

PASSAGES™

MANUSCRIPT

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FENDAR'S LEGACY



PAUL MCCUSKER
FROM ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY®



TYNDALE

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FENDAR'S LEGACY

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PROLOGUE



John Avery Whittaker, or Whit as he was best known around Odyssey, turned on his windshield wipers. The snow was falling heavily this morning, as if it were trying to make up for lost time after yesterday's sunshine. He slowed down and squinted at the road ahead. The turnoff for Hillingdale Haven was coming up.

He ran his fingers through his mop of white hair. He felt tired. He hadn't slept well last night, and a morning spent in front of the microfilm machine at the library was, at best, dizzying.

Whit and his good friend Jack Allen had been trying to tie up the loose ends of their investigation of the Marus manuscripts, a collection of stories about kids who'd supposedly slipped from Odyssey to another world called Marus. From the very first manuscript, which Jack had found in an old trunk belonging to a dead teacher named Maude McCutcheon, the two men had been hooked. They'd had to find out more. So they had followed a trail that led to more manuscripts and, finally, to a man named James Curtis. He'd written the stories over the past 70 years.

When Whit and Jack visited him for the first time yesterday, James had not only insisted that the stories about Marus

were true, but also that he'd gone to Marus himself. He hoped that he might somehow return to Marus now that he was an old man.

Ultimately, Whit and Jack didn't know what to believe. It didn't help that James lived at Hillingdale Haven, an institution outside Odyssey for those with emotional and mental problems.

Whit and Jack had talked about it late into the night and at the library this morning. They had hoped to find a clue they had missed in the stories of Anna and Kyle, Wade Mullens, and the other kids who had gone to Marus and returned. And then there was Scott Graham, who James Curtis claimed had gone to Marus and stayed there. Unfortunately, none of them could be found to verify the stories.

All the evidence fell right on the edge of plausibility. If you believed that other worlds existed, the evidence pointed to the possibility that those kids really had gone to Marus. If you didn't believe in other worlds, the evidence was circumstantial and didn't prove anything at all.

In the end, Jack couldn't accept that Marus was real. "James Curtis is an imaginative writer who mixed fact with fiction to come up with his stories. That's all," he concluded.

Whit shook his head wearily but understood Jack's feelings. "I wish I knew what to think" was all Whit could say to his friend. Could other worlds exist, with God somehow working in them similarly to how He works in ours? Or had James Curtis

and Maude McCutcheon created an elaborate fantasy that they had begun to believe was real?

Whit and Jack had parted company so they could get on with their work. On the way back to his soda shop/discovery emporium called Whit's End, Whit had decided to pay James Curtis one more visit. *Even if the manuscripts are fiction, they're still good stories*, Whit reasoned. *If James will let me, I'll put them in the library at Whit's End for kids to read.*

That's how Whit came to find himself turning into the driveway for Hillingdale Haven in a heavy snowfall. As he parked his car and dashed for the front door of the massive, red-stone complex, he noticed a police car sitting along the curb. Inside the reception area, a police officer was talking with a doctor Whit knew from one of the many civic groups to which he belonged. It was Dr. Jennings. The officer's black leather coat contrasted starkly with the doctor's white smock, Whit thought. He walked to the front desk and asked the receptionist if he could see James Curtis.

The woman looked at him awkwardly, then called out, "Dr. Jennings? This man wants to visit James Curtis."

The doctor recognized Whit immediately and came over. "Whit! What are you doing here?" he asked.

"I had hoped to see James Curtis."

The officer followed the doctor and inquired of Whit, "You know him?"

"I met him yesterday," Whit replied. "Why? Is something wrong?"

The doctor looked stressed. "No. There's nothing wrong," he answered nervously. "Why would anything be wrong?"

"You need to relax, Doc," the officer said. "We'll find him."

"James Curtis is missing?" Whit asked, astonished.

Dr. Jennings was a slight man with a birdlike face and thinning hair. He rubbed his eyes. "Nobody knows how it happened. He was in his room at bedtime, happy as could be. When he didn't come down for breakfast at his usual time, they checked his room. He was gone."

