

# The Seventh Day

By  
Andy Malone

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Andy Malone

Based in Scotland, Andy Malone is a popular international speaker and technology instructor with more than 20 year's experience. Winner of the Microsoft 2006 TechEd Speaker Idol contest, Andy has delivered technical and security content to thousands of delegates worldwide. His passionate style of delivery, combined with a sense of fun, has become his trademark and has won him great acclaim with large international audiences.

In recent years, Andy's international travels have also ignited another passion, writing. Having already written articles for magazines, websites and blogs, Andy decided to take the plunge and fulfil a childhood dream to publish a novel.

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For Patricia & Amy

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And heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled apart; and every mountain and island were moved out of their place.

Revelations 6- 14

## Prologue

**Location: Unknown. Date: Unknown.**

For me, the dream was always the same. The silence and blackness were absolute. Then a shining, piercing beam of light appears; then another and another. In all, there are seven. The lights seem to emanate from above, but with no identifiable source, surrounding me with what now appears to be a large, circular marble table complete with seven high-backed chairs. Behind the chairs, seven doors suddenly swing open and seven robed figures emerge from the darkness, and proceed to take their places around the table.

The faces of the seven are similar; gaunt pale complexions with dark, almost black, hair and piercing blue eyes. As they sit, no one speaks. The seven merely stare at each other, waiting for the silence to be broken. Then one rises and speaks.

“Has a decision been made?”

The group glance at each other for a moment and turn, responding almost in unison. “We have. Their fate is sealed.”

The standing figure pauses glancing around at the group and takes a deep breath. “Does it have to be this way?”

“Yes they are dangerous, of that there is no doubt.” The single voice that now speaks is different to the others, cooler and less emotional. The second figure then stands and continues, “They cannot change. We have seen it with our own eyes. History has shown that they will eventually not only destroy themselves, but also the planet. That cannot be permitted.”

“But, they have great potential. I have seen it with my own eyes.”

“Enough! The decision is made ... Besides, it has already begun.”

Then the dream is over and I wake.

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## One

### Present Day: Alva Glen, Alva, Scotland

“What the hell?”

Suddenly he felt the ground tremble and crack beneath his feet. Looking down in alarm, a split appeared like an open wound and a strand of brilliant white light began to ooze through. As the shaking increased, Tom began to panic but, as he turned to leave, the shaking suddenly stopped and he froze to the spot, waiting for something else to happen.

But there was nothing, no heat, no steam, nothing, except the continuous trickle of white light from below. Tom stopped, momentarily confused and feeling somewhat disorientated. Then, as before, the ground suddenly began to shake again. This time, however, the shaking was so violent that escape no longer seemed like an option. The deafening roar of rocks and debris shattered the silence as they began to fall around him.

Then, in a moment of sheer terror, the chamber floor suddenly gave way and exploded into a plethora of brilliant white light.

Tom screamed as he lost his footing and found himself careering downwards into the nightmarish abyss. As he fell, he lunged at a protruding rock and watched in horror as the ground that he had been kneeling on only moments earlier disappeared into the nothingness below. Clinging desperately to the rock for his life, Tom gritted his teeth and with his heart thumping and fingers sweating, struggled with all of his strength to pull himself to safety. His efforts were in vain, the floor was already beginning to collapse. His fingers slipping, Tom closed his eyes in preparation for what was to come. Then losing his battle to hold on, he took a deep breath and began to fall.

Unexpectedly, from nowhere, a large hand grabbed his arm. “Let go lad, it’s okay I’ve got ye.”



For a moment Tom was confused. He thought that he should be dead.

“What?”

Opening his eyes, he looked upwards and saw a shadowy figure through the brightness. Then glancing downwards, he began to panic again as he saw nothing below – no rocks, no ground, nothing but piercing white light! Tom shrieked in alarm, “I, I can’t, I’ll fall.”

“Nae ye won’t. Trust me laddie, it’s okay. You’re only few meters off the ground.”

“What?”

Tom suddenly yelled out in alarm as the figure released its grip and he fell downwards only to land on his feet just a metre or so below. As Tom looked up towards the shadowy figure above, his expression turned to one of disbelief as he was overcome by the intensity of the blinding light. As he tried to shield his eyes, the voice above spoke again. “Here lad, use the rope ... climb up.”

