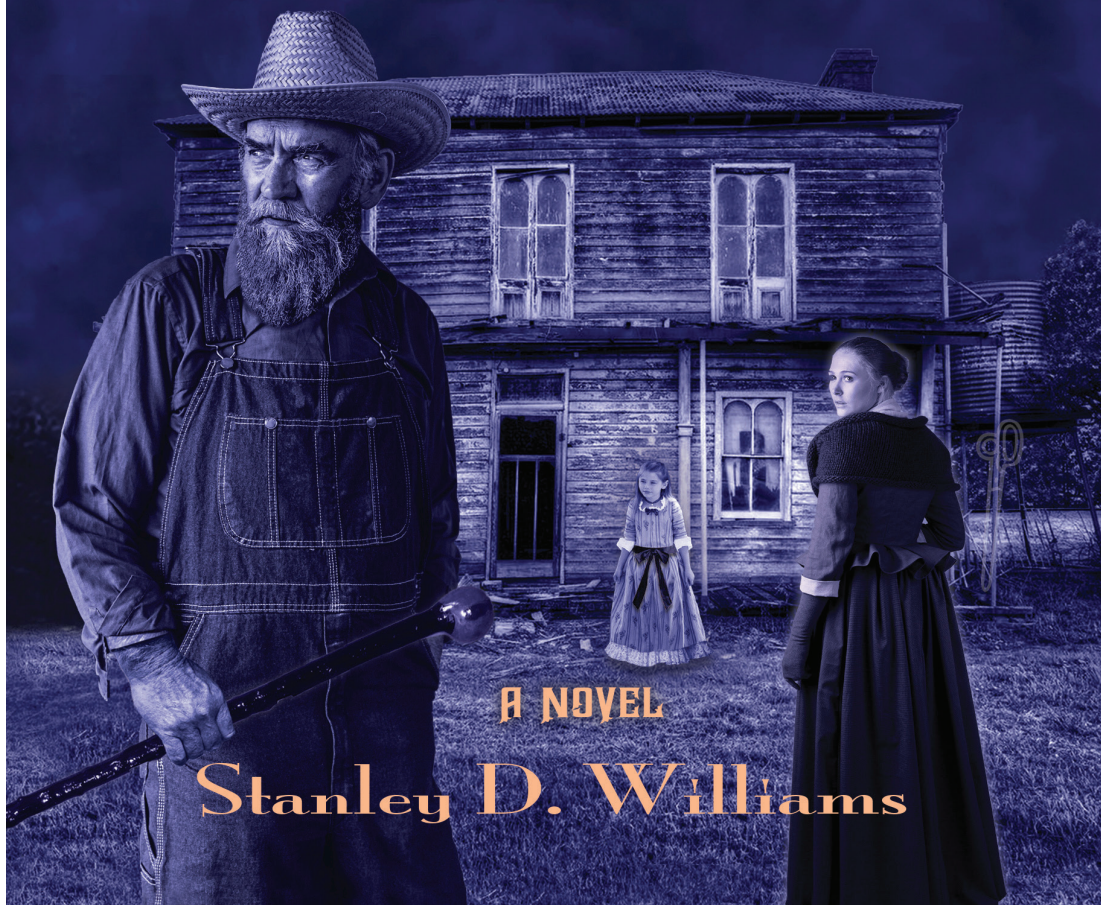


WIZARD CLIP HAUNTING

A True Early American Ghost Story



A NOVEL

Stanley D. Williams

THE WIZARD CLIP HAUNTING

Nineveh's Crossing

May 16, 2023

Early Reader Comments

I'm captivated by The Wizard Clip Haunting as it combines the best of both worlds. It accurately shares the known facts of the Wizard Clip with exciting fiction of what may have been. From the very beginning the characters sprung to life. I laughed, celebrated and mourned with the characters. I was there with them, and I cried when...(spoiler)...I think every waking moment will be spent reading this. A riveting novel. (K.M.)

Rich in American History, it's a dynamite story told well. (A.R.)

This is the first "modern" story (meaning written after 1950) that I had read in ages that I actually wanted to finish. The storyline is fascinating, the changing point of view adds intrigue, the writing is very good, with excellent pacing that compels one to continue reading. And it does this without the use of Hardy Boy cliffhangers. (M.R.)

A colossus of historical fiction. The reader is given a glimpse of New World pragmatism shredded by otherworldly forces it denies, and the Ancient Faith sweeping in to rescue surprised saints. (J.W.)

The Wizard Clip Haunting is a wonderful historical horror novel dealing with religion, the devil and his demons and a group of people who are interesting characters in a story I wasn't quite expecting. Yes it is a horror story with the devil and demons playing their part at trying to deceive and rid the world of those who are good. The pull of good and evil with guardians and demons is as old as religion and one that most never tire of reading or hearing.

I'm one where good needs to win, and it does here, but how it happens is interesting and the ending ties all the different characters together in what was happening and needed to be done to set things right. Even if you are not religious, this book based in religion is well worth the time to read just for the characters, the suspense of what will happen next, and how it will all be resolved. (B.M.)

I'm halfway through your book and can't wait to see what happens next. Historical fiction is my absolute favorite genre. Adding in the screwtape-style correspondence makes it even more of a page-turner. (A.M.)

After an extensive 10 year research into the life of Prince-Priest Demetrius A. Gallitzin (1770-1840), including his personal involvement in the Wizard Clip Hauntings, you can imagine my fascination in how this novel delightfully brings to life the initial facts and the formation and integration of the many complex personalities involved. The character development is excellent as is the high suspense and drama leading up to the Wizard and his clipping! (Betty Seymour, Loretto, PA)

Character Notes

“If I knew it was going to be hell on earth, I would have said ‘no’.”

— MARY ANN LIVINGSTON (née Babbitt)
Revolutionary War widow

“I am resolute in my judgment: Richard McSherry is a hypocrite, a double liar, a fraud, and he will not marry my daughter, Anastasia, so help me God.”

— RICHARD LILLY
Conewago Planter

“Far more work than I anticipated or prayed for.”

— RICHARD MCSHERRY
Irish bachelor who married well

“Men are not all the same. Thank God.”

— ANASTASIA MCSHERRY (née Lilly)
Richard McSherry’s wife

“That such attention has been given to a renegade priest is abhorrent.”

— REV. ANTONIO DE SEDELLA, OFM Cap.
Louisiana Franciscan Superior

“My appreciation to Mister Livingston for taking my advice, allowing me to assist, and employing General Gates’ former slaves. An honorable man.”

— JOHN ADAMS
U.S. Minister to England/U.S. President

“Many of the Catholic faith are misled into strange mysteries, but I am glad they are residents in our fair town. They are good citizens.”

— JONATHAN HAGER, JR
Son of Hagerstown founder

“He will make a good seaman, whether on land or water. Mighty glad he was aboard. America is better for it.”

— CAPTAIN JOHN WERNER
American merchant ship Eagle

“Never have I met a layman as well educated or a priest as rebellious.”

— REV. JOHN CARROLL, S.J.
United States Superior and Bishop

“Next time there will be blood and bones to pay. Gaspar does not relent.”

— JOSÉ GASPAR
Legendary Florida pirate

“I am a good Catholic girl...not a hussy. But nothing is forever.”

— LETITIA MCCARTNEY
Irish siren

The Wizard Clip Haunting

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This is a work of historical fiction. Many of the events, names are taken from historical records then enhanced by the author's imagination. The author makes no claim that anything in this story is true, but others have claimed that much is.

Bible Quotations on the Part Title pages are in memory of Matthew Carey, an Irish journalist who was jailed in England for criticizing the British government for its persecution of Catholics. He fled to America in 1784, and in 1790, the time of the story chronicled in this novel, he published the first non-King James Version of the English Bible in the United States—the Douay-Rheims Version English Bible. Translated to

English from the Latin Vulgate it was first published in Rome by the English College (NT in 1582, OT in 1610). The original Douay-Rheims employed a heavy Latinate vocabulary and was hard to read. In later years several new editions were released, some based on the King James Version text rigorously checked for readability and consistency with the Vulgate. The quotations herein are from the Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition (DRA).

