

# OMEGA Ω PROJECT

Thriller by Cinzia Palmacci

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

With this novel about the literary genre of the thriller, I test myself for the first time. And it is with great satisfaction that I present to the public a reading that I hope will be smooth, compelling and able to capture the reader's attention from the first to the last page. The plot is at "high tension", the pages will transport the reader into a surreal atmosphere, but also draws many cues from the reality of the news that we learn every day. From the first pages, the novel transmits to those who read it the impression that there is a red thread that connects all the characters between them in a great "drawing" drawn by an invisible but wise hand. The story is set in Italy.

Paride, Miriam, Father Miguel and a dark and diabolical plan to subject humanity and the planet to a dark power, which has something else in mind when its followers take part in the ritual sacrifices of innocent souls. Sacrifices that are perpetrated in an undergrowth of secrecy and mystery for an even

more gruesome end that goes far beyond any imagination: the fateful "Omega Project", already handed down through ancient manuscripts discovered and wisely interpreted by Father Miguel, a Dominican friar uncommon by the wit and spirit of observation. Then there is Paride, with a complicated life, who senses that there is something mysterious and disturbing about a dream made during a night that turned out to be "providential". Next to him, Miriam, a charming criminologist who will help him not only in the investigation, but also to bring out the best part of himself. I wonder if something will be born between them. The uncertainty of their future lies in the ability they will demonstrate in stopping the mad project, which holds the whole of humanity in suspense. The future of the world and survival on Earth depends on their courage and on a Higher Will that guides and guards their steps. What epilogue will this complicated and disturbing affair have? And above all: will it have unexpected future implications even by the characters themselves? To you find out. Enjoy the reading.

CINZIA PALMACCI

## PART ONE

### A STRANGE DREAM

When Paride Corsi decided to knock on the door of the Basilica of Santa Maria Ausiliatrice, he had already made his decision: to confess everything. The remorse and the sinister sense of perdition that had gripped his soul for some time did not make him sleep any more. The nights became longer and more dense with nightmares that made him wake up in the middle of the night with his heart in his throat and panic. The night before his decision was one of those that would leave an indelible mark on even the most unrepentant spirits. In fact, the evening before, Paride sipped a glass of white wine on his terrace in the center of Rome, in front of a sunset and a breathtaking view that few other cities in the world are able to give to the view. From his attic he dominated a skyline of ancient vestiges, churches and terraces in bloom. Faced with so much beauty, and looking towards St. Peter, he could not help but let himself

go to a deep reflection and a rethinking of the meaning of his life and of the dangerous direction he had taken. Before going to bed, he had noticed some sinister signs that began to disturb him. Some objects in his studio moved themselves as if moved by an invisible hand. Paride tried not to give us too much weight thinking it was due to his psycho-physical state, particularly shaken and under pressure for days. He had also begun to make use of anxiolytics to keep panic attacks at bay that became more and more frequent. He turned on the TV to try to distract himself but was struck by the news of a middle-aged man found with his body mutilated and died in mysterious circumstances. The chronicler, visibly upset, reported a dead crow found near the remains of man advancing the hypothesis, also supported by the investigators, that everything made one think of an esoteric ritual murder. Paride began to feeling strange and sweating cold. He decided to change channels, but suddenly the TV seemed to go crazy jumping from one channel to another until it was completely turned off. When he approached the appliance it re-ignited least three times, until it was completely in darkness because the current had also gone. That evening a violent thunderstorm broke out as if they saw few, and between thunders and lightning he believed in a power failure, but when he looked out the window he saw that only his apartment had remained in the dark. He took a hot shower, took a sedative

and lay down. That night, however, despite the sedative, his subconscious brought out the most disturbing nightmares that had ever disturbed his sleep. He dreamed he was in the middle of a large square, around monuments and churches. From far away he saw the outline of a woman who, approaching him, with a single nod of his arm showed him a chilling scene: an unknown number of children and young women were raped and brutalized under a blood-red sky, and a flock of crows from the sky the dead fell on the innocent little bodies of those poor victims who suddenly woke up shouting: "Justice, justice!" Then, the sight of a celestial body in the reddish sky that seemed to approach and want to crash into the earth. Awe and fear, Paride looked at the woman who looked no more than twenty years old. It was beautiful and gave off its own light. The woman smiled bitterly at him and with a tear that crossed her graceful face told him: << These poor immolated innocent children cry out revenge in the presence of God. You can and you must stop all this horror. Your confession can still save thousands of innocent lives. Take your life back into your hand and decide for the Good. Go back over your past, then I'll tell you the person who can help you. I will guide you. Trust me >>. Paride awoke in a state of anguish mixed with a sense of gratitude towards that woman, so motherly and reassuring, who seemed to want to protect him and warn him at the same time. He sat on the bed unable to close his eyes reflecting on the

