

Chapter One

October 3rd, 2005

It did, in fact, begin on that Monday, October 3, 2005, a date I'll never forget. More than three months before, I had written in my agenda with red marker, 'w/Esther to southern France'. Underneath that, on Tuesday, October 4th, was written in the same ink. 'Return'.

It seemed to me like an oasis of calm amongst all those other days scribbled over with appointments, deadlines and phone numbers. In retrospect, my life as a scientific researcher of plant physiologically was very hectic, and also very predictable. But all that came to an end after that eventful day.

Monday, October 3rd, was a beautiful autumn day, and the last day of the European Climate Symposium.

It was a symposium to discuss the threatening effects of carbon dioxide on our environment and on humanity.

I couldn't help but notice that other than the select group that had been invited, no one else appeared to have been aware that this important symposium was occurring. Why did 'they' keep it so secretive? And who were 'they' anyway?

I couldn't find any information about the promoters, the ECS-Foundation, except that they were a foundation.

The location of the symposium was a medieval castle in southern France, near the Spanish border, that now served as a conference/meeting center. It was located in the former region of Occitan, the area where 'dissidents' had traditionally lived.

We decided to depart on Sunday, October 2, as the day before I'd been invited to the wedding of my niece, Samantha.

Esther also had plans for that particular Saturday that were impossible to break.

So we left early Sunday morning and alternated driving for the thirteen hundred kilometer long journey. We arrived late Sunday evening in a small, sleepy town less than three kilometres from the castle. This was a place where it seemed the clock had stopped, somewhere around the year 1500. It was very picturesque, with old, decaying stone streets and old village homes. The village inn however, where we had two rooms booked, didn't look so picturesque at all. It was beyond a doubt absolutely the worst hotel I've ever spent a night in.

So there I sat, tucked safely away and almost invisible among the other occupants of the crowded hall in the medieval castle.

I listened to the 'creative' speakers who were brought here from every nook and cranny of the EU to give us their solutions to the developing climate problems. Each speaker was given one hour to put forward their own view of the world and its problems.

Don't worry, you didn't miss a thing! Actually, be glad you weren't there. One solution in particular sounded like more pointless nonsense than the others. How they had ever dreamed it up, I simply couldn't imagine. Esther waited, resigned to find some value in something. I, however, felt different.

On the way here she had announced that it was her intention to 'put a bee in their britches'. I was somewhat surprised, as she hardly seemed the type to stir things up. But, oh my god, was I ever wrong; indeed, she really had showed some fortitude. At the time it seemed so totally unlike her.

It's probably wise though, to first turn the clock back a bit. Back to about three months earlier, when I had received a message from her on my voicemail. She had sounded excited as she asked

me to please call her back as soon as possible. A few minutes later I returned her call.

“Hi Paul! Wow, thanks for getting back to me so quick,” she said enthusiastically. “Have you got a moment, then? I want to read you a letter that I received in my email this morning.”

“A letter?”

“Yeah, but to be honest I don’t know what to do with it. I’ve been invited to a symposium on climate change. Wait, I’ll read it for you.”

I listened attentively to what she read. When she had finished, she hung on the other end of the line; I didn’t know what to say. What did she want from me? There was a momentary silence.

“Well, so, what? Now, you want to know my opinion?” I asked cautiously. “Well, I guess you’ve been chosen to participate in a symposium in which they hope to find a creative solution to the CO2 problem on earth. That’s wonderful! Congratulations! No offense though, but why did they invite you, you’re an archaeologist?”

“Yeah, weird huh,” she replied with a laugh. “But you know, I think maybe it’s because of that scientific article I wrote three years ago. You remember the one? I’m sure that I told you about it. Where I discussed the relationship between Isis and Atlantis. Remember how at the time, the press had been calling me the ‘creative archaeologist’. And, as they had written in the announcement, they were only inviting creative thinkers.”

The memories of that article, and the commotion that it caused, came floating back into my consciousness again. “Oh yeah. That was just after you and I had met Edward for the first time; wasn’t it? At that opening of the photo exhibition on male beauty in Amsterdam? The one with all the nude photos, right?”

“Right, exactly! But honestly, you know, I’m kind of stuck in the middle on this one. On the one hand, I think it would be a great challenge to go to this symposium to speak; but on the other hand, I’ve got absolutely no idea what I could tell those people. What do they think? How on earth would I ever come up