

7. The House of Revelations

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God..."

Bennie moved stealthily through devoted sons and daughters of Abraham Jones as The Prophet cast a spell over the crowd in the NuWorld Mall.

As far back as the Suarez Assassination in 2016, the League's Committee on Bioethics & Human Rights warned of a dangerous distortion of NeoChristian values in The House of Revelations. Their distorted views stirred up a seething stew of militants intent on creating a Nation of Christ. Benito had never been in the prophet's presence before and the heat vented through his fanatic body of followers was palpable.

Abraham Jones was a media shark frenzy-feeding on restless crowds. Bennie had witnessed this sort of witch-hunt before, growing up in the shadow of righteous fever infecting all of Meso-America, the constant turmoil of misguided machismo, one oppressive regime supplanting another. His background in a country with as many constitutions as chiefs-of-state was one of the main qualifications for this job. The mere fact such witch-hunters flourished in the NuWorld bewildered him.

Abraham found his lead witch in Mako Masunaga. If Bennie failed to nail Masunaga to the cross, a corrupt regional authority would brush aside the League's charges and no one would ever know whether or not there really was a Body Shop.

"...with these words, the Unknown Prophet tells us the long night of suffering and ignominy is over. Rejoice, as the light of liberation is about to dawn. No more will our words prop up the sagging esteem of a powerless mass surviving under the dominance of the *digerati*. Brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, the time is upon us when the Lord will come down from on high and command His righteous soldiers to take up the sword—and lead us to SALVATION!"

The audience bristled with rage at the ungodly electro-elite. Abraham raised his arms to quiet the crowd. He called out to the Lord, "Command us, Lord Jesus, almighty God. Please show us the way. We come today to make clear Your message."

The chanting outside the security gate of the NuWorld Institute's Inner Sanctum fumed to a flashpoint as Abraham Jones torched an effigy of the Director of the Fountain of Youth Program.

“LET them DIE so THEY may RISE! LET them DIE so THEY may RISE!”

Abraham stepped back onto the speaker’s platform fanning the flames.

The crowd clamored to the brink.

“...Man was born on earth as a child of God,” Abraham preached, “and this earthly existence is living proof of our Covenant with *Him*. We must abide by *Him*, for *He* is our Lord and we’ll have no authority before *Him*...”

Benito blinked three times hard. His NuVision zoomed in on Gerta Hoffman as her security force massed at the gate, their body armor sparking like black jade in the afternoon sun. Hoffman was a tough New German, a neo-con emerging from a restructured European Union. She was recruited by the Cascadia Board of Commissioners to quell, once and for all, the radical insurgency of The House of Revelations. They had given her free rein in dealing with any marginal groups disrupting the business of the NuWorld’s technotopia.

Hoffman was a sleek iceberg who scaled in at about six feet. No kiss-and-tell in black Nike Shimmer & Sheer flexi-steel bodysuit with woven polyethylene fiber vital reinforcement plates from Lunar Tech, full military headgear, visor and eye-level laser (Messerschmidt Model XTC280), she stood with legs slightly apart in a dominatrix pose, I.D.ing demonstrators with remote scans from the balcony of the Homeland Security Tower. The supra-thin flexi-steel was stretched so tight her body looked shrinkwrapped. She tapped the gloved palm of her right hand with the handle of her stun stick, mouth working like a cat watching a bird.

Benito winked off before her scan picked him up. Just then a NuVision messenger window popped open in the corner of his contacts. Another scrolling spam had found a chink in his firewall:

Angel Plasma for Cosmic Consciousness.

After fifty-two separate trials, the *Columbiana Journal of Mind Sciences* recommends Angel Plasma for Cosmic Consciousness. Angel significantly reverses symptoms of depression without sexual side effects and, in fact, enhances one’s sexual performance. So don’t worry; be happy. A little Angel in your pocket will help bring the Devil out. Ask your doctor today. Quantities are limited.

He trashed the message, activated Lightspace Capture, updated the image of Hoffman and inserted it into the dossier provided by the League. The dossier was thin; Hoffman was still largely a mystery.

Abraham Jones and his followers perfected a politics of disruption, sabotage and assassination during the Water Wars. The NuWorld Authority fully intended to deal with him in a deliberate and public manner. The House of Revelations was bad for business; the Ice Queen, on the other hand, was *all* business. From the sketchy background the League provided, Bennie found reports on the brutal suppression

of uprisings in Bolivia and Peru, accounts of mass graves, people disappearing in the night and media manipulation—all funded by supra-national mega-corporations.

Several of Jones' bodyguards waited in the wings, their somber authority etched in stone. With the movement of Hoffman's guard, they closed ranks. They knew what was coming. Everyone knew. Abraham intended to martyr himself.

Hoffman's face was a blank page impossible to read. Her guardsmen filed into rank and snapped to attention. The sun retreated behind a bank of clouds. A fine mist fell. The whole scene unfolded as *deja vu*. CCBN media rovers and telerobotic-monitors started rolling. A chain of events was about to unfold.

