

Hidden Holocaust

[Author's Note: I've always been pro-life. I don't want to get into any arguments over it here, but I've heard the arguments for both sides and always end up in the pro-life camp. At a time when moviemakers shy from showing violence against cute puppies, I find it curious that people slide right by the fact we routinely end the lives of over a million human fetuses yearly, just in this country alone. I'll share a secret with you about my writing—all of my stories, be they faith stories, or erotic fantasy, have a moral component. I suppose I can't get away from it—it's how I'm wired. In this tale, I set up the opposing forces, then took a step back and—as quick as you can say, “Deus ex machine”—tried to look at the whole subject from *someone else's* viewpoint, THE third party, if you will. – T. H. Pine]

As I drove to the clinic, I was seething inside. I had just had an argument with my editor, Frank. He was sending me on yet another insignificant assignment. I told him I was getting tired of all the cub reporter jobs: ladies' auxiliary teas, Boy Scout award ceremonies, dedications, obituaries. After all, I had been on the paper six months! I pointed out that I had graduated at the top of my journalism class at college. I needed some *MEAT!*

Frank aimed that look of his—like he was observing some form of lower life under a microscope—and stuck his large, and very *hard* forefinger into my chest. “Listen, Joseph Pulitzer. I don't care how many classes you graduated at the top of, you gotta get *street smart.*”

Frank had come onto the paper as a mailroom boy. He worked his way up through just about every job on the paper, finally ending up as Assistant Chief Editor. It almost sounds like a “B” movie, starring Pat O'Brien but, from what I had heard, he had been a pretty darn good reporter in his day. The only thing was—it was no longer the heyday of Walter Winchell. Things were different—it was another world out there. The way I saw it, you had to change with the times.

I could see that Frank was not in a mood to reason with, so I ended the argument in the only way possible, while trying to maintain some dignity. I turned on my heel and stomped out. Somehow, I didn't feel too dignified.

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So...here I was behind the wheel of my beat-up car, on my way to cover a group of abortion clinic protesters from some church. I mean, it was all *done* before—a real snorer. I had a pretty low opinion of those wild-eyed religious fanatics. I mean, their only goal in life was to save the seals, the unborn, or the world. I was definitely not in the most positive frame of mind and hoped I didn't cross swords with some Bible-thumper.

An orderly group of picketers greeted me when I stepped out of the car. They walked quietly in a circle on the walk in front of the clinic, carrying signs. A couple of hecklers stood with the front door open, occasionally shouting some taunt. No one broke ranks, or shouted anything back. They just marched. Occasionally, one would break from the circle to hand an incoming patron a pamphlet. Sometimes, a passerby stopped to chat awhile with one of the picketers. I must admit, I didn't expect this. So much for fanatics.

A delectable blonde, marching with the picketers, caught my eye. I wanted to find out what a dish like her was doing hanging around with a bunch of Jesus freaks. The thought of a possible date wasn't the farthest thing from my mind either. I just hoped it wasn't to some Bible study, or to hear some long-winded preacher. I walked over to the circle of picketers and waited until the young woman swung toward me.

“Hi.” I used my most charming voice. “I'm Doug Esteban from the Clarion. May I ask you a few questions?”

“Sure!” she turned on a thousand-watt smile, and stepped from the circle.

“Tell me. Why are you here?”

“We’re here to protest the merciless slaughter of innocent lives. We feel those tiny lives have just as much of a right to life as we do, even though they can’t speak for themselves.”

“Don’t you think that’s a little simplistic?”

“Would you consider it simplistic to plead for your life, or the life of a friend or family member, if someone decided to end it?”

I was becoming a little uneasy with this beauty’s answers—she also had brains. “Er, you have a good point. But let me ask you how you can be so sure about these aborted fetuses when the Supreme Court can’t seem to reach a definite conclusion on when life really begins.”

“Our authority is the Word of God, not the supreme court, as to when God considers a person to be alive.” She pulled a small Bible out of the back pocket of her jeans, and began riffling through it. “It says here in the Book of Psalms—”

“That’s okay. I’ll take your word for it.” I wanted to avoid being beat over the head with the Good Book. “Look, don’t we have enough people in this world? After all, there are starving millions out there.” I figured that ought to fix her.

“Is the answer to the problem of over-population and world hunger to kill the innocent? Statistics prove that seventy-percent of the abortions performed in this country are for convenience, not because of poverty or health reasons.”