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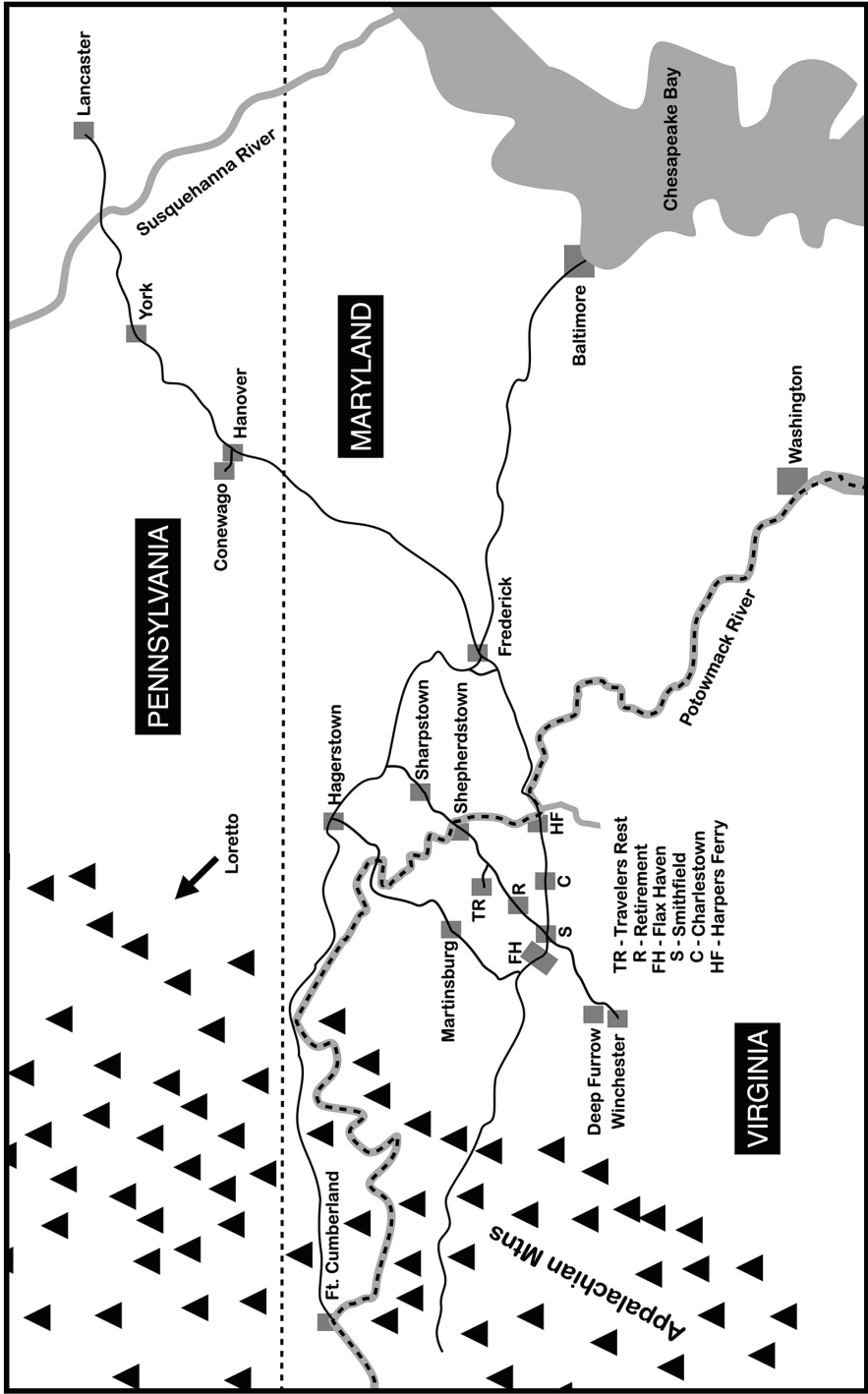
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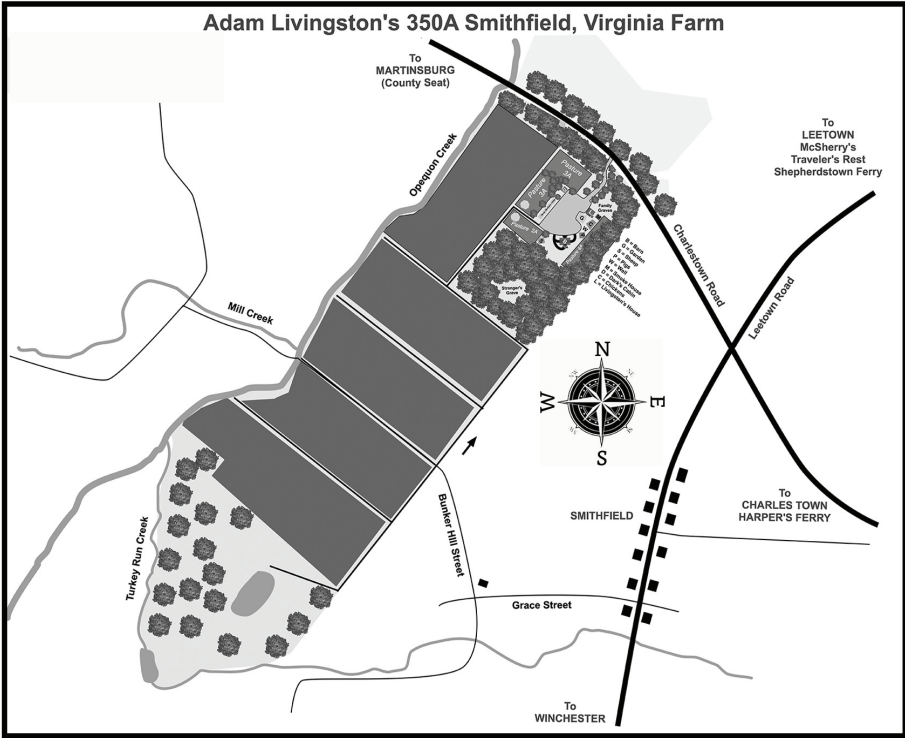
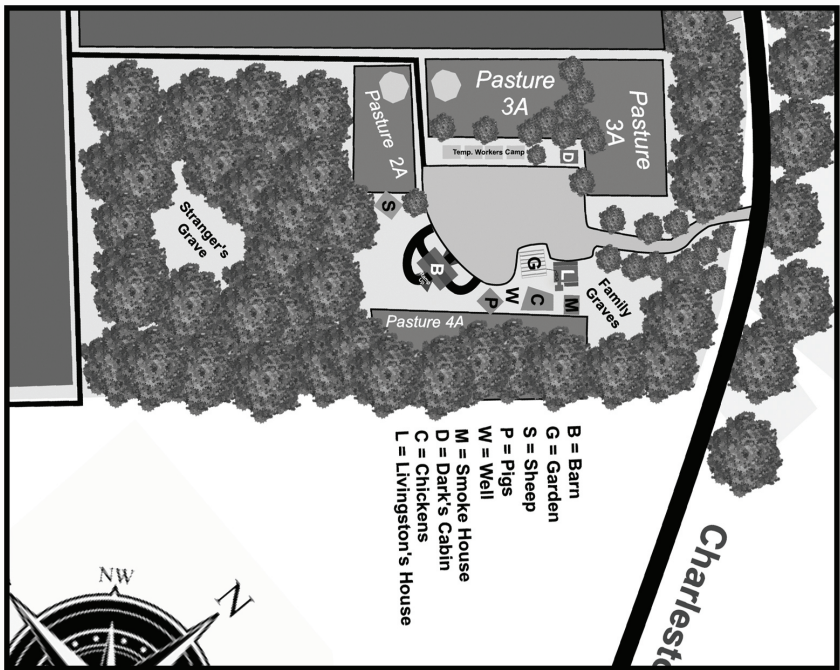
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for

JAIME ANTONIO SOTELO

an expat Filipino and emigrant to Australia who
first told me about the Mystery of the Wizard Clip in 2012.

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* An asterisk precedes a letter or paragraph indicating a documented historical source for all or part of what follows, e.g., most of the letters between Fr. Denis Cahill and Bishop John Carroll are real and not imagined. Also, an asterisk precedes the first mention of a name or place indicating a documented historical (or legendary) person or place that is not immediately known to common history, e.g., *George Washington* is not asterisked, but **Richard Lilly* is. While none of what the author ascribes to such persons or places can be relied on as true, nonetheless much of it evidently did happen.

Your minister would laugh heartily if you should relate to him the above facts; for with wise men of our enlightened age, he has peremptorily decided that miracles, &c., are no longer necessary, and of course they have ceased. Since when I did not learn; nor did I ever find any passage in Scripture which authorizes the belief that miracles should ever cease altogether, or that evil spirits should never have it any more in their power to molest the bodies and property of men, as they used to do during the life time of our Saviour, and even after his resurrection. (Acts v. 16.)

—Rev. Prince Demetrius Augustine Gallitzin
(aka Fr. Smith)

Part One: Progenitor

That which hath been made, the same continueth:
the things that shall be, have already been:
and God restoreth that which is past.

I saw under the sun
in the place of judgment wickedness,
and in the place of justice iniquity.

And I said in my heart:
God shall judge both the just and the wicked,
and then shall be the time of every thing.

(Ecclesiastes 3:15–17)

Chapter 1

Nudged by a Divine Impulse

1

April 23, 1821.

Two-thousand feet up an Allegheny mountainside the warm setting sun gave way to the cool dawn of night. Even higher, a thin waxing crescent moon broke through the overcast to back-light stands of spruce, balsam, and fir. Weaving its way through the warp and weft of valleys and high pastures, a cool breeze flew past the pinnacle of a small frame church and a matching rectory that together stood guard over the young village of *Loretto.

Inside the rectory was the austere study of a master bibliophile. The fragrance of pulp, fiberboard, and leather emanated from hundreds of volumes perfectly cataloged, but rarely read, on oak shelves that reached to the ceiling along every wall.

