

J. S. HELIOS

THE RETURN OF
SEDNA

First Edition



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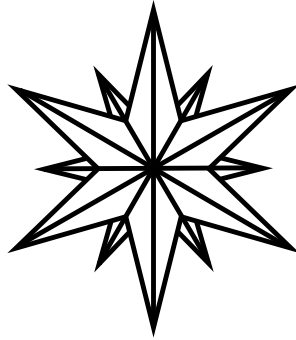
This work of fiction is based on the book *The Final Countdown – What Isaac Newton Failed to Discover*, by the same author.

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man (Gospel of Luke 17:26)



There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming in the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.

(Gospel of Luke 21:25-26).



When you see 'the abomination that causes desolation' standing where it does not belong—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (Gospel of Mark 13:14)

CHAPTER

I

It was after two o'clock in the morning when John Holson Smith, the most senior professor of Religious History at the University of New York, stood up from his desk and turned off his computer.

– I can't take it anymore! – he cried – I can't get rid of these damned headaches!

For more than two years, John had been suffering on an almost daily basis from headaches so severe that the only way of obtaining relief was by taking huge amounts of cerebral vasoconstrictor mediators. As a result, he had come to rely more and more heavily on these drugs, even though he knew he was exposing himself to the risk of a vascular spasm that would affect his brain, leading to ischemia and other even more serious effects. That is, if he didn't die from a stroke first.

As if all that wasn't enough, he was suffering from insomnia. He had great difficulty sleeping, and spent hours tossing and turning in bed. Unlike the headaches, John knew the reason for the insomnia - the absence of Carolina Moreira Knox, the daughter of the American director of a multinational industrial giant and a Brazilian former model, who had come to New York when her father was transferred to head office.

Since Carolina had left him two weeks ago, the professor had yearned for the warmth of her body in his bed. Without her, his life felt empty.

– And she didn't even have a good reason for leaving! – he murmured, as he undressed, the shower already running to heat the water.

In truth, he knew the reason why Carolina had left him, although he refused to accept it: a complete difference of opinion when it came to religion.

Since John had buried himself in his doctorate thesis, the theme of which was the influence and importance of faith for the salvation of the human soul, the couple had had heated discussions about the subject. For John, faith was an important part of the process of the spiritual redemption of humankind, but not an end in itself. He considered charity, voluntary work and kind, gentle interaction with others and the world itself to be the most important factor in the salvation of the soul. In other words, he believed that: “We are saved by the good deeds that our faith in Christ inspires us to perform. If we are not driven to perform such deeds to help our neighbor, it is because our faith in Christ is insufficient for our salvation.”

Carolina, however, was an extremely practical, even materialistic woman, who believed that religious faith was nothing more than a highly efficient way of getting rich, taking advantage of people’s naivety without them even noticing they had been duped.

In just a few short weeks, the tension between them had become almost unbearable.

Then Carolina had met the leader of a new Pentecostal church that was growing fast in Brazil, Apostle Mario Fernandes who, while not admitting so openly, made it quite clear that he viewed the church more as a business (and a highly profitable one) than a path to God. It had not taken much more than a handful of dates, a few hours of conversation, a bottle of champagne, and the luxury hotel suite where the “apostle” was staying in New York, for Carolina to decide that he was a more attractive proposition than John. She even managed to overlook the fact that Fernandes weighed over 160 kilos, in contrast with the professor, who possessed an athletic build, and worked hard to stay in shape.

With hardly a pause, she had gone with the pastor when he returned to Brazil, while all John got was an email explaining how Fernandes had won her heart.

– We’re going to build a huge temple in the city of Natal! – the holy entrepreneur had told her – and I want you there by my side, helping with the work of the Lord!

Just like that, John had found himself alone, his bed cold and empty, with only the walls to talk to.

– *Talk to, or fight with?* – he thought.

He shrugged, and murmured:

– Still, it never did any harm, did it? We were always fighting. Carolina may have had different opinions to mine, but, in the bedroom, we were a perfect match...

He stepped into the shower and said to himself:

– But she’d rather be with that fat fool... A crook! A wolf in sheep’s clothing! And worst of all, she’s been taken in by that huge pile of money that the swindler has stashed away!

The scale of Fernandes’ business dealings was no secret. He specialized in huge projects that required many millions of dollars in tithes and offerings, and was a permanent fixture on the Forbes list of the ten richest pastors in Brazil. With his soft voice and “keeper of the sacred truth” manner, he managed to persuade rich men, normally so careful in their business dealings, to hand over six figure checks, smiling contentedly as they did so, as though they had just reserved a seat in heaven next to God. Simony was the *modus operandi* of the theology of prosperity that Fernandes not only preached, but followed with great dedication.

The professor was just drying himself off when he heard a voice calling his name: “John!”

Automatically, he answered:

– Hold on, I’m just getting out of the shower!

He put on a *dressing gown* and walked into the living room, from where the voice had come. It had sounded as though there was someone in the house with him.

But there was no one.

He opened the front door. Again, no one.

– *I must be going crazy...* – he thought.

He looked at his desk, saw the whiskey glass he’d been drinking from, and murmured:

– I had less than a glass... it can’t be the booze!

But he was certain that someone had called his name.

He poured two fingers of whiskey into the glass and went into the kitchen to get some ice, then sat in the armchair and turned on the TV. He had to flick through a number of channels before he found the news.

The newsreader was talking about the list of natural disasters that had occurred recently, almost simultaneously, around the world. In just a week, five natural tragedies had taken place. A category 5 hurricane in the South Atlantic had devastated the coast of Angola, Namibia and part of South Africa; a tsunami had ravaged the coast of Chile; the Krakatoa volcano in Indonesia had erupted, and enormous earthquakes had hit the west coast of Mexico and the north of India, leaving millions homeless and thousands dead.

A climate specialist was interviewed, and reported that the planet was in an unnatural state. He said that while climactic changes such as storms and hurricanes could be explained by unchecked industrialization, and a lack of concern for sustainability, earthquakes and volcanoes were not the results of human action. “Something very strange is happening to the planet,” he said.

During the commercials, John looked for something else to watch. On another channel, a reporter, speaking from St Peter’s Square in the Vatican,

announced that the Pope had, for the last eight hours, been engaged in an emergency meeting with cardinals and theologians, as well as astronomers from the Vatican Observatory. The subject of the meeting remained unknown, but from the length of time it had been going on, it must surely be about something important, perhaps a major discovery made by the priest-astronomers. However, a number of devout Catholics believed that, faced with so many catastrophes across the world, the church leaders were almost certainly discussing the possibility that Judgment Day was approaching.

Following the report there was an interview with Dom Octavius Bourjois, an important monsignor in the Catholic Church, and founder and leader of the Order of Revelation, an organization dedicated to the study of the mysterious prophecies contained in the Bible. While monsignor was an honorary title for Catholic priests, and did not grant any particular authority within the church hierarchy, Dom Octavius wielded considerable influence in the Vatican and in the corridors of power of the Roman Curia.

John decided to watch the interview, mainly because Archbishop Bourjois was speaking directly about a subject of direct interest to his thesis, the influence of faith on people's lives. Furthermore, the cleric had mentioned "The Day of The Lord" – not Sunday, the day of rest and prayer, but that fateful moment described in the Old Testament when a terrible power descends upon the earth, as God reveals his fury at those who have disobeyed his commandments.

When he thinks clearly, as a researcher and a historian, John knows he cannot accept this story. He refused to accept that God, with his eternal love, could possess any type of anger. However, this was what the Holy Scriptures said, and this was what the faithful believed. So even in his skeptical scientist's mind, he was forced to admit that this faith influenced people's day-to-day lives, changing their thoughts and behavior. Fear of "eternal damnation" could not easily be dismissed.

– *And when the day comes, there will be no hiding place, no escape. Everyone will be judged. Only those that have converted to Catholicism, the true Christian religion, built upon the rock of St Peter, will be saved* – Dom Bourjois said to the interviewer.

– *And when will this day come, Monsignor? – the presenter asked – Do we know the date?*

– *There are many theories – Bourjois answered – Even the Mayans had a date for it, though as we saw, they were wrong. The great physicist, Isaac Newton, also made a prediction, based on mathematical calculations and an esoteric interpretation of the scriptures, particularly the texts of Daniel and of the Apocalypse. But we should not take that too seriously either. The date of the Great Day of the Lord, or the Great Tribulation, is known only to the Father. Not even the Son knows when it will come.*

John couldn't help but smile. How could the Monsignor speak with such authority? How could he say that not even the Son of God knew about the date, since the idea that the three divine persons of the Holy Trinity were one single entity was one of the pillars of catholic faith? If the Three Persons formed a single God, how could one know something that the other did not?

At this exact moment, much louder than the television, the professor again heard his name being called: "John!"

It seemed as though the voice had come from the kitchen. John went to investigate.

He had not taken more than two steps when he suddenly felt an agonizing pain in his skull. It felt like there was a vice squeezing his temples, and he fell, his legs turning to jelly. Using his arms, he dragged himself across the floor, reached the phone, and called an ambulance. Relieved to find that his speech was not impaired, he managed to describe what had happened and give his address.

– I feel ok – he told the operator – but it may be a stroke...come as fast as you can!

Roughly twenty minutes later, he was in an ambulance on his way to hospital.



While in the ambulance, John heard the same voice that had called his name, this time saying:

– *“When the Destroyer is no longer in its rightful place, it is time to flee far from the coast.”*

The doctors made him undergo an extensive battery of tests, including a CT scan and an MRI. They found nothing. The cause of the headaches afflicting the professor remained a mystery.

– You’ve been having minor arterial spasms for some time now – said the neurologist – Keep taking your medication, and look after yourself as best you can. If you continue to feel pain, suffer from dizzy spells, or lose consciousness, you’ll need to admit yourself to hospital.

John smiled to himself, thinking:

– *How ridiculous! How am I supposed to admit myself to hospital if I’m unconscious? I was lucky it wasn’t game over this time. It could easily happen again! What if it happens when I’m driving?*

He spent a week at home recuperating, following the doctor’s instructions. By the time he went back to the university he felt fine, and was anxious to get back to work. Although he continued to suffer from the terrible migraines and insomnia, in truth, he was used to them by now.



CHAPTER

II

As well as being respected for his knowledge and ability, John was much liked at the university, and his week's absence did not go unnoticed. He explained where he had been, but did not mention the voice that had called his name, and later, when he was in the ambulance, had uttered the mysterious phrase that had left him so intrigued.

At the end of the day, his good friend, Bernard Fry, an assistant in the Department of Botany, invited him for a coffee. As they chatted, Bernard told him that he was studying a plant from the Amazon with incredible therapeutic properties.

– One of its properties is its analgesic capacity – the botanist told him – and an incredible antidepressant effect.

– I've been suffering from terrible headaches– replied John – But I don't believe they're caused by depression...

– In many cases one of the first signs of depression is insomnia – said his friend – And you told me before that you were having difficulty sleeping.

– It's true – John admitted – But it's a big leap from that to depression...

– It's possible you don't notice – insisted the botanist – In fact, that's the most common story. A person who is suffering from depression, even without knowing it, refuses to accept the evidence.

He asked for another cup of coffee and, cracking a smile, said:

– It wouldn't do any harm to try it...

John thought for a moment. He knew that he could trust his friend. The scientist would never ask him to be a guinea pig in an experiment where the results were unknown. And certainly not where they might be dangerous...

– Why not? – said John, smiling – I'll be your guinea pig. When do we start the treatment?

– Now, if you're ready – said his friend – Nothing more to it than drinking a cup of tea. It even tastes pretty good.

– Tea? – John asked – You're not going to make me drink...

– Don't worry – the other man interrupted – It's not dangerous, or unpleasant, or even illegal... It's just tea made with some herbs from the north of Brazil, from the Amazon, an indigenous recipe that we're trying to perfect. We noticed that these herbs have a strong analgesic effect, and also work as an antidepressant. Pain, as a rule, leads to depression...

– You're thinking that the antidepressant action allows the analgesic action to take effect – completed John.

– Exactly! – Bernard exclaimed – We already know that migraines are the most important causes of depression, anxiety and panic disorders.

Shrugging and smiling a little, John said:

– So, we're about to perform a therapeutic experiment that, according to you, is completely safe... Or should I call my life insurance company?

– Trust me, John, that won't be necessary – Bernard guaranteed, laughing – As I told you, it's just tea. A type of herbal infusion, except it really works. Come to my lab today, after work. And spend the day as you normally do, don't change your routine.

John met Bernard in his laboratory as soon as he finished work at six o'clock.

The botanist led his friend to a comfortable room annexed to the laboratory and, once a doctor had taken his blood pressure, temperature,

and heart and respiratory rate, and asked him a few questions, served him a cup of tea.

– It’s good – John said – The scent and taste remind me of peppermint tea, though it’s a little bitterer.

– There’s no spearmint or mint in there – Bernard said – The taste is the herb itself.

– What herb is it? – John asked.

– It’s really a mixture of herbs – the botanist answered – Some herbs, the sap of a tree and some rare mushrooms. The Indians from a tribe in the Brazilian Amazon use the mixture in shamanic rituals. Our researchers noticed that after they drank this tea, the shamans felt no pain, and could cut or burn themselves, or stick wooden spikes into their skin, without feeling anything. Then we experimented with other types of pain, non-traumatic pain, and so far, it’s been a success.

– And there have been no side effects? – asked John, unable to hide his worried expression.

– Nothing’s been reported – said Bernard – Some patients have said they experienced more vivid dreams. But they were all good dreams, not nightmares, or anything unpleasant.

– Well... – said John – As I can’t sleep, I won’t dream...

– I think you’re wrong there. I think you’ll sleep very well. As I said, the analgesic effects of the tea should eliminate the pain, and a good deal of your anxiety. When that happens, you should be able to sleep.

With an apologetic expression, Bernard added:

– As part of the experiment, you will have to sleep here. We need to monitor your sleep patterns, you understand. We have quarters that have been specially adapted for the purpose, and if you like, we can take you home to pick up some things.

– There’s no need – said John – I have all I need in my office, even a few changes of clothes. I sometimes have to spend the night here at the university because of work...

Bernard took John to the rooms he had mentioned and stayed with him for a couple of hours.

The two men discussed a number of subjects, the majority of them related to university politics, as the elections to decide the new dean and members of the executive council, responsible for deciding the budgets for each of the college’s departments, were fast approaching.

The two professor disagreed with the way these funds were currently being administered and distributed.

– The Botany Department, as well as the Biology Department, needs more funding – said Bernard – So many of our research projects are on hold due to a lack of equipment and resources...

– The History Department is always overlooked too – complained John – Especially my area, Religious History, since the current Dean, a noted agnostic, decided it was a waste of time and resources to invest in such an area.

It was a little after ten o’clock when John announced that he was beginning to feel a little sleepy.

– I’m impressed. That headache that has been bothering me since this morning has completely gone – the professor said happily.

– Those two symptoms were expected – said Bernard – Now, we need to observe your behavior tonight and over the next few days. The experiment is scheduled to last five days...

– What are you expecting to happen? – asked John, filled with curiosity and a little concern.

– First of all, we think you’ll sleep well. Second, these migraines should disappear. And thirdly, we believe that you will experience some intense dreams...

– Nightmares? – asked John, even though his friend had told him there was no possibility of this happening.

– As I told you – answered Bernard – I don't believe that you will suffer from nightmares. But the scientists that discovered these herbs in the Amazon reported that one of their effects was the *third vision*, especially the action of *Banisteriopsis caapi*, also known as the vine of the dead or of the spirits. This means that your senses will be heightened and you may have strange dreams, such as premonitions or astral visions, or in other words, visions from another dimension of life.

John shrugged his shoulders in a gesture of resignation and murmured:

– Well... I'm not feeling any pain. And it's been a long time since I've felt so good. At the same time, I haven't felt sleepy in ages either. So if the price I have to pay is a few weird dreams, I can't really complain.

Bernard followed the professor over to the bed, personally installed the equipment that would monitor his heart rate and blood pressure and checked the micro-cameras that would observe him, and said:

– There is a bell that will sound to wake you in case you become disturbed and show signs that you're suffering from nightmares. My main concern is that you are as comfortable as possible.

– True comfort would be to have Camilla Belle here in bed with me – John said to distract his friend, but Bernard did not know who he was talking about.

–Evolet from the film *10,000 BC*. I've watched it about five times.

– Oh, of course... But this is scientific research, not a Hollywood script...

John smiled and when Bernard left the room a little less than five minutes later, he was already sound asleep.



CHAPTER

III

John slept deeply, without even the slightest headache, for the first time in years.

He had a dream, which he remembered with strange clarity, in which a man, slender and angelic in appearance, surrounded by a luminous aura, appeared and said: *“John, listen to the prophet. When the Destroyer is not in its rightful place, all will flee from the coast.”* The phrase was repeated several times and mixed with scenes of natural disasters, especially terrifying tsunamis that smashed against the coast, dragging thousands of people into the sea. Buildings collapsed and volcanoes spewed fiery lava in every direction. The sea level rose in a flash, wreaking havoc in the great cities of the Earth, where people sought refuge on the tops of buildings.

When he awoke, John found himself fascinated with the dream and the words that continued to echo in his mind: “When the Destroyer is not in its rightful place, all will flee from the coast.”

Who is the prophet to whom the man referred? What is the “Destroyer” he mentions? After wracking his brains for an explanation, he remembered the news report he had watched the day before, which showed a number of catastrophic events occurring across the world. Perhaps this explained the nightmare, but it did not unravel the mysterious words that he remembered so clearly.

When Bernard arrived and asked him how he had spent the night, John told him about the dream. The botanist answered:

– In fact, the monitoring of your sleep showed that you were a little more agitated than is normal at round 3am. That must have been when you had the dream, and the abnormality did not last more than about 45 seconds...

John was surprised by how short the period of time was. He felt that the dream had lasted around an hour.

– *It's a message, there's no doubt about it* – thought the professor – *But what could it mean? And I have this odd sensation that I have heard or read those words somewhere before...*

– Are you willing to continue the experiment? – Bernard asked, unable to disguise his anxiety – There are some further points we have to investigate...

John nodded and Bernard said:

– If you want to call your girlfriend...

Smiling, the botanist continued:

– It would be interesting to observe your behavior when you are with someone who affects the way you feel.

John chuckled wryly and said:

– There's just one problem, Bernard... Carolina left me about a month ago. There is no one else at the moment.

Bernard could not hide his disappointment and said in a low voice:

– I'm sorry... That's a real pity, for two reasons: firstly because she left you and secondly because of the experiment, which would have been much richer with her...

They talked for a few minutes more and had breakfast together. John told his friend that he had not been so hungry in the morning for a long time, and then each went about their daily routine. Finally free of the terrible headaches, John was in good spirits throughout the day.

Bernard, however, had a problem that he needed to resolve: in the experimental plan that he had devised for John, there needed to be at least

one evaluation involving an interpersonal relationship. He needed to find a girlfriend for John.

On his way to the laboratory, he bumped into his friend Christine Bell, an assistant in the Department of Applied Psychology who was also taking part in the tea experiment, and told her of his problem.

In a serious tone Christine said:

– I think you should get everything ready in the experiment rooms while Professor John is teaching.

– But it won't make any difference! – Bernard protested – John is alone, his girlfriend has left him! Carolina has gone! For the experiment to provide complete, valid data, for the results to have any credibility, there has to be an emotional connection between John and a woman...and not just any woman!

– You don't know that for sure – objected Christine – the emotional connection might not be as deep with another woman as it would be with his girlfriend...but there can still be a connection. And who knows, it might even happen tonight, don't you think?

Bernard looked doubtful, until Christine continued:

– We can't waste this chance, Bernard... Get everything ready and prepare for the unexpected. Anything can happen, don't forget that.

Bernard remained unsure, but agreed to do what the psychologist asked and ordered the apartment to be made ready. After lunch, the two friends met once again.

– Let's talk a little – said Bernard – perhaps you'll have a visitor tonight, after dinner. We need to see how you relate to people, how you socialize after the effects of the tea.

– I don't think anything will change –John thought – other than the fact that I'm not having migraines, and I'm more rested now that I can sleep again, I don't feel any different... In any case, the people I've come into contact with during the morning haven't reacted differently to me.

– That’s not true – said Bernard – I get the impression that you are freer, more relaxed... Friendlier, more open and more accessible.

– Perhaps – admitted John – As I’m not in any pain, maybe I’m in a better mood... I’ve certainly been more productive than usual!

He grinned and said:

– But that’s to be expected. If you’re not in pain and are well rested, then you are likely to get more work done, generally speaking...



The rest of the day passed normally. John’s delight at being free of the headaches that had plagued him for so long continued.

At the end of the day, Bernard called him on the phone:

– Come to the lab, John...It’s time for your tea.

Feeling a little nervous, John did as his friend asked. He did not want to miss the chance of another 24 hours of physical well-being, free of headaches after a good night’s sleep.

– *If the price I have to pay is to just drink a cup of tea...* he thought, walking to the lab in the Institute of Pharmacology.

Serving him his tea, Bernard said:

– As I told you, you will have some visitors today. Perhaps up to four people will visit the apartment to evaluate your social behavior.

– But as you have already told me about the reason for the visits, don’t you think the results will be artificial, even involuntarily so, in terms of being a social meeting?

– I don't think we need to worry about that. The Department of Applied Psychology has already designed corrective factors for this type of situation. The results we obtain will be filtered and will be completely accurate.

John shrugged his shoulders and at that moment Christine Bell approached, saying:

– Bernard is right, John. We will obtain completely accurate results. Accurate in every way.

John smiled and greeted the psychologist who, with a slightly flirtatious air, added:

– I organized the filtering criteria... And I will be in the apartment to check the results personally.

– I'm looking forward to your visit – the professor assured her.

Christine was a beautiful woman, tall, blonde, with a perfectly toned body and a face that would make half the actresses in Hollywood jealous. Her piercing blue eyes and full, sensuous lips were capable of arousing the desires of any man, and fill even the head of a monk with sinful thoughts.

– That's worth a point on your behavioral evaluation – said Christine, giving him a mischievous smile.

She said:

– I'll get there early, before the others... I've already told Bernard that I'll make dinner.

– In that case – John said – we'll cook together. I don't know if you know, but cooking is my secret hobby...



At around seven o'clock Christine arrived with bags of shopping.

– I guessed you would like seafood – she said – So I brought a few things to make a dish that I discovered on one of my trips to Brazil.

– Fantastic! – cried John – When I was in Brazil two years ago, to take part in a literary festival in the historic town of Paraty, I ate this amazing fish stew... They called it *caldeirada*.

– That's exactly what I'm going to make! – said Christine with a smile.

John helped her with the shopping and commented, slyly:

– They tell me that this dish has aphrodisiac qualities...

