

[38] Holocaust!

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished representatives of the world's nations, select members of the media," Leighton began at last, "it is a great honor and joy to welcome each of you here today to this most important occasion in the long and too-often tragic history of our race. We are gathered just to the south of San Francisco where, in 1945, hopeful delegates from less than half of the nations we represent met to lay the foundation for the United Nations. Today we lay the foundation for something far more significant—not just an organization of nations that remain hopelessly separated by national rivalries, but a New World Order that will make all people and all nations equal and one. When we have proven ourselves to be united and at peace, then we will qualify to apply for entrance into an intergalactic community of civilizations that have evolved far beyond us and who stand ready to share technology and supernatural powers that will give us undreamed of access to the vast universe of space and its limitless resources.

"We must crawl before we can walk, take baby steps before we can run and then fly. The key to this New Age lies in the first step we must take: qualifying for and receiving the gift of psychic power dispensed by highly evolved intelligences who have been watching over our evolution for thousands of years. When we first made contact with these entities more than two years ago, I selfishly assumed that this power was for my own nation's exclusive use in an ongoing rivalry with the Russians and Chinese, who were also attempting to develop psychic warfare capabilities. I soon learned, however, that the intention of the Archons was for us to share this knowledge and power equally with the entire world.

"Here again we see another very significant difference between what we seek to accomplish today and what happened at the San Francisco Conference of 1945. Then also the United States had developed an incredible new power, but one it was afraid to share with the world. That power has been the cause of much suffering in the deadly rivalry that ensued and leaves us today in fear of a

nuclear holocaust. Now, as then, it is the United States that holds the secret to an incredible new force. But this time, fortunately, it is under the control of higher beings and is to be shared with the world—not hoarded for ourselves and thereby creating a rivalry with others who would feel compelled to steal it. Indeed, equal sharing is the major condition under which this power will be dispensed. That fact alone should set every nation at ease and assure the success of this great adventure that we are privileged to launch today for all mankind. This will be, indeed, a quantum leap.

“You have all been given a draft of the agreement to be signed by all nations in the world. This Congress is not meeting to make changes in that agreement. It has been dictated by the Archons and cannot be changed. However, you will easily see that it is simple and gives no preference to one nation over another, but is designed for the mutual benefit of all. Your purpose in being here is to see a demonstration of the power that is being offered to your nation if you will join the New Order. Then you are to carry your report, together with the agreement and your recommendation, back to the leaders of your respective countries. We have 90 days in which all of the nations of the world must unite in signing the agreement, or the offer will be withdrawn. It is inconceivable that any nation would not wish to be the recipient of this power, but it must be left to individual decision. There will be no coercion, but the decision must be unanimous.

“As you will see, receiving the power entails submission to the direction of the Archons until they determine that we are well-established in the New Order and capable of carrying on by ourselves. Until there are comparable psychic leaders in each country to form a competent World Council, the Archons’ orders will be relayed through Antonio Del Sasso. He is the man whom I now wish to present to you once again—first of all on the giant television screen just behind me, and then, in person, as he gives further demonstrations of these capabilities.”

The applause was thunderous. The lights were dimmed. Viktor and Carla saw once again basically the same video that Leighton had showed them that first day in his office. There was, first of all, the location of oil, but now inserted in the video were statements by several geologists concerning the amazing size of the oil pool that had been verified to be underground at this seemingly unlikely site. Also added was a “transmission” from the Archons through Del Sasso promising that similar pools of oil lay in many other locations around the world—some in areas of extreme poverty—and would be disclosed according to a fair development schedule.

Next came the same sequence showing Del Sasso in the pyramid-shaped

hothouse holding his hands over the young plants, then the harvesting of the huge produce. At that point the video stopped and the lights came on briefly while an assistant secretary of Agriculture for the United States displayed some of the actual produce on the stage and explained that it could be grown in depleted soil and in arid conditions without fertilizers.

