

## Book One – The Story of Pachacuti

dilution of these key elements would render the charter ineffective.

‘We will reconvene in plenary session this afternoon at 1530 to put the amended proposal to a final vote. I ask those of you not yet persuaded to support the plan to consider very carefully the full ramifications of this conference failing to reach its objective. Without this plan, the world, as a united whole, simply doesn’t have a plan.’

Adam spent the rest of the day moving between the various workshop venues. Most of the queries he received were seeking clarification on forecast environmental outcomes. He took from this that there was more time being spent on the question of ‘what happens if we do nothing’, than on ‘how can we get around the obstacles and support the proposal’.

When the vote result was finally posted that afternoon, it was really only a confirmation of what everybody had known in the morning. For some the words on the big screen ‘54% in favour’ came as a personal relief that the marathon conference and the embarrassing charade into which it had dissolved was officially ended. Yet in spite of this, an ominous quiet descended on the auditorium as the outcome flickered onto the two huge screens. It stilled completely the gathering of belongings and the stuffing of briefcases with papers. For a long minute, some 5000 men and women stood or sat without moving, looking up at the numbers as though they contained a premonitory message indecipherable to the reasoning mind but impinging with awful clarity on the spirit.

Adam too was anchored and silent, watching the big screen, briefly impercipient to all but the pixelated swatches of colour looming above the assembly. From his proximity the text was massively oversized, the message almost obscured by its own expanse, an enormity that his vision could barely encompass. For a moment he had the distinct sense of being a small boy misplaced by a distracted parent, the world no longer a fair-ground of familiarity and fun but suddenly a sinister huddle of half-revealed perils. Universal on the faces he could readily see, there was the lost and querulous look of the innocent condemned for unknown crimes.