

Esteban

Book of the Fallen

by Colin Palfrey

An Unwelcome Visitor

A cold wind blew across the moor and kept the locals huddled by their firesides, while the moon remained always partially obscured by the cloud cover that had not only been forecast but also miraculously appeared on schedule. For tonight's undertaking this would be particularly important, as sometimes a perfect view of the nights events is...not to be desired.

The car was gently humming to itself as the air-conditioning unit valiantly attempted to restore some heat to its passenger. The window was even now slowly fogging up on the drivers side.

Esteban had spent the night in a nondescript bed and breakfast and wore unmemorable clothes. If you looked at him you would find your eyes sliding away, possibly noting just how unmemorable he looked. Of course, you would even forget that thought within seconds.

He had arrived without fuss as he always did

whenever he traveled, though in spite of his desire to move like a ghost, something about his eyes would always remain with the people who met him. This included the widow that had managed the rundown bed and breakfast, prior to his visit. Some people are simply in the wrong place at the wrong time but he liked to think that she had not been a waste of his talents.

All that you need to know about Esteban was that wherever he traveled, people died, badly.

This is not to say that he was in anyway connected with the events himself, as the many police officers who had investigate him over the years, knew all too well. He was always somewhere else and surrounded by people who remembered seeing him. It was also noted that he was never very far away from the scene of the crime and proof or not, several detectives had gone the extra mile and checked his references thoroughly.

Since coming to the small town of Tempest, very few people had spared him more than a glance. He

wore causal nondescript clothing, never asked for anything in the local shops and didn't socialize.

The one thing he had purchased in the newsagents that was based in the center of the rather shabby village, was a fork, which in itself is not an unusual purchase. It is however, rather a strange thing to need when you are staying in a guesthouse. As the bed and breakfast in question was regularly referred to as 'That place.' by locals, this was almost to be expected.

As Esteban waited in the car, he looked across at the source of his interest, Burdley house. Burdley house itself was a large country estate, owned and maintained by a French family that had shown an interest in the place some years ago. It had been fully renovated and in the last few years, it even stood as the headquarters for the local Conservative party. This was the purpose it was serving tonight, though Esteban certainly wasn't on the guest-list.

Though he was only 25 years old he already had

the patience of a man many times his age, he found nothing wrong with sitting in silence for hours at a time. He did hate the cold though, with a burning passion.

The mobile phone on the dashboard started to vibrate and he picked it up to answer it. Even the casual observer would have noticed the black paint that had been used to shield the garish light of its display from prying eyes.

“Hello Esteban, is it done, have you set it up?” the voice asked.

“Not yet,” he replied “But the time is almost perfect. Are you in the meeting still, and how long do you estimate it will be until you retire for dinner?”

“I am sure we can't hurry the main attraction,” the voice quipped, “Though I do believe we will be seated within the next quarter of an hour.”

Esteban smiled to himself because he knew the question was coming. “How exactly are you going to make this happen?” asked the voice.

“I assure you minister, it is nothing to be

concerned with.” he remained silent until he believed the voice was ready to speak again, then deliberately interrupted it.

“Would you really deprive yourself of the joy of seeing it all become clear,” he smiled to himself, “It would be like demanding to see your own portrait halfway through, just so that you could watch the painter wash his brushes?”

“Just do it!” said the usually confident voice. “I have no time for games.” To which Esteban replied “But that is all I have time for. Just finish your meeting before they assume you have constipation,” the voice attempted to interrupt but Esteban continued “Of course I know where you are, or was I to assume that you are at the other end of the room from your enemy? Honestly this is no longer your concern, good bye.”

Esteban enjoyed his work but would not explain himself to a jumped-up politician.

He got out of the car and headed for the front door in a way that would have left his employer in a

state of blind panic. There was nothing subtle or hidden about it.

Stanley Clarkson was not one of 'Them' and this disappointed him. He had joined the political party after finding that he was little good at anything else. He had a talent, people often said. Secretly he knew it was just a talent for sounding like he understood what was going, while actually being totally confused.

He was currently standing under an oak tree outside Burdley house, smoking a cigarette and contemplating the fall of society, i.e. not being allowed to smoke indoors, when he saw a peculiar thing.

Walking up the path towards the house was a nondescript looking man, his overall appearance just screamed servant and as such Stanley was already starting to look away. Then the strange man started to ripple. It was nothing so obvious that you could point to it, but suddenly the man's chin seemed stronger, his eyes more focused, his hair was, 'Spanish looking' Stanley thought to himself, before grinning at

his totally non politically-correct though. Even more unusual was the long dark jacket the man had been wearing.

As the stranger walked past Stanley's place of accidental concealment, that jacket no longer looked ordinary at all.

What was it that looked so strange? He had just decided to step out and ask the man's his business here, when he realized he had probably made the biggest mistake of his life.

The stranger was at the door, he raised his hands and placed them on the finely polished wooden surface and opened his beautiful black wings.

Stanley started to shake as people do when confronted with the completely impossible. He kept thinking, "My jacket doesn't do that!" in a slightly mad way. He wanted to turn around and run but simply couldn't move.

He felt a vibration run through his legs and thought he was about to faint, until he suddenly realized it was the ground itself that was shaking.

As he watched the mysterious visitor, there was a brief blast of light and then the door exploded inwards away from the man's hands.

Through the roar of the explosion Esteban turned towards him and briefly smiled, before entering the house.

Suddenly Stanley's fear no longer held him in place and he ran, he ran as fast as he could and faster than his slightly overweight body had ever ran before.

All the time he ran across that cold moor, he kept thinking that he could never outrun his fear of that twisted smile.