

THE  
ARMAGEDDIA  
SERIES

BOOK 2

BRYAN K. JOHNSON

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Bedside Books

An imprint of American Book Publishing

14510 Big Basin Way #155, Saratoga Village, Ca 95070

[www.american-book.com](http://www.american-book.com)

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

*The Armageddia Series: Book 2*

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# **PART ONE: RETRIBUTION**

“If an injury has to be done to a man it should be so severe that his vengeance need not be feared.”

- NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI

## CHAPTER 1

The pulsing of sirens are all around. Sound waves smash into the walls, rattling nerves in the night. Devin's hands are cupped hard over his ears, but that does little to dim the high-pitched whine piercing through his flesh.

Search lights sweep back and forth across the sky, shooting their brilliant knives out into the darkness. The light catches on the faint sparkle of metal lurking just past the clouds.

The air raid sirens have screamed out their song much more frequently this week. Almost every night, the note's cried somewhere in the distance, followed

by the booms and fires of impact. Between the attacking Axis raids and the government's own helicopters patrolling daily to keep the "peace," the skies have become a very busy place.

Devin gets up from the couch, wiping the troubled sleep from his eyes. The muscles along the back of his neck are firing in marital protest again. He's slept out here for close to a month now, but still isn't quite sure why. Something's just been different about Katherine lately. He's tried not to dwell on it. The more his mind wanders, the less he really wants to know.

At first, Devin just dismissed it as cabin fever. He hasn't had a steady job in quite a while, other than the occasional directive for the city—unburying survivors after another air raid or pulling the dead bodies of his neighbors from the wreckage.

Being around each other this much certainly hasn't been good for their marriage. Or the kids. After Devin came back from the horrors of Seattle, he thought everything would be better. And it was for

a while. But the calm faded and withered just like everything else once so brightly in bloom.

Devin pushes the wood blinds open wider. Several houses down his utopian suburban street are in flames. He knows almost every family in this neighborhood. He should. Devin's buried half a dozen of them now.

He hears an explosion rattle the copper pans hanging above the kitchen island even before he sees the flash. The light from the blast makes him squint. Its low roar hits the house and moves up his spine.

Devin is inside the bedroom before the television sky has even dimmed. "Stay down!" he shouts, seeing the silhouette of his wife's body against the flickering light.

Kat nods. She pulls the blanket up tighter to her chest before reaching out to him in habit. Devin could always calm her, even on the worst of days. But he's already gone, leaving only the shadows to bring her comfort.

The ex-fireman is up the stairs in an instant. He

*The Armageddia Series: Book 2*

slows when his emerald eyes find Tyler's door open wide. His son always keeps it closed, still scared of the dark even now at the age of nine.

Another jolt runs through the house, shaking the framed pictures that line the hallway.

They're getting closer.

Devin rushes into his son's room just as another flash blooms across the sky. The light cascades over a set of delicate shoulders standing transfixed at the window. The blond and pink streaks of Haley's hair look almost electric in the twilight color of the night.

"You guys okay?" he sighs.

Haley barely turns, her eyes instead locked on the light show of war. "I still come up here sometimes when I can't sleep," she whispers. "It helps settle him down, too."

Tyler sits bolt upright on the bed, watching his big sister standing guard over him. Deep shadows cut below his hollowed eyes. The boy's cheeks look even thinner and paler than normal. "It's like sleeping next to a heater," he smiles. They haven't had heat in a

year.

Devin reaches down and scoops the boy up. His body feels so light and frail now in the fireman's arms. Devin kisses the top of his son's forehead, fighting back a hardened rage. It fills him now every time he looks at Tyler. Devin thought Seattle would be the worst nightmare he'd ever be forced to witness. He was wrong.

There's been no medicine in months, and barely any food. Tyler's body is rail thin from the lack of movement and exercise so expected of most nine-year-olds. Without insulin, they've kept him on strict bedrest to help conserve his energy and keep the boy from overexerting himself. He, of course, absolutely hated it, but could see by the look in his dad's usually certain eyes that the alternative was even more terrifying.

"How you feeling, bud?" Devin asks, forcing a smile.

"Super," Tyler whispers. His voice is so quiet it's only just.

*The Armageddia Series: Book 2*

Haley wipes the tear off her cheek before her brother can see it.

“Let’s get you guys downstairs. We’ll have a sleepover in our room tonight, okay?” Devin glances up at Haley, seeing more flashes and colored lights in the distance behind her. “Come on now, love. Nothing good to see there.”

She turns away and takes only a step before the window detonates behind her. Glass and metal shoot into the room, flickering like lightning in the dark.

“Haley!” Devin yells from his knees. He stumbles forward with Tyler, wincing as the glass shards crack, then slice through his bare feet.

Haley’s body moves slowly on the floor. It arches and twists over the glittering remnants of normality.

“Now, love!” Devin shouts again. “We’ve got to get downstairs!”

Her head swims. Light spreads to a pearlescent white, devouring the shadows back. She gets to a knee. The stone and cedar house across the street from them is gone. *The Fredericks*, she thinks. *They’re*

*Bryan K. Johnson*

*dead. All of them.* She sees the faces of their two twin boys, just a year behind her in school, before scrambling over the broken glass.