At a walnut secretary hutch, its front pulled down to create a writing surface, sat Loretto's founder, the *Reverend (Prince) Demetrius Augustine Gallitzin, a thin, fifty-year-old man in a black cassock with thick, white, wavy hair falling in gentle curls to his shoulders. For some minutes he sat erect and still, staring into space. The grand arch of his Aristotelian nose set off his high cheek bones and recessed cheeks, his complexion ruddy. He appeared gaunt, almost malnourished if not for the deep-set, piercing blue eyes revealing an alert mind. Once a Russian prince, he carried his aristocracy humbly, and preferred to be addressed by his parishioners simply as Fr. Smith.

Looking down at the blank parchment on his desk, he knew that in twenty years he would not remember, but now he did. Yet the events he had been ordered to recount haunted him, for they documented an infestation some actors in the story would like to

forget. Fluent in French, Russian, Dutch, and now English, words were not foreign to him, nor were his well-used quills. Although a sharp knife lay about ready to sharpen the quills, finding the right words required wit.

As if nudged by a divine impulse, his right hand reached out, turned-up the lamp's wick, uncovered his inkwell, and at once his left hand grasped a favorite quill, submerged its nib in the pool of lampblack, and began the long journey.

2

Octave of Easter, Monday - 23 April 1821

St. Michael Catholic Church

Loretto, Pennsylvania

The *Most Reverend Ambrose Maréchal

Archbishop of Baltimore, Maryland

My Lord Maréchal,

In 1797, your once-removed predecessor, *John Carroll, directed me to travel from my residence in *Conewago, Pennsylvania to *Smithfield, Virginia. I was to investigate what neither of us believed—extraordinary stories emanating from an ordinary village about an ordinary man and his experiences with Spiritism. After three months of investigation, I was soon converted to a full belief of them. No lawyer in a court of justice did more than I, nor procured more than your unworthy servant.

As you have recalled, and indeed it is true, I wrote a careful account of these matters at that time and gave it to a then trustworthy acquaintance. But like a good book loaned, it never returned, and all manner of requests have only succeeded in securing its mysterious disappearance.

Therefore, at your request, here is an account of those events, which neither of us wish to be lost to time but no doubt will be

forgotten. It seems, too, that the stories may finally have come to their natural end with the recent passing of Mr. Adam Livingston. I will, therefore, write a full, orderly, and accurate account of what I have experienced, what I have discovered, and what the passage of time has revealed of those most strange and mysterious occurrences. While a curiosity to many, they were intolerable to a few.

The story begins during the upheaval in North America for control of land between the British and the French. In the British Colonies between 1756–1763 it was called the French and Indian War. In Europe it was the Seven-Year War, though to some it continues to this day. The conflict created uncertainties throughout Pennsylvania and Virginia, which were British Colonies then and commonwealths of the United States today.

But there was a second and overlapping theater of turmoil that influenced the actors and agencies of our story. It was the entrenched hatred of European kings and political leaders for the Catholic Church. The hostility of the day were missionaries of the Society of Jesus, Jesuits, which detractors considered the Association of Satan. In England the haters found their excuse for belligerency in the 1605 Gunpowder Plot, or the Jesuit Treason as some called it. It was the alleged attempt by dissident Catholics to assassinate Protestant King James I. Led by *Robert Catesby and the likes of *Guy Fawkes, its discovery and the execution of its ring leaders is celebrated still, both in the U.K. and here at the infamous Guy Fawkes bonfires traditionally lit on the evening of the fifth of November.

In other countries, such as Portugal, France, and Spain the hatred stemmed from the economic success Jesuit missionaries enjoyed in the New World, and their reluctance to turn over their acquired wealth to the royal treasuries of their sponsoring countries. Jesuit achievement, or arrogance, depending on one's persuasion, was rewarded by their suppression and exile from the New World, which was demanded by kings and acquiesced to

by Pope Clement XIV. Their reduction farming communes were closed down and their chapels leveled, but not necessarily in an orderly fashion, unless conflagrations set by royal armies are considered orderly. Anything of value was confiscated and given to the “poor”—as royal coffers were proclaimed to be.

Such were the global forces, the colonial values, the royal bigotries, and the social undercurrents in which Adam Livingston and Fr. Denis Cahill found themselves.

What follows is not one story but four, woven into a single fabric no doubt by Providence prompted by the purveyors of Perdition. The first story regards the *thirty-five acres of land in Smithfield, next to the *Opequon Creek, which you have considered significant but which the courts count as trivial. It is, as you have been told, sufficiently large and situated for the support of a priest, although it supports no one today. The second is the story of a resourceful but tragic farmer, *Adam Livingston. Some claim he was of the Lutheran persuasion but that is an exaggeration; for it is no exaggeration to say he was of no persuasion whatsoever. The third is the story of a heroic pioneering priest, *Denis Cahill, who found and forged a heroic missionary path in the early days of the nation but has since evidently lost his way. The fourth is of a supernatural demonic spirit, which the locals to this day call the *Clipping Wizard, and the town whence it came was known as Smithfield, but is today known as Wizard Clip or Clip Town. There are elements of this fourth narrative that you may suspect are inventions of my imagination. Yet, I assure you I am not known to imagine much of anything but God’s grace that comes to the undeserved, and his mercy that prohibits what is deserved.

Your Servant,
Fr. Smith

Chapter 2

Nor Did He Curse God

1

June, 1760.

Leaving the main road, the vagrant tied up his horse under the Opequon Creek bridge, climbed up the bank, crawled through thick brush, and walked the perimeter of the thirty-five acre property. It took a good hour as he was careful to stay out of sight. Except for a plentiful source of water from the creek that ran along the northwest boundary, the land was barren, untended, and seemingly useless, without hint of even a tobacco crop. How could a man exist without livestock, poultry, tobacco or even a barn? There had to be a reason, a good reason—no doubt he had hidden a treasure. How else could Alexander Mayfield have paid in gold for a sack of supplies at the Winchester general store?

The paradox made the vagrant grit his teeth and clench his fists. This had been a chance to change the trajectory of his life. *Damn!* Easily riled, he grabbed a fallen branch, and swung it hard against the trunk of a large tree. The blow reverberated up the stick, through his arms, and shook his torso until his eyes slammed shut. When he opened them, he was left with a crooked walking stick. *Small consolation.*

Returning to the road with his newly acquired staff, Silas Cain started up the winding cart path to the cabin. The path was hidden from the main road by wild brush and a grove of unkempt fruit trees. For that he was glad, and instinctually quickened his pace, thumping the heavy stick at rocks along the path.

Mayfield's modest, one story cabin was constructed of squared-off logs and cement chink, atop a fieldstone foundation. There was a small porch with just enough room for two rocking chairs,

one either side of the door. A flintlock rifle leaned against the cabin next to the door. There was a sweater draped over one of the chairs and next to it a few dishes and a jug, probably of home-made brew. It looked as if there used to be two persons living in the cabin, but now there was only Mayfield and he spent a lot of time in that one rocking chair next to the rifle. *Be careful.*

As he drew near, Silas tried to look presentable. A thirty-year-old Virginian, Cain was more than your common vagrant. He was a British army deserter having spent six months under George Washington's command in a contingent of *Brigadier-General John Forbes' 6,000 strong force. Cain had joined up looking for action. But he quickly grew tired of building Forbes' 300-mile-long supply road across the Allegheny Mountains. The road would later support an attack on the French at Fort Duquesne. That was two years ago, and since then Cain had led a depraved life of corruption, thievery, and murder. It bothered him not in the least.

Saddled with a Sicilian complexion, pointed chin, high but flat cheekbones, and a monstrous nose he was shunned by every village he visited. Ostensibly looking for a job, he would case the community, break in, steal, murder if he had to, and escape with whatever treasure or food he could find. He would have made a good pirate, but sea-faring piracy was out of fashion.

Such a life was getting old, and Cain was feeling the need to settle down and stop running. Yet even when he seriously applied to proprietors or farm owners there was no work. Perhaps it was because his thick, black, unkempt hair, stubble beard, and deep-set black eyes made him appear dangerous. At least he had that going for him.

Just south of the cabin Cain caught sight of Mayfield down on all fours. He was digging by hand in a small garden.

Cain strutted onto the property and pulled up short of the garden. He leaned on his stick, and raised the old man. "You Al-

exander Mayfield?”

Mayfield looked up, grabbed a long-handled hoe that had been lying next to him, slowly rose to his feet and stared at the visitor. “Who’s asking? You lost?”

“I aren’t lost, old man,” Cain said.

Mayfield stood erect, protected as it were behind a row of radish plants and the hoe he held across his chest.

Cain took a moment to size the old man up—fair complexion, couldn’t spend too much time outside, probably spent it inside counting his gold—age spots on his bald head—tangled, white hair hung over his ears that melded into a beard. That beard! He must trim it with a dull knife, once he combed the dried food out of it, which of late he hadn’t. Short, stoutly built, probably not someone to tangle with in years past or perhaps even now. An old-school, stiff upper lip, proper English gentleman who believed in God, but only as far as he could stretch his hoe. “You a hermit or something?” said Cain.

“What is it to likes of you?”

“Hard living alone, aren’t it?”

“Been jest fine for years, since the Missus died. ‘Fore that it was hard.”

“I’m interested in yer land. Like to buy it from ya.”