This young woman’s answers did not fit my picture of religious fanaticism at all. In fact, when looking at this from my reporter’s perspective, I had to admit she made a lot of sense. I decided to go along with it and see where she took me. After all, I was stuck on this assignment anyway. Maybe I could play up this angle in my piece.

“You know, you make a lot of sense, er, what did you say your name was?”

“Kathy. Kathy Maynes.” She looked a little wary at my change of tack.

“I’d like to know a little more about your church, you know...for my piece. Could I buy you a cup of coffee?” I pointed to one of those ptomaine trucks across the street.

“I...” She looked back to her friends and came to a decision. “I suppose so. What exactly would you like to know?”

We walked across the street, I bought her a cup of coffee, and we moved to a nearby bus stop bench. I asked a few perfunctory questions. As she warmed to her task, I got down some pertinent notes. She didn’t ramble or rant. She spoke articulately and with authority, occasionally looking up a reference in her ever-present Bible. She sure knew her way around in it. I finally came up with a zinger, so I tried it out on her.

“Suppose you got careless, and found yourself pregnant. I mean, a beautiful young woman like you must have, well, several male admirers. With all the ramifications it would have on your life, your career, wouldn’t you consider an abortion?”

Kathy blushed, but didn’t flinch. “First, let me say that I believe we are to observe God’s standard of holiness in our lives. Women shouldn’t get themselves into that position in the first place.”

“You mean to tell me that your God doesn’t allow for a healthy sex life?”

“Yes, but within the bounds of marriage. I fully intend to enjoy healthy sexual expression with my husband, if that’s what God has in store for me.”

“Pardon my rudeness, but you haven’t ever slept with a man? I mean, you look to be in your mid-twenties, right?”

Kathy straightened a little, thrust out her chin, and said, “I’m twenty-five and no, I haven’t.”

“You expect me to believe that? A good looking woman like you?”

“I really don’t care if you choose to believe it or not. It happens to be the truth. To finish answering your question, if I did find myself pregnant due to my own sin, I would certainly not compound that sin by killing the child. How would that correct my misdeed? I would simply be increasing my guilt before God.”

This was too much! Here we were, in the latter half of the Twentieth Century, and this gal was talking like Carrie Nation! Had she flipped out or what? I rethought my position. Maybe I *could* play up the cult angle. This one sure sounded brainwashed, for sure.

Just then, a change in the general ambiance diverted my attention. The picketers across the street had been singing some religious song while I interviewed Polly Puritan. Suddenly, everything went quiet. Even the scattered taunts of the hecklers had stopped. The cause of this became evident.

The picketers had stopped circling, and stood in lines on either side of the sidewalk. A man walked between those lines. He had longish hair, and a beard, and wore a robe and sandals, like an extra out of a Cecil B. DeMille sword and sandal epic. He walked right up to the front door, pulled it open, and went in. Kathy ran across the street and I followed closely behind.

This story was taking a turn I hadn’t anticipated!

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As I followed Kathy in the door, I almost ran into her, for she had stopped short. A little ways down the hall, the robed man stood silently observing the scene of panic that occurred around him. He just stood there, turning his head slowly from side to side, as if *absorbing* the chaos all around him.

A balding, portly man in a white shirt and a tie walked up to this enigmatic stranger. I took him to be the clinic director.

“See here! You can’t just....” He stopped in mid-sentence.

I was seeing all this from behind the robed man, so I’ll never know what kind of a look he gave the director. The man broke down and began to sob, his shoulders heaving as he stood before the strange figure, unabashedly, openly, crying like a child. The tears just ran from his eyes, as he stood transfixed by the stranger’s gaze. Then he turned and walked back to his office, crying all the while.

The robed man began walking down the hall, toward what I figured were the examination and procedure rooms. A few nurses and assistants made a perfunctory attempt at stopping him, but wound up in the same condition as the director. I wished I could see what his face conveyed, to reduce people to sobbing heaps!

The stranger finally stopped and turned to the left in front of a doorway. As I saw his face in profile, I could see that tears were streaming from his own eyes. On his face, a look of unutterable sadness enveloped his features. I had never seen anything like it in my life, as if the grief of the entire world rested there. Yet, as I looked at his face, I couldn’t remember the next second what its owner actually looked like. Strange. Unconsciously, tears started from my own eyes, and blurred my vision. I wiped them away and, when I looked up, I saw the robed man enter the doorway. Since no one was there to stop me, I followed.