– So it should – Christine said – Sea food generally has this quality. And with such a mixture of ingredients, the result is obviously going to be pretty stimulating!

Just then Christine's cell phone rang. She answered.

John, busy preparing the food, did not pay much attention, but even so, he could not avoid hearing Christine's words.

– What a pity... We're going to make a delicious seafood stew.

Then, saying goodbye, she said:

– Yes... We'll do it next time. See you tomorrow!

She hung up and, turning to John, explained:

– It was Bernard... He and two other people were coming to dinner, but there's a problem at the lab and they won't be able to make it. Looks like it's just the two of us...

John had to bite his tongue not to say "Great! I'd much rather have dinner with just you than with a hairy professor and two people that I don't even know..."

Christine began to slice an onion and said:

– I learnt in Brazil that the way you slice an onion is very important. We have the habit of attacking it with the knife. They cut it more gently. It makes sense: when you hit it, you lose a little of the essence of the onion... You do

the same with the garlic and the spring onions and the coriander... You cut it, rather than crush it.

She put a casserole dish on the stove, poured in some olive oil and added the sliced onion and garlic.

– Let the garlic turn golden. The onion should be transparent. Don't let it burn, or it will taste bitter.

She showed John the fillets of fish, and as she stirred the pot with a spoon, told him to place them gently in the oil. She let them fry a little on each side, and added the tomatoes which, following her instructions, John had cut into small pieces. She placed a lid on the pot and said:

– Now, we let the tomato release a little of its juice, while we wash and slice the green pepper.

She sliced the green pepper into strips and added it to the pot, then added a little more salt, oregano and a generous sprinkle of ground pepper, saying:

– I like to add a lot of this type of pepper to make the dish really succulent – she said, with a shy smile, thinking of the aphrodisiacal effects of the stew.

As a delicious scent rose from the pot, Christine took the scallops and clams, washed them and bathed them in lemon juice, then added them to the stew.

– It's very important that from now on we stir the stew very gently and delicately, otherwise the fish will break up completely... – she told John.

She rinsed the large shrimps – which had already had their shells removed and been cleaned, as well as the squid, and said:

– We'll add these last. They shouldn't boil for more than five minutes or else they will go all hard and rubbery. It's the same with the coconut milk and the palm oil. We put those in when we're just about to finish so as not to let them boil.

– It's amazing how you managed to find all these ingredients – said John.

– We’re in New York, John... You can find any ingredient you want here. And on 47th Street there are some great Brazilian food stores.

John agreed and took a bottle of Chablis from the fridge. He found two glasses, saying:

– I think it’ll be safe for us to have a glass of wine, don’t you?

Then, with a worried expression on his face he asked the young woman:

– Unless you think it will interfere with the tea?

Christine smiled and answered confidently:

– No. From what I’ve read about those who discovered this tisane, the shamans – or “pajes” as they are known in Brazilian indigenous culture – drank the tea with an alcoholic drink they made from raw, chewed manioc.

John poured two glasses of wine. Christine raised her glass and proposed a toast:

– To the start of a beautiful friendship, John!

– And to finally getting rid of these headaches...thanks to this miraculous tea!

While the stew simmered on a low flame, they went into the living room and sat on the sofa.

– And apart from not having headaches, do you feel any other changes?
– asked Christine.

– I feel great... Happy, even euphoric – answered John.

The young woman moved a little closer and placed her hand gently on John’s arm, saying:

– That’s all? Happiness and euphoria?

John felt a shiver run across his body and somewhat sheepishly answered:

– I have the feeling that my senses are heightened. And I have to say that it’s a very pleasurable sensation.

– The biochemists who are studying carefully all the herbs that make up this tea tell me that the effect of at least one of them is very similar to the

drug *Ecstasy*, but without any of the side effects or danger – said Christine – and for men, it works like an improved form of *Viagra*.

– If this is true it could be a sensational discovery – said John.

And, smiling, he said:

– This is why Bernard was so keen to invite Carolina...

– It's true... – admitted Christine – And I'm very interested in the results of the experiment too. Have you thought about how much the patent of this formula would be worth?

She brushed her hands lightly across John's neck and said:

– The university would make enough money to fund new experiments and we would make a fortune...

Once again John shivered with pleasure as Christina whispered in his ear:

– I also drank some tea today... And I've never suffered from headaches or insomnia...

– So – murmured John – the reason you took the tea is to find out...

– Exactly – she said – I want to find out if it really does...

Before she could finish the sentence she was kissing John hard on the lips, saying:

– So... Let's make the most of it! I don't know about you, but I'm feeling incredible!

As they continued to kiss, John led Christine to the bed.

– Looks like this tea really does have a stimulating effect – she said, with a smile.

– With you, I don't think I need any kind of a stimulant to get... excited!

– responded John – You're breathtaking!



They were woken in the middle of the morning by the noise of students in the corridor outside the apartment. Both felt great, with a deep sensation of peace and contentment. John had slept soundly, and as he told Christine, since he started taking the tea, his headaches had not returned.

– I just hope this doesn't mean I will have to take the tea forever... – he said softly – I don't want to become dependent on anything!

– I don't think that will happen – said the researcher – In fact, I think that the next phase of tests should evaluate your body's reaction to a reduction in the dosage of the medication.

The day passed normally and that night the couple once again spent the night in the apartment. However, unlike the previous night, when John, exhausted, had fallen into a deep, dreamless sleep, this time he dreamed once again.

First, he heard a deafening metallic voice repeat the words he had heard before: *"When the Destroyer is not in his rightful place, all will flee from the coast."* After this, everything went dark for a moment before the light slowly began to return and John could see the ruins of a destroyed city. He saw the dead rise like zombies from a horror film and trudge towards a stairway that reached into the sky. When they got to the top they threw themselves off, but instead of tumbling to the ground, they were lifted into the sky and disappeared into space.

John looked into the starry sky trying to see where the walking dead had gone. Suddenly he saw a red star growing larger and larger. As he continued to gaze at the sky he saw that the star was moving at a tremendous speed, until it hit the earth's atmosphere. It was a celestial body the size of a full moon and glowed like lava. He stood looking at the terrifying star for some time, until he noticed that the zombies that fell from the top of the stairs were being drawn towards it.

Then the same metallic voice said:

– The Day of the Lord is coming and with it great suffering for the nations of the world!

John awoke with a start. Leaving Christine sleeping peacefully, he got out of bed and called Bernard.

– What happened? – asked his friend with concern – Are you going to quit the experiment? Do you feel bad?

– No, nothing like that – answered John, trying to reassure Bernard but unable to hide the worry in his voice – I had another strange dream...

When he told him about the dream, Bernard said:

– This side effect of nightmares was predicted by the project team, just like I told you. However, I suggest you take a break from the tea for three days or so and let's see how you feel then. We'll talk more about this tomorrow.

John hung up and saw that Christine was sitting on the bed watching him. She smiled and said:

– Did you have a nightmare, darling? – she asked him with a smile, as John walked over and kissed her.

– Yes. It started after I began to drink the tea... Bernard said I should take a break for three days.

– He's right. We'll observe how you react without the tea. I didn't know that you were having nightmares...

– The first night I drank the tea I had another strange dream. I dreamed about apocalyptic destruction and an odd, beautiful being, who looked like a man but who had some feminine features. He said the words that I've been hearing ever since: "When the Destroyer is not in its rightful place, all will flee from the coast."

– It sounds like some kind of warning that something terrible is going to happen, like the Apocalypse, the end of the world. Don't you study this kind of thing?

– I have studied it, but not closely, because the prophecies are enigmatic and wide-ranging. But one thing is true: in various parts of The Bible there are references to a huge calamity that will strike humanity in the future. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew prophets talked about an event called The Wrath of God, the Day of the Lord or Jacob’s Trouble. A number of names are used to describe it. Jesus also predicted that an apocalyptic event would occur when the sun would darken, the moon would not give light and stars would fall from the sky.

– When the end of the world will come... – murmured Christine with concern.

– That’s right, something terrible. The idea of the end of the world runs through the Gospels. If I’m not wrong, in the book of Matthew, chapter 24, verse 14, Jesus said to his disciples: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” Because of this, we have believed in the end of the world since the beginning of Christianity, although we can give a different meaning to these words.

– What meaning? – asked Christine.

– I don’t believe that the end of the world represents the total annihilation of the planet and the end of the human race, which is a common belief. I believe it means an end to the world of violence, war, disease, sadness, and poverty. And that this end of the world will begin with the extraordinary event prophesized by Jesus. He said that in the future there would be a terrible affliction, greater than anything that has happened since the creation and that God would not shorten these days which no one shall survive.¹

Christine was impressed with John’s explanation. No one had ever given her such a clear and simple explanation of a passage from The Bible. Although she was not especially interested in religion, she enjoyed talking to John.

They continued talking for a few minutes more until Christine glanced at the alarm clock and saw her class was due to start in just thirty minutes.

– We have to get up. We both have classes to teach – she said, jumping out of bed and running towards the shower.



As he no longer had to drink the experimental tea, the following night John preferred to sleep at home and asked Christine to come with him, as she lived alone in university housing. Once he had finished teaching for the day he visited the library and borrowed a number of books about prophecies. When they arrived home, John told Christine to make herself at home and started to flick through the books. Once he had finished, he began to read the prophecies in the Old Testament of The Bible, especially the texts of Daniel and Ezekiel, together with the most enigmatic of all the books of The Bible: Revelations. He also gathered together the centuries of Nostradamus, copies of the prophetic manuscripts of Isaac Newton, and the letters of premonition of Edgar Cayce, among other materials that attempted to explain the coming events that would shape the history of humanity.

He knew that in one of the books scattered on the table he would find a clue to understanding the message communicated to him in the dream, which remained fresh in his mind. He was sure that both the message and the terrifying visions of the dream, together with the natural disasters sweeping the Earth had something to do with the Final Judgment.

Christine did not want to disturb him and buried herself in her own research, but not before telling him that he should go to bed when he felt tired, and that she would be waiting for him.

John knew exactly what she was suggesting. He kissed her and told her not to wait up, as he was determined to find an explanation for his dreams.

He studied until almost four o'clock in the morning, when his vision began to blur. Later, he would be unable to say if it was a dream, or if he really experienced a supernatural vision, a type of unfolding of the soul, as the mystics say.

The fact is that an illuminated being appeared at his side asking him to calculate the "time of the prophet" and, pointing to The Bible that lay open on the table, said that there he would be able to find the date of the Final Judgment. John grabbed the book and began to read the page which lay open. It was Chapter 12 of Daniel. After he read Verse 10, the angel said: "Pay close attention." He read Verses 11 and 12 which said: *"From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days!"*

The vision began to fade and after feeling a chill John awoke, as though he had been napping for a few moments. Looking around and seeing that the room was empty, he thought:

– If the vision told me to calculate the remaining time, that means that our days must be numbered. If the prophetic symbol of the days of The Bible represent years, that means the time of the prophecy must be 1290 years added to 1335 years, or in other words, 2625 years. But starting from when? – he wondered.

He was too tired to continue his investigations and decided to join Christine in bed and leave the deciphering of the prophecies for when he awoke the next day.

CHAPTER

IV

When he awoke, he remembered the interview with Monsignor Bourjois that he had watched a few days before, when the cleric had mentioned the Day of the Lord. Perhaps he could help him understand the apocalyptic prophecies that, based on his intuition, may be about to come true, especially when one considered the natural disasters that were currently afflicting the world.

– That’s it! – he exclaimed – If anyone can help me understand all this it’s Dom Octavius Bourjois!

He went to the computer and googled “Order of Revelation.” The first result that appeared was exactly what he had been looking for: the site of the religious order. He wrote down the address and left a note for Christine, who was still asleep, leaving it beside her on the bed. He wanted to kiss her gently, but decided not to so as not to wake her. After gazing at her beautiful face for a few seconds, he left the house.

Once on the street, he called a taxi and ordered the driver to take him to the Fiore Abbey, where the religious order was based and where Monsignor Bourjois lived.

When he arrived, John had his first surprise: the abbey, unlike the modest parochial houses he was used to seeing, which fostered an air of simplicity and religious purity, was a huge, sumptuous building, filled with expensive art. It was more like a small palace than a center of monastic life.

He pulled the bell cord and heard a ringing from inside the heavily fortified building, and soon a novice opened the door.

– I need to talk to Monsignor Bourjois – he said, once he had introduced himself – It’s extremely urgent, as it’s about a subject he spoke about recently in a TV interview...

The novice invited him in and asked him to wait in a large waiting room while he called the Monsignor.

John was bewildered by the luxury of his surroundings. It was a show of wealth that, from his point of view, made no sense in a parochial house. He could see dozens of works of art that would be better off in the collection of a museum, such as renaissance paintings, sculptures, expensive oriental carpets, thousand year old porcelain and books, many of which looked to be first editions and therefore extremely valuable.

It was hard for John to accept that a Catholic priest could possess such wealth. He believed that the Catholic Church and its priests and representatives had a duty to lead a simple life, almost a life of poverty, sending the message that concern for one’s neighbor was more important than well-being and personal contentment.

After a few minutes, Monsignor Bourjois appeared.

The professor was surprised by his appearance. He was a big man, over one meter and eighty centimeters in height, and strong and muscular. He was dressed in a black suit and a maroon sweater. There was a gold brooch pinned to his lapel, with a red insignia formed of the sign for infinity (a horizontal eight) with a line below. He wore a large gold ring stamped with the same design made from tiny rubies on the ring finger of his left hand. Despite his great size and stern expression, it was hard to imagine that this was one of the most illustrious and important clergymen in the world, a world renowned specialist in subjects related to the Book of Revelations and the words of the prophets.

Without wasting time, the professor introduced himself and said:

– I saw you being interviewed on television recently and realized that you know a great deal about Biblical prophecies, particularly those that relate to the great disturbances that will affect mankind. In other words, those that relate to the Day of the Lord and the Wrath of God.

The priest looked at John with interest as he went on:

– Like Isaac Newton, I performed some calculations and believe that the prophecy of Daniel holds the key to unravelling the mystery of when the Final Judgment will arrive. Newton believed that this would occur in 2060, as he thought that 1,260 years would pass between the foundation of the Holy Roman Empire by Carlos Magno in the year 800, and the apocalypse and the End of Days. However I believe that despite being a great scientist, he is wrong. The Apocalypse may be much closer than we think.

John took a Bible from his bag, opened it to a previously marked page and read:

– In chapter 12 of the Book of Daniel, verses 11 and 12, it is written: *“From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days!”*

He closed The Bible and continued:

– If you add those periods together the result is 2625 days, which is equal to 2625 years, but I haven’t yet discovered when the period begins. Newton considered a number of start dates, such as the year 800, 607 or 609, but I don’t believe it is any of these.

The smile on the face of the Monsignor, which failed to disguise a certain mockery on his face, disappeared.

He asked John, in a serious tone:

– Have you mentioned this to anyone?

– No – answered John – You are the first person I have told. I believe you might know something about the prophecies about the end of days and could explain something about them to me. Over the last few days I’ve dreamed repeatedly about natural disasters and a figure has appeared to me, trying to warn me that something is going to happen soon, saying: “When the Destroyer is not in its rightful place, all will flee from the coast.” I do not know exactly what this means, but I feel that I should warn people that something important is going to happen. It may be that the Final Judgment is not as far away as we think.

Dom Octavius’ face creased with worry when he heard John’s words. It seemed that the young man may have discovered something that he had believed no one knew. A secret that the Order of Revelation intended to guard from the rest of the world. It is worth noting the irony surrounding the name of the religious order, given that its intention is to keep secret something that would be of great interest to the rest of the world.

– You have done well, professor – said the priest – There are certain things that the population cannot discover for fear that mass panic might ensue. Please wait here a moment, there are a few things that I want to show you...

As agile as a cat, Bourjois left the room and John found himself alone once again, admiring the magnificent works of art that decorated the room.

He took a copy of “The Divine Comedy” by Dante Alighieri from a shelf and sat down to study the book. He was amazed by the book – not just its content, which he knew well and liked very much, but also the great beauty of the precious edition before him.

Delighted with what he saw – and more importantly, could touch, for the majority of books today were in e-book format, and therefore virtual – he did not notice the time passing, and did not worry when he heard the noise of a car that seemed to be leaving the garage of the Parish House.

After a further half an hour, just as he was finishing flicking through another book, he heard the door to the room open and, imagining it would be Bourjois returning, turned towards the sound.

He was to receive a shock. It was not the monsignor, but two priests, dressed in traditional robes, who quickly marched over to the professor and took hold of him aggressively.

John, however, was not built like your average academic, those who spend their time lost in study and whose exercise is 99% intellectual, rather than physical. The professor in fact took a keen interest in staying in shape – he was a believer in the motto *a healthy mind is a healthy body* – and was not only physically strong but an expert in martial arts.

Despite both the priests being big men, John quickly freed himself from their grip and much to his own discomfort, as he'd always been taught to respect holy men, was forced to punch one of them in the face.

However, perhaps due to the respect he had for religion, he did not put his full strength into the blow and failed to knock the man out. Instead, his opponent staggered backwards, before recovering and pulling a glittering Bowie knife from the folds of his robe.

At the same time, the other priest grabbed a Japanese sword from above the fireplace of the library and advanced towards John.

John knew *Ken-jutsu*, the favored martial art of the ancient *samurais*, and so understood that when defending oneself against a *katana*, one could not come with empty hands. The ideal solution would be another sword, but he could not see one anywhere. In desperation he grabbed a chair and raised it in front of him, using a type of shield. However, he knew that his shield would not protect him for long, for in seconds the sharp sword would destroy his defense and then split his head open like a pumpkin...

He managed to defend himself against the first attack. Then, as the priest shaped himself to strike horizontally at John's midriff where, if he attempted

to defend himself with what was left of the chair, the blade would strike his forearm, he heard the sound of a window being broken and a shout.

A shape dressed in black, wearing the cap and slippers of a *ninja* leapt into the room brandishing a *katana*. The priest who had been attacking John was forced to defend himself.

He didn't stand a chance. Holding the *katana* with two hands, the mysterious *ninja* defended himself against one blow and then sliced his blade sideways across the priest's neck, almost decapitating him. Blood spurted from the man's arteries and he fell, his life draining away through the wide, deep wound.

The other priest, still dizzy from the punch he had received from John, realized he would have no chance against this new opponent and fled from the room, locking the door to the inside of the house as he went.

– We've got to get out of here! – cried the *ninja*.

John was in no mood to argue. He hurriedly followed as his savior jumped through the broken window and crossed the garden, before jumping over the wall that led to the street.

They clambered into a convertible parked at the side of the road, and the man accelerated away as skillfully as a Formula 1 driver.

– Where are we going? – asked John – And who are you?

After a few seconds the man revealed his face and answered:

– My name is Maximilian Bacon, though my friends call me Brother Max. I have been given the mission of protecting you. And by the looks of things, you will need it. If I had arrived a few minutes later you would be dead.

– But why did they want to kill me? – asked John – I'm not a danger to anyone! I'm just a teacher...

Max did not answer, limiting himself to an enigmatic smile, leading John to ask:

– And what happened to Monsignor Bourjois? I can't believe that he didn't hear all that noise...

– Bourjois was looking out for himself, professor. He gave the order to kill you. He needed a solid alibi, in case the police investigated.

He looked at John and explained:

– These people are more than capable of hiding a murderer. Bourjois is the leader of a brotherhood protected by the Catholic Church, known as the Brotherhood of the Holy Revelation, or more simply, the Order of Revelation, which is said hold the secrets known as the Final Revelations. One of these is the date of the end of the world, known as the “Day of the Lord.”

He laughed loudly and added:

– You really put the cat among the pigeons when you mentioned the manuscripts of Isaac Newton and the calculations that he performed relating to the End of Days.

John raised his eyebrows in surprise and asked:

– But how did you find out about that? How could you know what I said to Bourjois less than half an hour ago, if there was only me and him in the room?

After a few moments silence, Max said:

– There are tiny listening devices hidden in almost all the rooms of the abbey, without their knowledge, obviously. Every word that is spoken there is transmitted to an operations room that monitors everything that Bourjois gets up to.

Fascinated, John turned and looked at Max, who continued:

– I have known Octavius Bourjois for a long time... He is a very intelligent, ambitious and stubborn man. We studied together at high school and then went our separate ways. I went on to study aeronautical engineering while he chose the priesthood. Bourjois is a very determined man who always gets what he wants, irrespective of the cost. Even if it means a loss of human

lives. He does not hesitate to remove anyone who gets in his way. Since he was young he has studied The Bible with great interest, and he has a particular interest in prophecies. When he was ordained into the priesthood of the Catholic Church, he revitalized one of the secret orders of the Middle Ages that was founded by Joachim of Fiore, a great student of Biblical prophecies. Following Joachim's death, his disciples continued to meet and study the prophecies. But they were persecuted by Pope Alexander IV, who declared the writings of Joachim of Fiore to be heresy, and were forced into hiding. From the shadows they influenced the decisions of the Vatican. They say that Isaac Newton, also known to be a committed student of the Biblical prophecies, as well as being an alchemist and Rosicrucian, had discovered the year of the Final Judgment. But it was not the year 2060 which was found in the scraps of his manuscripts, but instead a few decades before. However, he was unable to leave any record of what he had discovered, as before he could reveal it, the Order of Fiore decided to poison him. However, the dose was not fatal, but instead left him extremely sick, with major brain damage, and he died some months later, in March 1727, without revealing what he had discovered.

He paused briefly before continuing:

– Around a hundred years before that, Giordano Bruno had discovered the year in which the Wrath of Deus and the final judgment would come upon the Earth, from studying the prophecies of Daniel. When the members of the Order of Fiore became aware that he intended to reveal what he had discovered to the world, they decided to kill him. They persuaded a member of the order known as Giovanni Mocenigo, who belonged to one of the most illustrious and well-respected families in Venice, to make an accusation of heresy against Giordano Bruno in one of the courts of inquisition, saying that he defended heliocentrism. The plan worked to perfection and Bruno was executed at the Campo de Fiori where the members of the secret order had

met in the past. Bourjois brought this secret order back from the dead under the name of the Brotherhood of the Holy Revelation, which he commands with an iron fist. His closest circle of followers believes that they know what happened to the body of Christ after the crucifixion and that the answer lies in The Bible itself. But he has never revealed his theory, only saying that the secret would rock the foundations of theology and the Catholic faith. The members of the Order of Revelation consider him to be an envoy of God, as he has discovered, through The Bible, when the Final Judgment will come. If a member of The Order of Revelation discovers the truth and tries to tell the world, he is eliminated and never seen again. Those men tried to kill you on the orders of Bourjois, as he feared that you would discover more about the prophecies and would tell the press.

