



Mortal Memoirs

"It is appointed unto man
once to die..."

*This divine edict can not be avoided or ignored.
Still, every law devised for mankind has its loopholes*

by
Barton Green

Premise

Mortal Memoirs is the personal journal of the legendary Lazarus. It is the hand-written record of his adventures, from his resurrection to this very day.

From the dark recesses of a burial cave, a man four days dead stepped out into the light. The mortal's name was Lazarus. If it is appointed to humankind to die *once*, then this dead man indeed fulfilled his quota. But after satisfying this edict from another world, Lazarus was then mysteriously called back from beyond.

From his after-life return, dead-of-night deportation and narrow escape from a Jerusalem assassin, to his Mediterranean ship wreck and ultimate arrival in France, the tale of Lazarus is one of personal enlightenment, profound inspiration, and fast-paced adventure. From the first century to the present day, "Mortal Memoirs" is the journal of every mortal's journey.

Chased In The Present By The Past

As with us all, Lazarus is chased by his past... **In the beginning** he is hounded by a secret alliance of Roman and Judean conspirators dedicated to silencing his "death-defying example." **By the Dark Ages**, Lazarus is a mythic epic, believed by some, discounted by most and feared by **The Inquisition**: This internally corrupt dynasty knows the truth of his existence and will stop at nothing to keep Lazarus from exposing the truth he knows about them... **In the present**, he is the sought-after trophy of **international terrorists**, who stumble onto his identity, and plot to use his ancient value as a bargaining chip to either rule or destroy the world which Lazarus has nurtured for nearly 2000 years.

The life journal of this "dead man" ultimately falls into the hands **Chalice Kepler**, a prominent 21st Century professor of Mythology. The supernatural encounter Kepler has with Lazarus, upon their 'accidental' meeting, combined with Kepler's expertise in history and ancient languages, propels the young professor into a quest to unlock the manuscript's mysteries... which, he hopes, will ultimately lead him back to the elusive Lazarus, again.

A Journal of One Mortal's Memoirs

Originally recorded in 'code', (a protection against the Inquisition), Lazarus' journal is

first considered an “unbreakable enigma” by the experts. But in the eyes of Professor Kepler, the Nostradamus-like quatrains and its ancient Kabala letter-skipping techniques are but simple security measures safeguarding the life story of a man who would consider Methuselah a youngster. Armed with that insight, Chalice Kepler uses the journal of Lazarus like a ‘telescope’. He peers back in time to events ancient, recent, great and small, yet all boasting one common element... the life-affirming involvement of the legendary Lazarus.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Lazarus (of) Bethany

Likable, highly educated, yet mysterious, Lazarus ‘appears’ to be 45 to 50 years old. *“I am not immortal”* he explains, *‘It takes more energy to start up a cold engine than it does a warm one. I was dead four days; for me to be re-started required an extra jolt. Though my body now resembles that of man before The Flood, I am not immortal. I bleed just like you...’* This risen mortal is a man of many vocations; teacher, gardener, theologian, craftsman, philosopher, monk, physician. His last most recent post was “Dr. Lazarus Bethany”, Professor of Antiquities at Beirut University.

Those who encounter Lazarus along his journey are amazed at his detailed knowledge of the past. He speaks many languages fluently, and easily adapts to different cultures. Lazarus Bethany possesses the ability to understand the nature of a person's deepest need, and how best to handle it. He profoundly affects every life in his path.

Although he freely offers his help and frequently dispenses insight to those who are "sent his way", this ancient man prudently keeps his personal past between the covers of his coded journal. Each episode reveals only a small piece of the Lazarus puzzle.

Professor Chalice Kepler

Reminiscent of his famous ancestor Johannes Kepler, the off-beat theories of college mythology teacher, Chalice “Al” Kepler (33 yrs) likewise get him noticed. He's regarded in many elite circles as the “Carl Sagan of modern mythology.” Publicly, he is invincible. But privately, young Kepler battles with the physical limitations of Diabetes, and the emotional torture of his most painful failure, the departure of his wife.

After stumbling upon Dr. Bethany and his journal (in Episode 1-“*C'est La Vie*”), the professor’s cluttered world – simplifies. Haunted by their brief encounter, Kepler eventually resigns his college post and sets out in search of Lazarus Bethany, using the journal as his compass.

In each episode, Professor Kepler deciphers another of the journal’s stories...and/or investigates a modern-day encounter with the journal’s ancient writer. In every instance, Kepler personally uses the insights he discovers to inspire others, to improve himself – as well as his own chances of, again meeting, *“the man who knows the questions I have yet to conceive.”*

Each story begins and ends with a deciphered excerpt from the hand-written journal, appropriately titled., “Mortal Memoirs.”

Centuries of Encounters...

The pages of *Mortal Memoirs* takes us through centuries of encounters with an endless array of characters; some seemingly insignificant, others undeniably profound.

Lazarus points **Joan of Arc** in the right direction, and helps Professor Kepler's astronomer namesake, **Johannes**, to 'focus'. During the **Black Plague**, he works side by side with **Doctor Nostradamus**, who warns him that, "*We are 'exceptions' to the rule, and the Inquisition does not take well to exceptions.*" Heeding the prophetic doctor's warning, Lazarus starts his own monastic order, **The Lazarites**; not only to be the 'Red Cross/Peace Corp' of the age, but to provide him with 'a cover', and a series of 'way station'- sanctuaries around the world.

In 1667, upon adopting the alias of *Lazarite monk*, "**Friar Bethanae**", Lazarus finds himself in a unique struggle with an off-spring of the Old Testament "**Nephelium**" (*the first vampires*). Together, the monk and the 'monster' perform the first successful blood transfusion, between a dying boy and a lamb-- (*an event actually recorded in our history books*).

In the 1800's, as the Friar, Lazarus influences the writings of **Mary Shelly**, and the paintings of **Van Gogh**. He prods a young Parisian boy into deciphering the secrets of **Rosetta Stone**, and comforts the internal anguish of **Robert Todd**, the only surviving son of the sixteenth **President, Abraham Lincoln**.

As a medic with the French forces of **WW1**, Lazarus, now known as *Dr. Lazary*, helps both the living and dying to physically *see 'the other world about us.'* In August 1917 the diaries of the French, English and German soldiers present, all record seeing an "*army of angels*".

As a teacher in a small village school, outside of Munich, Lazarus saves a young **Albert Einstein** from falling off a mountain during a class trip. And in the process he shows the young genius how we are all connected, 'relatively' speaking.

Stopping **Millennium-New Year's Eve** traffic, Lazarus attempts to talk down a jumper from a big city bridge, by telling the man the tale of another despondent soul's final leap into **the Great Beyond...** And he helps a wounded American veteran of '**Desert Storm II**' cope with the reconstructive surgery that leaves him with the face of **Saddam Hussein...**

Whether it be **The Holocaust, man's journey into space, race rights, Rock, religion; or the common struggle of every mortal to find their life, face their death, or to imagine what comes next**— through it all, Lazarus remains steadfast. Like a massive planet, he draws the meteors of mankind just close enough to change their direction.

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Constructed from historic facts, wives tales, and documented accounts, *Mortal Memoirs* traces the extraordinary resurrected life of the Lazarus, from his grave to this very day.

"...I'm not immortal..."

