

The story behind the story of Katherine's Prophecy . . .

My source of inspiration for *Katherine's Prophecy* was *The Reincarnation of Peter Proud* (1974) by Max Ehrlich. I was fascinated by the concept of reincarnation and the ability of someone to somehow re-live his former incarnation and live to tell about it.

This novel (my second work but first to be published) is a spin on that theme with a decidedly spiritual/moral flavor to it. As my work on the story progressed, I realized that I was actually trying to make totally unbelievable situations believable, forcing me to fabricate situations that were both bizarre but remotely fathomable at the same time. This attempt at making the impossible seem plausible is what made writing this tale equally grueling and challenging – a true labor of love.

Below is an excerpt from *Katherine's Prophecy*.



Clem struggled to free himself but to no avail. Then he bit his tongue nearly in two to keep himself from screaming, feeling the warm, rusty-tasting blood running out the corner of his mouth.

Nancy's eyes were shut tight, her head thrown back as Hoffman suddenly rammed the barrel of the pistol into her belly.

Nancy screamed. She screamed so hysterically that it startled Hoffman, and he quickly withdrew the pistol. Nancy continued screaming louder and louder, her head still thrown back and her eyelids fluttering. Clem saw the look of panic on Hoffman's face - as if he had no idea what to do next.

Then Katie started crying, sensing her mother's distress. Clem watched as Hoffman looked first at Katie's crib, then at Nancy, and back at Katie again. His eyes were troubled, confused. He glanced down at the gun, which was still pointed at Nancy. Clem could tell that he was deciding whether or not to pull the trigger.

But he didn't.

Instead, in a confused fit of insanity, John Hoffman suddenly raised his hand up and brought the butt of the pistol down on Nancy's head, causing her to fall to the floor. Clem screamed in rage and lunged forward in the bed, only to fall flat on his face.

Hoffman stared at Clem, then sprung over and cold-cocked his jaw with the pistol.

Clem saw the flashing of bright lights and fell into semi-consciousness. He forced himself to keep his eyes open and stared down at where Nancy's limp, lifeless body lay on the floor, her head lying in a pool of blood. Her beautiful eyes were wide-open, frozen in the terror of the moment...

Nancy, his wife; the love of his life, was dead.

Overwhelmed by grief, Clem felt the tears flowing out of his eyes and down his cheeks, stinging his open wounds. He knew that he should be unconscious now, but adrenaline was preventing it from happening. Grief eventually gave way to vengeance; and he began looking around the room from his limited vantage point for John Hoffman.

He saw him ranting around the room as if he was searching for something. He was at the desk now, opening the drawers and slamming them shut in frustration. He went over to the fireplace and looked around the hearth, cursed, then ran over to the corner of the room where Clem kept his shotgun. Clem thought for a moment that he was going to take the shotgun and finish him off, but then realized that he could have used his pistol for the same purpose if that had been his intention. Then Hoffman suddenly leaned over and picked something up off the floor that was lying near the shotgun. Clem couldn't tell what it was at first. Then he started moving toward him; and soon he saw what it was that he'd been looking for.

A can of kerosene -

He was going to burn the place down!

Hoffman glanced over at Clem, then screwed the cap off and began splashing kerosene all over the house in a wild and random fashion. Clem tried to scream in protest, but found that he couldn't. He tried to move, but he couldn't.

He was paralyzed.

Hoffman continued pouring kerosene everywhere until the can was empty. He then ran over to where Clem was and stared down at him with the eyes of a madman.

"I'm sorry it had to turn out this way, Clem. But I must take what is rightfully mine. And the little child is mine."

Clem's heart palpitated madly. *Katie!* he thought. That's what this was all about! Hoffman was going to take his baby daughter and then torch the house with Nancy and himself in it - destroying any evidence

of what had happened!

And then it hit him. That was why he hadn't shot either of them! The slugs would have given him away once the authorities had investigated the remains of their bodies.

Hoffman turned and ran over to the crib. He swooped Katie up in one arm and ran toward the door. When he reached the door, he opened it up, then pulled out a box of matches and struck one on the bottom of his shoe. He waited a moment until the flame was strong, then tossed the match onto the floor.

In a matter of seconds, there were flames everywhere. Hoffman watched for a moment, then fled out the door and into the darkness of the night.

Clem lay frozen and watched as his house caught fire all around him. The fire spread quickly, and before long the bed was totally engulfed in flames. He could feel the intensity of the heat, and eventually could smell his own flesh burning as the flames swiftly engulfed him.

He stared through the inferno at his wife lying on the floor, her entire body aflame. He thought about her and his daughter as he breathed in his last few gulps of smoke-laden air and felt a stab of sorrow.

It should never have ended this way.

He prayed to God to save their souls - and prayed that somehow, some day, Katie could avenge this unholy act of treachery.

"Somehow, God, let this murderous man be punished for his sins."

And then, Clem took his final breath of life...

* from *Katherine's Prophecy*, © 2005 by Scott Wittenburg