"It's a big building. Are you sure he isn't around somewhere?" the officer suggested.

"We have doctors and nurses on staff around the clock. They monitor the halls. We've even checked the videotapes from the security cameras. He didn't leave his room."

"Obviously he did," the officer observed.

"This is really peculiar," the doctor whined. "We've never lost a patient like this. Never!"

"So why were you here to see him?" the officer asked Whit.

"I wanted to continue our conversation from yesterday," he replied.

"What were you talking about?"

"Some stories James wrote. I've been very interested in them."

The officer grunted as if deciding that Whit was irrelevant

to the case and turned to Dr. Jennings. "Come on, Doc. I need to write out a full report and call it in."

Dr. Jennings nodded, and the two men walked away.

"He's not dangerous, is he?" Whit heard the policeman ask.

"Oh, heavens, no!" the doctor replied as they disappeared around a corner.

Unsure what to do next, Whit was about to go back to his car when he became aware of someone at his elbow. He turned to face a man with dark, curly hair and a neatly trimmed, gray-ing beard. The man clutched a package under the arm of his thick overcoat.

"You're a friend of James Curtis?" the man asked Whit.

"An acquaintance," Whit corrected.

"You said something about stories that James Curtis wrote," the man continued.

"That's right," Whit affirmed. "But who are you?"

The man flashed a press badge. "I'm a reporter for the *National Church Times*. I was supposed to meet Mr. Curtis this morning to talk."

Whit pointed at the large, brown envelope under the man's arm. "Is that what I think it is?"

The reporter glanced down at the package, then back at Whit with a half smile. "You tell me."

"My guess is that it's an old-fashioned school notebook containing a story about a place called Marus."

The reporter nodded. "That's right. Mr. Curtis had sent it to me to read, and I was bringing it back. I wanted to talk to him. But now he's gone."

"So it seems."

"How does someone disappear from a closely watched room?" The reporter kept his eyes on Whit.

Whit shrugged.

"You know about Marus," the reporter said.

"Only recently."

"Then I think we should talk." The reporter turned to the receptionist and asked, "Is there somewhere around here we can get a hot drink?"

She pointed upward and replied, "There's a café next floor up."

The café turned out to be a small room with vending machines. Whit and the reporter got coffee and sat down at a table in the corner.

"What's your interest in James Curtis?" Whit asked.

"I write articles about unexplained phenomena," the reporter replied as he sipped, then winced at his coffee.

"What kind of phenomena?"

"Sightings of angels, claims of miraculous healings, that sort of thing," he said casually. "James Curtis had read my articles in the paper and contacted me about Marus. Then he sent me this story to read." The reporter placed his hand on the brown envelope.

“May I see it?” Whit asked.

“After you tell me what you know about it,” he answered.

“That’s fair,” Whit said with a smile. And for the next 20 minutes, he explained to the reporter how he’d come to know about the manuscripts through Jack Allen and how their trail had led them to James Curtis.

The reporter handed the package over. Whit pulled a familiar-looking black school notebook from the envelope. On the first page was written: *Chronicle of the Delivered*. It was dated June 4, 1998. “I haven’t seen this one,” Whit said.

“I’d like to see some of the others you mentioned. Did Mr. Curtis keep any in his room?”

“I think so.”

They finished their coffee and went back down to the reception area. Dr. Jennings was in his office, looking even more stressed and nervous once he found out that Whit was with a reporter. “I don’t want any publicity over this,” the doctor insisted.

“I’m not here about that,” the reporter assured him. “I’m here about Mr. Curtis’s stories. Mr. Whittaker seems to think he kept a few of them in his room.”

“Everything’s in his room, just as it was,” the doctor stated. “He didn’t take anything with him.”

“I assume he has relatives who’ll come—”

The doctor shook his head quickly. “No living relatives. He

had two sisters who died in the past couple of years. That's all. So I don't know what we'll do if . . . if . . .”

“You can't find him?” the reporter said, finishing the doctor's sentence.

“Oh, we'll find him,” Dr. Jennings said in a tight voice. “People don't just disappear off the face of the earth. We'll find him.”

“It would be helpful if we could see the manuscripts. May we go to his room?” Whit asked.

