

Let me begin by saying I'm surprised to be sitting here with this book, *The Book of David*, in hand. I'd hoped not to have it published. Indeed, I counselled Sandra Kasturi and Brett Savory, my lovely publishers, to cut their losses on the first volume in what will likely be a long and tiresome series. Yet, despite my best efforts to convince them otherwise, they insisted on publishing *The Book of David*, telling me that they had formed Chizine with the intent of publishing works they thought had merit rather than books that would sell. With this volume, I believe they will achieve this goal. So thank you Brett and Sandra, and let me say that I admire and respect your dedication to the literary arts, if not your business acumen.

For the benefit of those who have not read the first volume (and, based on the sales figures, I assume that's most of you), I'd like to summarize the story thus far: Bad things happen. Lots of bad things. For example, *The Book of Thomas* contains, in chronological order, wholly gratuitous scenes of torture, paedophilia, human trafficking, rape, murder, a naughty Pope, assassination, more sacrilege than you can shake a stick at, and radiation poisoning.

Having set the bar this low, I was worried I might not be able to pull off a second volume, but am happy to report that *The Book of David* exceeds the first volume in every conceivable way. It includes: a scandalous teen pregnancy; a violent, drug-induced abortion; numerous crucifixions; torture of children; sexual violence of all stripes; drug addiction; plague; pestilence; riot; war; multiple human and angelic immolations; additional radiation poisoning and the consequent massive loss of life; the wanton destruction of sacred icons and sites; a zombie fetus; several needless hallucinatory, dream sequences; and, worst of all, a book that contains all books, thus putting publishers and book dealers out of business. In short, quite possibly the finest book I've ever written.

But perhaps the best summary of this excessive novel came from a bewildering email my wife sent, one which, I think, nicely sums up the work: "Oh and I do like your book with a special little man who can do anything except what u really need him to do. Oh wait? Like Jesus! I like real human situations best and that's just my shortcoming as a reader. My imagination can go along with wicked towers into the skies of heaven and actually that's cool but a little magic man who changes before my eyes can fuck off. Still can't stop reading."

Now, the more astute listeners among you may have noted that I've yet to read anything from my book. Thus, to fulfil my obligation to do a reading, and to honour my wife's astute critique of my work, I have chosen to read the dedication from *The Book of David*: "To Karen, without whom I wouldn't have a wife."

Thank you.