs. Cardino said taking control. “I may not have all the answers but for once all that post apocalyptic fiction I’ve read may help out. Jessica, I want you to go by the door. If anyone shows that looks like a student or family, let them in. Mr. Connelly, can you take a team up into the kitchen and grab any food you find there?”

“We just had a delivery for next weeks breakfast and lunch,” Jim said.

“Grab it all,” Mrs. Cardino said. Dan Connelly grabbed his wife and two kids and a few more and took off for the stairs. “Jim are there refrigerators and freezers down here?”

“I’m not sure if they work anymore,” Jim answered. “But I can try to get them going.”

“Mrs. Johnson,” Mrs. Cardino called to one of the moms, “can you take about five kids up to the computer lab and just start printing everything you can find on surviving a nuclear attack? Or do it yourself books? Don’t read it, just open the website and hit print. You have thirty minutes.”

“Yes,” Mrs. Johnson called back and grabbed some of the kids and also headed for the stairs.

“Mr. Ellis,” Mrs. Cardino said to another of the parents, “look around for whatever clean containers you can find and start filling them with water. I don’t know how long the sinks are going to work and we will need water to survive.”

“I’m on it,” Mr. Ellis called out, as he too took a group of students with him.

“And last, Mr. and Mrs. Stone, could you get Jim’s master key and go classroom by classroom. Take any food that you find or bottled water. The spring parties were going to be tomorrow so I can guarantee that a lot of party foods have already been delivered,” Mrs. Cardino said. “Look for mini fridges in the rooms and teacher lounge. “There probably packed full for tomorrow.”

“On our way,” Mr. Stone said, grabbing the last of the kids and parents and heading out.

“What about me mom?” said Bethany, her youngest daughter.

“Help me down here,” she answered. “We need to clear out these rooms a bit so everyone can lay out their sleeping bags.”

“What about us that don’t have sleeping bags?” Bethany asked her mother.

“Shit,” she said. “Maybe we can find some blankets in the office clinic or some coats in the lost and found. Can you go look please?”

“Sure,” Bethany told her mother and took off running towards the stairs.

“I’m back,” said Mr. Taylor as he walked down the stairs towards her, carrying two extra large duffel bags.

“What’s in there?” She asked.

“Security,” he answered and unzipped one of the bags showing at least five guns of various lengths.

“Keep those away from the children,” she said to him. Not really upset that he had brought them, knowing that if they survived the initial strike, they may need them in the future.

“What else needs to be done?” Mr. Taylor asked.

“Well since you are now in charge of security, could you go relieve my daughter at the door?” she asked. “Maybe you could check the school over quickly to make sure we’re as safe as can be for now?”

“That I can do,” he said.

“I’m going to start rushing people along and get them back down here. Time is about up,” she said.

The two of them headed back up the stairs, this time Joe Taylor was armed. Sharon Cardino waved her daughter over towards her and the two of them began making their rounds of the school, getting everyone back into the basement.

Mr. Connelly and his group had just about finished moving all the food from the kitchen down to the old basement kitchen with the help of three large carts they’d found. Jim had managed

to somehow get the old outdated refrigerators and freezer working and all the food was now stored away.

“Jessica,” she called to her daughter, “go get the group in the library and tell them to grab what they’ve printed and head downstairs now.”

“Ok mom,” Jessica called back, trying to stay as calm as her mother.

“I’m just going to make one last check to make sure we have everyone together and I’ll meet you downstairs,” Mrs. Cardino told her oldest daughter.

Just as she finished talking they felt the ground shudder and heard the boom sound in the distance. Both froze for a second, when they felt the ground once more move as another bomb went off in the distance Mrs. Cardino yelled, “go now, and make sure you grab your sister!”

Sharon Cardino glanced over towards the tall glass windows that were in the front of the school. Off in the distance she could just make out the dust cloud that was forming in the distance. It seemed that the bombs had dropped far enough away that maybe they’d be ok. It wasn’t until she heard the screams as parents and students came running from all directions heading for the basement that she unfroze and was able to move.

“Everyone downstairs quickly,” she called to all of them. “Be careful on the stairs though. The last thing we need is for someone to fall and get seriously hurt.”

Once everyone was downstairs they all took seats along the walls. “What do we do now?” Jim asked Mrs. Cardino.

“Hopefully we survive,” she answered him.

“You don’t seem to sure about that,” he said to her.

“I’m not,” she said. “A lot depends on how close the bombs fell to us.”

“Is there anything you need me to do?” asked Mr. Johnson walking up to the two.

“We’re going to need a count of everyone that’s down here,” she told him. “I’m not even sure how many kids and parents came inside.”

“My wife and myself will get on that,” he told her. “You did good getting us in here and rounding up supplies.”

“I’m not so sure about that,” she said. “I don’t even know how much food or water we have.”

“We can work on counting that tomorrow,” Mr. Johnson told her. “What do you think is happening out there right now?”

“I don’t know. We don’t know how many bombs were dropped, or who exactly fired at us. The only thing I’m sure of is that the world just turned into a new kind of hell,” Mrs. Cardino answered.