

A person in a dark hoodie is walking away from the viewer down a long, straight path that is completely covered in fog. The path is flanked by bare trees, and the overall atmosphere is dark and mysterious. The fog is thick and white, obscuring the background and creating a sense of isolation and uncertainty.

BRIAN FALKNER

THE  
**TOMORROW**  
**CODE** ... --- ...

Crack the code or tomorrow is history

**THE  
TOMORROW  
CODE**

**BRIAN FALKNER**

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For Rachel, Nicki, Frances, Ray and Nancy  
My team of secret agents,  
without whom, nothing would have happened.  
And for Claire B., who was right.



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## **PROLOGUE**

*Burnt Mountain Viral Research Centre,  
100 miles north of Fairbanks, Alaska.*

Daytime at Burnt Mountain was a cold, grainy Alaskan twilight.

It was snowing, gently now, but it was clear that the overnight falls had been much heavier. The wind whipped down the mountainside into the valley, gusting the snow into whirls and flurries. Every now and then the sun ghosted through the clouds, giving the scene an unearthly glow, but just as quickly it was gone. The air itself seemed to crackle with ice.

There was little that could survive around Burnt Mountain in midwinter. Not man, nor beast, not even the smallest of creatures: insect, microbe, virus.

Tony “Stony” Crowe wiped snow from the faceplate of his armoured bio-suit. He shifted his eyes from the grey haze of the sky back to the telescopic sights of his Hechler Koch XM8, scanning the snow-covered roofs of the small complex of buildings in the valley below. Even softened by drifting snow, the flat grey shapes carried a palpable menace.

At the centre was a large industrial-looking building

that could be mistaken for a factory. Four long, narrow wings extended from each corner of the building. At one end a squat concrete block structure sat between two of the wings. From this distance, through the snow, it looked like a crouching beast.

Tall twin spiked security fences surrounded the entire compound, hanging heavy with their crop of snow, but the gates were strangely, ominously, open.

Sergeant Colin “Mandy” Manderson crawled into Crowe’s vision, keeping low behind a snowdrift. The tinted glass of his faceplate hid his face, but the identity of the lanky Texan was in no doubt from the large red “2” velcroed onto his suit at the shoulders, just below the insignia of the USABRF. United States Army Bioterrorism Response Force.

Crowe keyed his throat mike. “Perimeter team, all clear?”

“Nothing moving but the snow,” a quiet voice reported in his earpiece.

“Okay, move ‘em out.” Crowe gave Manderson a hand signal as he spoke.

A sharp gust of wind kicked snow across his faceplate, and when he cleared it Manderson was gone.

Crowe shook icicles from his weapon and rose to his feet, shuffling carefully after the Texan.

Crowe took position at the back of the team, watching his men, a nest of deadly white vipers, slithering silently down the hillside.

They broke cover at the base of the gully and sprinted the few metres to the snow-logged fence at the perimeter of the grounds, before skirting around to the gates, embedded in ice, rigidly open, a gap of about a metre.

The team snaked through and, on a signal from Crowe, dropped to the ground and Indian-crawled through the packed snow across to the wall of the building, below the line of sight of the small, snow-encrusted windows that were scattered, seemingly randomly, along the length of the wall.

Crowe keyed his mike. "Perimeter team?"

"Still all clear, you are good to go."

"Do it!"

Smith and Miller had the door off its hinges in a second with two close-range shotgun blasts, the shockwave rippling cracks through the ice coating the wall. They swung back to let the others pass, weapons

at the firing position.

Manderson was first through, Crowe on his heels. They fanned out automatically, seeking fields of fire, finding targets, taking in the scene.

Whatever Crowe expected to find, this wasn't it.

It was as if they had burst into a fairy-tale. A sparkling, iridescent, Disney-esque world. It was the reception area come guard station. Everything – the walls, the security desk, even the guard's telephone – was covered with a thin sheen of frosted ice, making pretty, twinkling stars in the flickering glare of the fluorescent tubes that lined the ceiling. Behind a large and very solid-looking desk a riveted metal door led further into the interior of the building.

"Lights are on, but nobody's home." It was Manderson's voice in his ear.

"Heating system has been shut down," Miller reported, looking at one of his instruments. "It's colder than the devil's armpit in here."

"Leave it that way," Crowe ordered. Whatever had happened, this was not the right time to start circulating air around the building.

"Over here," Smith said urgently, and Crowe moved

quickly towards him. Behind the security desk there was a pile of rags on the floor, covered, like everything else, with a frosting of ice crystals.