The doctor hesitated.

“There may be a clue in them about where he went,” Whit added.

Dr. Jennings thought about it for a moment. “All right, but it's strictly off-the-record,” he finally said. “I don't want any press about this. What will people think of Hillingdale Haven if they find out our patients can simply vanish like that?”

Satisfied, Whit and the reporter got up to leave.

“Don't take anything,” Dr. Jennings warned.

The two men agreed that they wouldn't.

“Mrs. Delullo will accompany you,” Dr. Jennings said, nodding to a nurse who sat at a desk nearby. She got up immediately and began to fumble for some keys.

On the way to the room, the reporter asked Whit, “Do you think people can disappear from this world?”

Whit cocked an eyebrow. “You’re really asking if I think James Curtis has gone back to Marus, right?”

“I suppose I am.”

“I don’t know,” Whit replied candidly. “I honestly don’t know.”

Mrs. Delullo opened the door to James Curtis’s room and stood next to it like a guard. The room was exactly as Whit had seen it the day before. Two large, wood-framed windows gave a view of the grounds; snow covered everything now. A small fireplace stood along one of the walls, and a sink stood in a corner.

“It’s like stepping back into the Victorian age,” the reporter said as he looked around. “A four-poster bed, the mahogany writing table, the old-fashioned chairs . . .”

“This front part of Hillingdale Haven was built over a hundred years ago,” Mrs. Delullo said.

The reporter whistled through his teeth. “Just look at that woodwork along the ceiling and the door. They don’t make them like this anymore.”

As he had the day before, Whit noticed a collection of newspapers scattered on a small coffee table. He now saw that several of them were copies of the *National Church Times*. “An avid reader,” Whit said, pointing.

The reporter smiled.

Whit went to the writing desk and looked around. In the

center were a ring of keys, an empty coffee mug, several fountain pens, and a roll of tape. A short stack of files and papers sat off to one side. Whit didn't feel he had the right to dig very deep, but he hoped a copy of one of the manuscripts might be seen easily. He found two sitting in the stack: the story about Annison and another about Draven.

"Do you think Dr. Jennings would mind if we stayed here and read these?" the reporter asked Mrs. Delullo.

"I'll have to ask," she said.

The reporter slid down onto one of the wing-backed chairs with the two manuscripts. "We'll wait here while you do," he said, getting comfortable. Mrs. Delullo seemed to disapprove of his impudence, but she turned and walked off. Dr. Jennings must have given his okay, because after that Mrs. Delullo returned only now and then to make sure the door was open and the two men were behaving.

Still clutching the manuscript the reporter had given him, Whit sat down in the desk chair.

A clock ticked on the mantle above the fireplace. Apart from that and the sound of turning pages, the room was silent. Whit thought he could hear the snow falling. He opened the school notebook and began to read.

CHAPTER ONE



“**L**ook at that!” Michelle Brewer exclaimed from behind the bushes.

Danny Taylor grabbed her arm and pulled her down. “Get down!” he demanded. “Are you trying to get us in trouble?”

“Ouch!” Michelle said and rubbed her arm. “Don’t ever lay a hand on me again, you male chauvinist!”

“What?” Danny asked, not sure what she’d said but suspecting from her tone that it wasn’t nice.

“You heard me.” She glared at him through her glasses.

Danny grunted and peered through the bush toward Trickle Lake. Though it was midafternoon on a hot summer’s day, a bonfire raged along the shore. Dozens of teenagers—maybe even hundreds, Danny thought—were milling around the lake and in the nearby forest. Tents had been set up around the various campsites and picnic tables. Loud rock music blasted through a sound system that had been set up by the dock. A peculiar smell filled the air.

It was June 1968, and this was a music festival spontaneously arranged by a group from nearby Campbell Community College. Word had gone around to Odyssey’s teens, and somehow Michelle had heard about it. Danny wasn’t surprised. Michelle somehow heard about *everything*, whether she was supposed to or not.

The crowd of young people had started to gather at Trickle Lake around noon. Most of them were students, with long hair and Day-Glo headbands, psychedelic jewelry and tie-dye shirts, bell-bottoms and sandals, and peace signs and radical placards.