– Are you talking about the date when the end of the world will come? – said John, amazed.

– Exactly. The date is guarded in a code in the Book of Daniel, which refers to 1290 days and 1335 days. You have already discovered part of the code, for you know that the days represent years and the two periods need to be added together. The Day of the Lord that you read about in the Old Testament will be an apocalyptic event on an enormous scale which will bring destruction through the cataclysmic forces of nature. No one will be able to prevent what is coming. The only thing to do is to hope for the best, but to prepare yourself for the worst. Despite the terrible suffering that humankind will experience, it will not be the end of the world. The destruction will not affect all the Earth's inhabitants. The vast majority, it is true, will perish and in many areas civilization will decline greatly, due to the chaos that will sweep across many countries. But a part of the Earth's population will remain as it is today, by and large. The survivors will be responsible for the construction of a new world of peace and happiness for everyone.

– Do you know when the destruction will come? – asked.

– It has already begun, but you are probably referring to the apocalyptic climax. Yes, I know. I also discovered it from reading the Biblical prophecies, but I cannot tell you. You need to find out for yourself, through reflection, intuition and a great deal of study of the Holy Scriptures. When you discover the truth, you can be admitted into the Brotherhood of which I am part.

After a long pause, John said:

– I have been having terrifying dreams about natural disasters and a luminous being that appears and utters the enigmatic words: “When the Destroyer is not in its rightful place, all must flee from the coast.”

– You are close to discovering what all this means, John. You will know when the time is right. The tea you are drinking has the side effect of opening your extra-sensory perceptions. You are experiencing premonitions and gradually you will be able to see what is happening on the other side of our dimension, in the parallel universe of the fourth dimension. As for this illuminated being you describe, it must be the same that told me that you needed protection from Bourjois.

Max smiled and said:

– I was given the responsibility of being your “guardian angel” until you were able to understand what is happening in the world and can reveal this great secret to humanity. This is your mission in this process of planetary transition.

– I would have thought that Monsignor Bourjois was the person nominated to communicate this message to the world – said John – I don’t understand why he wants to stop me telling people!

– Bourjois is a highly conservative priest, from the most traditional wing of the Church. He has great influence over the cardinals and there are those that say it is he who decides who will be the next pope through his lobbying in the days leading up to the Conclave. In this way, he sins against The Holy

Spirit, which according to The Bible is an unforgivable sin, as it can impede the divine orientation of the cardinals that leads them to vote spontaneously for the one who is chosen by God. He believes that no one should reveal when the spiritual judgment of humanity will come, as it is written in the gospels that no one shall know when the Day of the Lord will arrive – not the angels, not Jesus, but only God himself. If anyone reveals the secret, The Bible will lose credibility and subsequently the Christian faith will be weakened. In the Machiavellian plans of Bourjois, he believes that only he should be prepared when the Wrath of God takes all the nations of the world by surprise. The world will be in such chaos that he will be able to take advantage of the situation and seize control of the planet. The Order of Revelation relies on the financial support of some of the biggest multinational corporations on the planet. They are prepared for the worst thanks to Bourgeois' warning, in exchange for which they will support his campaign to become the Secretary General of the United Nations and assume control of the world after the disasters. Before this, however, he will have become leader of the Catholic Church, transforming it into a universal church which everyone will be forced to join, or they will be executed. It will be as though the inquisition has returned.

– So the fear that many people have of a New World Order controlling everything has some foundation – John said with worry.

– It does indeed. Bourjois operates stealthily to govern the world with the support of the international banks and the huge multinational corporations. Have you noticed the gold brooch that he wears on his lapel?
– asked Max.

– Yes, I noticed it. It was the infinity symbol with a line underneath. What does it mean?

– It represents infinite power. It is limitless power over the plane, which represents domination of the masses, the people. He dreams of one day

acquiring unlimited power. This is the badge of the Order of Revelation that is engraved on his gold ring. All the members of the organization use the same ring, except made of silver.

Max paused briefly before continuing:

– Bourjois is a very powerful man. He is an honorary member of the Club of Rome and is always present at the annual conference of the Bilderberg Club as an honorary member. He has a great deal of influence in the corporate world, which he has used to convince many companies, among them some of the biggest in the world, to finance the construction of the biggest seed bank in the world: the Svalbard Global Seed Vault situated on the island of Svalbard in the Arctic and administered by the government of Norway. This project was only possible through the influence and contacts of Bourjois.

John noticed that they were now out in the country, far from the city, and bouncing along a dusty, pothole filled dirt road.

– Where are we going? – asked John

– We're already here – answered Max, stopping the car in front of a gate, which he opened using a remote control – This is our headquarters... the base of the Brotherhood of the Holy Clove, or more simply the "Order of the Clove."

They entered the property and drove down a lane bordered by tall cypresses until they arrived in front of a large house with a long porch.

– There are only around fifty men here – explained Max – but around a thousand others are scattered across the world. We all have the same objective: to combat the nefarious actions of the Order of Revelation and stop its members from taking control of humankind. We have to fight the harmful influence of Bourjois over people, but discretely and silently, and without the use of violence where possible. However, as you have seen, this is not always possible. To take on Bourjois we have to use all the

weapons and resources available to us. He is as cunning as a fox and as slippery as an eel.

– And all of you have the gift of communicating with illuminated beings from another dimension? – asked John.

– Unfortunately not – Max answered – Only a few of us are able to make contact with these beings. Some of them are not from Earth but from other planets. In truth, only a few of our organization are able to successfully make such contact.

With a smile that was almost sardonic, John wondered aloud:

– If that is the case then those who have this power must be able to dominate the others. They believe you... and with this power you control them...

– That is not our intention – protested Max – All the members of the Order of the Clove accept our, let us say, command, voluntarily. And we hide nothing from the others. Absolutely nothing!

A little worried, John asked:

– What are we doing here, exactly? I need to get back. My cell phone battery has died and someone may be trying to get in touch with me – he said, thinking of Christine.

– Don't worry – Max responded – We won't be long here. I just want you to introduce you to my boss, to show that him you are still alive and that I am fulfilling my mission. Afterwards I'll take you back home. Christine must be worried that you haven't come home yet.

– You know about Christine too? – asked John.

– Ah, professor – said Max with a smile – when you start to communicate with spiritual beings from another dimension, you learn a lot of things. One day you will understand this.



CHAPTER

V

They waited for several minutes in the library until part of one of the bookshelves moved slowly aside to reveal a dark corridor, from which Max's superior emerged. He resembled one of the old oriental mystics that John had studied in books of ancient religions. As he stared at the man, the name Confucius popped into John's mind. Clearly this was not just Max's hierarchical superior, but a grand master standing in front of him.

While he appeared to be of a considerable age, perhaps more than a hundred years old, the man had no wrinkles. His air of wisdom was strengthened by his long white beard and bald head. He wore a type of tunic made from rough grey cloth, which reached down to his simple leather sandals.

– You look well, professor – said the old man – I am delighted to see it. You know, John, that destruction, tears and suffering will soon be present in every corner of the globe. The situation will be so desperate that even atheists will cry for God's help. Human beings continue to treat their brothers and sisters with violence, disrespect, hate and prejudice. Terrorism is the great evil of this century. Because of this, God will reveal his fury to all those who are evil, violent, arrogant, prideful, addicted, authoritarian, and selfish, and those who have rejected the wisdom of his commandments. During the process, unfortunately, many good, just people will also be sacrificed, although they will receive their reward on the other side. The misbegotten souls of the sinners and those who have rejected goodness and love for their neighbors shall be expelled from the Earth. They will be exiled to a distant planet from

where they shall never return. This is the eternal damnation of which Jesus spoke. In this distant place they will learn what they failed to understand here on Earth. You have an important role to play in understanding and explaining the transition of our planet to a new era of civilization. Peace will finally come to our planet and will remain here forever.

John had to force himself not to ask what his role would be, before the wise old man said with a smile:

– Pay careful attention to the dreams that you will have. Superior Intelligences will transmit their messages through these dreams and you must act in accordance with their orders. The lives of millions of people will depend on your decisions and actions.

– Am I to become a kind of savior? – asked John, stuttering.

– Yes. The lives of people living in high risk areas will depend on you, for they must be warned of the danger that faces them. They need to be told that the salvation of their souls depends solely and exclusively on the good deeds that they perform during their lives. Religion will save no one, only true religious goodness will allow the transformation of man and the subsequent salvation of souls. It is too early at this stage to give you more details.

The old man put his hands together and slowly bowed his head as a sign of farewell, before disappearing down the same secret passageway from which he had emerged.

– Shall I take you home now? – asked Max.

– I'd like to see more of this place... – murmured John – It seems an intriguing house.

– There will be plenty of time for that in the future. For now, it's enough that you heard what the master had to say.

– But how do I get back from here? – asked the professor – I don't know where we are.

– I will be by your side from now on. Wherever you go, I'll be there. My mission is to guarantee your safety, for we know that the Order of Revelation will stop at nothing to eliminate you!

– Shouldn't we tell the police? Ask for protection? – asked John, unable to hide his fear.

– Not for the time being – answered Max – How would you prove that you are being threatened? Dom Octavius is highly respected, both by the authorities and the Church. You would be completely discredited before your mission, which after all, is to warn the world of impending danger, had even begun. You need to save as many people as possible, and protect humanity's great achievements, such as the books, art and knowledge that we have acquired over thousands of years of civilization.

John had to accept that Max was right. He suddenly felt anxious and wanted to sleep so that he could once again dream, and be given some clue as to what to do and how to act.

He remembered the words of the old man when he talked about the destruction of a large part of humanity.

He realized that even though he was fit and agile and could travel quickly all across the world, he would not be able to warn everyone.

As though reading his thoughts, Max said:

– You don't need to tell everyone personally, John. With the help of the internet and social networks you can save many people.

John did not respond. Maybe Max was right, but he still felt that he was martyring himself: how could he save so many people? And what, exactly, was he saving them from? From death? From pain? Or from eternal damnation, as the Church taught?

Christine was worried when she saw how exhausted John was when he arrived home. She wanted to know where he had been all day, and why his

cell phone had been switched off, but he seemed distracted and lost in his own thoughts. When he told her that his cell phone battery had died, she responded with a mixture of anger and jealousy:

– You left the house early, and left a note saying you had gone to look for a priest... I was worried – she said as she made him a sandwich.

– It was a long day... I was studying the prophecies until the early hours. I was so tired I had a vision. A spiritual being came to me and told me to read a chapter from the Book of Daniel. The text refers to a period of 1290 days and another of 1335 days, until the Last Judgment. I believe that the two periods should be added together, resulting in a period of 2625 days, which is equivalent to 2625 years. I just don't know when the period is supposed to have begun.

After telling her everything that had happened during the day, the couple went to lie down and John had another dream. He was in a desert, which, from the lack of vegetation and strange rock formations, did not seem to be on Earth. He walked forward and behind some rocks saw a group of people gathered around a camp fire. They were roasting an animal, and from the way they gazed at it in desperation, they seemed to be very hungry.

They did not seem to be people from our planet, although John could not quite identify what was different about their hair covered bodies, which were similar to our Neanderthal cousins. Suddenly, he heard cries and an alarming sound. A fierce animal, similar to the extinct sabre-tooth tiger, came running toward the group. One of them, apparently a woman, was easily caught by the beast. As she fell to the ground, trapped between the animal's teeth, John saw the woman's face, and recognized that of his ex-girlfriend Carolina.

The professor woke with a start, awakening Christine.

– What happened? – she said, turning on the lamp.

– I had a strange dream about Carolina. It was in a strange place, perhaps from prehistoric times, with people covered in hair... – he answered, rubbing his hands across his face.

– The words of the man from the Order of the Clove have really got to you, she said.

– Maybe... – said John, getting out of bed and going into the kitchen.

He poured a glass of water and returned to the bedroom. He lay staring up at the ceiling, thinking, until he fell asleep and once more began to dream.

He was on a deserted beach looking out to sea. It was a beautiful sunny day. A tall man, dressed in long robes, whose face John could not see, approached and said:

– *“When the Destroyer is not in its rightful place, all shall flee from the coast.”*

John stared at the sky as though following an order, and saw the sun not merely shining but pulsating. As he gazed at the scene another, smaller sun emerged from behind the giant star. It had a yellow glow and was surrounded by alarming red sparks. John was afraid of what might happen next. The beach was no longer beautiful and everything had fallen silent. John felt the air thin and the sky began to grow with a red light. Gradually, the second star began to eclipse the Sun until everything became dark. The spiritual being beside John said: “Look behind you, my son...” John turned and heard a fearsome burst of thunder. He saw a great city, filled with skyscrapers. It was raining and the sky was full of dark clouds. Meteorites began to pour down on the city, destroying the skyscrapers. Storms, gales and hails battered the metropolis. In the background, John could see a volcano erupting, spitting lava in all directions. After a few seconds, the apocalyptic scene reached a climax when a terrible earthquake shook the Earth and John felt the ground beneath his feet tremble. Many of the buildings shook and fell. Although he could not see them, he knew that in the city there were thousands of terrified inhabitants, running in panic, trying to flee from the destruction.

John hid his face behind his hands. He did not want to continue watching such a terrible scene. He turned back to the beach and saw

that the invading sun was shrinking, as though distancing itself from the Earth and returning to the vastness of the Universe. The angelic being beside him repeated his enigmatic words: – *“John, listen to the prophet. When the Destroyer is not in its rightful place, all shall flee far from the coast. Warn as many people as you can.”* Then John saw a small wave begin to grow alarmingly. He realized he was watching the formation of a gigantic tsunami. There was no time to think. He was swallowed up by the monstrous wave and awoke with a cry.

– No!

His shout woke Christine, who was as scared as her boyfriend.

– What happened John! Another nightmare?

John could not speak. He stared in fear at the window as though he could see another tsunami approaching. He could not rationally describe his dream, but he knew that it was something terrible. He shivered as though suffering from a burning fever. Christine turned on the lamp and saw that it was five o’clock in the morning, and that the sun would soon come up. She went to the kitchen and prepared a glass of sugary water to which she added a few drops of sedative.

– Drink this, my darling – she said, passing him the glass.

John drank the sedative and lay down. Christine knew it was not the right time to ask questions and lay down beside him. They woke at ten o’clock when Christine heard a noise from the kitchen.

– John, did you hear something? – she asked, poking him. It seemed as though he had recovered from his nightmare.

– I didn’t hear anything... Go and take a look, it’s probably just the neighbor’s cat again...

Sleepily, Christine left the room. When she got to the kitchen, she screamed. John’s eyes widened and he said to himself: “this time I heard it!”

He hurried into the kitchen, but before he could get there he heard Christine asking someone: “Who are you?” When John entered the room he saw Max sitting at the table reading the paper.

– Max? What are you doing here! How did you get in? – asked John in surprise.

Apologetically, his friend tried to explain:

– Sorry, I didn’t mean to frighten your girlfriend, but my mission is to protect you and so I’ll never be far away.

After John had explained to Christine who Max was, she calmed down and prepared breakfast. John pulled up a chair, sat next to Max, and told him about the two troubling dreams he had just had. The professor’s bodyguard listened carefully and when he had finished, said:

– John, the first dream refers to the exile of the evil souls from this world to a primitive planet of the Milky Way, as the grandmaster of our Order has explained. The second dream that left you so troubled describes the catastrophic consequences of the process of transformation that is currently underway.

Max paused to take a gulp of orange juice and continued:

– The magnetic axis of the Earth is currently in the process of the inversion of the poles. The famous medium who lived at the beginning of the last century, Edgar Cayce, predicted that this would happen one day. Proof of this phenomenon is the weakening of the magnetosphere across a large area of the Atlantic Ocean and the Southern Hemisphere. This region of abnormal behavior is known scientifically as the South Atlantic Geomagnetic Anomaly. This origins lie in the depths of the planet.

He took an orange from the table and explained:

– Imagine the Earth spinning on its own axis at a speed of around 1,670 km per hour at the equator. Now imagine that within the Earth there is a sphere of liquid iron ore, the outer core, which also spins, producing

a terrestrial magnetic field. If this core, as it spins, begins to turn upside down, the magnetic field will weaken and the poles of the magnetic axis will begin to invert. At the end of the process, the magnetic north will become the magnetic south and vice-versa. This has already occurred many times in the past and the last time that the magnetic poles switched position was around 780 thousand years ago. During magnetic inversion the world will be in total chaos with earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes erupting and hurricanes all across the globe. Unfortunately, I believe that millions of people will perish. Those that survive will have to begin civilization anew, based on the concepts of brotherhood and working together.

The dreams that you have been having are premonitions of things that will soon occur. The substances present in the tea that you have been drinking have opened your mind to these extra-sensory premonitions that you have seen.

He paused to take another sip of orange juice then continued: – But there is more than this. In some people, the substances allow closeness to the Superior Intelligences that guide and protect human civilization. You have this characteristic, a privileged mind. This is why you were chosen. These dreams are only an important message from these beings. Now you need to know what to do with the information.

– And what should I do? – cried the professor – I will never be capable of saving humanity alone!

– Of course not – answered Max – But you are not alone. I am here, and Christine too. And the aim is not to save humanity, but to help those who listen to your warning. The survivors will also depend on your guidance, especially with regard to spiritual matters. If they do not, we will return to the wilderness, to savagery, where the only thing that matters is survival, at whatever cost. Our most primitive instincts will override any rules of society. It will be a case of every man and woman for themselves.

– And when will all this happen? – asked John.

– Very soon, John – answered Max – The signs are already here and you have seen on television how nature is unbalanced and how many natural disasters are occurring.

– And what should we do? – demanded the professor, unable to hide his fear.

– First of all, Christine needs to understand your mission in what is a vitally important period in the history of our planet. After that, we need to begin to spread the word of what you know. We have to warn the greatest number of people possible so that they can save themselves from these natural disasters. Through your paranormal abilities, it will be possible to discover which areas are likely to be most affected, and which will need to be evacuated when the climax of the global catastrophe is imminent.

Gravely, Max added:

– You can imagine how difficult it is going to be to convince public opinion, organizations and governments of the danger we are facing. Remember what happened over two thousand years ago, when Christ tried to save people and deliver them from sin...

– I had considered that – admitted John – I even thought that there is a risk that I will be assassinated...

– That is the intention of the Order of Revelation – said Max – And that is exactly why I've been sent to protect you.

Christine, who until then had simply watched and listened in silence, said softly to John:

– It seems crazy... But I believe everything that your friend says. Now we have a mission. You will be the spokesperson for a new era of humanity. Contact with the Superior Beings depends on you.

Max nodded his head and said:

– We need to start immediately. It will be difficult to convince people, because for them everything is absolutely normal. But we must try. We have to speak with the authorities, to warn them what is going to happen!

– I know a general, Felix McEntire, who is an old friend of my father...
– said John – We could talk to him. At the very least, he will give us an idea of how the authorities are going to react...

Max agreed. John stood and went into the bedroom to get ready to go to the University. Christine followed.

– I’ll always be by your side, my darling. You can count on me – she said, kissing him on the lips and going to take a shower.

John sat on the bed and remembered Bernard. He turned on his laptop to send an email to his friend:

“Dear Bernard. The tea from the experiment made my migraines disappear, but the premonitory experiences remained.” – And he described the dreams that he had experienced that night.

Bernard was online when John sent the message, and decided to share John’s feedback not only with his scientist colleagues but also by publishing it on his blog and a number of social networks that he used.



CHAPTER

VI

General Felix McEntire was an important member of more than one UN department and as a result, had moved from the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, to live in New York some time ago.

As a result, John had no difficulty in tracking him down and arranging a meeting.

– I have something very serious to tell you – said the professor – we need a place where we can talk in privacy.

– You don't need to worry about that – said the general – My office is completely protected against electronic listening devices. We can talk freely here in complete safety.

On the day of the meeting, John, Max and Christine began the short drive to the United Nations building.

As they left the parking lot at the university campus, Max said:

– Keep your eyes peeled... There is always the risk that the men of the Order of Revelation will try something...

John nodded his head, unable to hide his concern, and said quietly:

– I hate this type of situation... There are so many people out there, why did they choose me?

– Because you are the best man for this mission – answered Max – I've already told you this. Not many have your sensory abilities. Your paranormal perception was a big factor in your being chosen, you can be sure of that!

– But I could have refused, couldn't I? – said John.

– You could – answered Max – But we all knew, including you yourself, that you would never do that.

He smiled and said:

– You must be scared by all this. It is to be expected. But you would never have refused a task of this scale, for the good of humanity...

– Or what is left of it – said Christine.

– Exactly – agreed Max – And more disasters are on the way.

Just as John joined the traffic heading towards Manhattan, Max noticed a car parked by the sidewalk. As they passed it, the car accelerated quickly and began to follow them.

– We have a problem – said Max, with a worried expression – Step on it and take the next exit you can to your left!

There was not a moment to lose. The moment John tried to move into the left hand lane, he saw in the rear view mirror that the man in the passenger seat of the car behind had half climbed out the window and was pointing a machine gun in their direction, preparing to shoot.

– I can't slow down! – the professor said to Max – They're going to shoot!

He threw the car to the right just as the shooter pulled the trigger. As the bullet scraped the side of the car, John stamped on the brake and the car behind flew past them.

Getting back into the fast lane, John roared off behind the other car. When he was close behind it, he positioned the bumper of his car against that of the other car, and smashed into it from the left, forcing the car off the road.

Taken by surprise, the car skidded and spun, half on the road, half on the sidewalk. Out of control, it smashed into the concrete wall that divided the two directions of the highway.

– Don't stop! – ordered Max – Step on it and let's get out of here!

John obeyed and glanced over at a terrified Christine, who said:

– We should take another route into Manhattan... The main routes are too obvious. There could be something else waiting for us on the way...

– She’s right – agreed Max – Take the right hand lane and let’s go around the Brooklyn Bridge. It’s further, but it’s probably safer.



General McEntire was in his office reading a newspaper. The front page story had made headlines all around the world. A *paparazzo* had taken a photograph of one of the President’s closest advisors in a restaurant. The photographer was close enough to the high ranking White House official that he had managed to capture the text message that the man was reading. It said: “President extremely concerned with the arrival of Edna. Please provide a complete report.”

The story had become global news as soon as the *paparazzo* had posted the photograph on the internet and now every newspaper in the country was asking: “Who is Edna? Why is the President so concerned about her?”

The general was reading the story when his secretary led John, Christine and Max into the room. After they had been introduced, John explained the events leading up to the meeting.

After he had listened, the general said:

– Governments of nations all over the world are concerned with the frequency that natural disasters are occurring. Every week there is at least one catastrophe that causes worldwide panic. The global scientific community is at a loss to explain it, as earthquakes and volcanoes are not caused by global warning.

