

*“In this darkness,  
we are coming closer to you.*

*In this darkness,  
we will take the place of everything.”*

*- the voices*

Based on a true story

## A VOICE OUT OF NOWHERE

YOU LIGHT YOUR tenth cigarette of the day. It's only nine a.m., but you've been pacing since dawn. You can't remember sleeping, but you must have because there's a chunk of time that's missing, as if you've set it down somewhere and now can't find it.

*"Shit!"*

You know better than to fall asleep. Sleeping is dangerous. That's when the voices come. That's when you see those apocalyptic visions of the world ending, blowing up into smithereens. That's when the white woman with eyes of fire insists you are God.

Yesterday's brew sits cold and black in the coffee maker. You pour the remains into a mug and place it in the microwave, noticing the red spackle of pizza explosions covering the inside. "I should clean this place up," you mutter, looking around at the crumpled clothes strewn about your shabby apartment. Hundreds of "The Watchtower" and "Awake" pamphlets cover every surface like giant snowflakes. While the microwave hums, you sniff your armpits. It's been two weeks since you washed and now you stink like a wet dog. One more long drag off the cigarette: You tilt your head back and blow smoke all the way to the ceiling.

There is no fighting it any longer. You need a shower.

Reflected in the bathroom mirror is some version of you that no longer fits. Your eyes seem wrong. They're all one color – dark and glittering. The hair you were once so proud of hangs off your head like a black, greasy mop; your shiny bangs flutter every time you blink your eyes. And your *skin – God!* Have you ever been this *pale* before? You rub the sides of your face with balled-up fists, feeling rough stubble that's about to cross over into a beard. You hate beards. Even though Jesus had one, and God did too, you find them creepy, as if the person sporting one is trying to conceal something.

You reach for another cigarette but stop. "It's just a shower," you say, "for Christ's sake." While the water runs from cold to hot, you remove your clothes. It's getting harder and harder to manage

the buttons on your shirt. *Too much caffeine, too many cigarettes*, you tell yourself, but that's a lie. The real reason why your hands shake all the time? You're terrified.

"Don't close your eyes," you say aloud as you step into the hard, hot spray. Oh, it feels good. It feels *so* good. You smile, a gesture that feels more and more foreign to you with each passing day. The steamy scent of pine soap travels deep into your lungs as you rub the bar all over your body. You feel ribs protruding. *I've got to eat something*, you think, but you know you won't. Food, even though it beckons, is revolting.

You stand in the stream of cleansing water for a long time before you lather up your hands to wash your face. *Only close your eyes for a second*, you warn yourself. But a second is already too long. As soon as you shut your eyes against the bite of the soap, you hear the voice as clear as day, right there in the shower with you. It's the Devil.

*"I've got you now. I'm going to eat you alive."*

# WITNESS

*Coquitlam, British Columbia  
January 18, 1983 05:30*

WILLIAM LOOKED OUT the window at blackness so deep it defied any hope of morning. This was the pause between nighttime and daylight when anything was possible. These moments in the pre-dawn were moments so open to potential, the stillness outside literally *beckoning* a declaration of action.

William wanted something new; this early morning rendezvous with a hot cup of tea was boring. It was another predictable part of his retirement routine: bed at 10, sleep 'til 4:30, toss and turn, then get out of bed before his thrashings woke his wife and her ire.

While waiting for the water to boil, William brought his face as close to the window pane as he could without touching it. He felt winter on the other side, trying to make its way in. His steady breathing formed little circles of fog on the inside of the glass. By adjusting his outward breath, he could make tiny circles, then huge ones. That didn't hold his attention for long. Two more months of this Canadian west coast winter and he could finally look forward to dogwood blooms and daffodils. Colour, finally, and an end to dismal black and white.

The whistling kettle snapped him out of his reverie. He bolted to the stove before Iris woke up and started yelling bloody murder. By the time he reached it, the kettle was screaming. Simultaneously, William turned off the gas and snatched the kettle off the burner.

But the screaming didn't stop.

It was coming from outside; a piercing, primal scream that made William's gut tighten as if he'd been punched. Squinting through the window he scanned the dark landscape. Two human shapes — outlined by pale yellow light from an open garage — moved through his neighbor's yard. One shape pushed the other from behind.

