

# 2012: SEEKING CLOSURE

GREGORY BERNARD BANKS



STOCKBRIDGE, GA

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## Dedication

*To God, to my family, to my wonderful friends all over the world, to my readers and supporters, and to everyone with a dream. Live life to the fullest and with the most giving, caring spirit you can today, because as this story illustrates, you never know if there will be a tomorrow.*

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# **2012: SEEKING CLOSURE**

**Gregory Bernard Banks**

# Prologue

**T**HE CRATER IN the Siberian wilderness still smolders weeks later. Many continue to speculate on the cause, and a few brave reporters have attempted to enter the site only to be turned away by the military forces surrounding the area. Dust and debris from the event have risen into the sky and spread across most of the globe, tainting the sky red. The planet begins to cool, and a quiet sense of alarm spreads like a methodical wildfire. And yet still no official statement has been made...

A massive solar flare disables numerous satellites and knocks out power grids all around the world. Millions of people are plunged into darkness, feeling impotent without use of the technology they've become dependent upon in their daily lives. Even homes normally filled with the raucous sounds of children laughing and crying and playing go quiet while everyone awaits the powers to be to rescue them from their plight. But the longer they wait, the more they fear that this rescue will never come...

New York is devastated by the worst hurricane it has ever seen. The storm's howling winds of over 200 miles per hour sweep the streets clean, and shattered glass intermingles with the rain like jagged hail. Manhattan is underwater, and the grande dame of the harbor continues to stand, but missing the arm bearing the torch of light and freedom. Anguish and terror radiate outward from the state to insidiously infect the entire world. People cry out for answers, for reassurances, for a sense of calm defiance in a time of threat. Washington, for the most

*part, remains silent through it all...*

*An elderly man with balding head, bulging stomach, and surprisingly dainty gold-rimmed glasses hugging his large, round head, sits in a chair next to an anchorman at the NEN Network. Questions from both the anchorman and the viewing audience are hurled at him concerning his controversial theories about the recent series of catastrophic events plaguing the world. He talks about prophecies and predictions, about the ending of the Mayan calendar and about the dwarf planet Eris orbiting the Sun approximately 10 billion miles away. He tells of how this planet is the fabled "Planet X" of Sumerian lore, how its orbital proximity to the Earth in the near future will cause severe climate changes, and warns everyone that the long awaited end of mankind is near. The questions get harder and the man finds himself on the defensive as people attack both his credibility and sanity. Finally, the anchorman ends the segment with a summary of the situation, dismissing his guest and his silly accusations.*

*One man who sees the broadcast is relieved after the good chuckle the crackpot on NEN provides him. He wanders to the window to peek outside his beachside Florida home. People stroll along the beach in overcoats as they nervously glance at the roiling, red sky.*

*The man stumbles to the nearest chair and collapses into it, overcome by his own growing dread...*

*The Elder sadly looks at all of the gathered peoples of his village. Each of them awaits him to impart hope and a path to salvation, to ease their fears. But the signs have spoken for months. The sheddings of fur and skin uncovered in the surrounding woods, the diseased carcasses they found rotting in the plains to the south, and not one, but two village mothers dying during childbirth in the last year, are all indications of the evils to come. And then the earth shakes, and hours later the sky is smeared in blood.*

*Both he and the elders of the neighboring villages all agree that the Creator has grown angry with His earthly children, and something has to be done to appease Him. The old ways call for a sacrifice, and despite his reluctance to return to their former, barbaric ways, the Elder knows it must be done not only to satisfy the Creator, but to ease the worries of his village. And the sacrifice has to be the eldest and fairest virgin of the village, the one most cherished, and whose sacrifice would pain His children the most.*

*If it is possible for more creases to mar the Elder's face, they do so now as he looks at his beloved daughter in her virgin robes of white...*

Maria's dark hair flies in the cold breeze as she swings back and forth, her giggle part of the symphony of laughing children echoing across the playground. Scattered clouds stain the russet sky, and the air is thick with the collective anxiety of a frightened world. But the children's innocent joy lifts the spirits of the parents who stand or sit nearby, glad to escape the confines of their powerless homes for at least a few minutes of simple bliss.