“The only thing standing in the way of this bounty being available to the poorest areas of the world,” he said enthusiastically, “is the training of psychics for the individual countries and localities. The sooner the world adopts the Plan, the sooner we can see the complete elimination of all famine and malnutrition. I urge you to recommend early acceptance when you return to your home countries!”

The video resumed with some shots inside Viktor’s laboratory north of Moscow and showed him at the central controls. But the horror of Yakov’s death had been cut out. Finally, there was an astonishing montage of brief scenes in rapid succession around the world: Russian leaders in a series of secret meetings inside the Kremlin, similar secret meetings of Chinese leaders, generals and their aides conferring in an emergency meeting at NATO headquarters, the president’s Cabinet meeting in closed session in the White House, drug czars meeting secretly in Colombia, a top-level Mafia conclave in Sicily, the pope in private prayer in his chambers, and officers conferring over a map on the bridge of a Russian SS18 Typhoon nuclear submarine under the polar ice-cap. Subtitles in English explained each scene.

The lights went on, and Leighton stepped quickly to the podium amid a buzz of whispered comments erupting throughout the stunned audience. “You are wondering how we took all of those shots of secret meetings around the world,” said Leighton with a smile. “You’d never guess! They were all shot by Antonio Del Sasso from a laboratory just down the hall to your left and recorded from his brain directly onto videotape just as you saw them.” He paused to enjoy the applause, continuing when quiet had once again been restored.

“You saw Dr. Khorev, for example,” Leighton went on, “in his laboratory north of Moscow. That was before he came to this country, and he was unaware that the video was being taken at the time. And remember, that was in a secret and heavily guarded commando base whose very existence is known to only a handful of top Russian leaders. I need not tell you the potential of such capabilities, not only for ending war, but crime as well. That is why we selected the shots of the secret meetings of drug czars in Colombia and of Mafia leaders in Sicily. Those men have not been arrested yet, but you may be sure they will

be once the Plan has gone into effect. Both war and crime, ladies and gentlemen, will become obsolete on this planet!”

Enthusiastic clapping interrupted him for nearly a full minute. As it died out, however, the initial enthusiasm registered on the faces before him quickly gave way to a wary concern. Leighton smiled knowingly as he continued.

“I know what some of you are thinking. This will be the end, as well, of all privacy for everyone! Indeed not. You can put those fears at rest right now. Del Sasso is not peering into bedrooms. There will be no spying on business competitors or sports rivals. The Archons impose a psychic screening process that allows only illegal activities to be monitored and that blacks out everything else. The only exception would be in cases of life-threatening dangers to the parties concerned. The benefits are almost limitless, while safeguards will prevent any abuse whatsoever.

“Now, for the moment you’ve all been eagerly anticipating: when Antonio Del Sasso gives you a firsthand live display of just a small sample of the powers the Archons stand ready to dispense to the world. And now, ladies and gentlemen, once again, Dr. Antonio Del Sasso, an extraordinary Jesuit priest—but much more than that the Archons’ ambassador-at-large to the world!”

Tension peaked and found momentary release in a thundering standing ovation as Del Sasso stood modestly with head bowed. At last he waved his arms for quiet “Just a brief explanation first of all,” began Del Sasso when the welcoming applause had subsided. Those of you who know anything at all about the psychic research that has been in progress around the world for the past century realize that this has been a most difficult field. To get any results at all, the conditions must be just right. The outcomes of the most fruitful experiments are very difficult to repeat even under precisely the same conditions. Moreover, psychic power has been notoriously unpredictable and unreliable, and the effects achieved are disappointingly small at best and difficult to control.

“With that in mind, notice that the conditions are of no concern to me. You don’t have to be quiet, the lights need not be dimmed—I don’t even have to be close to whatever is happening. Yet it is all under perfect control—not mine, but the Archons’. I mention that again, because the key to receiving this power is in giving credit and submitting to those who direct it for our benefit. I can only do what they allow me to do and within the limits of the power which they are willing to dispense at the time—which, by the way, will be unlimited when the Plan has been fully implemented.”

