

[39] A Greater Power

Ken had been growing uneasy as the afternoon progressed. It was now after 5 o'clock. What was happening out there? Was it enough just to pray, or was there something he had to do as well? Decisively he rose from his knees and announced to the rest, "I've got to leave. I just know I'm supposed to get out to the installation as soon as possible. I don't know what I may be getting into or why the Lord is directing me to do this, so please pray for me! You know the guards have my picture and instructions not to let me in."

Don Jordan walked outside with him. "You're not even going to get off the main highway," he told Ken. "They'll have that access road blocked off for sure. You'll never get through. I'm going to get on my radio and contact the head of the local highway patrol, give him a description of your car, and ask him to let you through. That will get you onto the road. What you do at the gate is something else. I can't help you there. We'll just keep praying."

"I'll trust the Lord for that," said Ken as he hurried to his Jeep. "He'll make a way somehow! Thanks a lot!"

Sure enough, a California highway patrol vehicle and three local police cars were at the entrance to the access road and a police barricade across it. Ken pulled in and an officer waved him to stop. The officer looked at his driver's license, grunted, and handed it back. "Hey, move that thing and let this car through," he yelled, waving at two officers standing near the barricade.

There was another police checkpoint just inside the "Government Property" sign, but when Ken waved his driver's license at the officers manning it, they motioned him on. The last quarter of a mile to the installation, one side of the road was completely taken up with parked taxis, limos, and private autos, their drivers standing around talking and smoking or nodding in their vehicles. Nearing the gate, he saw that it was surrounded with television film crews and other media personnel who hadn't been allowed inside. They were waiting to get pictures of the dignitaries and hoping for interviews. It was total congestion. For a moment Ken had a mental image of the opening day of trout season on a small

creek in Los Angeles County. You almost had to bring in your own rock to stand on.

Ken drove his Jeep slowly through the milling mass and finally reached the gate. To his surprise he found it standing wide open. As he was easing his vehicle on through, a guard came running out of his station, yelling at him to stop. “Hey! You can’t go in there. There aren’t any parking places inside,” said the guard, coming up to his window. “You’re two hours late, anyway. Let me see your ID and your invitation.”

“I don’t have an invitation,” said Ken, “but I’ve got to get through! I was sent out here by Don Jordan of the FBI.”

“He’s got no jurisdiction in here. Say, aren’t you Ken Inman?” Ken nodded. “I thought I recognized you! Okay, just back this thing up and get on out of here. You know you’re not allowed on the premises.”

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Reaching Viktor, Carla was able to lift the beam enough for him to slide free. She helped him to his feet then getting her shoulders under an arm, she half-carried and half-dragged him toward the backstage exit that led off the rear of the platform into the interior corridors. They reached it safely amid the continuing rain of debris. By some miracle the door was ajar. She took one brief backward look at the chaos. Del Sasso was standing with uplifted head and hands—unscathed, untouched by deadly missiles. He appeared to be in an attitude of worship, as though he were offering to the Archons the impaled and crushed bodies as a libation. Then he turned and saw her. Even at that distance, she could see the searing hatred in his eyes.

Viktor was half-stunned and dragging a bloody and battered leg that was nearly useless. He clung to Carla, terror-stricken. If it were not for his helplessness, she could have been outside by now. But how could she abandon him?

“What have I done?” Viktor kept repeating. “What have I done? I thought we could fight them if we all did it together. Did I cause the deaths of all of those people?” He leaned against the wall, gasping for breath. “Someone has to escape to tell the rest of the world. You go on without me. It’s enough if only one of us makes it. The world must be warned!”

“We’re not the only survivors,” said Carla, trying to pull him gently along. “Del Sasso is alive! We’ve got to go faster, if you can.”

“I can’t make it—go on yourself. Tell them the Archons are *evil*. Tell what they’ve done. They’ve killed everyone so no one would know the truth.”

“I’m not leaving you, Viktor,” she said firmly. “We’re going to make it together. Come on, you can do it! Don’t give up now!”

