PSYCHEDELIC PROPHET

BOOK ONE THE MESSENGER

CHAPTER ONE—AN UNEXPECTED DETOUR

In a rural, secluded retirement enclave, northwest of Philadelphia, a stoic figure sat at a sophisticated computer console; his fingers dancing nimbly across a virtual keyboard. The man had neither a social security number nor fingerprints on file. Gray dominated his hair and beard, yet his pewter eyes sparkled with an intense radiance that commanded immediate respect. It was mid January in the year 2004.

He began an abbreviated countdown.

“THREE.”

His efforts to save the planet were now in motion. Within twenty-four hours two disciples would accompany him on a quest to enlighten.

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Snowflakes swirled around a pickup truck as it cut through the night. Bob Griffin concentrated on the road from behind the wheel as Lisa Holmes continued to talk about their future from the passenger’s seat.

“TWO”

. . .

A near record storm was finally winding down after a weekend of ice, snow and below freezing temperatures in Eastern Pennsylvania’s Pocono Mountains. As the couple travelled east toward Philadelphia on a dark stretch of road, the pale half-moon slid between wind-driven clouds.

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“ONE.”

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Coming around a bend the steering wheel bucked, then spun out of Bob’s grasp.

. . .

“Zero!”

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Bob’s tarnished, red 1994 Dodge Ram, whom he affectionately called Molly, careened off the paved surface, plowed into a snow filled meadow, and there came to an abrupt stop. Before Bob and Lisa could react, a buzzing filled their ears and they lost consciousness.

“So far so good,” the stoic figure observed.

. . .

Bob squinted from a harsh brightness; accompanied by a far off drone. Maybe it’s only a spotlight and the noise is from a generator, he thought. So where am I? He turned from the glare and noticed Lisa standing beside him. She was wearing a one piece- shiny green and burgundy number, and her brass colored locks were gathered in a ponytail. He blinked. A moment earlier she had been wearing jeans with a Sheep Skin Coat, her hair hanging loose, falling past her shoulders.

“Hey Lis, you okay? Where are we?”

“How should I know? I’m scared. Can’t feel my body,” she complained.

Bob searched his surroundings, but failed to determine any sense of distance. The whiteness dazzled his eyes. He couldn’t even tell what they were standing on.

A voice sounded: “Do not be alarmed, Lisa, Robert!”

“What! Who’s that?” Bob asked in a shaky voice that didn’t sound like his own.

”I am the Messenger,” the reply seemed to press them in from all directions.

“Where are we? Lisa stuttered, her rouge lips barely moving.

“Are we dead”? Bob wondered aloud.

“No, you are in a realm I’ve created, so that we could…uh…get acquainted. Do not be afraid. I require your assistance. I will use the name Mathew Wells during this visit. You will receive further instructions. For now goodnight.”

. . .

Lisa’s head slid forward as if she had nodded off for a second, then jerked awake. She found herself sitting inside Bob’s truck, in the middle of a snowy meadow. She turned her head to find him dozing beside her. She punched his arm, none to gently. He awoke dazed, and stared at Lisa.

“Wha… What’s your problem?” He grunted at his bothersome lover.

“Oh, I don’t know… Bob. You were asleep behind the wheel. We’re not on the road, and you’re asking me? Let’s ask Molly, maybe she has a clue!”

“Lis, the last thing I remember-came around a curve, was straightening out when the wheel twisted to the right from a tremendous force of some kind. I don’t know…wait…someone asked me to help him. Damn that’s strange. Lis… Lisa, what’s wrong? You’re shaking!”

He put his arm around her for support. She pulled away, her lose bangs dangling in front of cobalt eyes. Moonlight splashed across the freckles dotting a trim Celtic nose.

“Stop! What did you just say about a man asking for help?” Lisa questioned.

“I remember a man’s voice. He said he was the Messenger. You were right next to me, but where the hell were we?” Bob asked.

“All I remember is coming around that bend and good ol’ Molly swerving to the right-like I’m talking G forces here. Then the truck skidded off the road, into this field. I thought it was a dream, a dream with incredible resonance. Except for one visual- you, standing beside me. You were wearing a super tight outfit that seemed to change color. Next thing I knew, you punched my arm.” He rubbed the spot absently. “That brought me out of it. What just happened to us Lis?”

She maneuvered on the seat to search his coarse angelic face; gazing at it, a burst of recognition lit up her own.

“I remember now. Except the part about what I was wearing. There was this loud voice. Beneath the sound of the words, a humming… seemed to twang on every nerve ending in my body. You could feel each word, deep in your bones. Bob I know you heard the same thing I did.”

“Hey, I’m not denying it. I’m just at a loss right now.”

“Well you’re suppose to have all the answers Griffin”

He grinned at the lascivious minx testing him; even in the face of bizarre occurrences she still kept the score.

