



The Message

Nunis Vyner Robert

PartridgeSingapore

(108pp)

978-1-5437-8063-5

Thick with philosophical and spiritual arguments, the allegorical novel The Message follows a man's efforts to discern between good and evil forces.

In Nunis Vyner Robert's spiritual novel *The Message*, cosmic entities recruit a man to play a crucial role in the survival of the universe.

Two entities present an ordinary man, Robert, with opposing arguments in the age-old battle between good and evil. Joel, a light entity representing the Cosmic Consortium, argues that humanity's warring nature and weaponry are "an existential threat" to the future of the universe. He declares his intent to train and equip humans to bring Earth into its proper place in the cosmic order. Meanwhile Seth, representing the dark entities, argues for the coexistence of light and dark and provokes doubt in Robert's mind, saying that the Consortium engages in nefarious activities to eliminate the dark entities. Each entity makes a compelling case for his side; Robert is caught in a conundrum. In the midst of his deepest frustration, he prays to God for help.

Thick with philosophical and spiritual arguments, this is a novel about discernment. Robert has difficulty deciding which of the two entities he should believe; neither appears to be giving him the whole story. He is perplexed and confused, even left with a chill in his heart. Actions fall to the wayside as Robert listens to the two beings and ruminates over what they tell him. Scene changes are few, and the settings are vague (Robert's bedroom and favorite diner are named but not described), resulting in stagnation and a gray, sterile atmosphere overall.

A phone call from God jars the story from this stupor, though this divine intervention falters because God's voice is so human: he asks to be called "Al" (short for "Almighty"), and he delivers teachings about the true nature of heaven, the boundlessness of the universe, and about the many gods that exist. "Heaven is accessible to all who base their lives on love, justice, and self-sacrifice," Al intones. Still, while the story makes the battle between good and evil feel far less black-and-white, its variety of messages make it less than satisfying; among other lessons, it says that meditation is about tapping "into the Cosmic Mind for unlimited expansion of consciousness" and that each individual has a role to play in averting planetary disaster. Robert is also warned, in familiar form, that time is running out. Awkward sentences, agreement errors, and muddled references further impede its work.

The Message is a provocative spiritual novel in which an ordinary man may have a critical role to play in averting cosmic disaster.

KRISTINE MORRIS (September 18, 2024)

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