

## [28] Poltergeist!

After an early dinner in her room, Carla lay in bed flicking the television channels back and forth, trying to find something that held her interest, and hoping most of all that she would somehow doze off. Getting to sleep was becoming a nightly problem. At last she turned off the TV and lay in the dark, going over recent events and conversations and wrestling with her own thoughts.

When they had arrived back at the lab complex late that afternoon, no one had felt like doing anything further that day. The meeting with the Archons had been too emotionally draining, and their announcements so exhilarating. Frank had given everyone the evening off. Yet the sleep Carla needed so desperately eluded her.

It frustrated her that she kept coming back to the number 666. As much as she tried to deny it the fact that the Archons had chosen to identify themselves and their Plan with the symbol of the Antichrist was troubling. Everything Del Sasso had said, and to which she had so cleverly contributed, made sense. It was logical, even brilliant as they had all agreed. Yet that very fact worried her as well. It was almost too ingenious. And in spite of its brilliance, it lacked one essential element any means of proving that it rather than the opposing Christian view, was *true*. Selling this to the world would not be easy, and that was *her* job!

The most troubling thought seemed childishly simple: The setting up of a New World Order associated with 666 *was an undeniable fulfillment of Bible prophecies concerning the Antichrist!* Del Sasso's insights, though very cunning, were simply an attempt to deny the obvious facts. No matter how one tried to explain it away, the fact remained that the Bible predicted that the coming Antichrist would set up his kingdom using, in some way, the number 666—and that was exactly what the Archons were proposing to do!

Carla had told herself for years that she didn't believe the Bible. Yet it still made her exceedingly uncomfortable to see herself participating in events that seemed so much like what the Bible predicted—events that established an Antichrist kingdom and would therefore incur the wrath of God upon those

involved in them. It was particularly devastating that Del Sasso, in spite of his devious explanations, even admitted that the Plan was clearly an Antichrist plot, and the man he'd said would head it up—was he referring to himself? How could she communicate the facts to the world without arousing suspicion, opposition, and even panic? That this was her personal responsibility as a journalist had begun to haunt her.

It had all seemed crystal-clear that afternoon when she had agreed so wholeheartedly with Del Sasso, but now she wasn't so sure. The Plan was something that she desperately wanted to believe. It offered hope for a world on the brink of disaster and it made a lot of sense, but was she really convinced that it would all work out exactly as the Archons promised? Try as she might to give an unequivocal "yes" to that question, there was a nagging doubt that plagued her. And that fact was very unsettling. Del Sasso had said that the Archons were watching her day and night. Could they also read her mind? Were they, then, displeased with her, or did they consider doubt normal for human beings?

*The Archons!* Every time she closed her eyes she could see that UFO coming directly toward her, then passing incomprehensibly through the side of the building over her head. Frank had said it wasn't a *physical* object, but it had certainly looked physical. No physical object could fly through walls—or could it? Relativity, uncertainty, black holes, antimatter—who could keep up with what might be possible, and who was really qualified to make dogmatic assertions that something was impossible? If the Archons themselves were not physical, however, then whatever it was they flew around in wouldn't need to be physical either. Did they really need these vehicles to transport themselves, or did UFOs serve some other deceptive purpose?

Carla had never believed in UFOs. The very term "unidentified flying object" had seemed like a cop-out. Now she'd seen one for herself at close range, and it was still unidentified. And the beings that came out of it to talk with Leighton, Del Sasso, and Morris—why did they look so... *reptilian*? Granted that they had evolved beyond bodily existence, but if they were going to materialize temporary bodies so they could be seen by humans, why did they choose to take a form that seemed to be not only repulsive, but *demonic*? She shuddered at the thought. Was this what Ken had warned her about and for which she had ridiculed him? Had he, in fact been right all along? No, she could never admit that her father, instead of having been destroyed by Christianity, was actually an evil man who had perverted the truth.

Sleep had come at last when suddenly Carla was jolted to transfixed

wakefulness. The bed was shaking, but this was no earthquake. The whole building wasn't moving, just the bed—then it stopped. The drapes were open, and in the dim light coming through the window from the street below she saw what appeared to be a shadowy figure glide quickly around the corner into the bathroom. She froze in terror, a scream coming soundlessly from her paralyzed lips.

