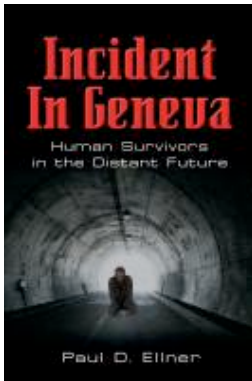


Incident In Geneva

Human Survivors
in the Distant Future



Paul D. Ellner



A strange phenomenon lands scientist Charles Handler in Connecticut five centuries into the future. Drastic climate changes and rising sea levels have reduced available land. The people have survived a thermonuclear war and a worldwide pandemic. Society, political structure, religion, and customs have radically changed. Everyone has been genetically modified to eliminate aggressive behavior and greed. A World Court warrant leads to Charles' arrest on charges of attempted manslaughter of the Human Race.

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“Hey-you-awake-now?”

Charles opened his eyes to see a tall man standing over him. He was lying on a warm, firm, surface, under a blanket. The man spoke very rapidly, and Charles did not understand.

“Do you speak English?” Charles asked.

The man laughed. “I am speaking English,” he said. “Are you sick or hurt?”

Charles shook his head. By paying close attention he was able to understand the man’s speech. He became aware that under the covers, he was naked except for his undershorts. He could hear the pelting of heavy rain. He sat up and looked around to find that he was in a large room. The ceiling slanted, low above him and rising over a window at the opposite end. A door near the window appeared to be an exit.

“Where am I?” Charles asked him. “What is this place?”

“Burv. This is Burv. My Mom brought you in this afternoon—she found you lying out on the ground. Where have you been to get those clothes?”

The man spoke so fast that Charles still had trouble understanding him. He ignored the question. Charles got up slowly and walked across the room to peer out of the window. Darkness and heavy rain obscured

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everything—as if someone directed water from a garden hose against the window.

Looking around the room, he noticed a door near the bed that he had occupied, a table, and four modernistic chairs. Across the room from the table and chairs, there was a couch.

The man appeared to be young and was dressed in a light colored, form-fitting shirt that lacked any buttons or a zipper. His dark pants were also tight fitting, and his outfit reminded Charles of the characters on the Star Trek TV program. The man sat down at the table and regarded Charles.

“Do you need a bio break?” he asked. It took Charles only a second or two to understand. He nodded.

“Lav is over there,” the man said, indicating the door next to the bed.

Charles entered the small cubicle. He sat down on the odd-looking toilet and relieved himself. Looking around for toilet paper, he found none but pressed a large button on the nearby wall. He felt a gentle stream of warm water washing his underside, followed by a current of warm air. *Must be some kind of a bidet.* It flushed when he stood up. A sink with a single faucet produced a small quantity of water when he placed his hands underneath it. There were no towels, but Charles found a hand dryer mounted on the wall similar to the ones in public restrooms. He saw what was obviously a stall shower.

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After knock on the door, the man entered and handed him some clothing. "Yours were destroyed when we found you. You can use these, but they will probably be too big." Charles got dressed.

Back in the room, Charles sat down at the table. "My name is Charles," he said, extending his hand.

"Ron 2659312" the man responded, offering his hand palm up, fingers extended. Charles wondered whether Ron was an inmate of some sort. *He's giving me the Hi-Five.* He slapped Ron's hand. Ron smiled.

"Are you hungry?" he asked.

Charles felt starved. "Yes," he said, looking around for a stove or refrigerator, but saw neither. There was something resembling a food vending machine. On closer inspection, Charles observed that there was a row of knobs, each with a different symbol above a delivery compartment. He sat with his hands clasped, rotating his thumbs.

Ron stared at Charles' hands. "Why are you doing that?"

Charles tore his hands apart. "It's just a habit. It's something I do when I'm thinking."

Ron raised an eyebrow and asked, "What do you want?" Charles shrugged.

Ron considered the device for a moment and pulled one of the knobs. The delivery compartment lit up when something appeared. Ron opened the door of the compartment, withdrew a plastic plate bearing some

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kind of food and a utensil, which Charles recognized as a spork, a spoon with tines at the end.

Ron noticed Charles's curiosity. The food lay in a brown sauce with a rich mushroom-like odor.

Ron gestured for Charles to eat. "Eat it. It's good," he said. Charles cut off a piece to taste. It was delicious, somewhat chewy, like a large noodle.

"Drink?" Ron asked.

"Yes, please."

Ron touched another knob on the device, which produced a clear plastic glass filled with some liquid. Charles tasted it, decided it was some kind of fruit juice, and drank. He finished the food and juice and felt satisfied. Ron took the glass and empty plate with the utensils, and threw them into some type of waste dispenser, which emitted a brief low growl.

The heavy rain accompanied by the wail of a high wind continued. The door popped open to admit a young woman, clad in what was obviously some type of rain gear. Her hat, made of a gray material, resembled a seaman's sou'wester. It had a low crown and a broad brim with, what appeared to be, a transparent windshield to protect the eyes. The coat, made of the same material, was knee length with a high mandarin collar. Charles noticed that the water did not bead on the fabric but ran off to quickly dry. Charles was surprised that neither wind nor rain blew in with her. She removed her hat and raincoat, smiled at Charles before walking over to kiss Ron. She was dressed in

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the same outfit as Ron, except that her shirt was light green in color.