As I entered the room, it confirmed my suspicions that it was a procedure room. In the center an examining table stood, partially obscured by a curtain. A woman lay on the table, her feet in the stirrups, obviously about to undergo an abortion. I averted my eyes out of modesty. The attending doctor turned abruptly to confront this robed intruder. There was a look of anger and annoyance on his face.

“What do you think you’re *doing*, man! This is a medical estab—”

The result was predictable. The doctor stopped in mid-sentence, his invective silenced. Yet, he did not cry. I moved around to where I could get a look at the robed man's face. A look of righteous indignation had replaced the sadness. Don't ask me how I knew it was righteous indignation, I just did. He turned, as if getting out of the doctor's way and, raising his left arm in a pointing motion, gestured toward the door in the classic, *Go!* command. For the first time, he spoke. "*It is inevitable that stumbling blocks should come, but woe to him through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble.*" ^[1]

As he spoke, the doctor walked from the room, his head bowed. The robed figure turned to the woman on the table and the medical assistant standing next to her. The assistant wept. The woman on the table didn't move a muscle. He walked over to the table and looked down at its occupant. She made no attempt to cover up, but remained transfixed. He put his hand on her stomach. She flinched, but made no other move.

"Why do you seek to destroy the precious life within you? Does it not say in God's Word, *Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you?* ^[2] How can you know the plans I have for this little one, that you try to destroy his life, even as it forms in your womb?"

"The man who made me pregnant is not my husband, *master.*" (So help me, those were her exact words!)

"What you say is indeed true, but do not seek vengeance on the innocent one inside you. It cannot redeem your sin."

At this pronouncement, the woman broke down and began to cry. "Oh my God! Please forgive me! I...I had no idea!"

The robed man helped the woman to sit up, and assisted her from the table, leading her to where her clothes hung.

"You do well to invoke God's name. Go home and care for the life he has entrusted you with. Seek God out and he will take you over the rough places, for it says in his word, *How blessed is he who considers the helpless; the Lord will deliver him in a day of trouble. The Lord will protect him and keep him alive, and he shall be called blessed upon the earth.* ^[3] This is my promise to you. Go and sin no more."

"Y-yes, I will. Oh, thank you, thank you master! I'll try to do my very best."

"Do not rely on *your* best. Rely on God to see you through."

"Yes, master." The woman left smiling, her eyes upon the robed man until she left the room. I looked at him then, and he was smiling for the first time. Yet, it was a wistful smile, comingled with sadness. I thought of a Bible verse myself, something from my days in Sunday school. *...A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief...* ^[4] It seemed appropriate at that moment.

All of this Bible quoting was beginning to make me feel like an extra in a Passion Play. However, I didn't feel in the least bit cocky. This puzzling stranger's actions held me in awe. His words, instead of being corny, had the ring of absolute truth about them. I didn't doubt that what he said was true. I just believed it unquestioningly. In his presence, all skepticism vanished.

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The robed man led a procession of myself, Kathy, and some of the nurses and attendants, from room to room. Whenever we came across a woman waiting in one, the first episode was repeated, with minor variations. As we continued, the mood seemed to lighten. When he had finished, he walked without pause to the front door.

As he stepped outside, into the sunlight, a large crowd greeted him, complete with a mini-cam unit from a local TV station. No one had dared venture inside, and everyone was waiting expectantly. The robed man stood facing the crowd, looking from side to side.

I've read about how hushed a crowd can get, but to actually experience it is a different thing entirely. Goose bumps rose on my skin when I realized there wasn't a single sound from anyone. There must have been a couple of hundred people present and not one person was talking to the person next to him or her. There wasn't even a cough.

Finally, the robed man raised his arms in an embracing gesture. I thought of the giant statue overlooking Rio de Janeiro. He spoke then, looking at the picketers, his voice carrying easily, with a commanding ring of authority.

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing any more, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men." As he spoke, the picketers nodded their heads in agreement. Some of them had half-smiles on their faces. Everyone within earshot listened intently. *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."*¹⁵¹

"He's quoting scripture."

"Huh?" I said, surprised by the voice to my left. I turned, and saw Kathy. I had forgotten about her.