Taking a Bible from his drawer, he continued:

– I am a Christian and believe in The Bible. I also believe that biblical prophecies contain truths that will one day occur. Perhaps we really are living in the days of the Last Judgment, but I cannot base my decisions on prophecies or premonitions caused by the hallucinogenic actions of a plant from the Amazon.

– There will be a terrible tragedy if we do not take immediate action – said Max – The coastal regions of many countries will simply disappear. Those close to volcanoes will be devastated by torrents of lava and covered by volcanic ash...

– What do you suggest we do? – demanded McEntire – It’s impossible to evacuate an entire city the size of New York!

– Of course – said John softly – But I believe we can warn people living in high risk areas so that they can be ready to flee when necessary.

– At the very least we need to prepare an emergency plan to avoid widespread panic... – said Christine – Can you imagine the confusion? The desperation of those that are left behind? The authorities are responsible for the safety of their citizens and need to know how to act when the time comes.

It was something we must think about... John nodded his head sadly, showing his concern, as Max continued:

– The best we can hope for is to increase the number of survivors a little, something which is extremely important, as humanity will need a workforce to rebuild the world. And of course, we can’t have a physicist doing the work of a builder... We need to guarantee the survival of as many people as we can, with different skill sets and knowledge.

McEntire nodded and after a few moments said:

– You’re right. I will see what I can do. But I am just one person. What about the rest of the world... What do you suggest doing about that?

– We will know what to do when the time comes, general – said Max – For now, my mission is to advise the authorities of the United States about

the imminent risk that we will face in a very short time. And this is something we have just done.

He smiled and said:

– Now, my mission in particular is to preserve the life of Professor John, as the members of the Order of Revelation have decided to eliminate him.

The three heroes were preparing to leave when the general spoke:

– Can I suggest an effective form of protection for John and, at the same time, an enriching experience for you all?

– Yes? – said Max, interested.

– I have to go to an air base in Natal, in Brazil... You could come with me. It would be a lot easier to keep the professor safe at an air base, don't you think?

– If you don't mind, could I ask what you're going to do in Brazil? – Christine wanted to know.

– The Brazilian Air Force brought down a UFO in the countryside of the northeast of the country – answered the general – And I have been asked to investigate the object and prepare a report for the Secretary General of the United Nations.

– And when do you intend to leave? – asked John.

– I have a US Airforce (USAF) jet ready and waiting. We could leave right now – said McEntire – And you could come with me...

– We could – said Max – We don't even need luggage, we can buy what we need there.

They did not waste another second. They went down to the building's parking garage, and were driven to the airport in an official car, followed by an escort of four security agents and two motorcyclists.

However, they were unable to leave immediately. A terrible storm had hit the Atlantic Ocean, with fierce winds, and the pilot of the jet decided not

to risk the flight, preferring to wait until the weather improved. This did not happen until the early hours of the morning.

The general and his three companions waited in the room designated for the authorities. They were extremely well protected as the doors to the room were guarded by CIA agents.

As the general had said, John was completely safe.



CHAPTER

VII

After the storm had passed, the flight was extremely calm, undisturbed by turbulence or any other incidents.

They landed at the Natal Air Base early in the morning and the jet was immediately towed to one of the hangars, where the passengers disembarked.

The general and his three companions were greeted by USAF Lieutenant Edward Halleck, who was following the investigations into the UFO, and were then taken to a sealed area of the hangar, where the mysterious object was being carefully examined by American and Brazilian military personnel.

– The Brazilian authorities are extremely reluctant to hand the UFO over to us for analysis at the Special Operations Base in Nevada, Area 51. We have the team and the equipment there to perform a thorough reverse engineering study and discover the secrets of this “flying object” – said the lieutenant.

Staring at the fuselage of the UFO, Christine noted that the enigmatic inscriptions engraved on the object were the same as those she had seen in a TV news report on *crop circles* a few days before at John’s house.

Just as she was about to say something to John, Lieutenant Halleck asked them to join him in the meeting room.

Sitting at the head of the table, Halleck said:

– There are some similarities between this event and the *Incident at Roswell...*

He gave an apologetic smile and continued:

– I imagine that you know what I’m talking about, but perhaps it would be a good idea to refresh your memories about what happened in the month of July, 1947...

– It’s a good idea – said Christine – John and I weren’t even born then...

The lieutenant nodded, and, taking a deep breath, began:

– On 9 July 1947, the *Roswell Daily Record* ran an interview with William Mac Brazel, a farmer from near the town of Roswell, New Mexico. He said that on 14 June that year he had found the wreckage of a flying saucer.

– In those days he must have been terrified... – commented Christine.

– He had found wreckage of meteorological balloons on his property in the past, and as a result he didn’t pay much attention to this latest discovery – continued the lieutenant – However, he had heard that some newspapers were offering up to US\$3,000 dollars reward for proof of flying saucers, as a result of the testimony of a pilot, Kenneth Arnold, who said he had seen flying objects in Oregon. Arnold said that as he was flying over the state he had seen what looked like a squadron of aircraft flying in formation, with movements that he described like ripples spreading over the surface of a lake.

The lieutenant smiled and continued:

– On 4 July, Brazel decided to collect the wreckage and three days later went to the police station in the small town of Chavez to inform them of his discovery. Sherriff Wilcox called the Roswell air base, who sent two officials to analyze the wreckage.

He took a sip of water from a glass on the table and continued:

– They analyzed the object and decided to send the material to the Fort Worth military base. However, despite their attempts to keep the discovery secret, word of the incident soon spread, leading to Brazel’s interview with the Roswell Daily Record on 9 July. The next day, an army spokesman denied the flying saucer story, saying that the wreckage found by Brazel was from a meteorological balloon and that pilot Arnold had merely seen a flock of migrating birds.

– Imagine the stories that the news generated – mused John – Especially when the Army tried to deny the rumors...

– Of course – agreed the lieutenant – Although they did manage to bury the case, up to a point. The story of the flying saucer was forgotten until 1978, when Stanton Friedman, a professor of Nuclear Physics who was interested in UFOs and extraterrestrial life forms, interviewed one Jesse Marcel who said that he had touched a flying saucer. In the interview published in the National Enquirer tabloid, he said he had never seen anything like the material found at Roswell, which he believed to be of extraterrestrial origin.

– The interest in UFOs must have been at its peak... – commented Christine.

– It’s true – agreed the lieutenant – And the media helped to add to the interest. As you might expect, after the interview in 1978 a number of books were written about the *Roswell Incident*. Although these books do not agree on every point, they are all based on the same supposition: the wreckage found at Roswell is from an alien spacecraft that suffered an accident and fell to earth. Aware of the panic that the news of a possible invasion of the Earth might cause, the US government prepared a campaign of disinformation to hide the facts of the true origin of the material from which the craft was constructed, preemptively confirming that the findings

were not from a meteorological balloon. The material was in fact sent to secret research centers, hidden from the public. Some of the books claim that these places contain the bodies of aliens and in some cases, even alien survivors, kept as prisoners.

The lieutenant, staring intensely at his listeners and lowering his voice just a little, continued:

– Just as is happening here...

There was a commotion in the room. Halleck, with a wave of his hand, asked for silence and said:

– Soon you will be able to confirm the truth of my words... Let me finish... In his book *Top Secret/Majic*, Stanton Friedman states that he has documentary evidence of the existence of a special government team dedicated to covering up the Roswell Incident. This group, comprising twelve people, was known as *Majestic-12* and was responsible for coordinating all the secret studies of alien wreckage and bodies that had been found. However, the government has never admitted that this group existed, and sceptics say that the documents presented by the book as proof are false, including falsifications of the signature of President Harry Truman.

– It seems that at the time there were two different movements within the government – said John – One that was in favor of transparency and clarity in relation to the investigations into UFOs and one that wanted to keep everything secret...

– It's true – said the lieutenant – The movement in favor of revealing the true version of the facts, led by Congressman Steven Schiff, requested reports of the case from the USAF. In one of these reports the USAF stated that the wreckage found at Roswell was from balloons used in the top secret Project Mogul, aimed at detecting possible Soviet nuclear testing. This explanation is at best rather surprising, as the Russians only began to carry out nuclear tests two years after the events in question.

– And the alien survivor? – asked Christine, intrigued.

With a smile, the lieutenant responded:

– In a 1997 report the USAF stated that the supposed alien bodies were in fact test dummies from *Project High Dive*. In conclusion, the USAF stated that a number of Air Force activities over the years had been confused by witnesses, who remembered incorrectly what had happened in July 1947. The supposed alien bodies were in fact test dummies carried by high altitude balloons. And the reports of dead aliens in the hospital at the Roswell base probably originated from a combination of two accidents, the victims of which were taken to the hospital: the KC-97 crash, in 1956, in which eleven military personnel died, and an incident with a manned balloon in 1959 in which two pilots were injured.

Halleck took a deep breath and continued:

– In fact, between June 1954 and February 1959, 67 dummies were sent up in balloons in the New Mexico region, the majority of which fell to earth outside the limits of the military bases. The dummies were transported in big wooden boxes, similar to coffins, to avoid damage to the sensors they contained. For the same reason, when they were taken from the boxes or found in the field, the dummies were normally transported in plastic bags or

on stretchers. In some cases, the dummies were dressed in aluminum clothes to protect their sensors from the low temperatures they would encounter at high altitudes. These facts explain why the witnesses believed they had seen the bodies of aliens.

– And everybody believed this – said Max, sarcastically.

– Not everybody – said the lieutenant – Even today, “ufologists” all over the world have no doubt that the Roswell episode represents some of the strongest evidence we have that flying saucers have visited the Earth. And there are documents and statements that raise serious doubts about the explanations of the military and the government. For example, in March 2011, the FBI released a document, the name of which was The Vault, dated 22 March 1950, written by agent Guy Hottel. The document describes the rumor that three flying saucers were found in New Mexico and that each of the spacecraft was occupied by three human forms, each one meter tall, dressed in metallic clothes of an extremely fine texture. Another example: in 2012 a former CIA agent, Chase Brandon, confirmed what many people believed: the Roswell incident really did occur. He declared in a TV interview: “It wasn’t any crap about a meteorological balloon. It was what the people thought when they found it. That object obviously wasn’t from this planet.”

– Very well... – said General McEntire – Let’s accept that this object you are examining is in fact extraterrestrial. But no one told me about an extraterrestrial crew member...

– We thought it would be better to keep that detail secret, general – the lieutenant said – Can you imagine what would happen if it was leaked to the media?

The general nodded his agreement and the lieutenant took the group to see the ET.



The visitor from outer space was installed in an apartment containing a windowless bedroom and a living room, sealed off from the outside world behind steel bars similar to a prison cell. The walls and furniture of the apartment were padded, the room temperature was pleasant and the humidity was at an acceptable level. A number of spy cameras were placed in the room, which was uniformly white, absolutely isolated and utterly sterile.

– It’s like a room in a mental hospital, with these bars and padded walls – said Christine.

– We can’t take any risks – explained the lieutenant – If he becomes hysterical and tries to harm himself... And nor can we risk any type of contamination. That’s why the environment is sterilized.

He pointed to the bathroom and said:

– We haven’t seen him use the bathroom yet...

– And what are you feeding him? How do you know what he eats? – asked Christine – Can you communicate with him?

– He has already told us what he eats and communicates with us telepathically– answered the lieutenant, with a smile.

– How did this happen? How do you communicate telepathically? – Christine wanted to know.

– It’s very simple: you hear a voice in your head, just as though you were thinking, only it is not your voice but his thoughts reflected in your mind. When you think, he understands everything.

– That’s amazing! Imagine a world where everybody knew what other people were thinking... We would all be honest and sincere.

– When he wants he can speak English or Portuguese aloud too. We don’t know if he has learnt other languages.

The ET was in front of them, sitting comfortably in an armchair. He seemed to be entirely alien, in relation to his surroundings.

Despite his calm, inoffensive manner, which did not suggest a threat, the alien was handcuffed to the arm of the chair. He was humanoid in form and around 1.7 meters tall. His head was much bigger than an ordinary human head and was completely bald. He had two big dark eyes, a thin nose and large, pointy ears. His mouth was relatively small, with thin lips. At first, it was impossible to see his teeth. His body was slender and lanky, with long, slim limbs, which gave an impression of fragility and little physical strength. His skin color varied between beige and grey and Christine thought to herself that the ET was far from attractive.

– What does he eat? – asked the general.

– Mainly steamed vegetables and fruit – answered the lieutenant – That is what he asked us for. And mineral water. He told us that our water is of excellent quality.

At that moment, the ET turned towards the visitors who could suddenly hear him in their minds:

– Welcome earthlings! I note you are very curious about me and I am happy to answer any of your questions... Would you like to come in?

And, fixing his big eyes on Christine, he said:

– I can tell you that I am not contaminated, nor will I become infected. My immune system is much more advanced than yours and I am naturally protected against the viruses and bacteria of your planet.

Without hesitation, they entered the quarters of the ET, who seemed to smile, happy to have visitors.

Abandoning his telepathic abilities, he instead spoke to them in perfect English, without the slightest hint of a foreign accent. It was as though they were talking to an American.

– I am being very well-treated and have already accepted the fact that I will never be able to return home. Your race does not yet have the technology to build a spacecraft that could take me back home.

– Where do you come from? – asked the general.

– You have already discovered my planet. You called it Kepler-22b, as it orbits the Kepler-22 star, located between the Cygnus and Lyra constellations, 600 light years from here. We call it Lano. However, with the technology you have available, it is impossible to reach the star.

– But how did you discover our world, and how did you get here? – the general wanted to know – What type of craft did you use?

– We came in response to a message that you sent years ago, when two of your scientists sent information about the location of the Earth in binary code. The message was sent to the stellar globular cluster M 13 in the Hercules constellation, but we managed to capture the signal, as our star is close to this constellation.

In order to clarify the information supplied by the extraterrestrial, Max added:

– He is referring to the Arecibo Message, created and sent by Frank Drake and Carl Sagan in 1974.

The extraterrestrial visitor continued:

We arrived here quickly as we used the “space folds” located in certain parts of space – answered the extraterrestrial – One of your greatest geniuses, Albert Einstein, has already spoken of them. But you still lack the scientific and technological capabilities to do the same. You will need to completely harness dark energy, which we call primordial energy, first. For now, you cannot reach or surpass the speed of light, without the total energetic dismantling of matter. In other words any mass, when it reaches the speed of light, will transform into pure energy and subsequently be destroyed. You need to learn how to control this transformation without destroying matter.

Turning to John, the ET said:

– We inhabitants of Lano are descended from the civilization that inhabited the planet that you call Mars. A long time ago our home in this solar system suffered a catastrophic collapse, but some survivors managed to escape to Lano, where they constructed a new civilization.

John felt a shiver run down his spine. What the alien was saying was very similar to a dream that he had, in which part of the population of the Earth was transported to another planet with the mission of building a new civilization. And Max had said the same thing.

Hearing John’s thoughts, the ET said:

– What will happen to your civilization will be different. The world will not be totally destroyed and you will not need to abandon your beautiful planet. However, it will be necessary to expel the evil, unproductive souls that live within your civilization. They are harmful weeds that suffocate the garden that you need to sustain yourselves. As the great saint who once lived among you said: the wheat and the chaff will one day be separated, as the former serves a purpose, while the latter is useless and should be burned.

Continuing to stare intently at the professor, he continued:

– The evolution of our ancestors on Mars was before the evolution of your race. Around 250 thousand years ago, at the time when *Homo sapiens*

were beginning to develop, the civilization on Mars was at the same stage as you are now: a planet at the peak of its development, overpopulated, with wars, poverty, disease and hunger. As might have been expected because, as is true throughout the universe at this stage of evolution, societies are selfish, controlling and exploitative, the major nations on Mars argued and started a global nuclear war. Not without good reason was our old planet associated with war in the mythology of the ancient races of the Earth, such as the Romans. When the countries decided to end the war, a lost star, which had been wandering without direction throughout the solar system, passed very close to the orbit of our planet, exercising a magnetic pull so strong that it “turned off” the magnetic field that protects us from solar radiation. Without this magnetic field the days of our civilization were numbered. All was destroyed by the solar winds, although there are still some remnants of our buildings on the surface of the planet.

When we discovered that the end of civilization was imminent, the more intelligent inhabitants, such as scientists, doctors, engineers, artists, both male and female, boarded spaceships, froze their bodies using the process of cryogenic sleep (in which beings are kept alive at low temperatures) and took off for the planet Lano. At the time, we were in possession of technology far superior to that which you have on Earth today. The journey took around 60 thousand years. While the fastest space probe that you have built, Voyager 1, can reach a speed of 17 km/s or 0.006% of the speed of light, our spacecraft in those days could reach 1% of the speed of light, or in other words, 167 times faster than Voyager 1, or around 3100 km/s. While you were living in caves, we were conquering space...

– With all this technology, why did your ancestors not decide to inhabit the Earth? – asked the general.

– They tried – answered the ET – and even got as far as constructing a temporary base on the Moon, but the problem was the oxygen in your atmosphere, which is poisonous to our people.

– But how can you breathe here? – the general demanded.

– Our scientists developed a system that adapts to the body and uses corporeal nitrogen as a substitute for breathing. Our big heads are a result to this system, which works in any atmosphere, a little like the helmets your astronauts use. However, I will not have much longer to live if I do not return to the mother ship, which is stationed on the dark side of the Moon, soon.

– Do you mean to say that you breathe nitrogen? – asked the general.

– Yes – answered the ET – We breathed nitrogen on Mars. When the magnetic field was destroyed, almost all the nitrogen that our race needed was swept from the planet by the solar winds. Today less than 3% of the gas remains in the Martian atmosphere. They knew that in 100 years there would not be enough nitrogen to breath and so they had to leave in a hurry, leaving everything behind. It was a great pity, as Mars, thousands of years ago, was a fertile planet, with a natural environment as rich as that of the Earth. There were rivers, seas and lakes. Our scientists discovered this by studying the soil on Mars.

– It's true – confirmed the general – In 2002 NASA discovered evidence of ice in the findings of the Mars Odyssey probe. Analysis of soil collected by the Phoenix probe in 2008 confirmed these findings.

The alien closed his eyes, as though tired, and after a few moments of silence Christine asked:

– One question that many of us want to ask is why you don't reveal yourselves to us instead of remaining hidden to human eyes?

– At the right moment we will reveal ourselves, as our mission to your planet is to help you during the difficult times that your planet will soon face... We remain hidden as this was the strategy that we adopted. We have

not come here in a disorganized manner, without a command strategy. On the contrary, everything has been carefully planned, organized by a central command so that the mission is a success. Some of you know this command by the name of Ashtar Sheran. This is not a single extraterrestrial being, but a galactic society of highly evolved beings formed by 21 members of the different civilizations of the Milky Way, whose goal is unity and harmony.

As I said, our race arrived here recently to help you overcome the challenges that are on the way. We form a group of twelve alien races that are currently engaged on a mission to the Earth. Of these, four have remained close to humanity for thousands of years, since millions of souls came to this planet exiled from another world.

Confirming the words of the visitor from outer space, Lieutenant Halleck said:

– It's true. In 2013 the former Canadian Minister of Defense, Paul Hellyer, admitted in a public hearing in front of a number of senators that at least four extraterrestrial species visited the Earth thousands of years ago.

The ET, looking at John once more, continued:

– I am not here because of some unfortunate twist of fate. I allowed myself to crash to be captured in order to deliver a warning to you earthlings. The lost star that destroyed our civilization is returning. It will not, however, cause the same destruction on Earth as it did on Mars, but will interfere with the magnetic field, resulting in an inversion of the magnetic poles. As a result of this event natural disasters will occur all over the world.

Once again, John felt a shiver run down his spine. The information confirmed what Max had said to him in the kitchen of his home.

General McEntire took advantage of the brief silence and said to Lieutenant Halleck:

– Well, lieutenant, I think we've heard enough... I need to get back to New York, but first, I want to get more information and data from the Brazilian military. I want to use the time on the plane to prepare my report...



CHAPTER

VIII

They were told that they had the rest of the day free, as their flight back to NY would depart that night, so John, Christine and Max decided to explore the city. It was Carnival week, an exciting event for any visitor to Brazil.

A car from the air force base took them to the center of Natal, where the street party was in full swing. As the bands played the local *frevo* music, the revelers, dressed in brightly colored clothes, performed the traditional dance, swinging miniature parasols as they did so. Many people were in fancy dress, and there was a great variety of unusual themes. The three visitors were dazzled by the enthusiasm of the partygoers. Nothing suggested that they were worried about the natural disasters that were occurring on the other side of the ocean. A crowd danced behind a giant sound truck with enormous speakers that poured out the music of the band that played on top.

As soon as they got out of the car, two half-naked women approached John and began to openly caress him. Christine pulled him away angrily, pushing the two women and shouting in English:

– This one’s taken! Try your luck somewhere else! – The women did not understand what she said, but understood that the couple weren’t in the mood for fun and games and left, howling with laughter.

Whispering in John’s ear, she added:

– And as for you, you’d better behave yourself...!

– But I didn’t do anything! – the professor protested – They attacked me!

– I saw – said the psychologist – But you didn’t have to smile at them, did you?

John thought it best not to respond. He wanted to enjoy their day out and not fight with his girlfriend.

With great difficulty they managed to make their way through the crowd to a quieter spot. John knew that his ex-girlfriend Carolina was living in Natal, married to a Protestant pastor, and he decided to pay her a visit.

At first, Christine did not like the idea, but eventually she reluctantly agreed. They found a taxi and John gave the driver Carolina’s address.

– But that’s the address of the Apostle Mario Fernandes! – cried the taxi driver – Everybody knows the *Castle of the Apostle* here in Natal!



They took the back streets to avoid the Carnival traffic, and the driver talked to Max, who spoke good Portuguese and translated for the couple:

– You know, *Doc*, I’m a Catholic, but I think it’s really wrong what these evangelist pastors are doing to people. They exploit people’s *ignorance*. Really, it’s like they’re selling *seats in heaven*!

He changed into a lower gear to climb a small hill and continued:

– You know that American magazine that lists the richest people in the world? Well... Apostle Fernandes is the richest pastor in Brazil, way out in front of second place! The man is worth millions of dollars!

– Religion was always a profitable business – said Max – And here in Brazil, like in any other developing country, there are plenty of opportunities to find your gold mine.

– It’s true – agreed Christine – I read a report about the growth of evangelicals in Brazil and the rise of the theology of prosperity adopted by many of the neopentecostal religions. According to the report, many young people in Brazil dream about becoming evangelist preachers not just because of the money, but also because of the social prestige that the position brings, and the possibility of a successful career in politics.

– As the Bible says – said John, with a laugh – faith moves mountains. And money too.

