

**Our purpose at Howard Publishing is to:**

- *Increase faith* in the hearts of growing Christians
- *Inspire holiness* in the lives of believers
- *Instill hope* in the hearts of struggling people everywhere

**Because He's coming again!**

*Proof* © 2005 by Bright Media Foundation and Jack Cavanaugh

All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America

Published by Howard Publishing Co., Inc.

3117 North 7<sup>th</sup> Street, West Monroe, Louisiana 71291-2227

www.howardpublishing.com

In association with Steve Laube/The Literary Group

05 06 07 08 09 10 11 12 13 14      10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Edited by Ramona Cramer Tucker

Interior design by Tennille Paden

Cover design by Kirk DouPonce

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publishing Data

Bright Bill

Proof / Bill Bright & Jack Cavanaugh.

p. cm.

ISBN 1-58229-437-2

1. Revivals—Fiction. 2. Missionaries—Fiction. 3. Prayer meetings—Fiction. 4. New York (N. Y.)—Fiction. 5. Holland Reformed Church—Fiction. I. Cavanaugh, Jack. II. Title.

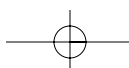
PS3552.R4623P76 2005

813'.6—dc22

2005040213

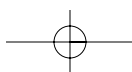
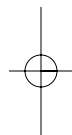
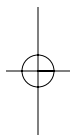
Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, Authorized King James Version, public domain.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, record, or any other—except for brief quotations in reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.



# DEDICATION

*To Jeremiah C. Lanphier and the other six believers  
who gathered for prayer on September 23, 1857,  
believing that God would answer their prayers for revival.*



# FOREWORD

## BY MRS. BILL BRIGHT (VONETTE)

In addition to our Lord Jesus Christ and his loving family, Bill Bright had two great passions in life: (1) helping to fulfill the Great Commission and (2) encouraging spiritual awakening and revival in America and in the world.

Bill fasted and prayed for many years that these two passions would see fulfillment. In each of his last nine years, he fasted for forty days, praying and yearning for the revival he believed to be coming.

The condition of the world and its need for repentance and faith in our Savior gripped his heart. He was burdened by the pervasive sin and people's hurts that he saw. Yet he believed in the power of fervent prayer and that God Himself does, indeed, long to send revival and grant mercy in response to the fervent pleadings of His people.

Beginning in 1994, Bill sponsored annual, nationwide fasting and prayer gatherings, bringing together thousands of Christian leaders and laypeople. In his 1995 book, *The Coming Revival*, Bill wrote, "I invite you to join me in praying that God will continue to use this fasting and prayer gathering as a spark to help set ablaze the Body of Christ in this most urgent and critical moment of history for our beloved nation and for the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ around the world." That would still be his plea today.

Bill promoted fasting and prayer for spiritual awakening and revival

## BILL BRIGHT &amp; JACK CAVANAUGH

for many years. In fact, he immediately donated every dollar of the full one million dollar prize he received with the 1996 Templeton Award in order to promote the movement worldwide. He once remarked that he was “the briefest millionaire in history.”

With declining health due to pulmonary fibrosis, which finally took his life in 2003, and knowing that his time was short, Bill teamed up with Jack Cavanaugh to create a series of novels that would be set in American history during times of revival. He knew the books would probably not be published while he was alive.

These novels portray Christians “who were great believers, great hopers, great doers, and great sufferers,” using his own words. Those attributes characterized his own life, and he recognized and admired the qualities in others.

Bill prayed every day that revival would sweep across our land, and I choose to believe he intercedes for our nation still. I like to think that his passion for America has not been diminished simply because he now resides in heaven.

It was Bill’s fervent desire that this series of novels create a hunger for revival in the hearts of Americans; that the people would call out to God; and that God would hear their prayers and once again bless our great nation with a tremendous outpouring of His grace and power.

## PROLOGUE

“Excuse me, Judge.”

“Hmm?”

“Your ten o’clock appointment is here.”

Judge Harrison Quincy Shaw glanced at the mantel clock. It was only 9:40. He frowned. “He’s early.”