"I told you they were going to have a festival today," Michelle gloated. "Didn't I tell you?"

To be honest, Danny didn't much like Michelle. She was bossy and talked a lot and had to have everything her own way. She was the kind of girl who annoyed all the boys and got on the nerves of all the girls. Mostly her opinions got her into trouble. She always complained about how men were Neanderthals who oppressed women and said that one day women would rule the universe so they could truly be free. Danny figured Michelle expected to be the president when that happened.

So why was Danny with her now? He had no choice. Michelle was his cousin, and his parents expected him to be her friend when she came to visit, which she did every summer as soon as school was out.

Danny got the impression that Michelle was sent to them because everybody else was too preoccupied to deal with her. Michelle's mother was in Cleveland, busy running a political campaign for a seat in Congress. ("Summer is a hectic campaigning time," he'd heard her say.) And Michelle's father, who lived with his new wife in Seattle, was too busy with his new family. So it became Danny's chore to keep Michelle entertained and out of his parents' hair.

Today he had thought they were going to go play at McCalister Park, but then she had sprung this idea on him right after they had left the house.

"There's a big hippie festival up at Trickle Lake," she had said. "Wouldn't it be groovy to see it?"

"No," Danny had replied honestly.

"I want to see it!" Danny's younger brother, Wayne, had chimed in.

But Danny had snapped at Wayne to go home. It was bad

enough having to put up with Michelle. He didn't want his little brother tagging along, too.

Wayne had pouted and gone back to the porch.

Michelle had then ignored both Danny and Wayne, climbed on her bike, and taken off in the direction of Trickle Lake. Danny had leaped onto his bike and gone after her. The entire way up, he had argued with her until he was breathless. He had said they would get into trouble. He had said the students would yell at them for being there. It had been no use. He had thought about turning around and letting her go on her own, but he knew his parents would blame him if they got home from work and anything had happened to her.

"That's the life," Michelle said now, gesturing to the hippies from behind the bushes. "Freedom to do whatever you want, whenever you want. When women are in charge, this is how it'll be."

Danny wasn't impressed. It looked like nothing more than a big cookout. His family had them all the time, but without the long hair, loud music, and weird clothes.

A twig snapped behind them. Danny and Michelle spun around. Wayne stood there with an impish grin on his face.

"What are you doing here?" Danny cried out in a harsh whisper.

"Mom and Dad didn't want me to be home alone, remember?" Wayne responded, sounding like a smart aleck.

"You're 10 years old. You know how to be home alone."

"But Mom said—"

"Oh, be quiet and get down before somebody sees you!" Michelle snapped.

Wayne stooped down and crab-crawled over to them. "What's going on?" he asked as he tried to squeeze between them to see.

Danny frowned. "Nothing," he said disgustedly. "It's boring. Let's go home."

"Not yet," Michelle said. "You know what? I think it's safe."

"Safe? Safe to do what?" Danny asked.

Michelle started to crawl around the bush.

"What are you doing?" Danny asked, his voice rising in pitch.

"I want to mingle."

"Mingle! Are you nuts? They don't want some *girl* hanging around."

"They won't care. They're too laid-back to care." She came out from behind the bush and stood up, then took a scarf out of her back pocket and tied it around her mop of black hair. She adjusted her glasses on her freckled nose and stepped confidently toward the lake.

"I don't believe it!" Danny said with a groan.

Michelle wandered in and out of the clusters of students who were drinking out of cans or nibbling from bags of food they'd brought. No one seemed to notice her.

"She's right," Wayne said. "Nobody cares."

"That's only because it's so crowded."

"Then we can go look around, too," Wayne suggested. "It's going to get even more crowded pretty soon."

"No, we're staying—" Danny stopped in midsentence because something about what Wayne had just said caused him to think twice. "Wayne, what do you mean it's going to get more crowded?"

"Because of all the police cars."

"*What* police cars?" Danny asked, a sick feeling growing in his stomach.

"The ones I saw driving up when I was following you. They would have beat me here if I hadn't cut cross-country."

Danny grabbed his brother's shirt. "The police are coming? Why didn't you say something?"

