

Book One: THE CHOICE Series

DREAMS IN THE DISTANCE

A NOVEL



NAN RINELLA



INTRODUCTION TO
THE CHOICE SERIES

We are our choices.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980)
French playwright/political activist

Literature is a luxury; fiction is a necessity.

G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936)
English writer, philosopher, Christian apologist

In my opinion, there's no better way to appreciate history than reading authentic historical fiction. They say that *experience* is the best teacher, *but it doesn't have to be your own*. Human nature hasn't changed since Adam and Eve. History *does repeat itself* and offers much we can learn and benefit from, whether from our own experience or while perusing the lives of those who lived it—both real and imagined.

History often resembles myth, because they are both ultimately of the same stuff.

J. R. R. Tolkien (1892–1973)
English writer, philologist
The Hobbit, The Lord of the Rings

I've always relished digesting history in a feast of delectable fiction. Exceedingly scrumptious are the thick tomes of James Michener, Herman Wouk, Leon Uris, Michael Phillips, Edward Rutherfurd, and, of course, Tolkien.

The Lord of the Rings was not historical, you say? Oh, but it was, just not of our world—exactly.

Michael Phillips dedicated his 1999/2000 Caledonia series to the memory of Michener. In his Introduction, Phillips quoted the master of the historical novel from his autobiography, *The World Is My Home*:

When people tire of the forty-eight-minute television novel, they will yearn for a substantial book within whose covers they can live imaginatively for weeks. The eighteenth-century, discursive-type novel will enjoy a vigorous rebirth, because readers demand it.

James A. Michener
American, Pulitzer Prize for Fiction
The Source, Hawaii, South Pacific

Michener thought this true in the 1950s and gambled his professional life on it. The rest is history. Beginning with Book One of THE CHOICE Series, I'm banking on the pendulum effect and a resurgence of the fluent and expansive-type novel again. I hope you enjoy the journey.

Caledonia touched my Scottish soul. My Irish heart grieved at Ireland's melancholy history in Uris's *Trinity* and Rutherford's *The Dublin Saga* (Dublin is my family surname). Michener's *Texas* functioned as my tutor when I migrated from Los Angeles to Amarillo in 1991. Wouk's World War II novels brought that era alive.

I especially owe so much to J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, whose lives and works have influenced my life and writing. Through them, God illuminated the way of this "hobbit in Narnia."

To construct plausible and moving 'other worlds' you must
draw on the only real 'other world' we know, that of the Spirit.
Of Other Worlds, C. S. Lewis

Frank E. Peretti and Randy Alcorn introduced me to the angelic beings who accompany us in this life, influencing our choices—toward the light or the darkness. Ted Dekker is today's prophet with his fantastical, speculative, otherworldly novels. They helped me recognize those competing voices that

whisper in the ears of our hearts and minds—*the voices*. And, I wonder dear reader, *who has your ear?*

Join me at DreamsInTheDistance.com for ongoing discussions of the relevancy of those voices in our lives today as they influence our choices.



PROLOGUE:

THE WAR

The Second World War began on the European front when German troops invaded Poland on 1 September 1939. Then on 3 September, Britain and France declared war on Germany.

When the Reverend Jonathan Whitely tried to explain war to his young daughter, Lily, she couldn't understand. But as the bombs began to fall, she and her best friend, Philomena Claiborne, became convinced that dragons were real, breathing fire from the sky.

For Phila's father, Rear Admiral Henry Claiborne, this meant another separation from his family when he commanded supply convoys in the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans. As she had during WWI, his wife, Beatrice, waited and prayed for his safe return.

After France fell to Germany on 22 June 1940, the soldiers of the 51st Highland Division were taken captive. Master Sergeant Duncan MacWhirter of the Seaforth Highlanders managed, along with a few others, to escape and help rebuild the new 51st Division. Training raw recruits proved challenging given hotheads like six foot six inches tall O. C. Ogilvie, who had enlisted with his cousin, Sandy. As the invasion of Great Britain appeared imminent, the Seaforth Highlanders trained and remained in Scotland for a year to defend the northeast coast against the potential German invasion that never came.

Rather, in an effort to destroy British air power, the German Luftwaffe conducted unrelenting air raids from July through September 1940, beginning with the ports and air bases. On 4 June, 1940, Prime Minister Winston Churchill said:

The Battle of Britain is about to begin—We shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be. We shall

fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds,
we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in
the hills; we shall never surrender!

Burning with a desire to be a pilot Lily's brother, Flying Officer Benjamin Whitely, joined the Royal Air Force. The RAF's resounding victory over the Luftwaffe, despite the loss of many of its pilots in The Battle of Britain, forced Germany to shift night-raid targets to London, other cities, and industrial centers. The Blitz lasted from September 1940 to May 1941. The first day of bombing, 7 September, caught Admiral Claiborne's eighteen-year-old son, Hugh, and eight-year-olds Phila and Lily returning from the Tower of London. Soon after, like many children in London, they were sent to the country to keep them safe, while Hugh returned to Cambridge University before joining the Royal Navy a couple years later.

By the time the United States entered the war, most of Europe had been occupied by Germany. O. C. (Ollie) finally got his chance to fight and demonstrate a courageous disregard for his own life in North Africa.

On 7 December 1941, the Japanese bombed the American fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, which launched the fight in the Pacific and brought America into the European theater. The US Army's Eighth Air Forces bombers and fighters flew missions from England over the Continent. California hotshot Lieutenant Daniel McCauley achieved his childhood dream, promoted to team leader of a fighter squadron.

WWII ended in the European theater on 7 May 1945 when Germany surrendered.

After the battles and bombs had ceased, the scars of war cut deep across the land and souls. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD, was yet to be diagnosed, however, both Ollie and Dan contended with the symptoms of what was then known as "battle fatigue." Regardless, Hugh envied the heroes and their honors.

Change was in the air as Brits tried to put the war behind them looking ahead to prosperity and peace. As society became less rigid and more reverential—Phila and Lily, Ollie, Dan, and Hugh began to wonder, might their dreams be possible?