Not rags, he realised, as Smith used the snout of his XM8 to spread the fabric out, the ice crackling as he did so. It was a uniform. A guard's uniform. More than that, a belt, shoes, even underwear. A gun.

Everything, in fact, except the guard himself.

"Looks like he stripped off and ran out there naked!" Smith made a vague nodding movement in the direction of the main doors.

"He wouldn't have lasted two minutes," Crowe murmured.

It took them three hours to check the complex. Every room the same. Ice-covered walls, ice-covered floors, ice-covered everything; everything, that was, except people. In room after room they found piles of clothes. Discarded hastily in untidy ice-covered heaps on the floor.

It was Mandy Manderson who eventually figured out the ice.

"Sprinklers," he said, pointing to a red nozzle in the ceiling of one of the passages. "There must have been

a fire in the complex somewhere. Activated the sprinklers. When the heating shut off, it all froze.”

Crowe nodded. But they had found no trace of a fire.

“Where are all the people?” Miller voiced their thoughts. “It looks like they just stripped off and ran outside into the snow.”

“Maybe it was a nudist convention,” Mandy drawled, with a sideways glance at Crowe.

“Maybe they were abducted by aliens,” Miller contributed.

“Yeah, nudist aliens,” Mandy said.

“Maybe some new virus got loose,” Smith suggested. “Made ’em go crazy.”

Crowe shook his head, his face expressionless inside the bulletproof glass of the bio-suit. “There’ll be some rational explanation for this,” he said.

He crossed to a window at the end of the passageway and stared outside as if expecting to see the missing scientists frolicking in the sub-zero temperatures. The wind was gusting harder now, funnelled down the valley by the mountains ahead and behind them. It picked up snow and hurled it at the

building in long driving blasts that threatened to smash through the toughened glass of the window.

“Remind you of something?” Manderson said softly, moving up beside him.

Crowe glanced up at him. “Novosibirsk?”

“It’s happened again, hasn’t it?”

Crowe looked at the icy fury outside and said nothing.

**BOOK ONE**  
**THE CHIMERA PROJECT**

## 1. THE END

They took all the trees  
Put 'em in a tree museum  
And they charged the people  
A dollar and a half just to see 'em.  
Don't it always seem to go  
That you don't know what you've got till it's gone  
They paved paradise  
And put up a parking lot.  
– Joni Mitchell, “Big Yellow Taxi”

*Saturday, September 26*

The end of the world started quietly enough for Tane Williams and Rebecca Richards, lying on their backs on a wooden platform on Lake Sunnyvale. Which wasn't really a lake at all.

Sunnyvale School was set in a small valley. A nice little suburban valley. A hundred years ago it had been a nice little swamp where Pukekos and Black Stilts had competed for the best nesting positions, and croak-less native frogs had snared insects with their flicking tongues. But now it was a nice little suburban valley, surrounded by nice little homes belonging to nice little

home-owners who painted their fences and paid their taxes and never gave any thought to the fact that when it rained, all the water that ran through their properties, also ran through the properties below, and the properties below those, and so on until it reached the lowest point of the valley floor. Which happened to be Sunnyvale School.

As a consequence, Sunnyvale School had to have very good drainage. When it rained hard, as it often did in Auckland in the spring, an awful lot of that rain made its way down from the hillsides and ended up on the playing fields and courts of the small, but cheerful school.

And sometimes the water, sauntering its way down the slopes with a mind and a mischievous personality of its own, would playfully pick up odds and ends along the way with a view to blocking those very good drains that the council had put in many years ago after the first and second (and possibly the third) time that the school had flooded.

Sometimes it worked, and sometimes it didn't. It depended on what the water happened to find in its path. Little sticks and paper food-wrappings washed

right through the big metal grills of the drains. Small branches, stones and other large objects generally just ended up at the bottom of their homeowners' nice little properties.

But light twigs and pieces of plastic sailed merrily down the surface of the water, and blocked the drains beautifully.

That was what had happened this particular time, and the sports fields of Sunnyvale School were covered in at least four inches of water, high enough to lap at the door-steps of the cheerful little classrooms across the way, but fortunately not quite high enough to get inside.

Tane and Rebecca lay on their backs on the small wooden viewing platform in the centre of the two main playing fields and looked up at the stars, for the rain had stopped many hours ago, and the night was clear and beautiful.

Neither of them were pupils of Sunnyvale School, in fact both of them were far too old to attend the school, and for another fact, both of them were in their second year at West Auckland High School.

However when they were younger, they had both

gone to Sunnyvale School, which was why they knew that when it rained really hard during the day, and stopped at night, it became a magical, wonderful place to be.