Wayne shrugged. "I wanted to see them bust everybody."

"But if they bust everybody, they'll bust *us*, too!"

"Oh," Wayne said. "I didn't think of that."

Danny scrambled to his feet. "You stay here," he ordered. "I'll go get Michelle."

Feeling about as conspicuous as an elephant at a party of pink flamingos, Danny made his way down to the small dock, which was the last place he'd seen Michelle. The music blasted through the speakers and pounded his head. A gruff voice sang about going on a magic carpet ride.

Danny felt a tug at his sleeve.

"You're going in the wrong direction," Wayne said and pointed. "She's over there."

"I told you to wait behind the bush!" Danny shouted at his brother.

"But you were going in the wrong direction," Wayne offered in his defense.

Danny pulled at his brother's arm. "Stay close to me."

No one seemed to notice them. The students had all gathered in small clusters, where they were chatting about things like the Vietnam War, a place called Berkeley, the Democratic Party convention in Chicago, and other things Danny didn't understand. A few sat around guitar players and smoked strange-looking cigarettes. Unlike Michelle, who talked constantly about what a great life she thought this was, Danny didn't like this party at all.

"Where is she?" he muttered irritably—and then walked right into her.

"Watch where you're going!" she shouted at him over the music. She adjusted her glasses and scarf and then fingered a necklace of beads.

Danny pointed at the necklace. "Where did you get that?" he asked loudly.

"That lady in the tent over there gave it to me." Michelle gestured broadly.

Danny glanced at the tent, where a young woman in a peasant dress and bright smile sat and offered homemade goods to whoever passed by.

"That's what I'd like to do," Michelle said into Danny's ear. "Be free all day and make things in a tent."

"Right now we have to get out of here!" Danny called over the blaring music. "The police are on their way!"

"What?" Michelle asked, tipping her ear toward Danny.

Danny spoke louder. "I said, the police are coming!"

A young man with a long mustache and granny glasses suddenly turned to Danny. "Did you say the cops are coming?" he asked.

"Yeah."

"I saw them first," Wayne added.

The young man turned quickly to the group he'd been talking to and yelled, "Cops!"

The word shot like cannon fire around that group and then to other groups, and suddenly there was a wild commotion as the students threw down their cigarettes and scrambled for the trees. A whistle blew from somewhere and then another from somewhere else, and the police swarmed in, their dark-blue uniforms a strange contrast to the surroundings. The music abruptly stopped, the sound replaced with shouts from the police and the students. An officer with a megaphone announced something about this being an illegal assembly and for everyone to stop where they were. No one did.

"My folks are gonna kill us! We've gotta get out of here!" Danny yelled. But there was nowhere to run. The police had

moved in from all sides, and Danny, Michelle, and Wayne found themselves squeezed onto the small, wooden dock that reached out into the lake.

“The boats,” Michelle said. There were small boats at the end of the dock, and she raced toward them. She seemed to think they could escape by paddling away. Confused about what to do, Danny and Wayne followed her. The three of them reached the ladder that led down to the boats. A crush of people, all with the same idea, arrived seconds behind them. Unfortunately, the back of the crowd didn’t stop when the front of the crowd reached the end of the dock. Soon people were being pushed into the lake. Danny saw Michelle go head over heels into the water. In the next instant, he and Wayne were forced in, too.

Danny was a good swimmer and quickly pushed his way to the surface. He looked around for Wayne and Michelle but had a hard time seeing. Water was pouring down onto him from somewhere above, as if he’d come up under a waterfall. *But there’s no waterfall at Trickle Lake*, he remembered, *so what’s this falling on my head?* He kicked to get away from the annoying splashing but found that his feet touched bottom. He stopped, surprised. He knew for a fact that Trickle Lake was more than 10 feet deep here. Placing his feet firmly on the ground, he stood up. And up and up. And soon he found himself standing in knee-deep water.

He looked around. Michelle and Danny were also standing up, only a few feet away, with puzzled expressions on their faces. Danny couldn’t believe his eyes. They weren’t standing in Trickle Lake anymore but in the center of a huge fountain in the middle of a large city center.