“She, sir,” the servant clarified.

“She?” Judge Shaw lifted an eyebrow.

“Yes, sir.”

“Are you sure?”

The question puzzled the house servant. He stared at the polished wooden floor. “I do believe she’s female, sir.”

Now the judge was amused. “You’re certain, Hendricks?”

“Mostly certain, sir.”

Judge Harrison glanced again at the clock. “Tell her to wait.”

“Yes sir.” The servant stepped back, quietly shutting the door.

Rectangles of morning sun, matching the shape of the window frame, stretched lazily across the floor, warming the room.

Judge Shaw returned to his morning reading of the Scriptures. The Bible in his lap lay open to Galatians. He read a paragraph. It didn’t register. He read it again. He still couldn’t recall what he’d read. The inspiration was gone.

## BILL BRIGHT &amp; JACK CAVANAUGH

Irritated, he tossed the book onto his desk. The closer he drew to an arm's reach of threescore years, the more routine his life became. Judge Shaw liked routine, and so did most of the men he knew. Routine gave a man's life a semblance of order and peace. Anyone who disturbed a man's routine was as foolish as someone who poked a slumbering grizzly bear with a stick. Men understood this; they respected another man's routine. But women seemed neither to understand nor respect a man's need for routine. Without even thinking about it, they poked the grizzly. And then they seemed startled when he roared. They acted surprised, like they'd done nothing wrong.

"Hendricks!" he shouted.

The house servant reappeared.

"Show her in."

Moments later the study doors opened.

"Miss Nellie Bly," Hendricks announced.

The judge stood, his stiff knees complaining. At six-foot-four, he took longer than most people to unfold. At full height he towered over his female guest. She extended her hand. It was swallowed up by his.

"You're early," the grizzly grumbled.

Miss Bly's hand flew to her chest. "Am I? I sincerely hope I haven't disturbed you."

Judge Shaw said nothing; he simply offered her a seat.

Hendricks stepped out, closing the door behind him.

Miss Bly began to talk even before she was fully seated. "Thank you for your time, Your Honor. As you probably know, I write for the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*. Human-interest stories mostly."

"What makes you think I would know that?" Judge Shaw said as he sat back down in his desk chair.

Since entering the room, Miss Bly's expression had been fixed, as though a sculptor had fashioned a bust titled *Cordiality* and set it on her shoulders. Now the image faltered. What was it about writers that made them assume everybody was familiar with their work?

To her credit, Miss Bly didn't brood over her disappointment.



## PROOF

“Anyway,” she continued, “two days ago my managing editor approached me—”

He cocked his head. “How old are you?”

“Pardon me?”

“Was the question difficult?”

Miss Bly pursed her lips. She contemplated the blank page of her reporter’s pad before replying. “With all respect, Your Honor, it’s not polite to ask a woman her—”

“I don’t put my manners on until after ten o’clock. You were early. Just answer the question. How old are you?”

“Eighteen, Your Honor.”

Judge Shaw stared across the room, his mind flipping through past years. *Same age*, he thought. *Same height*. The similarities were intriguing.

“As I was saying, Your Honor . . .”

He smiled. *Same energy and determination.*

“. . . my managing editor thought, and I agreed . . .”

*Her features are rounder, but she has the same quick eyes, the sign of a quick mind. And that can be dangerous for a woman, especially if it’s attached to an unbridled tongue.*

“. . . that your wife’s story would make a good column for our newspaper. In fact, I’m hoping it will be the first of a series of stories on prominent women in Pittsburgh history. With your permission, I’d like to ask you some questions about her.”

“What do you know about my wife?”

Miss Bly smiled. “Your wife is my inspiration. When I first—”

“Your inspiration? How?”

The reporter’s eyes flashed annoyance, but she held her tongue.

The judge chuckled to himself. Now *that* wasn’t like Tori at all.

“As I was saying, Your Honor, when I first became interested in writing, I read everything I could get my hands on, especially newspapers since I’m interested in journalism. I read every article on every page. Even the obituaries. That’s where I saw the notice of your wife’s death.