Attempting to explain the wonder of his resurrection and "youthful" appearance, Lazarus reasons: "...The ancient writings record that a young girl was dead only a few hours, before The Rabbi raised her back to life. Likewise, "The Widow's Son" was a corpse for almost two days, when the Teacher happened by. The main distinction between these individuals and myself is the length of our deaths. The young girl's absence can be estimated in minutes. The boy's departure can be gauged in hours. Yet my demise alone is measured in days. My lifeless cadaver laid rotting in a tomb for four long days.

"It would seem logical that the longer a body remains in a state of death, the harder it would be to revive. Therefore, I believe that having been dead the longest, with massive physical reconstitution necessary, more power than usual was needed. It takes more energy to crank up a cold engine, than to turn over a warm one.

"That up-graded jolt of other-worldly power not only called me back from Paradise, it re-vitalized my already stinking carcass - right down to my genes. Simply put, my constitution has been re-energized by such a dose of supernatural energy, that the metabolism of my resurrected body now closely resembles that of Methuselah, the oldest recorded life. Still I have only little more than doubled his 969 years.

"I am not immortal. I have simply had a unique encounter with a Power greater than myself. In doing so, I have fulfilled my quota. I have satisfied the requirement to endure natural death "once". I do not necessarily have to die again. However, if you cut me, I will bleed. If you put a loaded gun to my head and pull the trigger, like any mortal, I would perish. Like you, I too am aging - but not as rapidly; because I have experienced a measured portion of the same power that the scrolls say will one day open EVERY grave."



SAMPLE CHAPTER
From MORTAL MEMOIRS' first tale

"C'est La Vie"

by Barton Green

Journal entry

Trois Février, 1667

"It is appointed unto man once to die..."

The words are ancient, haunting. They form an edict that can not be avoided or ignored. Written down in the language of man, this heavenly command describes mortality's only predestined act. Even the mortal who first penned this insight has long since fulfilled his portion of its truth.

The statute is centuries old, yet with the whimper of every newborn its jurisdiction over humanity is daily renewed. To the majority of the living, its eight simple words are a sentence of execution without appeal, a slave's chaffing shackle, an ever-depleting hourglass. Yet here, in the foot hills of my adopted France, these words are welcomed, even cherished. In this land of plague, inquisition, and famine, this divine law is not reviled, but relished. Its command is a kind of emancipation.

"It is appointed unto man once to die..."

The eight-word Edict is part of the Sacred Book that rests on the altar of our monastery; and I, being the proprietor of this mountain abbey, have read it often. Over the years I have witnessed the callous results of The Edict's boundless rule. Yet on occasion I have also observed that, like every law devised for mankind, this decree of death also has its loopholes. And it is the existence of such exceptions that compel me to chronicle what I have seen, firsthand.

In this land I am called Friar Bethanae. It is not the name I was given at birth, nor the vocation I aspired to in my youth. Still, it is who I am today. For safety's sake my old name is rarely spoken. Suffice to say I am a man of many experiences; none the least of which took place over the evening just passed.

Although I am weary from the ordeal, and the folds of my bed beckon, I must record the details of those moonlight hours while they are yet fresh. But because this tale is an exceptional one, I must inscribe it mostly in the northern language of the Anglos. For at present, the English words come easy for me and hard for The Inquisition. That probing priesthood of exclusion does not tolerate the existence of any “exceptions.” Daily their prisons, chopping blocks, and bon fires implement their blind arrogance. They do more to populate Heaven with their sentences of death, than they accomplish with their masses and homilies. Therefore sadly, prudently, this record is not for their perusal, but rather for those who practice discretion with a feeling mind and an intelligent heart.

By rendering this episode in English script (which I have been told all nations will one day comprehend), I hope to sketch a glimpse of humanity so vivid, that all who experience it will chisel its image into the granite of their understanding. For without wisdom mortals perish *before* their “appointed” time. And indeed, “*it is appointed unto man once to die.*”

For one particularly plagued soul this ultimate destination was reached last evening. And serving as his reluctant escort on that final furlong, I likewise encountered an experience which has but one rival. It began just after sunset with a pounding at the abbey door...

At first hearing, the rumble seemed just another roll of thunder from the canopy of black clouds hanging over the valley. The rain, which poured from the dark billows, had fallen in relentless, blinding sheets for the better part of the day. So it took me a moment to recognize that the thunderous pounding was in fact a drenched soul standing just outside my door.

As I picked up a lantern to investigate, the mental image of a water-logged caller awakened my sense of dread. In this region no one dared venture out in such weather; for each soggy fool who did so seemed to be the next to exhibit the gray pustules of *Le Charbon*, the Black Plague. This being so, as I reached the vestibule and laid my hand on the latch, I concluded there could be only one mission that would prod a countryman up the rocky pass in such a downpour; it could only be a matter of life and death.

Lifting the bolt from its cradle, the thick wooden door swung open. Its sustained creak was quickly drowned out, however, by the deluge of wind and rain pummeling the threshold. Raising the lantern and thrusting it out into the elements, my eyes fell upon the silhouettes of two trembling figures huddled under a leaky swatch of burlap.

“Bonsoir Friar,” a breathless voice shivered from under the covering. As they stepped closer to the light, I recognized the mud splattered faces of Henri and Luc Ducant, the brothers who ran the ferry in the valley below.

“Mon Abbot, your skill is needed in the village.”

Perceiving the ominous timber of Henri’s voice, I inched the lantern a step closer and discovered that their faces were not splattered with mud, as I supposed, but with blood.

“*Entreé!*”

Pointing them toward the fireplace just off the vestibule, I leaned the full weight of my slender frame against the door, and pushed. As it slowly closed, the noise of nature’s fury diminished just enough that I could hear the labored breathing of my visitors. The staggered cadence of their heaving chests told me of their fatigue and anxiety. Their exhaled breath, visible in the firelight, filled the large stone-walled room with an air of foreboding.

“C’est mal, Friar,” Luc the elder groaned, “it is bad.” Shrugging off his water-logged coat into a puddle around his feet, he anxiously stretched his blood-stained hands out toward the hearth. Rubbing his palms together as though washing them in the warmth, Ducant shivered, “It has happened again.”

His unshaven visage of deep, leathery lines framed a set of old eyes which had obviously witnessed a horror. The expression spoke volumes, still I pressed the ferryman for more. “Happened?” I repeated the obvious, “again?”

“Oui,” he replied, “This time a child, a boy.” His head tilted down, his shoulders drooped, allowing a trickle of pink rain to fall from the bridge of his nose. “Blood is everywhere. You have to come. S’il vous plai, you *must!*”

Ducant’s plea was direct, put in words as common as the rain. Yet in his voice I sensed a lingering something as potent and unexplainable as the lightening in the night sky. Instantly I felt a rush of uneasy anticipation. My senses flushed.

“Where is he?” I inquired, setting the lantern on the hearth’s mantle.

“We took him to the café at the crossroads. The child appears to have encountered the same animal that attacked Marcel’s sheep yesterday, just up river.”

I searched the ferryman’s eyes to find a reason for my uneasiness. But only the glaze of mortality stared back.

“The café owner, Gino; he is a fine cook,” Henri shivered up along side of his elder brother, “But he’s no physician.”

“And Doctor Baptiste?” I probed.

“Summoned to Provence five days back. No doubt the weather has detained him.”

Another roll of thunder echoed over the mountain, sending a discernable trimmer through the rafters above us.

