

Emiley

**IN THE END, WHO IS
INNOCENT?**

*A Story of Love,
Hate, the
Paranormal and Murder*

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Emiley In the End, Who is Innocent?
A Story of Love, Hate, the Paranormal and Murder
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Dedicated to my children, David and Elizabeth

This is a work of fiction and all characters and places are a figment of my imagination. Any resemblances to real people or places are a coincidence unless otherwise noted, or used for reference to landmarks or real people that are not a part of this story.

PROLOGUE

“War is all cruelty, and there is no way to refine it.”

General William Tecumseh Sherman

Union Army of the Tennessee

1864

November 1996

There were deep hues of purple-gray shifting with the early morning light of the rising sun, shrouding the ranch’s buildings. The glow of dawn pushed hard against the darkest of the blue gloom still hiding out in the west. Looking east a pale yellow glow inched its way quickly toward the barn, as fast as the sunrise would allow the cool colors of this November morning to exist.

Lucius Hensley had just removed the coffeepot from the stove’s burner to pour himself his first cup of the morning. Stepping outside onto his covered wooden porch, he stood listening to the quiet, where all things of nature and man had eerily gone silent. No trucks were shouting engine noises, no horses were neighing, and there was neither talking nor laughter amongst the men standing like statues in their momentary astonishment. It was cold outside, but there was no wind for a chill factor. Another myth exposed, Louisiana did have a cold season after all. At least once every so many years.

The powerful early morning light was shining brightly on the east side of the barn now where Lucius’s attention stood fixated on the man hanging from a noose, dangling from the winch located just above the open second-story hayloft door. Lucius knew the noose was made of good, solid,

high-quality hemp, because it was the same rope his people used to work the horses. He observed the scene before him seemingly unmoved. His hired help were also watching, standing quietly on the perimeter road, a forty-foot swatch of unpaved road that circled Hensley's ranch-style home. Collectively they were observing the murdered man, Jasper Hayes, who up until now had been the ranch mechanic, and cousin to their employer, Mr. Hensley. The message was loud and clear for Lucius; he either had to stand down now, or expect more of the same. He had wanted the marijuana growers and moonshine boilers to tithe, but they were having none of it. It was time to go threaten the sheriff in order to save his own life. A task he hated as much as the man he would have to see, Sheriff Jon Beeville.

Part One

“Evil when we are in its power is not felt as evil
but as a necessity, or even a duty.”

Simone Weil (1909–1943)

Gravity and Grace -1947

“And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire
who it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And
when ye come into a house, salute. And if the house
be worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it not be
worthy, let your peace return to you.

“And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your
words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake
off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be
more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in
the day of Judgment, than for that city.”

Jesus Christ

The Gospel According to Saint Matthew,

Saint James Bible

Chapter 10, verses 11-15

Chapter **ONE**

Sunday, October 10, 2004

The hazy days of autumn have arrived, a time when summer and fall can't quite agree as to whose turn it is to be here. Morning and evening breezes bring the brisk, cool air of days growing shorter, while the afternoon temperatures remain decidedly warm. The shadows are changing too, reflecting relaxed textures generated by the autumn sun. They have become a refuge from the afternoon heat, and are darker than they were during the summer, creating a unique and subtle blackness that wouldn't be found any other time of the year in the Township of Emiley, Emmitson Parish, Louisiana.

A certain peacefulness has settled in, with the quiet harmony of fallen leaves, the winds blowing a brisk cadence that is usually the prelude to the winter rains which were now starting to settle in early it would seem.

The heat of summer's dog days still resides during mid-afternoon, but there is a mist that leaves a dew in the mornings now. The evening breeze has called for a coat or jacket to be worn by the citizens of Emiley. Very soon this will become the norm for all of the parish's inhabitants.

It happened on an autumn day like the one just described. It was a Sunday afternoon at approximately 12:45 when Danny Martinez and Sylvester Two Trees were skimming rocks off the pond at the falls of Le Rue Creek. Sylly (as that is what Sylvester's close friends and family called him) was

imagining that the rock he had just skipped across the small stream's surface was a NASA space shuttle skimming the surface of the earth's atmosphere on its reentry from outer space. His friend, Danny, had been talking this whole time, Syilly realized and stopped his daydreaming to listen while his friend told a story about the local reverend, Bishop O'Dell. Bishop is the reverend's first name and not a title, and this has confused some folks from time to time. But sometimes in the South, people just have strange names. Or so it seemed to these two young boys.