## BILL BRIGHT &amp; JACK CAVANAUGH

It said she wrote for the *New York Herald*. That intrigued me, given the fact that women weren't allowed to be reporters in those days. I did a little research. Your wife was a remarkable woman, Your Honor."

"How extensively did you research the times?"

"The times?"

"The times, Miss Bly. People don't exist in a vacuum."

She stiffened. "I know that, Your Honor."

"Well, what did you find?"

Nellie Bly swallowed hard. "What I meant, Your Honor, was that I know people don't live in a vacuum. I didn't exactly research the times in which your wife lived."

"Then you know nothing about her, Miss Bly."

The reporter squirmed in her chair like a student who was failing an oral history examination. "Neither did I say I was ignorant of the times."

The judge folded his arms. "Tell me."

"Well, for one thing, I know that the mid-1850s were a time of unrest. That slavery was an extremely divisive issue—"

The judge waved a dismissive hand. "Abolition. Slavery. The war. Yes, yes. What else?"

Miss Bly searched the ceiling as though she were hoping to draw inspiration from on high. She brightened. "The Lincoln-Douglas debates . . . and gold was discovered in California."

He scowled. "Not the whole blessed nation, Miss Bly. The part that pertains to my wife."

"I'm . . . I'm not sure I know what you mean, Your Honor, unless you mean the role of women."

The judge sighed heavily. "Spiritually, Miss Bly. What do you know about the state of the nation's spirituality in the mid-1850s?"

She appeared surprised. "You mean religious history? Preachers and the like?"

"I mean, Miss Bly, what was the spiritual condition of the nation in those days?"

"Good?"

## PROOF

The judge slumped in his chair.

She tried again. “Not good?”

“1857, Miss Bly.”

The reporter searched her memory, all the time shaking her head.

“Fulton Street,” said the judge.

That was no help either.

“The old North Dutch Church.”

Miss Bly had had enough. She repositioned herself in her chair.

“Excuse me, Your Honor, but if we could get back to your wife—”

“No wonder our nation is in the state it’s in if its citizens are ignorant of the great visitations of God!” the judge proclaimed. “Miss Bly, if you know nothing of the revival of 1857–58, you know nothing of my wife.”

For a time neither one of them spoke.

“September 23, 1857,” said the judge.

Miss Bly looked at him.

He pointed at her tablet. “You’re not writing.”

“Sir?”

“September 23, 1857. Write that down.”

She wrote it down.

“Fulton Street. 11:58 a.m. The morning dawned like any other morning, with no indication of the momentous events that would soon take place. We were a generation in search of a soul, Miss Bly. The Unitarians sought it through logic and reason; the transcendentalists peered inward. One utopian society after another sprung up, hoping to create the ideal community, while those of us who remained in the church prayed for revival. We hungered for it, Miss Bly. We’d read about former times when God’s Spirit revealed Himself in America with might and power—the Great Awakening of the 1730s and ’40s, the Yale revivals of the 1790s, and the revival in New York’s Burned-Over District in 1825. We prayed that God would do it again. And He did, Miss Bly. He did, beginning September 23, 1857.”

As Judge Harrison Shaw settled into a storytelling posture and

## BILL BRIGHT &amp; JACK CAVANAUGH

began to narrate, Nellie Bly recorded his words on her pad. Later, when she wrote up the interview, she used the story as a sidebar.

**Two minutes to noon.**

A tall, forty-eight-year-old businessman sits alone in an upstairs room of the old North Dutch Church in lower Manhattan. A stack of handbills lies at his feet.

Prayer Meeting

12 – 1 o'clock

Stop 5, 10, or 20 minutes

or the whole hour as your time permits

A weariness washes over him, the kind that goes deeper than tired feet and aching legs.

