

A Prophet

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. JONAH'S CAMPSITE - DAY

Sunlight filters softly through a thin canopy of leaves. A small blue tent opens onto a tidy campsite. A log provides a seat in front of a stone-ringed fire pit. An oasis away from the city and its vortex of stimulation.

JONAH - 30, hard-bitten, bearded - lifts a snared rabbit, limp body stained with crimson. He unsheathes a hunting knife and skins the animal with a practiced hand.

He spears the rabbit with a sharp stick and places it over the flames to cook. The knife he wipes clean with an already blood-stained rag.

Jonah leans to pick up firewood. A chain tumbles from his collar.

Light glints off a pair of dog tags and small silver cross.

Jonah tosses the wood into the pit, sits and stares into the fire. He absentmindedly twists the dog tags in his hand.

GRACIE (O.S.)

Daddy, daddy!

GRACIE - 4 in brightly colored dress and pink boots - bounds into the camp, straight for Jonah.

Behind Gracie, CATHRYN - 30, tight ponytail, meticulously put together outfit - rushes to catch up. She grabs Gracie's shoulder and stops her short.

CATHRYN

Wait, Gracie. We need to be careful around the fire, baby.

Jonah stands and takes a step toward Cathryn and Gracie. Cathryn takes a step back and shakes her head.

They pause, silence forming a wall between them.

CATHRYN

Here.

She pulls out an envelope from her jacket pocket.

Addressed to Jonah, the return address reads:

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF OKEECHOBEE

CATHRYN

He knows you don't live in the house anymore, right?

JONAH

No idea.

Jonah takes the letter.

CATHRYN

You should talk to him. Maybe your father could help with...

She gestures expansively to the campsite.

CATHRYN

...whatever this is.

JONAH

How's school going, Gracie?

GRACIE

I made a new friend and we painted and they're going to come over this weekend and we're going to play with my new toys.

Cathryn pats Gracie's shoulder.

CATHRYN

That's enough, honey.

(to Jonah)

You'd know more about her if you lived in town.

JONAH

It's just not a good time. I... I'll get there.

CATHRYN

Gracie, sweetie, can you go back a bit toward the car for mommy?

GRACIE

Uh huh.

Gracie skips a few feet away, then pirouettes and waves at Jonah. He smiles and gives a little wave back.

Gracie kicks sticks and small rocks as she meanders toward the car.

CATHRYN

We can't keep coming here.
It's... It's not good for Gracie.

JONAH

Not good to see her dad?

CATHRYN

What dad?

(beat)

This isn't what...You just... We
won't be back.

JONAH

Please...

CATHRYN

Get help, Jonah.

Cathryn walks away and takes Gracie's hand.

Jonah stands alone.

INT. JONAH'S TENT - NIGHT

Wind gusts past the tent. Tree shadows cast eerie silhouettes
on the tent walls.

Jonah tosses fitfully in a thick sleeping bag.

WIND

(whispers)

Jonah... Jonah... Jonah...

ANGEL (O.S)

(unison chorus of
women's voices)

SON OF MAN, REJOICE!

Jonah's eyes snap open. He bolts upright, eyes darting around
in terror.

A shadow like a large body.

Jonah frantically feels around the floor.

The hunting knife!

He swings it wildly at the shadows.

ANGEL (O.S.)
 YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED BY THE
 ALMIGHTY TO DO GREAT THINGS.
 REJOICE! REJOICE IN THE LORD,
 YOUR GOD!

Hands pressed to his ears, he cannot block the sound.

ANGEL (O.S.)
 RISE, RISE WITH THE DAWN! YOU
 WILL SPEAK THE WORDS OF GOD AND
 THE WORLD SHALL OBEY! REJOICE!

Jonah picks up his phone and frantically tries to turn on the flashlight.

The time reads 3:00 AM.

He scrambles to unzip the tent flap, then bursts outside.

EXT. JONAH'S CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Jonah tears through the moonlit camp. The cell phone light traces a frenetic zig-zag over the bare ground.

His bloodshot eyes look for any sign of a person.

No footprints but his own.

WIND
 (whispers)
 Jonah... Jonah... Jonah...

He turns over a rock.

A large white feather.

Jonah picks it up, hand trembling.

JONAH
 No. No, no, no.