And then the voices:

“Help! *Help!*”

“Get in the house. *Get in there now!*”

The bigger one stumbled to his knees. The other one pushed and kicked. “Get in the *house!*” he commanded. Lurching and stumbling, the other one complied, and the two shapes disappeared inside the garage.

William held his breath. Was this just a family squabble? Two men drinking and fighting? He didn’t recognize either of the men, but it would be hard to recognize anyone in this darkness. He knew his neighbours had a big, extended family, but why would they be visiting and running around at 5:30 in the morning? Should he call the police? What if it turned out to be nothing?

William returned to the kettle and poured steaming water into a mug. He noticed that his hands were shaking a little, and that surprised him. *Calm down*, he told himself. Steam rose from the mug, the warmth of the water and the aroma of the teabag bringing him back to his comfortable routine. A family squabble, that’s all that was going on next door. Holding his mug in both hands, William went back to the window. He saw the man who’d been chasing the other appear in the garage and take something from a bench. The man paused for a moment, grasping the thing in his hand. Then he strode back into the house – forceful, with purpose.

Within minutes, another scream made William drop his mug. It smashed into seven pieces and hot water sprayed across his pajama bottoms. Two more shapes ran through his neighbor’s yard. William couldn’t tell if they were men or women; both had longish hair, but both had boyish frames. “No, *no!* Not me! *Not me!*” It was the desperate, pleading voice of a woman. Two firecracker pops and one of the shapes – the one being pursued – fell to the ground.

There was a moment, just a moment, when everything froze. Then William watched one shape drag the other by its arms into the garage. A cold progression of goose bumps prickled at William’s scalp and crawled all the way down to his groin. He watched as the garage door slowly closed, sealing away whatever was about to happen next.

Had he just seen this? William looked at the clock. It was 05:48. He looked back at the neighbor’s house. Lights shone from every window. It was the only house on the block lit up like a bonfire. He blinked twice then ran to the phone.

“What is your emergency?” asked the measured voice on the other end.

William spewed out breathless words:

“Oh my God. I’m not sure what I just saw, but I think there’s been gunfire.”

“Sir, what is your location?”

“I don’t know the address next door,” William fumbled. He gave the operator his address instead. “I can go and wait for the police outside. To show them where it is.”

“Is anyone hurt?” asked the operator.

“I’m not sure. I think so. It’s dark. ”

“Sir, stay on the line while I dispatch a car.”

William’s heart was pounding now. He answered the operator’s questions about name and contact information, more details. “We’ll have an officer there soon,” she said, thanked him for his call, and hung up.

He went back to the window. Nothing stirred as he stared at the house next door, which – after all that commotion — had become deathly quiet. Just as his heart began to beat in a normal rhythm, he saw a spotlight turn on over the garage and a young man walk out into the cone of light illuminating the wet driveway. He wore a leather jacket, and there was something wrapped around his head.

He walked as if he had somewhere to go and in three strides disappeared into darkness.

# SCENE

*Coquitlam, British Columbia  
January 18, 1983 05:55*

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED Police officers Sergeant Brent Watts and Corporal Dave Bogan were on patrol, driving on Lougheed Highway just west of the Port Coquitlam/Coquitlam line. This was a depressing area even in the daylight: rows of dilapidated apartments and rental houses covered in mold and algae fed by the persistent rain and cloud cover of the Pacific Northwest. In a way, darkness made the scene more palatable, its ugliness less harsh when shadowed by night.

Their radio crackled: a report of shots heard on Spuraway Avenue, a residential area close by. Watts and Bogan responded, with Constables Nichols and Darden acting as backup a short distance behind.

The homes on Spuraway were newer, more modern and fashionable than the gloomy neighborhoods surrounding them. Watts and Bogan parked their marked police cruiser three houses away from the address provided by the caller. The residence in question supposedly had lights on in every room. They quickly located the house, exited the car, and proceeded on foot.