Suddenly the bed began to shake again and one side of it tilted up, dumping her onto the floor. *Lights! Turn on some lights!* Staggering to her feet she switched on the bed lamp. The bulb glowed, but its light didn't shine out—as though the darkness in the room were absorbing it. She felt her way over to the lamp that stood on one end of the long, low combination bureau and desk. As she reached over to turn it on, it slid away from her outstretched hand as though it were a living thing.

She felt utterly helpless and vulnerable. What could she do? As she tried to wrestle with that terrifying question, she noticed that a strange luminescent glow was emanating from the half-open bathroom door into which that mysterious figure had disappeared. Now she heard guttural mutterings in there that made her skin crawl. She would have to go past there to get into the hall. The thought of fleeing from the room turned terror into panic.

Out of the corner of her eye she saw flashing against the wall opposite the window the same purple and green lights that she had seen earlier emanating from the UFO. *The Archons!* Were they, as she had feared, displeased with her doubts and were making a threatening show of their power? Were they just frightening her, or did they intend some punishment?

Should she go to the window and yell into the night that she believed in the Archons, so this nightmare would end? Believe in their existence and power, that she did—but who were they, really, and what were their intentions? The questions that mattered the most were the hardest to answer. She found herself unable to make the total commitment of faith she knew they demanded. Would this be the end of her involvement with Leighton? Would she dare to go back there again?

Now she felt that *Presence* in the room—oppressive, ugly, reptilian, horrifying. Yet it had become loving in the warehouse. Would it make that same transformation now? If only the FBI still occupied the adjoining room, she would appeal to them! Why not appeal to the Archon that was apparently in the room with her?

She stood in the middle of the floor feeling foolish as she poured out her

words into the darkness, but driven to do so by an overpowering fear. “Please, may I talk with you? If you want me to believe, don’t scare me to death. Please leave me alone. I’m on your side. I want the Plan to work, but I have some questions—please!”

The luminous glow left the bathroom, the guttural grumblings stopped, and the light from the lamp she had turned on illuminated the room. With an audible sigh of relief, Carla sank down onto the bed and began to cry. They had heard her and had left. She was grateful. But the very thought of going back to bed seemed insane. Even if they had gone, there was no way she would stay in this room!

She picked up the phone to dial the desk to see if another room was available, at least for the rest of the night. Instead of a dial tone, however, she heard coming out of the instrument into her ear that guttural voice that had earlier been muttering in the bathroom: “No one defies the Nine... no one defies the Nine....” It was like a broken record—and utterly terrifying.

Instantly she dropped the receiver and stumbled over to the bureau. Her suitcase was sitting on top of it. In a frenzy she took some of her things from a drawer and threw them into the suitcase, sobbing over and over as she did so, “I’m not defying you... I’m not defying you....”

When she had finished dressing it occurred to her that the manifestations had stopped. That gave her fresh hope and courage. Cautiously she went to the bathroom, reached in through the half open door and flipped the light switch. The light came on. Everything seemed to be normal again.

Carla stepped one foot inside the bathroom and grabbed her toiletry case containing her toothbrush, comb, and other similar items. As she straightened up to step back out she looked into the mirror. Instead of her own reflection, there was the close-up image of one of the Archons just as she had seen them in the pyramid of light. It was staring at her with unblinking, hooded, reptilian eyes.

With a shriek she jumped back and slammed the bathroom door behind her. A large picture on the wall next to the bed crashed to the floor and splintered into pieces. The sound of shattering glass resurrected a horrible memory. She could see Chernov being cut in half again and the bloodied glass desk top exploding against the wall. That horrifying vision pushed her over the brink.

With uncontrollable sobs gushing from a throat now tightened in panic, Carla managed somehow to put the case from the bathroom into the suitcase and close it. Shuddering in terror as she hurried past the bathroom door with the suitcase clutched tightly, she fled into the hallway.

