

## [29] Woman and Serpent

Ken was turning out the light in his study when he heard the stifled scream. He raced across the adjoining living room and down the hall toward Carla's room. He flung open the door and burst in. The hooded figure leaning over the bed released Carla and turned quickly to meet this challenge.

There was no mistaking the tall figure, the full-length monk's robe, and the deliberate, almost flowing movements. For one brief moment of confusion and indecision, Ken wondered how Del Sasso had gotten in. Then he understood.

Now only a few steps away and moving rapidly toward Ken, the hooded figure pointed its right hand threateningly at him. In the same instant a giant cobra dropped from the ceiling onto Ken's head and shoulders. From where she lay, clutching her throat in pain and still gagging, Carla watched in transfixed horror.

"God, help me!" cried Ken. Instinctively he grabbed at the thick body that was wrapping itself around him, and found only empty air. The memory came surging back of another time so long ago, when he had been helpless against a similar attack. Now he knew what to do.

In a firm and authoritative voice, he commanded the huge serpent and hooded figure: "In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, *be gone—and do not return!*" Instantly they vanished from the room.

Ken hurried over to Carla. She was sobbing quietly. He put an arm around her shoulder, and she recoiled in fear. They're gone," he said softly. "Are you okay?"

"I'm terrified, Ken!" she said in a weak, hoarse voice, finding it very difficult to speak. "Where did they go?" She searched the room with frightened eyes.

"Never mind *where*. They're gone, and I promise you they won't come back. Not here. You'll be safe in this house from now on."

"My throat—I can hardly swallow."

"How about something warm to drink? What would you like? I'll run to the

kitchen and make it. It won't take a minute."

She clutched at his arm. "Don't leave me, please!" She struggled out of bed and to her feet. "I'll come with you."

He helped her into her robe and supported her as they walked down the long hall past the living room to the kitchen on the other side of the house. Carla sank into a chair while he put on a kettle and dug around for some tea bags.

"How did Antonio get in here, and where did they go?" she asked in bewilderment

He sat down at the table with her and looked at her earnestly. "I don't know how to tell you, Carla. You know we've had some misunderstandings and I don't want to—"

"Please, Ken. Just tell me. I'll listen." She returned his gaze with eyes that were tired, defeated, and desperate.

"It wasn't Del Sasso."

"But I saw him!"

"I saw him too, but that's not who it was. It was an evil spirit..."

"A *spirit*? How can you say that! I can still feel those hands on my throat. Look—there must be marks!"

He leaned over to look closely. "There are marks, but not made by Del Sasso in the flesh. It was one of the Archons, and you know who I've said they are. They're demons!"

Carla winced. "I was afraid you'd say that. But how could something without a body choke me and leave physical marks?"

"Did you see any *body* shake your bed or rip that picture from the wall?" he asked. She shook her head in confusion. "Is it *bodies* that throw things around in a genuine haunted house—or *spirits*?" Ken continued. "Does that tell you anything about the feats Del Sasso pulls off?"

They sipped their tea together in silence. She was still thinking over his question. At last she said, "Psychic power—we've always called it 'mind over matter.'"

"Whose mind?" he asked pointedly.

"Well, presumably the mind of the psychic."

"Why couldn't it be some other mind—the mind of a spirit being that's deceiving psychics into thinking it's their mind that's doing the great feats?"

"But spirits aren't physical," protested Carla, "and there's a lot of physical phenomena involved."

"Here we go again. Is a psychic's *mind* physical?" asked Ken.

“I guess I’ve always equated mind with brain.”

“Have you ever seen a psychic’s brain reach out and physically move some object? Is that what’s meant by ‘mind over matter’?”

Carla laughed ruefully. “Oh, that hurts!” she exclaimed. She swallowed the tea slowly in silence once again, letting its healing warmth soothe her throat.

“You’re knocking a lot of props out from under me, Ken,” she admitted grudgingly. “Why haven’t I ever thought it through like this?”

“Do I dare say *pride*? That was the problem in my case, and its the besetting sin of the entire human race. The Archons know that. So they bait the hook with the idea that psychic phenomena represent a power that *we* have, a power of *our minds*, that there’s an infinite potential in each of us that merely has to be developed. And all the time they’re channeling their power through us in order to delude us and bring us, in the end, under their control.”

Carla shook her head in bewilderment “That calls for another cup. Make it a little stronger this time, will you please?”

Ken brought the tea to the table and sat down again. “There’s also an element of fear involved. The threat from something physical doesn’t cause nearly as much fear as the threat from something nonphysical.”

She nodded solemnly. “I found that out tonight!”

“So you understand what I’m saying. If I told you there was a lion in the next room, you’d have one level of fear, and you’d quickly think of ways to defend yourself when it came through the door. But if I told you there was a ghost about to enter this room and you really believed in such things, you’d experience a terror far beyond what any physical threat could generate. Am I right?”

“Believe me,” she said, “even when you claim you don’t believe in such things, you’re still terrorized. Back in the hotel I tried to tell myself I didn’t believe, and I must have looked like a blob of jelly when I got here.”