At this point the trace of a grin touched Del Sasso’s face. “We have among

us today about 30 representatives of the major media giants. They are sitting in a section to my right and to your left. I won't ask them to stand or raise their hands, because you will all be able to see them. Take a look!"

To the utter astonishment of the audience and to the chagrin and fright of the media personalities, all 30 of them were suddenly lifted out of their seats and levitated up to the ceiling. Pandemonium broke out. "We won't allow any heart attacks," said Del Sasso quickly. "The medical benefits of this power—we haven't even mentioned them yet—are staggering. The potential for healing all disease on the planet and giving long life to everyone is unlimited."

He waved a hand and those suspended slowly returned to their seats. "Now," said Del Sasso with a laugh, "I'll show you how selective this power can be. You would certainly expect—would you not?—that everyone who had just lived through a remarkable experience such as the one you've just seen with your own eyes would now be an enthusiastic believer. But that strangely enough, is not the case. The skepticism of reporters and newscasters is beyond belief. Some of them are still convinced that what just happened to them was some kind of trick. Right now those who remain skeptical of this power and the Plan are going to go through the same experience again to see if we can make staunch believers out of them." Instantly five men and two women shot up out of their seats and found themselves near the ceiling once again. Carla noted with satisfaction that George Conklin was not among them. Then Del Sasso lowered them amid laughter and applause.

Now Del Sasso stood facing the audience, arms folded, eyeing each person thoughtfully. One could sense the apprehension. What might this man do next? Then he burst into a good-natured laugh. "Don't worry," he assured everyone. "I'm not going to have any more 'audience participation.'" There was an audible sigh of relief.

"Some of you were at Camp David a few weeks ago," continued Del Sasso, "when I was challenged by a certain well-known Southern senator who doubted the contribution this power could make to world peace. At that time a trap was set up, and as it propelled the clay pigeons, I disintegrated them into a thousand fragments with my mind, suggesting that ICBMs would meet the same fate shortly after they were launched anywhere in the world, once the Plan was in force. Of course, the first step would be to disarm and destroy all such missiles, since there would no longer be any need for them.

"The question was raised later whether such destruction of nuclear missiles in flight might not detonate them or in some way spread nuclear waste or

contamination. That was a very perceptive observation. Actually, we wouldn't disintegrate ICBMs the same way I did the clay pigeons. I was simulating what a shotgun does. With nuclear missiles, however, we would, if the need arose, simply disengage their connection with this universe—in other words, dissolve their existence, make them disappear, as though they had run into a lump of antimatter.

“I need a volunteer from the audience—a man with considerable strength. Quickly.”

From the front row a uniformed and very athletic-looking young United States Army colonel of about 35 jumped to his feet. Judging from the thick neck, cauliflower ears, and bent nose, he had been a boxer at one time. Del Sasso motioned to him, and the colonel hurried onto the platform. Looking at the 666 badge he was wearing, Del Sasso read off the information: “This is Colonel Rob Blaisley, adjutant to the current NATO commander.” He reached out and shook the colonel's hand warmly. “I'm pleased to meet you, Colonel.”

A lab assistant had wheeled up a large metal grocery cart filled with round objects. Pointing to it Del Sasso said, “There are about a dozen bowling balls in there and a couple of steel shot puts.” The colonel was hefting and checking them as Del Sasso spoke. “Is that right, Colonel?”

“They're legit,” said the colonel. “I love to bowl and I used to put the shot. These aren't cream puffs. They're regulation 16pound bowling balls and solid-steel 16pound shots. What do you want me to do—throw them at you?”

“Say, we're going on tour together, you and I,” retorted DelSasso with a laugh. “You've got some great lines. We'd make a terrific act! No, don't throw them at me. Throw them at the audience. The bowling balls first.”

The colonel picked up a bowling ball and prepared to throw it, when Del Sasso said, “Drop it on the floor first of all so everyone knows it's solid.” He held it over his head and dropped it. The impact was convincing.