Slowly descending a short stairway and painfully staggering along the narrow hall, they reached its juncture with the main corridor that went past the central lab and on to the offices. As they came around the corner into the broad hallway, they were suddenly confronted by Colonel Chernov blocking their path. It was impossible. He was dead. She had seen his horrible demise with her own eyes—but there he was, apparently in the flesh, a twisted grin defacing his mouth, his face a mask of evil. Revenge was clearly written in his malevolent eyes.

Chernov seemed not to notice her, so intent was he upon Viktor, whom he addressed in Russian. Viktor replied in halting phrases and seemed to be pleading for his life.

“It’s not Chernov.” Carla yelled at him. “It’s an Archon!” Viktor stared back, uncomprehendingly. “Tell it you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. Use His Name—believe in Him! He will save you!”

Carla was amazed. Had those words issued from her mouth? Then she realized they were coming from her heart as well. “I believe,” she cried aloud. “I do believe that Jesus died for me!” Now she had a new reason for surviving—not only to warn the world, but to tell Ken. Here, in this extremity, at the very apex of her life, she had yielded her rebellious heart to the One she had so long rejected.

Viktor was shaking his head. “Christ demands submission, too. I won’t do it I want to be free!”

“Christ gives freedom—from *yourself!*” She was pleading with him now. “The real dictator is Viktor Khorev! You’re a slave to *yourself*, Viktor! Christ will save you. He died for you.”

“No!” said Viktor. He stared at Carla for one brief moment with wide and glassy eyes. To her sorrow, she saw the unreasoning, frightened look of a man lost in a wilderness and despairing of ever finding his way back.

He tore his hand loose from her grip and began backing away in terror. Chernov, his twisted smile now turned into a snarl, was stalking him like a tiger preparing to spring on its prey.

“Viktor!” she yelled. “Believe in Jesus! He will protect you!” But Viktor seemed deaf to her voice now.

In a sudden blur of motion, Chernov spun around. His flying foot hit Viktor in the face with a deadly force that hurled him against the wall. Eyes instantly

glazing over, Viktor's limp body dropped to the floor.

Now Chernov turned his evil intentions in her direction. "Help me, Lord Jesus!" she murmured, and Chernov vanished. Sobbing uncontrollably, she ran along the main corridor, past the lab where she had first seen Del Sasso display his powers, then turned left past Leighton's office, where the nightmare had begun and where she had spent so many hours and days and nights struggling with her conflicts and finally committing herself—to *this*.

As she burst into the lobby with freedom now in sight she saw him. He was standing in front of the door in his long, black robe, hood thrown back, barring her escape. This was no Archon. It was Del Sasso himself in the flesh!

"What's the hurry, Carla?" he asked with exaggerated concern. "The party isn't over, and it isn't polite to skip out like this without thanking your host." He regarded her with an expression of greedy anticipation.

Carla hesitated. Should she run back down the hall for the side exit? No, he would catch her before she took a dozen steps. He could move like a cat.

"You don't have your Ken-boy here to help you this time!" gloated Del Sasso. "You're all mine!" He started toward her, and she began to back toward the corridor.

"You're mad, Antonio," she said. "Completely mad! You were enjoying that holocaust! You did enjoy slicing Chernov in half, didn't you?"

"I love the power," he said simply. "Why not? It's like being God. I can do anything. You'll see!"

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With the guard's words ringing in his ears, Ken began to pray. *Lord, please help me. I'm not backing out of here. I have to get through to Carla!* Suddenly over the main building appeared a pulsating glow of alternating green and purple. Then he saw it—a giant UFO all aflame rising right out of the roof of the theater in the center of the main building. There was a deafening roar and the roof seemed to collapse. It was obvious even to atheists and agnostics that a holocaust of supernatural proportions was taking place.

"I said back this thing up!" the guard was snarling, reaching for his weapon. Then he heard the explosion and turned and saw it too! At that moment a pervasive and ancient reptilian presence seemed to have been loosed through the ruptured roof—a presence that was terrifying beyond description.

