



THE ESSENE HERESY

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ISBN: Pending

An **R&R** Production
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Chapter Four

Cooper Pedy - South Australia - Wednesday 18th June

Jake had been at his desk in front of the laptop for over an hour. His total output during that time was five words.

When I was a child...

He stared at the pulsing cursor and couldn't imagine what he'd say next. Where could he start? What would he recount? And what should he leave out? Would anyone *really* be interested in anything he had to say? It wasn't as if he was famous to anyone outside of Boston radio-land. Who listened the radio these days anyway? His main claim to fame was having a bestselling author for a mother. If anyone were going to buy his book - if he ever got around to finishing it - they would want to know about *her*. But his own life? What could he say that was interesting or entertaining or enlightening?

That he'd wasted years partying and goofing off? Although admittedly he had managed to get a bit of a following as an intuitive amongst the psychic community.

But was that real? Sometimes he'd totally believed he might be a psychic but really, had he been kidding himself? Growing up, his parents had assured him of his psychic nature. Not because he was special but because, they'd explained, everyone was psychic to a degree and he was no exception. He'd so wanted to believe it - and he did experience sensations he couldn't explain at times. Sensations that led others to find things - and people - in locations that he couldn't possibly have merely guessed.

But it grieved him that he was only twenty-nine and he'd already had a failed marriage, a career cut short and not much else to show for his millions in trust.

Who wanted to read about some spoiled rich kid with little or no motivation?

Maybe was just feeling sorry for himself.

Maybe spending time alone in the middle of nowhere wasn't good for him after all.

Maybe he should get back to civilization, back to his friends, back to a job - if he could find one he liked. A job that inspired him.

Jake leaned back in the chair and put his hands on his head.

What was that he'd seen on the news the other day?

The news item about Professor Leibnitz on CNN. Dead. *Killed*. It had slipped his mind until now. As far as he knew there hadn't been any follow-up news coverage. Perhaps there was something about it online. Jake brought up Google and typed in the professor's name.

Up popped links to the professor's books, his website, his Wiki page and a documentary he'd apparently once narrated. Jake added *news* to the search box. An article written in the New York Times, dated June 14th - the previous Saturday - appeared at the top of the results. Jake clicked on it.

The article reported as much as Jake already knew. There was a quote from his wife, who was, the journalist said, 'stricken with grief', as though he couldn't think of any other cliché to match the reality, whatever it was. Jake also noted that the identity of the murder suspect was not printed. Just that he was a man of Eastern European extraction and that he was helping the federal authorities with their inquiries in an undisclosed location. *Federal*, mused Jake. That usually meant the crime crossed borders.

Jake clicked around but couldn't find any other stories that weren't obvious copies of the NYT report. Other links led him to Itamar's website, where his scholarly papers were listed. Jake scanned a couple but stopped when he realized he couldn't properly comprehend much of what he was reading.

Jake still couldn't imagine why anyone in the right mind would want to kill the old man. Perhaps it was some kind of misunderstanding. Maybe he was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Even Harvard University had its fair share of weirdos. Jake should know. He was once one of them.

Jake stood, stretched, and wandered to the window.

Odd that there was no follow-up. Maybe an old Harvard professor wasn't famous enough for a celebrity-obsessed public. Seemed unlikely. Leibnitz had done some well-reported work on early Christian relics. Wasn't that interesting - at least to a minority? Perhaps the authorities had slapped some sort of gag on the media. Jake didn't know enough about how machinations like that worked. Certainly not enough to speculate. But if more news had been suppressed, then *why?*

Jake's email pinged. He jumped back to the computer on instinct and flipped the screen to Outlook.

URGENT! For the attention of Jake Moss.

He didn't like the look of the subject line. Urgent emails were usually bad news. Either that or they were scams. Jake didn't recognize the sender's name. *Camden Law Associates*. He sighed and looked down to the bottom half of the screen where the message was displayed. More bad news. It was from his ex-wife. She must have finally gotten a job. Either that or she was screwing a lawyer. That would be about right.

Jake, I thought I'd better warn you. There's a woman from some psychic TV show in the UK trying to get hold of you. I told her you were incommunicado but she was insistent. Sorry to say I let slip where you were, thinking that would put her off. Didn't seem to. Might be knocking on your door soon. Didn't give her your address because I don't know it, of course. But thought you should know. See? I still care about you, asshole. Regards, Janet (the crazy bitch you dumped.)

Jake shook his head.

Fuck.

So much for solitude.

*

Dust billowed in the rear-view mirror. Tires crackled against gravel. The low sun almost blinded Jake as he rode the dusty track into town in his hire car, a crappy 2009 Holden Barina. Despite the air-con being on full blast, sweat trickled down Jake's neck. *Didn't this country ever get winter?*

He should be writing about his recent past. Yeah, that would be okay. His radio show days. And how he'd discovered he had a talent for knowing where to find missing persons. Actually *one* missing person - *once*. If he was honest with himself, he didn't know how he'd done it. But it had happened.

In Jake's second year at Harvard he'd submitted a term paper on remote viewing, despite being advised against it by his psychology tutor. It seemed Harvard was no longer proud of its long association with psychic research. His tutor had given him a low mark, accused Jake of using shoddy apocryphal research - and told him in no uncertain terms that he should start studying legitimate science. But his paper had,

apparently by chance, found its way onto the desk of Donna Robeson, a local freelance journalist. Jake always suspected Janet had *sent* it to her - they were dating back then - but she denied it to this day. The journalist, realizing that Jake was the son of the famous 'spirit-talker' Katherine Moss, used the paper as a basis of an article that suggested psychic abilities were perhaps hereditary. Donna Robeson's report appeared in the Boston Herald in July of 2007, much to the annoyance and chagrin of Harvard academia.

Jake's embarrassment didn't stop there.

Detective Louis Timity from Charlestown police department read the article and contacted Jake, explaining that he needed help locating a missing girl - a runaway teen feared dead. Jake tried laughing off any suggestion he might be able to assist but the cop had been persistent. *The family's last hope*, Timity said. Reluctantly, Jake turned up at the department, handled some of the girl's clothes, got a familiar sensation and then pointed to a spot on the map. Jake left the police department feeling slightly dirty, wondering if he'd helped but worried he'd been wasting their time.

The cops searched the area. As luck - or something more spooky - would have it, the badly disfigured body of fourteen-year-old Tisha Ghent was found a few hundred yards from where Jake had indicated. Overnight Jake became a local hero and celebrity, invited to talk on Boston TV and radio, then, after he'd flunked out of Harvard, was employed to co-host a program about strange phenomena on Boston KWND. Whether he wanted it or not, Jake's reputation as a bona fide psychic was sealed for the next six years. Until now.

My life is a mess.

But hey, it's my mess - and it's up to me to make the best of it.

At the Coober Pedy turnoff, a figure stood in the road, shimmering in the heat haze. As Jake approached, he slowed. A girl dressed in a pale blue jacket, matching skirt and fairly high heels waved to him. She was young, mid-twenties, with long straight brown hair. Completely out of place on a desert highway, miles from anywhere.

Jake brought the car to a stop and wound down the window. The girl moved toward him. Up-close, her face was overly made up, Jake thought, and she appeared to be wearing turquoise contacts. Even so, she was stunningly beautiful. The kind of girl, if he'd met her at a party, he would hit on without a moment's thought.

"Jake Moss?" the girl asked.

Jake smiled, cautious. "Who wants to know?"

"Hello, I'm Danica Palmer. Pleased to meet you, Mr Moss."

More - coming soon. For regular thrilling installments of this story go to:

<http://robparnell.blogspot.com>