“It grows worse,” I observed, glancing up at the groaning crisscrossed beams.

“So does the child,” Luc pressed. “With the doctor away, you are the boy’s only hope. Please, say you will you come with us.”

In the pit of my belly a giddy apprehension grew; the kind I experienced as a boy, exploring the dark caves of my homeland. Like those Palestinian caverns, I sensed there was more to Ducant’s plea than met my eyes. Something awaited me; *this* I could feel. Something, or someone was lingering in the darkness, at the bottom of the hill. But what? Who? And how did I know?

Without a ready reply for the brothers I moved to the stew pot simmering over the hearth. Removing the cauldron’s cast-iron lid, I retrieved two bowls from the mantle. “I would not be a proper Lazarite if I did not *first* tend to *your* inner beings. Please,” I motioned the siblings closer, “come warm yourselves with some broth.”

As the soaked pair shuffled closer, I leaned over the pot and dunked the ladle in deep. The act of stirring the kettle and gazing into the fire always provided me with a moment to myself; and I needed the reprieve. The flame’s dancing light shut out the surrounding world. And the circular motion of the broth focused my thoughts; which, at the moment, were likewise swirling.

“A *proper Lazarite...*” The words I had just spoken echoed in my head, reminding me of my place, my inescapable post. Tending to the bodies and souls of fellow mortals has been my assignment forever, it seems. It is a difficult, thankless vocation from which I

have seldom had a holiday. I have witnessed more than one human's share of The Edict's power. Yet I continue on; tending, tolerating; the chosen of an ancient monastic order; '*a proper Lazarite*'. This life-long post I alternately adore and deplore. Yet I would never willingly give it up. It is my purpose, my reason for living. For me, *c'est la vie* - such is life.

Still, as I leaned over the pot, deep in thought, a reluctance gripped me. "*A child is dying.... But it could be a trap. The Inquisition's hunters are known for their subtle schemes. What do I do?*"

Everything is a choice, fraught with risk. The very thing we *think* we should do, can be done at the wrong place or time. The wrong choice, made at the right moment, could be a waste of precious energy, or not change a thing. Even the most thoughtful, well-intentioned plan can turn out to be the most regrettable act of one's life. We never know the purchase price of a choice until after the selection is made.

Yet, there have been occasions when I have wanted to turn a different way but, for some reason, did not. And it is that unexplainable persuasion which has kept me from countless disasters.

As I turned the ladle, I felt myself reluctantly being drawn into the mouth of an unexplored cavern. The contrasting options whirled in my head as the broth swirled in the pot. '*What do I do?*' I stared into the hearth's dancing lights, like a moth drawn to flame.

"The broth, it smells good. .. Friar? Mon Abbot?"

The sudden voice over my shoulder brought me back to my stone-wall surroundings. Looking up, I gazed into the blood-smeared face Henri; the younger, larger Ducant. His towering frame was bending low, extended his long arms down toward me. In his massive hands he cradled a bowl of half-served soup.

"The broth," he smiled, "perhaps a little more, no?"

Realizing my lapse, I nodded my head and dipped the ladle from the kettle into his bowl twice more.

Holding the steaming stew up to his face, the young ferryman drew his shoulders up about his wet ears and savored the aromatic heat. The warmth filled his lungs. But in the

midst of this pleasure, I watched his half-closed eyes fall on the red stains that matted the cuffs of his sleeves, and Henri's broad chin began to quiver.

"So much blood," he whispered softly, unable to turn his eyes from the stains. "We found him just as we were docking for the night." His voice was distant, barely audible above the crackling fire. "The covered torches along the pier reflected something odd in the wake of our paddles. Through the gray rain, there was this clump of red bobbing against the shore. Since I was already soaked by the downpour, I jumped to the pier, tied off the bow and went to investigate." His account was whispered, reverent; as though he were describing the ritual of the Sacrament to a blind man, while sitting on the front row of St. Peter's, itself.

"From the looks of him, the lad had been mauled, torn a part. His neck and chest were nothing but a gaping, bubbling wound."

"Just like Marcel's sheep," Luc added, taking the second bowl from my hand.

His elder brother's interruption gave Henri a moment to visualize his next words. But the image he envisioned only conjured up a well of tears in his staring eyes. The gush reflected the flickering firelight.

"There was so much... red!" Shaking his head as if trying to dislodge the image from his mind, the younger Ducant's voice broke. Struggling to choke back the swell of emotion building in his broad chest, he gripped the bowl tightly.

"So defenseless!.. So very young!..." The words escaped his trembling lips in a high, choked-back pitch; like steam from a boiling tea pot. "He was about the age m-my Antoine would be now.. if ..if only..."

"If *what*!?" A sudden growl of aggravation erupted from the other side of the fireplace. "If only *what*, Henri?" Luc's old eyes squinted. The younger took a step back, trying to avoid what looked to me a familiar confrontation. "Tell us! Tell the Friar... *If what*?! If things had been *different*? *If* the sun were the moon? *If* water were flame? *If* La Charbon had not taken your little girl? Please! Henri! Enough! This must end!" Luc grasped his sibling's wet sleeve and tugged, "She is dead, let her go!"

The image of the clashing brothers balancing their bowls of broth, reminded me of Jacob and Essau; the Old Testament pair who quarreled over their dead father's estate.

Watching the Ducants in the firelight, it struck me how little the basics of this world truly change. Everywhere I have journeyed Death leaves a legacy; an inheritance to be claimed or released. Some struggle to possess the tangible spoils left by the departed. While others are themselves possessed; holding on to their decomposing memories until they, likewise, are in danger of spoiling- like Henri.

“Let Antoine go?!” the younger ferryman repeated in disbelief. “She was a part of *me*, Luc! Antoine was the part that was suppose to live on. She was my only chance -- no, *our* only chance for the family to continue. You expect me to simply forget that I had a daughter? Should I toss away her memory as easily as throwing another log on the fire?”

Henri’s nostrils flared and he began to pace about the room like a wounded bull.

“It is time, brother,” Luc persisted turning in place to follow the animal with his eyes. “For more than two years there has not come a sunrise that you have not evoked her name. Let her go! It is time, Henri! Everything ends. So must your anguish - and *my* long suffering of it!”

From my vantage point, looking up at the arguing pair, I realized that the child in the village was not the only one bleeding. One brother suffered from deeply inflicted grief; and the other, from the denial of his own unattended despair.

“Friar,” Luc turned toward me in desperation, “YOU tell him. Tell my stubborn brother that everything ends!”

With those words my inner eye adjusted to my own dark cave, at least enough to take my first exploratory step. Looking up into Henri’s sad face, I nodded my head slowly and gestured toward Luc, “Your brother is right. Your life will never move forward as long as you are anchored to the past.”

“Oui, Henri,” Luc interjected, “listen to the Abbot.”

As I rose from the kettle and laid a hand on each of their soggy shoulders, the younger Ducant lowered his eyes to the floor.

“I know you loved your child,” I continued softly, “I am sure she was a joy to your family. She was the triumph of your young life. But her brief time here is over. Yours is not.”

“Tell him, Friar,” Luc nodded agreeably, dipping his spoon into his steaming broth. “Antoine has slipped from your sight- but hear me,” Purposely I placed my forefinger under Henri’s bowed, still-trembling chin and I raised it just enough so the two windows of his soul could look into mine.