“I didn't mean from that high!” said Del Sasso. He turned to Leighton. “We need to reinforce this floor if we're going to do that again.”

“Please don't!” responded Leighton quickly.

“Okay. Start throwing them out there,” said Del Sasso.

The colonel hesitated. “Are you sure somebody isn't going to get hurt?” he asked. With that he was lifted off the floor up to the ceiling.

“You see what happens to doubters,” quipped Del Sasso, easing him back down again. “Now throw that thing right out there. You've got a four-star

general on the front row next to where you were sitting. Aim it at him.”

“Not on your life, sir!” said the colonel, and threw the ball quickly toward the other side of the auditorium. It had not traveled more than ten feet in the air when it suddenly disappeared. There was a loud gasp simultaneously from 250 throats. The colonel threw another in a slightly different direction, with the same result. Then a third. Del Sasso held up his hand.

“I think that’s enough of those, Colonel. There’s no point in destroying more bowling balls. They cost money, and the Archons have not yet told me how to bring them back. Now, how about those two shots? How far did you used to be able to put a 16-poundshot?”

“Sixty feet or more in my college days. I wasn’t that great at it but I competed in a lot of meets and won a few.”

“Okay. I won’t ask you to drop that onto the floor—it would go right through. But just let everyone know it’s solid.”

“It’s solid steel,” said the colonel, hefting the ball back and forth from one hand to the other.

“Now, let’s see how far you can put that thing out into the audience,” said Del Sasso.

The colonel gave a mighty heave. The steel shot launched in a high trajectory out over the audience, then suddenly disappeared.

“I don’t think we need to bother with the other one,” said Del Sasso, “unless you want to.”

“Yeah, let’s do it again,” said the colonel enthusiastically.

“Okay, heave-ho,” said Del Sasso.

Out went the second 16pound shot of solid steel, arching toward the audience, then vanishing into thin air. There was a roar of approval from the audience, then thundering applause. Del Sasso held up his hand for quiet, then motioned to the right of the stage. From behind the curtain a lab assistant brought out a strange contraption and thrust it into the arms of the astonished colonel.

“Would you care to tell the audience what that is?” Del Sasso asked him.

The colonel seemed dumbfounded. “It’s a—a *flamethrower!*” he said. “What am I supposed to do with this?”

“Strap it on your back and use it to burn me to a crisp.”

“You don’t mean that!”

“Yes, I do. You wanted to throw bowling balls at me. I much prefer flames. Go ahead.”

The colonel strapped it on his back while Del Sasso talked. He backed off a few paces, and from about 20 feet turned it on. A sheet of flame shot out aimed directly at Del Sasso, but disappeared when it got within a few feet of his chest. He began walking toward the colonel, and the flames receded as he advanced until suddenly, when he was standing directly in front of it the flamethrower itself vanished.

Spontaneously the audience, which had been sitting in breathless wonder during this incredible display of power, came to its feet clapping and cheering. Del Sasso smiled imperceptibly, bowed several times, then returned to his seat.

The standing ovation was deafening. Leighton held up his hands for silence. “You understand, of course,” he said when he could at last be heard, “that what you’ve just seen represents only the tiniest fraction of the power being made available to mankind through the benevolent intervention of the Archons. Moreover, as we have already mentioned, their Plan will involve the development of literally millions of psychics with powers equal to those of Antonio Del Sasso. In fact there will be no limit. Each nation will be able to train as many shamans as it desires. There is unlimited power available to all—even to the tiniest and poorest countries. Ultimately, each person on earth will have unobstructed access to the force innate within the universe without going through the Archons!

“Of course, to do this it will be necessary to manufacture large numbers of the Psitron—that’s the ingenious electronic divination device through which initial contact is made at the Omega point with these entities and which serves as the official training mechanism. We already have a commitment from a conglomerate of the world’s banks for a loan in the amount of five billion dollars to set up manufacturing plants for the Psitron in strategic locations on every continent. The guarantee for this loan, of course, will come from the signatories to the New World Constitution, which, as you now know, will of necessity include every nation on earth.