Silently, out of the rainy darkness, a young male appeared. He was backlit by a streetlight. Bogan noted that he was “wandering in various directions” close to the residence in question. The man looked to be in his early twenties and wore a leather jacket, blue jeans, and black boots. A brown, woven leather band encircled his forehead. As Watts and Bogan approached him, the young man dug both hands into his jacket pockets.

“Hands out of your pockets,” Watts ordered. The young man complied, raising his hands in the air. Watts searched the jacket by patting and pressing the pockets. He found no weapons.

“Where are you coming from?” Watts asked.

“From the school.”

There was an elementary school approximately two blocks away, but it was in the direction he was walking *to*, not from.

The young man's scowl was intense, but his skin was pale as plaster. His straight, brown hair ended in severe bangs that brushed against thick, furrowed brows. Below them, his dark eyes looked as black and flat as asphalt. He was shaking.

"We received a call about gunshots," Watts said.

"I don't know anything about that," the man said, his voice trembling. Watts squinted. The man's chin quivered, as if he were about to cry and was trying hard not to.

Watts looked past the young man to the house up ahead with lights ablaze. He had to get there. If shots had been fired, he needed to get there now. He began to walk, leaving Bogan behind as another police car approached. Constables Darden and Nichols parked, then exited their police cruiser and joined Bogan as he questioned the suspect.

The young man made a sudden motion toward the rear pocket of his jeans and Bogan grabbed his arm.

"Just my wallet," said the man. He handed it to Darden. Bogan, a tall, wiry, black-haired man of Russian descent, stared at the suspect with an intensity meant to intimidate.

"What do you know about this report we have of shots fired?" Bogan pressed.

"Nothing."

"I know you're lying. Your face says you're lying."

The young man continued to protest his innocence.

"*Dave!*" Watts shouted from up ahead. Watts needed his backup. He was already 15 feet away from the other officers when he turned and ordered Darden to take the man to the police car.

"Darden, you need help?" Bogan asked before he left.

Darden shook his head. "Go on."

Bogan quickly caught up to Watts, taking Nichols with him.

The three officers approached the well-kept Spanish-style house from the east side. A light from downstairs, below grade, illuminated raindrops on the wet grass in the front yard. The view inside was partially blocked by a curtain, but Watts could see a pool table.



A man suddenly burst out of the house across the street and ran toward the officers. Watts and Nichols prepared to draw their weapons; Bogan drew his and aimed.

“I’m William Turnbridge,” sputtered the man, “I’m the one who called.” Despite the man’s obvious agitation, Bogan lowered his weapon. William wore blue pajamas that were wet at the cuffs. Over them, a red, tattered robe was cinched tightly but unevenly, and he wore green rubber boots on his feet. Watts noted he’d forgotten to put in his teeth.

“I saw someone walk out of this house just seconds ago,” said William.

“Where did he go?” asked Watts.

William pointed in the direction of the school.

“Who was it?” Bogan asked.

“I can’t say for sure,” said William. “A man. Young. I couldn’t really see in the dark. But he’s the one talking to the officer over there.”

“Was there anyone else?” Watts asked.

The man shook his head slowly, signaling no. “Oh, wait, yes. There were two other men. They were each fighting with this guy at different times, but I didn’t see them come out of the house. They must still be inside.”

Watts looked at Bogan and jerked his head in the direction of the house. “Thank you sir,” said Watts to William. “Now, go back into your house and stay there.”

William paused. “What do you think happened?” he asked. Bogan took a step toward him and stared with such force that William took a step backward.

“Dave,” said Watts. “Easy.”

“Sir,” said Bogan, glaring at William, “Go ... back ...into ...your ...*home*.”

“You’ll be safer there,” added Watts.

“Well,” William said finally, “I’ll be across the street if you need any more information.”

William turned and jogged back to his house, his bare feet inside the green rubber boots making a squishing sound. Watts and Bogan crossed the yard of the house in question, revolvers drawn. Nichols followed. They stopped in front of the garage door, and listened.

Silence.

Watts walked to the side of the garage to peer through a window. He saw blue clothing heaped in a doorway that connected the garage to the house. He called Bogan, who was taller.

“Dave, come look at this.”