For three months Jeremiah C. Lanphier had walked the streets surrounding the church, distributing Bibles and tracts, temperance pledges, and handbills as part of a systematic visitation effort. Hired by the trustees of the North Dutch Church, he set out to visit every house, to speak to every person. He wanted to determine the religious condition of the families in the neighborhood. He had no special training for this enterprise. No prior experience. He was a merchant, not a minister. The decision to leave his business to do the Lord's work at a greatly reduced salary was not an easy one for him.

Once he decided, however, Lanphier launched into the task with enthusiasm. One of his more successful ideas was to make arrangements with hotels and boardinghouses for their guests who needed a place to worship. Chambermaids placed in each room small cards that indicated the times of the church services. Then, when guests attended a service, all

## PROOF

they had to do was mention which hotel they were staying at, and an usher would seat them in a pew specifically reserved for residents of that hotel or boardinghouse.

The weekday prayer meeting had seemed like a good idea too. But now he isn't so sure.

**12:10 p.m.**

Lanphier lets out a sigh.

He knows the neighborhood around Fulton and William Streets has changed since the North Dutch Church was built eighty-eight years ago. In those days the streets were populated by families; now one sees mostly businesses. The idea of a prayer meeting for businessmen seemed like a logical one. Why not give merchants, mechanics, clerks, strangers, and other businessmen an opportunity to pause in their busy day and call upon God? They could come and go as needed.

Lanphier had printed invitations and placards. For more than a month, he had visited all the business establishments in the area. The response he had received was encouraging. "That's what this city needs!" everyone told him.

Yet the minutes tick by, and he is still the only person in the room.

**12:20 p.m.**

Elbows on knees, hands clasped, Lanphier hangs his head.

The idea of a prayer meeting for businessmen had been born out of his personal prayer life. More than once he'd come back to his residence at the church, bone tired and discouraged at the day's lack of progress.

## BILL BRIGHT &amp; JACK CAVANAUGH

Now, his voice the only sound in the room, Lanphier repeats the words that came to him on the day he surrendered to the Lord's work:

'Tis done, the great transaction's done,  
I am the Lord's, and He is mine;  
He drew me, and I followed on,  
Charmed to confess the voice divine.

**12:30 p.m.**

He stands up. No one's coming, he tells himself.

He sits back down. No, I'll stay the hour. I announced that the room would be open for prayer for the hour, and so it shall be.

Moments later, the back stairs creak. A man enters the room. He says he's come to pray.

Another man follows.

Then another and another and another, until there are six.

They pray, agreeing to return again the following Wednesday.

Judge Harrison Shaw leaned forward in his chair. He was getting excited. "The following Wednesday twenty to thirty people came to pray. The week after that, thirty to forty. Exciting, but not earthshaking. Then . . ."

He opened a desk drawer. The first item he removed was a lady's pink fan.

Miss Bly smiled when she saw it.

The judge's gaze lingered on the fan. Setting it aside, he dug deeper until he found what he was looking for. A file folder plopped on top of the desk.

"These speak your language." He opened the folder. In it was a collection of newspaper clippings. He selected one of them. "The *New York Times*."

Miss Bly took the article and read with interest.

## PROOF

During their busiest hours, merchants, clerks, and working men gather day after day for worship. . . . A theater is turned into a chapel, churches of all denominations are open and crowded by day and night. The judge handed her another. "This one's *Harper's Weekly*."

The Christian churches of the land are now in the midst of an extraordinary awakening, the greatest, perhaps, which they have ever known. The movement is on so grand a scale that it commands universal attention. . . . The most indifferent and most incredulous lookers-on, even those who profess no belief in Christianity at all, cannot choose but to gaze, if it be only in wonder, to see the heart of almost a whole nation moved by one spiritual impulse.

"Also from *Harper's Weekly*," said the judge, "a regular feature called The Lounger."

"I'm familiar with The Lounger columns." Miss Bly took the article.