“Naturally, considerable technical expertise will be required to carry this through to a successful conclusion in as brief a time as possible. We are fortunate to be joined in this effort by a man who is undoubtedly the most brilliant parapsychologist the former Soviet Union ever produced. I refer, of course, to Dr. Viktor Khorev. Initially he defected from Russia in desperation to join the program. Now, however, Dr. Khorev is a hero in his own country and he has recently been commended to this work by the Russian president himself.

“It now gives me great pleasure to present to you our keynote speaker of the

evening, a man whose presence is a symbol not only of scientific greatness but of the solidarity between our two great nations—the United States of America and the Russian Federation—Dr. Viktor Khorev.”

Slowly and deliberately Viktor stepped to the podium and took his notes out of a plain folder and spread them before him. “Representatives of the world’s nations and honored guests,” Viktor began, looking out over the audience, “since coming here to this remarkable research center, I have been doing what all of you must carefully and courageously do tonight. That is, I have been attempting to understand the ever-more incredible happenings in these laboratories and their implications for all of humanity.

“What you have seen on videotape is all true. It is light-years ahead of anything we were able to accomplish or even dreamed of accomplishing during my years of psychic research in the Soviet Union and then in the Russian Federation. And the same can be said for the psychic research in any other country. There is no way, as both Dr. Leighton and Dr. Del Sasso have already carefully explained ...” Here Viktor half turned and nodded toward Leighton and Del Sasso, “... that such power could be developed apart from these entities known as the Archons—or ‘the Nine.’ I can tell you without fear of contradiction, based upon my many years of research, that no human agency has or can develop such powers. They come exclusively from the Archons. They control this power and dispense it as they will and to whom they will. And they have now declared their willingness, through Antonio Del Sasso, to make this power available to the world in order to prevent the destruction of this planet—a destruction which otherwise seems inevitable.

“For the world to receive this power, as we have already been told, we must of necessity submit ourselves completely to these entities—through their ambassador Antonio Del Sasso, of course. I think you are all convinced of the important part he will play in the Plan, and of his unique qualifications to do so. Naturally, if we are to submit totally to the Archons, then we must trust them completely. It would be folly to submit to beings that we are not certain are absolutely trustworthy.

“Therein lies the crux of the problem that I have wrestled with over these past few weeks. I want to take you through the process of doubt that I myself have experienced, and then bring you to the happy conclusion I have reached. I realized that if I and all of us—the world—are to trust them, and that is a necessity for the Plan to be put into operation, then there are certain criteria which we must assess.

“Here is the reasoning process I myself struggled through. First of all, I was raised in an atheistic country and am an atheist myself. Yet I recognize, as every reasonable person must that only God—if such a being existed—could be trusted totally. This is true because God, by very definition, is loving and kind and above corruption even by His own desires, being self-existent and infinite and thus needing nothing from anyone or anything, being Himself the Creator of all. And because God is, again by very definition, unchangeable, we can on the basis of both His character and His past performance have complete confidence in what He will do in the future. Unfortunately, God doesn’t exist, so we are left to our own devices and dare not put ourselves at the mercy of anyone else. And, as I thought it over carefully, that seemed logically to include the Archons as well.

“Being less than God—indeed, they deny the very existence of a supreme deity and claim that each of us is a god in his own right—the Archons could conceivably be corrupted by their own selfish desires. Here I faced a grave dilemma. Since the Archons, highly evolved though they may be, are less than God and thus capable of change, we have a serious problem. Even if they had been nothing less than completely benevolent in their dealings with mankind for the past thousand years, we could not have absolute confidence on the basis of that impressive record that they would not turn against or deceive us in the future.”

At this point in his talk, Viktor turned and gestured again toward Leighton and Del Sasso, who both wore expressions of concern, but seemed generally pleased with his approach thus far. “Dr. Leighton and Dr. Del Sasso have known of my doubts and have given of themselves most graciously in helping me to work my way through them. It was not easy, because the problem was a most difficult one. We are called upon to submit to the Archons totally, even though they are less than God and could be pursuing selfish interests that are unknown to us. Of course they tell us they are benevolent, but how can we accept such assurances?