Carol glances at the sleeping infant in the stroller before her. Little Marty's chubby cheeks help sculpt a perpetual smile on his lips. Despite her fear of being away from the relative safety of her apartment given recent events, Carol just doesn't have the heart to drag her children back inside just yet.

Times have been hard on all of them since she left Martin six months ago. She'd been so happy once, married to what she thought was a kind, caring man who loved his wife and kids. But then he'd thrown it all away for the pleasures of another's bed.

Across the playground from Carol sits a woman with short, dirty blonde hair. She cradles an infant in one arm, while in her free hand she holds an old Walkman radio which she listens to with rapt attention. Heavy shadows cling beneath her doeish eyes, and her

face looks wearied and tear-streaked. Even though Carol has been through a hard time herself, it is clear to her that this woman has been through even harsher things.

Carol stands and walks over to the woman with Marty's stroller in tow.

"Hello," Carol says.

"Hi," the woman replies, her attention still focused upon the radio.

"My name's Carol. What's yours?"

"S-Sharon," she stutters, a quick glance the only other acknowledgement of Carol's presence. Her dress is plain, a neutral beige hue that seems to be tainted by the red of the midday sky.

Carol sits on the bench beside her and leans in so that she can hear the radio better.

As the President speaks, she thinks of the recent climate changes, the storms, the widespread blackouts, the infrequent disruptions in both radio and television, and the mysterious explosion in the Siberian region that has thrown a dust cloud into the sky and put everyone on edge.

A knot forms in Carol's gut. The President sounds tired, depressed, like a man on the verge of collapse--a man who has accepted defeat long ago.

*Now he knows how I feel*, she thinks as the President reveals the coming fate of mankind.

**R**obert has never felt more alive as he lies in bed staring at the bloody sunlight seeping in through the curtains of the dingy hotel room. In the three months he's been on his own, his entire outlook on life has changed.

First, he finds Brother Vessie, who's opened his eyes to a brand new world. And then he hooks up with Abby, which Brother Vessie

deems to be the one with whom he will share the eternal ecstasies of the next realm.

According to Brother Vessie, the long awaited moment has arrived, when the very fabric of reality will shift and mankind will evolve into an entirely new state of being, like a caterpillar emerging from its cocoon as a butterfly. Admittedly, Robert doesn't understand it all. In fact, he's pretty sure that most of it is outright bullshit. But going along with the crazy old prophet has scored him a hot babe, a place to live, and food to eat, which is far better than jail or sucking off horny bastards for a couple of bucks, which he knows most kids his age wind up doing after running away from home.

A soft hand snakes over his bony shoulder.

"Mornin', Robbie."

Robert rolls over to face Abby. Her lush and wild red hair spills down over her chest, where her nipples peek through, supple and pink.

He strokes her pale cheek with the back of his forefinger, trying not to giggle like an undersexed teen (which, of course, he is). She purrs.

"You ready?" she asks as she twists a lock of hair around her forefinger.

"You know it, Baby. You?"

Abby giggles. "I've been ready all of my life."

Robert crawls out of bed, the room's chill stinging his privates as he walks over to the window and shoves the curtain aside.

The streets of Chinatown are bursting with activity, as usual. Cars are bumper to bumper, and the sidewalks are packed. If Brother Vessie had been standing beside him, he would bemoan how the single greatest moment in human evolution was about to take place, and yet the masses either didn't know, didn't believe, or didn't care.

"What do you think it'll be like?" Abby asks as she wraps her arms around Robert, one hand rubbing his hairless chest, the other,

to his extreme delight, sliding much further down.

“Beautiful beyond words,” he replies, his standard mantra whenever trying to sound like a true Chosen. But honestly, as long as he’s getting fed and fucked, he doesn’t care.

He glances at the tiny television in the corner. The President is speaking, and as soon as Abby notices, she claps her hands and squeals.

“This is it, Robbie! It’s showtime!”

“Yeah,” Robert replies, forcing a smile. He’s seen the President look sour before, but today the guy looks spent, like he’s bet everything he owns on the river card and has gone down in flames. Whatever he’s going to say, Robert knows that it’s serious shit for sure.