“Not fer sale. Leave me. Got radishes to attend. They don’t like company.”

“But I’ll pay you a good price, if we kin negotiate.”

Mayfield stepped out of his garden; the hoe still held across his body. “Told you git. I aren’t good at negotiating wid nobody fer nothin’. What’s wrong with yer head? Ya sick?”

“I’m Silas Cain. New to the area, looking for land to work.”

“Well, Mister Cain. This here is my land and I’m workin’ it.”

“Not lookin’ too good. You could use some help, it seems.”

Mayfield’s squared off stance and his squinty eyes lookin’ Cain up and down were insulting. “No need of assistance—or slave la-

bor. Now I've work to do, insofar as you point out I have no assistance."

"The ground's practically barren. I looked it over just this day. Why ya pretend to farm it?"

The old man glared. "Why is that any business of yours? It is mine to do with as I please. Now, git, or da'ya need persuasion?" At that Mayfield gripped his hoe until his knuckles turned white.

"It's not for farming' is it, old man? Yer holding a secret 'bout it," Cain said.

"What's there to keep secret?" said Mayfield. "You've walked the land. I watched you. Don't think I didn't. I've got no fences. Perhaps it might produce more if morons like you weren't trespassing on my crops."

"Crops! Those weeds, old man. Ya don't know what yer doing, and I kin do it better."

"With heaven as my judge, why should I care what you can do?"

"I buy it from ya. Sell it ta me. It not worth anything to ya. Dollar a acre. How many ya got?"

"A dollar per? I paid two-fifty per for these thirty-five, and I'll not part wid one of 'em, especially to insulters. Git off my land. I'm done wid ya."

Cain's brow dug valleys and his neck stiffened as he gripped his walking stick and glared at the old man who had grunted and turned back to hoeing his garden. *There was something hid here, and he was going to have it.* "Look, mister, I was just trying to be friendly. I'm not a claim jumper or anythin."

Mayfield turned and advanced on Cain, his eyes narrowed, and the hoe now held higher with two white-knuckled fists.

"Okay. Okay. I going. No need to get all rankled-like." Cain kept his eye on Mayfield and stepped backward careful not to trip over one of the many rocks protruding from the ground. When Mayfield went back to gardening, Cain turned, put his back to the

old man, and slogged down the path toward the road. He noticed a footpath through the brush that shortened the distance to the bridge and his horse. But his walk slowed. He was listening, pondering his options.

Suddenly, a small rock stung him hard in the back of the head—a perfect strike, from a sling shot? Cain whirled to confront the old man.

But Mayfield was in his garden, again on all fours, and turned away.

A bird or tree squirrel? Cain searched the sky, trees, and ground. Nothing!

Mad, he turned quickly to go, but his boot slipped into a rut. He lost his balance and fell. Stretching out his arm toward the ground to break the fall, the edge of a black obsidian rock cut his palm wide open.

At once. Blood. Everywhere.

Hatred boiled over. Grabbing the tail of his shirt, he jammed it into this palm and tightened his fist to stem the flow of blood. He couldn't ride back to town this way. The old man must have bandages. Picking up his walking stick, Cain turned back toward the cabin.

As he turned, a thorny branch whipped into Cain's face and cut his lower lip. The taste of blood, the perfect exacerbation.

A few steps more and a hole suddenly appeared under Cain's pounding step, twisting his ankle, wrenching his spirit, and fueling his temper.

But there was more. A swarm of biting flies attacked Cain's exposed head and neck. Frustrated, he swatted wildly at the stinging parasites with his fist, then with his stick, striking his ear with stinging effect.

To escape, Cain ran toward the cabin, one hand in a fisted bandage restrained by his shirt tail, the other holding the stick and his injured ear.

As he ran, an invisible boot kicked Cain in the shin. He gasped for air, but there was none. Twisting and turning, the pain and agony only fueled his ire. He hobbled as best he could back to the old man and yelled: “Sir. Kind, sir! Yer cursed land attacked me. I am in need. Help me. Please, help me!”

Limping and lamenting, Cain came at Mayfield. One arm was swinging fiendishly as if it had been mostly severed from his shoulder. The other arm flailed about, the walking stick circling savagely over his head. Mayfield, seeing the visitor in torment, jumped to his feet and ran to Cain’s aid, this time without his long-handled hoe.

For Cain there was but a split second of reflection of the original plan which had moments ago fled his consciousness, but now flooded back with clarity and vile. His adrenaline rushed so mightily that all his pain and impairment disappeared. Suddenly and instinctively, Cain, with his walking stick, viciously and repeatedly struck the side of Mayfield’s head.

Immediately, Mayfield fell in a heap to the earth. Blood spurted and drained from the old man’s ear, only to be swiftly sucked into the virgin Virginia soil.

Cain stood over Mayfield’s body, trying to understand what had just happened. The old man did not seem to be breathing. Good. But while the deed was done, it went nothing like Cain had planned, at least not as he had hoped. Mayfield had no time to scream. Nor did he curse God before he died.

2

Cyn Namrasit, Order of Paroled Sub-Demons (OPSD), hovered invisibly about the scene. Below Cyn, Alexander Mayfield lay motionless on the cool earth now being warmed by blood draining from his left ear—blood that would curse the land. Standing over Mayfield, Silas Cain breathed heavily. His wide-open eyes darted left and right, his bloody hand wrapped tightly in the tail

of his shirt.

Cyn spastically swirled in self-reproach, a veil of devastation blanketed his belligerency. Like Cain's darting eyes that searched for a cause, Cyn's damned essence searched for a hell-bound effect. But the scintillation in the continuum told Cyn that Mayfield's soul was not on its way to Perdition.

The consequences were devastating, not for Cain, or Mayfield, but for Cyn. Again, he had inadvertently assisted in sending yet another soul to that intermediate place that demons feared. For although it wasn't Heaven, it *was* Glory's vestibule and thus cut off from demonic influence.

Damn them all and Alexander Mayfield, Cyn cursed even as he hoped.

Jutting toward the dimensional crack to challenge the angel's claim, Cyn stopped short. Last time he attempted the jump, his scar-laced hide was ripped open by the sharp edges of the discontinuity. It required fire, painful fire, to anneal his hide shut again.

Cyn plunged back to the temporal scene to figure out what needed to be done. His plan had failed, miserably failed. While he relished the powers of suggestion and psychokinetics granted him, he had grown too confident. He was not yet the knighted demon he believed himself to be. Well, he was once, but that was before his last bust. Now on parole to live an abusive existence, he had fallen into a habit of anxious aggression to motivate his targets. Perhaps Cain was too agreeable to suggestions. He did respond rather well. Cyn had enjoyed pulling his strings like a marionette. The joy of seeing his ghoulish behavior acted out in one human toward another was nothing short of orgasmic. But there was a consequence to everything. Sub-demons still operated in a realm of natural cause and effect, the connections between which he and his kind could not revise. Cyn feared the consequences he now faced, much like last time.

Would his impatient supervisor send him back for remedial

training yet again? He doubted it. What good would it do? He didn't learn last time. Too impulsive, too aggressive, too impatient. But wasn't that the idea?

He felt anger, the wrong kind, he was sure. It wasn't aimed at others, but rather at himself from a more powerful and dangerous place. He wanted to run and hide. But where could that possibly be? He wasn't clever enough to invent a new dimension for himself alone.

Perhaps if he suggested a punishment for this stupidity, his master would let him exercise some control over the next decade of existence. Remedial hell was no fun. At once it was drowning, choking, bloody anguish, and death by fire while falling into a canyon of sharp obsidian rocks. The purpose, of course, was to experience pain, not to relieve it. Perhaps he could conjure a self-imposed penance, an exile that would avoid the temporal retribution for being an idiot.

No sooner had he considered the consequences of his rash behavior and had planned an inconspicuous exit, then Mayfield's corpse moved. Cyn didn't have a heart, but if he had one, it would have stopped in ecstasy.

Cyn got down close, allowing his essence to surround Mayfield's body, and hoped for a spark of life. If he could get Mayfield breathing again, he might have a chance to save his hide. He whispered to Cain: *Help the man. Awaken him. Cajole, then taunt. Make him mad, angry.* Cyn had to do this right. Then he could revisit his plan and execute it—*Mayfield must curse God just before he dies.* That was the plan. Cyn would be hailed as a hero. Perhaps it was still possible to take this fool to Hell and fleece that atrocious angel of victory. Yes, that was his chance. All he needed to do was to get him breathing again, let him soak in the pain, real, deep pain, get him to curse the Almighty, and then Cain can kill him again...for good.

Cain gawked at his malevolent deed sprawled on the ground before him. From Mayfield's left temple blood poured profusely, but just as quickly was sucked up by the earth. The panic that coursed through Cain's body was bittersweet. His spine quivered as it always did when he killed, but there was fear, too. Turning to the right and left, his eyes darted about. Had he been seen? Had anyone noticed?

He glared down at Mayfield's body and stabbed at it with his stick. He looked dead, but was he? Mayfield's face was in the dirt. Cain stooped down to get a closer look. The pallor had turned blue, but the man's nostrils repeatedly flared then collapsed as black vapor streamed in and out—the corpse was still breathing. In fact, the sooty vapor also pulsed in and out of the man's half-opened mouth.

