

JOEL C.
ROSENBERG

AUTHOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER THE KREMLIN CONSPIRACY

THE
JERUSALEM
ASSASSIN

A NOVEL



PRAISE FOR JOEL C. ROSENBERG

“Joel Rosenberg has an uncanny talent for focusing his storytelling on real-world hot spots just as they are heating up. He has done it again in *The Kremlin Conspiracy*.”

PORTER GOSS, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency

“Marcus Ryker rocks! Breakneck action, political brinksmanship, authentic scenarios, and sharply defined characters make Joel C. Rosenberg’s *Kremlin Conspiracy* a full-throttle and frightening ride through tomorrow’s headlines.”

BRIGADIER GENERAL (U.S. ARMY, RETIRED) A. J. TATA, national bestselling author of *Direct Fire*

“Joel C. Rosenberg writes taut, intelligent thrillers that are as timely as they are well-written. Pairing a fast-paced plot with an impressive understanding of the inner workings in the corridors of power of the Russian government, *The Kremlin Conspiracy* is a stellar novel of riveting action and political intrigue.”

MARK GREANEY, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Agent in Place*

“*The Kremlin Conspiracy* is my first Joel C. Rosenberg novel, and I am absolutely blown away by how good this guy is. The story moves at a blistering pace, it’s crackling with tension, and you won’t put it down until you reach the end. Guaranteed. Simply masterful.”

SEAN PARNELL, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Outlaw Platoon*

“If there were a *Forbes* 400 list of great current novelists, Joel Rosenberg would be among the top ten. . . . One of the most entertaining and intriguing authors of international political thrillers in the country. . . . His novels are un-put-downable.”

STEVE FORBES, editor in chief, *Forbes* magazine

“One of my favorite things: An incredible thriller—it’s called *The Third Target* by Joel C. Rosenberg. . . . He’s amazing. . . . He writes the greatest thrillers set in the Middle East, with so much knowledge of that part of the world. . . . Fabulous! I’ve read every book he’s ever written!”

KATHIE LEE GIFFORD, NBC’s *Today*

“Fascinating and compelling . . . way too close to reality for a novel.”

MIKE HUCKABEE, former Arkansas governor

“[Joel Rosenberg] understands the grave dangers posed by Iran and Syria, and he’s been a bold and courageous voice for true peace and security in the Middle East.”

DANNY AYALON, former Israeli deputy foreign minister

“Joel has a particularly clear understanding of what is going on in today’s Iran and Syria and the grave threat these two countries pose to the rest of the world.”

REZA KAHLILI, former CIA operative in Iran and bestselling author of *A Time to Betray: The Astonishing Double Life of a CIA Agent inside the Revolutionary Guards of Iran*

“Joel Rosenberg is unsurpassed as the writer of fiction thrillers! Sometimes I have to remind myself to breathe as I read one of his novels because I find myself holding my breath in suspense as I turn the pages.”

