

## Chapter Five

### Roma – Nine Months After the Second Coming of the Lord

*The Roman Press has learned that, recently elected, Pope Thomas Volan is about to make history. Our great leader is preparing to set foot outside the gates of Roma. It would be the first time that any Pope has left the city since the fourteenth Pope decided that he would try visiting the people of the world himself. That journey had ended in disaster, as Pope Jonathan Karl was lost at sea. That travesty occurred more than one hundred years ago.*

*It is unknown, at this time, where Pope Volan is heading. His staff would only say that he would be on official Church business. While it is mere speculation, the Roman Press believes that the Pope is heading to the country of Israela – where we have officially learned of some tragedies that we are forbidden to write about. Roma will be left without any kind of leadership, as the Pope is setting out with all three of his disciples. Even Pope Karl left a disciple behind.*

*When we know more, you will know more. However, the Pope's staff has assured us that the Pope would communicate with his people throughout his journey. The Roman Press will do its best to be there when he does so. May God bless us all and this holy journey. Amen brothers and sisters. Amen.*

In the time between Pope Thomas Volan's decision to leave Roma and the present – when the journey was about to take place, the newly elected Pope had had a chance to sit down with Cynthia Malar and confront her fears. She had revealed a momentary shock and distaste toward the religion that she had devoted her life to – claiming it had *stabbed her in the back*. However, in the weeks that followed, she came to realize that there was probably more to it than what the black and white presented. The Pope had convinced her to join his entourage and to decide later whether Christianity was worth abandoning or not.

The Pope and his disciples would be embarking on an epic journey to the Holy City of Bethlam – the birthplace of the Lord Demos Christ (and also the *headquarters* of the Church – as the congregation had learned recently). The Pope and his disciples laid out the best path to get there, and expected the journey to take about three months. This would put the arrival in Bethlam at a year after the Lord had returned to the flesh – if one were to believe that as an actuality. Ample supplies had been gathered, and the horses and carriages now awaited them for departure. Besides the Pope and his three disciples, there would be a dozen or so others along for the journey. The Pope had selected two more Junior Cardinals, along with various handmaidens and male servants that had proudly served within Roma's walls. Their first destination would be the town of Brind, where they would hire a great ship to take them across the Mediterranean Sea. They would make several stops along the way, in Napal and Materan for sure, in order to keep the public at rest. There, they could also learn of any more reports that may have been made from across the world. Demos Christ sightings were continuing to increase; surely there would be more by the time they reached Brind.

The Pope stood in front of an impressive oak armoire against a wall in his private chambers. He opened up the two doors to display the most formal dress in the Pope's wardrobe. Within the armoire was the glorious Papal Tiara that had been passed down from generation to generation since the crowning of the first Pope. This headgear weighed an impressive three and a half pounds and was

adorned with many jewels of many types. On its peak stood a pure silver cross, lined with diamonds of a perfectly identical cut. The Papal Tiara was only worn on the most holiest of occasions. Pope Thomas Volan could think of no holier occasion than a journey to the birthplace of Christianity. Along with the Papal Tiara, there was a matching robe – also lined with diamonds. The robe was the purest white, with red, gold, and silver bands circling the upper portion of the arms. Some suggested that the robe had been blessed by God, himself, as it was nearly impossible to become soiled.

The Pope removed these two items from the armoire and laid them on his bed. He then went back to the armoire to fetch the accompanying boots. As he slipped these on, he swore that he suddenly found himself closer to God. A surge of purifying energy cleansed his soul. When he draped the blessed robe over his shoulders, there could be no doubt – God was with him. Upon putting the magnificent crown upon his head, he could feel an energy force flowing upon his skin. He could feel its glorious vibrations that indicated the presence of the Lord in Heaven. Thomas Volan was one with God.

There was but one more piece to this outfit: the Holy Scepter of the Lord. Pope Volan knelt, and tugged on the bottom drawer of the armoire. There, sat the most glorious staff in all the land. With two hands, Thomas Volan lifted the scepter and raised it to stand vertically in front of him. The scepter was a good five feet in height and was made from the purest gold. It sported a long, slender shaft that rose upward into, what could only be described as, a shimmering star. In the center of this star sat a perfectly rounded crystal – a crystal that was said to display the image of God, himself. Atop the star was an eight inch cross bearing the Lord Demos Christ's sacrifice.

Pope Thomas Volan marched over to his full length mirror and stood proudly in front of it. He lifted the scepter slightly and gently tapped it down against the floor. When he did, he was surprised to see it burst to life. As the sun shines down on Olympia, so did his staff shine forth into his mirror. When he turned his eyes from his mirror and toward the staff, the glow was gone. Had it been a trick of his mind? Was the glow only visible from looking at the mirror? He thought about trying the same maneuver once again, but he did not want to chance that it had been his imagination. He would treasure that moment until the end of his days.