Cain gasped, and his head jerked back. From the side of Mayfield's mouth, a miniature tornado of dirt rose into the air. *Odd.* Standing up, Cain took his stick and rolled Mayfield's body onto its back, whereupon the swirl of dirt transformed itself into a jet of dark vapor that alternately pushed air into and then sucked it out of Mayfield's gaping mouth. At the same time his chest began to repeatedly expand and contract. A drool of blood on Mayfield's lips pumped in and out with the gusts of air. Cain narrowed his eyes on the man's face. Might the man rise from the dead as if by some wizardly force?

Cain's brain fogged over. What he saw made no sense. His eyebrows pinched the bridge of his nose, and his teeth bit into both lips. This was no time to be squeamish. Refocusing, he looked around, and dug the biggest rock he could find out of the ground. It was a granite boulder. With both hands he raised the boulder over Mayfield's head. The jets of vapor seemed to increase in intensity and speed. Mayfield's chest rose farther. *What are you*

waiting for? You want him to get up and fight back? Surging with anger, Cain brought his arms down and rammed the boulder squarely onto Mayfield's nose, crushing it and flattening his face.

Alexander Mayfield was certainly now dead. His chest stopped moving and the jets and puffs of sooty smoke disappeared, strangely enough, into the ground.

Cain relaxed, but clarity of thought had not returned. He began to lament the usual gap in his planning. For minutes he paced around the body trying to visualize his options. How was he going to dispose of the body, for the bloody mess was out in the open, as was the killing. The longer he stood there, the better the odds he'd be found out.

He could leave everything as it is, and go back to his horse the way he came probably undetected. But that would accomplish nothing and put him right back at the beginning of the day. His life would be no different. Something had to change.

Guilt? He felt none. Guilt was something for lesser men. Life was hard enough to regret the dismissal of those that dismissed him. But he hated this part of the recurring story—although he considered himself smart and clever, he never knew what to do with the body.

Of course, he could bury it. Yes, that's what he'll do. But there are problems with that as well. Getting the body to that clump of trees behind the cabin was only half the battle; he'd get his horse to help with that. He also had to dig a grave deep enough that ravishing animals would not claw off a hand or foot and drag it across the road in broad daylight. Cain hated work. Especially hard manual work like digging graves. His lungs took a deep breath. *Might as well get on with it.*

He looked around...there was a stable across the yard; a shovel could be found there. Next, he needed to get his horse, then the rest wouldn't be so bad.

Silas Cain climbed out of the shallow hole. The rocks he had pulled from it were piled to one side. He pulled Mayfield's body into the hastily dug grave. As the body dropped awkwardly into the earthen tomb, black steam rose like a dark mist out of the hole, coalesced into a spinning funnel several feet high, and drilled itself into the middle of the rock pile. Cain jumped back. The funnel was otherworldly, choreographed, and quick. With his shovel he fearfully nudged the top rocks aside. There were a variety: granite, agate, sandstone, and a box like stone of chiseled black obsidian. But there was no indication where the spinning funnel of smoke had gone.

A half-hour later, as dusk fell, he finished covering the grave with dead brush and arranged the rocks into a cairn as a hastily built memorial, the least he could do. Stepping back, he leaned on the shovel, and gazed at the cairn. Sadness overtook him. Why, he wondered? Was he mad to be sad, or sad that he was no longer mad? Killing always confused him.

A cool evening breeze wove through the trees. Cain sucked the fresh air into his lungs as if on the foredeck of his uncle's barque driving into a wind. But there was no cool saltwater breeze to savor. Just the musky, August dust. Rubbing the dust from his eyes he looked at his hands...no blood? By now, the body and its blood were feeding worms and other subterranean vermin.

Casually he returned to the site of the killing by the house as if nothing was amiss. He dug up the bloodied ground, and scattered it among the outlying shrubs.

With Mayfield out of the way, excitement returned to his demeanor. It was time to do what he came for. He tied his horse to a tree with a long rein near a patch of grass, found a bucket of water for the animal, and turned toward the cabin, at last.

Mayfield may have been a terrible farmer, but he was order-

ly. It took but a few minutes to find the property's claim with a full description of Mayfield's thirty-five acres and its history. King Charles II had granted the land to Lord Fairfax as a political payoff for Fairfax's support during the English civil war. Fairfax then surveyed the land, subdivided it for speculation, deeded 600 acres to Mayfield's uncle, Andrew Mayfield, who in turn granted thirty-five acres to his nephew.

It took much longer than expected, but after several tries by lamp light, Cain eventually forged a bill of sale, a new document renewing the claims but in his own name...with witnesses, no less. Stoking the dying embers in the fireplace he burned the original claim, and with a bottle of found brandy, celebrated his new acquisition. He was now the proud owner of thirty-five acres of Virginia land—a first for Silas Cain.

5

My Despised Cyn Namrasit:

You should be commended if it wasn't for the condemnation you bring upon your temporal presence. You are commended for the fraud and murder you have affected. Such things usurp the common order, while increasing man's selfish reliance on himself and never the Almighty...always our goal. Keep vigilant for opportunities to affect more of the same. However, for your temporal impatience which prevented your mark from cursing the Creator before his death, you are condemned; reports are Alexander Mayfield easily slipped into Glory. Tsk! Tsk!

For this failure you will be returned to a remedial state, and your physical presence will be confined here on this cursed land where Mayfield's humble blood soaks the earth. Here your sooty presence will remain until you learn the patience of fools befitting our na-

ture, and the land is once again occupied. Until then your spirit may roam wherever and whenever your deceptive influence is required, for there is much to do.

Future intelligence has apprised that this place will next be occupied by a German farmer from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He is Adam Livingston. Since he is likely next to touch your presence, he is your next mark. Your goal is to usher him into Perdition the moment he curses God.

Livingston is already a weakened and vulnerable man who finds little consolation in the Creator's religion. He claims to have no faith, but he overstates the case. His faith is trivial but still significant against the backdrop of eternity. We must push him away until he cannot return. Fortunately, unto his misfortune, Livingston is self-reliant and almost irredeemably arrogant. He does have a weakness for attractive Presbyterian women, no doubt because he was raised by unattractive Lutherans. He works a small farm in York. He thinks it was a gift from his father-in-law but it's a trap. To that end, go and influence him even further toward egotistical pride and those around him to a similar path. Of course, you must go disembodied since your physical presence must remain here. If our intelligence is correct, and Livingston comes here to live and farm, you may be able to manipulate him to lift your coffin from its grave. Such an auspicious moment would reconstitute your physical presence and aid your effectiveness. Then you must reveal to Livingston the subtle and persuasive detriments of your nature we so highly esteem.

Now, there is a complication that will challenge your bilocation faculty, although in the spiritual state such is eased. Future intelligence also tells us that Livingston's

eternal destiny is to be determined by a child shortly to be conceived in Dublin, Ireland. The parents are Francis and Alice Cahill. Francis is nominally Protestant, but Alice is secretly and devoutly Catholic. We do not know if the child will be male or female. Neither do we know how or when the Cahill child and Livingston's paths will cross. For us, it is fortunate that to be Catholic in Ireland is illegal; and if you're a priest it's certain death. Thus, a place to begin, and a simple task it would seem, is to prevent this Cahill child from being baptized. Divining the future meeting of these two persons is not possible but do what you can to prevent it at all costs. Now, be not hasty but clever. Go forth, far and wide, in what ways you can, promote pride and arrogance, and other evil upon those regions of earth to which you have been charged. Hell depends on you.

Eternally yours,
Master of Derelicts

Chapter 3

Count On It

1

May 6, 1766.

Francis David Cahill was a large man with a square face, strong arms, and a gentle spirit. It was evening as he checked the windows of his small, thatched-roof cottage and made sure they were closed and the curtains drawn tight. He also made sure the two doors were latched and barred. With the house secured, Francis

joined the group of friends crowded into the tiny gathering room.

Although he was not a very religious man, this night he prayed silently that the cover of darkness would protect his wife, Alice, the infant in her arms, a few of their trusted friends, and most of all his childhood mentor, Father Killian Doyle. Their voices were hushed as all eyes were on the tiny baby with the red tuff of hair, which Alice cradled close to her breasts.

Alice was a slight but strong-framed woman with round full breasts, a pale oval face, blue doe eyes, a thin, pointed nose, and rich auburn hair she tied in a bun.

Francis reached out and gently stroked the arm of the sleeping infant. Alice smiled up at her brawny husband and kissed his fingers. Francis wished his hands were cleaner, but the callouses and cracks of a mine laborer were always going to be lined with grime.

Fr. Killian faced the small group. He was a slight man, older than the others, dressed in shabby clothes with a green linen clerical stole draped about his neck. His eyes were clear, blue, and bright. He gazed sweetly at Francis and Alice and in a familiar Irish lilt asked them, "What do ye name this child?"

"Denis," said Alice with a contented smile.

Fr. Killian turned to the father. "Francis?"

"Aye, Father. It is Denis Francis we name him."

"After Saint Denis of Paris, Father," said Alice.

