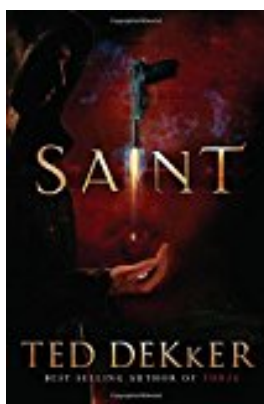


# [PDF] Saint (Paradise Series, Book 2) (The Books Of History Chronicles)

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**Description:**

**About the Author Ted Dekker** is the *New York Times* best-selling author of more than 25 novels. He is known for stories that combine adrenaline-laced plots with incredible confrontations between good and evil. He lives in Texas with his wife and children. Twitter @TedDekker, facebook.com/#!/teddekker

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I see darkness. I'm lying spread-eagle on my back, ankles and wrists tied tightly to the bedposts so that I can't pull them free.

A woman is crying beside me. I've been kidnapped.

My name is Carl.

But there's more that I know about myself, fragments that don't quite make sense. Pieces of a puzzle forced into place. I know that I'm a quarter inch shy of six feet tall and that my physical conditioning has been stretched to its limits. I have a son whom I love more than my own life and a wife named . . . named Kelly, of course, Kelly. How could I hesitate on that one? I'm unconscious or asleep, yes, but how could I ever misplace my wife's name?

I was born in New York and joined the army when I was eighteen. Special Forces at age twenty, now twenty-five. My father left home when I was eight, and I took care of three younger sisters--Eve, Ashley, Pearl--and my mother, Betty Strople, who was always proud of me for being such a strong boy. When I was fourteen, Brad Stenko slapped my mother. I hit him over the head with a two-by-four and called the police. I remember his name because his intent to marry my mother terrified me. I remember things like that. Events and facts cemented into place by pain.

My wife's name is Kelly. See, I know that, I really do. And my son's name is Matthew. Matt. Matt and Kelly, right?

I'm a prisoner. A woman is crying beside me.

Carl snapped his eyes wide open, stared into the white light above him, and closed his eyes again.

Opening his eyes had been a mistake that could have alerted anyone watching to his awakening. He scrambled for orientation. In that brief moment, eyes opened wide to the ceiling, his peripheral vision had seen the plain room. Smudged white walls. Natural light from a small window. A single fluorescent fixture above, a dirty mattress under him.

And the crying woman, strapped down beside him.

Otherwise the room appeared empty. If there was any immediate danger, he hadn't seen it. So it was safe to open his eyes.

Carl did, quickly confirmed his estimation of the room, then glanced down at a thick red nylon cord bound around each ankle and tied to two metal bedposts. Beside him, the woman was strapped down in similar manner.

His black dungarees had been shoved up to his knees. No shoes. The woman's left leg lay over his right and was strapped to the same post. Her legs had been cut and bruised, and the cord was tied tightly enough around her ankles to leave marks. She wore a pleated navy-blue skirt, torn at the hem, and a white blouse that looked as if it had been dragged through a field with her.

This was Kelly. He knew that, and he knew that he cared for Kelly deeply, but he was suddenly

unsure why. He blinked, searching his memory for details, but his memory remained fractured. Perhaps his captors had used drugs.

The woman whose name was Kelly faced the ceiling, eyes closed. Her tears left streaks down dirty cheeks and into short blond hair. Small nose, high cheekbones, a bloody nose. Several scratches on her forehead.

I'm strapped to a bed next to a woman named Kelly who's been brutalized. My name is Carl and I should feel panic, but I feel nothing .

The woman suddenly caught her breath, jerked her head to face him, and stared into his soul with wide blue eyes.

In the space of one breath, Carl's world changed. Like a heat wave vented from a sauna, emotion swept over him. A terrible wave of empathy laced with a bitterness he couldn't understand. But he understood that he cared for the woman behind these blue eyes very much.

And then, as quickly as the feeling had come, it fell away.

"Carl . . ." Her face twisted with anguish. Fresh tears flooded her eyes and ran down her left cheek.

"Kelly?"

She began to speak in a frantic whisper. "We have to get out of here! They're going to kill us." Her eyes darted toward the door. "We have to do something before he comes back. He's going to kill . . ." Her voice choked on tears.

Carl's mind refused to clear. He knew who she was, who he was, why he cared for her, but he couldn't readily access that knowledge. Worse, he didn't seem capable of emotion, not for more than a few seconds.

"Who . . . who are you?"

She blinked, as if she wasn't sure she'd heard him right. "What did they do to you?"

He didn't know. They'd hurt him, he knew that. Who were they? Who was she?

