

FROM THE BACK COVER: An irreligious, fallen military hero is chosen by God to conduct a ten year old girl, the next advance in human evolution, through a perilous contemporary world. Fleeing from the murderers of her family, they find refuge at the home of a dying minister. There, they learn about Sin and Grace and how to conquer despair. But questions persist. Why is the government so uninterested in this child's fate? Who is pursuing them? Is the angel who guides them real, or a figment of the child's traumatized mind? And does there exist a life after death, with the universe having its own memory of all that once existed though in different form.

This powerful novel blends action with introspection to confront today's most challenging questions. It provides entertainment, guidance, hope, and impact which persists long after being read.

***Ghosts and Angels:
A Memoir***

***How, During an Epoch of Terror, Goodness
Vanquished Evil and Restored Faith***

Also by Stanley Goldstein

Fiction

Lies In Progress

Park West: A Novel of Love and Murder and Redemption

Nonfiction

Troubled Children/Troubled Parents:

The Way Out

2nd Edition

Shopping For A Shrink:

Finding The Right Psychotherapist For You Or Your Child

Sound Advice And Stories To Change Your Life

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locations, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

I will save you from the hands of the wicked
And rescue you from the clutches of the violent.

JEREMIAH 13:,21

Therefore shall Heaven be shaken,
And earth leap out of its place,
At the fury of the LORD of Hosts
On the day of His burning wrath.

ISAIAH 13:13

That, like voices from afar off,
Call us to pause and listen...

—Longfellow, *The Legend of Murderer's Creek*

Contents

Editor's Note 4

Introduction 8

Chapter One 14

Epilogue 324

Appendix A: Declassification Document
for *Ghosts and Angels* 329

Appendix B: United States Senate
Select Committee on Intelligence Document 332

Appendix C: United States Department of Justice Memorandum Opinion 334

Author's Postscript 343

Editor's Note

...at each epoch the world was lost, and at each epoch it was saved.

— Jacques Maritain

...on the subject of ghosts. I do not in the least pretend that such things cannot be.

— Charles Dickens

Paulie phoned me eleven months ago. When we last spoke nineteen years before, he had looked and sounded much like his present day namesake on *The Sopranos* though being shrewder and more talkative. He wanted to hire me.

“I'm not looking for a job.”

“It's not the typical freelance gig,” he told me, in his wheedling fashion which I still remembered. “Think of it as being this year's mitzvah*.” Hearing these words, I suddenly remembered my Italian grandmother's advice to be wary of non-Jews when they use Jewish expressions.

“Like the favor you did after that last meal at my house?”

“You have nothing to complain about,” he said, sounding hurt. Which was doubtful for no one had as thick a skin as Paulie. “You got an agent and book contract in three weeks. With Puzo's publisher too! How many new writers get that break?”

Though he knew that wasn't what I was referring to, Paulie was right. I still owed him and he had called to collect.

“How is Denise?” I asked. My ex-wife was no longer a painful subject for me.

“She's having our fifth child. Seventeen years to the month after our first,” Paulie proudly informed me. Removing Denise from my life was something else I owed him for: they running off together had ended our stormy marriage. Yet I still cared about her and was grateful to Paulie for making her happy. But I was puzzled why he called me now and pressed him about this.

“The manuscript of an autobiography badly needs editing. It's a rush job and my boss begs you to do it.”

*Literally translated, a *mitzvah* is a *commandment* though the term is often loosely used to mean any act of human kindness which is intended to help one come closer to holiness and God. According to the teachings of Judaism all moral laws derive from divine commandments of which there are six hundred and thirteen given in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible).

“I'm a writer. There are plenty of editors around.”

“These pages need someone who thinks like the author. You both have doctorates. He's a mathematical physicist and Denise said you have a background in science.”

“College calculus and physics. My last books were thrillers with religious themes.”

“That's how we'll be marketing this book. And we'll say *you're* the author.”

Now I was really suspicious for no writer gives up credit for their work unless they absolutely must. I sprawled and prepared myself for a long story. “Tell me about it.”

“Read it first. *Then* give me your answer,” he pleaded. “There's no way to contact the author and I don't know how much of his story is true. But the manuscript sat for months on government desks waiting for clearance. Where it would still be except for the pressure from a senator who's also a minister. This is a touchy point.”