A coil of rope appeared and Tom grasped an end and sighed with relief as he felt himself being hauled upwards. However before he had a chance to say thank you, he found himself lying flat out on the cave floor, only centimetres from yet another gaping precipice and possible death. Coughing and spluttering Tom took a deep breath just as his rescuer came into focus. A large scruffy dark haired figure, unusually dressed in some kind of costume, cotton shirt and a pair of old fashioned breeches, possibly eighteenth century. Tom opened his mouth to speak; the big man slapped him on the shoulder and spoke, “So laddie. Who the bloody hell are ye?”

Tom Duncan just gazed at the man, not only trying to comprehend what just happened, but also who his saviour was. The figure in front of him simply grinned, “Aye, laddie that’s just how I felt when I first saw it. The names Dougie Allan, what’s yours?”

Still speechless, Tom merely murmured and pointed his finger towards the drop. “Er, Tom. Tom Duncan. I, I don’t understand, where did you come from? What the hell is that?”

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Dougie's smile faded and his expression turned serious, still aware that the sheer drop was only meters away. "If it's alright with ye laddie, I think we had better move away from this place, what do ye think?"

Tom nodded in agreement as both men pulled themselves upwards and walked out back into the safety of the passageway, then out towards the mouth of the cavern.

At the entrance, both men flopped onto the ground breathing heavily. Tom looked at his strangely dressed saviour and repeated the question. "So, Mr Allan, where did you come from? What's with the costume?"

Dougie looked at Tom with some surprise, "Why, it's nae polite tae criticise another person's clothing. Why, I could say the same about you!"

Tom didn't respond. First because he struggled to understand Dougie, the man's accent was strange, although familiar. It was unusual, old Scots perhaps, almost foreign. Second he sensed that this angel of mercy could perhaps be easily offended.

Dougie continued, "To be honest, I don't ken. One minute I was in the mine, the next ... McArthur, then I found myself here."

Tom's face turned to confusion. "Mine, but Mr Allan, there is no mine. It shut down over 200 years ago."

Offended, Dougie suddenly jumped to his feet, "Are you calling me a liar Sir? I was just there."

The cold expression on Dougie's face was deadly serious. "No Mr Allan, I'm not calling you a liar. It's just that there is, no mine, there hasn't been in over 200 years."

Dougie's mouth gaped open in bewilderment.

"Then how ..." Dougie's head dropped as he fell to his knees. "No, my Mary, my bonnie lassie, she's, gone?"

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Tom stared at Dougie sympathetically, desperately trying to find the right words to offer some comfort. “Mr Allan, I’m so sorry, I don’t know what to say.”

“Neither do I lad, neither do I. For me it’s 1710 and I’ve lost my whole life.”

Minutes passed and the two men sat still in silence, staring at each other, each man seemingly contemplating his own future. Looking up, Tom broke the silence. “Mr Allan, may I call you Dougie?”

Dougie gave a smirk, “Aye laddie, of course ye can.”

“I don’t know what this place is or what’s happened here. But, whatever it is, it must be for a reason and if you are in agreement let me help you. Hopefully we’ll find some answers together.”

“Aye, agreed.” Nodding, Dougie extended his large hand and both men shook in agreement.

“So perhaps a good place to start would be at the beginning. You mentioned someone called McArthur. Did he have something to do with you being here?”

Dougie sat back and frowned. “Aye, well I suppose in a way he did. It was because of him that I took the bloody job in the first place. Ten pounds a month tae be mine manager ...”

Dougie’s head dropped and he sighed. “Ten pounds. Well at the time it seemed to good tae be true.”

## Two

### Wednesday 25th November 1709 – Alva, Scotland

James Ritchie was thoroughly miserable. The carriage ride from Falkirk had been cold, damp and uncomfortable. If that wasn't enough, it was raining and not just a light rain either. It was, as the locals would say, "bucketing down". Menacing storm clouds were casting great shadows, low across the Ochil hills. It was only half past four in the afternoon, but already the brightness of day was disappearing into night. The gloomy sky just added to Ritchie's misery, reminding him of the shorter days and long wintery nights which were fast approaching.