“One persuasive argument is the fact that the Archons are so far beyond man that they really don’t need us. There is nothing we can offer them, it would seem, therefore nothing they would want from us. And so they would have no motive to lie to or trick or harm us in any way. After all, what would be the purpose? For some time I accepted this line of reasoning. I eventually had to face the fact however, that if they had no interest in harming us, then why would they be interested in helping us. Why would they be interested in us at all? That question left me puzzled, and then I realized that there was something I had

overlooked.”

Viktor paused to draw several deep breaths at this point and to gather his courage. A stillness that could almost be felt had settled over the audience. Every eye was fixed in unblinking anticipation upon Viktor. Carla noticed that Leighton seemed frozen in his chair and Del Sasso was ominously motionless as though he were going into trance. She felt a growing sense of dread, yet at the same time she seemed to be strangely insulated from what was happening around her.

What Viktor had said about God had hit her with stunning force. Here was an atheist telling her who God was—if, as he said, there was a God—and why He alone could be trusted. His reasoning had been powerfully persuasive. It had loosed a flood of deep and growing convictions that she had been suppressing. Time seemed to stand still, the auditorium receded into unreality, and Viktor’s voice became a distant drone as conversations she’d had with Ken came back with new force. His logic could not be refuted, and now could no longer be ignored. And the very points Viktor, an atheist, was making—which she seemed to be hearing as though for the first time—reinforced and gave new credibility to what Ken had tried to persuade her of these past weeks.

Viktor’s voice, now betraying the strain of a growing fear, yet ringing with a courage born of conviction and the urgent desire to warn the world, caught her full attention once again. “There was no need to speculate. The evidence was staring me in the face, but I had been unwilling to accept it. It is a matter of record, if Frank Leighton will be willing to admit it—and if not, there are others here who may have the courage to do so (here he glanced quickly at Carla)—that the Archons have been less than forthright in their dealings with those involved in this project even from the very beginning. They have promised peace, love, and brotherhood. Instead they have produced violence, involving even the death or insanity of those who have believed their promises and submitted to their control. In contrast to the millions of psychics in addition to Del Sasso they promise, they have not produced even one—in spite of diligent efforts at these laboratories to train others on the Psitron! I now doubt that they ever intended to. We have obediently given the Archons complete control of this project and our lives, and the results so far—other than the powers Del Sasso displays to seduce us—have not been good!”

At last it was all coming together for Carla. *Why didn’t I listen to Ken?* she thought *What if the Archons are demons? Viktor is making an airtight case against them. They’re evil, without a doubt, bent upon deception, domination—*

and perhaps even destruction. She felt an overpowering urge to get up and run for the nearest exit But Viktor! What would happen to him? She couldn't leave him. So she sat there, transfixed by the horror she felt, and which she knew with a strange and terrifying certainty was about to explode before her.

From the audience came a restless stirring, a rising murmur. Carla sensed that the presence of love that had earlier been felt had gone, and in its place was the reptilian presence she knew all too well. Leighton started to rise from his chair, then sank back, seemingly too stunned to react. Now an ominous silence had settled in the auditorium, like the calm before a storm. The audience was transfixed in silent alarm. Only the eerie sound of breathing could be heard.

Viktor's words came in a torrent now, as though he expected to be stopped and was rushing to get it all out. "It's the complete control they demand that concerns me. I've experienced totalitarianism. I understand that there are many changes being made even now in my native country—a country that I dearly love. However, that country is far from the freedom that all men cherish, a freedom that I sought in the West and which I find is lacking even here."

Carla could not believe her ears. And it seemed even more unbelievable that Leighton had not intervened, and that Del Sasso had made no move to cut him down. Were they reluctant to create an even worse scene in front of this audience and therefore would simply allow Viktor to finish and then discredit him? And what of the Archons? Why had they made no move to silence him?

