PSYCHEDELIC PROPHET

BOOK ONE THE MESSENGER

CHAPTER 2 Coming to Grips

After Bob left the vestibule, he jogged down the steps and jumped in his truck. He turned down the heat, and then slipped Molly into gear. Circling back to the gatehouse he tried to piece together the facts.

“Okay, so what do we have here? I’m driving along the same road I’ve used plenty of times. We’re turning, and Molly,” he slapped the leather covered steering wheel to get the pickup’s attention, “pulls out of my control, hops over the curb and comes to rest in a field. That’s already strange. But no, that’s not even the bizarre part. At the same instant we’re transported somewhere else. Yes doctor, I said transported. Lisa and I are standing side by side. Not in the truck: not in a snowy field, somewhere else. An out of body experience: shared by both of us? And, oh yeah, let’s not forget the voice.”

“‘I am the Messenger.’ Give me a break!” Bob rolled out of the driveway as another thought surfaced.

“How did we get the same information? A shared delusion? I don’t think so.”

He cruised toward the city, questioning his sanity, and keeping under the speed limit. He wanted to tell his dad when he got home, but tell him what? He opted to wait, rather than come off half-cocked.

The Griffins, or what was left of them, lived in what is known as Northeast Philly. Their section, Castor Gardens was a budding ghetto, populated by a generous mix of Spanish, Asian and African Americans. Not very many Anglos were left in this neighborhood, yet the Griffin guys felt comfortable there. Bob’s father George, younger brother Jimmy, and a chocolate Lab named Mo comprised this struggling family. Bob’s mother Sandy was taken from them in a devastating automobile accident, some ten years ago. They say time heals all; no one told the Griffins.

George was a superb auto mechanic, who happened to be employed by Nicholas Holmes’ business partner, Herb Lerner. That is how Bob and Lisa met. Lerner BMW boasted a prolific sales department that kept George and his staff of mechanics quite busy. Jimmy, the youngest member of the family attended Father Judge High School. Unlike many of his peers he enjoyed reading, especially classic Sci-Fi, and he also invested his time on the Internet, honing impressive digital skills.

Bob zipped through the house heading for the fridge. After close inspection he grabbed a loaf of bread and lunchmeat from the drawer, and reached for his beer. Now he was set. George and Mo came up the steps, the dog galloping, George performing more of a shuffle. Bob tried to temper his dog’s jubilation, but Mo hurdled toward his favorite human, almost knocking Bob over. The dog had a big canine smile, his tail swishing to and fro.

“Take her easy you crazy Lab. I see you, calm down.” Bob and his dog made quick work of the sandwich.

“Hey son, how was your excursion into the never ending blizzard?” Mr. Griffin asked, a thin smile clinging to his somber mug. He wore a ratty jogging outfit and white canvas sneakers. A perpetual shadow lingered on Bob’s father’s jaw line no matter how frequently he shaved.

“Get any from that wealthy vixen of yours?”

“No father, I respect her far too much to allow us the act of fornication before we are joined in holy matrimony,” Bob lectured with a straight face. “I’m shocked you would entertain such notions.”

“Where’s Jimmy at, on the internyet?” Bob asked in an inexplicable Russian accent, presumably because he had always associated the medium with a ploy by the Russians to steal the enthusiasm of young Americans.

“Probably, if he’s not in the garage tinkering with his bike.” Mr. Griffin began to yell: “Jimmy, your bro’s home, come up for air… say hello”.

From the basement a gangly dark haired kid emerged; Bob smacked his brother’s head as a show of affection.

“How was your weekend, Jim?” Bob asked. “Dad drive you up a wall while I was away?”

“Nah, he was tolerable this time.”

Bob folded his arms, leaning against the windowsill.

“Were you working on the cycle this weekend? I know my tools are right where I left them, right?”

“Sure”

“Do me a favor… anyway. Clean up the mess you didn’t make in the garage, then go to sleep. But… hold up one minute. Need to ask you something.” Jim gave him a furtive glance, but waited. Bob turned to his dad.

“You going in early tomorrow, or can we do a quick turn at the table?”