As a boy, Ritchie had been lucky enough to have had a little schooling and, as a result, he had found employment with John Hardie Ltd, a Falkirk-based land surveying company. In the early days, he had loved his job and found it new and exciting. When he had joined the company at the age of twelve, old Mr Hardie had remarked that he showed great promise and took it upon himself to equip Ritchie with the skills needed in the business. However, nine years later, that all changed when the old man suddenly died of a heart attack. After the funeral, William, the elder of the two surviving Hardie sons, moved quickly to take control of his father's company. From that point on, what had once been a promising career for the 28 year old became nothing more than a workaday position as a courier, responsible for the delivery of mundane documents to mundane clients.

As the carriage, bumped and jerked its way along the rough track, Ritchie drew breath, shook his head and sighed in sheer disbelief at how stupid he had been. Brushing down his once smart bottle green coat with his hand, he gazed down at the brown leather satchel sitting on his lap. In his head he could hear his wife's voice repeating over and over, "I told ye so. I told ye he would make a bloody fool out of ye."

“Aye Jenny,” Ritchie thought, “you’re right, as usual.”

Looking outwards towards the hills, Ritchie noticed the familiar outline of three neglected, almost derelict farm cottages, indicating their arrival in Alva. Taking a deep breath, he groped under his seat, fumbling and eventually retrieving a large wooden stick. Firmly taking hold of one end, he proceeded to bang the carriage roof three times in order to get the drivers attention. After a few momentary jerks, Ritchie felt the carriage begin to slow and eventually it rocked to a halt. The carriage shook as the driver leaned over and cleared his throat, “Are ye okay Mr Ritchie, Sir?”

Ritchie sat up and leaned out of the right side of the carriage, straining his neck as he attempted to make eye contact with the driver. “Aye I’m braw, Tam. How much further?”

The elderly driver held his breath for what seemed like an eternity while he surveyed the location. “Well, this is it, Alva! What was the name o’ the chap that ye were wantin’ tae see?”

Looking down at the satchel, Ritchie untied its leather laces and pulled out several pieces of parchment. After a moment of struggling with the deteriorating light, he eventually made out the name. Clearing his throat, he again strained towards the driver. “Douglas Allan,” he shouted.

“Oh Dougie, aye, in that case we’re just about there.”

The carriage juddered again as Tam repositioned himself back into his driving seat. After a loud crack of his whip the carriage once again rocked into motion. With barely enough time to return the documents to the satchel, the horses were once again slowing. Ritchie sat up and adjusted his tunic in an attempt to make himself look a little more presentable.

As the carriage rocked for a final time, the elderly, somewhat scruffy, driver jumped down, walked around and pulled open the right hand side carriage door. Placing the satchel under his right arm, Ritchie jumped out of the coach that, even in the rain and after two hours of an

uncomfortable journey, was a welcomed relief. As he looked around, Tam the driver was already climbing back up to his seat.

“What time would ye like tae return tae Falkirk Mr Ritchie, Sir?”

Pausing for thought, Ritchie replied, “Could ye please stay? I shouldn’t think I’d be tae long.” Repositioning himself in the driver’s seat, Tam nodded in acknowledgment and replied, “Aye, nae bother.”

Ahead of him, Douglas Allan’s modest but well maintained cottage; a warm inviting glow coming from inside. After hours of sitting on a cold, unpadded seat the thought of some home comfort seemed appealing. As Ritchie approached the door, the delicious aroma of home cooking, drifted by, reminding him by means of a stomach rumble that he was hungry. Placing the satchel under one arm, he paused to take a breath and then knocked three times. After a few moments muffled voices could be heard from inside along with the sounds of approaching footsteps.

The door swung open to reveal an attractive woman in her late twenties. She was tall with long, dark, platted hair. Dressed in a dark green bodice and long flowing skirt, her bright blue eyes surveyed Richie and she smiled politely.

“May I help ye Sir?”