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All that day Ken had felt an insistent burden for Carla and an overwhelming sense of danger on her behalf. He had left his office shortly after lunch to come home and had spent the afternoon and evening in his bedroom in earnest prayer. He had cried out to God to rescue her from the seductive influence of Del Sasso, to protect her from evil and the destruction that he knew the Plan would lead to for those involved in it, and to do whatever was necessary to open Carla's eyes to the true identity of the Archons. The burden had finally lifted about nine o'clock, and he was confident that his prayers had been heard and would be answered. He had gone into his study to do some computer work that had to be ready the following day. Having finished that task, he was reading his Bible before going to bed, when the doorbell rang.

The bell continued to ring frantically as he hurried to the front door concerned that the sound would waken his mother. *Who could it be at this time of night?* The recent violent events had caused him to become cautious. Before opening the door he called out "Who is it?"

"It's Carla. *Please!*"

*Praise God!* He opened the door and there she stood, hair disheveled, eyes swollen from crying, panic and terror written all over her face—and holding tightly to a suitcase from which several items of clothing protruded. Ken took the bag, and with an arm around Carla drew her quickly inside. She clung to him, sobbing, "Something's after me! I almost didn't get here. The car was fighting me like it was alive!"

For one reeling moment Ken relived his own experience with a car that had driven him over a cliff.

"I know what you mean. You did the right thing coming here," he assured her as he led her into the living room. She sank down onto the sofa and fought back the tears. He sat beside her. "Can you tell me what happened?"

"All hell broke loose in my hotel room!" The words poured out in a flood of tears. The bed was shaking, pictures coming off the wall... voices... a horrible *Presence*. It was terrifying! I—I can't talk about it."

Ken put an arm gently around her. Its protective pressure released more pent-up sobs. "I'm sorry," she said when she had recovered somewhat. "You know this isn't like me." She straightened up and smoothed her hair and wiped her eyes. "I'm going to be okay. You offered to take me in—is that still open?"

"For as long as you want!"

"Ken, this is so good of you. It's just until I can recover my wits. I feel like a

fool, blubbering like a baby.”

“Carla! What happened?” Mrs. Inman had come into the living room and hurried to put an arm around Carla as well.

“Demonic manifestations in her hotel room—horrible,” said Ken softly. “She can’t talk about it.”

“You poor dear! Let me show you to your room,” said Mrs. Inman, taking Carla by the hand. “Ken, you bring the suitcase.”

They walked down the hall together to the far end of the house, where Ken’s mother opened the door to a spacious suite. “The bed’s made up,” she said, leading Carla inside. “The bath’s through that door. I’ll get some towels. The other door goes to a study. This end of the house is all yours.”

Mrs. Inman hurried to pull some towels and an extra blanket out of a linen closet just outside in the hall and put them on the bed. Ken set the suitcase down and stood there uncertainly. “Would you like to come into the kitchen for a bite to eat or something to drink—and unwind a little?”

“I could fix something—whatever you want,” added his mother, patting Carla on the arm.

*I desperately need to talk this over, but not with him. He’ll just lecture me about demons....* “Thanks so much. It’s very kind, but it’s so late and I’m absolutely wiped out. If I can just get some sleep. In the morning I’ll tell you all about it.”

“You sleep in as late as you want” said Mrs. Inman. “Breakfast is whenever you get up.” She joined Ken in the hall. “See you in the morning, Carla.”

“Good night And thanks so very much.”

It didn’t take Carla long to get into her nightgown. Leaving the bathroom light on and the door open a crack so that her room wouldn’t be completely dark, she collapsed into bed completely exhausted. Peace... safety—the house and its occupants exuded the feeling. The events of the last few hours receded into a limbo of blessed unreality as she drifted off to sleep.

How long she slept she didn’t know, but something suddenly awakened her. She struggled to open her eyes. Through the drawn drapes came the dim flashing of violet and green lights, apparently from just outside the sliding glass doors. *Their UFO again!* A sixth sense caused her to turn her head—and there he was. She saw him distinctly in the dim light and gasped in surprise. The long black robe and hood were unmistakable.

“Antonio?” she whispered. “What are you doing here?”

The figure made no answer, but moved toward her ominously, seeming to

glide without touching the floor.

“Antonio!”

He was standing over her now, motionless and silent. Inside the hood she could not make out his face—only the glowing eyes. Suddenly he bent over and reached out. She screamed just as his hands grabbed her by the throat and choked off the sound.