“Not *everything* ends, Henri,” I whispered, “You will see your daughter again.”

The ferryman’s eyebrows slowly raised and he lifted his large frame back to its full height. “What are you saying?”

Luc cocked his head, halting the spoon halfway to his lips. “She is dead, gone!,” he wrinkled his old eyes. “*Everything* ends.”

“Her life ended Luc, but *she* did not.”

The two glanced at each other, then back at the madman they suddenly perceived me to be. The fog of their mortality was thick.

“I will see her again?” Henri’s voice returned to its wistful reverence. “H-how?”

Stepping past them to the woodpile resting against the stone hearth, I pulled a shard of kindling from the stack. Tossing it into the flames, I turned back to the mesmerized pair and attempted to burn away their blinding, mortal fog.

“That piece of young tree,” I pointed to the burning shard, “will never have the chance to grow tall and large. It will never know the joy of holding a Robin’s nest in its arms, or shading the sun from lovers carving their names in its trunk. Yet look at it,” I gestured to the glowing embers, “its attributes are warming this room, filling it with light, accomplishing its purpose here, at its appointed time. But all too soon it will be gone, consumed ...at an end. But *we* are not wood.”

Slipping my hands into the cuffs of my woollen frock, I crossed my arms and studied their bewilderment. Their confused gaze, reminded me of my own indecision. And I realized that my words were not only for the Ducants, but also for the boy within me, hesitating at the brink of the unknown, waiting at the bottom of the hill.

“Though our allotted days are consumed in the heat of love, impatience, anger and regret we are not incinerated, like kindling. Our nature absorbs these volatile experiences. If we are wise, we use life’s heated moments to stoke the glowing embers of our individual understanding - our illumination; so that we might shine the

brighter. We are not wood, but living, thinking beings capable of accomplishing far more than a sliver of kindling.”

“This may be so, Friar.” Henri wrinkled his brow, “But how can the loss of my only child possibly be a good thing?”

“Everything has a purpose, Henri, a reason for being at a specific moment in time-- Your daughter’s birth, her brief life, her death, your reaction to it, even your presence here on this night, in this storm. We should not shy way from these heated moments, but rather experience every flicker of its flame. Such illumination is meant to burn away our imperfection. It is designed to enlighten and guide us toward our appointed destination.”

Moving back to the hearth, I directed their gaze once more to the flame. “At our appointed time we each rise from the cinders of our flesh, like the smoke, and fade from earthly view. But retaining the glow of all that we experience here, we continue on toward a light far brighter than the fire of a thousand hearths.... We are not wood. We do not end.”

“Mon Abbot you are a man of God, no doubt. But h-how do you know these things?”

“*Enough!*” Luc bellowed again in disgust, banging his empty bowl against the stone hearth. “All of this talk will not change the past. Nor will it raise the dead! It only wastes time for the living!” Bending over, he picked up his soggy coat. “*The living*, Henri! Remember us? *The living?* Your wife Louise...my Maria... that ravaged child who hopefully still breathes! We did not come here to dwell on death, but prevent it!”

Throwing his coat about his shoulders, Luc shot an impatient glare in my direction, and pointed toward the foyer door. “Well, man of God? Whether the boy lives or no, your services are needed.”

Ducant’s old, anxious eyes tugged at me. The heat of the hearth’s flames on my back prodded me forward. The cauldron in my belly was a conflicting swirl of Lazarite duty and growing dread. And in the tense silence of the moment, another roll of thunder rumbled through the rafters.

“It grows even worse,” Luc prodded, glancing up at the creaking beams.

“Yes,” I admitted, forcing a hesitant smile, “and so does the child.”

“So, you will come?” Henri whispered, pushing his blood-stained cuffs back into the confines of his soggy coat.

“Of course,” I bowed in priestly fashion. “I am not wood. How could I refuse?”

The question was rhetorical, but my sense of foreboding would have gladly welcomed another option. But the unexplored cavern, just ahead, remained dark.

If I could have only known the price of my choice *before* it was made. Freewill ...there is nothing free about it

Further Episode Samples

“Gimme Three Steps”

Tim Wynn has never lived up to his family name. He’s always been on the losing end of things. Although intelligent, he constantly paints himself into a corner. To say that he has a low self image would be an understatement. Every time he gets into a jam his only response is to run. And each time he feels that urge, he hears himself voice the same desperate plea, “Please, just gimme three steps (for the door).”

On one of these occasions, during his attempt to escape an exceptionally unforgiving loan shark, Tim literally runs into Dr. Lazarus Bethany. (*The present-day Lazarus*)

The two fall into a conversation which eventually culminates with Lazarus noting, “We’re placed in this world to accomplish certain things, the most important of these being self improvement. But ironically, the one thing we can not see is our self. You can look at me and point out my faults, and I can look at you, and list yours. But only I can change me...and only you can change you.”

“Life would be a lot easier,” Tim confesses, “if we were able to see our self as we really are.”

“Yes,” Lazarus replies, with a twinkle in his eye, “I can see how that would help.”

In that instant Tim Wynn spots the loan shark coming around the corner. And in typical fashion, Tim panics and whispers his standard prayer, “*Please, just gimme three steps.*” Before the words are out of his mouth, he turns and takes three steps off the curb—directly into the path of a city bus! The impact propels Tim’s body ten feet into the air, and he hits the pavement with a thud.

From the loan shark’s perspective, it is an accident no one could survive. Grinding his teeth, he marks Tim’s debt “uncollectible” and leaves.

Bethany manages to break through the gathering crowd, kneel on the pavement, and take the young man's hand. After a few tense moments Bethany then stands and pulls Tim to his feet. The crowd is amazed. The young man is shaken, yet checking himself for injuries, he finds none. However, after taking three steps, he turns... and watches himself get up off the pavement.

"This is what you asked for," Bethany explains. "You're three steps ahead now, and able to see yourself as you really are. Take careful note. Watch yourself; or you'll end up right back where you started."

* * *

BEACON MCFEE

Born the night Halley's Comet blazed across the sky in 1910, young Beacon McFee grows up with his eyes on the stars. On Christmas Eve 1920, Dr. Lazarus Bethany, his father's best friend, gives the ten year old a brass telescope, and tells little Beacon that he and Mark Twain have *"much in common. Twain was born when the Comet came around in 1836 and he died when the comet came back around - on the very night you were born. If you use this telescope wisely, one day you'll be able to tell the world a story far better than any tale Twain ever spun."*

McFee's father adds with a laugh, *"Twain always said, 'I came in with the comet and I'll go out with the comet.' And sure 'nough, he did! ...Keep lookin' up Beacon, the comet's comin'!"*

His father's jest overshadows Bethany's important words and unintentionally paints a picture of impending doom for Beacon McFee. The boy soon grows to feel that the return of the comet will, like Twain, mark his end, as well.

...Beacon McFee uses Bethany's little telescope and eventually becomes an astronomer; not only to quench his fascination for the stars, but to also keep an eye out for the return of the ominous comet.

Meanwhile, in a distant land...Three reporters are assigned to cover the peace mission of the King's personal envoy to *"..that turbulent province at the remote edge of the empire."* Ordered to dress "like the natives" so to not arouse controversy, and to report weekly for their "evening news", the correspondents board their ship -and head for Earth.