Ritchie nodded in return, “Aye, good evening tae ye. My name’s James Ritchie and I’m lookin’ for a Mister Douglas Allan. Have I come tae the right place?”

“Aye Sir ye have,” she replied. “Would ye like tae speak with him?”

Ritchie nodded, “Aye, ma’am that would be much appreciated.”

The young woman briefly turned her head inward and Ritchie sensed that she was silently beckoning to someone inside. Then came the sound of a man’s voice, “Mary, don’t leave the poor man standing ‘oot there in the cold, invite him into the warm.”

The woman turned her head back to Ritchie and stepped back, swinging the door open.

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“Aye, would ye come away in then Mister Ritchie?”

Entering the humble but inviting room, Ritchie’s eyes immediately caught sight of the remains of an apparent evening meal. On top of a long wooden table stood two wooden bowls, a small loaf of bread and two mugs.

To the left, there was an open fire over which hung a large iron pot. On the right there was what appeared to be a sleeping area, divided by a large tartan blanket, tied to either side of the opening in the stone wall.

As he stepped forward, the woollen blanket parted and a tall, unshaven, powerful-looking, dark-haired man in his thirties appeared, dressed in dark tanned breeches, white shirt and a woollen waistcoat.

“Good evening, Sir. Ye’ll be from Mr Hardie’s office, aye?”

Feeling somewhat intimidated at the sight of this gentle giant, Ritchie placed the satchel on the table and politely extended his hand. As the two men shook hands, Ritchie couldn’t help thinking that he wouldn’t like to get on the wrong side of Dougie Allan.

“Aye Sir, my name is James Ritchie. Mr Hardie has sent me with a proposal for ye tae consider.”

Releasing hands, Ritchie reached for the satchel. “If ye will permit me tae stay a while tae talk it through with ye, it would be good o’ ye.”

“Aye, of course ye can.”

A moment later, the door was closed and the woman was standing beside her husband. “Mr Ritchie, Sir, this is my wife, Mary. She makes a fine broth and you look cold Sir, would ye care for a bowl?”

Giving a courteous but enthusiastic nod, Ritchie smiled, “Aye, it smells grand, Mr Allan, that’d be braw.”

**Commented [A1]:** Just thought, if he is seeing it he will know if there are two or three.

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Pulling out a wooden stool, Ritchie sat, as Dougie placed a tankard full of milk in front of him. Moments later, Mary returned with a wooden bowl full of steaming, thick vegetable broth. Thanking her, Ritchie picked up a spoon and eagerly ate the hot soup in barely a minute. Then, as Dougie and Mary grinned at each other, he reached for the tankard of milk and enthusiastically gulped down half the contents.

Dougie stood up and walked over to the small fireplace; he reached down towards a pile of misshaped logs and picking up two and placed them carefully on the dying embers of the fire. Seconds later, the fire seemed to burst into life again, revived like a thirsty man who had just been given a glass of water.

“It’s good tae see ye enjoy your food Mr Ritchie, my wife will be pleased that ye liked her broth. Now, if ye please, tell me more aboot this proposal from Hardie that ye mentioned.”

Swallowing the remainder of the milk, Ritchie wiped his lips on his sleeve and placed the tankard to the table. Turning to his left, he could see that Mary had risen and made to move towards the large blanket dividing the room.

“It’s fitting if I leave ye tae your business, gentlemen,” she said as she walked away.

Both men suddenly stood as if Mary had royal blood running thorough her veins.

Ritchie smiled and nodded with a sense of genuine gratitude. “I’m most thankful for your kindness Missus Allan.”

The young woman smiled and gave a nod before disappearing behind the blanket.

As the fire crackled in the semi darkness of the cottage both men returned to their seats. Staring at each other on opposite sides of the table, Ritchie leaned across, picked up the leather satchel and untied the drawstring. Opening the bag, he reached inside and pulled out two large pieces of parchment.

“Mr Allan, ye will be familiar with the Erskine folk and their plans for the silver mine?”



Dougie smiled wryly, “Och aye I ken all about the plans. But I don’t want tae get involved with politics.”

Ritchie raised his eyebrows, “Ye will forgive me for sayin’ so, but this has nothing tae do with Sir John’s Jacobean interests. This is purely business Mister Allan.”

