

Hollywood Coverage

Title: Don't Kill the Messenger **Author:** Joel Pierson **Date:** 9/25/10
Genre: Supernatural/Mystery **Pages:** 154
Locale: South-Eastern USA **Period:** Present

Recommendation For Adaptation:

- Strongly Consider
- Consider
- Needs Improvement

Best Medium For Adaptation:

- Motion Picture
- Television Series
- Live Theater

LOGLINE:

Tristan Shay receives psychic messages that direct him to help others, and one of these messages directs him to help Rebecca, a beautiful latent-psychic whose father wants to use her hidden abilities for profit.

BRIEF SUMMARY:

Tristan Shay has spent the past two years receiving psychic messages that instruct him to convey helpful information to specific people. He doesn't know from where this information comes, only that he must act upon it. He travels to Key West and tells Rebecca, a 21-year-old stripper, to leave Florida and go back to college in Ohio, agreeing to drive her there. En route, Tristan receives several more messages. The first takes him to Tarpon Springs, where he warns Stelios, a fisherman, not to go fishing that day because his boat is going to sink. Stelios accepts the warning, revealing he, too, is psychic, and tells Tristan there are many psychics at work. Next, Tristan and Rebecca follow a message to Atlanta, where Tristan fails to save a man whose car has been booby-trapped and is then mistakenly arrested for the man's murder. Upon Tristan's release, he and Rebecca get a room at a local hotel to rest and recuperate. Rebecca kisses him, and they make love. They leave early the next morning, following another message to a near-abandoned town in Pennsylvania, where they save an elderly couple whose home is set to collapse. There, Rebecca realizes she has been in the location before; it was her childhood home, and her father ran the Zinc processing plant that created a toxic cloud, polluting the town and driving away everyone. Tristan and Rebecca continue on, toward her home in Ohio. Rebecca begins to exhibit a number of psychic abilities, stimulated by her proximity to Tristan. Before arriving in Ohio, they see Stelios, who reveals Rebecca's father, Calvin, wants to use her psychic abilities to determine oil drilling sites. The drilling will destroy the local fishing industry, and Stelios and the other fishermen are trying to prevent it. He also tells them Tristan has been mentally manipulated by powerful psychics who have implanted false messages in his mind – like the one to find Rebecca and bring her to Ohio. Rebecca and Tristan arrive at her father's home. Calvin wants to keep Rebecca there to help locate oil drill sites near Tarpon Springs. After a brief confrontation wherein Calvin threatens them, Rebecca and Tristan leave for Kansas to help 11,000 people in danger from an impending Tornado.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs Improvement
Concept :	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Story:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Characters:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SYNOPSIS:

For the past two years, the life of TRISTAN SHAY, 30's, has not been his own. Introverted and isolated, he simply goes where he is sent. He doesn't know who sends him, or why it is he's sent, but he goes nonetheless. While driving south to Key West, Tristan stops in the road to avoid a deer. The deer speaks to him, or rather; a message from somewhere is projected through the deer, warning him, "Don't fall in love." Tristan continues on and arrives at his destination, a strip club called Gulf Breezes. There, he finds REBECCA TRAEGER, 21, a beautiful stripper to whom he must deliver a message. While watching her dance on stage, all Tristan can hear is the deer's warning: "Don't fall in love."

When Tristan reveals to Rebecca he isn't there for a dance - that he was sent to deliver a message - she's suspicious and assumes he's a cop, or was sent by her father. Tristan tells Rebecca she must leave Florida and go back to college. He explains he doesn't know who sent him with this message, be it God, Fate, or the universe; all the information he needed to find her appeared in his mind two days previously, and he knew he had to deliver the message or suffer the unrelenting nausea, blinding headaches, and insomnia that inflict him until the message is delivered. Rebecca finds it hard to believe him, but is strangely curious about how he lives and how he works. He explains he's independently wealthy, thanks to royalties he receives from his father's invention of the LED. Tristan forces himself to leave, and Rebecca follows, asking where they're going. She tells him he can't just leave her there after telling her to leave her life behind. Reluctantly, Tristan agrees to take her back to Ohio, where she was attending college.

They stop at Rebecca's apartment so she can pick up some clothes. Tristan establishes he wants nothing from Rebecca and isn't there to hurt her in any way. Though he finds himself extremely attracted to her, he hides it well; he doesn't know how to deal with those kinds of feelings. They leave Key West and drive north, stopping in Marathon for food. While eating, a vagrant approaches them and asks for money so he can buy food. Tristan gives it to him and, as the vagrant leaves, he warns Tristan, "Don't fall in love." Only Tristan hears. Rebecca notices Tristan's bothered by the interaction-; she's more observant than the average person. They're too tired to continue traveling, so they get a room at a Days Inn. There's only one vacancy, so they have to share a room. Fortunately, there are two beds. Before going to the room, Rebecca clarifies that nothing is going to happen between them, something Tristan hadn't even considered.