In the falling mist, helmeted and masked guardsmen marched outside the domed Nike Center and lined up along the perimeter. Bennie intercepted Gerta's command: *arrest the false prophet*. A circle of bodyguards tightened around Abraham. The Prophet pushed them aside. Bennie figured Hoffman wanted to create enough confusion so Abraham could be assassinated or abducted. When the people in Bennie's homeland tried to break the chains of economic and political bondage by following a promise of independence and self-determination, *viva Bolivia, viva Nicaragua, viva Panama*, Students for Democracy in Guatemala City ended up scrambling to escape over the bodies of their comrades along Avenida la Reforma after the Embargo of Nineteen. But the Rios Regime was so weakened in the aftermath that the people rose up, *viva Revolución*. The carnage would have brought the bloodiest Toltec warrior to his knees. When the regime finally fell, a new military government seized control within a month and his people were still in bondage.

The possibility of martyrdom only ignited a self-righteous determination in Abraham Jones. Cameras were on him. An instrument of God cannot be reached by reason alone. The collective faith of devotees crackled like electric current. The crowd swayed together, wide-eyed, intoxicated on Abraham's words, transfixed by the nodding head of the effigy consumed in smoke.

The day Bennie turned twelve, June 20, 2012, his father jokingly warned him the world was coming to an end in six months. In some ways, Bennie wished it *had*. Those last days of the Fifth Age were a dark time. Indigenous students were ridiculed because the great Mayan calendar had been wrong. It was as if their whole civilization had been built around a cadre of mad mystics. His own father was embarrassed to call himself Mayan. But the calendar *wasn't* wrong. Something had been loosed from Pandora's Box that couldn't be put back, something that would change all of humanity. Bennie didn't know if it was good or bad, only that it was on the loose.

He thought about the Spanish Catholic priests stacking up codexes and burning them. Those who appropriated Bennie's milieu to create sensationalist adventures were no better. Men like Wilbur Hart and Abraham Jones held up warped mirrors to tantalize followers with the novelty of their own twisted image.

Mist turned to warm rain. A light breeze wafted blue smoke off the effigy, its

body stuffed with published scientific papers and semi-damp dissertations. The high drama exhorted Abraham. He rose up on his toes, reaching toward heaven as if a guardian angel tugged at his collars to lift him above the fray.

“...The ages of man are all delivered unto Him as waves upon a shore, and whosoever should escape an earthly end confounds their beginnings in the heart of our heavenly Father...”

Thunderous applause shook the platform.

Bennie didn't fear what he knew; only what he didn't know. There were too many hidden agendas here. He felt powerless and alone. He longed to return to his farm in Costa Rica.

“...I am the rock upon which your faith can be built...” Abraham declared from his pulpit, wiping perspiration and mist from his thick brow. “...But before His kingdom comes, we must suffer our sins. We must bring down this fortress of *evil*...” He leveled an accusing finger at the glass and polycarbonate towers of the NuWorld Institute.

The towers hardly looked evil to Bennie. Their clean lines and perfect symmetries, if anything, were heavenly, particularly the Willamette Twin Pyramids.

“These towers of Satan with their perverts, pornographers, adulterers, soulless servants of the devil's own machinations committing crimes against the righteous souls of God's children, must be brought down. Give us strength, Lord Jesus, to denounce this Babel which perpetuates the myth we can achieve peace on earth without the return of Jesus Christ, Our Savior...”

The crowd roared.

Bennie bumped shoulders with fanatics as he walked through the crowd. An unspoken tension pressed against the throat of the demonstrators like the blade of a knife. Hoffman's guard advanced. Neos linked arms, circling the withered black effigy. Someone stepped up and cut it down. The effigy slumped to the ground. Women and children seated in pine chips between pruned bushes of Oregon grape outside the dome began to wail.

Abraham leaped onto the ground. Neo women kissed his hands, their fingers trailing off his legs as he moved among them.

“...Do not fear. We are soldiers for our Savior,” he bellowed, “Do not run, stand with the Lord against those who live in sin. We must free their spirits. They have been mesmerized by NuWorld gadgetry, held captive by heathens who think themselves gods. We were given consciousness, sons and daughters, to come to *Him*, our one Lord God and Savior, *Jesus Christ!*”

Gerta's ground force moved quickly and purposely, securing the perimeters of the park outside the dome. They advanced in line with neuro-shock sticks at the ready.

As the circle closed, the fire burned brighter in Abraham. He offered an arm to a young woman with black braided hair, wearing an Egyptian wraparound toga. As he held out his hands, their fingers linked and he gazed into her eyes, lowering his

voice: "Come unto me and be saved, my child. Where there is no death, there can be no resurrection, no ascent to heaven."

The woman kissed his hand and fell at his feet, hugging his legs.

The guardsmen advanced within twenty feet of the demonstrators. Several Neos foolishly charged. The guardsmen protected themselves, sending the aggressors sprawling with the tip touch of their stunners. The woman kissing Abraham's knees stood up as if to shield the Prophet with her body.

Abraham preached on, "Hold, my children. If the ground does not shake under the feet of these Infidels and tumble them down into the abyss without God's light, then His Will be done through His *instruments*."

The Neos began chanting again.

"LET them DIE so THEY may RISE!"

Bennie's NuVision recorded the contact zone from the penumbra, drifting back with uncommitted others from the intense drama unfolding in the park. One step removed from the disputation, he crossed that invisible line between spectator and participant, carrying a paralyzed Neo girl to a clearing.

Someone set off smoke bombs. The smoke spread through contesting ranks. There was tear gas. Screams and shouts carried through the mall. Something hit Bennie from behind. His knees buckled.

When he came to, the smoke had cleared. The grounds were littered with neuro-shocked demonstrators tangled in gummy strands of glycerin. Several downed guardsmen were being loaded onto hovercraft.

Abraham Jones was nowhere to be found.