His congenial lie—that we *must* get together soon—followed, and our conversation ended. I agreed to read the book because, like I said, I owed him.

It arrived at my door the next day, four hundred pages held together by two large binder clips. It was typed and paginated but far from ready for publication, being undivided into chapters and written in that style typical of scientists who use multi-syllabic words where a small one would do. So after calling Paulie and agreeing on my fee, I created its chapters, shortened the sentences and simplified the language*, and took out all of the mathematics and most of the technical terms.

“Change the title. It's too long and will never sell,” Paulie had instructed me, and I did. But I anguished even as *Ghosts and Angels* went into production, feeling that the author's original description was more accurate: *How, During An Epoch Of Terror, Goodness Vanquished Evil And Restored Faith*.

Of an earlier time, Anna Freud wrote about the power of the individual to battle tyranny, stating that “for every gang of evil-doers...there is always at least one 'just' man or woman ready to...sacrifice his or her own good for fellow-beings.”**

This book tells how, sixty years later when freedom again became threatened, it was saved by individuals: a wounded soldier, an orphaned girl, a dying minister, and perhaps another.

*Though all of this book has been cleared for publication by the required government agencies, I have left the original security classification of documents intact.

**Gardiner, Muriel (1983) *Code Name “Mary”*. New Haven: Yale University Press, p. xiii

Despite Paulie's offer I left these pages unsigned, being unable to decide whether I wanted my name to be associated with this book. For I'm convinced it isn't possible that what the author described could have happened. Unless—*unless*—ghosts and angels *do* exist.

Introduction

*"You've worked on crime victims before. Why was she so different?"
"Because of the expression on her face...and that there was no blood left in her."
United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Hearing – Appendix B*

"...foreign nationals who engage in domestic terrorism...are violating international law and not protected by provisions of the Geneva Convention which govern the conduct of war. Thus they may, following their apprehension and without judicial oversight, be immediately deported from the United States for whatever further actions are deemed necessary."

United States Department of Justice Memorandum Opinion – Appendix C

*Fate leads the willing and drags the unwilling.
—Seneca*

At first there was just blackness. Then came a memory: my bullet wound from long before when I was losing blood, shock set in, and my thinking grew foggy. But now I felt increasing self-control as my consciousness slowly returned. I heard the murmur of quiet machines. Then the sound of a door opening and closing with the smooth precision clicks which one associates with well constructed automobiles and prisons.

I unsealed my eyes cautiously, being afraid that opening them to the brightness would increase the dull throb in my temple.

When my eyes were fully opened I found myself lying on a metal bed in a barely furnished room with whitewashed walls. A soldier sat in a chair at the foot of my bed. An officer was seated in a corner of the room. Turning my head to the right, I saw a white enameled night table holding a clock. When I tried moving toward it I discovered that my left leg was shackled to the bed.

Another soldier then entered the room. He was dressed in the same odd military clothes which the other two wore. Like theirs it had a Mandarin collar which could be worn up or down. Its color wasn't the traditional American army uniform of green for woodland combat or gray for urban warfare or sand brown for desert fighting. This style was new and I remembered reading about it in an alumni newsletter which had been mailed to me from the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.

The uniform's color was derived from the United States Marines' MARPAT camouflage scheme. It had a digital pattern which suggested colors and shapes without actually being them, as if one were viewing an incompletely downloaded photograph. Instead of traditional buttons this uniform had zippers. Insignia and patches were fastened with Velcro, not sewn, and placed on the front rather than the side. Moreover, boots were now suede brown and not the usual polished black.

This soldier's name tag read, not surprisingly, Smith, and he allegedly held the rank of colonel in the United States Army. My ability to grasp these facts made me realize that my thinking abilities had recovered enough to permit me to risk speaking and to be interrogated.

The man seemed short though from my prone position I couldn't be certain. What I felt surer of was that despite his uniform and insignia he was no ordinary soldier, that this was no conventional hospital, and that my interview was being recorded and likely broadcast elsewhere.

The man seated himself gingerly on the hard wooden chair by my bed as if his back hurt, leaned his expensive Coach briefcase—certainly not military issue—against the chair leg, and hung his beret from the edge of the night table. He had balding gray hair and a warm smile which left his shrewd gaze untouched.

