

***Ghosts And Angels:***  
***A Memoir***  
***How, During An Epoch of Terror,***  
***Goodness Vanquished Evil And***  
***Restored Faith***

**Also by Stanley Goldstein**

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**STANLEY GOLDSTEIN**

***Ghosts And Angels:  
A Memoir***

***How, During An Epoch of Terror,  
Goodness Vanquished Evil And  
Restored Faith***

**WYSTON BOOKS, INC.**

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Goldstein, Stanley  
Ghosts And Angels: A Memoir/  
How During An Epoch Of Terror, Goodness Vanquished Evil And Restored  
Faith

A Novel/Stanley Goldstein  
1. Terrorism—Fiction  
2. Religion—Fiction  
3. Clergy Life & Duties—Fiction  
4. Military Life & Duties—Fiction  
5. Military Weapons—Fiction  
6. Scientist Life & Duties—Fiction

Library of Congress Control Number: 2010943084  
ISBN 978-0-9832326-0-5 (print)  
ISBN 978-0-9832326-1-2 (E-book)

Cover photograph by Tom Haseltine/  
Photographers Choice Collection  
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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*

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## 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?”

\*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).

“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.”

“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*.

\*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.

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.

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.

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

## 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 four 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.



## Chapter 2

*The academic mind is filled with alternatives.*

—author

*The fact of twilight does not mean that you cannot tell day from night.*

—Samuel Johnson

For moments I just stared at the dead weight of girl in my arms. Alcohol does that to you. It makes one uncertain what they are seeing and should do even if I was sure that the blood and the girl were real unlike the events in my dream. And, though I feel ashamed to admit this, I did consider walking away and staying uninvolved.

Because it had been my past heroic acts in the British army and with Julia which placed my life in free fall. Following which I concluded that there is too much pain and surprisingly little reward in being a hero. Certainly not with a child who, given my luck, I might even be accused of having injured.

Yet while I considered abandoning her I was already planning. My leg, which had been crippled during a past good deed, was starting to bother me. I would have to investigate further while sitting on the ground or in my car. But how *did* one talk to a child? There were none in my life and my having learned to cope with Julia's tantrums didn't qualify me to speak with this girl. Whose name, it then occurred to me, I didn't yet know. Finding out would be a good first step in opening communication between us, as they say in the best bureaucratic jargon. Also, a familiar question might help to pull her out of the panic she was obviously experiencing. So I cleared my throat and spoke with the calm, slow cadence which one uses with melodramatic girlfriends, traumatized soldiers, and terrified children.

"Hello. My name is Alan. What is yours?"

The girl didn't immediately respond. When she finally did it wasn't as if she saw me although I was directly in front of her.

"Holly." Her voice had the haunting atonal characteristic of one who is dying and had accepted their fate.

"Holly is a pretty name. Holly, I hurt my leg when I was a soldier. That's why I use the cane in the back seat. Can we sit in the car while we talk? Come."

I took her hand and she followed. Step by step we slowly approached the passenger's car door. I opened it and, because she then stood rigidly, I told her to lower her head so she didn't hurt it. After she seated herself I closed the door and walked to the driver's side.

When seated, I quickly began speaking. I was afraid that if I stopped

talking her frozen state would deepen or she would become hysterical. "You look really tired. I guess we're both tired. It's past our bedtimes and we should be asleep." I was about to add the words "in our beds" to my last sentence before thinking that her living nightmare had likely begun there.

Being a former soldier, I was accustomed to unpredictability and confusion. And the sight of blood was certainly familiar to me. But having to cope with an impenetrable child in a situation about which I lacked *any* information was not.

I felt that to keep her calm I should not yet ask what happened. But I wondered what else to say, having used up my capacity to communicate with children. Then I remembered a past experience.

Six years earlier, while doing research at the Institute, I was cajoled into teaching a summer class in introductory nuclear physics to a group of gifted high school youth. This was a pet project of my boss so his courteous request had left me no choice. Being an inexperienced instructor, I quickly used up my day's supply of lecture notes within the first few minutes of the class. Then, being forced to improvise, I told the students a story about the young Albert Einstein, in those days when he still worked in the patent office in Berne, Switzerland.

After receiving a colorfully scripted letter, Einstein threw it into the trash. He didn't realize that it contained an invitation to attend a ceremony at Geneva University where he was to be presented with his first honorary doctorate. Feeling that my time-consuming story should have some educational purpose, I advised the students to never immediately conclude the obvious without investigating. Using as an example that even such a popular term as "energy production" is incorrect since no force can produce energy. Rather, there are different forces in nature (gravity, the so-called weak force; electromagnetism, the so-called strong force) and their interaction can *change* one type of energy into another but the total amount of energy always remains the same.

So, years later when facing the terrified Holly, I also told her a story even as I thought how oddly I was behaving.

When confronting danger a person naturally seeks others. Yet I didn't take her to the nearest home for a phone and help. Why? Because (I concluded with my best scientific reasoning) I must unconsciously have determined that those who threatened her were close by and presented greater danger than the tiny sheriff's department on this Maine resort island could handle.

"Donald Duck was my favorite comic book when I was your age," I told Holly, "In one adventure his nephews, Huey, Dewey, and Louie, wanted to bake him a birthday cake but needed honey. When they climbed a tree to

get it they got stung by bees who didn't want anyone taking their honey. Those stings really hurt! Do you hurt anywhere?" These sentences were my non-threatening way to learn the extent of her injuries.

As Holly shook her head, I heard the crackling of brush and small animals scurrying past. Sounds I last heard years before during a nighttime battle in the jungle when I felt surrounded by moving things which seemed the stealthy enemy approaching. I was wet, cold, confused, and afraid because I couldn't sense where or how many they were. Now I felt that identical primitive dread and with it came the same certain knowledge: like vultures homing in on their prey, this bloodstained child was being hunted.