“Aye, well in that case I’ve known about the plans, and that ye had a bit o’ bother with safeguarding things I hear!”

Pausing for a moment as if to catch his breath, Ritchie swallowed and said, “Aye, well, if you are referring tae McArthur then ye’d be right, but there has been nae evidence tae suggest that any stealing has taken place,” he paused for a second and then continued, “on the contrary, there’s nae evidence at all.”

Looking down at the parchment Ritchie paused and gazed back at Dougie, who looked genuinely confused.

Ritchie continued, “Mr Allan, my employer has given me power tae seek ye oot tae secure your services. Mr Hardie would like tae offer ye the position of Mine Manager for the forthcoming project and he is willing tae pay ye a most excellent salary o’ ten pounds sterling each month.”

Dougie sighed, stood up and walked across to where a clay pipe and a small box of tobacco sat on a table beside the fireplace. Picking up the pipe, he took a handful of tobacco from the box and fills the pipe. Kneeling down at the fireplace, he picked up a small piece of wood and used it to light his pipe. Moments later, small circles of bluish-grey smoke rose from the pipe as the sweet aroma of burning tobacco filled the room. He then stepped back across to the table and re-took his seat.

“Ten pounds sterling each month? That’s a lot o’ money Mr Ritchie Sir. Sounds tae me like there may be more tae the matter than meets the eye?”

Well at least it was a positive comment thought Ritchie. It's obvious he was interested; after all he didn't say no, did he?

"Ten pounds for a good job done, Mr Allan – that's all. Mr Hardie just needs tae be certain that nae more mishaps take place."

"Mishaps?" said the big man, "Is that another word fer trickery?"

"Nae trickery or anything else Mr Allan, it's just that Sir John would rather see any silver taken from his land remain in his family rather than folks like McArthur getting' at it, I'm sure ye understand."

Looking at Ritchie, Dougie raised his eyebrows, "I will tell you Sir, I don't know this McArthur myself, but from what I've heard, he's a good man."

"I never said he wasn't Sir, it's just a wee bit suspicious."

Ritchie glanced down at the papers and looked back at Dougie, who was still puffing away at his pipe.

For a moment Ritchie thought he had struck a nerve and upset the big man. Deciding that he didn't want to offend any further, getting to the point seemed to be the best course of action. Ritchie said, "Until there is evidence there's nae a lot we can do. The fact is though, Mr Allan, Sir John has need of a manager." Pausing for breath Ritchie sighed then continued, "So Mr Allan Sir, ten pounds sterling per month tae manage the mine and ensure good security is maintained. Do we have a deal?"

Dougie leaned back and took one final puff of his pipe, placed it on the table and licked his lips. With a small grin appearing on his face he leaned forward, "Aye, Mr Ritchie, Sir. Aye, ye have a deal."

With the agreement made the two men shook hands. Ritchie felt satisfied, almost as if he had conquered some ancient foe and the feeling of intimidation that he experienced at the

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beginning of their meeting had now faded. Who knows, he thought, perhaps even Mr Hardie will be pleased at the result.

It was around 7 pm when James Ritchie finally left the Allan's. With the satisfaction of the deal done and the contract signed, Ritchie bid farewell.

"Ye should be there first thing Monday morning Mr Allan, and all the best of luck tae ye."

Dougie smiled in return, "And to ye sir, and to ye. Goodnight."

Within minutes Ritchie's carriage had departed. All that could be heard was the faint muffled sound of carriage wheels disappearing into the darkness.

Dougie closed the wooden door.

"Is he away?" came a soft voice from behind.

"Aye," said Dougie softly. Mary approached and wrapped her arms around him. Her hair was soft and he stroked the back of her head as they hugged.

"Are ye sure aboot that job Dougie?"

Pulling her head gently backwards with his large hands, he stared into her blue eyes. "Aye, my love, it'll be braw and besides its nae often that its possible tae earn ten pounds for a month's work, is it?" Dougie again embraced his wife; continuing to stroke her hair, he felt her take a deep breath and then softly exhale.

"Aye, Dougie, I suppose it's nae," she whispered.