"Hey," she said to both men.

"Hi," Charles responded.

"Pat 2678493." She approached him and, to his surprise, kissed him on the cheek.

"Pat is my matcom," Ron explained.

She was tall, with closely cropped blond hair and a trim figure. Charles guessed that she was in her late twenties.

Ron got some food and a drink from the dispensing device and served Pat. Charles joined them at the table. Ron and Pat spoke so rapidly that he had trouble following their conversation.

After dinner, they invited Charles to join them on the couch. Ron spoke a few words and a section of the wall before them morphed into a large monitor.

Charles was astounded. "How did you do that?" he asked Ron.

"What do you mean," Ron said. "That's just an ordinary visoscreen."

A woman's head and face appeared.

"Hey, Mom," Ron said. "This is Charles—the man you brought in".

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"Hey, Charles," the woman smiled, and Charles realized they were skyping. "How do you feel now?"

"Better, much better, thank you. Thanks for rescuing me."

"No problem, but we should have you checked out at the Med Center after the storm."

Ron and Pat continued a rapid-fire conversation with Ron's mother until they said goodnight. The monitor went blank, and the wall re-established itself.

"Can I ask you what is today's date?"

"Today is March 18th," Pat said.

"What year?"

"2512, of course," Pat told him.

"What? I thought you said 2512."

"I did. Is there a problem?"

"Are you serious? This is really 2512?"

Pat and Ron both nodded.

Charles was engulfed by panic and disbelief. *I can't believe it—how can it be? How is it possible—five hundred years—five centuries—if this is true—Carole—my family—where are they now?* "Oh my God—gone! All gone," Charles sobbed.

"Where do you come from, Charles?" Pat asked.

"I'm from 2012," Charles told them.

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Ron and Pat looked at him in disbelief and then looked at each other.

"That's five hundred years ago! That can't be." Ron said.

"I know it can't be!" Charles exclaimed. "I have no idea what happened. I was down in the tunnel of the CERN Collider in Geneva, Switzerland, and the lights went out. I started walking in the tunnel to find my wife, and it started to rain. How could it rain in the tunnel? All I know is I became exhausted. Next thing I woke up here. You said this place is called Burv?" They both nodded.

"How the hell did I get back here from Geneva?"

"Back here? You have been here before?" Ron asked.

"Yeah. It used to be called Burrville—just a few houses at the bottom of the mountain. We called it Burr Mountain, but it was only 1300 feet high. On top, there was a lake and a condo community with 474 units, 19 tennis courts, and three lodges."

"What is a condo?" Pat asked.

"Oh, sorry. Condo for condominium, the people own their unit, but the community owns all the land."

"I'm tired," Pat said. "I don't know about you Ron, but I have trouble believing this story. Sorry Charles, but I can't help it. We can talk about it in the morning. Let's go to bed."

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Charles was surprised to see that Ron and Pat undressed and changed into some form of nightclothes without any show of modesty or embarrassment. The bed on which he had rested had somehow extended its width to be queen-sized. Ron produced a kind of sleeping bag, which he placed on the floor near the bed and indicated that this was for him. Ron and Pat got into bed and the illumination, which came from the entire ceiling, dimmed.

The floor, composed of some plastic material, was warm, and Charles lay down on the sleeping bag. The bag was comfortable as he lay in the semi-darkness, listening to the howl of the wind and the heavy rain. He tried to make some sense out of his situation. He remembered being in the tunnel at CERN, but that was all until he had awakened here. *This place seems like the U.S.—how did I get here from the tunnel in Switzerland—Carole must be distraught by now trying to explain my disappearance—police would have been searching for me—I’ve got to contact them in the morning—how long was I out—I was only up for a few hours—Jesus I’m tired—like jet lag.*

His thoughts turned to Jean-Pierre. They had met years ago after Charles found a bottle of Handler champagne in a Paris bistro and, curious about the name, phoned the vineyard in Epernay. Jean-Pierre, the owner, invited Charles to visit at their home where he was warmly received. He showed Charles his vineyards and cellars where thousands of bottles of champagne were stored. The two men tried to find a common ancestor, but failing that, decided to be cousins. Jean-Pierre’s teenage daughter spent a

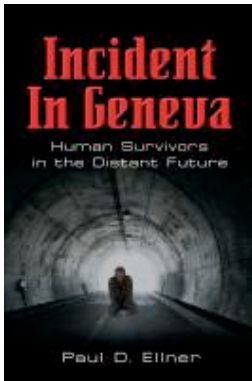
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summer with Charles and Carole and over the years Dan and Jeremy had visited the Handlers in Epernay.

"Gone, all gone," Charles muttered before falling asleep.

After it was apparent that Charles was asleep, Pat whispered to Ron, "Do you think he's dangerous?"

"No, I don't think so, but we should report his arrival here to the Gov. I'll call him now."



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