Danny had been reciting to Syilly what his Pa had told him about Reverend O'Dell. Apparently he had to wear those Coke-bottle eyeglasses because he was guilty of the blasphemous sin of masturbation. Pastor O'Dell headed the ministry at God's Mighty Hand Evangelical Church in Emiley along with his pious wife, Margaret, who was also called by some of the local folks who knew her "the Celestial Bitch from the Book of Maggots."

"My Pa also told me that the only problem with O'Dell's ministry in Emiley is that God hasn't visited that particular church of worship for eons due to Pastor O'Dell's offensive sermons where he accuses all niggras, Jews, and whoever else he hates, or doesn't agree with, as being the sons of Shoal, heretics all, and worthy of burning at the stake. Eternal damnation! That's what my Pa says, and that's big stuff, Syilly."

Danny then went on to tell his friend that Reverend O'Dell knew God would punish fornicators with blindness for playing with themselves. "So," he continued, "that old penis prick, Bishop O'Dell, must have turned a deaf ear to that particular nonsecular law more than a few times during his tenure in Sunday School, because now he's damn near blind as a bat!"

Syilly laughed like a lunatic. "Danny, you dumbbell," he scolded, "you can't go blind from playing with your dick; that's silly Christian nonsense, that's all that is. The truth of the matter is that it's all about controlling a church's congregation who tithes. Money, dude, money! It is all about big bucks, you fool. Make people feel guilty, scare them into thinking something's wrong with their morals, and make them pay for their abominations. Then they can receive absolution from the pastor and get to live another sin-free week to party hardy, Dan. Heh, heh, heh."

Syilly himself, being mostly Poime Indian with some Frenchman hiding in the wood box along the way, knew better of course, because his tribal shaman had never said such a dumb thing like that. Besides, everyone knew

that the wisdom of the Native American was far greater than any WASP Christian preaching.

Danny stopped for a moment to let what Syllly had just said to him sink in, and decided he liked much better what Syllly's shaman had to say than what his own father had been telling him all this time. So being the man that he was, he told Syllly, "Yeah, I think your shaman is right, sounds like to me."

Danny then gave Syllly a large grin and told him, "But just to be on the safe side of things," *just in case that dumb Injun is wrong*, he thought, "I will close my best eye and take a chance with the other one when I am whacking off." This admission sent both boys laughing and sliding on the loose muck near the edge of the creek and dangerously close to the water's edge.

Danny's sliding momentum had pushed him so hard into his friend that Syllly, wildly flailing his arms in the air, fell over the creek's edge, plunging into the clear, watery abyss below them.

Briefly submerged beneath the water's surface, he immediately popped up like an angler's bobber. Splashing and treading water, Syllly yelled a litany of curses at his friend, challenging him to dive into the creek after him.

Danny, who had somehow managed to put the brakes on, avoiding his buddy's fate in the creek's cool waters, started laughing as hard as he had ever laughed before in his life, so hard that to his horrific surprise, he found that he was peeing in his pants! A huge blue stain in the crotch of his denim jeans was steadily spreading down his pant legs.

"Darn you, Syl, look what y'all made me do. I'll kill you and take your scalp if y'all tell anyone from school, you little prick."

With the gauntlet now tossed, Syllly responded by singing ghost dancer war chants while chucking clumps of mud-muck at Danny from the far side of the creek, zeroing in and landing several great hits on his friend's not so small torso.

Danny retaliated with some made-up lyrics from the martial melody of the "Garry Owen" (George Custer's US Seventh Cavalry's marching theme), then dove into the water after Syllly, starting a splashing war between the two combatants.

After they found themselves exhausted from treading water too long while recreating the clash of the USS *Monitor* and the CSS *Merrimack*/

Alabama, they reluctantly agreed that a truce should be called. It was time to rest.

After a brief respite, Syllly told Danny, “You don’t have to worry about me spilling the goods to any no-accounts at school because you are my friend, Danny, and so it stays right here between us. Okay?”

