



## Harbinger

**P. A. Vasey**

Mascot Books

(324pp)

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*A woman thought to be dead reappears, boasting a new connection to extraterrestrials, in the electrifying science fiction novel Harbinger.*

P. A. Vasey's probing science fiction novel *Harbinger* explores the existence of life-forms outside Earth.

Will is a war veteran who is slow to come to terms with the death of his wife, Alex, whose body was never found. He allows his best friend Nico to persuade him into going on a blind date. However, the date leads to his kidnapping, and he is blamed for the malfunctioning of a quantum computer with groundbreaking possibilities.

As circumstances become stranger at the lab where Will is held hostage, he struggles to understand how he and Alex fit into the puzzle. Further complicating matters are the cryptic messages he receives from Alex claiming that she is alive and also being held hostage. Will clings to the hope of her survival, though the suggestions seem off.

Alex's sudden reappearance is accompanied by multiple mysteries around system malfunctions, mass deaths, the rapid healing of deadly wounds, and the appearance of strange beings on Earth. Will is nagged by the question of where Alex has been for two years—and why she can't remember basic details from their life together. Alex is frantic, insisting that there are places where she and Will need to go—and that a message needs to be sent into space to preserve human existence. Further, Alex's newfound abilities come to the fore. A heroine who seems to be neither here nor there, she oscillates between expressing human emotions and seeming detached. Questions about who or what she is electrify the tale.

As the story progresses, the details of the book's enigmatic prologue are clarified. Answers to its many mysteries are shared as well. Some logistical questions remain, though, including regarding how Alex and her companions are able to avoid national security radars, even with the relative invisibility that their heliplane provides them. The characters also cause scenes in a public museum and a Deep Space Network (DSN) site but escape these situations with credulity-straining ease.

The novel is rich with descriptions and careful worldbuilding, though some such interjections of information are interruptive to the book's growing tension. Will, in particular, is prone to overexplaining elements of the story, though this seems to be somewhat a consequence of his bid to absorb new information and keep up with Alex. In comparison, the book's ending is abrupt and unsatisfying.

In the exploratory science fiction novel *Harbinger*, the possibility of a coexistence between extraterrestrials and human beings is weighed.

GABRIELLA HARRISON (August 16, 2023)

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