*What if Brother Vessie isn’t such a crackpot after all?* Robert wonders. For a moment he thinks of his mother, and even his alcoholic bastard of a father. But then he shrugs the thoughts off with a laugh.

“What’s so funny?” Abby asks.

“Nothing, Baby,” he says, taking her into his arms as he tries to ignore the grave news coming from the television screen. “Just high on life, that’s all.”

“**H**urry up, Father! We have to go *now!*” Gil Schlesinger shuffles down the hallway with a hastily packed suitcase in hand. He pauses to snatch down his most cherished photo of Hena from the wall. She beams in her white dress, a drooping bouquet of daises he’d plucked from the courthouse flower bed clutched in her hands. Taken in 1951 on their 5th anniversary, he still blushes with happiness at her dimpled smile. It was the very same smile that had gotten him through their time together while awaiting their turn in the gas chambers.

“Father!”

“I’m coming.” Gil looks at his son, a taller, leaner version of him-

self when he was that age. Gil fears that Adam is in some kind of trouble.

Maybe when he's not doing science stuff he's dealing drugs on the side and now former clients are after him? Or perhaps he's uncovered a huge secret and now the government wants him for treason, and will do anything to silence him?

But then, since Hena's passing, Gil concocts such absurd scenarios on a daily basis. He's afraid of losing the only family he has left, so his mind runs wild with all sorts of horrible thoughts.

"You could at least tell your old man what's the hurry," Gil says as he descends the staircase. "I'm 85-years old. I've survived the Nazi's, three heart attacks, a stroke, cancer, and losing your mother, God rest her soul. What could possibly be worse? Have aliens landed in Nevada?"

"No, Father," Adam replies as he rushes his father through the entrance hall and toward the front door.

"Are you in trouble with the authorities?"

"Of course not," Adam says as he guides his father out onto the front porch and down the steps toward the limo waiting in the driveway.

"So what?" Gil asks, pausing to look back at his son. He pulls his sweater collar up around his neck against the growing chill. "Is the world ending or something?"

Gil flashes his son a smile, but it fades once he sees the look on Adam's face.

Neither speaks as they climb into the back of the limo.

**T**he Reverend Carter Daily kneels in prayer in the back yard of his harbor-side home. Despite his fervent belief in God and his history of fiery sermons about preparing for the End Times, the truth is that he never expected to see them in his lifetime. Not that he

believes that this is the end, praise Jesus! But the growing violence of the weather and the increased number of natural disasters, along with the financial crisis and the resulting rise in poverty and crime, has many of his flock scared witless.

*Guess I'm too good a salesman,* he chuckles to himself.

Of course as a preacher, times like these were good for business. People love to freely court damnation as long as things are going good, but let a hair get out of place or a wart suddenly appear on their formerly pristine lives, and they run straight to good old Reverend Daily for counsel and salvation. As a man of God, he is both obligated and delighted to help them. And the bit of coin that comes along with such labors is merely God's way of blessing him for his service to the Lord.

But for the last few weeks, things had gotten a bit out of hand. As December 21st approached, even the doubters began to doubt their own disbelief, and as people are wont to do, they started hedging their bets. Donations to the Church of the Blessed Indoctrination skyrocketed, and the Reverend's new five-thousand seat arena-style cathedral on the Upper East Side had been full to near busting every Sunday.

For Reverend Daily, there is nothing better than standing in the pulpit blasting his message to millions of people across the entire globe and feeling the jubilation of the enraptured crowd as the Holy Ghost dances among them, whipping many of them into a holy frenzy.

"God has a blessing for *each* and *every* one of you," he shouted last Sunday, "and soon and very soon, we are *all* going to be freed from the turmoil of this mortal life!"

The booming shouts of "Amen!" and "Hallelujah!" had reduced Reverend Daily to tears, and his wife, Rebecca, and his kids, Carly, Carlton, Carson, Caryn, and little Carter J., had beamed with pride from the front row as their anointed spiritual shepherd bathed in the

love of his adoring flock.

“Daddy!” shouts 6-year old Caryn as she stumbles out of the house. “Come quick. The President’s on, and he’s saying something that’s got Miss Mattie crying really bad.”