Moved by his best friend’s pledge, Danny thanked Syllly, telling him that he could be counted on for doing the same thing if it were the other way around.

“I know that,” Syllly responded. He and Danny were like blood brothers, womb to tomb, and always stood beside one another when the need arose.

Syllly waited some moments before speaking again, as he was feeling embarrassed by what he felt he needed to ask his friend. This had been building up inside of him for a long while, and the opportunity to get an opinion from Danny was right now. It was just the two of them there, and Sylvester didn’t know when he’d get another chance to talk privately. He felt he knew nothing about important stuff like sex and all, and that probably all the other guys his age did, which left him trailing the pack big-time. Danny would know, he thought, and he knew he could trust Danny.

“Dan,” Syllly tentatively asked, “how come guys call it beating your pud, or beatin’ your meat, bonking your Johnson, or jacking off? Sounds pretty stupid to me.”

“That’s because you’re a dumb Injun that doesn’t know the way of the world, Syllly,” Danny reprimanded his friend. “Heck, there are lots of different names for playing with yourself.”

Syllly, not wanting to be cowed by this white boy, best friend or not, decided to call his bluff and challenged him to name a few. “Syllly,” Danny began with an all-knowing, mature look on his face, nodded his head. “There’s beating your meat, beating your pud, jacking off, missile launching, carving your woody, stretching the goose, winging your wanger, erecting your staff, firing your cannon, good stuff like that, and anybody without shit for brains knows that, dude.”

“Well, if you say so, but I don’t much get what jacking off means. What’s that? Something to do with jacking up a car, so as to change a tire?”

“Nah, Syllly, it’s a name made up by some Russian spy. It was taken from this spy dude’s name, Ivan Yakenoff. I know this for sure because Leon Bussy told me, and he’s seventeen, so he knows all of that stuff.”

“Wow” was all that Sylvester could say, “that’s sick, man. Bitchin.”

Sylly, soaking wet, gingerly picked himself up off the ground and began to brush the mud off his clothes when suddenly, a big Cheshire grin spread across his face as he said, “You might want to drop those piss-stained trousers of yours, Danny, and check to make sure your underpants ain’t full of shit, too.”

Sylly turned and took off running in a full-blown sprint toward a big sycamore tree near the pond to get out of harm’s way. He knew he’d pissed Danny off now, big-time, and he had better make it to the base of the tree before his friend could react.

Danny yelled after him, “You’re dead now, ya little butt swipe! I’m gonna skin your tiny, sorry little ass and hang it to cure over my Pa’s shed door,” as he started to look for some rocks to toss at his so-called best friend.

Sylly, laughing like a crazed hyena, climbed up the tree faster than fast, then crawled out onto a huge branch overhanging the pond below him. He figured that if Danny tried to get him down from the tree, he could make a jump for it, right into the deep water of the pond, then swim on over to the other side of the creek, climb up the bank, and skedaddle to where they had tied up their bikes, before Danny knew what had hit him.

Danny began heaving mud grenades at his friend and started to laugh himself as he crushed some direct hits against Sylly’s body. He reached down, looking for some more choice projectiles to hurl at his tormentor, when he froze at the gasp he heard coming out of Sylly’s mouth.

Looking up at his friend, Danny was terrified by the pained look on his friend’s face that he might really have hurt him with the last rock he had just chucked. The rock had clunked real good into Sylly’s left leg, and maybe, Danny thought, he just might have thrown it a bit too hard.

Danny moved quickly toward the large sycamore tree, as his friend’s expression was more a look of horror than of someone in pain. He was scared that he had really screwed up big this time. When he reached the base of the tree, looking up, he could tell that Sylly was trying to tell him something, but Danny couldn’t quite make out what it was. “What is it, Syl? Did I hurt ya, man? I’m so sorry, Sylly, I didn’t think that I would really nail ya good or nothing, really! I’m sorry!”

Sylly wasn’t hurt at all from anything that his friend had thrown at him; he just couldn’t draw his face away from what was floating just below him

in the pond. There, tangled in some marsh vegetation in the pooling water before the falls, right beneath the tree branch on which Syllly was straddling, was one of the twin LeMonte sisters, floating faceup with what looked to be a serene expression on her face.

The problem was that she was floating about four inches below the water's surface and didn't appear to be breathing or moving.