He crouches and hugs his knees. His knuckles turn white as he desperately clutches the feather.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

A small neutral room with a desk and two chairs. Boxes of office supplies sit half emptied on the floor and desktop.

DOCTOR VERNON - 25, glasses, pantsuit - rests a clipboard on her lap and impatiently taps a pencil. She glances at her watch and at a calendar of appointments on her desk.

Jonah shifts uncomfortably in the chair opposite.

DOCTOR VERNON

What do you feel is keeping you from regular contact with your daughter?

JONAH

Other than Cathryn? Probably depression. And the PTSD. It's been hard... harder lately than usual.

DOCTOR VERNON

Can you elaborate?

JONAH

Since I got back-

DOCTOR VERNON

From deployment.

Jonah nods.

JONAH

The city sets me off. People set me off. It's not so bad when I'm alone. But I don't want to... I miss them.

Doctor Vernon flips through a chart on her clipboard.

DOCTOR VERNON

It appears that past medications had limited effect. Was that from inconsistent use or the prescriptions themselves?

JONAH

Was taking them regular for a while. Don't think the pills helped much.

Doctor Vernon jots some notes down. She pulls a laptop from the desk and types.

DOCTOR VERNON

Have you experienced difficulty
distinguishing your own thoughts
from voices you may hear?

JONAH

Uh, no.

DOCTOR VERNON

Have you ever felt that strangers
are watching or following you?

JONAH

Nope

DOCTOR VERNON

Have you experienced sudden,
unexplained feelings of intense
fear or paranoia?

Jonah hesitates. Doctor Vernon looks up.

JONAH

No. No. No I haven't.

DOCTOR VERNON

Have you ever had an experience
where you heard voices that no
one else seems to hear?

Jonah squirms. Eyes the door.... Blinks rapidly... Feels a
chance slipping away....

Doctor Vernon clears her throat.

JONAH

Uh... No. No voices.

DOCTOR VERNON

I think you may be a candidate
for a new V.A. program to treat
persistent depression. I'll refer
you to the clinic and get you set
with the earliest appointment.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - CLINIC - DAY

A green bench takes up most of an examination room. A chair
and counter take up the rest.

HENRY - 40, a nurse practitioner in green scrubs - stands by the counter. Jonah sits stiffly on the bench.

HENRY

Relax, Jonah. I've seen probably a dozen guys come through this program and come out better on the other side.

JONAH

Even ones as fucked up as me?

HENRY

Hell yeah, man. There are a lot of vets that need a boost beyond those off the shelf meds.

JONAH

How far beyond...

HENRY

We use the stuff that will actually rewire your brain instead of slap a bandaid on it.

He takes out a jar of brown pills.

HENRY

These are psilocybin. We've found that psychedelics are pretty effective at treating depression and working through PTSD symptoms like yours.

JONAH

So these are like magic mushrooms, or something. Like, am I going to trip out on these?

HENRY

Generally no. But we keep you here under observation for the first dose, just to be sure.

JONAH

I guess it's worth a shot...

HENRY

Here. Take this and I'll set you up with a bunk.

Henry hands Jonah a pill and a small cup of water.

INT. BUNK ROOM - CLINIC - DAY

Weak light peeks through the blinds of a small room with a small dresser and modular bed. Jonah lays on the bottom bunk and stares vaguely upward.

JONAH

This is taking a while to kick
in...

He blinks a few times.

The world loses definition... edges blur... colors shift...

JONAH

Oh... Shit...

He holds up his hands, waves them in front of his face. Sits up, head swimming.

ANGEL (O.S.)

(faintly)

Jonah... Jonah...

Jonah's head snaps up.

The ANGEL towers over him in the form of Doctor Vernon. She glows softly, edges hazy.

ANGEL

SON OF MAN! WHY DO YOU HIDE FROM
THE CALL? RISE! RISE!

JONAH

No. No... Go away... Please go
away...

He curls into a ball on the bed, hands pressed to his ears.

The door opens and Henry enters. Only Jonah visible.

HENRY

Is everything OK in here?

Jonah sits upright, eyes wide, staring at the towering Angel in front of him.

ANGEL

BEHOLD! THE WORLD OPENS TO THE
WORD! RISE! GO OUT! SPEAK WITH
THE VOICE OF THE LORD!

Jonah whimpers, pounds his head with his fists.

JONAH
Go away. GO AWAY!

