

"GRIPPING AND TERRIFYING. . . . AN INTENSE EXPERIENCE,
AND ONE NOT TO BE MISSED!" —ROBERT McCAMMON

LITTLE HEAVEN

A NOVEL

NATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR

NICK CUTTER

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A Novel

NICK CUTTER

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ADAM GORHAM



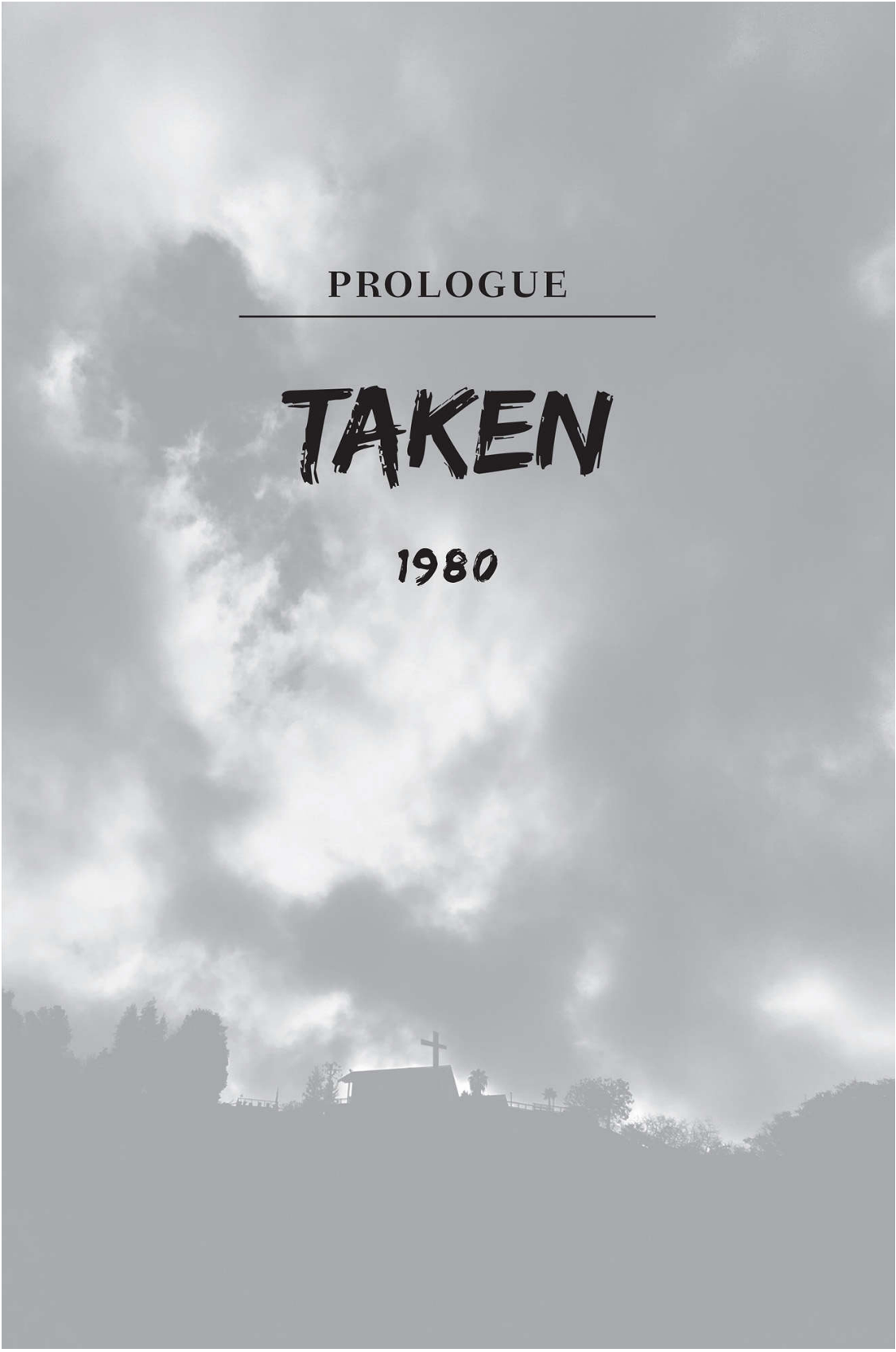
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There was a house made of dawn. It was made of pollen and of rain, and the land was very old and everlasting. There were many colors on the hills, and the plain was bright with different-colored clays and sands.

—N. Scott Momaday

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PROLOGUE

TAKEN

1980

THERE IS A SAYING THAT GOES: *Evil never dies; it merely sleeps.*
And when that evil awakes, it can do so soundlessly—or almost so.

Even insects can scream.

The little aphid did, though at a register too high for any human ear to perceive. It toiled in the root system of a cactus plant growing on the edge of the New Mexico desert. An insect so small that it was practically invisible to the naked eye.

This was how it would begin again. The wheel coming around.

While the aphid fed on sugars deposited in the cactus roots, something curled up from the blackest recesses of the earth. It slipped inside the aphid's body. If there was any pain—and yes, there would be—the insect was unable to articulate its agony beyond that thin scream.

The aphid trundled up the root stem, through the loose-packed sand, up onto one of the cactus's fleshy leaves. There it encountered a honey ant, which fed on the honeydew that aphids produce.

Their antennae touched briefly. Whatever had stolen inside the aphid slipped soundlessly into the ant—something as inessential as the smoke billowing from the chimney of a charnel house.

The aphid erupted with a tiny pressurized hiss.

The ant returned to its hill, skittering through a fall of lemony afternoon sunlight. It disappeared down the hole. Shortly afterward, the hill emptied, ants pouring forth in furious multitudes.

The ants organized themselves in a skirmish line like soldiers on the march, and proceeded determinedly until they came to the burrow of a meadow mouse. They filed down the burrow, thousand upon thousand. There came an agonized squeal.

Presently the mouse emerged. It hopped and shook, its skin squirming. The mouse spun a few agitated circles before righting itself and dashing into the dry grass. It paused here and there to gnaw at its flesh, drawing