In his sleep, Tristan is afflicted with tremendous pain and wakes, having received the mental telegram he must deliver to Stelios Papathanissou, a fisherman in Tarpon Springs, Florida. Rebecca is reminded how incredible it is that Tristan's ability is real. She again demonstrates a heightened sense of empathy towards Tristan, saying she "can see your thoughts about me." Their banter improves and borders on awkward flirtation. They start driving towards Tarpon Springs, playing twenty questions as they travel, but Rebecca is unable to guess about whom Tristan is thinking. She talks about her parents, who she hasn't seen since she left school; they are divorced, and her relationship with them is strained.

In Tarpon Springs, they meet STELIOS, a Greek fisherman, whom Tristan warns not to go out on his boat that afternoon because his engine will catch fire and Stelios will die at sea. The fisherman takes the news with surprising

calm, and heeds the warning. Tristan has introduced himself as “Alex,” and Rebecca as “Persephone.” As they are walking away, Stelios reveals he knows Tristan’s real name; Tristan isn’t the only one with a gift. Stelios says he has “the sight” and sometimes knows what will happen before it happens. Tristan asks Stelios about his own gift, and why he was chosen. The fisherman replies, “You ever send a message you wish you could take back? Maybe God does too.” Stelios tries to see into Rebecca’s future, but he tells her he can’t see much. After, Stelios pulls aside Tristan and tells him he saw more than he told Rebecca; Rebecca needs Tristan and soon, Tristan will need Rebecca, too. Off the boat, Rebecca tells Tristan her given name is actually Persephone. They head out on the road again and, while driving, Tristan receives another message and nearly crashes his car. They must now go to Atlanta.

There’s a lot at stake on this assignment, and they have just eight hours to get to Atlanta. As long as Tristan tries to help the person to whom he has to deliver the message, he’ll be fine; if he doesn’t try, something bad will happen to him. While driving, they joke about Rebecca being psychic as well, but she can’t guess the playing cards Tristan imagines in his mind. Tristan expresses an important thought to Rebecca: dying without making a difference in life is the default situation for people – if you do nothing, if you don’t meet your potential, then you make no difference. People seek meaning every day, but often never see it, even if it’s staring them in the face. When Tristan saves people, he changes their lives – and a small part of history – which means there must be potential in those people’s lives. Otherwise, why would he be sent to save them? They reach Atlanta and find their target: JEFFREY CASNER. He’s suspicious and jumpy, and Tristan can’t stop him from getting into his car, which explodes as soon as Casner starts it. Tristan is knocked out by the blast and comes to as he’s being arrested for Casner’s murder.

DET. ERIC FOGLE interrogates Tristan. Rebecca presents herself as legal advisor to Tristan, putting her Pre-Law classes to good use; Tristan’s regular attorney is on vacation in the Bahamas. Det. Fogle claims a witness saw Casner and Tristan having an argument before the car exploded, and that’s why they are holding him. Rebecca manages to persuade the police to release Tristan based on a credit card receipt that places him outside of the Atlanta area during the time the bomb would have been put in Casner’s car.

After his unpleasant stay in jail, Tristan decides they deserve a stay at the Hilton in downtown Atlanta. He asks for two rooms, but Rebecca interrupts, saying they should get just one room, as she wants to be close in case Tristan gets a new assignment. Tristan tries to pay Rebecca for her legal services – a gift toward college tuition – but she refuses. Tristan wants Rebecca badly, but is hesitant because he knows he’s falling for her, yet he’s still trying his best to be honorable. They flirt a little, then she kisses him, and they make love. During the night, Det. Fogle arrives and arrests Tristan for sexually assaulting Rebecca. Tristan is horrified but, before long, he wakes and realizes it was just a nightmare. Suddenly, Tristan collapses in pain and receives another message. This time, they’re headed to Wyandotte, Pennsylvania; in fifteen hours, a family’s house is going to collapse.

