

THE MESSENGER

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. INSTITUTION - DAY

Cracked white walls of an old four storey hospital stand against the blue skies of a summer's day.

A long road leads to a main gate, a sign with worn lettering reads "St. Christopher's Institution for Mental Sciences".

SUPER - 1988

A car, driven by Detective BROOK, 31, pristine, drives up to the gates. Detective LAKE, 25, sits in the passenger seat.

EXT. INSTITUTION - COURTYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Barred windows look down from the main building onto a large square of gravel and paving stones.

MCKINLEY, 25, bookish, strides from the main door.

Brook steps from the car, is met by McKinley's fake smile.

Lake steps out and stretches, reveals a shoulder holster.

MCKINLEY

Detective Brook, Detective Lake,
how are you today?

Brook strides towards the main doors, McKinley on his heels.

BROOK

You must be McKinley.

MCKINLEY

Pleased to meet you.

McKinley extends a hand as he skips alongside, Brook ignores it, looks up to one of the windows.

BROOK

Never thought I'd have to visit
this nut case.

INT. INSTITUTION - JOE'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The window belongs to this room, a white box with an iron framed bed, desk and a chair.

A tape deck plays BRAHMS quietly.

A simple wooden crucifix hangs above the bed.

JOE, 32, shaved head, sits at the desk reading a book.

The secure metal door unlocks with a loud clunk, swung open by a large ORDERLY, Brook and McKinley enter.

The door clangs as the Orderly closes it behind them.

MCKINLEY

Good morning, Joe, how are you today?

McKinley's condescending is obvious.

BROOK

A serial killer, listening to Brahms? I expected to find you babbling nursery rhymes while wearing your own shit as a hat.

Joe continues to read.

MCKINLEY

Do you remember Mr. Brook?

Joe doesn't look up, speaks quietly, precisely.

JOE

How could I forget the noble detective responsible for stalling our work?

BROOK

"Stalled?" Interesting you should say that, considering we just found another one.

Brook strides forward, takes the book from Joe and closes it, lowers himself to eye level.

BROOK (CONT'D)

And I suppose you mean "Our work" as in, you and God's work?

JOE

I would not be so presumptuous as to assume God was involved.

BROOK

But you still believe you're his messenger?

Joe looks up slowly, smiles softly.

JOE

You really should have paid more attention to my message, instead of my taste in music, Detective.

BROOK

And the six victims we've found so far weren't "message" enough?

JOE

A message is not a message until it is heard. I am not the first and I will not be the last.

Brook looks over to McKinley.

BROOK

Why don't you go fix me some coffee?

MCKINLEY

I beg your pardon?

Brook fixes McKinley a solid look, the penny drops.

McKinley knocks on the door, the Orderly lets him out.

Brook watches McKinley leave, turns off the music.

BROOK

Tell me about the others.

Joe smiles.

JOE

I'd be pleased to help you, Detective.

EXT. LOWER MANHATTAN STREETS (PRESENT) - DAY

A bustle of PEDESTRIANS surround ABIGAIL, 26, pretty, as she manoeuvres through the crowd, cell phone to her ear, breath steaming in the white coldness of winter.

SUPER - Today

She steps out to hail a cab, the taxi passes by.

ABIGAIL

(to phone)

Yes, honey, I know that, but mommy has to go to this one audition and then we can--

Another cab passes by.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

Shit!

(beat)

No, not you, honey, mommy has to go now OK?

(beat)

(MORE)

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
I love you too, Cassie, I promise
I'll be home soon.

She hangs up.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
If I can get a damn cab... Taxi!

She raises her hand, a cab pulls up a little further along.

A STRANGER, 55, immaculate, a neat scar across his throat,
tries to intercept the cab, bumps shoulders with Abigail.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
Hey! Watch it!

The Stranger's voice is raspy, damaged.

STRANGER
Pardon, miss, I didn't see you
there.

He backs off, holds the taxi door for her.

Abigail is caught off guard by his politeness for a second
before she hesitantly ducks inside the waiting cab.

STRANGER (CONT'D)
My apologies once again.

ABIGAIL
It's OK.

He shuts the door with a gentlemanly smile.

INT. TAXI - CONTINUOUS

Abigail watches The Stranger walk away, notices that he wears
surgical gloves.

TAXI DRIVER
Where too?

Abigail turns to the driver's mirror.

ABIGAIL
Huh? Oh, sorry, Empire Hotel on
Portland.

The taxi pulls away Abigail looks back to where The Stranger
was, he is gone, swallowed by the crowd.