Not even The Lounger can help seeing the universal interest in the great religious movement of the moment. When, at high noon, in the densest business parts of the city, swarms of men are hurrying in various directions, and an observer learns that they are not going to the bank, and that they are not in all this hurry to save their credit but their souls; and when for the first time in his experience, he sees that in a Christian community the Christian churches are not closed for six days in seven but are open; that they are not attended by a few decorous listeners upon one day but thronged with multitudes of eager and excited people several times a day, he will naturally do as

## BILL BRIGHT &amp; JACK CAVANAUGH

this Lounger did—follow the crowds and observe the scene.

“And not just New York,” said the judge. He read place names aloud as he picked up one account after another. “Philadelphia. Chicago. Omaha City. Cleveland. St. Louis. Louisville. Baltimore. Hartford. Providence, etc., etc., etc.” He handed a fistful of clippings to Miss Bly.

She read one byline aloud. “T. E. Campbell, your wife’s pseudonym.”

Headline after headline appeared before Nellie Bly as she leafed through the news clippings.

New Haven, Connecticut—City’s Biggest Church  
Packed Twice Daily for Prayer

Albany, New York—State Legislators Get Down on  
Knees

Schenectady, New York—Ice on the Mohawk Broken  
for Baptisms

“Your wife had quite an interest in spiritual revival,” Miss Bly said. “Something the two of you shared?”

Judge Shaw gave a nod. “I was one of the six who attended that first prayer meeting on Fulton Street.”

“Is that where you met? At church?”

The judge leaned back in his chair, his hands interlaced comfortably across his belly. “Miss Bly, have you ever heard of the court case that the newspapers dubbed *The State of New York v. The North Dutch Church?*”

A puzzled expression formed on the reporter’s face.

“James Kittredge Jarves prosecuted the case. I was the defense.”

Miss Bly’s eyebrows arched. “You went up against your wife’s father?”

The judge smiled. “She wasn’t my wife at the time. The outcome of the trial would determine our future. You see, Miss Bly, I made a promise to her father that if I lost the trial, I wouldn’t marry his daughter. And in order to win, I had to prove in a New York court of law that the Holy Spirit not only existed, but that He was behind the extraordinary events of the time.”



# CHAPTER 1

Harrison Shaw tugged at the sleeves of his dress coat. Actually, it wasn't his coat. It belonged to the Newsboys' Lodge in Brooklyn. All the guys used it for important occasions. Isaac Hirsch wore it to his bar mitzvah. Murry Simon got married in it. Luckily for Murry—or perhaps for Murry's bride—the coat was his size. Isaac wasn't so lucky. When he wore it, the sleeves hung well past his knuckles. He looked like he was playing dress-up with his father's coat. Harrison had the opposite problem. The sleeves didn't begin to cover his bony wrists. He tugged on them again just before reaching for the door knocker.

Hollow brass lion's eyes stared back at him. His coat sleeve rode up his arm as he lifted the lion's jaw to strike the knocker pad. The metal was cold. He shivered—not from the chill of brass in early winter, but from nervous excitement. This was the first time he'd been this far uptown. It had been an intimidating journey as he'd walked past one stately mansion after another. "Millionaire Row," they called it. If the boys at the lodge could only see him now.

Nervously, he shoved a hand into his trousers pocket and fingered a lone coin. An 1831 silver dollar with a nick on the edge. It had been his good-luck piece for as long as he could remember.

The latch sounded. The door opened.

A house servant appeared. She was so short her gaze hit him in the

## BILL BRIGHT &amp; JACK CAVANAUGH

belly and worked its way up, the way it would if she were gazing at a church steeple.

“Deliveries in back,” she said, closing the door.

Harrison found himself once again face to face with the brass lion. The lion was smirking at him.

He knocked a second time, this time bending over to speak to the female servant on her level.

The door opened.

“I’m not a delivery boy,” he blurted. He spoke the words so quickly—to get them out before she had time to close the door again—that they came out as a single word: “I’mnotadeliveryboy.”

His words hit a middle-aged man in the waistcoat.

“Congratulations, sir,” said the house servant, looking down at him.

Cringing, Harrison pulled himself up to full height. The servant, distinguished, with gray temples, extended his hand, palm up.

