



The Nightmare Begins

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World War III is now a bloody page in American history. With nuclear holocaust killing more than a quarter-billion people worldwide and the United States just a memory, John Thomas Rourke, ex-CIA Covert Operations Officer, weapons expert and survival authority is enduring the ultimate test.

Soviet Occupation Forces have landed and must begin the "pacification" of America. They will start by liquidating any prominent Americans who could become a rallying point for armed resistance. The first name on the list is Samuel Chambers, the lone surviving member of the Presidential cabinet. And as the American KGB invades Texas to find Chambers, they find Rourke there as well.

With his young friend Paul Rubenstein, Rourke is fighting his way back to continue the search for his missing wife and children. Paramilitary armies, heavily armed brigands, a beautiful KGB infiltrator, an unending stream of War refugees, and a land gone mad with violence block his path. The birth of U.S. II has begun and the quest continues for John Thomas Rourke, The Survivalist.

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The Nightmare Begins Details

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From Reader Review The Nightmare Begins for online ebook

Timothy Boyd says

This is my favorite adventure series. Dr John Thomas Rourke leads his family and friends through a post apocalyptic world fighting ever step if the way. Fantastic characters and plots. Very detailed weapon descriptions. Excellent series. My highest recommendation

Matt says

Let the horror begin. Nothing happens from here through the rest of this 26-part series.

Kurt Vosper says

see book 1

D. E. says

The 2nd Novel of the Survivalist Series/El Paso/Chicago/Atlanta

JA has penned the 2nd novel of the Survivalist Series which takes place primarily in the southwest. He and his oak, Rubenstein, continue their easterly journey until they are forced north too by pass destroyed nuclear areas. They save the new President from the Russians and Rourke continues his search for his family. He his is an excellent dread for the genre.....ER

Dan Panke says

I can see this series having a good life as the story seems well thought out and it does hold your interest.

Lance says

More of the same but the main character runs into some new people and gains some new enemies and some new allies. The Soviet Union and the KGB are more of a presence in this book as they have actually landed in the USA and are continuing their efforts to take over. Rourke continues his quest to find his wife and children.

Ron says

Post-apocalyptic pulp goodness.

Henry Brown says

The series' title character is John Rourke, a former CIA operative who was on a civilian flight at the hour the missiles struck. His sidekick in this book was Paul Rubenstein, a former white collar geek type with a good heart, and a mental toughness allowing him to cope and adapt well to the new world, under Rourke's hands-on tutelage. Rubenstein was on the same flight, which crashed out West. The story picks up as the pair are making their way through Texas for the eastern seaboard, where Rourke hopes to find his wife and kids still alive somehow, and Rubenstein plans to turn south into Florida to look for his parents. They're traveling on motorcycles (Rourke in style--his is a Harley).

This series has most of what you would hope to find in a post-apocalyptic yarn: A smart, skilled, resourceful hero who is up to the extraordinary task of surviving in such a world; a wide-open Wild-West type landscape of dangerous wilderness and ghost towns; and a rogue's gallery of brigands and Soviets to ensure Rourke's quest is no radioactive milk run. And yet Ahern avoided some of the cliches...er, conventions I've come to expect in the genre. There were no human mutants, for instance. Our heroes did encounter a group of infected teenagers, but the author made it clear they were living on borrowed time--not transforming into vampires or Marvel supervillains. And though there was some sexual tension here and there, there was no prose-porn.

What about gun porn? From what I've read, Ahern has a reputation for this. Maybe I still don't understand where the threshold is defined between describing a weapon/its use and descending into "gun porn," but in my opinion the author's treatment of firearms in this book was the former, and not the latter. Rubenstein's primary weapon (a WWII German submachinegun, MP40) is so interesting that I now am tempted to seek out the first issue just to find out how it was acquired. Rourke's signature side armament are twin Detonics Combat Masters, and his use of them at one point (though nothing flamboyant enough for a John Woo movie) actually had me break reading silence and sound off with a hearty "ooh-rah!" For long range, he carries a CAR-15, arguably the father of the M-4 carbine in such wide use today in US troop deployments.

