

# CAIN

A NOVEL

JAMES  
BYRON  
HUGGINS

# C A I N



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BYRON  
HUGGINS**

S i m o n   &   S c h u s t e r



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This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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This book could not have been written without the help of a great many friends, including Bob Liparilo, Frank Cohee, Jr., Bill Lamphere, my mother, and most of all, my wife and two children.

Jan Dennis deserves responsibility for the story's highest level of conception, and I remain in his debt. Robert Gottlieb of William Morris, who recognized the work, is also someone I am indebted to. And then there is my editor at Simon & Schuster, Bob Mecoy, who made so many suggestions that improved what I hoped would be a dark and contemporary gothic horror story.

I utilized well over a hundred reference materials, some contemporary, some going back as early as the Bronze Age. Then there was reliance upon the voluminous writings of philosophers from early Roman times through the Middle Ages until today, in addition to Catholic treatises governing the rites of formal exorcism. I have done my best to capture what we cannot see—the heart of an eternal war, if it be true, between the two most powerful beings in the cosmos.



Also by James Byron Huggins:

*Leviathan*

*The Reckoning*

*A Wolf Story*

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*to Jan Dennis*



# PROLOGUE

Wind roared with the wrath of a wounded god as the granite gateway of the grave shattered. Ancient air, hot with subterranean strength, flowed from the broken portal, and age-old volcanic dust rose around them like a vengeful, resurrected ghost.

Raising a hand against the heated blast of the tomb, the priest glared into a darkness that seemed to absorb their torches with stygian solidity. He glared as the world around them accepted the roaring blackness, a roaring blackness that continued for a long haunting moment rushing, releasing, breathing. Until . . . silence.

Stillness.

Holding a torch tight in a sweating fist, Father Marcelle faintly heard hushed, frightened words behind him and felt his own arms and legs trembling.

"*Ayya!*" an Israeli digger shouted as he pointed to a massive column inside the portal.

Marcelle saw Hebrew letters chiseled hatefully into stone and raised the torch high to read the cryptic inscription. He saw that it was from the hard and warlike Davidic period, a period consistent with this sealed, five-thousand-year-old demonic Temple of Dagon recently unearthed by a sandstorm in the white dunes of Megiddo.

"What says it, Father?"

Marcelle concentrated to decipher the words as the stench of ancient death and decay invaded his breath. And after a moment he was certain that, yes, it was an archaic form of Hebrew not written in five millennia, its true meaning lost to a chaotic and forgotten age.

*"Father! What says it!"*

With a severe act of will Father Marcelle braced himself and walked forward to enter the tomb, a place grown inexplicably cold despite the volcanic breath that had swept over them but moments before. Struggling to contain a strange anxiety, Marcelle whispered, "It is from the Davidic period. It is a warning."

*"Ayya! A warning! What says this warning?"*

"It is . . . obscure," Marcelle replied, trembling despite his control. "But it is very clearly a warning. It says in Hebrew, 'Let no man disturb the . . . the Neshamah, finally slain within these walls by the sword of David, Warrior-King of the Hebrews, a servant of Yahweh.'"

*"Ayya! Ayya! Ayya!"* was all Marcelle heard behind him, and he fought to control his fierce excitement, staring into the blackness of the long corridor. In the distance, just beyond a crumbled arch of huge dimensions that was probably the original entrance of the tomb, he saw a burial chamber that held an even deeper gloom.

Slowly following the torch's too-small circle of light, Marcelle walked toward the soundless dark. He barely noticed those who moved, almost staggering, behind him.

*"Neshamah? What is it, Father? What is Neshamah?"*

Marcelle heard himself as if from a distance. "It was used to describe a man that is not man," he said as he neared the secretive entrance of the burial tomb. "It describes a man without a soul. A man who lives but does not truly live . . . because he had no soul."

Marcelle dimly heard the stampede of retreating footsteps but their panic didn't prevent him from moving closer to the burial chamber. Then he realized there was a single presence stepping beside him in almost utter silence. He glanced down to see that it was the chief digger, trembling violently, holding a shovel in tight fists.

Without expression, Marcelle turned to the entrance to behold what lay within. And he stared for a wild and uncanny moment before his mind could accept the reality of it. He didn't move as he heard the Israeli blessing himself.

Before them, it was there.

A gigantic skeleton lay bone-white upon a massive stone slab. Lordly it was, and nobly proportioned. But the skull had been severed to be

spiked upon a lance, hatefully impaled in the floor. Marcelle stared at the severed skull and in the firelight the depthless eyes glimmered, burning with a bestial essence that could have held its own in the nethermost hell.

Still wearing proud armor of iron and brass, armor blackened by flame and savagely scarred by the sword of some unconquerable opponent, the skeleton was haunting and horrific in the torch. Struck to silence, Marcelle walked slowly forward, cautiously circling the enormous form.

Immense in stature, perhaps eight feet tall and of tremendous bone-strength, the man had obviously been a powerful warrior. A long iron sword, heavily notched by battle, lay coldly at his side. And a broad, double-edged dagger was clutched tight in a skeletal fist, as if the hate that commanded those bones in life could not release the blade even in death.

Shaking his head, Marcelle turned slowly to the skull and instantly saw something engraved in the broad forehead. Amazed and breathless, he raised the torch high and close over the flickering black eyes.

It was a single word:

GOLEM.

Carved deeply, the word was scarred by a savage dagger slash struck with kingly force across the thick white bone, as if to forever erase the power of the word from the world.

The digger whispered, "What is it, Father? What is it?"

"It is the same as Neshamah," Marcelle said, turning with a strange fear to the headless warrior, so heavily armed. "It was once used to name a dead man that lives."





# CHAPTER

## 1

White heat smoldered on the dunes of Death Valley as he ran with white sand burning his bare feet beneath the sun. And a vast white wasteland stretched before him to the horizon as distant sand dusted white air, dancing in the heat.

Here he had come so long ago, to rebuild himself. And as he ran, with his feet churning white on the dune, he knew that he had. He had rebuilt himself piece by piece with discipline, and heat, and desert, and sun.

Now, he knew, he was strong.

On and on he climbed, fiercely resisting the desert, holding his form as he fought the smothering air almost too hot to breathe.

Black glasses concealed his eyes and he was almost naked. His body, lean and muscular, was burned dark. His hair, brown and flecked with white to mark his age, was shorn almost to the scalp.

Without mercy he climbed, for mercy was something he would never show himself again. No, neither mercy nor rest because peace, if he should find it, would not come from either of these. No, peace could come only from embracing what he knew in his heart day by day with the haunting and silence and dreams, the faces, and the memories.

Death in heat raged over him and Solomon savagely rose against it, fighting and embracing, challenging until the sand and desert and sun finally surrendered to his strength once more as he reached the crest.