HENRY
Hey, bud. Let's take a look at-

Jonah flies off the bed, pushes Henry aside and escapes.

EXT. CATHRYN'S HOUSE - FRONT - NIGHT

The Angel leads Jonah toward a one-story suburban house. A TV flashes images through the large front window.

ANGEL
BEHOLD! THE LIGHT OF HEAVEN
SHINES FORTH TO GUIDE YOUR STEPS!

Jonah steps into the light from the living room, face almost serene in the glow of the lamps.

Cathryn snuggles with Gracie on a couch. They snack on popcorn as they watch toddler YouTube videos and follow the dance movements.

ANGEL
SPEAK HEAVENLY WORDS TO THE
UNBELIEVERS

Jonah stumbles around toward the back of the house, fights for each step as his brain struggles to connect to the motion.

EXT. CATHRYN'S HOUSE - BACK - CONTINUOUS

With jilted steps, he moves to the back door.

He tries the knob. Locked.

The hunting knife.

He jams it into the door latch. Punches it in with a fist.

It swings slowly open.

INT. CATHRYN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jonah stumbles into the room and Cathryn looks up from the TV.

CATHRYN

Jonah? What the fuck are you-

JONAH

(with Angel voice)

FALLEN, FALLEN IS BABYLON THE
GREAT, THAT MADE ALL THE NATIONS
DRINK THE WINE OF HER LICENTIOUS
PASSION!

CATHRYN

Oh my God. Gracie, Gracie come
on!

Cathryn seizes Gracie off the couch and sprints for the bathroom.

Jonah chases haltingly.

INT. CATHRYN'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Cathryn slams the door shut, presses her back against it. Gracie screams and starts to cry.

CATHRYN

It'll be OK, baby. Don't cry.

GRACIE

Why is daddy yelling?

CATHRYN

Quiet, honey, stay back from the
door. OK? Just stay back.

She scrambles for her cell phone and pushes Gracie farther in.

Cathryn pounds the emergency call button.

ON JONAH

Jonah pummels the door with his fist. He grabs the handle and shakes the door violently.

JONAH
 (with Angel voice)
 FALLEN, FALLEN IS BABYLON THE
 GREAT!

ON CATHRYN

Cathryn frantically pushes against the door while Gracie looks around afraid and confused.

<p>CATHRYN (on phone) Hello? Hello? Please send help. Please-</p>	<p>GRACIE Mommy! What's daddy doing? I'm scared mommy. Mommy...</p>
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ON JONAH

He pulls the knife, plunges it into the door jam by the lock.

JONAH
 (with Angel voice)
 SHE HAS BECOME A HAUNT FOR
 DEMONS. SHE IS A CAGE FOR EVERY
 UNCLEAN SPIRIT-

JONAH
 (with normal voice)
 -a cage for every unclean bird...

Gracie's cries and Cathryn's frantic voice seep out into the suddenly silent hallway.

Jonah looks around... the bathroom door... the living room... the knife in his hand...

CATHRYN (O.S.)
 It's my husband. He's gone crazy.
 Hurry! Please!

A faint siren on the street outside.

Jonah bolts.

EXT. JONAH'S CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Jonah paces restlessly around the cold fire pit.

JONAH
 Fuck. Fuck... What do I do?

His phone lights up. A dozen missed calls.

A message from the clinic.

HENRY (O.S.)

(on phone)

Hey, Jonah. This is Henry. When you get this, please call back. I've been trying to find you and get you help. Please return to the clinic as soon as you can safely do so. I'll keep trying to reach you.

Henry opens photos and scrolls to a picture of him and Gracie. They make a funny pose at a playground in bright sunlight.

He sits on the log and stares at the picture.

Red and blue light pulses through the trees. Faint shouts from police penetrate the oasis.

POLICE (O.S.)

Jonah! Mr. Spencer! Jonah! Come out peacefully! Unarmed!

Deeper into the forest... the only escape.

Jonah stands, glances around camp.

No time to pack.

ANGEL

ATTEND ME, PROPHET! FOLLOW!

The Angel beckons to him from deeper in the forest.

Jonah drops the phone.

He turns to the police lights... his tent... the Angel...

He enters the forest, trees dark pillars of a star roofed cathedral.

The picture of Jonah and Gracie shines for a moment on the phone, then goes dark.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END