I have a prejudice against the entire M16/AR15 family of weapons. The 82nd Airborne Division was usually one of the first units to get new toys (the Kevlar helmet, the M249 SAW, etc.), and I did get to plink with some M16A2s when they were still brand new. Their accuracy was pretty good, I'll admit, and they were far more dependable than the A1s I had used in OSUT. Yet I was appalled by their tendency to malfunction in spite of diligent cleaning. Especially in sandy environments. Yet the AR15 and its derivatives are still the most popular assault/battle rifle with the Pentagon and in men's fiction.

OK-moving on.

The bad guys in Nightmare Begins were also a breath of fresh air. No "B" movie Nazis here--even the KGB honcho. And his wife/agent Natalia is surprisingly complex. (Rourke recognizes her, BTW, from one of his spook missions in Central America.) In addition to the knowledgeable depictions of weaponcraft, I appreciated thoughtful details like the difficulty of finding gasoline after a nuclear war. A very popular author in the genre fails to address this issue honestly. Another author in the genre, many of whose books I personally like, had his protagonist once use Federal Reserve notes to pay for something in the post-nuke economy...and they were accepted! Rourke and Rubenstein find it necessary to forage (though they make an effort to deal fairly and honestly with others). This is a far more sober speculation, IMO.

Nightmare Begins has left me with the impression that at this point in the continuity, the series is just hitting its stride. I certainly plan to read the other Survivalist book I picked up, and will be on the lookout for others. Based on this reading, I recommend The Survivalist as an intelligent, well-written TEOTWAWKI series with plenty of action to keep us turning pages.

Charles says

An excellent start to the series. This is my favorite non fantasy, non SF series, although it later develops some SF elements in it. Ahern writes action as well or better than anyone. I've learned a lot from him.

Carl Timms says

Gets things going but not great

It's ok, not great. It gets the story going now the war has happened but compared to the adventures to come in fact three superior later books it's just a stepping stone. Finale is exceptionally unsatisfying also, being just a bit too easy.

Natalie is way more annoying than I remember though and the way John just casually flirts with her actually makes me really dislike him. Paul is a great character though. He really starts to come into his own in this one.

Nicholas says

What did I think? I think I thought this book/series was way cooler when I was 8 and first read it. It does explain where I got my preference for long, detailed lists of weapons for RPGs and a deep down dislike of Soviets comes from though.

While I wasn't aware of the term "Mary Sue" at the time that I first read this, I see now that holy goodness gracious is Rourke a Mary Sue. Or Marty Stu, whatever the kids are calling it these days, and I don't mean the watered down, useless definition tossed around so liberally on the net these days.

Hold up a few minutes. I need to go relieve some masturbatory tension by looking at some pictures of guns, with their cool blued, sleek hardness gracefully and erotically enhanced by additional recoil-providing gas ports along the long, long barrel. Then I'll imagine myself slowly, gently caressing the gleaming rounds of 15 whatever grain Federal Premium hollowpoint full metal jacket manstoppers, as I slowly, sensually insert them into the individual vaginas, wait, no, I mean, chambers of my massive Colt Python. Then I'll have a threesome with my glimmering matched Detonics .45s. . . ummmmmmmmmmm

Yes, Ahern has a thing for his guns. A big thing.

Whaddya mean, "What about the characterization and storyline"? Yeah, I guess it paid some lip service to those things also. I mean, it has a beautiful female Soviet spy. That counts, right? overall, TNB is kind of sloppy, but I think the author really invested himself in the story. I'll probably read a few more to see if he

improves, or continues on the same path.

Keith says

Was fun easy reading in my teens. Would actually like to pick one up again and see what I think now. :D

stormhawk says

The second installment of The Survivalist series is the one that sealed the deal for me and kept me reading. There are elements of hope in this post-apocalyptic novel. I think that sense of hope is what raises the story beyond most comparable books in the genre.
