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Dedication

This novel is dedicated to my wife Pat. Without her bright spirit, patience, and untiring support, *God's House* would not exist. She made this all possible.

Acknowledgements

My agent, Al Longden, believed in me. He helped assure my writing was professionally vetted and market worthy. Thank you, Al. We're getting traction at last.

Ernest Hemingway once said, "There is no such thing as writing, only rewriting." Novels are indeed that way. I would never have made it without a loyal cadre of readers and editors who assiduously scanned years of drafts with eagle eyes and brutally honest criticism. Each time they touched my words, my novels got better. Kay Jewett deserves special credit.

Don Bendell – a writer himself, friend, patriot, and a real-life Special OPs hero – helped a lot. Don said writing novels would change me, and it did. Tony Hillerman deserves mention, as does his daughter, Anne, and her colleague Jean. Tony gave me the best novelist advice I've ever gotten, plus personal support and encouragement when I was about to give up. Tony was a true gentleman, gracious to a fault. My fellow novelist, Robert Kresge, a founding member of CIA's Counterterrorism Unit, also gets a nod.

Two departed friends deserve thanks: Captain Langford C. Metzger, a Vietnam hero who gave me early encouragement, and Tom Holce, a legendary Oregon entrepreneur and Angel Investor who explained the byzantine financial details and connections of a major church swindle.

I've been blessed to live in a culture that values exceptionalism, and to have a life that has touched interesting events and people. It was freedom, innovation, and a career in technology at the peak of "the American Century" that helps give context for my writings, and it is freedom, innovation, and technology that let me break through and got my books published.

So many people have contributed to the publication and success of this book: I thank you all for your inspiration, friendship, and support. Finally, you, my readers, are most important of all. Thank you for choosing this book. If you like it, please tell your friends.

Testimonials for God's House

“GOD’S HOUSE is a must-read for those who like to have their breath catch while reading a novel. Mix a little bit of THE DaVINCI CODE, FIREWALL, and Tom Clancy’s Jack Ryan together, and you will begin to get a glimpse of this exciting, suspenseful global intrigue-filled techno-thriller by John D. Trudel. Trudel has really done it with this exciting story woven around the reluctant hero, Jack Donner, a powerful church, the UN, and government spy bosses. I simply give readers fair-warning: DO NOT start this book unless you have some hours to spare, or you will miss appointments, dates, and ball games to finish it. GOD’S HOUSE – read it at your own risk . . . you will wet your pants.”

Don Bendell

*Don Bendell served as an officer in Special Forces and was in the Top Secret Phoenix Program, is a top-selling author of 26 books, with over 2,500,000 copies of his books in print. His most recent is **Tracks of Hope**.*

Fast-paced, compelling, intelligent and impossible to put down. *God's House* has everything you expect from a thriller, including a tough, big-hearted hero—Jack Donner—with whom you can go to the ends of the earth and enjoy every breath-taking moment. A fine début novel from John D. Trudel, definitely a thriller writer to watch.

Margaret Coel, author of *The Perfect Suspect*.

“In thirty years of teaching English, I’ve covered most of the classic narratives. Viktor Frankenstein’s creation confides to Captain Walton that he is evil because he was not allowed to love or be loved. The deep cover persona of John Black also could neither love nor be loved. Yet, John Black/Jack Donner faced evil, named it as the enemy, and fought it unceasingly. In the end, he finds a chance for love to grow. The story works at many levels and its characters are compelling. GOD’S HOUSE is as new and timely as tomorrow, but as old as corruption, treachery, and deceit. Don’t miss this début novel by an exciting writer who knows his craft. Read the book and tell your friends.”

Charles H. Moody

“John Trudel has captured the language, procedures, and frustrations of people working in the intelligence community perfectly. GOD’S HOUSE is a plausible story that could yet be ripped from tomorrow’s headlines. His harrowing descriptions of the situation in Nigeria hit home even more forcefully now that the world is following the progress of the Arab Spring. A good premise, tight writing, sympathetic but desperate characters, and a masterful storyteller. What a combination. I can’t wait to read Trudel’s next thriller.”

Rob Kresge, retired senior CIA counterterrorist analyst and author of *Murder for Greenhorns*, 2011 finalist for the Bruce Alexander Memorial Award for Best Historical Mystery of the Year

“Trudel's GOD'S HOUSE has everything the best thrillers offer: sharply drawn characters, crisp and realistic dialogue, and mounting suspense. Jack Donner, the main protagonist, possess enough cynicism and hardened experience to effectively tackle and defeat any espionage bureaucracy that might stand in his way or sabotage his efforts in his fight against corruption and iniquity. This consummate thriller-suspense story is brilliantly imagined, vividly drawn, and rich in incident and detail. A must read for all intelligence/espionage aficionados.”

Roger Croft, Author, *The Wayward Spy*

"GOD'S HOUSE is a great read. If I saw it in an airport and started it, I'd buy it. Recommended."

Jerry Pournelle, Award Winning Author

God's House

“There are at least two kinds of games. One should be called finite, the other infinite. A finite game is played for the purpose of winning, an infinite game for the purpose of continuing the game.”

James P. Carse, *Finite and Infinite Games*

Chapter 1 – Homecoming

Seattle, Washington

Jack Donner sighed, venting deep frustration. He waited for the other passengers to disembark before he stretched and rose to his feet, careful not to bump his head on the overhead bins. One or two passengers gave him odd looks as they filed past, but he pretended not to notice.

He'd been traveling for four days, but it felt longer.

The 29-hour flight across the Pacific had been interminable. He'd come halfway around the world, running for home, running from horror.

He'd broken his own rules by stopping for an overnight in Japan because he desperately needed rest. His hands were shaking and his eyes felt like sandpaper. Unfortunately, the only lodging available near the airport was a business hotel with claustrophobic sleeping rooms. The space was like a shoebox and his futon was too small. He lay awake most of the night staring at the ceiling, arms folded on his chest, legs dangling, startled by each strange sound.

Jack's nerves were raw and his mind was churning. Each time he started to nod off his subconscious sent him danger signals and jerked him to full alertness. Sleep was impossible.

*He forced himself to stop thinking about the past weeks. Second guessing made things worse. **That way lies madness.** Last year, a friend stuck a gun in his own mouth and pulled the trigger. Jack didn't want to end up that way.*

He finally gave up, shaved, showered, and put on his cleanest dirty clothes. He had warm rice and tepid tea back in the terminal. The meal was a lump in his stomach. Jack wasn't fond of rice. Pouring soy sauce over it helped some. At least he managed to keep it down.

He upgraded to business class and waited four more hours to board. When the plane was airborne he reclined the seat into a bed and finally dozed off.

Sleep was fitful. He kept waking up disoriented, wondering where he was. His exhaustion seemed more than physical and the nightmares were the worst he'd had for a long time. The flight attendants woke him twice because he was moaning loudly, bothering the other passengers.

Jack was glad he'd shipped the body separately. It was a reminder of failure. The mission was another exercise in futility, the third in two years. He was getting tired of that too. More than tired. Angry.

When they finally touched down on U.S. soil he was thankful to be home. This mission had been rough. He had enough of stupid rules and dumb-assed political accommodations.

Jack nodded at the cabin crew as he passed. "Nice landing." It didn't hurt to be polite. Hell, any landing you could walk away from was a good landing.

The young pilot smiled appreciation.

Jack strolled down the concourse, taking an escalator down to the luggage carousel. Baggage was slow, as always.

It didn't matter. This time there was no hurry.

When his lone bag appeared, he shouldered it and headed for customs, fitting himself into the longest line. The one that said, "U.S. citizens with nothing to declare."