The stars above shone down with a piercing intensity that penetrated the haze of lights from the suburban homes around the valley. The moon too, was lurking about, turning the weathered wood of the small platform to silver. All around them the lights from the sky above reflected in the inky blackness that was Lake Sunnyvale. The lake that sometimes appeared where the playing fields were after a particularly heavy rainstorm.

There were stars above, and stars below, rippling slowly in the light breeze, and it was like being out in the centre of the universe, floating through space on your back.

Tane and Rebecca thought it was the coolest place to be. On Lake Sunnyvale. After the rain.

Tane tossed a pebble into the air, and there was a satisfying plop a few seconds later as it landed. They both raised their heads to see the widening circles of ripples, shaking the foundations of the stars around

them. Then, as if controlled by the same puppeteer, they put their heads back down together.

Tane's feet were pointing one way, and Rebecca's were pointing the other, so that the tops of their heads were just about touching. If they had been boyfriend and girlfriend they might have lay down side by side, but they weren't, so they didn't.

From an open window, in a house, somewhere on the surrounding slopes, an old Joni Mitchell folk song reached out plaintively across the water to them.

Rebecca said again, "Time travel is impossible." She said it more firmly this time as if that were simply the end of the discussion and the judge's decision was final and no correspondence would be entered into.

Now ordinarily Tane would have given up at that point, because Rebecca was almost certainly right. After all it was Rebecca, and not Tane, who had aced her Level One Physics exams the previous year, the top student in the entire country, at the age of just thirteen! Which had been no real surprise to Tane who had been in the same classes as his friend as she had confounded science teacher after science teacher, and math teacher after math teacher, by somehow,

instinctively, knowing as much about the subject they were teaching as they did.

Some teachers enjoyed having Rebecca in their class because she was very, very clever, if a little rebellious and uncontrollable at times. But other teachers found it stressful to have a girl among their students who took great delight in correcting them whenever they made mistakes.

So if Rebecca said that time travel was impossible, then time travel was impossible. But there was something about the stars that night. Something about their slow drift through the heavens above and below them, something about the beautifully random, and randomly beautiful patterns they made.

Or then again, it might just have been that Tane liked to argue, and he especially liked to argue with Rebecca.

“I read a book once,” Tane said, “I can’t remember what it was called, but it was about these grad students who go back in time to mediaeval days to rescue a missing historian and they fight..”

“Timeline,” interrupted Rebecca, who also loved a good argument, and especially enjoyed showing that

she knew more than Tane, “Michael Crichton, 1999.”

“Yeah, that’s it. But anyway, they manage to create this... like... pinprick in the fabric of time somehow and then they kind of transmit themselves through it.”

“I know. I read it,” said Rebecca, and then, perhaps because she realized that she was sounding a bit negative, she said, “I mean the science was quite good in it, about the fabric of space-time, and the Quantum Foam, all the way up to the part where they transmit themselves through this tiny hole into the past.”

Tane twisted his head around to look at her, but it hurt, and all he could see were her shoes, so he twisted back again. He thought for a moment. True, he wasn’t as good at math and science as she was. Tane’s strengths were in art, and music, and he was a school legend on the harmonica, but even so the time travel thing sounded at least feasible to him.

“Why?” he asked eventually, “Why couldn’t they transmit themselves?”

“Try to think logically,” Rebecca said firmly, but not unkindly. “How could you transport a live human being through a pin hole of any kind?”

“What about a fax machine!” Tane said suddenly.

“You put a piece of paper in at one place and it gets sent along a telephone wire and it comes out in another place.”

“No it doesn’t.”

“Yes it does,” said Tane, starting to get into the argument, even though he knew she was going to turn out to be right.

“No it doesn’t,” repeated Rebecca, “A copy of the piece of paper comes out. The actual piece of paper you sent stays right where it was. All you are sending is an electronic image of the paper, just like a digital photograph of it. Fax is short for facsimile and facsimile means copy.”

She knew a lot of things.

“So...um,” Tane was losing and he knew it.

“We can transmit pictures, sound, even movies, through wires, or through the air in radio waves. But we can’t transmit a solid object. Not even a piece of paper.”

And that was pretty much the end of the conversation for the moment. They stayed on the platform for a while longer. Neither of them really wanted to go home, for reasons of their own. They

talked about school a bit, and made some jokes about some of the people in their classes, and it was about ten o'clock, after they had sloshed their way through Lake Sunnyvale back to the road, that Tane resumed the argument, as if they had never left off. Which just showed that he had been quietly thinking about it the whole time.

“Well if we can't transmit people through time, what about sounds, pictures, and movies, like you said.”