"He's quoting the Bible, from Matthew, actually."

"Are you sure?" Kathy gave me a look that erased any doubt.

The robed man continued. "You have done well to come here." He addressed the picketers. "Do not weary in doing this, for it is my will to preserve life. To those others of you here, let it be known that the Father in Heaven is the giver of life. Let no man, or group of men, treat it lightly. He watches from Heaven, and his judgment is sure. Consider this, all you who take the life of the unborn. Heed the words of my ambassadors!"

The enigmatic stranger ended his speech, dropped his arms, and walked calmly down the front walk, away from the clinic. As if a spell had been broken, the crowd began to mill about, as their voices rose in a confusion of sound. Shoved from side to side, I lost track of Kathy. I heard someone near me say, "Who was that guy?" Another, probably one of the picketers, answered. "It was Jesus! We were visited by the Savior!" I tried to look around, to find where the man had gone, but I had lost him in the crush. I worked my way out of the crowd, and came face to face with Kathy.

"Was I imagining things or what?"

"Why do people resort to doubting their senses when they encounter something out of their depth? It was real. You were there with me. We both saw it."

"No, no. I'm serious. That man had an effect on me I can't explain. It was like...like I didn't have any wise-guy quips left. All just I wanted to follow the guy, *wherever* he went. Am I crazy or what?"

Kathy's defenses came down a little now that she saw I wasn't kidding. "No, you're not crazy. I believe you. All of us had an encounter with the Lord. Call it a vision, call it a miracle, call it mass hysteria, but the Lord Jesus visited us here. I don't know how to explain it. I just believe it."

"You think it was *Jesus*?"

"Yes. I do."

I looked directly into Kathy's clear, blue eyes. There was not a hint of mockery there—or insanity. She meant what she said with all her heart.

“Look, when I asked you to join me earlier for a cup of coffee, I wasn't being entirely honest with you. I'd like to offer you another cup. This time I'll be straight with you. I really need to talk with someone. How about it?”

“Okay. Just let me tell my friends where I'm going.”

Fifteen minutes later, we were sitting opposite each other in a coffee shop. It was the most unique conversation I had ever had in my life. I thought my cronies and I had come up with some esoteric subjects during our bull sessions in college, but this capped anything we ever discussed.

Here we were, talking about a God capable of creating the universe being personally interested in mankind—interested enough to come down in the form of a man to do something about the Big Problem. That problem was something to which Kathy referred often. It was *sin*. An hour-and-a-half ago, I pegged Kathy for a bona fide head case. Now I was listening intently, not as a reporter but as someone whose life had taken an abrupt change of course. Gone were the probing, cynical questions. I asked questions all right, but for an entirely different reason. I genuinely wanted to *know*.

As Kathy warmed to her task, she remembered more and more of her Bible. The verses poured out of her, corroborating each point she made. I had no idea the Bible contained so much information. Nor, did I ever dream one person could know so much about a book that usually collects dust on a shelf, or coffee table. What she couldn't dredge out of her mind, she looked up. Before long, I felt like a nervous homeowner talking to a fire insurance salesman. Convinced and convicted, all I wanted to do was sign on the dotted line.

“Kathy, you speak as if you know this God of yours personally. Is it possible to know him like that? Isn't some sort of mystical happening supposed to occur?”

“No Doug, not at all. The Apostle Paul put it best when he answered a question from his jailer very much like yours. He said, ‘*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.*’”

“That's it?”

“Yes, that's it. However, make no mistake. It's only the beginning of a new life. Would you like to take that step Doug?”

So there it was. All my life I had been an idealist. I became a reporter, hoping to shape my life into the mold of a Murrow, a Woodward, or a Bernstein, and get at the heart of crime and corruption. Yet, as I grew older, bitterness crept in. Rage at the futility of it all lay at the heart of my glib cynicism.

Now, what seemed like the most absurd scenario of all confronted me. With all that was wrong with the world—all the pain and suffering, so much injustice and oppression, and so few people with compassion and decency—an omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent God who wanted to get involved in my life, personally, asked me to believe in him. The whole idea was so unlike anything I had ever considered, I figured only a being like God could have thought of it. It all made sense to me at that moment.

Kathy had been waiting patiently while I mulled these things over in my mind. A look of genuine concern lay on her lovely features. I asked myself how someone so gorgeous could be so compassionate, so selfless. It was this thought that pushed me over the edge.

