

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF  
THE EXTINCTION SERIES



# THE FIFTH KIND

A S C E N S I O N

JAMES D. PRESCOTT



THE  
FIFTH KIND  

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**JAMES D. PRESCOTT**

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## **Books by James D. Prescott**

The Genesis Conspiracy

Augmented

Extinction Code

Extinction Countdown

Extinction Crisis

The Fifth Kind: Arrival

The Fifth Kind: Awakening

The Fifth Kind: Ascension

## **Dedication**

To my editor RJ, my incredible beta team, and my dedicated readers.

## **Character List:**

**Dr. Katherine Shepard:** Civilian expert in languages and exobiology.

**Colonel Devon Peters:** Administrative head of the UFO crash retrieval program (CRP).

**Commander Bradshaw:** Director of the CRP.

**Dr. Debra Mercer:** Medical research director at Joint Base Andrews.

**Special Agent Dwight Douglas:** FBI agent. Runs the Washington, D.C., field office.

**Desiree Douglas:** Dwight's elder daughter. Drax agent.

**Monique Douglas:** Dwight's younger daughter.

**Special Agent Sue Keller:** FBI agent. Washington, D.C., field office.

**Anastasia Petrova:** Computer prodigy.

**Miguel Alvarez:** Delta operator. Marksman.

**Jake Thompson:** Delta operator. Communications specialist.

**Nash:** Delta operator. Heavy weapons.

**Dr. Rajan Singh:** Lead scientist for the CRP.

**U.S. Senator Donovan Ravencroft:** Drax replacement.

**Isadora:** Thalasian assassin and operative.

**Dr. Mateo Vargas:** Physicist who discovered the fifth force.

“There are multiple accounts from credible witnesses, including senior military officials, of UFOs disabling nuclear weapons. This should be a matter of urgent national security interest.”

—Christopher Mellon  
**Former Deputy Assistant  
Secretary of Defense  
for Intelligence**

# Act 1

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Ezekiel's Wheel



# CHAPTER 1

## **Aurora, Texas, 1897**

The townspeople stood in the dusty road, decked out in their finest. Although this wasn't so much a meeting as it was an inauguration, perhaps even a celebration.

With a population just shy of 400 souls, Aurora wasn't big enough to justify a full-time mayor. These were simple farmers and ranchers, after all, struggling to eke out a living in an unforgiving environment. As a result, there were no signs of ostentatious wealth here, only decent God-fearing folks who fought every day to stave off famine, locusts, disease, and a host of other threats, natural and unnatural.

All of which made the brand-new water tower, the town's first, all the more impressive. In the end, it had cost \$300 and taken six weeks to build, an endeavor spearheaded by Henry McCulloch. Originally from the Isle of Skye, Scotland, he had emigrated to America with less than a dollar in his pocket. Over the next fifteen years, he had worked every menial job imaginable, eventually earning enough to head west. Today, he was a rancher with 100 head of Hereford cows. He was also the de facto leader of Aurora.

While he had had a remarkable beginning, the water tower itself was no less impressive. Built from wrought iron, it rose sixty feet into the air, by far the tallest structure within 500 miles. Its presence served as a symbol of the bright future that lay ahead for the humble town of Aurora.

Henry rose and gripped the edges of the podium, blinking away the oppressive heat from the midafternoon sun bearing down on him. His heart filled with pride as he began his speech.

He had gotten no further than a dozen words into his prepared remarks when he caught sight of a glimmer in the distance. Focused on the task at hand, Henry drew his attention back to the festivities until that glimmer became a flash.

A handful of onlookers seemed to notice the brief pause in Henry's speech, along with the crease forming on his brow. They turned, curious about what had caught his attention, and gasped at what they saw. A deafening roar accompanied the terrifying sight, shattering the peaceful tranquility and replacing it with panic.

The world was ending, Henry was certain of it.

The object, a ball of flame the size of the general store, streaked overhead, no higher than twenty yards. The townspeople recoiled, fearful they were about to be incinerated by the very hand of God. Instead, the object veered to the left and collided with the newly minted tower. The resulting explosion of water, steam, and steel was tremendous.

Henry and the other dignitaries dived for cover. A half second later, the object struck the ground, shaking them violently. If the Lord wasn't punishing them for their sins, it surely felt that way.

The moment the fire and brimstone was over, Henry scrambled to his feet, aware that the world had, in fact, not ended. And apart from having been nearly scared to death, everyone present appeared to be unharmed. Rushing to the edge of the clearing, he surveyed the damage.

The water tower was no more. That much was clear. But the once-empty field behind Aurora's main thoroughfare now bore a long, ragged scar where the object had impacted the ground. Curls of smoke rose from the gash where the earth had been torn up, as though churned by a giant's plow.