“Don’t need to be in til eight, so I’m game. Think I’ll catch up on some sleep.” Griff, as his co-workers called him, rubbed his eyes before examining his eldest from the foot of the stairs.

“You feel alright? Look kinda pale. Too much partying, or are you coming down with something? Get some rest!” George called over his shoulder as he lumbered up the stairs.

Bob signaled for his brother to sit across from him at the Dining Room table, which rose above the tattered green carpet like a megalith; dominating the room by its size and stature. Even though it was scarred and pitted the surface, still held a shine. Fashioned from New England Birch, this caramel rectangular affair suffered from a fairly common deformity. The Southeastern leg was shorter than its three counterparts, which produced a rocking jerky motion for those who sat at that end.

There were two additional pieces of furniture stationed in the room. A Cherry wood breakfront guarded the passage to the basement steps. Leaning against the far wall, an overburdened Maple hutch teetered beneath layers of books, magazines, and numerous bush league trophies Bob had accumulated during his formative athletic years. Water stained gypsum panels sagged from the mottled framework of the drop ceiling holding them in place. A grease encrusted hexagonal chandelier hung ominously overhead. A single window allowed diffused moonlight to enter the paneled interior.

“Bro, listen something’s up. It might turn out to be important. Jim noticed a glaze to his sibling’s eyes.

“I’ll tell you more, as soon as I find out what’s going on.”

“What are we talking about here?”

“That’s just it; right now I’m not sure.” Bob gave Jimmy what he hoped was a reassuring smile. “Tomorrow I’ll know more. Just be ready to approach whatever it is with an open mind.” Jim sprang to his feet.

“Whatever you need me to do, I have it covered. I’m down with it. But, why the drama, the clawing suspense?”

Bob often felt he couldn’t measure up to his brother’s mental capabilities. This undertaking might provide him the opportunity to change that assessment.

“Perhaps tomorrow we’ll have more to discuss, for now you need to straighten out the garage and get some sleep. Say no to the nyet, he ordered; sending him to the nether regions.

The perplexed mechanic stepped into the Living Room. Collapsing into a worn cushion, on a once noble sofa, he caught an accurate reflection of himself in an antique crooked mirror. His blonde hair looked muddy, his face washed out. Even the jade beams of his eyes lacked their usual depth and sparkle. Sinking into the foam and velour trenches, he wondered what tomorrow would bring.

Mr. Holmes was in his home office. He talked slowly, summoning the precise diction for the caller’s benefit. With the tips of his fingers he massaged bloodshot orbs as he sat behind a custom mahogany desk.

“Do not give it a second thought, Mr. Harrison. The paperwork will be completed in the morning, and the whole matter sewn up by midweek. Yes, I appreciate your honesty. Well thanks… you also. Goodnight.”

Mr. Holmes stabbed a button, disconnected then mumbled “asshole”. Holmes stood, glanced at a row of screens built into the wall. No sign of Lisa’s arrival on the readout. At the wet bar in the alcove, behind the wooden monstrosity, he poured himself a Scotch and water.

“Sharon? Did Lisa come in yet?” Mr. Holmes asked the intercom, considering that maybe he had missed the flashing light that would indicate to him that a silent alarm detected a breach in one of the outside doors.

“She’s in her room. At least I think she’s up there.” Mrs. Holmes whispered.

“Alright I’ll try her extension. Lisa, Lisa are you there?”

“Yes dad, I’m here… not feeling well, was almost asleep. Can we talk tomorrow?”

“Well alright young lady,” he replied, disappointment in his tone. “I’d thought you would have dropped in to say hello. Did you enjoy the weekend?” Without waiting for an answer, he added. “I sure hope Bob drives that prehistoric truck carefully on the ice.” When his daughter did not respond to the bait, he left her with, “Good night doll. I’ll be looking forward to seeing you in the morning before class.”

Lisa murmured a goodnight. She hated that moniker, which is why he used it. Miss Holmes slid back into her four-post bed and stared up at the ceiling. Her heart pounded like a runaway bass line. She felt both exhilarated and scared. ‘What happened earlier tonight in that field? And what did this Messenger from God want from them?’