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THE
HARBINGER

JONATHAN CAHN

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What you are about to read is presented in the form of a story, but what is contained within the story is real.

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Chapter 1

An Ancient Mystery

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AN ANCIENT MYSTERY that holds the secret of America's future."

"Yes."

"What would I think?"

"Yes, what would you think?"

"I'd think it was a plot for a movie. Is that it? Is that what you're presenting...a movie manuscript?"

"No."

"A plot for a novel?"

"No."

"Then what?"

He was silent.

"Then what?" she repeated.

He paused to carefully consider what he was about to say and how to say it. Her reputation among those in media was that of a woman who neither wasted her time nor indulged those who did. She was not known to suffer fools gladly. The discussion could meet an abrupt end at any given moment and there would be no second chance with her. The fact that there had even been a meeting in the first place, that she had even agreed to it, and that he was now sitting in her office, high above the streets of Manhattan, was nothing short of a miracle—and he knew it. He had only one concern—the message. It didn't even occur to him to remove his black leather overcoat, nor had anyone offered to remove it for him. Leaning forward in his chair, he gave her his answer, slowly, cautiously, carefully deliberating every word.

"An ancient mystery...that holds the secret of America's future...and on which its future hangs. And it's *not fiction*—it's real."

She was quiet. At first, he took the silence as a positive sign, an indication that he was getting through. But then she spoke and quickly dispelled the notion.

“An Indiana Jones movie,” she said. “An ancient mystery hidden for thousands of years under the sands of the Middle East...but now revealed... and upon it hangs the fate of the entire world!”

Her flippancy provoked him to become all the more resolute. “But it’s not fiction,” he repeated. “It’s real.”

“What would I say?” she asked.

“Yes, what would you say?”

“I’d say you were crazy.”

“Perhaps I am,” he said with a slight smile. “Nevertheless...it’s real.”

“If you’re not crazy, then you’re joking...or you’re doing this all for dramatic effect...part of a presentation. But you can’t be serious.”

“But I *am serious*.”

She paused for a moment, staring into the eyes of her guest, attempting to ascertain whether he was sincere or not.

“So you are,” she said.

“So I am,” he replied, “and you have no idea how much so.”

It was then that her expression changed. Up to that point it had suggested a trace of amused interest. It now turned to that of total disengagement.

“No, I guess I don’t. Listen, I believe you’re a sincere man, but...I’m really...I’m really very busy, and I don’t have time for...”

“Mrs. Goren.”

“That’s *Goren*. The accent’s on the last syllable. But *Ana* is fine.”

“Ana, you have nothing to lose by listening. Just go on the slight possibility...”

“That you’re not crazy?”

“That too,” he said. “But the slight possibility that what I’m saying could actually be true, even the slight possibility that there could be something in what I’m telling you, even for that slightest of possibilities...for just that... it would be important enough to warrant your time. You need to hear me out.”

She sat back in her chair and stared at him, making no attempt to hide her skepticism.

“You still think I’m crazy.”

“Fully,” she said.

“For argument’s sake, let’s say you’re right. I *am* crazy. Indulge me, as a public service.”

She smiled.

“I’ll indulge you, Mr. Kaplan, but there’s a limit.”

“Nouriel. You can call me Nouriel.”

At that, she got up from her chair and motioned for him to do likewise. She led him away from her desk to a small round conference table where the two sat down. The table was situated in front of a huge glass window through which one could see a vast panorama of skyscrapers with similar windows, each reflecting the light of the afternoon sun.

“All right, Nouriel. Tell me about your mystery.”

“It’s not *my* mystery. It’s much bigger than me. You have no idea how big, or what it involves.”

“And what does it involve?”

“Everything. It involves everything, and it explains everything... everything that’s happened, that’s happening, and everything that’s going to happen.”

“What do you mean?”

“Behind September 11...”

“How could an ancient mystery possibly have anything to do with September 11?”

“An ancient mystery behind everything from 9/11 to the economy...to the housing boom...to the war in Iraq...to the collapse of Wall Street. Everything in precise detail.”

“How? How could an ancient mystery possibly...”

“Affect your life? Your bank account? Your future? But it does. And it holds the key to America’s future...to the rise and fall of nations...to world history. And it’s not only a mystery, it’s a message, an alarm.”

“An alarm?” she asked. “An alarm of what?”

“Of warning.”

“To whom?”

“America.”

“Why?”

“When you hear it,” he said, “you’ll understand why.”