Bogan looked. The blue clothing was a pair of jeans attached to a female body lying face first in the garage.

“Shit,” said Bogan. “We better call for backup.” As the two officers quickly discussed the situation, their radio crackled. It was Darden.

*“Suspect has just admitted he is the Antichrist and the world is going to end on the thirty-first.”*

“We’re going in,” said Watts. “Nichols, call for backup. Guard the front door.” With all three service revolvers drawn, the officers prepared for what might be waiting inside.

Watts opened the unlocked storm door and froze.

He heard his measured breathing and the thudding sound of his heart.

Otherwise: utter silence.

Now he was at the main front door. It, too, was unlocked. He pushed it in then waited, listening. Hearing nothing, Watts and Bogan both entered.

Immediately inside to the right was a raised living room fenced in by a decorative railing. Watts and Bogan quickly made their way through the short hallway and stopped at a huge pool of wet blood. It was at the base of three stairs that led from a family room to a raised kitchen. Watts’ jaw tightened. Bloody drag marks and footprints were all over the carpet. Both officers stepped around them as they made their swift but cautious way through the house.

Fifteen feet inside, down the main hallway and to their left, was the body of a male on his side, his upper torso extended into a laundry room. A gallon jug of fabric softener sat near his head, which was

surrounded by a thick halo of blood. His facial features were almost indecipherable, as if covered by clear gelatin.

Watts heard it first: gurgling, labored breathing. Despite the obvious trauma to his face and head, the man was still alive. Watts called for the paramedics at 06:10, his heart thudding in his ears as he crouched next to the man, careful not to disturb any evidence. Could he administer mouth-to-mouth? “Sir,” he whispered, “*Hang on*. Help is coming.” The injured man wheezed and Watts saw tiny bubbles forming as air forced its way out of the place where his mouth had once been. It was the most nightmarish thing he would ever see in his life.

Meanwhile, Bogan saw blood sprayed all over the kitchen, but no bodies. He followed the drag marks down a set of basement stairs to a games room where two males lay side by side, next to a pool table. One was middle aged and lying on his back. The other was a teenager, face down. They were so close together that their heads and shoulders touched. Blood had pooled and begun to cake around both of them. Bogan stood quietly for a moment, staring, listening for any signs of life. Both bodies were completely still, even as blood continued to seep from under the older man’s shoulders. Bogan felt a familiar rage begin to rise inside him.

He returned to the main floor and saw a single action .22 calibre rifle leaning on the three stairs between the family room and the kitchen, muzzle pointing upward. It sat there, posed, in a sopping pool of darkening blood. It looked to Bogan as if it had been placed there deliberately, with great care, as if to signify something.

“Two DB’s downstairs,” Bogan said to Watts.

“Living room and bathroom clear,” Watts responded. They proceeded up the main stairs to the darkened upper floor. The only light came from a doorway at the end of the hall to the right. Weapons drawn, they walked sideways toward it. The door was partially closed. Watts pushed it open with his foot as Darden covered him. There in the master bedroom lay the body of a middle-aged woman on her back with both arms up, one of them across her face. She was nude, except for a pair of white panties and white tennis socks. Around her, the cream-coloured, blood-soaked carpet had begun to turn brown.

Watts stepped toward her to look for signs of life. The woman’s eyes were open, but unblinking. Watts turned to Bogan and shook his head, signifying no, then checked the ensuite bathroom.

“Clear,” he said. Bogan finally lowered his weapon.

They checked two smaller bedrooms on the upper floor. Both were empty, but all the beds, Watts noted, were “mussed.”

After making a radio call for the Identification unit to attend, Bogan checked the condition of the man in the hallway. Incredibly, despite the ferocious trauma to his face, he was still breathing, though with great difficulty. Bogan shouted at Nichols, “*Where the fuck is that ambulance?*”

Three steps into the garage, Bogan discovered two more bodies. One was the body he’d seen from the outside window. The victim had an obvious gunshot wound to her head and appeared to have fallen where she’d been shot. Another body lay between two cars with arms upraised and a blue jacket covering its face. Its shoes were wet and muddy. Because the size and shape of the body were somewhat androgynous, Bogan couldn’t be sure if it was a woman or man. On a workbench in the garage, Bogan spied a hammer covered in blood.