“So, what’s going on?” Lisa asked. She looked calm, but her pulse was racing. “How could both of us have the same dream or hallucination?” Bob deliberated. “Whatever really happened, I come away with the impression… we’re to help this Mathew Wells accomplish a task, … a mission.”

Through this exchange Molly’s engine hummed smoothly. Feeling more alert, Bob backed slowly out of the field, his monster tires guaranteeing success. Once the rubber hit the asphalt, he stamped on the accelerator and they were on their way.

“What the… where did all the gas go? I filled the guzzler on Friday when I went on a beer run. There’s only a quarter tank left.”

Since Bob’s dashboard clock refused to work, he asked his co-pilot. She checked her cell: “ten-forty.” Then she read her watch: “twenty of eleven can’t be, we turned off of 611 just past ten,” Lisa objected to the evidence of reality.

“This shit isn’t even funny,” Bob said. Hearing a click, Lisa flinched. The Pearl Jam disc Bob had loaded, what seemed like minutes earlier, popped out of the player.

The couple proceeded down an even smaller road that snaked through Rydal, Pennsylvania, an exclusive neighborhood, featuring generous parcels wrapped lovingly around humongous dwellings. State owned land of wooded hills and shallow valleys garnished the township. Lisa’s father, Nicholas Holmes, owned a lucrative Real Estate company, and his success was mirrored by the size and splendor of his veritable palace-a rambling, contemporary two story mansion, meticulously positioned on a ten acre lot.

This was Bob’s immediate destination. He and Lisa were heading home from a three-day ski expedition at the Griffin family log cabin near Big Boulder, a destination that had provided hours of exercise and laughs. Bob thought back to the fun they had before the storm began in earnest.

The slopes were ideal, a packed powder base, with temperatures approaching thirty. A stiff wind out of the Northwest, whipped the light snow into swirling curtains of white. Chris Santore, and his girlfriend Beverly, proved their superior slalom skills once again. Chris often claimed he owed them to their savior, Jesus Christ. Bob took these opportunities to jokingly declare: ‘I’m a believer,’ in a lame Evangelical imitation. Bob’s best friend Kevin concentrated on the tubing area. Bob had also bamboozled Scott and Meissen to tag along for kicks, and even those two ended up having a blast.

Scott repeatedly fell off of the tube on his tenuous journey up the mountainside. He had to resort to crawling across the slick surface, then lunging at his rubber conveyance. Meissen, due to his ingestion of OxyContin and Bombay Gin, nodded off by the time he reached the top. Scott craved the opposite effect, injecting crystal meth directly into his bloodstream by the hour. Bob and Lisa’s friends were diverse.

Now, all that was in the past. Bob had to get his act together; return to the real world. First thing in the morning he had to install an engine into a late model Buick. As he approached the gate, a uniformed sentry scrutinized the interior of the truck to eyeball Lisa. Once she gave her four-finger, “I’m okay, signal,” the security guard allowed them to continue up the expansive drive. Bob pulled up to a fountain, dark and still in the winter starlight.

He hauled Lisa’s belongings from the truck, up a set of marble steps and beneath an arch, into a vast entrance hall. With no one in sight, he dropped her bags on the Italian tile, gave her a quick kiss and said that he loved her. Lisa whispered.

“Don’t tell anyone about the episode until we know more.”

“Okay,” he agreed, even though he knew that he would mention something to his younger brother. “I’ll call you tomorrow,” he yelled over his shoulder. “Don’t worry, we’ll figure it out Lis.” Walking away; she turned and placed her index finger vertically near her full lips. In his anxious state Bob disregarded a basic rule: talk softly, or be recorded by one of her dad’s countless fiber optic ears.

Lisa walked through the sitting parlor and into a well lit breakfast room, which led to a gourmet kitchen, housing restaurant size appliances and up to the minute high tech enhancements.

“Didn’t know you were back yet sis,” Lisa’s younger brother Sean remarked as he studied the contents of the refrigerator.

“We debated whether your crew would make it home tonight. What a storm!”

“Yeah, a real blizzard. We could hardly see our rides from the cabin.”

Her brother found what he was after, grabbed a fork and headed for the stairs. In the family room Lisa’s mom talked on the phone. Lisa walked over to her chair and kissed her cheek. Sharon Holmes followed Lisa with her eyes and smiled. She held up her index finger, which meant: “I’ll be with you in a moment.” True to her gesture she disconnected, and asked her daughter to retrieve a Benson & Hedges from across the room. The obedient daughter brought her a cigarette and lighter.

“Some mess out there, huh kiddo? Did you and your friends have fun on those mountains?”

“It was alright.”

“Wuz wrong? Did you and that Griffin fella have a fight?”

Mrs. Holmes voice slurred, her eyes looked bloodshot, unfocused. The skin around her chapped lips appeared gaunt and weather beaten.

“No mom, nothing like that. Guess I’m tired.”

“Well, put on your P.J.’s and relax.”