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THE DAWN OF AMBER

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AUTHOR'S NOTE:

The characters in this book are not modeled on anyone who actually exists. Rather, they are combinations of various people I've known and the product of my own somewhat bizarre imagination. With very few exceptions, any resemblance to actual people or events is unintentional and coincidental. All errors, technical and otherwise, are my own.

For the late Dr. Leonard N. Ozeroff

I wish to give my sincerest thanks to the following people:

To my wife Cyndi and my children Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, Jordan, Barry Jr., and Andrew—I'm sorry for the unrecoverable lost time, I really am. You deserved more from me. To my mother Sheila Ozeroff (whom I have placed on a pedestal so high I can no longer see her), thank you for your unending enthusiasm and support, which actually kept me going when I gave thought to throwing in the towel. To my brother and fellow author Mark Ozeroff, thanks for all your invaluable input, editorial suggestions, and other help.

To my other brother, Captain David F. Ozeroff, USN:

You were manning your post all the while, and I salute you.

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This book is dedicated to America's domestic

warriors; men and women who, though they wear

different uniforms and patches, are all still part of the same army. These are the heroes who run toward the sound of gunfire; the officers, deputies, and troopers who man our country's internal front lines against an ever growing tide of homegrown evil. Every day they push a sled around the worst areas of town, going head to head with and taking crap they don't need from people everyone else is afraid of. Too often they must see and do things that should be asked of no human, and only occasionally do they get to do things that make it all seem worthwhile. How is it that I always hear them say, "Can you believe they actually pay us to do this?"

You stay safe out there, all of you.

Prologue

Red and blue stroboscopic lightning cut through the venetian blinds and ricocheted off the frightened faces surrounding me. Sticking to the shadows with my back to the wall, I crept to the window and peeked between the slats.