Hunks of metal littered the debris field, a mixture of the water tower and whatever had hit it. In the distance, Henry could only just make out the contours of the object. It was no longer on fire—the water tower had seen to that. Instead, it was blinking through a series of colors that bore no resemblance to anything he had ever seen before.

Just then, a sandy-haired boy named Timothy ran up to him, his clothes wet from the watery explosion. The child began frantically waving in the object's direction. Henry's gaze bounced between the boy and the object, still blinking and smoking.

"Do you know what that thing is, son?" Henry asked, his mind reeling.

The boy nodded. "Pa read it to us last night in the Good Book."

A look of surprise flashed across Henry's weathered features. "Did he now?"

"Yessir. Sure as shine, there ain't no doubt. That thing we just seen was Ezekiel's Wheel."

# CHAPTER 2

## Present Day

The black Chevy Suburban kicked up a trail of dust as it sped along the backcountry road.

“Slow down, will you?” Dr. Lena Lang snapped, annoyed. Her co-host of the TV program *Paranormal Places*, Dr. John Avery, had a foot she swore was much further down on the periodic table than anything resembling lead.

It was early evening, and the sun was already beginning its retreat, spreading ribbons of gold and orange across the sky. In the back was their director, Marcus Lee. Talented and calculating, he had once been a highly sought-after Hollywood director before reality TV had come along in the early 2000s and cut his career short. Next to him was their producer, Alex Rivera. His background in journalism made him an asset, but his addiction to risky behavior often got them into trouble.

Alex laughed. “You’re lucky I’m not driving.”

Grinning, Lena peered back at him. “I had them put it in my contract. ‘If Alex gets behind the wheel again, I walk.’”

A light shone in John’s eyes. As the host, he was ruggedly handsome—that much wasn’t a shock—but also well-educated, with a degree in religious

studies from Yale University. Behind his back, he was often referred to as John “did I mention I went to Yale?” Avery.

That didn’t impress Lena one bit. She’d studied physics at Princeton and spent the following ten years at CERN cracking the secrets of the universe. Then, two years ago, an unexpected offer had fallen into her lap: a guest appearance in a talking head documentary on the History Channel. Cheesy, yes, but it had demonstrated she had both the looks and the brains for show business. Not long after, the network had pitched her on a new program they were putting together called *Paranormal Places*. The premise was simple: in each episode, she and her co-host, John Avery, would visit remote locations around the world in search of strange and unexplained phenomena.

She was a devout skeptic, while John, on the other hand, believed just about anything put in front of him. Lena suspected their pairing hadn’t been as accidental as it might seem. The tension between the two was evident on and off air. The truth was, she found John arrogant and perhaps even a little gullible. Of course, she would never say any of that to his face. His ego was far too delicate for the full truth.

And yet Lena was also aware she could also be somewhat difficult and inflexible. They were opposites. For the purposes of the show, at least, the odd pairing worked well. The ratings were strong, and the History Channel had already ordered a third season.

That was why they’d come to the Apache Hollow cave in Texas, a vast subterranean system that was said to be haunted. Over the years, a laundry list of bizarre supernatural occurrences had been attributed to the caves: werewolves, chupacabra, and even vengeful spirits.

As far as she was concerned, all of it amounted to a giant sack of BS. A remote Texas mining town in the middle of nowhere suddenly becoming a

hotbed of paranormal activity just as the municipality had been on the verge of bankruptcy? The coincidence was too hard to ignore. None of this had made a difference to John, of course. Growing up in the region, he'd heard the stories for years. So when he'd pitched this location for the first episode of season three, no one had been one bit surprised.

"How's the equipment holding up?" Marcus asked Alex.

"So far, so good," Alex replied. "We got it tucked away in Faraday cages."

In the last few weeks, the sun had grown even more unstable, bombarding the Earth with plasma storms multiple times a day. In most cases, the only logical response had been to protect anything electronic, lest it should get zapped and turned into a rather expensive brick.

Marcus nodded, apparently working out a few final points of the script. They would arrive at the entrance just after nightfall, find it sealed shut, and then retreat to town. There they would wait for morning and question the locals on what they knew. In the end, they would find no sign of anything, leaving Lena to secretly wonder whether the inflated History Channel paycheck was worth selling her soul.

Knowing Alex, perhaps she should have guessed that wasn't how things would turn out.

They pulled up to the cave entrance a dozen miles outside of town. Lena got out and stretched her legs. John did the same, checking his reflection in the side mirror and warming up his voice. In the distance came the faint echo of a freight train. The light was fading fast.

Marcus opened the back hatch and removed a Canon EOS C300 camera and attached an Aputure LS C300d light. He buzzed around Lena and John