After folding his hands over his stomach he crossed his legs as if preparing himself for a long talk. He spoke in a soft, even voice. His powerful build contrasted with his gentle, almost feminine manner, one which he may have cultivated to deceive the unwary. Intelligence plus deception is a highly successful combination, I reminded myself, echoing a line from the *Eton College Chronicle*. This is a dangerous man.

"Welcome back," he said.

"Where am I?"

"In a hospital room. You were shot. The bullet just grazed your forehead but we kept you sedated to help you heal."

"How long have I been unconscious?"

"For four days."

"That's not the usual treatment is it?"

"No, but we're not a typical hospital," he said with a small smile.

Suddenly I remembered—"Holly," I screamed, and tried to raise myself.

The guard at the foot of the bed immediately moved towards me and I focused on the large pistol in his shoulder holster. But the colonel waved him off and, after placing his hand against my shoulder, forced me down with a strength which I didn't expect from someone nearing sixty.

"She's down the hall and doing fine," he said. "Being so young, we woke her three days ago. Since then she's been playing poker with a nurse for dimes. I staked her with ten dollars in exchange for half her winnings and she was up seventy three dollars as of an hour ago. We already let her see that you were OK—she wouldn't eat otherwise."

The man lied persuasively but I knew Holly was dead. There was no way she could have survived *that* afternoon. No way. But because he held all of the cards I played along with him.

"When can I see her?"

"Maybe soon, maybe never," he said smoothly, as if he had prepared this response in advance. With experienced interrogators you can never tell for sure. Then I used my only ace.

"I realize that I'm just a British Green Card holder but the U.S.A. is still a nation of laws. What if I insisted on seeing a lawyer?"

"There's none on this base to take your case. You're in Azerbaijan on a facility under that nation's jurisdiction. But we do control a non-denominational cemetery here," he added pointedly. "Besides, even in America no lawyer valuing his career would represent you: the crazed scientist who murdered ten people including clergy and children. Though there's an even better reason why no one but us can help you."

"And what might that be?" I asked, gritting my teeth and trying to keep a snotty tone from my voice.

"Because," he said slowly and using words which drained all hope from me, "both you and Holly are officially dead. Her funeral is this Sunday. There's a closed casket ceremony to hide the evidence of your sadism and a moving tribute which I wrote myself. Students from her grade will be there. The Connecticut governor too."

To confirm this he removed a Greenwich newspaper from his briefcase and laid it on the bed. "It's three days old."

ENGLISH SCIENTIST KILLED AFTER MURDERING TEN. TORTURED BODY OF KIDNAPPED GIRL FOUND, the blunt headline read.

"It wasn't like that," I said, with a sense of resignation.

The colonel opened his Mandarin collar with an awkward gesture as if being unfamiliar with it. He glanced towards the corner of the ceiling where I noticed the glint of what was probably a video camera lens.

"Yes, we know. But only some of it," he murmured in a surprisingly understanding tone. "And now you can tell us the rest." But then his voice hardened. "Which better be everything if you hope to get Holly back to America."

Why did I break then? Because, upon hearing her name, I hungered to spin words into colors and make Holly live even if only in speech. And to be permitted to return to America and mourn at her grave, the final refuge for the child I risked loving and failed to protect.

So I did tell him everything—even what I wanted to forget. Plus some matters he may not have been allowed to know. Like the questionable reliability of the W-76 atomic warhead and my work with Pulsed Energy Projectiles. Not unless his security clearance went as high as mine once did. Had I really been a "crazed scientist?" Sometimes, I admitted to myself.

"Can I have some water?" I asked, wanting time to organize my thoughts. The colonel nodded and a gray uniformed nurse quickly entered the room. She placed a tray with two bottles of Poland Spring Water on the side table. After holding the straw to my lips for a long sip, she returned the bottle to the tray and left the room.

"It all started with my first sight of Holly," I said. "She was drenched with blood." Then, surprisingly, tears flowed down my cheeks though I had never cried before. Because I so rarely shared my feelings, I thought. The colonel placed his hand on my arm and, soon, I began my story—which was unlike any he could have heard before.