“All this from a mystery that goes back...how far did you say?”

“I didn’t say.”

“So how far back does it go?”

“Two and a half thousand years.”

“A two-and-a-half-thousand-year-old mystery behind what’s happening in the twenty-first century from politics to the economy to foreign affairs—all that and you’re the only one who knows about it?”

“I’m not the only one.”

“Who else knows about it?” she asked.

“There’s at least one other.”

“Not the government? The government has no idea, even though it’s behind all that?”

“As far as I know, no government, no intelligence agency, no one else.”

“No one but you.”

“And at least one other.”

“And how did you happen to discover it?”

“I didn’t discover it,” he answered. “It was given to me.”

“Given? By whom?”

“A man.”

“And who was this man?”

“It’s hard to say.”

At this she leaned forward and spoke to him in a tone both intense and slightly sarcastic.

“Try me,” she said.

“You won’t understand.”

“What was his name?”

“I don’t know.”

“You don’t know?” she replied, with a trace of amusement in her voice.

“No, he never told me.”

“So this earth-shattering mystery is known only by you and this one man who gave it to you but doesn’t have a name.”

“I didn’t say he didn’t have a name. He just never told it to me.”

“And you never asked?”

“I did, but he never told me.”

“No phone number?”

“He never gave me one.”

“No business card?”

“No.”

“Not even an e-mail?”

“I don’t expect you to believe me yet.”

“Why not?” she replied, making no attempt to hide her skepticism. “It sounds so plausible!”

“But hear me out.”

“So this man with no name gives you this mystery.”

“That’s correct.”

“And why to you?”

“I guess I was the right one.”

“So you were chosen?”

“I guess so,” he replied, his voice trailing off.

“And where did *he* get the mystery from?”

“I don’t know.”

“A mystery on which the nation’s future is hanging, and no one knows where it came from?”

“From where do prophets get their messages?”

“Prophets!” she said. “So now we’re talking prophets?”

“I guess we are.”

“As in Isaiah...Jeremiah?”

“Something like that.”

“The last time I heard about prophets I was in Sunday school, Nouriel. Prophets don’t exist anymore. They’ve been gone for ages.”

“How do you know?”

“So you’re telling me that the man who gave you this revelation is a prophet?”

“Something like that.”

“He told you he was a prophet?”

“No. He never came out and said it.”

“And you believe all this because it came from a prophet?”

“No,” he answered. “It wouldn’t have mattered who said it. It’s not about the messenger; it’s about the message.”

“So why are you telling *me* all this? Why did you come here? I’m not exactly known for dealing with anything remotely like this.”

“Because the stakes are so high. Because the future is hanging on it. Because it affects millions of people.”

“And you think I have a part in this?”

“I do.”

“Really?”

“Yes.”

She leaned back in her chair and stared at him for a moment, intrigued, amused, and still trying to figure him out.

“So, Nouriel, tell me how it all began.”

He reached into his coat pocket, laid his closed hand down on the table, then opened it. In the middle of his palm was a small object of reddish, golden-brown clay, circular and about two inches in diameter.

“It all began with this.”

He handed it to her. She began examining it. The more she looked at it, the more intrigued she became. It was covered with what appeared to be ancient inscriptions.

“It all began with this.”

“And what is it?”

“It’s a seal,” he answered. “It’s the first seal.”

Chapter 2

The Prophet

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A SEAL,” SHE REPEATED as she continued her examination of the object in her hands. “And what exactly is a seal?”

“It’s what they used in ancient times to mark a document as authentic or authoritative.”

She laid it down on the table.

“And the markings?”

“Letters,” he said, “Paleo-Hebrew engravings.”

“Paleo-Hebrew...I’ve never heard of it.”

“It’s an ancient form of Hebrew script.”

“Are you some kind of an archaeologist?”

“No,” he replied, “a journalist, a freelance journalist.”

“Wait a minute...Kaplan...Nouriel Kaplan. I knew the name was familiar. You’ve done pieces in magazines and on the Internet.”

“Guilty.”

“Why didn’t it hit me before?” She shook her head back and forth in her amazement over not having recognized the name at the start. “So you’re *not* crazy after all,” she said, almost apologetically.

“Some would disagree with such a presumption,” he answered. At that, her demeanor and tone became markedly less guarded.

“But this has to be a departure for you. How did you get involved with it?”

“This is how,” he said, lifting the clay seal from the table. “This is what began everything.”

“How did you get it?”

“Believe it or not, it came in the mail.”

“You ordered it?”

