

Overland, a dramatic thriller

by Ramcy Diek

Prologue

THE TRIP INTO THE CITY took him almost three hours. Rage dominated his already ugly frame of mind.

“Asshole!” he yelled, honking his horn at the unexpected car that suddenly pulled out right in front of him. “Who taught you to drive, slowpoke? Hit that throttle!”

He looked at his fuel gauge. Empty. A stream of curses spewed from his mouth. He wanted so much and had so little. Life was unfair. Everything he’d ever cared about had been taken away from him and all that remained were responsibilities. The upcoming holiday season only added to his misery. He hated Thanksgiving. It brought out too many people, the spirit of Christmas already in their eyes as they clogged up the streets, sidewalks, and parking lots. Beyond pathetic, they were blind to other people’s misery, pretending the world was one big happy place. It was not. Not for the likes of him.

He drove first to the post office. With any luck, his welfare check was waiting for him. After finding a parking spot, he got out of his pickup truck. The frigid November blizzard immediately hit him in the face, and he pulled up his collar against the snowflakes whirling around. The sidewalk was just starting to turn white, his boots leaving footprints in the slick layer. As he rounded the corner to Edison Street, the force of the cold westerly wind slammed into him. He took a quick hold of his baseball cap, drawing it further down to keep it from flying away, and shuddered. His threadbare camouflage jacket was no match for the almost below freezing temperatures.

Other pedestrians hustled by, all bundled up and eager to escape the cold. He envied them their warm coats. He needed one of those rugged waterproof parkas. Preferably one with a hood and lots of pockets. That would make life a little better.

At the post office, he opened his box and pulled out the small stack of mail. The first item that caught his attention was a red note, informing him his rent for the box was overdue. He mumbled a harsh word, crushed the note in his hand and tossed it onto the floor. “That check better be there,” he mumbled, searching through the stack of letters and advertisements until he

found it. On his way out, he dumped the rest of the unopened mail in the garbage bin. Whatever it contained, he didn't care.

Continuing his drive on fumes, he headed downtown to cash what had become his only source of income. Without a phone or a watch, he had no idea of the exact time. The darkening sky suggested it had to be close to five. When he reached the bank, it was already closed.

"Damn you people," he shouted. He banged his right fist several times against the glass door, leaving dirty smudges all over. "Lazy sons of bitches! Can't you work a few minutes longer?"

He looked around with wild eyes filled with wrath, his hands still balled into fists. Several pedestrians hurried to get out his way. He didn't even notice their shocked reactions as he continued to rant and rave. "Get out of my way!"

He lumbered back to his truck. His stomach growled, and he hadn't had a cigarette in more than two weeks. He craved the nicotine more than anything. What now?

Frustrated, he stepped in and slammed his palm against the steering wheel. He'd spent his last few bucks on gas and didn't even have a penny left in his pocket, the mental image of the double burger and large fries beyond his reach. Dammit, he needed cash. He needed it now.

All over the city, lights sparkled. Store windows glowed, filled with decorations and signs, trying to lure in customers with discounts. The holiday season would kick off with Thanksgiving only a few days away, followed by Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday. All the cheerfulness and brightness fueled his resentment. What a way to spend your time, buying useless gifts nobody wanted or needed. Didn't they have anything better to do with their money? Why not give it to the poor and needy, to someone like him?

Traffic crawled. The snow stopped, turning into a light drizzle. With luck, he might just make it to the Westside Soup Kitchen. He'd been there several times in the past. Run by several priests, or some other religious dudes, the food was decent. They even served a second helping if someone asked. With the holiday season, people were more generous to the hungry and donations to shelters increased. Who knew? They might even offer dessert.

He left his truck and walked the last few blocks. On the way, he passed an All-American diner, an Italian restaurant, and two burger joints. The delicious smell of roasted meat and french fries tickled his senses and made him salivate. His anger against the bank flared up again. He would have given anything for a juicy burger smothered in cheese and several thick strips of bacon, or for a bucket of fried chicken with mashed potatoes and gravy. Instead, he would probably wind up eating spaghetti and cheap white dinner rolls, or Spanish rice with sticks of celery and iceberg salad.

One of the city buses came to a halt next to him, the screeching brakes drawing his attention. The doors opened and people streamed out on the sidewalk in front of him. Others waited to climb on board, blocking his path. He stopped and waited, his hands deep in his pockets, until he noticed the colorful advertisement on the side of the bus.

It read – 'Protection for all you hold dear. Call Overland Insurance' - in bold lettering, with

two men and two women on either side, all four dressed to perfection, smiling brightly with their too white, orthodontia-enhanced teeth.

He felt sucker punched in the belly and his blood started to boil. He knew that insurance agency too damn well. The Overland family! Definitely the last name he needed to see today. Acid-filled resentment flooded his throat, and disgusted, he spat on the sidewalk. He detested those people, hated them. They'd caused his troubles. They were to blame for his misery. Somebody should destroy them, make them burn in hell. That's what they deserved.