

Chapter 1

It was thirty minutes into the live stream of the morning newscast. A voice interrupted the program.

“Everyone on this island must leave immediately. Those who stay will be killed. Your own weapons will be used against you.”

William Weston was sitting at a table inside the café. It was part of his morning routine. He'd listen to the news on his laptop and have a cup of coffee. Weston had just taken a sip when he heard the voice. Something about it sounded inhuman. Weston nearly dropped his cup. He quickly closed the program. Then he packed up his laptop.

Weston was the mayor of Cole's Island. But right now he wasn't focused on official duties. He was more concerned with talking to his seventeen-year-old son. He hurried out to his car and drove straight to the high school.

Once inside the office, Weston stopped at the front counter. A couple of teachers were talking about what they'd heard during the news earlier.

"We'll be killed?" one of them was saying. "It had to be a joke." They started laughing.

"I need to see Brett Weston."

The laughter suddenly stopped. The teachers looked at the mayor, who had an angry look on his face.

"Of course, Mayor," one of them said. "Let me see what class he's in." The woman checked the computer. "Brett's in history right now. I'll call the classroom and have him sent to the office."

"Thank you," Weston said.

A few minutes later, Brett came through the office door. By now the bell had rung and the room was filling with teachers and students. Brett was a tall kid. It was easy for Weston to spot him in the crowd. He caught his son's eye and walked toward him. "You're not going to get away with it this time," Weston said in a loud voice.

The room got quiet.

Brett pushed his red hair from his eyes and looked around. "Looks like I'm busted," he said to some students who were looking his way. "Overdue library book."

A few of the kids laughed. Then the room got noisy again.

"Let's go," Weston said after he signed Brett out.

The two walked to the car in silence.

"What did I do?" Brett finally asked once they were in the car.

Weston gave his son a disgusted look as he walked away from the school.

“Just tell me so we can get this over with,” Brett said.

“It’s that stupid stunt with the newsfeed this morning,” Weston said.

“I didn’t do anything. I swear.”

“Of course you didn’t. And I might believe that except for all of the other stunts you’ve pulled.”

Weston unlocked the car, and they both got in.

Brett rolled his eyes. “So where are we going?”

Weston didn’t say anything. But Brett could see they were headed for downtown. They passed shops and offices. A small park. And then city hall and finally the public media broadcasting station.

Weston parked and got out of the car. Several people smiled and waved to him.

“Such a popular guy,” Brett said under his breath. Then he got out of the car.

“Come on,” Weston said.

Brett followed him into the station and up the stairs to the manager's office.

"Ann? I want Brett fired now," Weston said.

"Dad!" Brett said in a loud voice.

Ann stood up and stepped out from behind her desk. "What's this all about, Will?" she asked in a calm voice.

"You know what I'm talking about. That ridiculous announcement this morning."

"I don't think Brett did that," Ann said "Brett takes his job here very seriously."

Weston responded as if he hadn't heard her. "I should have known he'd do something like this," Weston said. "With his computer skills it's too easy for him to make a fool out of me. And he has the whole island as his audience."

"Could I at least hear the announcement you think I made?" Brett asked.

"We don't have it," Ann said.

"How can you not have it?" Weston

asked. “Isn’t it on some kind of digital file?”

“Listen, Will—” Ann started to say.

“No, Ann. Someone here is responsible. If you won’t give me a name, then I have no choice but to believe that Brett did it.” Weston looked at his son. “Do you have any personal things here? If you do, get them now. And then we’re going.”

“Ann!” a voice called out from the hallway.

Ann hurried out of her office. Her assistant was standing in front of the window.

“Look at this,” Lana said. She was motioning for Ann to come over. “Down there,” she said, pointing to the parking lot.

Ann looked down and saw two people. They were lying facedown. Neither of them was moving.

By now Weston and Brett had come over to the window. They were watching the bizarre scene. A car horn started going

off. And a radio was blaring. The sounds seemed to be coming from an SUV that was now headed for a group of men. It looked like the driver tried to swerve to avoid hitting them. Two of the men managed to get out of the way. But an older man holding a cane was moving very slowly. The SUV struck him. The man flew up onto the hood and rolled to one side. Then he fell and hit the pavement.

Now the SUV was stopped. The driver jumped out. It was a woman. She ran over to the man. That's when the vehicle backed up. But no one was driving it. Then the brakes screeched, and the SUV shot forward. The woman screamed and started to run. But it was too late. The vehicle hit her. She lay still on the pavement.

"I'll call 911," Ann said. Then she looked at Lana. "Tell production to put out an emergency alert."

Weston pulled out his cell phone. "I'll

call the mainland for backup,” he said. But then he saw his phone was dead.

Lana returned a minute later. “There’s no power.”

“I know,” Ann said. She was looking at her dead cell phone. “The computers are down too. Tell the technicians to use the emergency generator.”

“They already tried that,” Lana said.

Brett was still looking out the window. “Oh no,” he said.

“What is it?” Weston asked.

“It’s a woman with a baby and a little boy. They’re headed for the parking lot. I’m going out there,” Brett said.

“No, Brett. We don’t know—”

Brett was already on his way out of the station.