Rebecca had to actually think about that for a moment, which was a small victory for Tane. He pulled out his harmonica and played a slow blues riff as they walked.

“Nope.” She said at last. “If I understand the science right,” and Tane thought she probably did, “then you could only send stuff backwards. You couldn't transmit to the future because that hasn't happened yet.”

“But you could send it to the past!?”

“Well... theoretically. But let's say we invented some kind of radio transmitter that could broadcast through time. Something that could transmit

messages through the quantum foam. Nobody could listen to the messages we were sending because in the past they wouldn't have invented a radio receiver that could pick up the transmission."

"Oh," said Tane, thinking that Rebecca, as usual, made perfect sense.

They reached Rebecca's house and stopped.

All the lights were off, but one of the windows flickered bluely with the glow of a television. Her mum was watching TV, which was no great surprise, because that was pretty much all her mum did all day, and all night. At least since her dad had died.

"Oh." said Tane again, pointlessly, and glanced up at the sky just in time to catch the brief flash of a shooting star.

That was when the inspiration struck him. That was the moment when it all seemed so clear.

"So what if someone in the future had already invented a time radio transmitter and was sending messages back to the past, waiting for someone to invent a receiver?"

He wasn't sure if that sounded silly or not, so just waited for the usual rebuff from his friend.

It didn't come.

"What's that again?"

"Well, let's just say that some time in the future someone invents one of those transmitters you were talking about. And just say they are sending out messages, through that foamy stuff, just waiting for someone in the past to invent a receiver."

"Well, I... um..."

"What if we built a receiver and just listened. Just waited for a signal from the future."

"Well, the whole concept of quantum foam is not even proven. And I wouldn't have the slightest idea how to build a receiver." Rebecca mused. "But it's an interesting idea."

That may not have sounded like much, but it wasn't very often that Rebecca thought that Tane had an interesting idea, so it was kind of an important day, if only for that reason.

Although, with hindsight, it was actually an important day for much bigger reasons than that.

"You want to come on another march with me?" Rebecca asked, walking slowly backwards up the driveway towards her darkened house.

“Of course,” Tane said automatically, “What are we protesting about this time?”

“Whales,” Rebecca said.

Tane shook his head. “I’ve got no problems with whales. They’ve never bothered me.”

Rebecca laughed. “It’s a couple of weeks away. I’ll remind you.”

She turned and disappeared into the carport and inside her home.

## **2. THE MARCH**

*Sunday, September 27*

The next day, the day of the march, Rebecca got arrested.

The Japanese Prime Minister was visiting Auckland. What he was doing there, Tane wasn't sure. Some trade summit or international congress of some kind, he didn't really know or care.

The protest march was scheduled for midmorning, starting downtown and winding its way up through the central city, finishing at the Prime Minister's hotel just as he arrived from the airport.

Tane gripped his placard with both hands and held it high to show his support for the cause.

Protest marches were kind of fun, he thought. Anyway, he couldn't let Rebecca march by herself. He hadn't let her march by herself on the anti-nuclear march, or the anti-GE (genetic engineering) march, although he'd had the flu on the day of the climate change march, so she did that one alone.

There had probably been a time when Rebecca didn't feel strongly enough about some issue or the

other to want to march in protest about it, but that was probably when she was in preschool, and Tane couldn't remember it.

They were at the very front of the marchers. On the front line of the battle, as it were.

A long swelling chant began at the back of the line of marchers, "Ichi, ni, san, shi ... don't kill whales, leave them be. Ichi, ni, san, shi ..."

"What's this itchy knee business," he asked Rebecca in a quiet moment between chants.

She rolled her eyes. "It's one, two, three, four in Japanese. It's because—"

"Yeah, I get it now," Tane said as the chant began again.

"Ichi, ni, san, shi ... don't kill whales, leave them be!"

"Thanks for coming, Tane," Rebecca said after a while.

"Gotta save those whales!" Tane said enthusiastically, waving the banner around, and accidentally clouting a large man with a shaved head, wearing a leather jacket, who was marching next to them.

"Sorry," Tane said.

The man grinned and nodded to show that no harm was done.

Behind them was a large group of protesters wearing robes made from some kind of sackcloth, smelling like they hadn't washed for a week. Maybe they objected to bathing as well, Tane thought.

It was an officially sanctioned, organised march, which meant that the road was blocked off by police cars with flashing lights at each intersection along the route, until the marchers had passed by. Another police car preceded them, rolling slowly forward a few metres in front of Tane and Rebecca.