Killian smiled, "Ah, a good name, but a martyr for the faith. You not wishing his beheadin', 're ye?"

"No, Father. Not that," said Francis gravely.

"Aye, then a great warrior of valor that name makes him," said Fr. Killian.

Francis glanced admirably at his old mentor. *Why does he smile as if there's not a care in the world? We're all in danger he must know, grave danger.*

"Francis, it is okay...that you are not Catholic, although I know

that Alice wishes you were, especially after all these years. But we are here in the sight of God and he will bless you and your son for this courageous act.”

Francis’ lower lip was at work as he attempted to quell his nerves, “Aye, Father. I thank you.”

Alice leaned lovingly against her husband’s bulk and pulled little Denis close to her breasts.

The priest turned back to the small book of rites in his hands, studied it for a moment, then looked back to the parents. “Francis, Alice, what do you ask of the Church of God?”

“The faith,” the couple said quietly in unison just as they had rehearsed.

“What does the faith offer thee?”

“Eternal life,” they both said.

Francis held within him an avalanche of emotion that defied his understanding. For eighteen years he and Alice had prayed unceasingly for a child. Their prayers had always been answered, or so it seemed. Alice had conceived five children but was never able to carry any of them to a live birth. With each child Francis feared Alice might not conceive; then he feared she might die in childbirth only for her to deliver a dead baby. It was always heartbreaking. They had buried each child in the town’s cemetery, usually without a burial rite since there were no Catholic priests on the island.

Denis Francis was the first to be born alive and healthy. Over the past week as Francis anticipated the illegal gathering, he often caught himself holding his breath; and his appetite had nearly disappeared. To forestall danger on the job from weakness, he had forced himself to eat. He was happy and proud to have arranged for the baptism of his son, if only because he loved his eternally optimistic and always smiling Alice. Now Francis feared in a different way, not just for Alice’s life, but for the life of his friend, Fr. Killian. With an increase in his fear, so his hearing had improved.

When a cart rolled past his cottage on the cobblestones outside a covered window, his body tensed in trepidation that death might yet be at the door. As it was, Francis paid slight attention to the rite. He had to be attentive to what could still transpire and what possible action he would take if trouble arose.

The last time he had seen Fr. Killian was at his wedding in a small Capuchin chapel in the hills west of Dublin. Francis thought the wedding was a secret. But evidently it wasn't. Word got out, and shortly after their private Mass, the Brits burned the chapel to the ground for violating the penal code against all things Catholic. Nonetheless, he was a man of his word, and despite the danger, he had promised to baptize and raise any children they had in the Roman faith. Twenty years ago, he had learned that making such a promise was the only way he could make the red-haired beauty his wife. But it took two years to convince himself, and Alice, that he'd be true to his word.

True, he was not a religious man, but he was a romantic. He believed his life was at the service of his wife, and the mystical Emerald Isle he cherished. He disagreed with the boisterous and often raucous Protestants at the mine. They believed that Catholic papists should all be run out of the country or hanged. Wasn't it enough that Catholics could not own land, or a business, or run for parliament, or hold any official position in the government? Did they also have to leave this sacred green isle?

Fr. Killian continued the baptism rite. *"We now pray for this child who will have to face the world with its temptations and fight the devil in all his cunning. Father in heaven, your Son died and rose again to save us. By his victory over sin and death, cleanse this child from the stain of original sin. Strengthen him with the grace of Christ and watch over him at every step in life's journey. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen."*

"Fight the devil!" Fr. Killian had said. Francis worried that little Denis would not have to wait too long to do that. As soon

as Denis was born, Francis sent a simple message with a trusted seaman to his mentor in Brest, a French port. To there, years ago, Fr. Killian had escaped. The message read: "Would you come visit our new family?"

Killian came immediately on the return ship to Dublin. He knew that a child, indeed a miracle child, had been born to his friends Francis and Alice Cahill, and that a covert baptism was needed. Hidden in a small bag along with some food would be a book of rites and his stole, the only indication that the otherwise shabby looking old man was an incognito Catholic priest.

The rite continued far too long, thought Francis. The longer it took the greater the opportunity for detection. He could not imagine what evils would befall them all if this illegal event were discovered. He had considered booking passage for the three of them on a ship to Brest. But on his meager earnings that was out of the question.

Fr. Killian blessed the water that Alice had provided in a beat-up tin basin, and then took the infant from his mother.

Immediately, as if the tyke was willing himself to be awake for the auspicious moment, little Denis' eyes flew open and gazed up into Fr. Killian's eyes. So caught up he was in the sudden appearance of the old priest's benevolent face, the babe cooed a greeting.

Holding the infant in his left arm with his hand supporting the baby's neck and head over the basin, Fr. Killian used his right hand to gather successive handfuls of water and cascade them over little Denis' scalp and the small tuft of red hair. "*Denis Francis Cahill, ego te baptizo in nómine Patris...et Filii...et Spíritus Sancti. Amen.*"...(I baptize you in the name of the Father...and the Son...and the Holy Spirit.)

"Are we done now, Father?"

"Not quite, Francis. There's no reason to rush these things."

"Aye, that is where ye are wrong, Killian. The devil is at the door and I'll not soften until yer back safely on the Stella Maris."

The old priest nodded, seemingly unworried. He took out a vial of sacred chrism, opened it, and wetted a finger in the oil. Then, making the sign of the cross in oil on the crown of the child's head, Fr. Killian anointed young Denis: "*Deus omnípotens, Pater Dómini nostri Iesu Christi...* The God of power and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin."

The prayers went on, seemingly forever, which only served Francis as a reminder of one reason he wasn't Catholic...they never stopped praying. *How do you ever get any work done?*

When the baptism was finally over and even before the guests had left, Francis persuaded Fr. Killian to say his quick goodbyes, and be escorted the eight blocks to the docks. Once there, Francis would see that the priest was sequestered on the *Stella Maris*. He had already paid the Catholic-friendly captain for the priest's passage. Then, sometime before dawn with the outgoing tide, the ship would slip away from the quay and the danger would pass.

But a safe exit from rabid hooligans operating with impunity under the guise of fulfilling the king's anti-Catholic penal laws was not to be.

As Francis and Killian stepped into the night and shut the door behind them, a dark fume of smoke passed lazily over the waning crescent moon. Neither Francis nor Killian noticed the fume, yet they both experienced a premonition of danger.

Francis carried an unlit lantern. They navigated their way toward the quay along the narrow streets mostly by the lights in the windows of closed-up cottages. They steered clear of a noisy pub, crossed through a cemetery, passed a ship repair yard, and finally turned down an alley toward the quay. At the end of the alley was a pub where sailors bided their time. Above the roof of the pub Francis could see the two masts of the *Stella Maris*. The ninety-seven foot yankee rigged, freight-schooner's masts and yards were outlined against the moonlit clouds that hung over the Irish Sea. The closer they got to the ship the more Francis was relieved

that he would see his mentor of many years safely to the ship.

As they turned the final corner next to the pub and began to cross the last hundred feet to the ship's boarding ramp, they were greeted by an unwanted sight. Francis' quick pace suddenly slowed. Keeping his eyes sharp and wide open, he pulled his cap down over this forehead so as not to be recognized.

Loitering near the ship's boarding ramp, in the light of the pub's open door, were five men that Francis instantly recognized as the self-appointed enforcers of Britain's penal laws. These were men with blood on their hands, pro-government Protestant vigilantes who spent their free time getting drunk and plotting revenge on Catholics. They were especially hostile toward priests.

Francis reached out, took Fr. Killian's arm, and pulled them both to a stop. There was nothing peculiar in the dress or behavior of Fr. Killian that would announce him as a Catholic cleric. But there was something about the way the men suddenly and purposefully turned toward Francis and his friend in the dark that announced they knew who Killian Doyle was. Perhaps they also knew why he was in Dublin.

Fr. Killian was Irish, and years earlier had been chased off the island because he was a priest who wore his Catholicism on his sleeve as a badge of honor. There would be those who would have recognized him. Perhaps a member of the *Stella Maris* crew knew the priest was violating the law by returning to Ireland and had alerted the anti-Catholic ruffians. Here they were, clubs in hand, waiting for the priest to return from his calling.

The five men, all large and hell-bent, lined up abreast and dared Francis and Fr. Killian to run their blockade to the ship's ramp.

Francis scanned the ship's deck looking for crew, mate, or captain that might come to their aid, but the deck was clear. He had expected a few mates to be loading cargo right up until the tide eased the ship out of the canal towards the sea. But there was no

one.

He turned his head to the door of the quay-side pub. The ram-bunctious noise inside had quieted down. Another half-dozen men edged their way out of the door, defiant looks on their faces, to watch what was about to happen.

How many other ways were there off the island, thought Francis? He surveyed the possibilities—perhaps a dozen. But it was too late.

“Killian, let’s go,” said Francis as he pulled on Fr. Killian’s sleeve getting him to retreat into the darkness of the ally.

“No, Francis. The ship is just there. Captain Terry will see me safe on board,” said Fr. Killian.

But before Francis could answer, there as a voice behind them. “Francis! Why you bring a popish priest to our town?”