INT. EMPIRE HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Abigail is in the arms of MARCUS, 32.

They are both sweaty, short of breath, sheets ruffled, the glow of sex on their faces, clothes strewn about the room.

MARCUS
That was incredible.

ABIGAIL
I am pretty good, aren't I?

MARCUS
I've got a few tricks too!

Abigail giggles, Marcus kisses her forehead.

She sighs, reaches to the night stand, checks her watch.

ABIGAIL
Shit! Is that the time?

Abigail slides out of Marcus's embrace, sorts through the clothes in a panic.

Marcus watches from bed, amused.

MARCUS
This would be so much easier if you just told him.

ABIGAIL
You know I can't do that, Marcus.

She hops about pulling on her underwear, recovers her bra.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
I promise, when Cassie's a little older, I'll tell him it's over.

Abigail anxiously pulls on the rest of her clothes, darts back and forth getting ready.

MARCUS
I understand. I just hate it when you leave, I hate all this sneaking around.

Abigail leans over, kisses him.

ABIGAIL
Call me a cab.

MARCUS
You're a cab.

INT. INSTITUTION - JOE'S ROOM (1988) - DAY

Brook looks at the title of Joe's book.

INSERT - JOE'S BOOK COVER

The Divine Comedy - Dante Alighiera.

BACK TO SCENE

JOE

You're an educated man, do you
enjoy the classics, Detective?

BROOK

"They had their faces twisted
toward their haunches and found it
necessary to walk backward, because
they could not see ahead of them.
And since he wanted so to see
ahead, he looks behind and walks a
backward path".

JOE

The punishment of false prophets,
sorcerers and astrologers.

BROOK

That's what you did, isn't it?
Twisted their faces backwards.

JOE

Faced with the evils of mankind
throughout your working day, how
can you abide to not pull the
trigger and send them to where they
belong? I just pick a more...
poetic way of punishment.

BROOK

Maybe I should have pulled the
trigger when I arrested you--

JOE

And send me to where I belong?

Brook places Joe's book on the table.

JOE (CONT'D)

I have no illusions as to where I
will be sent, such is the price of
being the messenger.

BROOK

You sacrificed your soul, to punish
the wicked?

JOE

I did what your precious laws could
not, I delivered a message of
justice and gave closure to the
victims they had wronged.

BROOK
Not your place.

Joe looks right into Brook's eyes, his voice rises.

JOE
You are correct, it is your place
and the place of your peers, and
you've failed to make them listen!
(Beat)
You failed them all.

EXT. EMPIRE HOTEL - NIGHT

Abigail steps from the hotel and into the street, heads
towards a waiting taxi, it's head lights full on.

She brings out her phone, turns it on, dials a number.

ABIGAIL
Hey, Jenny, everything alright?

JENNY (V.O.)
We've been worried about you!

ABIGAIL
Sorry, the director was... huh... a
car crash or something.

JENNY (V.O.)
How was the audition?

Abigail flounders.

ABIGAIL
Huh... terrible, didn't get it.

Abigail approaches closer to the taxi, notices something odd.

The taxi seems empty, no driver.

JENNY (V.O.)
I'm sorry, hun, maybe next time.

ABIGAIL
How's Cassie?

JENNY (V.O.)
She's fine, just making her dinner.
Oh yeah, before I forget, David
called, said he will be home in
about half an hour.

Abigail looks at her watch.

ABIGAIL

Yell him I'll be back about ten
thirty.

JENNY (V.O.)

Sure, honey.

She hangs up, looks at the empty cab, strains to see past the
head lights.

Abigail reaches into her coat pocket, recovers a wedding
ring, puts it on her ring finger.

Suddenly, she is blind sided by an unknown attacker, one
powerful arm goes around her waist, her mouth covered by a
hand in a surgical glove, she is dragged into an alleyway.

Abigail whimpers, tries to struggle, the attacker jabs a
needle into her neck.

Her world goes black.

INT. INSTITUTION - JOE'S ROOM (1988) - DAY

Joe stands at the window, looks into the distance.

JOE

You know I'll be out of here within
a few years. I know exactly what
the doctor's need to hear.

BROOK

Don't go booking a vacation just
yet.

Joe turns to face Brook.

JOE

People like you believe themselves
to be a shield, but people like me
are the righteous sword.

BROOK

The punishment? Prevention is
better than cure?

JOE

Exactly. Don't you wish you could
punish them, Detective Brook? Make
them suffer for what they have done
to others? Stop them from doing it
again?

BROOK

It's not my job--

Joe cuts him off with venom.