Harrison grabbed the servant’s hand and shook it. “Nice to meet you. Name’s Harrison Shaw. I’m expected.”

The servant stared at Harrison’s hand as though it were a three-day old fish. “Your calling card, sir.”

“Oh! Calling card!” Harrison retracted his hand sheepishly. He felt his pockets, even though he knew there were no calling cards to be found.

The servant stood motionless. Pigeons could have landed on his arm.

“Um . . . where I live we don’t use a lot of calling cards,” Harrison said.

“Shocking, sir.”

“If you could just check with Mr. Jarves, I’m sure my name’s on a list somewhere, or I could run home and get a note from my guardian . . . a letter of introduction . . . that is, if you really need something in writing.”

The servant lowered his hand and stepped back. With a heavy sigh, he said, “This way, sir.”

Earlier that morning, when Harrison, now in his midtwenties, had climbed out of bed, he knew that the events of this day could very well

## PROOF

chart the course of his professional career in New York's dog-eat-dog legal system. He'd worked hard to get this far, and today could very well be the payoff he'd so often dreamed of. Had he known that stepping across the threshold of this Fifth Avenue mansion would launch him down a series of rapids in a boat without an oar, he might not have crossed it so eagerly.

Never in his life had Harrison stood in such an entryway. Four white marble Corinthian columns thrust upward to the heavens. Literally. Overhead cherubs looked down mischievously at him from cotton clouds set against a domed blue sky. Gawking upward, he turned full circle, his feet gliding effortlessly on a floor smooth as glass.

All of a sudden Harrison realized he and the cherubs were alone. The house servant had moved on. He ran to catch up.

Harrison followed his escort at a steady clip through two rooms, both of them larger than the common room at the Newsboys' Lodge, then down a carpeted hallway lined with portraits of well-dressed people who glared at him disapprovingly as he passed.

The servant opened two floor-to-ceiling doors and motioned Harrison into a sitting room. "Wait here. Don't touch anything." The massive doors closed.

Harrison found himself alone in a room that resembled a museum. He wasn't surprised. Jimmy Wessler had warned him that rich people liked to collect a lot of strange and unusual artifacts, not just paintings and statues of ancient Greeks like most people thought. Jimmy knew about this kind of stuff because his uncle was a lawyer for rich people in Albany.

For twenty minutes Harrison remained firmly planted where the house servant had left him, suffering the scratchy constraints of his stiff upturned collar with no complaint as his head swiveled this way and that. Then his curiosity got the better of him, and he inched closer to a polished round table to get a better look at a white porcelain elephant. Just beyond the elephant was an oriental jade chess set; and beyond it, a vase with a painting of a crouching black jaguar. And before Harrison

## BILL BRIGHT &amp; JACK CAVANAUGH

knew it, he had penetrated the room's interior. But he wasn't touching anything.

Floor-to-ceiling windows flanked him on the left, framed by red velvet curtains. Beyond the windows was a small orchard of trees with naked branches. A soft light fell on him and the room's strange assortment of collectibles.

Painfully aware that he didn't have the money to replace anything he broke, Harrison navigated the room's clutter, zigzagging around embroidered footstools, plump sofas and chairs, little tables loaded with trinkets, and cabinets jammed full of porcelain and glass animals.

Oil paintings hung on the walls from long wires that stretched to the ceiling. Pastorals mostly. Metal plates mounted on the frames identified both painting and artist. *The Voyage of Life*, by Thomas Cole, captivated him with its depiction of a young man, tiller firmly in hand, sailing the river of life. The thrust of the young man's chin and his billowing clothes suggested adventure and determination. In the distance a shining castle beckoned him. An angelic being watched over him from the shore. So intent was the youth on his goal, he didn't see the choppy seas and rough water ahead.

Other paintings in the room were interesting but not as dramatic. There were several by Frederick Church depicting scenes of South America and a pastoral landscape by Asher B. Durand that hung in a prominent location. Harrison had never heard of any of these painters before.