Francis and Fr. Killian turned. Behind them, blocking their exit to the ally, were three men he knew well. Each held a menacing club in his grasp.

Francis cowered, hunched down in defense, trying to hold still the darkened lantern. “He’s, no...not, a priest, Sal. He’s a friend going back, now to...to France.”

“Francis, there’s no need of that.” Fr. Killian turned to the men with bars and clubs as if offering the sign of peace at Mass. “Aye, I am a priest and happy for it. God is my guide and judge.”

The hooligans closed in. One called out, bolstered and emboldened from the evening’s alcohol, “Git him, boys. No popish witch on these here sacred isles, I say.”

Francis saw the flash of white hatred in the group’s eyes as he and Fr. Killian were encircled. The clubs raised and swung in attack. Francis no more ducked one club but at once two others hit him squarely on the back and the side of his head. Instantly, he fell to the cobblestone quay. Warm blood ran down his neck. As he dropped, he caught sight of Fr. Killian receiving the greater number of deadly blows to his head and chest until he crumpled to

the quay's deck. Once down the thugs viciously kicked the priest in the ribs and groin. Finding his prayer book, they ripped out its pages. The green linen stole was yanked from his coat pocket and tied around his neck, then pulled tight suffocating him.

There was no yelling or screams, just the sound of lethal blows from wooden clubs to skin, bones, and skull. Crippled and in the way, Francis was shoved and pushed from the pile, then forgotten as if already dead.

Nearly exhausted, the vigilante Irishmen each gave Fr. Killian one last savage kick or cruel boot to the head. Then, covered in sweat with the drunken drool of mad dogs frothing from their gasping mouths, they backed away and surveyed their *good deed*. Finally, too spent to howl even verbal insults, they staggered back toward the pub—sweat, blood, and saliva dripped from their hands and faces. Entering the pub, they raised their clubs and fists in the air, saluting their demonic victory, and cheered each other as if their football team had just scored a goal to win the match.

Francis raised his head as best he could. Through his own sweat and blood, he trembled at the sight of the hooligans filing into the pub. Fresh ale was already being poured to cheers of celebration.

Not sure he could bear the sight, he nonetheless forced his eyes to focus on the lifeless pile of his childhood mentor and friend, dead on the quay, a few feet from the ship that would have carried him safely home.

Behind, on the ship, a tall and broad-shouldered man, dressed like the ship's captain, stood silent and still near the aft rail, his form silhouetted against the moonlit clouds beyond.

Francis dragged his body to Fr. Killian's and managed to sit up and hold Fr. Killian's head in his lap. He tried in vain to push hair, blood, and spit from his friend's eyes. Francis openly sobbed. Gasping for breath he rested his cut forehead on the beaten skull

of the priest. "Father! Father! Forgive me. I did not know. I did not know. But I should have."

Raising his head to look at the peaceful crescent moon now covered by a cloud, he yelled through what he now realized were broken teeth, "*God where is your vengeance? Kill the bastards or I will. I swear by Saint Peter. Why are you silent and just stand by while this holy man is, is...*"

Suddenly, there was a tug on his coat lapel. He stopped his wailing demand for vengeance and looked down into the face and the eyes of the beaten pulp of a man in his lap. The priest was still alive.

Through broken cheek bones and blood, Fr. Killian smiled up at Francis. "Francis? I made it. I kin't sin anymore. I'm all right, now." Fr. Killian coughed up dark gruel and blood. His breathing was labored and short. "Do you hear me, Francis? I made it. I kin't sin anymore."

Francis looked at the priest in astonishment, not understanding what the priest was trying to say between his last breaths.

"Pray...for me, Francis. I will...pray for him...for little Denis.... Yes? Count...on it. Hey? I kin watch over him...I be there for him. Fret not...dear friend." With a shallow smile on his thin lips Fr. Killian took his last gasp of breath, even as his eyes focused one last time on the mine laborer who tried to make sense of it all, the father of Denis Francis Cahill.

As the men's eyes connected, and Francis gripped the priest with all his remaining strength, as if to prevent life from slipping out of his body, Fr. Killian's body relaxed, and the ruddy skin quickly drained of blood. One moment the priest was full of life, and the next whitened, empty, and soulless.

For the longest time Francis held his friend's body in his arms like the Madonna held her Son after his crucifixion.

He sat there, exhausted, not knowing what to do. He was alone...all alone. Or so it seemed.

Then, as the cloud slipped away from the moon, allowing the quay to once again be engulfed in soft light, he heard a voice—at least he thought he did: “I can see it all now, Francis. I will intercede for little Denis. Fear not.”

Francis felt nothing but overwhelming guilt and remorse. How could he have let this happen? His dear Alice would be fearfully saddened and perhaps never forgive him for bringing Fr. Killian back to the city’s quay. He should have known better.

He had been crying for more than an hour. But now his tear ducts were dry. Tears no longer came.

Reverently laying his friend’s head on the cobblestone, Francis tried to stand, but he found it difficult.

Then a supportive arm and another, under his, raised him up. Two crew members from the *Stella Maris* helped him onto the ship. Captain Terry stood by the ramp and waved four other men off the ship. They scrambled to Fr. Killian’s dead body, hoisted it onto their husky frames and followed Francis onto the ship.

Captain Terry’s surgeon patched up Francis as much as he could. In the early morning hours the deck crew saw Francis away from the quay and onto the streets back to his home. Captain Terry also put a bag of money in Francis’ pocket equal to what he had previously paid for Fr. Killian’s passage. Terry, although not Catholic, was smart enough to know he didn’t need a curse on his ship for taking profit for the passage of a martyred priest. The captain promised Francis to deliver Fr. Killian’s body to his order in France.

Before dawn, the *Stella Maris* slipped its lines and drifted away from the quay with the outgoing tide and its sacred cargo.

As Francis staggered the last few blocks to his home, he relived the weight of the tragedy. He wished it had been him that had died and not the good priest. But for some unexplained reason Francis did not feel the deep remorse he thought he should have. Surely, as soon as he entered his house and his wife’s bed-

room where she would be asleep with the child, he would have to tell her what happened.

Remarkably, he felt a sliver of hope, as if, despite the murder and his own injuries, things would be good. But he could not explain why.

He stood outside the back door to his house but a moment, not wanting to track the blood of the encounter onto his doorstep. He looked up at the moon now fading into the morning sky. There were no clouds. There was a fresh breeze. The *Stella Maris* would be well on its way by now, and safe from the miseries of Dublin's evil.

As he reached for the door's latch, he had a vision of taking Alice away on a ship as well. What if the anti-Catholic sentiment took her life? He had not known that to happen to any woman, although some outspoken Catholic men had been hanged in the woods. They had openly confronted groups such as those that had killed Killian. Would they kill sweet Alice if they knew? He shivered—some of them probably did know. But what would he do in France? He did not know the language and there he would not likely find work, unless for slave wages. Still there was something in his mind that he wanted to better understand, as if Killian was already at work in the supernatural realm.

The sun was coming up and he would need rest. No work today. He would send a friend to the mine to substitute for him. He pushed the door open, but it was barred. A moment later, he heard the bar being removed and the door opened revealing Alice, very much awake. She flung herself into his arms. She had been crying.

Word had traveled back to Alice that Fr. Killian had been murdered and that her husband had been beat-up but spared. Frightened more for her son's life than her own she had barred

herself in the cottage, extinguished the lamps, and prayed. *Where was God?*

That little Denis had cooed himself to sleep in her arms was a divine consolation. Perhaps God was around, but not near enough for her. She had kept a lookout for Francis and when he came around the corner in one piece, albeit a bit bloody, she thanked God and unbarred the door.

When he entered the cottage, she could not restrain herself in holding his large frame in her frail arms and soothing every hate-filled wound with her loving kisses. The surgeon had done a good job, but she would do even better.

Shortly, Francis sent her out to find his friend Michael and ask him to take his place at the mine. She did and returned without delay.

While he ate a large bowl of warm porridge and goat's milk, he recounted the attack, the kindness of the captain, and handed over to Alice the bag of money. He apologized profusely for not being more religious and sensitive to her needs. But she had never thought of him otherwise. Together, they decided the bag of money was sacred and would be reserved for something special.

When Francis was done talking, she could not shake from her mind what Fr. Killian had last said: *"I will pray for him, for Denis. Count on it. I can watch over him now. I'll be there for him. Do not fret."*

But when it got right down to it, she was scared. She loved Ireland and her friends, but at what cost? She feared for her son the most. Being the mother of a young child changes everything. Francis, even with such a Catholic name, was safe. Technically, he was Protestant, although Fr. Killian's murder caused Francis to confess that he was embarrassed to be one.

Could they go to France where they didn't know the language and where Francis would have to work for a pittance? Here he had a good, stable job. Would they be safer to move out of the city

and further south where hooligans were fewer, but compassionate friends more distant? And what about work? Mine labor paid a lot better than farm labor.

By keeping her Catholicism under wraps, they had been safe these past tumultuous years. Unless they started holding meetings and causing a religious ruckus their lives were probably not in danger. Since there were only elections at the beginning of a new reign not much was likely to change.