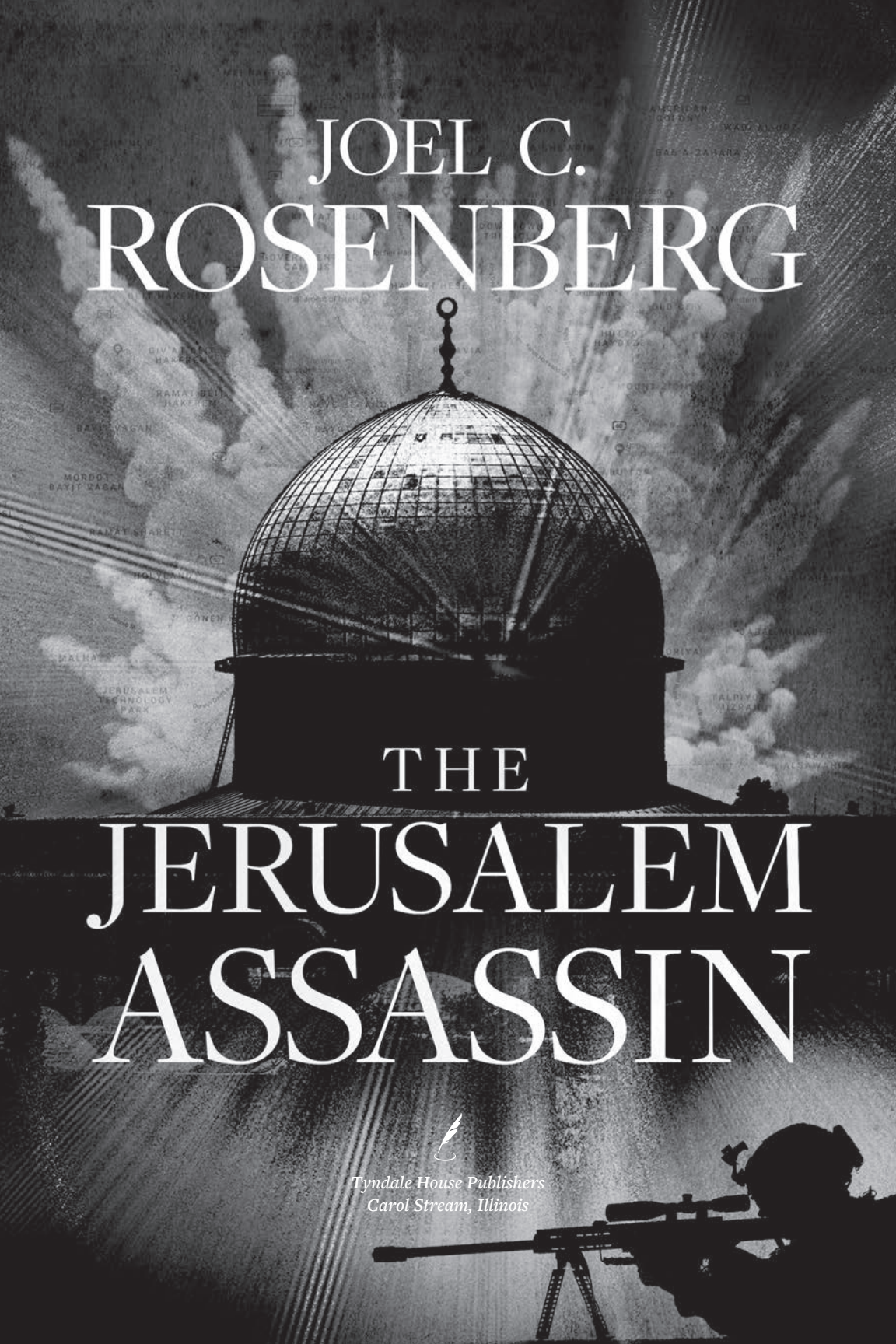
ANNE GRAHAM LOTZ, author and speaker

“Joel paints an eerie, terrifying, page-turning picture of a worst-case scenario coming to pass. You have to read [*Damascus Countdown*], and then pray it never happens.”

RICK SANTORUM, former U.S. senator

THE JERUSALEM ASSASSIN





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The Jerusalem Assassin

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Designed by Dean H. Renninger

The Jerusalem Assassin is a work of fiction. Where real people, events, establishments, organizations, or locales appear, they are used fictitiously. All other elements of the novel are drawn from the author's imagination.

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*To my nephew, Luke,
for whom I have the deepest love and the fondest hopes.*

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Americans

Marcus Ryker—special operative, Central Intelligence Agency
Richard Stephens—director of the Central Intelligence Agency
Martha Dell—deputy director of intelligence (DDI), Central Intelligence Agency
Peter Hwang—special operative, Central Intelligence Agency
Andrew Clarke—president of the United States
Barry Evans—U.S. national security advisor
William McDermott—deputy national security advisor
Margaret “Meg” Whitney—secretary of state
Kailea Curtis—agent with the Diplomatic Security Service
Geoff Stone—special agent in charge, Diplomatic Security Service
Carl Roseboro—deputy director, U.S. Secret Service
Robert Dayton—U.S. senator (D-Iowa), member of the Senate Intelligence Committee
Annie Stewart—senior foreign policy advisor to Senator Robert Dayton
Carter Emerson—pastor, Lincoln Park Baptist Church, Washington, D.C.
Maya Emerson—wife of the pastor

Russians

Oleg Stefanovich Kraskin—son-in-law to the late President Aleksandr Luganov
Mikhail Borisovich Petrovsky—president of the Russian Federation
Nikolay Vladimirovich Kropatkin—head of the FSB

Iranians

Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ansari—Supreme Leader of Iran
Yadollah Afshar—president of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Mahmoud Entezam—commander of the Iranian Revolutionary
Guard Corps
Dr. Haydar Abbasi—Iranian ballistic missile scientist and director of
Iran's missile program

Israelis

Reuven Eitan—prime minister of Israel
Asher Gilad—director of Mossad
Tomer Ben Ami—deputy director of the Shin Bet

Palestinians

Ismail Ziad—president of the Palestinian Authority
Amin al-Azzam—Grand Mufti of Jerusalem
Hussam Mashrawi—director of the Waqf and son-in-law of the
Grand Mufti