After they had driven along the beautiful coastline for around twenty minutes, they arrived at a practically deserted beach, where a spectacular building had been constructed in the style of the castles of the Loire Valley in France.

– We’re here! – said the driver – Does he know you’re coming? Normally you have to make an appointment in advance...

– He doesn’t know – Max told the driver – But we’re more interested in talking to his wife than the pastor himself... And we won’t be long, so wait here, please.

He was right. No sooner had they got out of the car and asked the uniformed guard at the gatehouse to announce their names to the pastor’s wife than they were led towards the imposing entrance to the castle.

– All it needs is a moat and a drawbridge – quipped Christine as they were led up a beautifully landscaped path.

Carolina came to meet them personally at the door.

She was an attractive woman, and her beauty was heightened by the elegant, expensive dress she wore. She smiled broadly, happiness bursting from every pore.

John, however, could not help thinking that Christine was much more beautiful, even dressed in a simple colored top.

Carolina led them to the living room. John noticed that the house was ostentatiously and expensively furnished and decorated.

– What a pleasant surprise! – exclaimed Carolina – If you had told me you were coming...

– It was a last minute trip – explained John – A UN mission to the Brazilian Air Force base related to a case we're working on... As we had the rest of the day free, I thought I'd come and see how you are.

Carolina asked for cashew fruit juice to be brought for the visitors and told them how happy she was helping her husband with the work of the church. But she was involved only in the financial side of the ministry, as she had no interest in theological or pastoral matters.

– I like living in Brazil. It's not as glamorous as New York, of course, having Central Park on your doorstep, but financially we have been truly blessed here, thanks be to God. — She grabbed a Yorkshire terrier that was sniffing at her feet and, placing it on her lap, continued:

– Fernandes is always travelling, supervising our churches all over Brazil. Since we bought the jet... He's hardly at home.

– You bought a jet? – Christine said, as though surprised.

– It was bought and registered as the property of the church, but only Fernandes uses it. It's his little toy...

John tried to steer the conversation away from small talk and on to more serious matters, and said:

– Carolina, have you noticed the number of natural disasters that have been in the news recently?

– These things have happened since the beginning of time. I sometimes think they are a punishment for those who do not accept Jesus as the only Lord and Savior. – She said, showing no regret for the thousands of victims of the tragedies, many of whom were from countries in the Middle East and Asia which were not Christian.

Max, who had remained silent until now, said:

– Do you not think that we are close to Judgment Day, the long awaited selection process of humanity, when we will all be judged for our deeds, as is written in the Book of Revelations?

– I believe, as does my husband, that Jesus will return unexpectedly and will take all of those who believe in his name to heaven. We will not undergo any kind of trial, as we will be lifted up and will live with the Lord forever. These things that are happening on the other side of the world don't bother me.

John, realizing that she was unwilling to listen to any opinions other than her own, made one last try:

– Carolina, I have been having very strange dreams about natural disasters and voices that talk of more catastrophes to come. I really think that you should move as far away from the coast as possible, as there is a risk that a tsunami will strike Brazil in this area.

Carolina looked out the window at the sea and said, incredulously:

– Look John, these tragedies don't happen here in Brazil. We are a blessed country. As the saying goes, God is Brazilian.

– I really believe that you should consider moving away from the coast for a while. Part of the Mid Atlantic Ridge lies along the north and northeastern coast of Brazil, as far as the state of Paraíba. Any movement of these plates could create an enormous wave capable of reaching the coast.

– We cannot abandon the Church and its worshippers just like that... – said Carolina as her husband entered the room.

Once everyone had been introduced, the pastor sat next to his wife and in a rough voice said:

– I was in the library when I overheard your conversation. I understand the professor's concern and we are all troubled by events on the other side of the world. The war and the natural disasters are terrible tragedies, but I can assure you that they do not represent the end of the world. These trials will

pass as others have passed. We need to continue with our lives as normally as we can, with the concerns inherent in things of this world.

Taking a Bible that was open on a table next to the sofa, exhibited like a trophy for an admiring public, he held the book aloft and said:

– This is the Word of God. It guarantees that many things must happen before the Last Judgment. The just will be saved, the Antichrist will take over the world and will desecrate the Temple of Jerusalem, making God adored by men. Satanists will be defeated by the angelic hosts, the dead will rise... See how much is still to happen.

John nodded glumly and thought:

– It's very clear why they don't believe our warnings. If they admit that the Last Judgment is coming, the faithful will stop their donations... And that's the last thing that they want!

As they said goodbye, John was extremely disappointed to see how blinded by ambition and rampant materialism Carolina was. Perhaps, he thought, he shouldn't be so surprised, as he knew his ex-girlfriend well, and was aware of what a materialist, and how interested in earthly wealth, she was. Her god was money, basically. Faith and religion were an easy way of making her materialist dreams and desires come true.

They returned to the air base as night was falling, a few minutes before the US Air Force jet was due to leave for Washington, as General McEntire had much to discuss with the Pentagon before returning to the United Nations headquarters in New York.

John had always been adverse to public speaking, being a reserved and even shy individual. He was therefore shocked to see a battalion of reporters waiting for them when they arrived at Ronald Reagan Airport.

Bernard, who was also waiting for them, went to find his friend and explained:

– I’m sorry, John, it’s my fault. This is the result of the response to a post that I put on Facebook about the premonitory dreams that you told me about in your e-mail.

Although he was not happy, and without releasing Christine’s hand – she seemed to the professor to be his most important support at that time – John tried to answer the questions he was asked.

He treated the situation as a chance to spread the warning about the terrible series of disasters which would ultimately represent the so-called *Apocalypse*.

The meeting with the reporters continued for about fifteen minutes until it was interrupted by the arrival of two men dressed in dark suits, who identified themselves as federal agents.

One of them said:

– You need to come with us to give an official statement... And I’m sorry, but it needs to be right now.

Without further explanation, other than a few vague sentences about providing information to the Pentagon, the two agents took Max, John and Christine to the entrance to the airport where a black Blazer GMC was parked.

On the way to their destination, escorted by another car with four agents and two motorcycle outriders, John asked the official who had approached him at the airport:

– Are you CIA or FBI? Where are we going? To the Pentagon?

– Actually we’re Secret Service. The President wants to talk to you. We’re taking you to the White House...

With the intensity and frequency of the natural disasters throughout the world increasing, until they were occurring on a daily basis, Dom Octavius Bourjois decided that he had no choice but to call a meeting of the inner circle of the Order of Revelation. He urged them to take action to ensure that people did not believe it was the end of the world, and that what was happening had nothing to do with the so-called Day of Judgment, or the Day of the Lord.

– Our biggest problem is this professor – said a furious Bourjois – We have to get rid of him!

– I don't understand how so many of our attempts to eliminate him could fail! – exclaimed Peter Balo, his right hand man – I thought it would have been easy to deal with him... He doesn't strike me as someone who is prepared for this type of combat, and is helpless after being dumped by his Brazilian girlfriend...

– He has Max Bacon on his side – said one of Bourgeois' advisors, a huge man named Aaron – And to make matters worse he met a woman... This Christine has become the focus of the professor's life. It seems he has improved considerably on his last girlfriend.

– We have to eliminate all three – said Bourjois, with a scowl – We cannot risk being discredited.

Staring at Balo, he said:

– John knows that we are not dealing with complete destruction and the end of the world. But he may want to make humanity believe that we are. He may want to use this to his benefit. He will be able to save many lives and everyone will believe that he is a prophet sent by God. After that, whatever he wishes will be obeyed. He will ruin my plans for the future of the planet...

– It's true – admitted Balo – And he could easily order our destruction when the chaos is over.

– We have to be ready – said Aaron – And for this, we have to train and equip an army of our best disciples...

– I do not think we have time for that – said Bourjois – The best we can do is to silence these three as quickly as possible.

– I will take care of that myself – said Aaron – And I assure you I will not fail.

– I hope so – said Bourjois – It is all or nothing now. Either we will control the world after these disasters, or we will be destroyed ourselves.

Aaron nodded his head in agreement and said:

– We know that he went to Brazil. Probably he went to find his ex-girlfriend and try and save her. Unfortunately, there is no system of espionage among the followers of the evangelical sect led by this Mario Fernandes, Carolina's current partner. They are all fanatics. So we have no news of whereabouts of John since they left the USA and arrived in Brazil.

– No, they're back! They only stayed a day – said Peter Balo – I saw them being interviewed at Ronald Reagan Airport on CNN. The TV showed them being taken away in a black jeep by two agents who looked like they were CIA. I don't know where they went to, but I'd guess it was Arlington or Washington.

– Should I eliminate them all? – asked Aaron.

– I believe it is the only way – answered Bourjois – But do not go alone. Take a team with you. And use the jet. That way you can bring whatever weapons you need.

Aaron smiled. He had a cruel, sadistic nature, and this was exactly the answer he had been looking for. An opportunity to wipe out his adversary using brute force and violence.

– Be careful – said Bourjois – If what we have heard about the Order of the Clove is true, they may be protected by mysterious forces... These so-called Superior Beings of the Galaxy.

– We know they don't exist – said Aaron, in a mocking tone – and even if they are protected, nothing can stop a rifle bullet... And I don't intend to let them get away...

Standing, he barked:

– I will take six of my former colleagues from the Special Forces. Those that served with me during Operation Abbottabad.

Bourjois nodded. Aaron knew exactly what to do. He had already proven himself during the mission that led to the capture and death of Osama Bin Laden with the Navy Seals, the elite American fighting force.

Bourjois had always known that sooner or later he would need to call on men that were capable of killing for money. So when Aaron's mission with the CIA was over, he had offered him the role of special advisor. He had not regretted it. The mercenary was worth every penny of the hefty salary he was paid. Bourjois had had to deal with more than a few enemies to maintain his untouchable power, his position as the power behind the throne, or in other words, he who really gave the orders in the Catholic Church, even while remaining in the shadows.

In addition to this, Aaron was a sworn atheist whose only God was money. As a result, he knew perfectly well that Bourjois, in reality, was still flesh and blood, subject to the same temptations as any other. And one of his greatest weaknesses was the opposite sex. Soon the two were both enjoying the orgies that Aaron organized for himself and for the Monsignor. Orgies that would not have disappointed the dignitaries of Ancient Rome...

For the mercenary, the role that he fulfilled and the virtually unlimited power of Bourjois were a perfect match. There was certainly no lack of money, and female companions in droves. Rare were the nights when they were not surrounded by beautiful and, logically, sexually available women.

Nor did Bourjois have to worry about this aspect of his life being revealed. At the first sign of a threat Aaron would take action, cutting off any

possibility of a scandal at the root. That was what had happened to the woman who had tried to blackmail the Monsignor. Her body was found carbonized inside a burnt out car in the parking lot of a shopping mall. Even though the fire department had arrived a few moments after the blaze had started, they were unable to extinguish it, much less save the woman.



Accompanied by Meggy, his inseparable companion, Aaron flew to Arlington in Bourgeois' private jet.

– We are racing against time. We need to find them fast – he said, looking at Meggy.

– I don't understand why the Monsignor is so obsessed with eliminating them... Our legions of followers are far more numerous and our power, in every sense, is much greater!

– It is a political issue, Meggy – explained Aaron – Bourjois cannot allow non-believers. Absolutely everyone must follow him blindly.

– But that's impossible! – cried the woman – There will always be someone who disagrees with the Order of Revelation! It's part of human nature...

– Perhaps it's impossible over a long period of time – said Aaron – But in the short-term, it can be done. And don't forget that the Day of the Lord will arrive suddenly, when no one is expecting it. That is how the Holy Scriptures must be interpreted...

Meggy gave a small laugh and, in a mocking tone, said:

– Seriously, baby... Don't tell me that you believe in that nonsense!

– I don't. You know that we, who form part of the inner circle of the Order of Revelation, know that these stories were created to control the masses.

The uncontrollable desire for eternal life and the fear of the unknown make people easy to control. In truth, religion is the strongest of shackles... And when people believe that we, the inner circle, know what is to come, they fear and respect us. And then, life becomes better, easier, more comfortable, full of opportunity and wealth.

Meggy was forced to admit that Aaron was right. Their lives were proof of that. If they weren't working for Bourjois, they would still be mercenaries, risking their lives on a daily basis for a fistful of dollars in the wilds of Africa or some desert in the Middle East, fighting for something that they would never care about. With Bourjois, it was different. The objective was power, wealth, comfort. That was worth a few risks, and in any case the risks were considerably smaller than they would have faced when up against hundreds of soldiers, sometimes fighting alone. Of course there was a price to pay, there had to be, such as when she had to share a bed with Bourjois... or accept that Aaron took part in the orgies that the Monsignor enjoyed so much. She would rather be with Aaron and only with him... But on the whole, both knew there was not much to complain about.

As though reading her inner thoughts, Aaron said:

– And there's no point trying to fool the Monsignor, after all, he knows everything. Remember Arthur Carrani, who tried to sell the secrets of the organization to the press? Even today no one knows what happened to him. Bourjois took him out of the picture before he could say a word. I don't know how, but he is always one step ahead.

– Come on, it's obvious how he knows – said the woman – Someone in our team is Bourgeois' spy. And when I find out who it is, you can be sure I'll know what to do with them!

Aaron shivered. He knew Meggy well and knew what she was capable of. In the same way as she was a passionate lover, she was a cold, cruel

killer... That sculptured body and angelic face hid a fearsome warrior, an expert in martial arts and a skilled user of firearms.

– Well... – he said – Let’s concentrate on finding John and his friends. We know where they are, so let’s complete our mission as quickly as possible. We have to remember how unstable things are in the world today, and the quicker we can remove any threats, the better.



CHAPTER

IX

Once they had arrived at the White House, John, Chris and Max were taken to an underground bunker underneath the East Wing of the presidential complex, known by the acronym PEOC, or Presidential Emergency Operations Center, where there was a control center built by NASA.

It was a surreal, intimidating space of more than 300 m², filled with control panels, banks of computer monitors and a huge screen on which around fifty people were watching a live CNN broadcast about UFO sightings over New York. At the same time, in another window on the screen, the same thing was happening in Europe, with shining objects flying past the Eiffel Tower at great speed. The visitors were amazed by the technological structure of the room, with hordes of people working in the same place, hurrying from desk to desk, watching the monitors, or speaking on the phone. On the wall, beside the giant screen, there was a huge map of the world, marked with flags, symbols and models of flying saucers, showing the scale of the sightings across the world.

On another large screen, military personnel were following the movements of two F-22 Raptor combat planes that were chasing an alien spacecraft over Seattle. But the UFO easily outpaced the two planes, before diving into Elliott Bay and disappearing from the radar screens.

– My God! Are we being invaded? – cried Christine, visibly shaken.

– It seems not – answered Lieutenant Halleck, the same officer who they had met at the Brazilian air base – none of these UFOs have fired a single

shot. On the contrary, it is us who are playing the part of the aggressor. When our pursuit planes tried to bring them down, nothing could hit them. It seems there's an energetic force field protecting them. If they really are from another planet, and everything suggests that they are, then we aren't giving them a very friendly reception.

The lieutenant was accompanied by the NASA astronomer William Mitchell, who was also the President's special advisor on outer space related issues, and the same man who was photographed receiving a message on his cell phone by the paparazzo. After they had been introduced, Bill, as he was known, invited the three visitors to come with him, as the President wanted to meet them as soon as possible.

Sitting around a large oval table in a meeting room, Lieutenant Halleck advised them that the number of disasters was increasing on a scale no one had ever seen before, and assured them that the NASA scientists had already discovered the reason for this.

– The president is in a video conference with the Russian president at the moment in the Situation Room, but he will soon be here to brief you – said the astronomer.

Soon the president arrived, followed by General McEntire and a military officer carrying the “Nuclear Football”, the black briefcase that contained instructions and codes for the launch of nuclear weapons in the event that an immediate attack was required, or even the launch of the entire American nuclear arsenal simultaneously, an attack which would destroy the planet.

– I'll speak to those vultures from the press in thirty minutes – he said, placing a black folder emblazoned with the *official seal* of the United States and the words “TOP SECRET” on the table – But first I want to meet Professor John Holson Smith, who, I've been told, has received premonitory messages through his paranormal psychic abilities. The alien being that you met in Brazil told us that the professor had received the

mission of warning the world of the events that will affect humanity from an extraterrestrial source. However, it is important to remember that it is our duty to inform the population as much as we can, while always trying to avoid widespread panic.

– The panic is already starting, Mr. President – responded the general.

– I'm aware of that – answered the President – But it can still be controlled. The greatest danger is when it gets out of control. If people start to flee in panic there will be many deaths that could have been avoided.

Sitting on the edge of the table, the President continued:

– I called these reporters vultures for a reason. Just so you have an idea what is happening, they heard I was extremely worried about the arrival of Edna... and the next thing you know, they have created a lover for me with the same name! It sounds like a Hollywood script, but sometimes life imitates art...

He smiled and continued:

– Edna is the codename that we have given to the planetoid Sedna. Before I go on, tell them what we know about Sedna, General McEntire.

– Sedna was discovered in 2003. We believe it was a planetoid located beyond the Kuiper Belt, in the Oort Cloud, or in other words, three times further away from the Sun than Neptune. Its orbit is extremely eccentric, with an aphelion (the point of orbit furthest from the Sun) around 937 AU (Astronomical Units) and a perihelion of 76 AU. It is the reddest astronomical body in the solar system and its orbit period is around 12,000 thousand years. That is the basic picture, Mr. President.

– Good – said the President, tapping a pen on the table – the main problem, however, is that our scientists have discovered that Sedna is heading towards the Earth.

– But I thought Sedna was on the far side of Pluto? – asked John, incredulously.

– When the star was discovered, the distance was calculated correctly, however, due to the inaccuracy of some of the data obtained, the estimate of the orbit was not correct. The telescopes on Earth had a highly unstable image of Sedna due to the turbulence of the atmosphere. So it was necessary to use the Hubble Space Telescope to observe the new planetoid, which is roughly the same as trying to spot a football field from 1,500 kilometers away. Once the Hubble found Sedna, it was used for other tasks and no one paid much attention to the planetoid as it was so far away. Our astronomers only started to worry when they noticed that Sedna was in our solar system, between the orbits of Saturn and Jupiter, just over a year ago, when terrestrial telescopes were able to observe the star more precisely.

The President glanced at his advisor, the astronomer William Mitchell who, after clearing his throat, continued his commanding officer's explanation:

– Really, the orbit calculated was most unusual. The location of Sedna, in the orbital model proposed, made no sense at all. The planetoid could not have had the orbit we imagined, as it was never close enough to be affected by the Sun, but was also not far enough away from the Sun to be affected by other stars. Because of this anomaly, the Nemesis hypothesis gathered strength.

Over the last 30 years, some colleagues of mine believed in the existence of a companion star of our Sun. The idea was not so ridiculous, as the majority of stars in our galaxy were found in groups of two, three or even four stars, and because of this the theory had some credibility in the academic world. The star was called Nemesis or the Death Star as it was responsible for the mass extinctions that affected our planet. Nemesis, when it entered the Oort Cloud, disturbed the orbit of millions of asteroids and comets, which were then launched in the direction of the Sun. Many of these bodies struck the Earth, causing the mass extinctions of the past.

He paused briefly to take a sip of water and continued:

– Gentlemen, *The Truth is Out There*. Sedna is our X File – he said, referring to the successful science fiction show broadcast on the FOX channel in the 1990s – Sedna is the Nemesis star that the scientists of the past believed in. It is not exactly a planetoid, but a brown dwarf star, three times bigger than we supposed, approximately 2,500 km in equatorial diameter, or 70% the size of the Moon. Despite the light of the Sun, the star can already be seen during the day in the Taurus constellation. Its most important characteristic is its gigantic magnetic field. It is precisely this magnetic field that is causing the disasters on our planet, as it is directly affecting the magnetosphere and the Earth’s core which is the dynamo generator of this magnetic field. We know this because there are clear signs of the inversion of the magnetic poles. We need to prepare ourselves for even greater catastrophes.

The President’s advisor walked to a large LED screen attached to the wall which showed an animated version of the orbit of Sedna, and explained:

– The brown dwarf star has already passed the Sun and is at this moment alongside Venus in the South Celestial Hemisphere, close to the ecliptic plane. As you can see, Sedna’s orbit is highly unusual, being rather elongated, similar to longer period comets. As the President says, Sedna is coming our way.

– Is there a risk that the star could strike the Earth? – Christine wanted to know.

– There is a small statistical risk, which we cannot ignore, of around 0.1%. But the most likely prospect is that the perihelion of the orbit will come at some point between the Earth and Venus, from where it will return to the immensity of space. We are dealing with one of the greatest enigmas in science: why the rotation of Venus is the opposite of other planets in the solar system. The explanation is that over millions of years, with each passage of Sedna, Venus was affected by the magnetic field of

the invading star and gradually its rotation shifted to an angle of 177° , or in other words, Venus “turned upside down.” That is why our neighbor rotates in the opposite direction.

Pointing at the diagram, he continued:

– The gravest danger is if the star passes close to the Earth... I don’t even want to think about the consequences... Despite the fact that the Moon does not have a significant magnetic field to be influenced by Sedna, the gravitational interaction between the two stars will result in terrible consequences for the Earth. Gigantic tsunamis will sweep the coast of every continent. It will be an apocalyptic event – said the astronomer, turning to the table with a look of concern.

– Can’t we use nuclear weapons to change the orbit of the star? – suggested John.

It was the President who answered, as any decision involving nuclear weapons was his responsibility. He said:

– That would be a viable solution, but only in times of peace. The war we are facing in Asia and the Middle East prevents us from using nuclear weapons in this operation, as we would need to use our entire nuclear arsenal for the mission to be successful. I was just on a conference call with the Russian president discussing this subject, but he is not willing to cooperate by giving up some of their nuclear warheads. As a result, that plan has been rejected, as we need our nuclear weapons for the war in which we are involved.

Looking pointedly at General McEntire, he continued:

– If we had known about Sedna a few years ago, we could have prepared ourselves better for this moment. The first warning was given by a writer who, at the height of the 2012 Phenomenon and the Mayan prophecies, published a book in which he analyzed apocalyptic prophecies. In the second edition of the book he predicted that Sedna would pass close to the orbit of

the Earth. His ideas seemed ridiculous at the time. Even though both our government and the UN were aware of his theories, they were not considered believable or relevant, and were ignored completely.

– And the natural disasters? Will they get worse? – John asked.

– We can't be sure, but it's possible – said the advisor to the President – Our civilization has never experienced a magnetic inversion of the poles and the worst case scenario is that the disasters will intensify, with more earthquakes, tsunamis, a rise in sea levels and volcanic eruptions becoming more frequent over the coming days. There is also a risk that the geographic poles may shift, migrating to other regions.