Even though Tristan is a person of interest in the Casner murder, he and Rebecca head for Pennsylvania. The town of Wyandotte has been nearly abandoned for many years, but Tristan doesn’t know why. They have been sent to save the only family left. On the road, Tristan suspects they are being followed, but when he confronts the man he suspects is tailing them, he realizes he’s becoming increasingly paranoid and is mistaken. They arrive at Wyandotte, and it’s a total ghost town. They drive toward WILLIAM and VIRGINIA HARBISON’S house and, before long, Rebecca realizes she knows the way. It’s almost like she has been there before. They introduce themselves to the Harbisons, calmly explaining the house is going to come down. The Harbisons have been expecting this news and they sadly move out of their home and into an abandoned house nearby. While moving their belongings, the Harbisons tell Rebecca and Tristan the story of what happened to Wyandotte.

It used to be a bustling industrial town, where almost everyone worked for Allegheny Zinc Works. One day, a cloud of smog from Zinc Works descended upon the town and never left. A number of people grew ill and died, including the Harbisons' son, Joshua.

The group finishes moving what they can, and then, right on schedule, the Harbisons' house collapses. As they are preparing to leave, William Harbison mentions the name of the Zinc Works' plant manager: CALVIN TRAEGER, Rebecca's father. Tristan and Rebecca leave hastily, Rebecca clearly distressed. When they stop near a playground, she jumps out of the car. She sees a dedication plaque, naming the area "Persephone's Playground."

Rebecca runs to what was her childhood home, deeply distressed. She faints, and Tristan takes her to a nearby hospital. They spend the night there before heading to her father's home in Ohio. Rebecca calls her father from the car, telling him she'll be there in a few hours. She and Tristan start talking about Tristan's home. Rebecca tries to imagine it, and ends up describing his house and bedroom with perfect accuracy. He prompts her to play twenty questions with him and, in contrast to the days before, she's able to guess the people and places he is imagining within one or two questions. She names the playing cards he imagines every time. Tristan deduces that Rebecca is also psychic, and her gift is growing stronger from being around him. Rebecca also has a series of coordinates in her head, pointing to a spot in the Gulf of Mexico. They continue driving and talk about going their separate ways; Tristan must keep delivering these messages, and Rebecca must go back to school. But they'd like to continue developing their relationship, when possible. They stop suddenly when they see a man standing beside a car pulled to the side of the road. It's Stelios, from Tarpon Springs.

The fisherman leads them to a local café, revealing he tracked them using his psychic abilities. He explains that a group of oil speculators is trying to find a coastal area to drill, using psychics to pinpoint the best spot. Rebecca's father, Calvin Traeger, is part of this group of speculators. If they find a drill site in Tarpon Springs, it will put Stelios and all the other fishermen out of business. There is a war going on, and Stelios must stop Tristan and Rebecca from going to Calvin. Tristan reminds Stelios that he was sent to bring Rebecca home, but Stelios asks Tristan if he knows the provenance of the message. Stelios explains to Tristan how some psychics – like Tristan – can receive messages, but others can send them. People can manipulate Tristan by sending him false messages – and this is the case with Rebecca. He tells Tristan that Rebecca has gifts of her own, and her father wants to use them to find the best site to drill. Stelios also reveals it was him who sent Tristan to Atlanta to see Casner, a major investor in the group of speculators. He needed someone to take the blame for the murder, and he was able to psychically persuade the police to arrest Tristan. Tristan is understandably livid. Stelios explains it wasn't him who killed Casner, but others who want to prevent the drilling at Tarpon Springs. Tristan asks how many psychics are out there, and Stelios tells him there are thousands; everyone has the potential to be psychic, but only a few realize this potential. Stelios leaves, urging them not to see Calvin Traeger. Rebecca resolves to go see her father so she can warn him people might try to hurt him, as they did Jeffrey Casner.

Tristan and Rebecca arrive at Calvin Traeger's house and find a significant police presence there. Rebecca rushes in to see if he's okay. Traeger is fine, but orders Tristan to be arrested for kidnapping Rebecca. It becomes clear he's the one paying the police. Rebecca tells him she knows about his oil business, and Calvin explains it will be a way for them to make a fresh start. Tristan tries to explain he never kidnapped Rebecca, then blurts out that he loves her. Calvin takes a gun from a nearby policeman, pointing it in Tristan's face. Rebecca steps between Tristan and the gun. She asks the policemen for help, one of whom steps in and disarms Calvin. Tristan and Rebecca leave. To Tristan's surprise, Rebecca is still set on going back to school.

Tristan receives another assignment, and this is a big one: 11,000 people in Cedarsburg, Kansas are in grave danger. Two days from now, a tornado is going to move through town and destroy everything it touches. Rebecca instantly starts formulating a plan of action about how to warn everyone - college can wait. Calvin Traeger forbids Rebecca to go with Tristan. She dismisses her father angrily, and she and Tristan head for Kansas.