Landing in the desert, the trio brave the salty, sandy atmosphere of Palestine and follow their "beacon-star" to the pre-determined location of the envoy's arrival. Instead of photographs, they hand-sketch the sights of earth for their weekly news briefs and transmit both their combined audio/video "sketch reports" back to their world, on a "fax-like" transmitter. However, when they finally reach the Bethlehem site, they are surprised to discover that the King's envoy did not arrive by ship --but by birth!

As the trio quickly race back to their spacecraft to report this late-breaking news, they carelessly drop a scroll of sketches, detailing such unusual sites as: the earth and moon

from space, and a strange, but recognizable aerial view of the Jerusalem/Bethlehem region.

The bundle of sketches land at the feet of a young boy, who upon glancing at them immediately chases after the three camel riders. Although the lad runs after the strangers, his short legs are not fast enough. And standing on a nearby hill, out of breath, he watches in awe as the trio's spacecraft roars off into the sky. As the sound of the ship fades into the clouds, the boy hears his mother calling him;

"Lazarus! its dinner time, where are you boy!" Turning for home, he answers his mother and hides the treasured sketches under his cloak.

In space, the alien reporters discovers that the salty, sandy air of Palestine has crippled their machinery. They struggle to escape earth's atmosphere, hoping that the void of space will allow their weakened transmitter better reception. However once free of earth's gravity, it becomes apparent that their ship is beyond repair. And they veer off course directly into the path of an on-coming comet.

Knowing that there is no hope of escape, the three reporters resign themselves to their fate and calmly program their last transmission. Placing a hand-drawn illustration of a newborn child, (complete with umbilical cord), into the "fax-like" machine, the trio file their final report detailing the surprise visit of the King's Son to the undeserving planet call Earth.

Upon depressing the "SEND" button, a beacon antenna activates on the outer hull of the ship and begins broadcasting a high-pitched series of beeps. The comet then smashes into the spacecraft, "shish-kabobbing" the antenna section into the ice. The comet roars on, now carrying with it the continuing "beeping" transmisson of the reporters' message.....

On Christmas Eve 1985, BEACON McFEE, (now an aged professor of astronomy), is surprised to find an ageless Dr. Lazarus Bethany at his front door. In the midst of their greeting the telephone rings; it seems that McFee's excited observatory students have made a baffling discovery. Their radio telescope has tuned in "..strange signals that seem to be emitting from the approaching Halley's Comet!"

Hearing the news, McFee's face turns white. Bethany has arrived just in time. With the help of Lazarus' finally-revealed sketches; Beacon McFee, his students, and the world at large, eventually discover that the comet is not a heavenly symbol of impending doom, but rather an everlasting message of hope ...passing by earth every 73 years.

*All stories and concepts represented
in this document are registered with WGA.*

Overview**Book One**
"C'est La Vie"
by Barton Green

Ferry men LUC DUCANT and his younger brother HENRI struggle to find the bank of the Rhine river, in the middle of a torrential downpour. Out of the gray mist they spot a small patch of red. It is a boy, mauled by some vicious animal. The brothers take the half-alive child to the nearest shelter, the Crossroads Pub. There they find a group of half-dry patrons already on edge thanks to PEARCE BECKWITHE; a scary, chalky-pale, aristocratic man sitting alone, nursing a mug of ale.

The brothers, with the assistance of pub owner GINO and his daughter CELIA, discover that the village physician, Dr. BAPTISTE is in Provence, and not expected to return anytime soon, given the weather. It is decided that the only hope for the boy are the Monks, perched high in the foothills in their monastery. The brothers dread the climb, especially in the rain. But if the boy is to be saved - climb they must.

There they persuade the Abby of the mountain monastery, FRIAR BETHANAE to journey down the slippery slope to tend to the dying boy...

Upon the arrival of the Friar and the brothers quickly determined that the boy has lost too much blood to survive. The ferry men are saddened by the news, especially Henri, who still grieves for his own deceased child. Seeing that there is little they can do, the brothers slip out to check on their storm-tossed ferry.

The pub customers likewise begin to leave: Finding themselves nestled between a chalky-pale 'plague carrier' and the sight of a bloody, dying child, the majority decide to brave the dangers of the rain. Taking advantage of a lull in the storm, the population of Gino's establishment quickly dwindles to five weary souls; Gino, Celia, The Monk, the dying boy, and the brooding aristocrat, Pearce Beckwithe.

Friar Bethanae soon notices in the child's eyes a "connection" with Beckwithe. The Monk tries to solicit the young man's help. He refuses, choosing rather to sit in the shadows. "I just want to be left alone." But the Friar is a better judge of character. He knows there is 'something' between the quiet young man and the weakening child. And after some persistence, the two men begin to talk.

Eventually, Gino and Celia drift off to sleep, leaving only Beckwithe and Friar Bethanae to maintain the death watch over the weakening lad. As the rain pounds the roof, their idle conversation turns to lofty observations and deep questions, such as;

“Why do bad things happen to good people?”, “Is there really a God?”, “If so, why would he allow this to happen to a child?”

Arguing against the reality of a Deity, the despondent, ashen-faced Beckwithe recounts for the Monk events from his life...

~ Pearce Beckwithe's Tale ~

Born in 1525, Pearce Beckwithe grows up in the English village of Lincolnshire. His fondest aspiration is to attend Oxford. But his meager station in life, as the son of a shoemaker, makes that dream impossible. His father, a staunch protestant, is accused of harboring a fugitive from The Inquisition. And although the senior Beckwithe argues his defense eloquently, The Church, under the dictatorial hand of **CARDINAL THOMAS WOLSEY** refuses to be made the fool. In retaliation, Wolsey contrives evidence and sentences Peter Beckwithe and his wife to the dungeon. The Cardinal then confiscates the family's land and possessions, and “requisitions” their son, 11 yr old Pearce, in exchange for “court costs.”

Young Beckwithe's first recollection of Wolsey is being torn from his mother's arms, (*by picking the boy up by the shoulders*), and ‘handing’ the kicking, screaming child to an assistant, dressed in priestly robes.

Pearce's early years are spent in London's royal court as valet and later personal secretary to the Cardinal. During that formative time young Beckwithe takes on every menial task Wolsey can throw at him. He does so in hopes of one day winning his master's recommendation Oxford's Christ Church College; which, in turn, would earn him a station and salary adequate to purchase the freedom of his incarcerated parents. But that day never seems to arrive.

Wolsey, aware of Beckwithe's aspirations, has no intention of elevating the lad. Doing so he would be losing a perfectly good pawn in his twisted game for more power. Thus Pearce grows to despise everything about the Church, his Inquisition duties, and especially Wolsey.

Sensing the boy's growing frustration, Wolsey attempts to pacify his “prisoner”. To gain young Beckwithe's allegiance, he feigns compassion for the boy's ailing mother. After spending nine years in the dungeon, the Cardinal ‘uncharacteristically’ commutes her sentence, so she might die in the relative comfort of Pearce's small bedroom. Although grateful for the few days he has with her, Pearce's distaste for the cunning Cardinal grows.

Beckwithe soon discovers just how ruthless and greedy Wolsey can be:

During the height of the English Inquisitions, there is an occasion when a land-rich physician is brought before the tribunal on suspicion of heresy. It seems the wealthy-eccentric doctor had been experimenting with the theory of blood transfusion; which the Church deemed to be “*tampering with God's domain.*” In his defense, the doctor

explains in detail the experimental process of bottles and tubes, and how vital blood is to the survival of mortals.