“Your arguments are convincing. The God you speak of is different than the God I thought I knew about. Yet, at this moment, it all makes sense to me. It's all somehow *worthy* of such a God.” I looked deeply into Kathy's eyes. “When you asked me just now if I wanted to take a step

of faith, I hesitated. One thing, however, argues against my hesitancy. Do you want to know what that is?”

“Yes Doug, I would.”

“From the very first time I saw you, your obvious beauty captivated me. I singled you out because of it. Believe me, my motives were far from pure. What I didn’t expect was the person who lives behind the pretty face.”

“Doug, I don’t want you—”

“No, no. Let me finish. Just a few seconds ago, I wondered at how you could be so atypically selfless for so beautiful a woman. That’s when it hit me. If God could keep *you* so unaffected by your obvious good looks, make you the wonderful person you *are*, well, that was the final piece of the puzzle. I’m ready, Kathy. Whatever you say, I’ll do it.”

Kathy, a little nonplussed by what I said—and somewhat embarrassed as well—blushed up to her eyebrows, but she recovered quickly and continued. “Doug, I don’t want you to do this for *me*. Jesus is the one who can save you. You should come to him for who *he* is. Do you understand that?”

Kathy had misinterpreted my comments. I thought of trying to explain further, but merely replied. “Yes. I understand.”

“Then, Let’s bow our heads and pray.”

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I suppose the world would have to take the word of the people who were at the clinic that day, for the TV crew hadn’t gotten an inch of tape on the robed stranger. Oh, all the cameras worked just fine, but the tape merely showed an empty set of steps. Sound wise, there was only the distant hum of traffic—and the silence of the crowd. No one found the stranger later, or knew of his whereabouts.

I wrote my story and submitted it. It was not the story I had come for, and Frank didn’t like the religious overtones.

“Who do you think you are, the religious editor now?”

“I wrote what I saw, Frank.”

“No you didn’t. What you wrote what you *felt*. It’s too subjective.”

“No Frank, I wrote what I *saw* and *heard*. It happened just like I wrote. All the facts are accurate. I didn’t editorialize.”

“Yeah. That’s fine, *if* you’re writing a sermon. Unfortunately, this is a *newspaper*, not a pulpit.”

“You know Frank,” I began, my Latin temper rising, “you are undoubtedly the...the...” I suddenly felt a change of heart. I considered his position—the job he had to do. I had never done that before. I usually let my passions dictate instead. “Never mind. Do what you feel is best with the story. Good night.” I turned and started to leave his office.

“Hey, kid.” Frank tone sounded conciliatory. I stopped at the door and turned to face him. “Maybe if you ease up on the Billy Graham stuff a little, I could use it. There’s some good content here. Think you could do that?”

I looked at Frank, amazed. He had actually backed down, made a concession.

“Well? I haven’t got all night.”

“Uh, sure, Frank. I’ll get right on it, have it on your desk tomorrow morning. Okay?”

“Yeah. Now get out of here. I got work to do.”

As I drove home, I replayed the scene in Frank’s office. Was his change of mind because of my change of attitude? When Kathy said that God would give me a new heart, I was skeptical.

Now I began to see what she meant. Before, my only interest centered on *me*. Now I was beginning to see the other guy's side of it. I could hardly wait to see Kathy and tell her about it.

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I did a follow-up article on the women at the clinic that day. They now lived changed lives. Without exception, they took a new interest in the babies they now planned to carry to term. They were more than eager to tell of their encounter with the gentle stranger who wrought such a change in their lives. In fact, they all sounded like Kathy. I knew what they meant.

When I finished the article, I dropped it in Frank's inbox, and turned to leave his office. I almost collided with Frank.

"Whoa! It's not a good idea to run over the story editor."

"Sorry Frank. I just dropped off the follow-up article on the women at the abortion clinic."

Frank smiled. "You didn't pound the pulpit too heavy?"

I smiled back. "No Frank; wouldn't think of it." At that moment, I thought of Kathy and her candidness with me. She told me what I *needed* to hear.

"Frank, let me buy you a cup of coffee. I'd like to tell you a story."

^[1] Luke 17: 1, 2

^[2] Jeremiah 1: 5

^[3] Psalms 41: 1, 2

^[4] Isaiah 53: 3

^[5] Matthew 5: 13-16