Just then the cell phone of the astronomer William Mitchell rang, interrupting his explanations, and allowing General McEntire to continue.

– There is another troubling factor. Sedna is bringing with it thousands of asteroids and comets that will be launched towards the Earth. It will rain meteors. A similar event of this magnitude took place between 12 and 13 thousand years ago, and also coincided with the orbital period of Sedna. The last passage of the dwarf star through the solar system took place at the intercession of the Pleistocene and Holocene geological eras, resulting in the end of the Ice Age and the extinction of many species of large mammals. That was when the Woolly Mammoth, the Giant Elk, the Cave Bear and other animals disappeared. It was also when the prehistoric American people, the Clovis culture, also mysteriously disappeared. It all fits together, and Sedna is the final piece in the jigsaw that was missing from our understanding of the prehistory of our civilization.

With a calm, studied expression that gave him a mystical air, Max had remained silent throughout the conversation, as though he already knew about everything that was being discussed. Intending to bring the meeting to a close, the President said:

– There is no instruction manual for the situation we are facing. We need to make the right decision and we need to do it quickly. We were taken by surprise. Sedna is not in its rightful place.

When the President uttered these words, John immediately remembered the voice he had heard in his dream: “When the Destroyer is not in its rightful place, all should flee far from the coast.” He understood that the *Destroyer* was Sedna. The warning was clear. Populations that lived in coastal areas should move inland due to the threat posed by rising sea levels and tsunamis, as had been discussed in that very room.

The President said:

– I think it would be a good idea to talk to the Brazilian writer who predicted all of this to help us understand the situation further. We need to save as many lives as possible, preserve our technical and scientific knowledge and protect our works of art. We are running out of time.

The President asked Lieutenant Halleck to be summoned. When he arrived, his Commander in Chief ordered him to put in place a contingency plan aimed at evacuating people away from the coast and further inland.

Then, attempting to portray a sense of calm that he obviously did not feel, he said farewell to his visitors and left the meeting room accompanied by his advisors and the faithful soldier carrying his “end of the world” briefcase. Following the press conference, in which he revealed the truth about Sedna to the media, he recorded an address to the nation, asking for calm and faith in God. He remembered the American people of their spirit of unity and asked those who lived in the countryside to provide shelter in their homes for those fleeing from the coast, as gymnasiums and public buildings would not have enough space for everyone.

John, Christine and Max remained in the room for a little longer, admiring the state of the art technology that surrounded them. When Lieutenant

Halleck returned, he invited them to stay in the same hotel as the rest of the team that was advising the President on the current crisis.

Once they left the bunker, they saw that a fierce storm was raging. Soon it would have the strength of a category 5 hurricane.



Once they were comfortably settled in a spacious and luxurious hotel room, Christine commented:

– The storm is raging outside, but inside we’re well protected... I saw the security system around the hotel. We’re surrounded by *marines* and CIA agents. Nobody is getting in here tonight to try and hurt us!

– I wouldn’t be so sure – said Max – These followers of the Order of Revelation are as stealthy as commandoes, and they’re very well trained. But I’ll be watching your backs, and no one will get past me easily...

He smiled to calm their nerves and added:

– Let’s try and get some rest. We will have to take turns keeping watch. You two sleep first and in six hours we’ll switch. We have to be ready to move at the slightest suspicious movement, or even a helicopter or plane flying lower than normal. We can escape through the service exit of the hotel. It would be suicidal to try and confront these fanatics, if they manage to get in...

– But you said no one would get past you easily... – protested Christine.

– I did – said Max – But if they got as far as this apartment... If we find out they are in the hotel, it would be wisest, and safest, to get out of here.

John and Christine did not need to be asked twice. They went to their hotel room and after taking a shower talked about the prophecies and the disasters that were affecting the world. Christine believed that her boyfriend was in a privileged position because he could see the future, but John told her that his visions were tormenting him, as he could do little to save people. Christine tried to calm him, telling him that anything he did would be a help, and that he would be of vital importance for the people he saved.

Before going to sleep, John took his Bible and read again the *Prophetic Sermon of Jesus*. He found verses in the gospels that described Jesus's vision of the global chaos to come. For example, the unexpected appearance of Sedna was prophesized in the Gospel of Mark, when Jesus said: "*When you see 'the abomination that causes desolation' standing where it does not belong--let the reader understand--then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.*"² It was clear that the expression "the abomination that causes desolation" refers to Sedna, which is not in its rightful place, as it was this star that was responsible for all the desolation, havoc and destruction sweeping the world. This coincided with the message in the dreams that he had been having. The Destroyer was, in truth, the abomination that causes desolation of the biblical prophecy. The warning that those who lived in Judea should flee to the mountains referred to the rising sea levels in that part of the world.

John thought that those verses were a rich source of prophetic material that had not been deciphered in time for humanity to prepare itself for the trial to come. In the same gospel, John read the prophecy of the days the world was currently experiencing: "*Because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now--and never to be equaled again. If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them.*"³

In the Book of Luke, he was surprised with the accuracy of the prophecy. It seemed as though Jesus had actually seen what would happen to the world. *“There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”*⁴

While the couple relaxed, Max turned the TV channel to CNN. The newscaster was reading the following:

– ...terrible destruction is already sweeping the West Coast. After the sudden rise in sea levels, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego are practically underwater. Hundreds of people are missing and thousands are homeless. It is the same story in other parts of the world. The south of England, Normandy, and almost all of Holland have been affected by the elevation of the sea. In London, the flood barriers that have protected the city from the River Thames could not withstand the strength of the water and have sunk.

In Italy, volcanoes that were extinct are erupting and hundreds of earthquakes have struck the country. In Asia, tsunamis are sweeping the coasts of Japan, North and South Korea, China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and Australia. There are earthquakes in China, India, Pakistan and other parts of the Middle East.

In South America, Brazil was struck by a tsunami caused by the shifting of the South American tectonic plate, which destroyed a number of cities, including the capital of the state of Rio Grande do Norte, Natal. We do not know for how long we will be able to continue broadcasting news of what is happening to our planet. Our directors are studying the possibility of broadcasting from on board an aircraft, as it seems safer to be in the sky than here on the ground at the moment. We just need to find a way to ensure the aircraft can be refueled. Scientists have confirmed that the Earth’s axis

is undergoing a significant change, on a scale never seen before in human history.

According to the scientific community, all this chaos is being caused by the passage of a brown dwarf star which can be seen in the sky during the day and which was previously believed to be the planetoid Sedna. As a result of these events and the war that is currently in progress the committee director of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists at the University of Chicago has decided to readjust the Doomsday Clock to 11:59, in other words, one minute until the end of the world. The last time that this symbolic clock of the scientific community was so close to midnight was in 1953, when it was set to 11:58.

The President of the United States is proposing a ceasefire among the countries that are currently at war in order to confront this common enemy, which is much more powerful and more devastating than any war. When the chaos is over, we will have to begin a new civilization.

Max gave a sigh and said softly:

– Well... it's no surprise to me. The Order of the Clove already knew about what is happening and the effects of the inversion of the magnetic poles. Unfortunately, all this is necessary if humanity is to rise again, like a phoenix, from the chaos, based on love and brotherhood. Probably, a large part of the population will perish, taking with it the so-called "modern civilization." Those that survive will have to begin again. Technology will be more limited, of course, and the production of consumer goods and food will be drastically reduced... The monetary system will have to be rethought, as existing currencies will mean nothing...

He was shaken from his thoughts by the newscaster who, at that moment, was saying:

– *There is no news of the Pope, after the Vatican was almost completely destroyed by the earthquake that struck Rome. It is thought that he has been*

taken to Castel Gandolfo, his summer residence, located in Lazio, a region around 30 km from Rome that was not affected by the earthquake. The last task of the Pope before the earthquake was a meeting with Monsignor Dom Octavius Bourjois, which was interrupted by the quake.

– Bourjois did it... – said Max to himself – He is very close to seizing all the power and riches of the Vatican. He is just a few steps away from sitting on the throne of St Peter...

Max knew that he had to do something to prevent that from happening. He had known Bourjois for a long time and he knew that once in power he would be the worst of all tyrants. Not one despot from the past could be compared to him. The only thing that Bourjois wanted was absolute power and total control of the planet.

At exactly this moment, the transmission went off air.



While Max tried to establish a plan of action, John, sleeping alongside Christine, dreamed that Carolina was being swept away by the current of a mighty river. People of all ages and races tried to save themselves. The river, which ended in a towering waterfall, was full of people being dragged towards the precipice of the falls, and their deaths. He wanted to dive into the water to save his ex-girlfriend but an invisible force seemed to be impeding him.

He awoke with a start and spent a few minutes staring at the ceiling, reflecting how much his life had changed since he had started drinking that tea, before getting out of bed to get a drink from the *minibar*.

In the living room he found Max, who pointed at the television, now switched off, and said:

– All the channels are dead. Just before they went off air, I saw the news that among all the catastrophes around the world, a tsunami struck the northeastern coast of Brazil. Natal, the city where your ex-girlfriend lives, was hit hard. I don't think she survived. The TV showed the entire city in ruins, including the mansion where they live... Nothing survived. I'm sorry, John.

Despite the fact that his relationship with Carolina had ended some time ago, John was devastated by the news.

He fell onto the sofa, saying softly:

– I hoped that she would survive. If only her religious faith had been based on spiritual, rather than material, growth.

Just then Christine, who had also awoken, came into the living room. After Max had told her the news, she poured a whiskey for each of them and, putting her arms around John, said:

– I know that it's tragic, darling, but you don't need to feel guilty about her death. You did everything you could to warn her of the danger – she said, running her fingers through his hair.

It was after four o'clock in the morning and, despite being exhausted, John could not imagine going back to sleep.

He remained in the living room, as Christine dozed with her head in his lap, and thought of the difficult mission ahead.

As though he could read John's thoughts, and perhaps alerted by invisible spiritual forces, Max said:

– There is no doubt that it's an extremely dangerous mission... The men of the Order of Revelation are on our tail. They are very close. We have to get out of here before they find us!

– But how? – asked the professor, a tone of desperation creeping into his voice – The roads are jammed with people fleeing from the coast... It will be a lot easier for our pursuers to catch us in the middle of a traffic jam!

– We’re going to go by helicopter – answered Max.

Smiling, he added:

– I’ve already spoken to the general about it. He has promised to leave a *Bell 206 Jet-Ranger* at the hotel helipad. We don’t need a pilot, as I learnt how to fly as part of my Aeronautical Engineering course and I know that you are also a pilot... We are going to leave around nine o’clock in the morning.

John felt calmer when he heard the news and was about to ask Max how he knew that he could fly helicopters, but at that moment his phone rang.

It was Bernard, who said:

– Sorry for calling so late, John, but I wanted to speak to you before cell phone communication cut out completely... You need to come back to the University as soon as possible... I was asked by the dean to convince you to give a talk to the students and professors explaining everything that is happening around the world.

– Ok. We’ll be there in the morning – answered John.

Max, who had heard what Bernard had said, as John’s phone had been in loudspeaker mode, said:

– Tell him we have to stop for fuel in Philadelphia, as despite having a full tank, I want to pick up two spare containers. We don’t know where we might have to fly or what the refueling options will be ahead. I know that there are fuel shortages in many cities, as the oil refineries are paralyzed.

They waited for Christine to awaken, and, after a big breakfast, went to the hotel’s helipad where as Max had said, a *Jet-Ranger* was waiting for them.

They quickly boarded the craft and, after running some checks, Max lifted them smoothly into the air.

As they flew over the city, they could see chaotic traffic, countless buildings destroyed and fires blazing. Streets and avenues were completely flooded in the wake of the hurricane.

Pointing out the disaster below them, Max said:

– This chaos what you are seeing, which is being repeated across the globe, was foreseen by a number of psychics and prophets of the past, among them Nostradamus and Edgar Cayce. Very few people believed them, but now we know they were correct. In the Old Testament, the prophets warned of this historic moment that the human race is undergoing, known as the Wrath of God or the Day of the Lord. Even Jesus predicted this global destruction. His warning is in the prophetic sermon in the gospels, which also include the prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem. My friends, we are living through the Last Judgment and the selection process of humanity.

Tilting the craft forwards to pick up speed, Max continued:

– The condemned souls will be exiled to another planet, very similar to our world in prehistoric times, while the just will remain on Earth and will have the opportunity to rebuild the world and continue our civilization. This reconstruction has to occur in the most natural way possible. We cannot allow our rebirth to become corrupted by men like Bourjois, for example. He will want to seize absolute power over the rest of humanity. The Order of Revelation has exactly this objective: to put in place a New World Order that will bring together all the survivors, transforming them into slaves under the banner of a single religion, a Catholicism similar to the Middle Ages, in which the clergy are the keepers of truth and knowledge.

– In fact – pondered Christine – this is the objective of the inner circles of all the religions and sects scattered across the world. Perhaps Buddhism is an exception, but as for the rest...

– You're right – admitted Max – These religious powers seem to forget that diversity is an essential characteristic of humanity. This same diversity

makes it difficult to establish a regime based on subservience, a slavery governed by a single dominant faith.

– Sometimes you seem like an atheist... – said John.

– I don't consider myself to be a true atheist – answered Max, with a smile – I believe, for example, in the Superior Beings from other dimensions. And I have proof of their presence in our world too. But my studies, research and rational thinking have led me to no longer believe in so-called “dogmas of faith”. Every religion is created by men who develop a doctrinal and theological body that they believe to be true and immutable. The main religions of the world were created in the past, when scientific knowledge was not even 1% of what we know today. How could the people of the past be infallible when it comes to determining the truth of divine matters and yet know nothing of science? Congregations and religious orders were created to enslave the human conscience with the aim of creating people who were mentally equal.

– But your life is dedicated to the Order of the Clove – said John – This means that you believe in something, that you fight for the same goals as Bourjois, for example.

– Yes, but in a totally different, perhaps even opposite, way – objected Max – The Order of Revelation intends to unify all the religions and sects in order to have complete control over the minds of the human race. It is not hard to imagine a new Inquisition being carried out to eradicate anyone and anything that disagrees with their rules. We, of the Order of the Clove, ask for high standards of moral and ethical behavior, based on Natural Laws. For example, “Do not kill”. This is one of the natural laws. “Do not steal”, is another. We do not want to unify anything, we know that diversity is necessary for human progress. Out of disagreement come new, positive ideas that drive civilization forwards. If it was not for Einstein and his theory of relativity, after all, which contradicted so much of what had gone before, we

would have stagnated, wouldn't we? And soon, those that had previously disagreed find a way to collaborate, so that scientific progress can continue.

As they flew over the region, they could see the immense destruction below them. Rivers overflowed their banks, there were huge landslides and great cracks had opened in the surface of the earth.

– The ground waters have broken – explained Max, as though he was once again reading the thoughts of the professor – This phenomenon is known as liquefaction and occurs after seismic disturbances when large quantities of water rise to the surface, resulting in what you see below you.

He pointed to a column of black smoke rising into the sky a few kilometers in the distance and said:

– That is the greatest danger we face, at the moment... Dormant or extinct volcanoes coming back to life and taking people by surprise. Our greatest fear is the eruption of the Yellowstone super volcano which would be catastrophic for the USA. All of this is happening because the internal core of the Earth is moving, intensifying the convection currents of the crust. This increases the pressure on the interior of the Earth, and the volcanoes are the planet's escape valve. This volcano is close to spitting out magma in every direction, in an enormous explosion.

John nodded slowly and, without hiding his sarcasm, asked:

– And what do you think the Superior Beings are going to tell us to do? In an almost ruined planet that is experiencing terrible changes?

Max turned the helicopter towards Philadelphia and, after a few moments, answered:

– These Beings have already experienced similar situations on other planets. The Last Judgment occurs on every planet with intelligent life forms. It is a necessary moment of transition. They know what needs to be done and what we can do to help ourselves. They will tell us what to do. For now, I know that we have to get to Philadelphia to buy as much fuel as possible.

CHAPTER

X

While Max, the professor and his girlfriend headed for Philadelphia, Aaron called Bourjois to tell him that he had so far been unable to find the three friends.

– But that’s impossible! – thundered the Monsignor – Even if he’s being helped by that damned Max Bacon, you should still have been able to eliminate him!

– It will be done, Dom Octavius – Aaron promised – I know that they are going to New York. Our phone tapping service discovered a call to John in which he revealed his destination, and we know that they will make a stop in Philadelphia to refuel the aircraft. We will get them today!

– I hope so – said Bourjois – They cannot be allowed to spread the news that the Last Judgment has arrived!

Aaron knew that what the Monsignor was saying was true. For the goals of the Order of Revelation to be successful, it was essential that John be removed as soon as possible.

However, at the same time, he knew that it was not going to be a simple task. He had known Max for a long time, and was well aware of his strength as a fighter. He knew eliminating him would not be easy. And, as long as Max was still alive, the chances of reaching the professor would be slim.

– We have to do this today – said Aaron to Meggy.

– We could lure them into a trap – Meggy suggested.

– And how do you suggest doing that? – the mercenary asked.

– The weak point of any man is the woman he loves – answered Meggy, with an evil smile – The moment he knows, or even suspects, that the woman he loves is in danger, he will risk everything to save her.

– But as far as we know, his ex-girlfriend is dead... – argued Aaron.

– She isn't the woman John loves – replied Meggy – We must kidnap Christine. And we need to do it before John can spread the word about his visions and ideas of the Last Judgment and the separation of the souls.

Aaron nodded his agreement and, pulling on the cyclic of the helicopter while operating the flight controller, lifted the helicopter into the air at top speed and pointed the nose of the craft towards New York.

– Whatever happens – said the mercenary – it won't be easy. The three of them are always together and Max is as a tough customer!

– I'll do it alone – said Meggy – None of them know me. I have this advantage. I'll be able to get close to Christine and make her trust me. After that it will be up to you.

With a grave expression, she added:

– But remember we need her alive! Christine is the guarantee that John will try and save her.

Once more, Aaron nodded his agreement. He said nothing, as he did not want to irritate Meggy, but he couldn't help thinking that if he had the opportunity – and it wouldn't be hard to arrange it – he could have a little fun with Christine, before he killed her.

With this in mind, the mercenary pushed the cyclic forwards, lowering the nose of the craft and pushing the helicopter onwards more quickly.

– We can't count on more than half a dozen colleagues in New York. The phone system and internet are hardly working. Communication is difficult in all this confusion – said Aaron.

– We have to inform as many members of the Order as possible – said Meggy – Assuming Bourjois does not do it for us. But being positive, we do

not need anyone's help. The two of us are enough. The two of us have always been enough, haven't we?

The mercenary smiled. In fact, he couldn't complain. Meggy had proven that she was the perfect woman for him. Both as a fighter and a lover.

– When all this is over, I'm going to ask the Monsignor to give us a month's holiday – said Aaron – I want to take you away somewhere quiet and secluded...

– That sounds perfect – said Meggy – The problem is there might be nowhere quiet and secluded left soon...



An hour after they left Washington, our heroes landed at Philadelphia International Airport. Max asked an airport worker to fill up the main fuel tank and install two extra containers.

The sky was a deep, cloudless blue. While Max inspected the instruments of the helicopter the couple waited beside the aircraft. Christine, looking at the sky, got John's attention:

– Look! Could it be another UFO?

John stared at the sky and said:

– I imagine that the lights of a UFO would be colored and blink like we see in films. This light is more intense and doesn't blink. I think it may be the dwarf star Sedna approaching...

– Do you think it is going to hit the Earth? It reminds me of the film *Melancholia* by Lars von Trier – asked a concerned Christine.

– I don't think that's going to happen. God is not going to annihilate humanity, because not everyone is evil – answered John – The statistics are in our favor. It will soon return to its orbit around the Earth, at least that what's the NASA astronomer said in the meeting at the White House.

Approaching them, Max said:

– What you are seeing was predicted a long time ago by the Hopi Indians. They foresaw the arrival of a blue star that would bring widespread destruction to the world, so that humanity would be purified. The appearance of the blue star was a celestial signal announcing the imminent destruction of the planet.

– So, Sedna is the long awaited blue star of the Hopi? – said the professor, looking up at the sky.

– Exactly John – explained Max – While Sedna is a red star, the reflection of the Sun onto the star, contrasted with the blue sky, gives the star a light blue glow, as you can see.

Christine, who was also looking at Sedna, said:

– I remember reading in school something about the Kachinas in the Hopi legends...

– The prophetic legends of the Hopis said that the appearance of the blue star would make a Kachina arise, that would dance and remove its mask. The Kachinas are spiritual messengers in Hopi culture, equivalent to our angels. This prophecy is also coming true. Do you know who the Kachinas are for us? – asked Max.

After a brief silence, John said:

– The alien beings?

– Exactly. The ancient Hopis predicted that extraterrestrials would come to our world at a time of crisis to help us, and would remove their masks, in other words, would appear openly to us. We already saw an alien in Brazil, and soon they will reveal themselves to the world.

– That’s incredible. How did they know this, Max? – said Christine in admiration.

– Prophecies were always part of Hopi culture. Now that you have asked how they knew about these events, I will tell you something that no one knows: the Hopi Indians are direct descendants of the Clovis Culture, the prehistoric Americans. They lived in what is today New Mexico, while the Hopi tribe emerged not far away, in the neighboring state of Arizona. The Clovis were almost completely decimated by Sedna’s last passage, and those that survived became the distant ancestors of the Hopis of today. The painful experience of 12 thousand years ago was passed down from generation to generation in the form of the collective unconscious and became the prophetic legends that we know today. But they did not only foresee Sedna, the blue star. They also predicted a nuclear catastrophe, and this war that is happening on the other side of the world, which could yet end in tragedy. They also foresaw the inversion of the magnetic poles that is taking place at the moment. According to the legend, twin warrior gods, one of which lives in the North Pole, and the other in the South Pole, maintained the stability of the planet, taking care of the rotation and the axis of the planet. During this period of purification, the warriors changed position, leaving the planet in a state of imbalance and convulsion.

At that moment the airport technician told them that he had finished the refueling process. The two spare containers were attached to the aircraft and connected to the main tank. Then, Max, putting on his Ray Bans and walking towards the cabin of the helicopter, finished the conversation, saying:

– It’s time to go, guys. We’re heading to the Big Apple.



CHAPTER

XI

New York, John's birthplace, usually had a mild climate, despite its warm summers. Even the cold weather in winter was not usually particularly harsh. However, with the subtle change in the Earth's axis, temperatures had fallen drastically and, at four o'clock in the afternoon, Christine had to wear clothes that were more appropriate for January in Alaska... Max and John did the same, dressing in clothes capable of withstanding a polar winter. They headed for the university gymnasium, where John was to give his talk.