For one brief moment the guard stared in stark terror, then he turned and ran. Ken gunned his engine and drove forward. In the rearview mirror he could see the throng of media personnel scattering in panic and heard their horrified

screams. The UFO, looking more like a ball of fire now than a spacecraft, had dropped down and was heading directly for the gate at accelerating speed, skimming along just above the ground.

“Help me, Lord Jesus—thank You!” There wasn’t time to say more. The UFO was upon him. He gripped the steering wheel and closed his eyes for one brief moment. His car passed right through it “Thank you, Lord!” Now he could see that there was no place to park. The few spaces were filled with limousines and military vehicles. He pulled up in front of the stone wall that protected the front door and jumped out. They would be in the theater. He ran the hundred feet along the building to his right and tried both doors, but they were locked. The handles were almost too hot to touch. No sound came from within except the stillness of death and the crackling of fire. He stepped back a dozen feet and looked up. Dense, black smoke tinged with the red of leaping flames was billowing into the sky. The theater was engulfed, completely ablaze.

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Carla turned to run down the corridor, but Del Sasso reached out quickly and caught her long, auburn hair in one huge fist. She screamed, scratched, kicked, but he was far too strong for her. She felt herself being dragged back into the lobby, where he threw her down in the middle of the floor. She lay there half-stunned. Standing over her, Del Sasso was preparing to offer to the Archons a most acceptable sacrifice—a new Christian.

“Lord Jesus, help me!” Carla cried. “God help me—please!”

“Jesus is helping *me!*” intoned Del Sasso. “He belongs to the Archons now. They crucified Him, and they want you as well.”

They both heard the handle turn and then the front door swing rapidly open and slam against the outside wall. Ken rushed inside, heading for the corridor. Then he saw them and stopped in surprise. Del Sasso whirled to face him.

“You said you shut me down and that I was afraid of you. And I said I would kill you if you ever showed your hateful face in here again! Now we will see.” Del Sasso grabbed a heavy ceramic lamp from a table, ripped it from the wall, tore off the shade and gripped it by the narrow top to use as a weapon. Warily, he advanced on Ken.

“Let’s go, Carla,” said Ken firmly. “We’re leaving. Head for the door. Now.”

“Look out Ken! He’s—” She struggled to her feet and began to circle widely around Del Sasso toward the door.

“Why do you need a weapon like that?” asked Ken calmly. “What about

‘psychic powers’? Why not use them? You know they won’t work on a real Christian, don’t you, *you demons of destruction!*”

Del Sasso’s mouth moved, but no sound came out. He hesitated, eyeing Ken murderously. Carla had reached the door, pushed it open, and held it as she watched in frightened fascination. Ken began to retreat slowly toward the open door, never taking his eyes from Del Sasso, who was following, brandishing the lamp uncertainly.

“I’m not talking to you, Antonio. You’re just a shell,” said Ken in an even voice. “I’m talking to the demons who possess you. Whoever you are, however many of you there are, in the Name of Jesus Christ and through the blood of His cross--we’re leaving. You can have this building!”

Ken had reached the door now and motioned for Carla to leave. “Get to the Jeep!” he whispered. She turned and ran. Ken stepped quickly outside, still keeping his eye on the psychic. Del Sasso let out a roar of rage and threw the lamp just as Ken slammed the door shut. He heard the lamp smash harmlessly on the inside of the door as he turned and hurried to join Carla. She was leaning up against the Jeep, sobbing. The door to the lobby had not opened.

“He won’t follow us,” said Ken. “Praise God, you’re safe!”

She fell into his arms. He held her tight as she shook with sobs. “You can’t believe what happened in there!” she managed to say. And then the whole world started to spin and everything went black.

He carried her into the car, then climbed in behind the wheel and started the engine. In the distance he heard the sound of sirens approaching rapidly along the access road. Film crews were rushing through the gate, setting up cameras. Reporters were talking into recorders. Ken drove slowly around the circle drive and through the gathering crowd. Looking back, he could see that the fire, driven by a stiff breeze, had spread from the theater and now engulfed almost the entire structure. The four-starred flag was flapping proudly above the fender of the general’s car.