Along the way, early morning shoppers either raised their arms in the air and shouted in solidarity, or stared curiously at the throng, wide enough to completely cover the roadway, and stretching away behind them. There had to be a thousand marchers, Tane reckoned, although he wasn't much good at estimating the size of crowds. That seemed like a lot of people who cared a great deal about what were basically just really big fish.

The march started down on the Auckland waterfront and proceeded straight up Hobson Street

to the Sky City casino complex with its massive 300-metre-high Skytower.

They turned right before the casino into Victoria Street, then stopped at the entrance to Federal Street where the Japanese delegation's hotel was.

Wooden barricades prevented the marchers from entering the street, so they had to wait, milling and chanting, completely blocking the road.

It didn't take long for the Prime Minister's motorcade to arrive. First came a police car, then a black van that had to be filled with security guards. Then a long black Mercedes limousine.

The chanting rose to a crescendo as a line of police officers formed a human barricade. Behind the blue line of police, Tane could see the slender figure of the Japanese Prime Minister emerge as a large bodyguard in a dark suit opened the door of the limousine and stood to attention.

Several New Zealand dignitaries that he didn't recognise stood in front of the hotel, waiting to greet the man.

Rebecca raised her arms in the air, forearms together, hands gently cupped outwards, and it took

Tane a moment to realise what she was doing. Her arms and hands were making the flukes of a whale's tail. He dropped the placard to the ground in front of him and copied her. He saw the big biker type next to him do it too.

The chanting and shouting behind him gradually diminished and he turned to see the placards lowered, and a sea of the whale tails wavering quietly, peacefully along the route of the march.

Somehow it seemed to make the point more forcefully than any amount of shouting and screaming could do.

And that might have been the relatively peaceful end of it, if it hadn't been for the Prime Minister stopping as he got out of the car, turning to the protesters, and waving cheerily.

Maybe he was just being friendly. Maybe he was waving to someone he knew. But it was the worst thing to do to a crowd that had been winding itself up, chanting and shouting over the last twenty minutes of marching. The quiet waving of whale tail hands in the air now seemed to be nothing more than the calm before the storm.

There was an angry roar from the crowd, like that from a wounded animal, then suddenly the wooden barricades were down, toppling under an onrush from the protesters. The police linked arms and stepped forwards to meet the onslaught. Behind them, more police officers drew batons and waited.

The Japanese Prime Minister and the other dignitaries scurried towards the hotel, all thoughts of ceremony vanishing in the face of the wild animal that lunged towards them.

Tane tried to push himself backwards, but it was impossible with the press of the crowd and he found himself crushed up against a huge policeman with a beard and bad breath. The air squeezed out of his lungs with the pressure from behind and an overwhelming feeling of claustrophobia enveloped him.

The thin blue line held though, the storm of protesters safely contained on the outside. All except one, Tane saw, through a gap in the blue uniforms. A small, quick shape, a blur of movement, and Rebecca was halfway towards the Japanese delegation, dodging around the larger, slower policemen like a rugby player evading tacklers.

She almost made it, shouting and screaming something about whales and murder, when one of the large, dark-suited men grabbed her by the arms, pinning her, and forcing her to the ground.

At that point the line fractured in a dozen places, the fury of the crowd intensifying as one of their own was attacked. Suddenly there were protesters running everywhere, some battling police batons with their makeshift placards.

The bearded policeman whirled away from Tane and he managed to fight his way sideways, unable to see Rebecca, unable to do anything but try to claw breath back into his lungs and to get out of the running, crushing crowd.

He found a small oasis amongst the concrete pillars at the base of the Skytower, and slumped to the ground, exhausted.

In the end they had to call in the riot police to clear Federal Street. Over a hundred people were arrested, but most were released without charge, after being processed at the Auckland Central police station, just a few blocks away.

Tane waited outside for four hours until Rebecca

finally emerged, bruised and dishevelled but defiant, and followed closely by her mother who looked angry and confused.

“That was awful,” she said. “They photographed us, took our fingerprints, and jammed us all into these tiny cells while they decided what to do with us.

“I tried to get to you,” Tane said, which wasn’t really true, but seemed like the right thing to say.

“You couldn’t have done anything,” Rebecca said. “They had me into the police van in three seconds flat.”

She rubbed her wrists and Tane could see red marks.

“It’s so unfair,” she raged quietly. “They’re the criminals, killing whales and calling it research, but we’re the ones who end up with criminal records!”

“Don’t worry about it,” Tane said. “You’re still a kid. They have to erase all record of the arrest the day you turn eighteen. I read that somewhere.”

She was silent.

“Really,” he insisted, trying to make her feel better. “It’s nothing. It won’t matter at all.”

He was wrong though, because as it turned out, Rebecca getting arrested mattered quite a lot.