A split second of concern pierces the Reverend’s heart. His wife and three oldest children are leading a pilgrimage of several church members to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. The trip, planned over a year ago, had come at the worst possible time to travel abroad, but Rebecca insisted on going anyway, and he’d reluctantly agreed. The turmoil with the weather, scattered power outages, and other phenomena had at first caused the Reverend grave concerns for their safety. But then he remembered that he was God’s shepherd, his “number one spiritual dude” as one of the kids had referred to him in Sunday School last week.

The Reverend looks toward God as he stands and straightens his tie.

“Lord,” he whispers. “You’ve never forsaken me before, and surely you won’t start now.” He basks in the thought of the stuffed collection plates sure to greet him this coming Sunday.

A Chesire grin splits his face as he follows his daughter into the house.

**T**eena sits in her trailer while her makeup girl touches up her face and her hair stylist teases her mound of platinum blonde hair so it looks more disheveled (in a perfect sort of way). In the scene, Teena Tarrington, the *Scream Queen* du jour of 2012, is surrounded by a gross of cackling zombie Babylonians pouring in from the mysterious planet Nibiru, which according to the script has magically appeared one day in the sky. Teena loves movies like this. Such drama, such action, such gore.

Such bullshit.

And that's exactly what the audience loves. Theatrical bullshit. When first starting her acting career, she'd wanted to be the next Meryl Streep or Halle Berry, the cinema starlet who everyone both envied and respected. But then her tits had gotten in the way, as they had most of her life. Producers were more interested in copping a feel, and directors were more interested in finding fresh new ways to have her healthy jugs make at least one tantalizing appearance on screen. After seeing the first few paychecks the girlies had gotten her, she decided to let them carry the workload while she rode them all the way to luxuryville. Since the world was so intent on treating her like its whore, she had decided that she might as well get paid for it.

Teena reaches into her purse and scoops out a couple of pills and tosses them into her mouth, chasing them with a triple espresso double mocha latte, with a bit of bourbon mixed in.

"Miss Tarrington," says the assistant director as he pokes his head through the doorway. "We need you on set in five minutes, please?"

"Whatever you say, Sugar." She leans forward in her signature, "Let my cleavage do the smiling," move, and the A.D.'s face goes beet red as he ducks out of the door.

"Another man smitten with Teena the Kitten," she giggles to herself.

She waives her flunkies aside and stands, checking her wardrobe, what little of it there is, one last time. She rubs her freshly spray-tanned thigh, not the least bit ashamed of how much she enjoys touching herself and her smooth, soft skin. She then slips into her dainty, 3-inch alligator heels and glances at herself in the mirror, blows herself a kiss, and heads for the door. The chubby makeup girl, Sandy or Mandy or whatever her name is, gasps. Teena follows the girl's gaze toward the small television on the dresser, and for the first time she realizes that the President is speaking.

She shivers just thinking about his deep, resonant voice and the hint of frost on the tip of his thick hair. Normally confident and reas-

suring even in the worst of times, today he sounds forlorn, perhaps on the brink of crying. He appears older, grayer, gravel grinding in his voice. Teena has fantasized about being his Marilyn Monroe, or even just his under-desk intern. But as he begins speaking just now, for the first time she sees him as an entirely different, lesser man.

“Pussy,” she scoffs as she spins on her heels and walks out of the trailer.

Joey clutches his family’s picture to his chest as he kneels before their graves. The breeze is cool, and getting colder by the minute. The sunlight is muted by the haze, which paints the sky the color of sunset.

One year ago his world ended when a drunkard coming home from a party swerved into his lane and forced his car off the bridge and into the murky river below. The cruelest part of it all was that God had spared Joey’s life so that he must endure the misery of his losses for the rest of his life.

The words “not guilty” still echo in the back of Joey’s mind. The image of the bastard’s smug face and short mane of blonde hair as he strides from the courtroom are etched into the background of every conscious thought. He presses his lips to the photograph and then lays it between the graves of his wife and daughter. He climbs to his feet, jaw set, rage building within his gut, and then he begins to run. He reaches his car, pausing to stare at his own reflection in the side mirror. Hair graying and falling out in clumps, face like that of a man who has lived three times as long and born 1000 times as much heartache, he looks as if he too died in the crash, but had gotten up and kept walking anyway.