During the testimony Wolsey's attention is not focused on the doctor's deeds, but rather on the land-rich defendant's vast collection of DEEDS. Knowing that the Cardinal would do anything to 'acquire' them for his personal treasury, Pearce surmises the experimenter's fate. Frustrated by the injustice, Beckwithe deliberately hides key evidence he knows Wolsey could twist to his advantage. Still, the crafty Cardinal discovers Beckwithe's ruse. But even though he takes note of the boy's insolence, Wolsey does not reveal his discovery. Instead, though deprived of Beckwithe's hidden evidence, Wolsey shows the boy who has 'the real power.'

In a blatant display of his ruthless greed, Wolsey charges the doctor and his assistants with "*consorting with familiars*" and making "*...the cold weather last devilishly long.*" He sentences the group to be burned at the stake in order to "*...raise the mean temperature of the province.*" And of course all of the property of the condemned is confiscated by the church—Wolsey. (See Foxe's Book of Martyrs p 329_334 paperback).

The Cardinal's outrageous charge and harsh sentence goes unopposed. And Pearce grows to feel that he is nothing more than a helpless scribe to an all powerful Pharisee.

In 1545, the prominent Sir William Askew family from Beckwithe's home village comes under the political attack of the Church. The Askew's are forced into giving up their property, (which is, again, the real motive behind their arrest). Their daughter, Cassandra, who was once Beckwithe's childhood playmate, comes to Pearce and begs him to use his influence to save her family. Pearce, enamored by the beautiful lass, promises to intervene.

Remembering Wolsey's seeming "kindness" towards his own mother, he requests mercy for the Askews. Hearing Beckwithe's solicitation, Wolsey sees his opportunity to finally respond to the boy's once-attempted insolence. Again, the Cardinal feigns compassion: Wolsey tells Beckwithe that he admires the lad's benevolence in requesting clemency for the family, instead of his own imprisoned father. He further bates Pearce by subtly suggesting that, "*the doors of Oxford University are flung wide to men of such character.*" And he assures Beckwithe that his petition "*will be answered.*"

Feeling a little full of himself, Beckwithe tells the worried girl that his influence with the Cardinal has resolved the conflict. He promises Cassandra that she and her parents would again be together, "*... on the morrow.*" The next morning the Askew family is brought before Wolsey for routine arraignment, which everyone expects to be a dismissal of all charges. But the Cardinal has other plans. With Pearce at his side and the family standing before him, Wolsey produces the very documents that Beckwithe hid from him during the trial of the experimenting doctor.

Having slyly forged the Askew family insignia over the doctor's crest, Wolsey places the damning evidence into the record, and condemns not only the parents, but also their daughter, Cassandra, to the stake.

By this act, the Cardinal not only removes the legal barriers between him and the acquisition of the Askew's vast estate, he also reveals his knowledge of Pearce's ruse. Thus displaying his ultimate power over Beckwithe and his old, incarcerated father.

As part of his public pronouncement of the Askew's death sentence, Wolsey slyly adds, *"I am grateful to my trusted assistant Pearce Beckwithe for supplying me with the evidence against this evil family. And as a reward, I grant him permission to oversee the discarding of these blasphemer's charred bones."*

Beckwithe is devastated. The family, his fellow villagers, and especially Cassandra are shocked by his supposed involvement. The 25 year old's blood boils with raged and helplessness. Only his fear for his imprisoned father, keeps him silent and submissive.

That next day is filled with a seemingly endless parade of public executions. And by Wolsey's command, the Askew family is the last to burn. Tied to the same stake, the family's sense of helplessness is shared by Beckwithe's own inability to intervene. His lack of power to keep his promise to Cassandra is as torturous to Pearce as the flames surrounding the stake. And as the family's screams rises with the smoke, Pearce is forced to watch his failure light up the town square.

To add insult to injury Beckwithe is forced to keep his "clean-up" crews on the job till after sun down. By that time the flames have consumed not only the lives of those he wished to save, but also his own desire to live. Filled with remorse and self debasement, Pearce can not bare to oversee the final burial of the family. He leaves it to his crew to do the job, and he slips off, by himself, to cry.

It is while he is absent from his men that a pack of wolves meander into the Square; having been enticed by the smell of blood. Yet upon discovering that their 'meal' has been over-cooked, the pack turns angry and transforms back into their true form, *Nephelium-demons, the semi-divine off-spring of the fallen angels which once mated with the "daughters of man." (*Genesis 6:4)

These 'Children of the Night' once cursed both God, and their fallen-angel forefathers for their created divine nature, trapped in human-form. Banished from both camps for their insolence, they faced the paradox of divine immortality housed in a deteriorating mortal frame. These vagabonds of both heaven and hell were trapped in a cosmic paradox: They dare not vacate their prison of sinew and bone, for there was no other refuge remaining but oblivion. Although they despised their freakish existence, they hated the thought non-existence even more. So to escape the inevitable death of their bodies, they defiantly replenished themselves by draining the blood, the life-giving force, from God's created masterpiece, man.

Witnessing the sudden appearance of these divine-like creatures, Pearce's clean-up crew runs in terror, but the Nephelium are too fast, too strong for them. And in a blinding moment Beckwithe's men are devoured and discarded into the same bloody pile of victims they had been assigned to bury.

The sound of screams from the town square rouse Pearce momentarily from his private grief. Returning to investigate, Beckwithe is surprised by the hungry pack, and is likewise accosted. He puts up a good fight, but in his heart he knows that, like always, the odds are against him. And with his grief still intact, he sees no reason to continue railing against his helplessness. Taking a step backward, the boy deliberately rips open his shirt and shouts, *"I am powerless, powerless! I've never known victory, and I never will! I am glad its over! C'est la vie! -- Just make it quick!"*

Hearing this, the clan abruptly halts their attack and stares at their strangely willing victim. Intrigued by Beckwithe's resignation, they take a step back, as if they understand mortal futility. And out of the pack, their leader, MALICE, emerges.

After studying Pearce a moment, the leader flashes a hungry grin and muses, *"Why are you in such a hurry to die?"* Beckwithe recounts for Malice his family's plight, Wolsey's greed, and the helplessness of his failed life, concluding with the words... *"Follow the rules' that's all I've ever been told. But no one ever bothered to explain what the rules were. Through trial and error I wasted half my life in the search. The other half I've spent being tried for the errors I've made along the way. What I've learn from it is, 'you just can't win.' I've never been anything but a helpless puppet. I've never known anything but defeat. I am powerless. I don't have the strength to fight, nor the inclination to even try. I'm tired of failing, weary of living. Just make it quick."*

Stroking his chin, Malice thinks, then offers his victim the Deal of Lifetime: *"There is no escape. You WILL be taken. But what if I said you could avoid the kind of meaningless death that your master has forced you to clean up after? You have reminded me of our futile fight. And because of that distant memory, I am going to offer you something no one ever has - a choice. Would you like to possess the power to overcome those who have had power over you? You can become your master's - master! All you need to do is accept my life - our way of living. Join us and you can make up your OWN rules. Or, we can use you, like everyone else, and then discard you, like the refuse you say you've always been. Your blood will merely quench my thirst. But MY blood can extinguish the misery of your mortality. Which will it be; a little taste, or an eternal tomb?"*

"Power over those who've had power over me," Pearce repeats to himself. *"If it's your way or no way,"* he finally answers Malice, *"I am compelled to chose the latter. C'est La Vie! I've tried this life. Let's see what I can do with yours."*

In an ancient demonic ritual, first designed as a symbolic defiance of the Creator, Malice opens Beckwithe's vein and drains him of God's gift, life. But just after The Gift is depleted, Malice does a rare thing, to his clan's surprise he cuts open his own forearm, and allows the semi-divine, Nepheliumic flood to fill the dead man's mouth. And after a dark, silent moment Pearce Beckwithe opens his eyes, again.

