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and the Bram Stoker Award

DOUGLAS
CLEGG

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Douglas Clegg writes "horror at its finest!"
—*Publishers Weekly* (Starred Review)

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LEISURE BOOKS



NEW YORK CITY

A LEISURE BOOK®

April 2001

Published by

**Dorchester Publishing Co., Inc.
276 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10001**

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ISBN 0-8439-4857-4

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Printed in the United States of America.

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RAVE REVIEWS FOR THE WORK OF DOUGLAS CLEGG!

"Every bit as good as the best works of Stephen King, Peter Straub, or Dan Simmons. What is most remarkable is not how well Clegg provides chills, but how quickly he is able to do so."

—*Hellnotes*

"Clegg's imagery is intense, horrific, but he paints with a poet's hand. Horror at its finest."

—*Publishers Weekly* (Starred Review)

"Unforgettable!"

—*The Washington Post*

"Doug Clegg is one of horror's most captivating voices."

—*BookLovers*

"Clegg possesses a master's unsparing touch for horror. [*You Come When I Call You* is] a brilliant achievement of occult fiction."

—*Rue Morgue*

"Douglas Clegg's short stories can chill the spine so effectively that the reader should keep paramedics on standby!"

—Dean Koontz

"*You Come When I Call You* is the first major literary event in the genre for the year. I've never had a work of fiction affect me more deeply. This is an absolute must read!"

—Garrett Peck, *Hellnotes*

"Douglas Clegg's writing is like a potent drink that goes down with deceptive smoothness—right before it knocks you on your derriere."

—*Horroronline*

MORE PRAISE FOR DOUGLAS CLEGG!

"Clegg has cooler ideas and is much more of a stylist than either Saul or Koontz."

—*Dallas Morning News*

"Clegg's gifts as a teller of grim tales are disconcerting and affecting."

—*Locus*

"Clegg is a wonderful writer. He knows how to deliver the goods."

—*World of Fandom*

"Parts of *The Halloween Man* bring back fond memories of both Straub's *Ghost Story* and McCammon's *Boy's Life*, but Clegg adds his own unique touches in this high-class horror novel. A memorable contribution to the genre."

—*Masters of Terror*

"Douglas Clegg has raised the stakes; for himself, as well as for the genre he writes in."

—*FrightNet*

"Doug Clegg has proved himself one of the masters of the supernatural thriller."

—Edward Lee, *BarnesandNoble.com*

"*The Halloween Man* is a stunning horror novel, written with a degree of conviction that is rare these days."

—Fiona Webster, *Amazon.com*

"Reminded me of King and McCammon at their best. I was awestruck."

—*The Scream Factory*

"Packed with vivid imagery; a broadly scoped, but fast-paced plot; powerful, evocative writing; superb characterizations; and facile intelligence, *The Halloween Man* is more than its blurbage could ever convey."

—Paula Guran, *DarkEcho*

THE FACE OF THE DEAD

I went about my day as though nothing were wrong.

I went down to the subway to catch the train to my ex-wife's place to pick up my daughter for the rest of the weekend.

I tried to keep from thinking about anything regarding Naomi. She was no more. Even my dream of who she was seemed to dissipate when I thought about Alan Cowper and his brutal way of telling me what he wanted me to know.

The platform was crowded with shoppers and tourists and those who move from one place to another, all asleep on their feet, all somewhere else in their minds. I felt I was the only one there, really there, really standing on the platform and knowing where I was.

And then I saw a familiar face, a face that I would recognize no matter what time did to it.

I saw her standing in a crowd, a crowd whose faces faded into blankness, I saw her there, I knew it was her.

I know it was her.

Shimmering like heat above a burning road.

Naomi.

Other *Leisure* books by Douglas Clegg:

MISCHIEF

YOU COME WHEN I CALL YOU

THE NIGHTMARE CHRONICLES

THE HALLOWEEN MAN

*For Brooke Borneman—
With thanks to every subscriber of the List, as well as to
Dorchester Publishing and Subterranean Press.*

Be sure to visit Douglas Clegg online at:
<http://www.douglasclegg.com> and www.ehaunting.com.
You can e-mail Doug at: dclegg@douglasclegg.com.