– I'm a little nervous – said John – Do you think they will accept what I have to tell them?

– Have you ever considered that they have no alternative? – asked Max – What you have to tell them is exactly what they need to hear: that the Last Judgment is here. You are going to give them a new understanding of salvation and condemnation. Salvation represents permanence here on Earth for the good, and those who are willing to take part in the construction of the Kingdom of the Lord in our world. Condemnation represents the expulsion of those evil souls and sinners to the wilderness of a primitive planet where there is only violence and pain. The condemned will live there until there is another selection of souls among that civilization. And the process will repeat itself, as you know.

With great seriousness, he continued:

– And do not forget to warn them about the Order of Revelation and Bourjois. You can be sure that he will try anything to take over the world

and make everyone his slave... We must be careful. I have no doubt that he is planning to kill us.

Christine felt a shiver run down her spine and John said softly, in a worried voice:

– I know. We need to stay together at all times.

Even though the gymnasium was packed, outside a crowd was trying to push and shove its way through the doors. In all the confusion, despite knowing that they had to stay together, the three were soon separated amidst the crowd. Max led the way, followed by John, who could no longer see his friend, while Christine was left behind. John became desperate. He yelled and tried to make his way towards her, but the crowd pushed him forward, and when he finally managed to get free, Max pulled him into a corridor that led to the stage.

For a brief moment Christine began to worry when she realized that the crowd was pushing her further and further away from John.

However, she knew that she couldn't panic and that if she decided to fight against the river of people, she would be knocked over and probably trampled on.

She tried to call out to John, but the noise of the crowd drowned out her cries. With no alternative, Christine allowed herself to be swept forward, supporting herself on other people in order not to fall.

– I can't see Christine! – cried John – She's lost in the crowd somewhere!

– I'm going to take you to the stage and go and look for her – said Max – Don't worry. We just got split up. I didn't see anyone suspicious.

John tried to calm himself. He knew that when Max said "I didn't see anyone suspicious" he was trying to stop him from worrying. It would have been impossible to see anything in all the confusion outside the gymnasium. However, the professor had no choice but to accept the words of his friends. And he knew that Max would do everything he could to find Christine.

When he was on stage, the professor saw Max moving among the by now much calmer crowd that filled the seats and the court.

Grabbing the microphone, he cleared his throat and began:

– You have heard the news of the dwarf star Sedna, and that all that is happening, which was foreseen in The Bible and by prophets and psychics from the past. I myself have had mysterious dreams...

Christine was lost, stuck in the middle of the crowd. She saw John on the stage but could find any way of reaching him. Suddenly, a beautiful woman appeared in front of her and, taking her hand, led her to a quiet corner of the room.

They did not exchange a word, but her savior did not release her hand. In fact, the physical contact made Christine feel safer and she did not try to pull away.

That was when she saw Max, who stood out among the crowd due to his impressive size.

She realized Max had seen her too and was making his way towards her. She tried to pull her hand away but, more scared than ever, realized that the woman had no intention of letting her go. On the contrary, Christine saw that the woman's other hand held a hypodermic syringe filled with a yellow liquid.

– What's that? – cried Christine – What are you doing?!

Without further hesitation, she made the stranger drop the syringe. At the same time, with a strength she didn't know she had, Christine shoved the woman in the face and managed to free herself.

She saw Max coming towards her, pushing some people out of the way and leaping over the heads of others, finally landing between Christine and the woman.

– Run, Chris! – he ordered – Get to the stage! Stay among the crowd!

Christine obeyed. She ran into the crowd and disappeared among the bodies.

Seeing that Christine was relatively safe, Max turned his attention to the strange woman.

He smiled when he recognized her and said through gritted teeth:

– Well... If it isn't Margaret Scott...! The infamous "desert snake!"

– I don't know how you recognized me – hissed Meggy – But you're not going to live long enough to tell anyone about it!

Meggy stretched out her right arm and revealed, hidden in her sleeve, a cutthroat razor attached to her wrist by an elastic band.

Max knew the weapon well, and was also aware that Meggy knew how to use it. She threw her arm out again, releasing the razor which would slide open, exposing its sharpened blade, and strike its target – Max's carotid artery – before disappearing back inside the woman's sleeve. An old Sevillian trick from more than two hundred years ago, but one which was still efficient...

However, in these two hundred years, a few things had been discovered about razors. One of these was that they cannot cut pure silk, but slide on the material. And Max always wore a lot of silk – at the very least, a scarf. Additionally, anything that interfered with the trajectory of the razor meant that it would not close properly and, due to its movement, would return open, cutting the throat of its owner.

Without hesitation, Max unrolled the scarf in his right hand and, with incredible speed and skill, brushed the razor, which was speeding towards his neck like an arrow, aside. The blade, as he had predicted, found its way back to Meggy. Open. And hit her in the thyroid cartilage, cutting her throat.

Meggy tried to scream. However, all she could do was to release a gurgling noise, the sound of the air leaving her lungs mixed with the blood spurting from her torn vessels.

Max watched Meggy fall to the ground. That was one problem taken care off. However, he knew that more danger lay ahead. If Meggy was there, her colleague and partner would be there too, and, as Aaron would never dare to face him alone, that meant more of Bourgeois' men, as dangerous as the mercenary himself, were also in the vicinity.

Max shoved his way to the front, where John, now with Christine at his side, was explaining what was really happening to the planet, both from a physical and spiritual standpoint.

When the professor looked at him he gestured for John to hurry.

John nodded and wrapped up the talk a few minutes later.

Without allowing time for questions, John took Christine by the hand and, led by Max, they exited the building as soon as they could. Their destination was the airport, and their helicopter.



However, before they could leave the university, on the way to the airport, John noticed that Christine was walking with difficulty, limping and supporting herself on his arm.

– What happened? – asked the professor – Why are you limping?

– I think that I twisted my ankle during the confusion at the gymnasium – she answered.

– This could be a problem – said Max – If we have to run, for whatever reason, or if we need to walk long distances on our next mission...

– It will get better – said Christine – I've just twisted it...

– We had better go back to my house. We need to take care of that – said John to Max, who agreed.

When they got home, the psychologist's right ankle was even more painful and swollen.

Examining the injury, Max said:

– It doesn't seem to be fractured, but it needs rest... It's not going to be easy for you to come with us.

Christine said nothing. She did not want to be separated from John, but Max was determined:

– In this state, you represent a real danger. You will slow our movements and we will become an easy target for the Order of Revelation mercenaries.

And, with a tone that suggested he had made up his mind, he added:

– We will rest here today.

– What are you going to do tomorrow? – asked the girl, anxiously.

– We have to stop Bourjois from continuing with his Machiavellian plan to exploit this chaos and take over the world... – responded Max – And I've been told that he is in Italy... So that is where John and I are going.

While John prepared an ice pack for Christine's ankle, Max, who had a profound knowledge of oriental culture, took a kit of fine acupuncture needles from his bag and placed them at different points on the body of the young woman, who felt better after a short time.

The communication system in New York was still functioning and so they were able to watch the news.

They learned that most of the country was without electrical energy, and the water supply system in many cities was on the brink of collapse. The resulting energy blackouts had resulted in looting, especially in supermarkets. The President had decreed a state of Martial Law. Hurricanes and violent tornadoes were sweeping the south of the USA and the Yellowstone super volcano was close to erupting. The Earth's magnetic field was weakened,

meaning that ultraviolet rays were reaching the atmosphere with greater intensity, burning severely many people, who filled the hospitals.



CHAPTER

XII

The next day, after a hearty breakfast, Max and John said goodbye to Christine and left for John F. Kennedy International Airport, where the Order of the Clove executive jet, an Embraer Legacy 650, waited to take them to Rome.

– My idea was to travel to Italy on a commercial flight, but with all this confusion, and with so many cancelled or overcrowded flights... This is the best solution – said Max.

And, with a worried expression, he added:

– We also can't be sure about the passengers that might be on a normal flight. But I can guarantee that on our jet there will be no one from the Order of Revelation. That's why we are going to Italy on our plane to tackle evil at its source! We will find and destroy Monsignor Bourjois before he can continue with his diabolical plan!

– But how will we find him? – asked John – And how will we get to him, when we do? I'm sure he will be extremely well protected...

– Yes, of course – answered Max – But every security system has at least one flaw...And that's what we will look for. We know, for example, that Bourjois is tremendously ambitious. I am sure that he is at Castel Gandolfo, where the Pope was taken after the earthquake in Rome. At this stage of proceedings, he must be with the Pope, trying to persuade him to support his plans. We must go there without delay. We have to stop

him before he goes to the length of killing the Pope in order to seize the throne of St Peter.



The earthquake that Max referred to had occurred a few days before, during a meeting between the Pope and Bourjois. The buildings of the Vatican were severely damaged, including a large part of St Peter's Basilica, forcing the Pope to leave quickly for his summer residence, 24 km to the south east of Rome, in the region of Lazio. A few days after that, the Pope invited Bourjois to dine with him and continue the meeting that was interrupted at the Vatican.

– My dear monsignor, before the truth about Sedna was revealed to the world, our astronomers at the Vatican Observatory, whose telescope is here in Castel Gandolfo, already knew the whole story. They informed me of what was happening a year and a half ago. Throughout the 20th century, Our Lady warned us countless times through a number of psychics that disasters would occur as a punishment for disobedience and the evil of men. Those that stray from the path and do not follow Jesus will now have to face the wrath of God. I am sure that Sedna is the star Wormwood that was prophesized in the Book of Revelations, Chapter 8, Verse 11.

– I do not believe that there will be serious consequences from the passage of this star, which is not much bigger than other comets that have passed close to the Earth. Soon this chaos will be over and everything will go back to normal – said Bourjois demonstrating that his lack of concern over the case. After taking a sip of wine served by a butler, he continued.

– What concerns me the most, Your Holiness, is that the position of Camerlengo is vacant. Since the earthquake a few days ago you haven't named a substitute for Cardinal Stefano, who died in the disaster.

– And do you have any suggestions?

Without a hint of shame, Bourjois suggested his own name. Perhaps the Pope had expected this, as no surprise showed on his face. He knew that the Church owed the monsignor, who had always helped the Bank of the Vatican with generous donations when the institution was facing financial difficulties, a debt of gratitude. It was time to repay the many favors provided by the influential cleric. When the Pope agreed, Bourjois took from his leather briefcase the document that named him Camerlengo, substitute of the Pope in the case of his death or resignation.

– You work quickly, Dom Octavius... – said the Pope, surprised at Bourgeois' initiative.

– Everything I do is for the good of the Church... – Bourjois answered.

The Supreme Pontiff slowly read the short document, which was written in Latin. Seeing his hesitation, Bourjois tried to convince him:

– Your Holiness, I'm your best option at this moment. The world is in a critical situation, but your weakened health prevents you from taking a more active role at this time of crisis. The Church needs to provide help to the survivors.

Despite being 80 years old, the Pope's mind was as sharp as ever. And what Bourjois was saying about the position the Church had to adopt at this moment was absolutely correct.

With an anxious expression, the Pope said:

– My health does not allow me to engage in tiring tasks. My heart is weak, and I rely on my cardiotoxic digitoxin based pills... If only I was thirty years younger, you can be sure I would be leading a rescue team somewhere or other.

Bourjois knew that what the Pope said was true. If it was not for his heart problem, diagnosed just a year ago, he would be commanding rescue teams and personally delivering medicine, clothes and supplies to the needy of Rome.

He smiled to himself. The Pope's weakness had become his salvation. The Pope took the pen and signed the document that named Dom Octavius Bourjois Camerlengo of the Catholic Church. As he passed the sheet of paper to the monsignor, however, he said:

– If you think that I am going to resign any time soon, however, you are wasting your time.

Bourjois simply smiled and thought: *“That won't be necessary...”* In order to lighten the mood, the Machiavellian priest took a bottle of liquor from the closet and poured the Pope a drink, but not before pouring around three hundred drops of concentrated digitoxin into his glass, a quantity thirty times greater than what the Holy Father required.

The Pope took a sip and said:

– We may well be experiencing the Last Judgment. The English monk the Venerable Bede had a prophecy, which said: *“While the Coliseum stands, Rome will remain. When the Coliseum falls, Rome will fall with it, and the world will come to an end.”* You saw that the Coliseum fell during the earthquake...

Bourjois responded with a sneer:

– I believe that he was alluding to the fact that the Coliseum was so imposing, that if one day the old building collapsed, Rome and the world would also fall. It was just a figure of speech, nothing more.

– Perhaps... or perhaps he really was prophesizing the destruction of the city in the Last Judgment. – He took another sip of liquor and said:

– Dom Octavius, I have always been curious about the meaning of the symbol of the Order of Revelation. Can you explain it to me?

Bourjois did not hesitate. He took the gold broach from his lapel and showed it to the Pope, saying:

– It is a mark of absolute power. You can see the symbol of infinity with this line below.

Then, he turned the broach 90° to the right and again showed it to the Pope, saying:

– And what can you see now?

– The number 18.

– Exactly. Eighteen is the sum of $6 + 6 + 6$.

Astonished, the Pope cried out:

– My God, the number of the beast! So you are the Antichrist!

The digitalis intoxication had its desired effect at exactly that moment. The Pope began to feel ill, and the rhythm of his heartbeat fluctuated wildly. Unable to breathe, he turned pale, and fell from his chair.

The murderer ran to the door and shouted:

– Help! The Pope is having a heart attack!

The doctors and some cardinals arrived quickly, but it was too late. The Pope was dead.

One cardinal took the document that named Dom Octavius Bourjois Camerlengo of the Church and said:

– What are your orders, Dom Octavius?

Without another word Bourjois knelt, took the ring of the fisherman from the finger of the Pope, who remained stretched out on the floor, and put it on his own finger. One of the cardinals who watched the scene said:

– Dom Octavius, the ring must be destroyed.

– The world is in a state of chaos, Bourjois said in a grave tone – Disasters are occurring across the globe, and as a result it will be impossible to summon the cardinals to a conclave. Some of them have even died in the catastrophes. Therefore I shall assume the duties of leader of the Holy

Roman Catholic Church from now on, and assume control of the vacant See indefinitely.

The cardinals in the room were well aware of Dom Octavius' dislike of being contradicted. No one contested his decision, and all bowed before the new Pope.



Max and John learned of the death of the Pope when they disembarked at Rome International Airport, ten hours after leaving New York. However, no one yet knew that Monsignor Octavius Bourjois was the new Pope. He had decided not to choose a new name as he considered this irrelevant. Instead, he preferred to act in the shadows, something he was used to, having long been the effective commander of the Church. The cardinals, with Bourjois' agreement, decided not to spread the news that he was the new Pope, as they feared an unfavorable reaction on the part of the faithful, and instead decided that it would be prudent to wait a few days before announcing the news.

– We are too late, John. We should have known – growled Max – When Pope John Paul I died in 1978, Bourjois was a member of the Apostolic Camera, the organ of the Roman Curia responsible for managing the property of the Church. He, and other cardinals, were shocked by the innovative ideas of the newly elected Pope and resolved to take action to maintain the *status quo* of the Vatican. Even today the death of John Paul I has never been properly explained. I am sure that Bourjois was involved in that case and I'm sure that he is involved in this death too. It has Bourjois written all

over it. And now, more than ever, we will have to eliminate him. His power is growing fast.

– And what do you intend to do? Bourjois must have an army protecting him...

– We can be sure that it won't be the Swiss Guard who, in the 21st century, still haven't left the Renaissance behind... Bourjois will have a battalion of the most deadly mercenaries at his side!

He smiled and said:

– But we can beat them. You can be sure of that!

– I hope so – said John – not least because, if we lose, it will be the end of us. Bourjois will not show any mercy! He will not pass up the chance to make mincemeat of us!

Max said nothing. Soon, they had hired a car and were on their way to Castel Gandolfo.

– We have to study the area very carefully – said Max – And we have to plan everything down to the smallest detail. We can't slip up. We won't get a second chance!

Sitting in the passenger seat, Max opened a map of the region and, indicating a number of locations to the professor, said:

– Look. We have to approach the Pope's summer residence from the northeast. It will take us out of our way, but from there we can see the house from the top of a hill. I know the area, and I know that from there we will be able to get a good view of practically the entire building.

– But we will still have to get in, won't we? – said John – It won't do us much good if we can see everything but not get in!

– The wall around the residence is high and defended by barbed wire – explained Max – We can't jump over it. However, there is a back door, a service entrance, that we can use. We just need to take out Bourjois'

mercenaries and then, it will be like hunting a rat... He will be alone, or practically alone, and we can take him out.

John looked doubtful, and Max added:

– Obviously, we won't expose ourselves to an open attack. I have brought some weapons that will be extremely useful, and if we use them in the right way, will guarantee our safety and our victory.

Saying this, he showed John a large case that lay beside him on the seat and said:

– Bourjois will have to fight dirty, which has long been his style... If you want to talk about the vengeance of God, then you can consider us as the avengers. What gives us an advantage, at least in theory, is that we are fighting on the side of God...



The low, gently sloping hill less than three hundred meters from the walls of the summer residence was hidden by a wood of conifers.

Hidden among the trees, Max and John crawled to the top of the hill and, with the help of the powerful binoculars that Max had brought, carefully studied the house.

They would have to enter the building, knowing that Bourjois would have at least fifty armed guards. It was a practically impossible mission.

– Before it would have been easy – said Max – The Pope was protected only by the Swiss Guard, who were normally armed with decorative lances and swords. But with Bourjois in charge, we will have legion

of mercenaries to deal with, armed to the teeth with the most modern equipment possible.

John examined the building through the binoculars and nodded his agreement, saying:

– I can count at least twenty men down there. And they are armed with assault rifles. We won't stand a chance against them.

– We can rely on the factor of surprise – Max said quietly – And we have equipment that will allow us to take them on in complete silence.

He showed the professor the weapons that he had brought, telescopic rifles equipped with silencers, and said:

– It is not going to be pretty... But we have no other choice. We need to eliminate the maximum number of mercenaries possible. And we have to protect ourselves, because pretty soon it is going to turn into a warzone round here.

John looked through the binoculars again and said:

– I don't see Bourjois...

– He will be well-hidden and well-protected – said Max – He would never leave himself out in the open. We have to go in there and get him, and unfortunately, he is not going to come quietly.

With a serious expression, Max explained:

– Bourjois is no ordinary priest. On the contrary, he is highly trained in martial arts and is extremely dangerous.

– It would be ideal if we could kill him from here... Cut off the head of the snake... – said John.

– It's true – admitted Max – It would be perfect. But we are dreaming if we think that will happen. We will have to take on Bourjois inside, and I doubt we will manage to bring him out alive.

– The important thing is that we get out alive... – said John – There wouldn't be much point surviving all these natural disasters if we were to die at the hands of a fanatic like this damned Bourjois...!

Max was going to say something to try and convince the professor to be more optimistic, but at that moment he noticed movement inside the house, and said:

– Look at the windows on the top floor... The mercenaries are gathering together in one of the rooms.

– Fantastic! – cried John – We can take them all out together! Neutralize them at the same time!

– I doubt it, professor... – retorted Max – We could, at the most, eliminate three. The others would react together and return fire. Then they would come after us with hunting dogs. It's better to take them out one at a time, when they are separated.

– But it will take too long! – argued John – And it won't take long until they will find out that we are shooting at them!

– That is inevitable, professor – said Max – But be a little patient and you will see that things are simpler than they appear. The first thing we need to do is find a way into the house.

Exactly as Max had anticipated, the meeting of mercenaries did not last long and soon they separated again, leaving the room in pairs, in different directions.

– Let's see where they go – said Max – And we can try and hit them in pairs, and in places where the bodies won't be found immediately.

John nodded and saw one of the pairs engrossed in conversation among some of the tallest bushes of the garden, to the left of the building.

– Those two will be the first – he said, loading his rifle – I will take the one on the left and you do the one on the right...

Max nodded and also loaded his weapon, saying:

– I’ve got him in my sights...

– On three – said John – One... Two... Three!

They pulled the triggers together and the muffled sound of the shots seemed as one.

Three hundred meters away, the two men fell, catapulted forward by the impact of the heavy 458 Winchester caliber bullets, ammunition suitable for killing a large pachyderm.

With impressive speed and accuracy, Max took out another two mercenaries in a spectacular *double* hit that happened so quickly that the second soldier did not have time to even realize what was going on.

– Four down – he said – Let’s find a different spot and try and take out a few more. After that, we can think about going inside...

With Max carrying the heavy equipment bag, they crawled down the hill towards the house. They stopped and hid themselves once again when they were just fifty meters from the entrance to the building.

– Now I’m going to show these bandits what a real dirty war is like – muttered Max.

From his bag, he took out what looked like a rather elderly *bazooka*.

– World War II ended a long time ago – joked John.

– It might look almost the same – answered Max – But you will see that it’s quite different.

He placed a warhead on one of the rockets and added:

– These are filled with hydrocyanic gas. In eight seconds everyone who is in the affected area will be dead.

Patently, he waited for one of the mercenaries to open a window, and fired.

– The problem with this weapon is that you can’t have any type of obstacle in front of the warhead, no matter how weak. Even the lightest contact would release the gas early, and for our purposes, that has to happen inside the house...

Two seconds later, the projectile entered through the open window and a cloud of smoke could be seen coming from the room in which at least six mercenaries had gathered. As Max had said, in eight seconds, there were six dead bodies lying on the floor.

– Old, but effective – he said – I think it’s time for us to start our invasion. The gas will be completely dissipated in a few minutes, which is how long it will take us to get there.



They could not know how many mercenaries remained, or where they would find them. So, as they entered through a side door, they took great care to not alert the bandits of their presence.

– Don’t forget that our objective is to find and neutralize Bourjois – said Max – And it doesn’t matter if we capture him alive or not...

– To be honest, I can’t think of any reason why we would want to have him as a prisoner – said John.

– You’re right – agreed Max – A man like Bourjois has to be eliminated. If he remains alive, even in a prison, he will be able to continue with his evil plans. And, with his talent for persuading people...

They crossed an internal patio and entered the service area of the residence. In a large and fantastically well equipped kitchen, around half a dozen staff were working. As soon as they saw John and Max their faces were filled with terror, and the *chef* quickly cried out:

– We’re just cooks... Don’t hurt us! We are only following orders!

– We know – said Max – Get out of here and keep your mouths shut! Just tell us where we can find Dom Octavius Bourjois and how many men he has with him.

– They must be in the *bunker*, down in the cellar – answered the man – Just a few minutes ago one of his guards asked me to make him a snack.

Max smiled and said:

– Well then, we mustn't disappoint them. You are going to give them their snack. But make it a big one, because the *trolley* will be our way in, and our hiding place...

