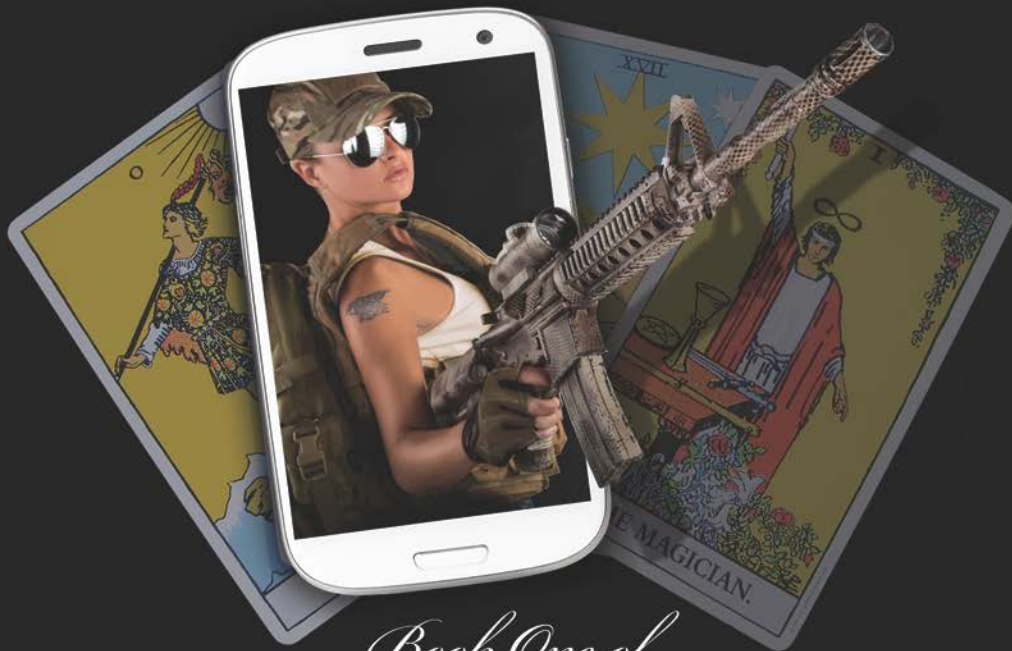


*The* **L**  **ST**  
**AMERICAN**  
**WIZARD**



**TERRY IRVING**



*Book One of*  
**THE NEW ABNORMAL**

## CHAPTER ONE

The airplane crash woke Steven Rowan.

To be completely accurate, it wasn't the crash.

It was the insane screaming of four of the world's largest jet engines being pushed twenty percent past their recommended maximum thrust only thirty feet over his head.

In addition, 'awake' wasn't really the correct term for his current state of consciousness.

He was standing stark naked in the center of the room, jerking back and forth as his mind frantically spun between possibilities, seeking what could be so terribly wrong, and running through options of escape. A small part of his mind was simultaneously working on the less-important questions of who he was, where he was, and what he'd done to himself last night.

The pulsating howl of the jet began to diminish, but the screaming only grew louder and more intense. Suddenly, Steve fell to his knees—hands pounding repeatedly into his temples as he joined in the screaming.

Tears flew from his eyes as he crawled forward and began to pound his head against the glass door to the balcony. He was desperate enough that he hoped the self-inflicted pain would fill his head and diminish the shocking sound, the sheer terror, and the infinite sadness he was feeling.

He felt a sharp spark of agony as the glass broke.

Suddenly, blood began to stream down his face and his head was free of pain. The confusion and terror—the massive wave of emotion—all that continued, but the anguish had ceased. The massive assault of sound split into hundreds of what he could only think of as voices.

Men and women were screaming, a mother was kissing the top of a tiny head and whispering soothing sounds, a man on a cell phone was frantically dialing and re-dialing—desperate to leave a message. In contrast, two men were running through a checklist with professional calm but curses tickled at their throats—fighting to get out.

In the center, he heard a steady sound. A quiet chanting—young voices tinged with success and anticipation.

The glass door exploded.