At 06:20, the Coquitlam Fire Department arrived.

“*In here!*” Nichols motioned them through the front door and directed them to the injured male who was still struggling to breathe. The three paramedics were a blur of ripping paper, jerking elbows and quick hand movements as they supplied oxygen to the victim, but he stopped breathing three or four minutes later.

“You!” barked Watts, focusing his attention on the paramedic in charge. “Check the rest.” The sandy-haired, doe-eyed young man looked at Watts as if to say, “*What do I do?*”

Bogan said, “Come on,” and accompanied the paramedic to check every body, careful to preserve the crime scene by not stepping in blood or moving any physical evidence. Reporting back, the ashen-faced paramedic confirmed, “They’re all dead, sir.”

Watts looked at his officers, then at the medical team. “Thank you for your work here,” said Watts to the ambulance crew. “You can all leave.”

As the emergency personnel departed, the three officers gathered at the front door.

“Jesus,” said Bogan.

“Jesus had nothing to do with this,” said Watts, looking at his corporal. “Dave, you strong?” Watts had worked with Bogan long enough to know that he responded to violent crime with a violence of his own – a temper that was purely dangerous.

“*I’m p e r f e c t i o n,*” Bogan answered, his clipped tone telling Watts Bogan was using every molecule of restraint to hold himself back from punching a wall...or a suspect.

“What about you, Nichols?” asked Watts.

“Sir...” he answered, then stopped.

Watts nodded. “This may be as bad as it ever gets, Nichols.” Watts paused. “If you’re lucky.”

None of them had ever seen – nor would ever see again — such carnage all in one place. Even Watts – the most senior of the three by far – was rattled. He kept clearing his throat. It was 06:29, and there was nothing to say. The silence was eerie.

They all jumped when an alarm radio blasted on at 06:30. The Bee Gees *Night Fever* rocked the house. Nichols chuckled grimly: Here they were, three trained police officers surrounded by six dead bodies, and a little radio music practically gave them all a seizure? It was funny in a sick way. They waited for their hearts to calm down.

Moments later, a second alarm shrieked, jolting them back into the moment.

The radios were left untouched for the benefit of the Identification unit.

“All right,” said Watts. “Let’s check outside while we wait for Ident. Nichols, you stand guard at the front here.”

“Yes, sir,” answered Nichols. As he watched the drizzling rain dance through the cone of light beaming down from the front of the garage, he heard the bedroom radio. The upbeat music seemed particularly obscene in contrast to the bloodbath below. He tried his best to block it out.

Outside, in the rain, Watts and Bogan checked the front and back yards and the two vehicles parked in the driveway. They found a brown, semi-automatic rifle on the lawn between the victims’ house and the neighbour’s house to the east. There were drag marks in the grass. They left the rifle for Ident to photograph.

As night gave way to day, in the weak light of morning, Watts noted a pair of eyeglasses lying on the cement driveway in front of the closed garage door. One lens lay on the ground beside the frames and there was some blood splatter on the driveway next to the garage door. A spent .22 calibre rifle shell lay a few feet away from the glasses. Watts left them untouched.

At 07:15, others began to arrive. Two officers from the Identification unit set about their work of photographing and recording physical evidence. Coroner Brenda Bolin, followed by a pathologist and the regional coroner were escorted into the house. Newspaper and television reporters began to converge. Neighbors came. School age teens gathered, ignoring the school bus that waited on the corner. One girl – later identified as someone who had dated the young man who lived in the house – howled. “Please,” she cried, “*Please*, turn out the light in his bedroom!”

Watts remained at the house until 09:30, continuing to secure the scene, manage the change of shift of members<sup>1</sup> for security and deal with the press. He conducted his work proficiently, professionally, and without emotion, but he couldn’t shake the images of what he’d just seen. He wondered if he’d ever be able to forget them.

Meanwhile, Constable Darden listened to the suspect, the self-professed “Antichrist,” tell what had happened in the early morning hours of January 18, in the Spanish-style house on Spuraway Avenue.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “members” refers to officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police