She spoke urgently through her tears. "I'm your wife! We were on vacation, at port in Istanbul when they took us. Three days ago. They . . . I think they took Matthew. Don't tell me you can't remember!"

Details that he'd rehearsed in his mind before waking flooded him. He was with the army, Special Forces. His family had been taken by force from a market in Istanbul. Matthew was their son. Kelly was his wife.

Panicked, Carl jerked hard against the restraints. He was rewarded with a squealing metal bed frame, no more.

Another mistake. Whoever had the resources to kidnap them undoubtedly had the foresight to use the right restraints. He was reacting impulsively rather than with calculation. Carl closed his eyes and calmed himself. Focus, you have to focus.

"They brought you in here unconscious half an hour ago and gave you a shot." Her words came out in a rush. "I think . . . I'm pretty sure they want you to kill someone." Her fingers touched the palm of

his hand above their heads. Clapsed his wrist. "I'm afraid, Carl. I'm so afraid." Crying again.

"Please, Kelly. Slow down."

"Slow down? I've been tied to this bed for three days! I thought you were dead! They took our son!"

The room faded and then came back into focus. They stared at each other for a few silent seconds. There was something strange about her eyes. He was remembering scant details of their kidnapping, even fewer details of their life together, but her eyes were a window into a world that felt familiar and right.

They had Matthew. Rage began to swell, but he cut it off and was surprised to feel it wane. His training was kicking in. He'd been trained not to let feelings cloud his judgment. So then his not feeling was a good thing.

"I need you to tell me what you know."

"I've told you. We were on a cruise--"

"No, everything. Who we are, how we were taken. What's happened since we arrived. Everything."

"What did they do to you?"

"I'm okay. I just can't remember--"

"You're bleeding." She stared at the base of his head. "Your hair . . ."

He felt no pain, no wetness from blood. He lifted his head and twisted it for a look at the mattress under his hair. A fist-sized red blotch stained the cover.

The pain came then, a deep, throbbing ache at the base of his skull. He laid his head back down and stared at the ceiling. With only a little effort he disconnected himself from the pain.

"Tell me what you remember."

She blinked, breathed deliberately, as if she might forget to if she didn't concentrate. "You had a month off from your post in Kuwait and we decided to take a cruise to celebrate our seventh anniversary. Matthew was buying some crystallized ginger when a man grabbed him and went into an alley between the tents. You went after him. I saw someone hit you from behind with a metal pipe. Then a rag with some kind of chemical was clamped over my face and I passed out. Today's the first time I've seen you." She closed her eyes. "They tortured me, Carl."

Anger rose, but again he suppressed it. Not now. There would be time for anger later, if they survived.

His head seemed to be clearing. More than likely they'd kept him drugged for days, and whatever they'd put into his system half an hour ago was waking him up. That would explain his temporary memory loss.

"What nationality are they?"

"Hungarian, I think. The one named Dale is a sickening . . ." She stopped, but the look of hatred in her eyes spoke plenty.

Carl blocked scattered images of all the possible things Dale might have done to her. Again, that he was able to do this so easily surprised him. Was he so insensitive to his own wife?

No, he was brutally efficient. For her sake he had to be.

Their captors had left their mouths free--if he could find a way to reach their restraints . . .

The door swung open. A man with short-cropped blond hair stepped into the room. Medium height. Knifelike nose and chin. Fiercely eager blue eyes. Khaki cotton pants, black shirt, hairy arms. Dale.

Carl knew this man.

This was Dale Crompton. This was a man who'd spent some time in the dark spaces of Carl's mind, securing Carl's hatred. Kelly had said Hungarian, but she must have meant someone else, because Dale was an Englishman.

The man's right arm hung by his side, hand snugged around an Eastern Bloc Makarov 9mm pistol. The detail was brightly lit in Carl's mind while other details remained stubbornly shrouded by darkness. He knew his weapons.

Without any warning or fanfare, Dale rounded the foot of the bed, pressed the barrel of the Makarov against Kelly's right thigh, and pulled the trigger.

The gun bucked with a thunderclap. Kelly arched her back, screamed, and thrashed against her restraints, then dropped to the mattress in a faint.

Carl's mind passed the threshold of whatever training he'd received. His mind demanded he feel nothing, lie uncaring in the face of brutal manipulation, but his body had already begun its defense of his wife. He snarled and bolted up, oblivious to the pain in his wrists and ankles.

The movement proved useless. He might as well be a dog on a thick chain, jerked violently back at the end of a sprint for freedom.

He collapsed back onto the bed and gathered himself. Kelly lay still. A single glance told him that the bullet had expended its energy without passing through her leg, which meant it had...

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