“Carla, the entire human race knows intuitively that evil spirits are real. But because of pride and fear we pretend they don’t exist. We hide behind the discredited materialistic bias of ‘modern science’ as our justification for doing away with Satan and God, demons, and angels.”

Carla had finished her tea and was turning the empty cup around in her hand, studying it carefully.

“But that’s not really relevant to what happened to me tonight,” she said at last “You haven’t convinced me that demons were involved at all. I really think it was the Archons, and I still believe they’re highly evolved, *benevolent*

intelligences from some other part of the universe. I don't see why that can't be true."

"They certainly act like demons!" said Ken sharply.

Carla put the cup down and started to cry softly. She buried her head in her arms on the table to stifle the sobs. "They're trying to frighten me, and I don't understand why they think they have to." She lifted her head and looked at Ken through the tears. "I know you won't understand this, but I still want to work with them. Yes, they scare me to death, but I think their Plan makes sense..."

Ken shook his head in disbelief. "Carla, if what you've been through hasn't convinced you, I don't know what it's going to take!" He swallowed the rest of the sentence.

"Ken, your Bible says that God chastises people—sometimes very severely," said Carla. "And you think that's okay."

He nodded. "I know what you're going to say, and it doesn't work. God is infinitely just and loving, and His ways are perfect. You can trust Him. But if you trust the Archons, Carla, you're finished!"

"Let me tell you what happened," insisted Carla. "I talked to the Archon that was in my hotel room, Ken—honestly I did. And they stopped frightening me for a while. I think it's horrible what they did in the hotel, but suppose they were trying to discipline me for doubting, like you believe God does? I just don't want it to happen again. I was terrified!"

"And here in your bedroom?"

"I think that was different. Supposing there are bad Archons out there, and they did that to turn me against the good ones and their Plan?"

"And I think you're too tired to be rational," said Ken in frustration. He glanced up at the kitchen clock and stood to his feet. "It's nearly 3:00 a.m. I'm bushed, and you ought to be in even worse shape. Let's get some sleep."

Carla pushed her chair back and got up reluctantly. "I'm afraid to leave the security of this kitchen and go back to bed."

"I'll make you a promise, Carla," he assured her again. "They're not coming back. Believe me."

"You've got power over them. I've seen that. That's what makes me feel safe here."

"It's not my power," put in Ken quickly. "I can only command them in the Name of Jesus Christ. That ought to tell you who they are!"

Her eyes were pleading with him. "Can I ask you one other thing? I was *physically* choked by a *spirit* entity of some kind—and could have been killed if

you hadn't saved me. I saw that horrible, huge cobra with my own physical eyes. And there was Del Sasso, only it wasn't him, and it wasn't a real snake. That's what you're trying to tell me, is that right?"

Ken nodded.

"Why *me*—and what's it all about?"

Ken started to speak, then hesitated. After a long thoughtful silence he said at last, "Carla, there's too much involved in those questions to get into them when we're both so exhausted. We'll talk tomorrow morning, or whenever you want to."

Together they started walking slowly back toward her bedroom. "I'll say this much right now," said Ken. "What happened to you tonight isn't anything new. It's been going on in various forms since the beginning of time."

"It has? Like when and where?"

"Well, it all started with a woman and a serpent in a garden. You know when that was. Instead of threatening her, however, that serpent seductively offered her infinite knowledge and power. But it destroyed her and all of her descendants with an ingenious deception."

"Oh, Ken—you know what I think about that story. If I weren't so tired—"

"You amaze me, Carla. I'd think that what just happened to you would have been more than convincing! You saw the serpent with your own eyes, and you know that the Bible always identifies Satan as 'that old serpent.' What is it going to take?"

"Are you saying that was *Satan* himself?" demanded Carla.

"It could have been," said Ken without hesitation. "Whether that's so or not he was certainly the one behind what happened to you tonight."

"Del Sasso has an entirely different interpretation of the Garden of Eden myth," said Carla softly. "It made an awful lot of sense when he explained it and I was so sure then, but now I'm confused. I don't know what I believe."

"I know very well what Del Sasso and others like him teach," responded Ken evenly. "They've turned the whole thing inside out so that the serpent becomes the savior. And the promise of godhood, instead of being the seductive lie that enslaved the human race, is promoted as the 'truth' that sets us free."

"I still think it makes a lot of sense," said Carla defensively.

"Stop and think Carla, please! Can't you see that the lie hasn't changed? And the Leightons and Del Sassos and Khorevs—yes, and all the rest of us—are just as vulnerable today as Eve was then."

At the door to Carla's room they stopped. "You can be very thankful for

what happened tonight,” Ken declared with conviction.

Carla’s instant look of protest demanded an explanation.

“You’ll be thankful one day, Carla. It’s going to force you to make a decision. The Archons realize you’ve got doubts, so they can’t destroy you by deceit. You’re not buying the whole lie, so the next thing they try is fear and violence. You’ve seen behind the mask to their true character. God has allowed this in His mercy. Look at the evidence now, and make the right choice!”

Carla could respond only in stunned silence. “Good night,” she murmured at last.

“Good night—and God help you!”