“No. I didn’t order it, and I wasn’t expecting it. It just came...a small brown package with my name and address and no return address. Inside was this ancient-looking seal, nothing else, no letter of explanation... nothing.”

“And what did you think?”

“I didn’t know what to think. What was I supposed to make of it? It had no connection to anything in my life. Who would have sent it to me with no explanation? I put it away. But it continued to intrigue me. One day...it was late afternoon...I found myself unable to stop thinking about it. I decided to go outside for some fresh air. I put the seal in my coat pocket and went for a walk along the Hudson River. It was a windy day. The sky was dark, filled with ominous-looking clouds. After some time I sat down on one of the benches overlooking the water. I took out the seal and began examining it. I wasn’t alone on the bench; there was a man sitting to my left.”



“Looks like a storm,” he said without turning to me or interrupting his gaze, which was fixed on the sky above the water.

“It does,” I replied.

That’s when he decided to look, first at me and then at the seal in my hand. And that’s when the intensity of his gaze first struck me. “What’s that?” he asked.

“Some archaeological artifact.”

“May I see it?” he said. “I promise to be careful.”

I was reluctant, but for some reason...thinking back, I don’t know exactly why, I agreed to his request. He began examining its details.

“Do you have any idea what it is?” I asked.

“Where did you get it?”

“Why?”

“It’s very interesting. It’s an ancient seal.”

“Which is what?”

He continued, “Seals like this one were used to mark important documents—edicts, decrees, communications by kings, rulers, princes, priests, and scribes—in ancient times. The seal was the sign of authenticity.

It would let you know that the message was real, from someone important, and to be taken seriously.”

“What about the writing?”

“It’s in ancient Paleo-Hebrew, from...I would say...the sixth to seventh century B.C. How did you get it?”

“Someone sent it to me.”

“Who?”

“I don’t know.”

He removed his gaze from the object just long enough to make eye contact with me as if surprised by my response.

“You don’t know who sent it to you?”

“No.”

“Someone just sent you this in the mail.”

“How do you know so much about it?”

“About seals?”

“Yes.”

“Ancient objects are a hobby of mine. It’s Judean.”

“Judean?”

“The seal is from the kingdom of Judah.”

“And that’s significant?”

“Very. It’s where most of the Bible came from, the kingdom of Judah—Israel. There was never a people for whom the authenticity of a written word meant so much. For them, it was a matter of life or death. You see, God spoke to them. He sent them words, prophetic messages of correction. Messages to save them from calamity. If they ignored such a message, the result would be catastrophic.”

“And God sent these words how?”

“Through His messengers, through His servants, the prophets.”

“And how exactly would He *send* these messages?”

“The prophet would receive the word through impartation—a vision, a dream, an utterance, a sign. He would then be responsible to deliver the word to the nation, either by proclaiming it or by committing it to writing or by performing a prophetic act.”

“And how would the nation know if a word came from God or not...if it was authentic? How would you recognize an authentic prophet?”

“It wouldn’t be by his appearance,” he said, “if that’s what you mean. He wouldn’t necessarily look any different from anyone else, except that he was *called*. He could be a prince or a farmer, a shepherd, a carpenter. He could be sitting right next to you, and you’d have no idea you were sitting next to a prophet. It wasn’t about the prophet but about the One who sent him.”

“So then how would they know if the message was from God?”

“It would contain the mark, the fingerprint of the One who sent it.”

“Like a seal.”

“Yes, like a seal...and the word would come at the appointed time—when the nation needed to hear it, in critical times and in times of apostasy and danger.”

“Danger?”

“Of judgment,” he replied.

“And would they listen to the prophets?”

“Some would; most would not. They preferred to hear pleasant messages. But the messages of the prophets weren’t meant to make them feel good but to warn them. So the prophets were persecuted...and then came judgment... calamity...destruction.” He handed me back the seal.



“It was him,” said Ana, breaking her silence. “The man on the bench...he was the prophet.”

“Yes.”

“He was letting you know that when he said, ‘He could be sitting right next to you.’”

“Exactly.”

“What did he look like?”

“Somewhat thin, dark hair, a closely cropped beard. He was Mediterranean or Middle Eastern looking.”

“And what was he wearing?”

“A long dark coat. He was always wearing the same coat every time I saw him.”

“So he handed you back the seal.”

“Yes, and I asked him, ‘So why would anyone want to send me an ancient seal?’

“‘A seal,’ he said, ‘bears witness to a message that it’s authentic or that it’s of great importance.’