vision, on his life and on what the words of that mysterious woman might have meant. He turned to look at the alarm clock on the bedside table and noticed that it marked three in the morning: it would be a long night between thoughts and decisions to be made. The following day, the stormy sky of the previous night had given way to a clear sky and a deep blue. The sun shone in all its warm radiance. Paride opened his bedroom window to let those warm rays come in as if to dispel the darkness of his room and his soul. When he started to open the window, he noticed something dark on the terrace. Not succeeding in seeing what it was, he started to approach when he saw with horror that it was a dead crow, just like those who had disturbed his sleep all night long. He was horrified, but still more firm in his resolve to get rid of the weight he had been carrying for too long. He took a quick gulp of his coffee and hurried to the car parked under the house. He had already decided: he had to talk about it to a priest, the only figure he could explain to him what was happening in his life. A priest yes, but who? He felt he had to be someone familiar, a friend. He thought again of the woman's words in the dream: << Retrace your past ... I will guide you >>. Suddenly he remembered a priest of his childhood, and he realized that he was really guided by a supernatural hand. He felt blessed. He had no hesitation in heading towards the Basilica of St. Mary Help of Christians, to which he arrived

almost flying, despite the usual Roman traffic at rush hour. As he drove, his memories brought him back to his childhood spent in the green Umbrian hills. His was a modest family, his father had been a proud cattle breeder and one piece, and his mother a very devoted woman dedicated entirely to the family. His brothers Angelo and Davide had decided to take over the family business when his father died. While Paride, a promising law student, had moved to Rome for his studies and embarked on a career as a magistrate. The last time he saw his family was when his mother died, as did Paride she remembered with tears in her eyes that she was the backbone of the family. From her he had learned hard work and fervent faith. Faith that then with time faded away until it disappeared completely. After then, for fifteen years, Paride broke off all contact with his brothers. He remembered his country life, despite the past. Paride, a handsome and unmarried man, had devoted all his energy to his career, and never found time to start a family. The turn she took her life soon became incompatible with the idea of having a wife and children. He reflected that if he had to devote himself to his family, perhaps his life would have taken another, much less dangerous, direction. It occurred to him that when he was still a boy, his mother had educated him in a simple and very religious life. He and his brothers had received all the sacraments until confirmation, regularly attending the parish and, from time to time, serving mass in the church of a

small convent in the open countryside not far from home, whose parish priest was a Dominican friar of Hispanic origin: Father Miguel Gonzales. Father Miguel was an austere friar, as required by his habit, but at the same time very sweet and endowed with an empathic sensitivity towards others. Qualities that made him particularly appreciated by the community, and especially by the children and young people of the country. Of his transfer to Rome he had heard from his brothers when, at his mother's funeral, they told him he would like very much to see him again before he died. The memory of the penetrating gaze but at the same time full of human understanding of Father Miguel, made Paride feel safe and at home. He felt that the priest of his childhood could have told everything, but everything about his life.

### THE EXPECTED MEETING

The drive to the Basilica of St. Mary Help of Christians ended after a long journey into her past and her memories. He got out of the car, and with his heart in his throat mixed with an emotion he hadn't felt for a long time, he knocked on the door asking for Father Miguel Gonzales. He was opened by a young friar of about thirty, who with a distinctly Teutonic accent seated him in the small room adjacent to a small, somewhat spartan studio. The walls of the

room were covered with ex-votos and images of devout people who appeared smiling in group photos with Dominican friars. In one of these he recognized Father Miguel with a very grateful young man who expressed great admiration for the elderly friar. Father Miguel went down the stairs to Paride, who did not immediately recognize as the wild country boy he had seen growing up as a teenager. But Paride recognized him immediately, despite having become a well-worn eighty-year old man. Paride walked up to him as an ill-concealed emotion clenched his throat. He took his hands and knelt down in front of the old priest who gently raised him up because he was beginning to remember that man who had lost sight for years.

- << Paride Corsi? The most irreverent and lively altar boy that I still remember with great affection? >>.

- << Yes, I'm Father Miguel >> Paride replied movedly as he held his hands. Father Miguel sat him down on a sofa and sat down beside him.

- << How many years have passed since the last day we greeted each other in the rectory? >>.

- << More than thirty years dear father. But how is she rather? I find it in great shape >>.

- << Well, dear Paride, prayer corroborates not only the spirit but also the body. But tell me, how's your family? And did your life lead you where you wanted? >>.

- << My parents died about fifteen years ago, and my brothers haven't heard them since. Relationships have cooled a bit especially since I decided to move to Rome having decided that I would not take care of the family business and the farm >>.

- << I'm sorry. I hope they are all well, and that one day you can find the time and the will to find your brothers. The family is more important than the career. Careers pass, the family remains. It is the only important link that remains when life leads us to understand the transience of earthly things and our illusions. So what do I owe this pleasant surprise? >>.