JOE

A pathetic excuse. It is our responsibility to heal the sick, feed the hungry and protect the defenceless!

BROOK

But without rules, without order, there would be chaos.

Joe advances towards Brook, his voice escalates.

Brook doesn't flinch.

JOE

There already is chaos! You must surely know that. Laws were written long before you or I, and we chose to ignore them! And now it is up to people like you and I to correct and readdress the balance.

Brook slams his hand down on the table.

BROOK

Enough bull shit! Where are the others!?

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE (PRESENT) - NIGHT

Abigail awakens, naked, hung by her wrists on a chain, a single fluorescent tube lights a patch in a vast, dark space.

Her eyes dart about, wide with terror, she begins to weep, struggles against the chains.

She shivers, a mix of extreme cold and fear, her lips blue.

ABIGAIL

Oh God!

The Stranger's broken voice echoes from the darkness.

STRANGER (O.S.)

God?

ABIGAIL

Who are you? What do you want? Let me go!

He laughs, his footsteps echo as he moves into the light.

STRANGER

God will not help you, because you did not listen to him.

ABIGAIL

What have I done wrong? Please, let me go!

The Stranger slides up to her, eye to eye, strokes her cheek, wipes away a tear, she notices his scarred neck.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

You, from the taxi.

STRANGER

I've been sent to help you.

INT. INSTITUTION - JOE'S ROOM (1988) - DAY

BROOK

Where are the others?

Joe gestures to the world outside.

JOE

Everywhere! Can't you feel them, under your skin, befouling the very air you breathe?

BROOK

If you really care for the innocent, then what about the families of the people you killed? What about their suffering?

JOE

Don't you see? We're helping them! Their loved ones had died long before they were punished by us!

BROOK

What?

JOE

They no longer have to watch the evil of mankind masquerading in the bodies of their family and friends.

Joe turns back to the window.

JOE (CONT'D)

How many times have you had to deliver the news to a parent, that an innocent son or daughter has died for no reason at the hands of a drunk driver, a rapist or a pedophile, and been able to do nothing about it?

Brook has no answer.

JOE (CONT'D)
But you have experienced the other
side of the coin, haven't you?

Brook angers, a nerve hit.

BROOK
What did you say?

Joe smiles.

JOE
You had to tell your wife, the wife
who then decided she couldn't go on
living without her precious
daughter. Hit and run, wasn't it?

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE (PRESENT) - NIGHT

Abigail screams out.

ABIGAIL
Help! Please, somebody help me!

STRANGER
We are far away from anyone who can
hear, or anyone who cares.

ABIGAIL
Please, why are you doing this?

STRANGER
You are one of the lustful, the
adulterous and the treacherous!

He pulls Abigail's wedding ring from his pocket, studies it.

STRANGER (CONT'D)
You did this to yourself.

ABIGAIL
Please, I don't wanna die.

INT. INSTITUTION - JOE'S ROOM (1988) - DAY

Brook explodes with fury, grabs Joe's neck, pulls a flick
knife with the other hand and places it against Joe's throat.

BROOK
Don't you fucking speak about her!

Joe smiles, presses his throat a little against the knife so
it just breaks the skin, a small trickle of blood appears.

Brook shouts in anger, Joe speaks calmly, satisfied at
getting a rise out of Brook.

JOE

It wasn't me that killed your daughter, Detective, but this still feels good doesn't it? Feels right?

BROOK

Not another word you fuck! Shut up!

JOE

Imagine if I was the driver of the car that mowed down sweet, innocent Melanie?

BROOK

I'm going to fucking kill you if you say one more word about her!

JOE

Punish me if you think I am deserving, but you know I did what you only dream of being able to do. I sent a message!

The door flies open, McKinley and several ORDERLIES rush in.

MCKINLEY

Brook! What are you doing!?

Two Orderlies grab Brook, try to pull him away.

As they wrestle, Joe takes the knife from Brook, swings it in an arc slicing Brook's throat.

A river of crimson flows from Brook's throat, he drops to the floor, choking and gurgling, eyes on Joe.

McKinley rushes to aid Brook.

Joe drops the knife, raises his hands, the other Orderlies overpower him and tackle him to the floor face first.

Joe's face comes down hard, inches away from Brook's, their eyes meet as McKinley desperately tries to stop the bleeding.

Brook's eyes begin to fade, the very same eyes as--

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE (PRESENT) - NIGHT

--The Stranger, Brook, now 55, stands before Abigail.

BROOK

I am just the messenger.

FADE OUT.