

CHAPTER ONE

This evening the wind will be gusting to forty miles an hour. No rain in sight, but a rapidly moving cloud cover will probably hide tonight's full moon that will be directly above us for a few short hours. If you are lucky and outdoors, you may be able to catch a glimpse of the moon if there is a break in the cloud cover." Fred reached to shut off his favorite radio station, knowing he would not be hearing this weatherman again. It was a few minutes past eight o'clock; two hours before, the sun had disappeared over the western horizon. The wind was blowing the clouds swiftly, shutting out the full moonlight above. Occasionally, a brief flash reflected from the landscape, lighting the grassy areas, tall trees in the distance, and rows of bushes along the expressway. The road was free of vehicles as far as Fred could see.

When the sun had set the day before, he had finally decided that it was the time to make a decision. He had all night to think about how to solve his problem of atheism versus God, but was not being able to do so. At long last, he decided upon a solution, knowing what to do and how to do it. He felt immediate relief. Later that day, he went to the hospital and to the clinic to sign all the charts that required his signature. He felt it was his obligation to be caught up with all the paperwork that needed his attention. He had the time that day to vacuum some of the floors and clean all the dishes that needed washing. He wanted to wait until it was dark, for traffic would be minimal on the freeway.

Helen had decided to leave Friday morning for her sister's home. She, too, would have time to gather her thoughts and to make some decision about the future of her marriage to Fred. He had not told her what the problem was; they had had the same argument again. This time Helen told Fred that he would have to explain himself and verbally respond to her questions of "What's wrong?" and "Why don't you talk to me?" She had always felt close to him since their marriage, although an occasional brief period of pensiveness bothered her during that time. For the last month, Fred appeared to be more preoccupied. At first it was only once in a while, lasting only a few hours—then he was back to his usual outgoing and cheerful self. But now he had been moody all day long for the past several days.

Fred knew what the problem was, but he could not explain it to Helen. She would not understand. He had told her no problems existed at the medical clinic where he treated patients. But, what he did tell her was that his problem was indirectly related to his bi-monthly (bimestrial) meetings with a group of friends sharing the same interests--timely topics, such as atheism,

religion, politics, chaos theory, and evolution. Fred had told her he'd been happily studying these subjects for years. Not knowing the specifics of what they studied, she felt he looked pleased about attending the meetings with his friends. He believed in atheism, and topics regarding that subject or religion always seemed to make him uncomfortable. Finally, Helen was able to force Fred to talk about his real problem.

Happiness pervaded Fred's love for Helen ever since he'd met her six years earlier. Within a year, they were married, and life had continued to be content until a few months ago when he was exposed to that "book." It appeared now that he was not enjoying the everyday tasks, not listening carefully to his patients and medical peers, and not attending Helen as he had done in the past. His world had become topsy-turvy and what he thought he proved as true may have been otherwise. This mental alteration began when he first deciphered the secret writings in the last four pages of the "book." Up until the last few months, he had plotted his whole life from the time he was in college through medical school, his first marriage, his successful practice, and his esteemed position in the community. He achieved these goals with a keen ability to manipulate the people close to him, meaning he was in complete control. Just two achievements were not manipulated: his second marriage when he fell completely in love with Helen, having no desire to exploit her, and the "other matter" that seemed to have taken control of him.

A little over six feet, broad shoulders, brown hair with streaks of gray consistent with his age in the early forties, a friendly smile most of the time, and that sparkle in the eyes that would attract others—these physical attributes characterized Fred. His "other matter" reached its climax a month ago after breaking the code in the "book." At that time, his demeanor changed, fights began with his wife, he lost interest in his surroundings, and rapidly descended from despondency to deep depression.

Driving at seventy miles an hour, Fred did not notice the botanical life that he passed and the fast moving clouds with occasional lunar light streaking the darkness. He was driving for only one fanatical reason. He was searching for the panacea that would relieve his anger, his fear, his frustration, and the depression that seemed to have consumed his life. The overpass was one mile ahead. At its base, massive cylindrical cement supports were in place adjacent to the highway. In the distance, they were barely visible but became larger and closer as he began accelerating faster and faster. No cars were in view, which gave him some relief. No one would see the crash, and there would be no harm to drivers of other automobiles. Moving his right hand from the

steering wheel, reaching down to his seat belt and unlatching it, he began to veer his new red sedan diagonally across the other two lanes, directing the car to the closest brightly lit pillar by the car's high beams. It was dark out; the clouds on high appeared thick, hiding any traces of moonlight. In only a few seconds, he would be relieved of the depression and heavy burden he'd carried for the past month. He finally would be at rest--clear-headed at last. Closer and closer, it was now time!

Where did it come from? The sky was dark like a moonless night. The moon could not be seen, but there was that flashing, sustained light that appeared brightly in the windshield blinding him. Suddenly, he turned the steering wheel in a clockwise motion, not knowing why! A strange, steady sensation electrified his whole body from his hands to his feet. Driving to the right shoulder of the highway, he braked the car to a stop and turned off the ignition.

Sweating profusely, he wiped his hands on a towel lying on the floor mat. What was I thinking, did I really want to take my life? I was so ready to end it and would have, except for that damn flash of light coming from nowhere. It must have been the moonlight shining through a break in the clouds. Why did I make the decision to commit suicide instead of working things out? Everyone has his breaking point or a point of no return, and I must have reached it, but this time that flash of light prevented my reaching the goal of finality. Could Chaos theory explain this experience, a small movement of a cloud results in saving my life.

While sitting in the car, his heart rate was decreasing to normalcy, the perspiration had ceased, and a generalized calm pervaded his body--a feeling he had never experienced in his life. Was this the type of sensation Paul had? It could have been but certainly of lesser quality.

Why did he want to end his life? He had a successful career. He had no financial worries, well respected by his peers, happy with his practice, happy with his new wife, and pleased that he accomplished so much since the death of his mother. He enjoyed all these endeavors until the "book." Then, it seemed everything began to disintegrate, not all at once, but slowly, like an insidious disease. He thought about past incidents in his life that could have started him toward the point of no return: the death of his parents, the desire to become a physician, his first wife, his second wife, his sometimes fanatical promotion of atheism, or did it begin with Paul who lived a thousand years ago?

Fred started his car, found the nearest turnoff, returned to the freeway, and headed back home. As soon as he reached home, he went to the telephone to call Helen. Her sister answered and gave the telephone to his wife. He said, "Helen, we have to talk."