“‘But what would that have to do with me?’ I asked. ‘I don’t have anything to do with messages of great importance.’

“‘Maybe you do and just don’t know it.’

“‘You’re very mystical, you know.’

“‘Or maybe,’ he said, ‘you’re about to receive one.’

“‘What do you mean?’

“‘A message of great importance,’ he replied. His left hand had been resting on his lap for the entire length of the conversation...closed. That’s when he opened it. In the middle of his palm was a seal.”

“No!” said Ana, now leaning forward in her chair. “How could he have?”

“But he did.”

“...a seal like yours?”

“Like mine, except with different markings.”

“But how did he...?”

“Exactly. That’s what *I* wanted to know.”



I couldn’t think straight. I couldn’t process it. My heart was pounding, and my voice grew tense. “What’s that?” I asked. I knew what it was, but I didn’t know how else to say it.

“A seal,” he replied.

“What I meant was, what are you doing with a seal?”

“What am *I* doing with a seal? The question is, ‘What are *you* doing with a seal?’”

“How did you get that?” I countered.

“I told you, it’s my hobby. I collect them.”

“You collect seals?”

“Yes.”

“*You’re* the one!” I said, my voice filled with tension and rising. “You’re the one behind it. You’re the one who sent it to me. What is this all about?”

“It’s all about finding out what it’s all about.”

“How did you do this? How did you manage to...You’ve been following me?”

“Following *you*? I was the one sitting on the bench. *You’re* the one who came after. Are you sure *you* weren’t following *me*?”

“I don’t even know you.”

“Nevertheless, you were the one who came after.”

He was right, of course. He couldn’t have been following me. He was already there. *I* was the one who sat down next to him. And yet in his hand was a seal just like the one in mine, as if he knew I would come, as if he’d been waiting. But it was a rare thing for me to go there. It wasn’t planned. And *I* was the one who chose to sit down at that particular bench and to take out the seal at that particular moment. I asked him again, “What is this all about?”

“You’ve been given a seal,” he said, “Where there’s a seal, there must be a message. Do you have a message?”

“No,” I replied, almost defensively, “I don’t have any message.”

At that he paused and just stared for a few moments into the distance. Then he turned to me and, looking directly into my eyes, uttered his reply. “But *I* do.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“But I do have a message.”

“What message?”

“I have a message...for you.”

At that point I was almost shaking. I got up from the bench. “I don’t think so,” I said in a voice now tense with anxiety. “I have no idea how you managed to do this, but it has nothing to do with me.”

“It’s the time,” he replied.

I wanted to run, but I couldn’t. I was torn between two impulses—the urge to get as far away from that bench as I could and the need to hear what he had to say. I was frozen. And then he spoke again.

“It’s the time, Nouriel.”

“Nouriel!” I replied almost shouting, “How did you...?”



“How could he have *possibly* known your name?” Ana interjected.

“A good question, but he never answered it. Instead, he turned his gaze back to the distance ahead and continued speaking. ‘It’s the appointed time, but not for an ancient nation. It’s time for the word to be given...for the mystery to be revealed...for the message to go forth. It’s the appointed time—but not for an ancient nation.’”



“This has nothing to do with me,” I said again.

“Then why were you given the seal?” he asked.

“Who *are* you?” I countered.

He didn’t answer that but just looked at me. It was a silence as intense as anything else that took place that day. I couldn’t stay there any longer.



“So you left him?” she asked.

“Yes.”

“And what did he do when you left?”

“I don’t know. I didn’t look back.”

“So how did you make sense of all that?”

“I didn’t. I went home. But I couldn’t stop thinking about it. For days it was almost impossible to sleep. I picked up a Bible to look for anything I could find on the prophets and their messages. Days went by, weeks, and I could hardly think of anything but that encounter. And then I returned.”

“To the bench by the Hudson.”

“Yes, but not exactly *to* the bench, but near it, to where I could see it from a distance.”

“Why?”

“Because I wasn’t sure I wanted to see him again.”

“But you *did* want to see him again.”

“Again, I was torn. I knew that if I didn’t see him again, I’d never know the answer. At the same time I was afraid of what that might mean. And yet, still I was drawn back. I had to return.”

“And...?”

“And he wasn’t there. I returned a second time. And again he wasn’t there. And then a third time.”

“And...?”

“The third time he was there just as he was the first time, sitting on the same bench on the same spot, in the same long dark coat.”

“And...?”

“And then it began.”