Joey climbs into his car and checks the glove compartment. Re-assured, he slams it shut, starts the car, guns the engine, and then pulls out into traffic. He clicks on the radio. The President’s words only harden Joey’s resolve.

He speeds up as he unleashes a primal scream.

“Dammit!” Vicky shouts as she tosses her cellphone onto the dash of the news van. “Where the hell is everybody?”

Ben throws her a sidelong glance.

“Still no luck, huh?”

“No.” Vicky runs her fingers over her long, auburn hair, which is tied up in a tight bun. “All my sources seem to have just vanished off the face of the earth.”

Ben stops at an intersection, waving to pedestrians as they cross in front of him. He grips the steering wheel, trying to keep his hands from shaking.

“Something’s wrong, Vicky.”

“I know.”

“Very wrong.”

“I *know*.”

They stare at one another, his soft brown eyes locking briefly with her piercing blue ones.

“What do you think is going on?” Ben asks.

Vicky reaches into the briefcase at her feet and pulls out a stack of papers. She riffles through the articles printed from the Internet about the predicted end of the world. She focuses on the date highlighted on each one.

*December 21, 2012.*

She checks her watch. The date’s the same.

“I don’t know, Ben,” she says, a chill spreading through her body. “But we’re sure as hell going to find out.”

The sickly glow streaming in from the window behind the President bathes the room in crimson. His aides, advisors, and senior

staff members, those who haven't been evacuated already, huddle close to his left and right, just out of camera range. He clinches his hands together to keep them from trembling as he struggles to compose his thoughts.

He glances off to his left, where a photo of his wife and young son rests on his desk. Gloria flashes her famous smile, the very same smile that has captivated both the country and the world for the last four years, and him for the last 26.

He thinks of 5-year old Tanner. Months, even weeks ago, President Rodriguez had hopes and dreams for his son's future, despite the knowledge he has carried for more than a year. But now he has to go on the airwaves and somehow impart hope when for most, hope has long died and turned to dust.

"One minute, Mr. President," says the balding director.

The President looks into the camera and feels as if he is staring down the barrel of a gun as a finger slowly squeezes the trigger. His left hand strays to the cross dangling from his neck. His wife often teases him about the habit of reaching for it every time he's stressed, and, as she jokes, it is why he would make a horrible poker player. But today the last hand has already been played, and as everyone turns their cards over, all of them are blank. Which as it turns out doesn't matter, because the jackpot has been filled with nothing but fool's gold anyway.

His family is safe, yet he yearns to hold them tight just in case. He wants to be, needs to be, with them, but first he has to warn the people of the world. It is his duty...his damned duty...to tell them that they were about to die. Guilt mingles with the relief of knowing that he and his family would not be among them.

As the director counts down the last seconds, he tears the cross from his neck and throws it away.



**G**regory Bernard Banks began his pursuit of a writing career in 1997, after spending years studying his other creative love, graphic design. Over the years since he's served as moderator for the *Zoe-trope All-Story Writers Workshop*, as a site administrator for *Scrawl: The Writer's Asylum*, and as webmaster for the *WRITER and MARKET Literary Search Engine*. He's currently co-

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Banks is also a contributor to *Audacity Magazine* (AudacityMagazine.com) with his column, "A Sedentary View", and continues pursuing his dream of landing a 7-figure book deal by the time he's 80.

He's published five books prior to this one, *Crossroads and Other Tales*, *Phoenix Tales: Stories of Death & Life*, *A Writer's Journey in Poetry & Prose*, *An Interview with Santa and Other Christmas Treats*, and *The Summoner*.

Banks lives in the rapidly growing city of Stockbridge, Georgia with his parents, his computer, and far too many books on his Amazon Kindle to count.

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**Tom Townsend**  
Story creator



**Kevin Tan**  
Film Producer/Director

Learn more about the film at:

**[www.seekingclosurethemovie.com](http://www.seekingclosurethemovie.com)**