A tale of love, tortured bodies, and an unsolved riddle concealing the power of the universe. About a girl in danger; a dying minister's prophecy, and his unusual explanations of pain and Sin and Grace. Then, finally, how when America battled extraordinary evil, the Heavens intervened. Yes, a ghost or possibly an angel joined the fray. Which, being a scientist, I knew must have sounded crazy. Except that it really happened.

Chapter 1

The leaves will whisper...and if you listen she will call.
Edwin Arlington Robinson, *Luke Havergal*
...rescue came in the nick of time out there/from this little mite by me.
Ibsen, *Terje Vigen*

I felt as if I existed only so long as I was loved by Julia who grasped the sadness of my life more clearly than anyone I knew. I could not understand her but nothing else seemed to matter. Only later did I remember the saying of Walter Badgett, that people are most credulous when happiest; and the older proverb I should have paid special attention to: be careful for what you wish since there is always a price to pay. Yet probably I always needed Julia—or a woman like her—to raise my emotions to that level by which other people live.

Though feeling controlled by her will there is only one test of what I wanted: what I let happen. For despite the frequent searing pain our relationship left me with something priceless: a glimpse of joyfulness, a faint sense of optimism and home.

And this figure looked so like Julia. Both even had the same rose tattoo on the left arm: a purchase after her divorce. But I knew it couldn't be Julia for she was dead I reminded myself. Maybe not, I still hoped, as the figure slithered towards me.

Although she was forty when we met, six years older than me, Julia had always looked younger: a “genetic gift” from her otherwise inadequate mother she explained. This enabled her to dress youthfully as she was now. Denim jacket. Embroidered suede skirt. Long necklace. Even her makeup—peach and pink—reeked of youth, I noted, for this was one of my rare dreams in color.

The figure undressed seductively as she approached, a knowing smile on her face. Her short jacket was closed with only one button. She opened this while she walked and cupped her breasts in her hands. But suddenly—as I lay naked awaiting her on the bed—she froze, reacting to a low whimper originating from outside of the room.

Then the figure—Julia?—continued towards me. Her lace bra dropped to the ground and, as I stared at her small pointed breasts, she smiled and massaged their nipples. By the time she reached my bed her panties had joined the rest of her clothes and jewelry on the floor. I noted the odd sight of her completely shaved pubis: though I preferred this, Julia had always left a small tuft of hair.

The figure hovered over me and kissed my face. But then she again froze, responding to the same sound I had heard earlier. Like from a wounded animal protesting the pain which it could not understand. Quickly, although it couldn't be soon enough for me, the sound disappeared and Julia was in my arms. "You're gorgeous," I murmured as I had so often in the past. Running my fingers down her arm, across her belly, inside her. She moaned and stroked my face until the strange cry again interfered. Now it was closer, louder, more insistent.

Slowly—struggling not to—I opened my eyes and found myself sprawled on the auto seat with the car door open and the usual foul post-alcohol binge taste in my mouth. Julia—or whoever the figure had been—was gone. Except for her increasingly faint image which I could still dredge up and a feeling of moistness on my face.

That was the first moment I felt the terror which, without warning, had already entered my life. Though in that instant it was from my realization that reality could never equal fantasy and I hadn't fully valued Julia until I lost her and would never have her again. Not in this life.

Dreams are wondrous things, I reminded myself as I rubbed my cheek. Which *did* feel wet. Then, in the illumination of the overhead car light, I saw that my fingers were colored blood red. Moving the seat's lever, I jerked to an erect position and searched my face in the makeup mirror but could find no cut.

Now I heard the same sound which had roused me from my dream and moved towards where it seemed to be coming from: a few feet outside of the car. There, in the dim light off its interior, stood a girl of about ten. She was dressed in a sweatshirt with "MIT" logo and pajama bottoms with grinning characters from the Peanuts comic strip. Some were difficult to make out for they, like her hands, were stained everywhere with blood to a degree which couldn't have been from small accidental cuts.

"Pleeze," she begged in an exhausted desperate voice. Then she collapsed into my arms.

End of Chapter One

Copyright © 2011 by Stanley Goldstein.

All rights reserved.

Note: While this text is accurate, its formatting differs in the printed and E-book editions.