



### **Exclusive Excerpt from *Without Warning* by Joel C. Rosenberg**

We peeled out, fishtailing in the slush.

Art Harris was in the front passenger seat, on his phone and already briefing someone back at the bureau on the nightmare unfolding around us. Matt was sitting to my right, staring out the window as round after round of mortars smashed into the roof and the walls of the north wing of the Capitol, the part of the sprawling complex where the House Chamber was located. I had my phone out now. I was speed-dialing Allen MacDonald over and over again but kept being directed to voice mail.

Suddenly the driver stomped on the brakes and turned hard. We found ourselves twisting, turning, sliding twenty or thirty yards across the ice- and snow-covered pavement, barely coming to a halt in front of a Capitol Police cruiser. Our driver, a fifteen-year veteran of the U.S. Secret Service, put his window down and demanded to be let through. But he was told this exit on the north side—leading to Constitution Avenue and from there to Pennsylvania Avenue—had been sealed off until the president's motorcade made it safely back to the White House. Harris flashed his badge and explained we urgently needed to get back to FBI headquarters, but the officer told us there was nothing he could do. The orders had come from the top. The only way out, he said, was on the opposite side of the Capitol grounds.

Infuriated, Harris ordered the driver to backtrack. He did, slamming the sedan into reverse, spinning the car around, and racing for the southeast gate, swerving to avoid the craters caused by errant mortar rounds. Again I tried to call Allen—several times, in fact—but didn't get through.

As we spilled to Independence Avenue and headed west, lights flashing and siren blaring, I looked back at the Capitol. The scene was surreal, like something out of a Hollywood blockbuster. The entire north wing—the House side—was ablaze. Through the blowing, swirling snow, I could see additional mortar rounds arcing in from multiple directions. Several smashed into the great dome, which was soon engulfed in flames as well. Police cars, fire trucks, ambulances, and

HAZMAT teams were racing to the scene from all directions, even as we raced away at ever-increasing speed.

Our driver took a hard right turn on Third Street and headed for the intersection with Pennsylvania Avenue just a few blocks ahead. Matt and I were riveted on the Capitol out the window to our right. But when we heard Harris gasp and drop his phone, we both turned to see what in the world he was reacting to.

When I saw it, I gasped as well. The president's motorcade—what was left of it, anyway—was straight ahead, trying to advance westward on Pennsylvania, back to the White House. But they were under attack from RPG and automatic-weapons fire. At least four of the cars in the lead had smashed into one another. Now they were a raging inferno and were piled up in a way that blocked the path forward for the rest of the team, including the Beast—the president's limousine. Both limo drivers were now trying to back up, but they had at least a dozen Chevy Suburbans behind them, also trying to back up and creating a bottleneck.

Suddenly I saw a brilliant flash of light. It originated from a high window of a large office building to the right of the Labor Department. Next I saw the contrail, and before I could make sense of it all, one of the Suburbans behind the Beast erupted in a massive explosion. The SUV was lifted into the air and then flipped over, landing on its roof. A fraction of a second later, there was another flash of light, another contrail, and another Suburban was blown sky-high.

Our driver slammed on the brakes and we went skidding for a good thirty or forty yards. Fortunately, with all the streets blocked off and cleared of traffic, there was no danger of smashing into anyone else. Not here. But we still were watching the president's motorcade come under assault, and we were horrified at the sight.

From my vantage point, I had a clear view of everything that was unfolding. I used my phone to take multiple pictures both of the motorcade and the Capitol. Just then I saw members of the Secret Service's tactical unit open fire on the office building. Two agents fired RPGs into the window from which the incoming fire was emanating. At the same time, another agent popped out of the roof of one of the remaining Suburbans. He was armed with a .50-caliber machine gun. He pivoted toward the office building and let her rip, though not before a final rocket-propelled grenade was launched at the Beast. With my iPhone operating in video mode, I watched as the RPG hit the side of the lead limo and burst into a ball of fire, even as both that limousine and the one behind it maneuvered to get out of the kill box, onto a sidewalk, and around the burning wreckage of the lead cars in front of them.

Our driver started shouting into his wrist-mounted radio. He was explaining what he was seeing, and while I couldn't hear what he was being told in return, it soon became obvious. We were now supposed to act as the lead car, a blocking force to get the president back to the White House. Our driver gunned the engine,

and we raced for the intersection, fishtailing when we got there but narrowly making the left onto Pennsylvania Avenue. We couldn't see anything but the snowstorm ahead of us. Luckily, the boulevard was clear of traffic. D.C. Metro Police cruisers blocked most of the access streets on either side of us, and several massive white-and-orange D.C. snowplows and salt-spreader trucks blocked the remaining ones. I figured we ought to be home free once the presidential limos worked their way around the burning vehicles currently blocking their path.