She knew that this was the last evening that she would see him for whose sake she had given away her lovely voice and left her home and family; and he would never know her sacrifice. It was the last night that she would breathe the same air as he, or look out over the deep sea and up into the star-blue heaven. A dreamless, eternal night awaited her, for she had no soul and had not been able to win one.

—Hans Christian Anderson, "The Little Mermaid"

Prologue

1

"Blood-red rose with thorns," someone whispered.

It was like the voice of a fairy tale. There should be a wolf and a maiden, and a small thatched cottage on the edge of a vast dark forest. There should be a field of roses growing wild in front of a castle with the tallest towers in all the world, and someone very evil would be whispering that, as a curse at the birth of a child of the kingdom, or perhaps it would be the Queen, dying, who would say it, the drops of blood upon her sewing as she named her daughter. "Blood-red rose with thorns," the voice whispered, and perhaps it was a dream, perhaps it was real, but it stayed with him for years, that voice.

Douglas Clegg

The voice brought with it a strange sense of comfort, of warmth.

It was both the wolf and the maiden, the thorn and the rose.

He knew who it was. He just could not say her name. Not yet. Not until he'd been awakened from the dream of his life, into the dream of the world.

And the dream began the same for him, each time.

Once upon a time . . . it began. Once upon a time when you were young and the world was ancient and the caves were full of wonder and the girl you loved believed that you were everything.

So it began.

2

You never know what your destiny will be until you go through the darkness.

That's what Jake Richmond knew, when the darkness first hit.

Later, years had passed between the time he knew he loved her and the moment he knew he had lost her. [Naomi. Nawombi. Nayami. Nyomi.] All the names he'd called her, all the ways he'd stretched her name as if by tugging at it, he could somehow possess her. He could somehow hold on longer than she could fight to let go.

But they were children then. It was years ago. Jake tried not think of that.

He could not think of Naomi. He could not imagine her as she was when he'd last seen her.

Naomi

Or when he'd first seen her. Or when he imagined what she must look like now. She was the kind of woman that was remembered more in spirit than in form—he could not for the life of him, as he went about the daily grind of work and life and all the unfortunate choices he'd made (he told himself often), remember her face other than to remember that he could not conjure anything but her essence in his mind.

She had vanished from his life.

He had always had the feeling she would reappear again, like magic. It was his secret from everything and everyone else in the world. Naomi would come back in some unexpected way. He was sure that someone whose influence was so powerful could not completely disappear. He always had the sense that his connection with Naomi could never be lost. Jake, with his ragged dark hair, cut too short in the summer, too shaggy in the winter, who was too impatient to wait at crosswalks for green lights, who discovered early that he would never be a captain of industry or a star of anything or the best of what Manhattan had to offer, or anything other than the kid from Carthage, Virginia, who grew up and escaped and ran to the biggest city he could find; Jake, who still believed that neckties could strangle and that sneakers were still sneakers and not expensive pop-culture statements; Jake who fell in love once or twice in his life, but knew that love was something forged early, and that your first love was sometimes the only one you should never have left behind.

Douglas Clegg

Jake, who believed himself ordinary in every way, had always hoped that the extraordinary would return in the form of the girl he had loved as a boy.

Sometimes, a man understands that the boy in him knows better how to love than the man he has become.

Sometimes, waking up early in the morning, a chilly dawn in New York City, with the sound of sirens or a dog barking or someone in the apartment above clomping in what could only be wooden shoes across the floor, he would lie there, half-dreaming, and remember it all. Remember Naomi. Remember himself, the little boy with the big crush.

3

Once upon a time, when he was just twelve and could barely understand why the world was the place it was, Jake Richmond held as tightly as he could to Naomi Faulkner's hands. He told her that he would never let go of her as long as he knew how to breathe.

"Blood-red rose with thorns," she said, her voice so small and yet so significant, it echoed within him even while he lived a different life. The torn crimson petals drifting, in her lap. She said it like it would mean something someday, as if she were taking a picture of the flower with her eyes and saying the words to record it.

He stared at the petals, and the scratches of thorns along her wrists. He didn't know why the rose's thorns had dug in her arms so deep. He