Thought by all of Oxford to have been devoured by the same beasts that killed his crew, Beckwithe is free to 'work nights' and wield his new power to clandestinely orchestrate

Wolsey's downfall. Using his new Nepheliumic abilities, he doesn't contrive evidence, but rather manipulates the Cardinal's own actions against himself.

After a few weeks of Beckwithe's behind-the-scenes maneuvering, Wolsey's true colors are brought to the attention of Henry VIII, who immediately summons the Cardinal to London to refute the evidence against him. However 28 days into his journey, while resting at Leicester Abbey, Wolsey is startled by the sudden appearance of Beckwithe. Confronted by what he thinks is Pearce's ghost, Wolsey is frightened into admitting his guilt. He even goes as far as to blubber the whereabouts of his ill-gotten wealth. The old Cardinal is so thoroughly terrified by the appearance of the "dead demon" that he has a heart attack.

His last historically recorded words sum up his wasted life; "*If I had served my God as diligently as I have served my self, He would not have given me over to my enemies.*"

Having exacted his revenge against Cardinal Wolsey, Pearce immediately flies to the Oxford prison containing his 70 year old father. The frail old man, having given up hope long ago, dies just before Beckwithe arrives.

...With nothing else to live for now, Pearce Beckwithe discovers that his newly acquired power is in fact an eternal curse. And for the next 80 years he wanders in misery, literally feeding off the lives of others.

Finally, in 1667, Pearce's roving leads him to a riverbank just outside a small village in France. There he finds a young boy fishing, and his urge to feed is roused. But just as he is about to pounce, he is surprised by the sudden appearance of the lad's parents, emerging from the plush foliage along the bank. Startled, his Nepheliumic reflexes take over. And in an instant, the two adults' throats are slashed and their bodies are tossed into the fast current of the river. Then turning to the lad, he picks the boy up by the shoulders and begins to dine.

But there is something familiar about the way he holds the boy, something that triggers a memory from his own childhood -- Wolsey ripping him away from his parents-- *by the shoulders*. And with that sudden flash of recollection, Pearce drops the half-dead boy; realizing he has become the very man he loathed. Like the monster Wolsey, he too kills to live. And as a torrential rain begins to fall, he flees the bloody scene, repulsed with the demon he has become...

* * *

Pearce tells his story with vague references to dates and specific facts, so not to frighten the Friar with names like 'Wolsey;' such references would reveal the young man's true age of 142. But the Lazarite monk knows more about history than his young companion suspects. In fact he even interrupts at times to correct Beckwithe's subtly with surprising detail; revealing information that only someone intimately familiar with the time could possibly know...

There, in the wee hours of the morning, over the body of a dying child, the remorseful Nephelium-offspring discovers that the Abbot he knows as Friar Bethanae, is in fact the 15th Century avocation of the Biblical, risen, Lazarus, himself. And in that instant of knowing Beckwithe realizes that he and the Friar are not so different after all: Both have fulfilled the Edict, *“It is appointed unto man once to die,”* and both have returned to an eternal existence upon accepting the blood of their respective Masters.

As their argument over the existence of God continues Lazarus, likewise, illustrates his own point of view, by detailing experiences from his own eventful 1600+ years.

~ The Monk's Tale ~

(Not to be told 'in total' as below, but in fragments, over the course of the series)

Upon his well-publicized resurrection, Lazarus becomes the living proof that his friend is indeed Who He claims to be. The risen body of this otherwise ordinary mortal is instantly recognized as a dangerous inconvenience to Jerusalem's paranoid Sanhedrin.⁽¹⁾ The instant Lazarus steps out of his tomb - alive, he is automatically marked for death, again. Scribbled onto Caiaphas' "hit list," he becomes second only in priority to a certain carpenter-turned-prophet. (1) John 11:47_53, 12:10

However, when the public crucifixion (which Lazarus himself witnesses) turns Jesus into a martyred hero, the astute temple conspirators change their blatant tactic of murder. Instead of exercising their standard ploy of accusation and assassination, these confederate Pharisees scheme to dispose of Lazarus in a less revealing fashion.

Knowing that they must destroy the growing faith, the temple cohorts slyly convince the Roman government to deport Lazarus and his family⁽²⁾. Under the cover of darkness, Roman soldiers force Mary, Martha and their risen brother to hastily pack their bags. The three are then deliberately put aboard a "leaky" ship, bound for Gaul (France). Ordered to "never return," they are pushed out into the violent waters of the Mediterranean Sea.

(2) William P. Barker "Everyone In The Bible", Lazarus p. 214

The trio's relief at being "deported" rather than "dispatched" is short lived upon the outbreak of a wave-swelling storm. The howling wind, blinding rain and scurrying crewmen force Lazarus and his sisters down below. The relative safety of the ship's belly, however, is quickly washed away by the sudden appearance of an even greater danger -a gaping hole in the ship's hull!

It's obvious to Lazarus that the man-made configuration was calculated to remain intact until the ship had reached the open sea. Fortunately the Mediterranean's strong gale winds push the disabled craft just far enough off course to safely reach the isle of Cyprus.

Having barely escaped certain destruction, Lazarus and his sisters decide to remain on Cyprus. Repairing the roof of an abandoned cottage with planks from their scuttled ship, the three set up house-keeping and try to settle in to a normal life. But the memory of their crucified friend, and the undeniable fact of Lazarus' return can not be suppressed. And soon the island is buzzing with the story.

Inevitably, news of Cyprus' risen man reaches the inner chambers of Jerusalem's Temple. It doesn't take long for the chief priests to surmise that their problem has not vanished, but flourished. Fearing Lazarus' compelling evidence for his friend's 'divinity', and his knowledge of their complicity in the ship's sabotage, the group quickly agrees to attempt another assassination.

Assigned to the task is an over-zealous temple guard. This faithful, yet gullible Jewish warrior is deceived into believing that he has been chosen to carry out the "holy execution of the blasphemer," Lazarus. He is given a substantial bag of money and ordered not to return, but to discreetly send back word, once the deed was done.

Upon his arrival on Cyprus, the young assassin has no trouble locating Lazarus and his sisters; they are the talk of the island. He hears the three speak at a large, outdoor gathering, but having been indoctrinated by his Temple superiors, he's unconvinced by their words. Lazarus' resurrection tale only serves to incite the warrior's righteous rage. And that evening, with smoldering indignation, he follows the trio back to their refurbished cottage.

The assassin waits outside for Mary, Martha, and Lazarus to retire. Then quietly climbing a ladder to the dwelling's roof porch, he starts to enter Lazarus' bedroom window. However, his hefty armored frame is too much for the refurbished roof's newly installed ship planks (*the inferior wood used in the ship sabotage*) and the assassin plummets through the scaffolding to the first floor's stone foundation, breaking his neck on impact.

