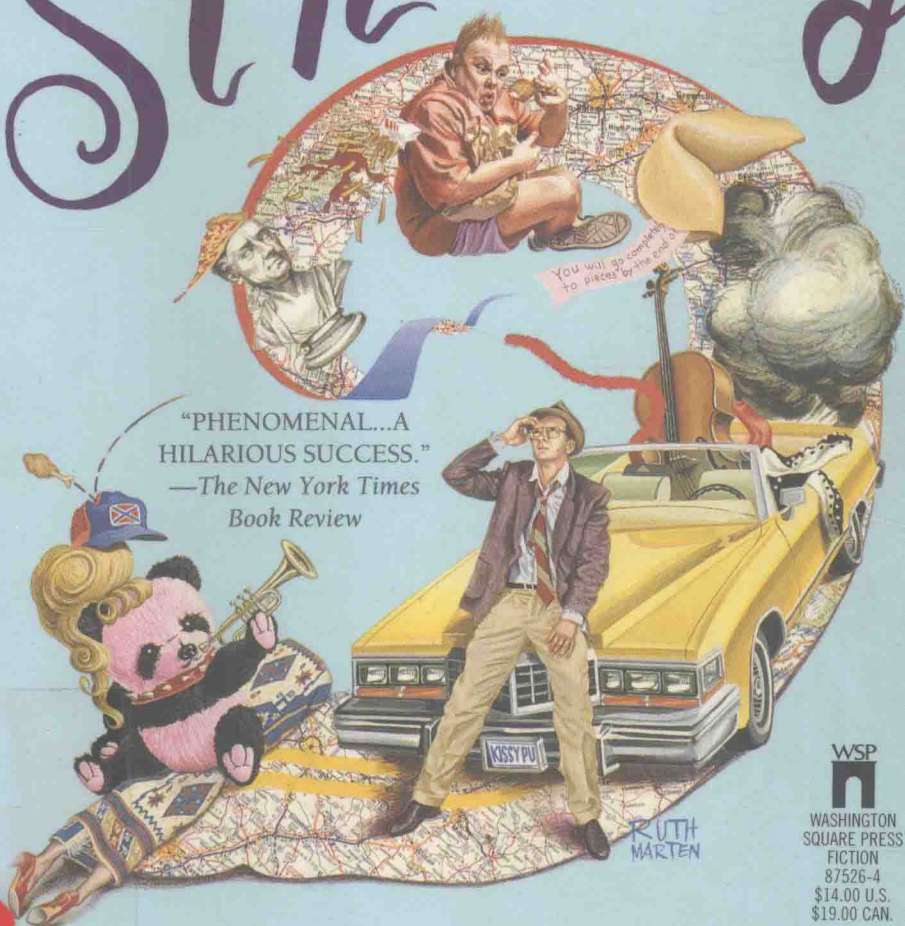


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*For my father
Thank you for the gift*

**This book is cald Handlyng Synne.
It contains Tales and Marvels.**

**Handyl hem at onys euerychone
Noght one by hym self alone
Handyl so to ryse from alle,
That none make the eft falle
With shryfte of mouthe, & wyl of herte,
And a party, with penaunce smerte;
Thys ys a skyl that hyt may be tolde
Handlyng synne many a folde.**

Robert of Brunne, 1303

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I'D LIKE TO thank some friends who made *Handling Sin* easier.

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Handling Sin took considerably longer than I foolishly figured. I appreciate everybody's patience. My thanks to them all—in particular, Peter Schifter. And as always, for everything, thank you, Maureen and Meg.

The character Victoria Anna Hayes first appeared in "Get Up and Go," *Southern Humanities Review*, Vol. XVI, Spring 1982. The character Flonnie Rogers first appeared in *Viva*. I'm indebted to John G. Barrett's *Sherman's March Through the Carolinas*

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(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1956, 1983) for the Civil War song.

There are three people without whose friendship, nudges, winks, and wise teaching, I never could have written *Handling Sin*. They are Miguel Cervantes, Henry Fielding, and Charles Dickens. I owe them more than I can say, and a lot of what I've said.

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Prologue

THERE LIVED IN the Piedmont of North Carolina a decent citizen and responsible family man named Raleigh Whittier Hayes, who obeyed the law and tried to do the right thing. He had a wife and two daughters, and he owned his own house, his own business, two oceanfront rental properties, two automobiles, his own retirement plan, and a large number of Treasury bonds. Thus was he well established in the middle class. Also he took care to be a member of the Civitans, the Chamber of Commerce, the Baptist Church, the Neighborhood Association, and the United Fund. Everyone who knew him called him reliable Raleigh, hardworking Raleigh, fair-and-square Raleigh, and, in general, respectable, smart, steady, honest, punctual, decent Raleigh Hayes.

The day came when the members of the court of Heaven took their places in the presence of the Lord.

THE CALL