Saudis

Faisal Mohammed—monarch of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Abdulaziz bin Faisal—heir to the throne and minister of defense
Abdullah bin Rashid—director of the General Intelligence Directorate

Turks

Ahmet Mustafa—president of the Republic of Turkey
Hamdi Yaşar—producer, Al-Sawt satellite television network

Others

Abu Nakba—commander of Kairos
Mohammed al-Qassab—member of Kairos
Maxim Sheripov—member of Kairos
Amina Sheripova—member of Kairos
Dr. Ali Haqqani—member of Kairos

“What enables the wise sovereign and the good general to overcome others and achieve things beyond the reach of ordinary men is foreknowledge. Now, this foreknowledge cannot be elicited from ghosts and spirits, nor by analogy with past events, nor by deductive calculation. It must be obtained from men who know the enemy situation.”

SUN TZU, THE ART OF WAR

1

WASHINGTON, D.C.—15 NOVEMBER

They were coming, and he knew they were coming, and he knew why—they were coming to kill him and to kill the president and to kill anyone else who got in their way.

They were coming to settle scores.

The United States had inflicted too much damage in too short a time. Such actions could not simply be ignored. They had to be avenged. They had to be repaid at the highest levels, starting with the man responsible for issuing the strike orders.

What wasn't clear was when or where the attacks would come or how many were coming or precisely how they would strike. Despite vacuuming up untold terabytes of phone calls, emails, text messages, and other electronic communications over the past month, America's seventeen intelligence agencies had precious little to show for their efforts, and what few leads they had uncovered were infuriatingly inconclusive.

Yet why let threats of murder and chaos ruin a perfectly good evening? thought

Marcus Ryker as he stepped out of the shower and toweled off. He had never been one to let himself become paralyzed by fear, and he certainly wasn't going to start now. Growing up on Colorado's Front Range, he had lived to push the boundaries, especially as a teenager, to experience the rush of the unknown, to suck the marrow out of life. He wasn't repelled by danger; he was drawn to it, electrified by it. His sisters accused him of being an adrenaline junkie, and that was probably true. Still, he was no longer as reckless as he had been in his youth. That's what he told himself, anyway. Time and experience and loss and immense pain had, he hoped, refined his most foolish instincts and perhaps tempered them with a bit of wisdom.

Unlocking the wall safe in his bedroom closet, he removed his Sig Sauer P229, inserted a full magazine, chambered a round, and put the automatic pistol in his shoulder holster. Next he withdrew two spare magazines and clipped those to his belt before closing and locking the safe. Though there was plenty of disturbing chatter out there, there was no credible intel indicating attacks were imminent anywhere in the homeland, much less here in Washington. But one could never be too careful.

Opening the front door of his apartment building, he scanned the street. Traffic seemed light, but it was still early. Other than a few teens huddled on a stoop across the street, he saw nothing suspicious. Satisfied that all was clear, Marcus walked briskly down the street and around the corner to where his 1986 Nissan Stanza was parked. It was ugly and brown and rusty and almost as old as he was, but somehow it still ran, and—best of all—it was paid for. He got in and started the engine.

Two blocks away, Marcus pulled over at a florist and spent far longer than he should have picking out an appropriate arrangement. Too many varieties. Too many colors. He couldn't even remember the last time he'd bought flowers. He finally settled for a bouquet of daffodils and paid the clerk in cash.

They'd agreed to meet at seven. By the time he got to the town house, it was almost twenty minutes past. And there was no place to park. He eventually found a spot several streets away. He'd be even later now, but it gave him a chance to walk a bit, and that helped settle his nerves.

Finally reaching his destination, he stepped onto the front porch, knocked on the metal screen door, and waited under the porch light. The night was chilly, and there was a brisk breeze coming off the Potomac River. In faded blue jeans and boots, a black crewneck sweater over a white T-shirt, and a black leather jacket, he wasn't exactly cold. But he suddenly wondered if he should have worn a suit or at least a shirt with a collar. In all that had happened over the past few years, there were some things he could not forget, no matter how hard he tried. There were others he struggled to remember, and social graces were among them.

Marcus knocked again, harder this time, but still no one answered. The longer he stood there on the creaky wooden porch, the more he wished he were home, ordering Chinese food, throwing on sweats, and falling asleep on the couch watching ESPN. Pete Hwang kept saying he needed to get out more. Then again, Pete was an idiot. A friend, of course. The best one Marcus still had. But an idiot nonetheless. Divorced. Estranged from his kids. Living alone in a new city. Yet insisting he was enjoying his newfound "bachelor's life" and trying to get Marcus off his rear end and "back in the game."

And then, just as he was contemplating walking back to his car, the front door finally opened.