Quickly, he explained to the *chef* what he needed to do. He was to find the largest *trolley* available, cover it with a table cloth, and with Max and John hidden on the lower part of the trolley, take it to the *bunker*.

– As soon as you push the *trolley* into the *bunker*, get out of the house as fast as you can – said Max.

As soon as they were in the *bunker*, Max took a quick peek through the folds of the table cloth. He saw Bourjois sitting in an armchair on the far side of the room, with two machine gun toting security guards at his side. Behind him on an ivory support there was a beautiful samurai sword, which Bourjois had ordered to be placed there.

In fact, Max could, using a pistol and silencer, have shot Bourjois and his bodyguards there and then. However, he had a few questions that he wanted to ask the Monsignor... And he could only answer those questions if he was alive, and conscious.

One of the questions was simply to ask where Bourjois had hidden the money that he had been funneling from the vaults of the Institute for the Works of Religion, the Bank of the Vatican. It was money that had been intended for the charity projects of the Church all over the world that Bourjois had remorselessly syphoned off. He had convinced financiers, corporations and governments to make generous deposits in the Bank of the Vatican, and had

later withdrawn his share as a form of commission that was not described in the statutes of organized religion.

The *chef* stopped pushing the *trolley* when it was less than five steps from Bourjois' armchair.

Max knew he had to work quickly. He knew the damage the monsignor's bodyguards could do, and he also knew the other mercenaries in the *bunker* would react immediately and violently. There was only a small possibility that when they saw that their leader was gone, they would surrender and give up their weapons.

Still in hiding, Max signaled to John, who was holding a submachine gun, that he should focus on the mercenaries that were behind, and to the right of Bourjois. There were eight of them and the professor would have to shoot quickly and accurately. There would be no possibility of a second chance.

Pulling the table cloth away, Max sprung from his hiding place and opened fire against the mercenary to his right. He hit the man in the forehead, and he fell back onto the feet of Bourjois. He was dead before he hit the ground.

John, meanwhile, killed the other guard beside Bourjois with a shot to the heart, then opened fire against the eight guards behind him, mowing them down with his machine gun.

Max was surprised to see that Bourjois did not have a gun. Instead, he leapt to his feet with the agility of a cat and grabbed the *katana*. In an instant he had unsheathed the sword and was advancing towards them.

Max could have shot the Monsignor, but wanting to capture him alive, used the table cloth from the *trolley* to impede his movements.

A hard slap to Bourjois' head was enough to knock him to the ground, unconscious.

However, unluckily, as he felt the sharpened tip of the sword entered his neck, cutting the carotid artery on the right side.

Blood spurted from the wound and before anything could be done, the Monsignor's soul was delivered to the Devil.

– Game Over, Bourjois! – John said, ironically.

– Well... – grumbled Max – I didn't get to interrogate him. Now no one will ever be able to find the money that this crook stole!

– Even if the Order of Revelation collapses with the death of its leader – asked John, wiping his brow – we still have to deal with Aaron... I have no doubt that he will want to exact his revenge. Firstly, because he has lost his perks and secondly, because we killed his partner, Meggy.

– It's possible, but we need to get back home. I'm going to ask for the private jet to be made ready for tomorrow morning. We can spend the night in a hotel nearby.

This was the news that John had been hoping for, as he was missing Christine terribly.

With the death of Bourjois, a new Camerlengo was chosen by the cardinals, who decided that due to the natural disasters that were sweeping Europe and potential war among European countries, it would be better to choose a candidate from outside the continent. As Brazil was the biggest Catholic country in the world, this was the logical destination, and the Holy See was transferred to the Basilica of Nossa Senhora Aparecida, in the state of Sao Paulo.



CHAPTER

XIII

When they arrived at the airport the next day, they discovered that the pilot had fallen ill during the night and had been taken to hospital. As they were in a hurry, Max decided that he would fly the plane, as he had learnt how to pilot aircraft of that size as part of his training as an aeronautical engineer.

With Max at the controls, and John as his co-pilot, the plane took off from Rome. Max pointed the craft to the west, so that they could see what was happening on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

The entire Mediterranean coast was a scene of destruction. In some areas, the sea had advanced onto the land. As they passed over Palestine, John saw the sea advancing over the Gaza Strip, and remembered the prophecy of Jesus that said: *“When you see ‘the abomination that causes desolation’ standing where it does not belong - let the reader understand - then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”* (Mark 13:14). All of this had been foreseen two thousand years ago and no one except a certain Brazilian author had believed the revelation of Jesus.

Higher up, they could see a number of extraterrestrial spacecraft in unsheltered areas, rescuing people from erupting volcanoes or from areas where the sea level had risen quickly.

– Look! – exclaimed Max – The extraterrestrials are helping the victims. They’re saving people...

– Where are they taking them? – asked John – And who are these “chosen ones”?

At that moment, an alien spacecraft took off. It rose vertically into the sky and disappeared.

– They are being taken to a safe place and will return when the devastation has passed – said Max – These “chosen ones” will have the task of repopulating the Earth and rebuilding a better world.

– John, you remember that rash of Mayan prophecies and that the world would end on 21 December 2012? Well, we are now experiencing exactly what was predicted to happen on that date. The problem was that the Mayan calendar and the Gregorian calendar was calculated wrongly. Back then the “end of the Mayan calendar” was still a few years off. But now that day has arrived. Today is the last day of the 13th Baktun. Today is the real “21 December 2012.” It is the Apocalypse and the Last Judgment!

As they flew over the Atlantic, John saw, to his right, an Italian fighter jet approaching rapidly.

Max also saw the plane and cried:

– It’s going to attack! It must be Aaron!

Max pushed the joystick forwards and increased the power of the engines. Just in time. Machine gun fire poured from the jet, just missing the plane.

Max pulled the joystick back, increasing the altitude of the plane, and at the same time switched on the missile detector.

– It’s not going to be easy... – he muttered – This plane doesn’t have the maneuverability to escape, and we have no weapons...

– We have to trust the Superior Beings – said John – If we have a mission to complete, they won’t abandon us.

At the same time, the “incoming missile” alarm sounded. Max swung the plane sharply to the left, keeping the nose level and forcing the maximum power from the turbines. They managed to dodge the missile, but Max knew

they would not be able to escape a heavily armed military jet. He tried to keep calm so as not to worry John.

However, their salvation did not take long to arrive. Out of nowhere, a rain of meteors began to fall from the sky. Sedna shone brilliantly, like a smaller twin star alongside the Sun. Everything suggested that the star was now extremely close to the Earth.

– We’re going to get hit, one way or another! – cried Max – If not by Aaron’s missiles, then by the meteors! They’re as big as a house!

Max performed a subtle movement, allowing Aaron’s jet to move ahead of their plane. Then, as Aaron attempted a *loop* in order to resume the hunt, a huge meteor hit his plane, smashing it into pieces.

John and Max breathed a sigh of relief, and suddenly the meteor shower stopped completely.

– That’s it! – said Max – The intervention of the Intelligent Beings... They came to destroy Aaron...

John, remembering the Prophetic Sermon of Jesus, said to Max:

– That meteor shower was also prophesized in The Bible. The Book of Mark says *the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.*”⁵ Sedna is shaking the magnetosphere and all the forces that maintain the balance of the Earth.

Max agreed with a smile, as he was very familiar with the associations John had identified. He said:

– The Biblical prophecies described the global catastrophe that we are experiencing as the Wrath of God and the Day of the Lord. The first warning about Sedna was revealed by the prophet Daniel and confirmed by Jesus, who gave it the name the Abomination of Desolation, as you have discovered. The Book of Revelation called Sedna Wormwood and even said that many people would die in the water – and isn’t that is what is happening with the rising sea levels? Even Nostradamus knew of this dwarf star and gave it

the name Monster in century 3:34. More recently, psychics and spiritualists warned of something terrible that would strike the Earth with the passage of a star close to the Earth that they called Nibiru, Hercolobus or Planet X. Today we know this star as Sedna.

After around twenty minutes of uneventful flying, they passed over the Canary Islands.

Max tilted the plane a little to the left and said:

– Look... – There is the island of La Palma and the *Cumbre Vieja*, a very dangerous volcano that seems to have remained silent throughout the chaos...

John looked down and said:

– It may just seem that way, Max. I think it was just waiting for us before erupting... The smoke is very thick and I can see lava bubbling in the crater...

It was exactly at that moment that the volcano erupted.

An immense lick of flame roared from the bowl and the western flank of the volcano, the side that faced the US, began to split open and slide into the ocean.

Stunned, John cried out:

– Jesus! The island is sliding into the sea and forming a monstrous tsunami. And it's heading for New York! We need to hurry to save Christine. She can't leave the house and I'm sure nobody knows about this eruption.

– We can move faster than the tsunami – said Max – We can get to the airport before the first waves hit the coast.

– We have to get there first! – cried John in a worried voice – I don't even want to think about Christine being caught up in this tragedy!

They were flying at a high altitude and Max lowered the nose of the plane to increase its speed. Keeping the powerful Rolls-Royce turbines at full thrust, he muttered:

– We have enough fuel... This plane isn't supersonic, but it can reach 800 km/h, which is enough to get us there in time. The most difficult part will

be the journey by helicopter to your house... It will feel like we're flying a winged turtle, but we'll make it.



Meanwhile, in John's apartment, Christine was watching news of the countless catastrophes that were occurring all over the world as Sedna, now shining brightly in the sky, reached its closest point to the Earth. The TV showed live images of large alien spaceships landing on the ground to save crowds of people from the solar radiation that was becoming more and more intense in the absence of the protective shield that the Earth's magnetic field represented. The colored lights of the aurora boreal could be seen in the sky of the northern hemisphere as far south as the equator, due to the weakening of the magnetosphere, which itself was caused by the accelerated inversion of the magnetic poles.

Christine watched nervously as images of a storm of hundreds of meteors coming from Sedna and falling onto New York were broadcast. She wanted to leave the house, but her foot was causing her great pain and she could barely move around the house. What was more, she had promised John that she would wait for him at home. Whatever happened, she would keep that promise.

Just before the news of the eruption of *Cumbre Vieja* and the resulting tsunami that was moving rapidly in the direction of the east coast of the USA appeared on the TV screens, there was a sudden blackout in the neighborhood, meaning Christine was unaware of the terrible risk she was running by staying in the house. An official warning was broadcast telling

everyone to leave New York and seek shelter on higher ground. But Christine knew nothing of this and remained in the house.

As chaos descended on the city – as in many cities around the world – the police became more and more stretched, as all officers were involved in the evacuation of the citizens. As a result, the opportunity arose for the looting of supermarkets and homes by criminals in search of food and valuables.

Some of these criminals decided to burgle houses in the neighborhood where John lived in Brooklyn, which seemed abandoned, and where they would not be disturbed in their “work.”

Due to her limited mobility Christine had not moved when the power went out. She was sitting in the living room when she heard a noise from the kitchen.

Thinking that it must be someone from the National Guard who was searching the houses for people to be rescued, she hobbled into the kitchen with the aid of a cane.

When she entered the kitchen, she was alarmed to find a man putting canned goods and other food into a large sack. She knew immediately that he was a thief and, bravely, attacked him.

Brandishing the cane like it was a samurai sword, Christine aimed a blow at his head.

She felt a sharp stab of pain in her ankle, and realized that it could not support her weight, impeding her movements.

She took a step back, preparing for another attack, this time distributing her weight more equally on both feet.

The thief took advantage of her hesitation, and threw a bottle at her, forcing Christine to duck to avoid being hit.

The thief, leaping forward, grabbed her and put a kitchen knife to her neck.



Over the radio of the jet, the control tower advised John and Max that the airport would close in the next thirty minutes, as the tsunami was approaching the mouth of the Hudson at great speed and everyone – including the flight controllers and other airport staff – had to abandon the city. When they arrived at their destination, Max landed the jet without difficulty on the runway reserved for military craft. They ran to the area where the helicopters were stationed and climbed aboard the first one that was ready for use. Once in the air they could see the enormous wave that was sweeping towards Rockaway Beach. They flew towards Brooklyn, which was just a few minutes away, at top speed.

For John time seemed to pass agonizingly slowly... he was nervous and impatient. Soon a gigantic wave would hit the coast, destroying everything in its path. Christine would no doubt be at home waiting for him and if he did not make it in time... John did not even want to think about that possibility.

The journey did not take longer than five minutes. Max landed in the middle of the deserted street, right in front of John's house.

Without wasting a second, the professor ran towards the house. He was surprised to see the front door open. Then he heard Christine shouting:

– Let me go, damn you! Take what you want, but let me go!

John did not waste time. Unarmed, he approached the thief, who released Christine in order to defend himself.

Christine, still limping, fled into the bedroom.

The thief turned to face John, waving a dangerous looking meat cleaver. He advanced towards the professor, slashing the knife in the direction of his throat.

Unfortunately for him, John was well-trained in martial arts. He defended himself from the blows and easily knocked the knife from his opponent's hand.

But the thief did not give in easily. He grabbed a stool and lifted it in the air, preparing to bring it crashing down on John's head.

That was when he heard a thud as the criminal was hit in the left temporal by a bullet from the .357 Magnum that John kept at home.

– I could have handled him – complained John, hugging Christine, who was still holding the smoking gun.

– I didn't want to wait and see, darling... – she whispered in his ear – I wanted to help.

– We have to hurry, Chris – said John – A tsunami is coming!

Taking Christine in his arms, John hurried back to the street, where Max was waiting with the helicopter's motor running.

Looking up into the sky, John could see thousands of birds flying away from the coast. It was a clear sign that the tsunami was very close. He glanced towards the end of the street and saw the waters crashing towards them at great speed, destroying houses, trees and cars.

– Let's go! Get in! – cried Max.

They climbed quickly into the helicopter and were just putting their seatbelts on when Max lifted them into the air, at the exact second that the destructive wave swept past below them.

From the safety of the air, more than two hundred meters above the ground, they could see the scale of the destruction. Streets and avenues were transformed into mighty rivers of detritus and wreckage. Buildings had been demolished, bridges were destroyed, ships, cars and trucks had been swept away. There were corpses everywhere.

– I think it's safest in the mountains – said Max, and the couple agreed.

Now that they could relax a little, they noticed how bright it was, and, looking upwards, they could see the dwarf star Sedna alongside the sun, shining with an intense red light that made it seem as though it was spitting out sparks. The Earth was being lit by two suns! Soon, Sedna passed in front

of the sun, eclipsing it and turning day into night.⁶ It was a clear sign that the dwarf star was crossing the ecliptic and beginning its return journey to the outer limits of the solar system.

– Let’s get out of here! – said Max, pointing the nose of the helicopter inland – I don’t want to run the risk of that star interfering with the instruments of the helicopter!

The pilot’s concern was justified. No more than 15 minutes later the instruments of the aircraft began to fail, and they started to lose altitude. Max did everything he could to keep the helicopter airborne, but he realized it would not be possible for long. The best thing to do was to find a place to make an emergency landing. Despite his abilities the helicopter began to spin out of control, before hitting the Earth, smashing the tail. The three occupants of the craft were knocked unconscious.

In his unconscious state, John had one more vision, a side effect of the tea he had been drinking, which had opened his third eye, or spiritual vision, to the fourth dimension. He looked to the sky and saw that Sedna had assumed a colossal size. It was even redder than it had been before the accident. The star was so big that it seemed as though it would swallow the Earth. He could even see its surface. There were many volcanoes and great cracks, from which poured smoke and burning lava. There was so much fire that it looked like a vision of hell. John remembered the words of condemnation that referred to an “eternal fire” and the text of Revelations that cited a terrible “lake of fire” where those that were not to be saved would be sent.

Suddenly, John saw terrified people being pulled from the Earth’s surface, screaming and moaning with pain and despair. They were spirits of the shadows that were being drawn towards Sedna. There were a great many of them and their numbers were increasing fast. Many tried to grab onto the ground or the trees, but the strength of Sedna’s pull was much stronger, and they could not hold on.

As John was watching this terrifying scene he awoke with a start. He saw what had happened, and noticed that he had a few light wounds on his arm and face. Christine seemed fine. She had no injuries and soon awoke. They called Max, who lay with his head against the window of the helicopter, but he did not respond. John and Christine climbed from the craft and went to help him. He had a cut on his head, but it did not appear serious, and soon he too awoke.

They decided to remain inside the helicopter for a time until they recovered from the shock.



CHAPTER

XIV

Sedna had begun to reduce in size, which indicated that the dwarf star was moving away from the Earth. The radiation of the Sun did not seem dangerous, a sign that the planet's magnetic field was reconstructing itself. Max looked at the instrument panel, which was as he had imagined: the needle of the compass, which should have pointed north, now pointed south, proof that the magnetic poles had been inverted.

They left the helicopter, taking a dirt road that led away from where they had crashed. Christine leant against John for support. Without knowing where they were headed, they walked for half an hour before coming across a gas station with a small cafe beside it. They went into the cafe and called out, but it seemed as though the place was abandoned, Christine sat down and Max went to find something to eat. John noticed a TV, and switched it on just as a news reporter began to speak:

– We are coming to you live from the Cheyenne Mountain nuclear bunker, from where the President of the United States is about to address the nation.

– People of the United States of America and of the world. The war is over. Peace was agreed by all the participants in the conflict. The United Nations Security Council has unanimously agreed that all nuclear weapons are to be destroyed and the radioactive material is to be reprocessed by nuclear power

plants. We needed a divine intervention from space to save the human race from being decimated by a nuclear holocaust of global proportions.

However, our civilization has experienced the most terrible natural catastrophes that our race has ever seen. We were taken by surprise by a dwarf star that we did not imagine would be so dangerous. It left a trail of destruction across the planet and significantly altered the geography of the continents.

The San Andreas Fault has split, meaning that part of California has separated from the continent and formed an island. The same occurred with the New Madrid Fault which, between Memphis and Nova Orleans, has opened from the Gulf of Mexico along the Mississippi River for around 500 km. Central America no longer exists. The Caribbean tectonic plate has sunk a thousand meters meaning that the waters of the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans have joined together, allowing free passage for maritime transport. The Panama Canal no longer exists.

The Mediterranean Sea has covered part of North Africa and the Middle East. Those regions of Europe at or near sea level are underwater. In Asia, many islands have been submerged and others have risen where before there was only water. In the middle of the Atlantic, a large area of land, the size of Texas, has emerged from the sea bed, forming a great island. This is most likely Atlantis, which many said was submerged in the past.

After 780 thousand years, the polarity of the magnetic pole has inverted. What was the North Pole is now the South, and vice-versa.

The axis of the Earth has also been altered. The North Pole has migrated to Siberia and the South Pole has moved to the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

Some regions were flooded and froze in a matter of hours. They will remain this way forever. With the displacement of the poles, Greenland and the continent of Antarctica have melted. Antarctica will become an international territory, under the administration of the United Nations, and will be inhabited by survivors of the tragedy from all nations, who will rebuild their lives. The same will take place on the island that emerged from the middle of the Atlantic.

With the change in the geography of the Middle East, Jerusalem will be returned to the United Nations and on the Temple Mount where the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque were destroyed by an earthquake, a new UN headquarters will be built.

Today, I propose establishing the message of the Georgia Guidestones as a declaration of the new world order for the reconstruction of our planet. Today, a new era will begin for human civilization. The Declaration of Georgia says:⁷

- 01. Maintain humanity under 500,000,000 in perpetual balance with nature.*
- 02. Guide reproduction wisely — improving fitness and diversity.*
- 03. Unite humanity with a living new language.*
- 04. Rule passion — faith — tradition — and all things with tempered reason.*
- 05. Protect people and nations with fair laws and just courts.*
- 06. Let all nations rule internally resolving external disputes in a world court.*
- 07. Avoid petty laws and useless officials.*
- 08. Balance personal rights with social duties.*
- 09. Prize truth — beauty — love — seeking harmony with the infinite.*
- 10. Be not a cancer on the earth — Leave room for nature.*

When the President's speech was over, Max turned off the television and brought the couple some sandwiches that he had found in the kitchen.

– Don't think that it's over – said Max, laughing – Everything happened so quickly, and John hasn't had time to fulfill his mission of alerting the maximum number of people. Now you need to comfort the survivors and inspire their hopes and dreams of a new beginning. And you can be sure that it won't be the easiest part of your mission!

– At least we won't have to worry about Bourjois and the Order of Revelation – said Christine – Or in other words, you're free... You've completed your part of the mission.

– Well, not exactly – objected Max – It's true that Bourjois and the Order of Revelation don't represent a danger any more. But there is the chance that another Bourjois might appear. You will have to confront people that want to take advantage of the chaos engulfing the world and seize control. And I will be here to protect you.

– You can be sure that we don't intend to become Bourjois' substitutes... – said John.

– So convince the world of that – laughed Max – There is always someone who will look at your good deeds and see someone who wants power...

Grimming more widely, he slapped the professor on the back and added:

– And don't think that the Order of the Clove is seeking this power... At least I'm not!

They continued talking until they heard a strange buzzing noise coming from outside. They went outside but couldn't see anything, though the buzzing continued.

– What is it, Max? – asked John.

– I don't know. I've never heard such a strange noise.

– Me neither, but it seems to be coming from over there. – said John pointing towards a small hill among the trees.

– Look, there is something glowing over there. Let's see what it is – Christine said, eagerly.

They climbed to the top of the small hill and were met with a surprising sight. Below them lay a great valley containing dozens of brightly lit alien spacecraft, from which dozens of people were descending. These were the men, women and children that had been rescued by the spacecraft from areas of high risk at the climax of the global cataclysm. There were also other space vehicles equipped with large cranes that were constructing buildings five floors high with remarkable speed to protect the survivors.

John took Christine in his arms and kissed her, before saying:

– Sedna was a necessary punishment from God. The human race needed to learn how to live in togetherness and harmony with its fellow beings. We will rebuild this shattered planet so that our descendants can live in a world of peace and happiness. The Earth will be the kingdom of God, where all good men can live.

END

NOTES

1: *Matthew 24:21-22 and Mark 13:19-20*

2: *Mark, 13:14*

3: *Mark, 13:19-20*

4: *Luke, 21:25-26*

5: *Mark, 13:25*

6: *“But in those days, following that distress, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light.” Mark, 13:24*

7: *The Georgia Guidestones is a granite monument located in Elbert County, Georgia, where ten phrases are carved in eight modern languages (English, Spanish, Swahili, Hindu, Hebrew, Arabic, Chinese and Russian) and a short message is carved at the top, in four ancient languages (Babylonian, Sanskrit, Greek and Egyptian Hieroglyphics). No one knows the true origins or purpose of the monument. All that is known is that in June 1979 an unknown man using the pseudonym R.C. Christian hired the Elberton Granite Finishing Company to build and install the monument.*





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