"This is a crucial gathering and you do indeed hold the future of the world in your hands. Everything depends upon whether you bow to the will of the Archons or resist them. I warn you now, to submit to their control will be to turn this world into one vast prison—not of bodies confined within cells, but of minds no longer able to think for themselves. The paradise the Archons offer will in fact turn out to be the indescribable hell of a vicious totalitarianism worse than anything this world has yet seen—dictated by alien intelligences who intend to use us for their own insidious purposes."

Leighton had shaken himself out of his paralysis and jumped to his feet. He ran to the podium and tried to pull the microphone away from Viktor. Fighting off Leighton, with a last effort Viktor shouted into the mike, "Close your minds to the Archons' influence. Fight back. Don't let them impose their will." At that point a security guard grabbed Viktor, tore the mike from his hands, and threw him onto the platform floor.

The unleashing of the Archons' fury came at that moment and with a violence that swept all rational thought before it. The stillness was broken by a

cry of rage from the throat of Del Sasso, horribly reminiscent of his reaction when Ken had shut him down in the laboratory. Yes, Carla was now certain that Ken had indeed shut him down. Ken's last words came vividly before her: *The wrath of the Lamb—the judgment of God!* Yes, she admitted at last, *Jesus is God. He is all Viktor has attributed to the Creator of the universe, and here, in this building He is no longer restraining the murderous evil the Archons represent. Those who believed them are reaping the fruit of rebellion against the true God.*

The floor began to buckle, then it suddenly opened beneath the media representatives, swallowing them en masse. Seats were ripped up from the floor and flew through the air. The audience was thrown about like so much flotsam on a stormy sea. The entire auditorium was in a state of massive upheaval. Huge chunks of the roof caved in, crushing scores of delegates to death. And most horrible of all, the laminated wood beams that supported the ceiling splintered off into long spears. They flew through the air like guided missiles and impaled those who still remained alive and were madly scrambling over bodies and debris in an attempt to get to the exits.

Those delegates who managed to reach the exits without being speared, climbing over piles of bodies and wreckage in the process, found the doors locked and their exit from the holocaust denied. Pounding with their fists helplessly on the doors and walls, some died of hysteria, while the remainder were crushed under the rain of debris from the collapsing roof that seemed to be aimed at those below by some all-seeing intelligence that was directing the destruction. Clearly, no survivors were going to be allowed to escape to tell the horrible truth of what actually happened.

Leighton, in the last spasm of a blasted dream, cursed the Archons and burst suddenly into flames. His scream was quickly swallowed up in the intense heat and his body seemed to melt and turn to ashes before Carla's horrified gaze. Then she saw other examples of spontaneous human combustion taking place among the few who still remained alive. The flames began leaping from their bodies to consume others who were already dead. Mike Bradford, head of security, was hit in the middle of the back by a heavy piece of the ceiling that knocked him to the floor. He struggled up on one elbow, pulled his revolver from inside his coat and in a rage fired several slugs into Leighton's disintegrating body. Then he turned it upon Del Sasso, who was sitting entranced in his chair in yoga position, but the gun was torn from his hand and a heavy beam came crashing down and crushed his skull. His assistant leaped from the

platform, only to vanish before he landed on the auditorium floor below.

Viktor, who had been too stunned to move from where he lay, was slowly regaining consciousness. He struggled to his feet and began to stagger desperately toward the rear of the platform. He had only taken two steps when a huge section of the overhead stage lighting crashed down upon him and pinned him to the floor. He lay motionless. Carla, miraculously untouched, was certain that he was dead. She had already started to run toward the backstage exit where she had entered, when she heard her name being called.

Turning around, she saw that Viktor had regained consciousness once again and was struggling to get free of the weight that held him down. His eyes were pleading with her. To go to him would be almost certain suicide, but she could not abandon him. She made her way back as quickly as she could over the debris.

“Lord Jesus, help me get to him—help me!” It was the first prayer she had uttered in over 20 years.