Searching the broken body, Lazarus finds a bag of gold and travel documents bearing the familiar Jerusalem temple seal. Rightly surmising from the evidence that the intruder had been sent by the chief priests, the trio concludes that these fanatical Pharisees will never stop until Lazarus has been returned to the grave. Therefore, the family decides to have another funeral.

Having gone through this once before, Mary and Martha make all of the arrangements. Publicizing the truthful fact that Jerusalem's chief priests desired their brother's death, the sisters call the surrounding neighbors to witness the Jewish interment of an embalmed man ⁽³⁾. Among the pall bearers placing the body inside a hillside tomb marked "Lazarus" is Lazarus, himself; wearing a black mourner's hood to conceal his identity. ^{3) Suicer, Thesaur.}

ii 208; Lazarus' bones "found" in Cyprus A.D. 890. Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theo. & Eccles.Lit Vol.5 (K_Mc), Lazarus p. 301

As this is being done, a temple courier hands a pious member of the Sanhedrin a note whispering, "*My Lord, a message from Cyprus.*" Anxiously the priest breaks the assassin's seal and reads Lazarus' forged, yet deceptively truthful correspondence; "*...Your obedient emissary, giving his full measure of devotion, has successfully restocked the tomb of the intended.*" Placing the note inside the waist sash of his robe, the priest rushes off with a triumphant smile to inform his collaborators.

A few days later, using the dead assassin's gold, Lazarus and his sisters secretly board a trade ship and sail to Marseilles, France ⁽⁴⁾. There the family settles and helps to establish the Gaelic (French) chapter of the early church; which, in time elects Lazarus as its first Bishop. ⁽⁴⁾ Codex Apocr. New Test iii 475; William P. Barker "Everyone In The Bible", Lazarus p. 214; Lux Evang. p. 388; Thilo, Apocryph. p.711

Years pass. Mary and Martha's hair turns slowly gray and their smooth, olive-skinned faces eventually become as wrinkled leather. Lazarus, however, displays no sign of age.

His oddly youthful appearance and unbridled energy serves as a daily testimony to the miracle power of Jesus. And, partially due to his example, the church of France grows.

Likewise, the Christian population around the world flourishes. But along with its positive tidings Lazarus also hears, over the years, the sad news regarding the fate of old friends; ⁽⁵⁾ men who had once sat around his table in Bethany: Both Andrew and his brother Simon Peter were crucified, Peter upside down. James, the brother of John, was beheaded. Matthew was run through with a spear. Thomas died in India, slain by a dart. Mark was burnt. James the Just was thrown from the Jerusalem Temple wall, then beaten to death. Philip was crucified, then stoned. ⁽⁵⁾ John Foxe, "Foxe's Book of Martyrs" pgs 6_13

As the years turn into decades, Lazarus is not only confronted with the fatality of old friends in far away lands, but he is eventually compelled to brave the inevitable loss of his own sisters, and thereby face the reality of his personal fate.

Having fulfilled the scriptural statute to 'die once,' Lazarus comes to realize, *"I alone am left to tell the tale. I witnessed it all. It's ironic; the Greek word for 'witness' is martus: martyr - a title each of my friends can claim with honor. They were all witnesses, and were martyred because they were so. I, on the other hand, simply died. And because I did, I have, in turn, become a martyr as well... A living witness to the blood of all the sacrificial lambs that have gone before."*

~ The Discovery ~

As the child's life wanes, and sunrise approaches, Beckwithe's remorse turns to frustration, and he lashes out in a rage of helplessness: *"What good are all of these words to this dying child? I could ease the child's misery by either finishing what I started, or giving him drink from my own veins. But I will do neither; one would end his life, the other would damn him to my eternal death... Isn't there anything YOU can do? Where is this God you say exists? I can't give him my blood, but what about the blood of this Lamb you keep talking about?!"*

Beckwithe's rambling reference to "lamb's blood" sparks again the memory of the condemned doctor who had been experimenting with the theory of blood transfusion.

And virtually at the same instant, Beckwithe and Frair Bethanae hit upon the same idea; *"The blood of a sacrificial lamb -- it just might work!"*

Recalling his Nepheliumic feast of mutton the day before, just up river, Beckwithe scurries off to fetch the pick of the litter. Meanwhile, Lazarus wakes up Gino and Celia and has them gather up the necessary jars and tubes described in Pearce's memory....

It is a fluke, but it is also an historic fact that on this very night, in 1667, the first recorded blood transfusion was performed, between a dying boy and lamb. (World Book Multimedia Encyclopedia)

When the flush of red begins to fill the boy's cheeks once more, the rain finally stops. And Pearce Beckwithe's thoughts return to himself: *"I wish there was a way I could transform, too. But the only means of escape I can think of,"* he sighs, turning toward Lazarus, *"you would consider suicide."*

"Maybe not," the Monk smiles, *"You're not a demon destined for oblivion, but a man who made a mistake; 'It is appointed unto man to die ONCE, and you've already done that. All you need to do now is admit your mistake to the God you once denied, then free yourself from the cursed shell that imprisons you. Pearce, the best way to find the transformation you seek,"* he points to the hills above the village, *"is to wait up for the light."*

"...Only if you will go with me."

The two men then leave the pub and scale the mountain trail to a spot where they can face the sunrise, in its full glory. As they sit, waiting for the first rays to appear, Beckwithe becomes introspective. *"When it happened to me before, all I remember is a sharp pain, a canopy of black, then an abrupt return to the world I thought I left."* Looking up into the Monk's face, the shoemaker's son finally calls his companion by his true name. *"Tell me what it is really like. You, more than anyone else should know. Lazarus, what is it like to die?"*

Friar Lazarus Bethanae's account is vivid, detailed and strangely inviting, and Beckwithe's giddy anticipation mounts with every word. However, in the midst of his elation, Pearce manages to recall one final piece of business that must be attended to: *"I have taken so much from so many and I want to try and make amends."*

Reaching into his jacket pocket he retrieves a stylish, leather folder. And extracting the contents, he continues, *"Like me, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey devoured people. But when I took my revenge on him, I also took back his ill-gotten wealth. It is more than one individual can spend in a lifetime."*

Giving Lazarus the documents, he also removes a ring from his finger; *"The embossed insignia is the only proof of ownership these documents require. I know that you will put this to its best use. However, I have one request; I took the boy's family from him. I discarded them in the river... See that a portion of this is given to the boy, and to the*

ferryman who lost his child. Put them together. Allow me to give them what I was denied; The boy needs a father, and the man needs an heir."

Finally, as the first rays of the sun peak over the eastern horizon, Beckwithe squeezes the monk's hand affectionately, gratefully. Then, standing to his feet to face his fate, Pearce Beckwithe flings his arms open wide. And with his head held high, he confesses his faults in a collection of words Lazarus will never forget...

“...I've lived more than I've learned,
Taken far more than I've earned,
Now let this imitation of mortality burn.
Give release to the immortal-me within
Immerse me in the light
Of the One Who lived without sin.
Grant me power over the one
Who has had power over me.

Bid me drink of Your cleansing blood,
Turn into dust this shell of mud,
That I might finally know
The grace I thought could never be
To this world I bid, Adieu
Finally, my search is through
...C'est la Vie!!”

