

The Messenger, Chapter 2

by Hannibal Tabu

- BACK AT STATELY NEWHAUS MANOR ... -

Some miles away, Rasul Justice sat on a roof top patio and pulled a headphone mic off of his close cropped head. A tall, lean man of African extraction with a loose fitting black t-shirt and jeans hanging off his frame, he glanced around at the makeshift screens -- tarps pulled over nine-foot-tall chain link fence segments -- and sipped at a glass of chilled cranberry lemonade. Moments later, The Messenger dropped suddenly on to the roof, moving so quickly that he couldn't be seen until he was behind the screens, stopping mere inches above the rooftop before gently settling down.

"You've finally improved your landings," Justice said with a smirk.

"Did you have to f-- with me so much while I was trying to be all newsworthy?" The Messenger asked, taking off his mask to reveal a receding hairline, grizzled beard and eyepatch on his pale face. His shoulders slumped a bit and The Messenger was gone, leaving Nate Newhaus in his place.

"Ah, you can take a hit better than Robin Givens," Justice chuckled, passing Newhaus a frosty Heineken from a nearby cooler. Newhaus chuckled and sipped on the beer. "Too soon?" Justice asked.

"Thanks for waiting for me, 'Alfred,'" Newhaus joked.

"One more butler crack and I'm gonna 'butle' my foot off in yo' a--, I know that ..." Justice said, putting the radio equipment in his messenger bag.

"So now I'm a cop!" Newhaus said. "How cool is that?"

"Given that you were a criminal vigilante a week ago and a shlumpy Hollywood dandy a few months before, that's pretty hilarious," Justice responded.

"Well, I feel like you should keep the key," Newhaus said, handing over the metal gift, "since I wouldn't know anything about how to control my powers without you."

"Yeah, I'm a regular freakin' Yoda," Justice smirked. "But no thanks, I'll avoid any evidence of a connection between us, just in case you ever get any actually competent arch enemies."

"Oh, good point," Newhaus conceded, now out of the costume and sliding on a black mock turtleneck. "I guess I gotta hide that thing."

Justice nodded. "I suggest a buried stash somewhere deep in the forest. Anyhoo, while you were shmucking it up with the powers that be, an old lady got raped over off of Wilshire and 15th and there was a hit and run on Cloverfield and 26th. The life of a hero ..."

"Are you *ever* gonna be positive about what I'm doing?" Newhaus sighed.

"I agreed to help keep you from getting killed ... immediately, anyway," Justice answered, ticking a list off on his fingers. "I helped you get into the gym and working out so you could deal with the metal I put in that costume of yours. I helped you figure out how to use your telepathy and your magnetism. However, I've *always* said that this whole thing was stupid and you'd be better off getting paid."

"Something happened to me, Rasul, and I got these powers for a reason," Newhaus said defiantly. "Then I just *happened* to have a karaoke buddy who *happens* to have grown up in a family of magicians, who knew something about what I was going through?"

That's *fate!*"

Justice laughed at him. "If it's fate, then why didn't we stick with any of the other 'superhero names' you wanted?"

"I told you already," Newhaus protested, "if I called myself 'Supernatural' and they ever made a comic book about me, it'd get mixed up with the tie in for that TV show. Then 'Seraph' was a member of the Global Guardians, remember?"

"Yeah, I read the Giffen-era *JLI* stuff, I remember," Justice said fondly. "At least the news media has been pretty forgiving to you, given how much stuff you've broken. They really are desperate to stop the body counts. In any case, I gotta go finish this *Black Enterprise* article before my editor starts nagging me. We singin' at Britannia tonight?"

Newhaus nodded. "Sure. Norm's afterwards?"

"Maybe -- I'd rather we all get some *GTA 4* multiplayer on, but that fool McGallagher doesn't have a PS3. All right, see you later."

Justice made his way down off the roof, leaving Newhaus alone to consider his newfound life.