Glow or no glow, the Lord's increased presence or not, the new Pope felt purer than he had ever felt, and for the first time since he had accepted his post, he felt like a Pope. He was the ruler of the Christian fellowship – there was no doubt in his mind about that. There may very well be a segment of the Church above him, but he would not readily accept that they represented the Word of God anymore than he. People who seek the Lord's grace should not have his messengers hide in secrecy. As had been foretold, God is always there for those who truly seek him. The Pope was there for his people; the upper hierarchy of the Church was not. Perhaps this had been why Demos was now laying judgment upon the land. Perhaps God had simply waited the prophesized two thousand years before delivering his only begotten son back unto the world. No, that made sense insofar as the Church itself, but what of reports of Demos Christ laying waste to crops? And what of more recent reports of cattle, and other livestock, being discovered with their lives literally sucked out of them? No, the Church could not solely be blamed for the return of the Christ.

Pope Volan was never more sure of his decision to journey to Bethlam. In Bethlam, he would demand answers. He not only wanted answers for himself, but he wanted answers for the people. He would be known as the Pope who brought down the barrier between the upper Church and all others.

The Pope made his way from his chambers and into the foyer. The Holy Church of Roma was divided into two sections. While facing towards the front of the Church from outside, the left section was the Cathedral. It stood higher and adorned two peaked towers on either side of a lower rounded roof. To the right of the cathedral was the living quarters' section. This section stretched out lengthily to the right and was more rectangular in shape. Together, the Church made for a magnificent site. The foyer was located just right of the Cathedral and was accessible from it by a set of double doors toward the back. These were locked from the Cathedral side, in order to prevent unwanted guests within the living quarters.

Waiting for him in the foyer were his three disciples. He could see the awe in their eyes when they first laid witness to his glorious appearance. Each disciple bowed in turn as he descended the stairs and passed them by. When he did so, he turned to face them. Each one strode forward to kiss each of his cheeks and the top of his hand. First was Alvin, "My Lord is truly magnificent." To which Pope Volan replied, "Your Lord is, but he is not I." Next came Coran, though he said nothing – he merely nodded. Finally, Cynthia Malar came forward. She held her kisses longer than the two men and she added a slight curtsy. She simply said, "Your grace."

The Pope had instructed his disciples to dress comfortably for the journey, but he was both dismayed and joyous to see that they were dressed formally as well. It was settled then; the journey was entirely official.

Pope Volan led his congregation out the main doors of the living quarters and into the courtyard. He was delighted to see that the streets were filled with faithful Christians, all supportive of his decision to go abroad. However, it would take them much longer to get out of Roma than previously expected.

In the courtyard were two dozen horses, a half dozen carriages (including both his official ceremonial carriage and his comfort carriage), and the men and women who would be accompanying them on the journey. Several of the horses were loaded with gear. Two of the carriages acted strictly as supply carts. These were each attached to two horses. His official carriage was being led by the usual three white stallions. His comfort carriage was attached to two horses, though it was likely the heavier load. The remaining two carriages would transport the servants, and two of the horses would be ridden by the Junior Cardinals. In truth, it would be quite the parade to see, both leaving Roma and out on their journey. Surely their trip would require a bit more time due to the spectacle. Still, the Pope could not bring himself to be disappointed. This journey was for the people, and the people should be fully welcomed wherever he went.

Pope Thomas Volan waved to his faithful as he and his disciples boarded the ceremonial carriage. Before he sat down, he raised the Holy Scepter of the Lord toward the Heavens. The crowd roared in response – his disciples leading the cheers. The Pope's ceremonial carriage was divided into two seating sections: the Pope sat in the front, while his disciples sat in the rear. Pope Volan commanded his three mighty stallions to embark, and with that, the journey to Bethlam had commenced.

The crowd slowly parted to let the Pope's entourage pass. Some followed as the Pope passed, but most stayed their ground. Amongst the followers were several members from the Roman Press. They would not be denied the chance to cover this historical journey. At the moment, the Pope and his followers were unaware of their stalkers. In the coming months, the Roman Press could very well play its

own part in the history of Olympia. Where reporters went, there was usually trouble. And sometimes – even oftentimes – that trouble was a direct result of the reporters' interference. Though the Roman Press would become a nuisance, there were other dangers that would affect the Pope and his party of followers even more so. Such dangers would even cost many of them their lives.

From high above Roma, another *individual* was interested in the procession. The Lord Demos Christ floated within the clouds, all too eager for this journey to commence. To him, everything had been set in motion according to his plans. The prophecy had been planted by him oh so long ago. He had foreseen that it would require two thousand years in order for certain things to unfold – none the least of which had to do with him recovering from his death. And now, over two thousand years later, his power was nearing its potential. For two thousand years he had patiently waited to return. He had been at rest with his father by his side, watching the pitiful excuse known as human beings. Finally, the time had come for his Tribulation. Soon, there would be no power in the universe that could stop him. For the time being, however, he still remained slightly vulnerable. However, he would make sure to prevent anyone from discovering the secrets that would bring forth his defeat. And with these young, naïve fools now fronting the quest, his mission would be all too easy.