But it was the Act to Restrain Foreign Education of 1695, one of a series of Penal Laws, that bothered Alice the most. She was barred from sending little Denis overseas for an education. The Protestant-controlled Irish Parliament was afraid foreign educated children would come back to Ireland as adults and, as had happened in the past, attempt to overthrow the government by seditions and open rebellion. The punishment for sending Denis to, say, France for schooling would result in the loss and forfeit of all their goods, chattels, trusts, lands, tenements, and all hereditary privileges for the rest of their natural lives. Not that she or Francis had any such trappings—rents, annuities, trusts, lands, tenements, or heritage. They didn't. They lived month-to-month, and only then, she was convinced, by the grace of God.

Months later, as little Denis grew, he often would wake from a nap and begin to fuss. Alice loved the spontaneity of such moments. She was needed. She was a mother, and she loved it. She put down her mending and stepped quickly to the cradle in their bedroom. As soon as she appeared and looked down at him, his little legs and feet kicked with delight and the dimples in his chin appeared with a little laugh. A quick check of his wool diaper proved him still dry. "Good boy," she congratulated him. "Are we hungry?" As if he understood perfectly, little Denis puckered his lips and made that all familiar sucking sound that sent Alice's milk aflow. "Yes, darling, you're empty and Mama's full. Let's fix that." Picking him up in her arms, little Denis' eyes grew wide

with the adventure of flight and then awe as he landed on her soft, full breasts. Wrapping a blanket about him, she cradled her son in a rocker, opened her dress, and satisfied both their needs.

As mother and child gazed at each other, Alice relaxed. The turmoil of her mind about their future made peace with the realization that neither of them were in any immediate danger. In fact, they were probably safe for a number of years. She would begin his education, teaching him to read, write, and speak properly. After all she was the one with an education, not Francis, although he could read a little. When it came time for more formal classroom experience there was an underground hedge school taught by a good man her mother had told her about. He might even be a Catholic priest in disguise as her mother suspected. Brave man. At any rate she was determined to keep Denis out of the government's Protestant boarding schools.

When Francis came home from the mines, he was usually tired. But after little Denis joined their family, she noticed an extra alertness in Francis' step and eyes. In the evenings he spent "man-time" with their son, which, at first, worried Alice. Francis would rough house with the boy making the child alternatively laugh and cry. She had been gentle with their son all through the day... "training him in the way he should go"...and then came this burst of energy from the giant in the boy's life. After a while, however, it became obvious that little Denis looked forward to Francis' return from the mines. The babe seemed to love the tumbling, and throwing, and teasing. He was always begging for more.

One night, after Francis cleaned up from work, something different happened. Little Denis had been rocking back and forth on the floor trying to understand the mechanics of crawling, when Francis picked up the boy, put him on his big lap, and sat before the fireplace just staring at the child. Meanwhile, Denis, looking for activity, kept busy climbing the mountain that was his father to inspect and pull at lips, eyes, nose and ears. Occasionally, Fran-

cis would look over at her, as if he wanted to say something. But he didn't. Instead, he'd go back to tickling little Denis' belly, causing the child to wiggle furiously. Alice was sure the child would fall head-first onto the stone floor, and often he did tumble. But never did he fall onto anything but his father's soft, outstretched hands.

At first such father-son play caused her to panic. After a while, however, she realized Francis was too careful to ever let Denis fall and hurt himself. She forced herself to relax...but only until the next time little Denis took flight.

At supper, Francis quietly held his son on his lap, and played at putting food in the child's mouth, which little Denis wisely spit out.

"'Tis not what the tyke's expectin'" Alice said.

Francis took his big finger, rescued the bean full of drool as it came out of the baby's mouth, and shoved it in his own and chewing wildly...showed the child how it was done. Little Denis stared wide-eyed. Francis would then open his mouth wide as if to swallow his son whole, "Notice, my son. 'Tis gone."

"Stay that," Alice teased. "He's likin' to try it an' choke to his grave."

"Aye, that he might." Francis chuckled.

"What's come over ye?"

"Me, Lass?"

"You's not what I was expectin'...tonight."

Francis got quiet and gently cradled little Denis with both of his large arms. "I had me a talk with Michael today...about Kilian. He was angry, wanted to kill someone 'imself."

"But he's not Catholic."

"No. But he's a good non-conformist, if you askin' me."

"What's he belivin' in, then?"

"Nothin' that he tells me."

"What then did you talk 'bout?"

Francis was quiet again.

“Out with it, now,” Alice teased.

Francis took a breath, held it for a moment. “Michael thinks there’s probably somethin’ special about our little Denis. Thinks he should be dedicated t’God or somethin’, insofar as a holy priest gave his life for him.”

Alice thought about that. “Does Michael know what Fr. Killian said about praying for Denis from heaven?”

“Aye, I told Michael that.”

The couple were quiet for a long time, when it was that Alice started to weep.

“Alice? What matter?”

There was another long silence between them. Alice collected her thoughts. “Do you remember the story from the Bible I’ve always found a favorite, ’bout Samuel and his mother?”

“Ah, ’haps not. You’re the scholar of the two of us. I lucky to read.”

“But you’ve heard it, I’m sure. She was barren. Like me. And she, like me, prayed that God would give her a child...a living child. She prayed so much that the priest thought she was high on the bottle and told her to put away her wine...except she wasn’t. She was praying. You remember me praying for a child, Francis?”

“Oh, Lass! Of course, I do. I do,” his voice quavered. “That is why Killian came. It was a miracle we both thinks.”

“Well, Samuel’s mother was so grateful that she did something any mother would find impossible. As soon as Samuel was weaned, she took him to the Temple, dedicated him to God, and left him there to be raised as a priest. She brought him food now and then, but he never again slept at home. She saw very little of him after that, it’s possible.”

Alice noticed Francis’ deep frown as he pulled little Denis closer. “Aye, I do recall the story now that you tell it. But, Alice, I’m not thinkin’ I’m likin’ what yer suggestin’.”

“Francis, I’m not suggestin’ we give Denis away to anyone. But I think Michael may be right.”

“What is it you mean?”

“We should dedicate him to God, and perhaps also to the Church...that he would one day be a priest.”

“What?! And be killed like Killian? Not in my lifetime.”

“Then, let it be him that decides it, when the time is right. But we can raise him with that in mind.”

“I don’t think Michael had that at all in mind.”

“Perhaps not.” Alice smoothed her skirt and looked around; she felt her tears still wet. “Do you remember the name of Samuel’s mother?” She looked deep into her husband’s eyes, willing him to recall.

He remembered. “It was Hannah.”

Alice nodded...

...and Francis cried.

It was then, they both knew that God would protect their child, and do something great with him—the son of Francis David and Alice Hannah Cahill.

3

My Despised Cyn:

We don’t give wreaths for participation, although we’ve been successful in getting humans to. We have been excellent at promoting mediocrity.

What a sorry mess you are as a demonic influence—an honorable title for your peers we suppose—but you have pilfered it for a laughingstock. What does it matter that another priest is murdered in his meekness? Yes, it upsets a few, and allows the haters to crow. But the priest’s soul is in Glory, not Perdition where all should be. Where is your loyalty, fool?

The only thing here worth celebrating is that we now

know the Cahill child is male, and that there's a fearful humility in his mother to dedicate him to God—that means the priesthood, which we must prevent. Can you do that? If so, the Devil be God! To allow this Cahill child to become a priest would be irreversible, even if we push him into some dark sin.

Again, the laws of Ireland are on our side for there are no Catholic seminaries on the Green Isle. For Denis Cahill to be a priest he would have to be educated outside, perhaps in France or Spain. How he ends up outside Ireland is going to be a stretch for his parents, for they would lose everything as your peers so wonderfully accomplished one-hundred years ago with the Act to Restrain Foreign Education. What a beautiful act of national, arrogant pride we have got the Irish into.

For the time being you can do little there. Get back to Pennsylvania and see if you can further disintegrate your mark's faith. Damn his humble wife, *Esther, a pain in Hell's rear. Perhaps we should dare to petition for her demise.

Eternally yours,
Master of Shadows

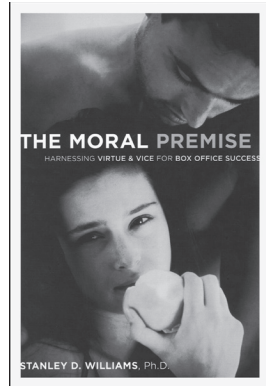
About the Author

Stan Williams is a writer and filmmaker, based in Michigan with occasional forays to Los Angeles and Europe. He's known as a story and screenplay consultant and workshop leader due to his book *The Moral Premise: Harnessing Virtue and Vice for Box Office Success*. The Wizard Clip story came to him from an ex-pat Filipino and emigrant to Australia who thought the Wizard Clip would make a good movie. Stan agreed, but figured he'd better write the book first. He and his wife, Pam, have three children and ten grandchildren. Stan holds degrees in Physics (BA), Mass Communications (MA), and Film Studies/Narrative Theory (PhD). www.stanwilliams.com

also by Stanley D. Williams
available at Amazon.com and NinevehsCrossing.com

THE MORAL PREMISE: Harnessing Virtue and Vice for Box Office Success
(Michael Wiese Productions publisher)

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