Paride suddenly became serious in the face and visibly pale, and Father Miguel noticed his sudden change in appearance.

- << Father Miguel, unfortunately mine is not a simple courtesy visit in the name of old times. I came to her to ask her for help, and not just spiritual >>.

- << Tell me Paride, from your appearance I would say that it is something

important if it causes you such disturbance >>. - << Yes, father. Not only do I feel troubled, but also threatened>>.

Paride told the dream he had had the evening before going to look for him, and Father Miguel was very impressed because he had had a similar dream some time before. And the woman of the dream, who had recognized as a divine and celestial figure, had announced to him a very important visit to which he would have to devote all his attention and his help. Paride, far from the faith for a long time, had not grasped the spiritual essence of his dream, but to the words of Father Miguel he was not only surprised, but also grateful for that enlightening and comforting encounter with the old priest. Now he knew he could count on "special" help. Father Miguel asked Paris to accompany him to the Basilica because it was almost the time of Holy Mass and he had to prepare readings and prepare the altar. They went down to a long corridor that brought them right inside the Basilica. Father accompanied him on a guided tour throughout the central nave and showed him a very fine picture of the Virgin Mary. Paride stopped almost paralyzed in front of the image, seeing an impressive resemblance between the woman of his dream and that portrayed in the picture. When he told Father Miguel about the old priest his eyes lit up so much that his eyes became radiant:

- << I was sure. I was certain that she had been the one to announce your visit to me, it was she who guided you to me >>. Paride hugged him tightly and cried like he hadn't done for too long. They sat in front of the image depicting the Holy Virgin Mary, and Paris began to open his heart to the old priest. Heart that until then had been a well sealed casket, but which felt heavy for what was carried inside for too long. He retraced thirty years of his life: from when he left for Rome to undertake his university studies, until the moment when he took seriously the decision to meet Father Miguel to redeem himself from all the evil done and to which he risked becoming accustomed. When he made his "cardboard suitcase" he was a young man of good hopes little more than an adult. His uncle Paolo, a lawyer at the Court of Rome, he had placed it in a small apartment adjacent to the university town. In order not to be alone, Paride decided to share spaces and expenses with Carlo, a student outside the law school he had met during a private law lesson. Carlo was a native of Basilicata, and would have proved to be very enterprising and cordial like all the people of the south, but with a side of rather singular character: he suddenly became taciturn and aloof, at times melancholy. One day, while Paride was preparing to go to the university for a dense university morning of study, he was about to warn him that he left the house when he noticed that the door to his room was ajar, and there was Carlo standing before a sort of fetish hung

on the wall in front of which two black candles burned. Although it was eight o'clock in the morning, the room was completely dark with the windows still closed and the windows sealed. Carlo, in a clear state of trance, recited litanies in a language never before heard by Paride, who, seeing him hidden in that strange ritual, did not consider himself interrupting him and left the house troubled by what he had seen, but also worried about his friend. During the morning, taken by the intense study commitments, he decided not to think about it anymore and to concentrate on his student day. He made up his mind to talk about it with Carlo to better clarify his ideas, even though he sensed that his friend's explanations would not serve much to calm him. In the evening, after an intense day of lessons and various commitments, Paride decided to face Carlo on the subject while they were preparing to have dinner. Carlo stared at him with a strange air, then smiled and told him that, having to face a demanding medical school exam, that ritual had been recommended to him by a friend of the course, a member of a sort of "secret coterie" who met at night following a precise calendar made of particular dates and moon phases. To convince him, this friend of his told him that if he also joined the strange "congregate" his university career and his future would take altitude and nothing would stop him achieving his goals and satisfying his professional ambition. Carlo, who like Paride was a very

ambitious type, gave in to the temptation thinking that there could be nothing wrong with attempting an "alternative" route, so he decided to accept that unusual proposal by becoming an effective member of the one that did not take long to manifest itself as a real esoteric sect. Certain conditions were imposed on him: compliance with the rules by participating in all their assemblies, and the recitation of strange ritual formulas before pentacles and inverted crosses. When Carlo decided to enter the sect, he knew nothing about Satanism and the worship of evil, and all that that would have meant over time. He came from a very devout and catholic family, but he never wanted to get involved in matters concerning religion. He considered them "outdated" and a legacy of ancient popular traditions. While he considered himself too unconventional and modern to believe in certain "superstitions". Since then he moved to Rome to study, his intolerant attitude was also got worse. Paride had listened to Carlo very carefully, but a certain curiosity betrayed the somewhat paternal air he had decided to keep towards Carlo. He wanted to keep away from everything he had heard, and try to convince his friend to get out of that sect that could prove dangerous. But at the same time a curiosity and a desire to penetrate into a world he did not know but that fascinated him crept inside him. Carlo, as a skilful story-teller, had understood him, and was able to neutralize any attempt at rational defense that could have driven Paride away