"Here they come," Matt said as the first limo found an opening and began to catch up with us.

Harris and I craned our necks to get a look. For a moment, I only saw one of the limousines, but soon the second emerged through the flames and billowing smoke as well.

*"Floor it!"* Harris shouted, and the driver did just that.

Soon we were racing west on Pennsylvania, past the Canadian Embassy and the Newseum on our right and the National Gallery of Art on our left. But when we got to the Navy Memorial, all hell broke loose. I heard automatic gunfire erupt to our right. It seemed to be coming from one of the adjacent office buildings. But before I could pinpoint the exact location, one of the D.C. snowplows suddenly pulled directly into our path. Our driver mashed the brakes and swerved left, but I knew instantly there was no way we were going to clear it.

We slammed into the driver's side of the enormous truck. There was a deafening crunch of metal on metal, and all the windows in our car blew out. We all lurched forward. I saw the air bags deploy in the front seats, but in the back, neither Matt nor I wore seat belts. In the intensity of our exit from the Capitol, neither of us had even thought of it, and now we were being thrown around like rag dolls. The limousine behind us tried to swerve out of our way but couldn't turn fast enough. It clipped the rear of our Lincoln Town Car, sending us spinning out into the middle of the street, where we were then broadsided by the second limousine seconds later.

When we stopped moving, everything grew quiet. We were all choking on the smoke emanating from the explosive charge of the air bags and badly rattled by the crash. But we were still alive, and as best as I could tell, I hadn't broken any bones.

"Everyone okay?" I asked, kicking open my door.

We were hit by a frigid blast, but at least we could breathe.

"I'm good," Matt said. "But my door—it's stuck."

I glanced at him. Matt wasn't good. He'd cracked his head. Blood was pouring down his face. I offered to help him, but he waved me off. He insisted he must look worse than he felt. Then he pulled out a handkerchief and applied pressure to the gash across his forehead.

"Get out on my side," I said, glad we were both bundled up against the bitter wind and snow.

As my brother scrambled across the broken glass covering the backseat and exited through my side, I checked on Harris. He insisted he was fine and focused on our driver. "He's not moving," Harris said.

"Does he have a pulse?" I asked.

Harris checked, then shook his head. "No; he's gone."

Just then I heard gunfire erupt again. It wasn't close, but it wasn't far enough away for comfort either. I scanned the sidewalks and the buildings around us but couldn't find the source. Harris drew his service weapon, a Glock 9mm handgun. That wasn't going to provide much protection if our attackers stormed into the street with automatic weapons, but at least it was something.

Suddenly a pistol fired. This *was* close, directly to my left. I turned quickly and stared in horror as the driver of the snowplow—clad in a black parka and black ski mask—climbed out of his cab and fired twice more, aiming at Harris. The FBI agent wheeled around and fired once but then went down.

The snowplow driver had also been hit. He landed with a crash on the crumpled hood of the sedan. He was groaning in pain, but he was alive and began pulling himself to his feet. To my right, I saw Matt hit the deck. I knew I should have done the same. The gunfire to our right was getting louder by the second, and the driver with the pistol was no more than ten feet away. But with Harris down and in mortal danger, I instinctively climbed back into the car. I reached for our driver's service weapon and yanked it from its holster under his jacket. The assailant was back on his feet now and stumbling toward Harris. I didn't know if Harris was dead or alive, but there was no time to hesitate. I fumbled for the safety, flicked it off, aimed through the shattered windshield, and fired four times. The man snapped back violently, then went crashing to the snow-covered pavement.

I immediately got out of the car and raced around the back, the pistol in front of me, ready to fire again. But before I could, I saw Harris—on his back on the slushy concrete—firing three more rounds into the hooded man.

*"Clear on this side!"* he shouted.

*"Clear on this side too!"* I shouted back.

Harris scrambled to his feet. He grabbed the gun from the man. There was no doubt he was dead. A crimson pool was now growing around him.

Harris tossed the terrorist's gun to me. Harris himself was covered in snow and ice, but he was moving with ease. He didn't look injured. It took me a moment, but then I realized he hadn't been shot; he'd merely slipped on the ice while whirling around. The fall had probably saved his life. He urgently signaled for me to double back and move around the front side of the snowplow while he went around the back side, just in case the driver had a wingman. I quickly did as I was told. I

motioned for Matt to stay down and gave him the extra pistol.

Then, as I peered around the front of the truck and the giant orange plow, it became clear Harris's instincts were right. There was a wingman. Standing no more than two yards from me was an enormous figure—at least six-foot-five—also wearing a black parka and a black hood and holding a submachine gun.