Next to the Durand painting hung a scuffed wooden frame that was not displaying a painting. Inside the frame was a piece of paper that showed a crease from being folded over and was now yellowed with age. A letter, penned in French. The signature fascinated him: Marquis de Lafayette. A chill of excitement passed through Harrison at the realization he was inches from a page of correspondence that had been penned by the hand of a true Revolutionary War hero. A relative of Jarves's perhaps?

Something else caught his eye. Something down low on a table. Harrison turned his head to see a stuffed bird beneath a glass bell looking

## PROOF

up at him. Its eyes had a murderous glint in them, as though death had come upon it suddenly and it was intent on revenge.

The creature was small and gray with black markings around its eyes so that it appeared to be wearing a mask. Its eyes locked on to him with hypnotic force, and for an instant, Harrison knew the helpless sensation prey feel when they know they're going to die. The moment was beyond unnerving.

Harrison gave the table a wide berth. The bird's eyes seemed to follow him.

Now that he thought about it, the whole house was a bit unnerving—the peeping angels in the entryway, the unsmiling portraits in the hallway, the bird restrained under glass. The unsettled feeling in his gut was more than simply being unaccustomed to the trappings of wealth. There was an underlying dark anxiety about the place. He suddenly found himself craving fresh air—fresh *outside* air.

But he couldn't just leave. Mr. Bowen and the boys back at the lodge were counting on him. What would he tell them—he got scared and ran away before the interview?

He took a deep breath and put some distance between him and the bird, looking for something to distract him. Something that didn't have eyes.

He found what he was looking for beneath another glass bell jar. A pocket watch dangled on a gold chain. It was obviously of sentimental value to Mr. Jarves, because while the watch looked expensive, it was damaged. Its backside was charred; a portion of the crystal was clouded from smoke. The hands of the watch were stilled, frozen at sixteen minutes past one o'clock.

As Harrison bent over to examine it, he noticed something new to the room. Something that hadn't been there when he'd entered. He was certain of it. An odor. What intrigued him was that the odor obviously didn't belong in this museum of musty drapes and old wood and scary stuffed birds beneath bell jars.

## BILL BRIGHT &amp; JACK CAVANAUGH

The door latch rattled. The massive doors swung open. The house servant who had deposited him in the room eyed Harrison suspiciously. Harrison raised his hands to indicate he hadn't touched anything.

Everything about the house servant said, *Follow me*. Verbalizing it would have been redundant. The servant turned, and Harrison dutifully fell in step behind him.

Their journey was short. They stepped across the hallway, where the house servant opened a second pair of double wooden doors. "Mr. Harrison Quincy Shaw," he announced, stepping aside.

Harrison walked into the largest library he'd ever seen in his life. Three floors of books rimmed the room's perimeter, dwarfing him by their sheer number. Each level was reached by one of three sets of open circular stairways. Harrison recognized the titles closest to him, not that he'd read them. These were books the authors he read quoted.

Just beyond the room's center, four men huddled over a desk. Their backs were to him. They spoke in whispers, giving no indication they were aware he'd been announced. Unsure what to do, Harrison glanced at the house servant, who appeared unconcerned over their lack of response. So Harrison acted equally unconcerned. He tugged at the sleeves of his coat.

From within the huddle came a voice, strong with authority. "Let's get on with it."

The four men turned to face Harrison. They wore identical black suits—all with sleeves long enough to cover their wrists—and identical expressions, which gave the impression their personalities had just been repossessed. Of the four, one was remarkably shorter than the others. Another had white bushy sideburns.

Harrison Shaw's future rested in their hands.

## CHAPTER 2

Harrison felt like a specimen under scrutiny. He matched the serious gaze of the four men in black, though not without difficulty. Mr. Bowen had prepared him for this moment. *Always look a man in the eye, Harrison. A man who cannot hold another man's gaze is either weak, ashamed of himself, or has something to hide.*

*Or is scared out of his wits,* Harrison thought. His gaze moved from man to man. Harrison wondered which of the four was the notorious J. K. Jarves.

Just then the men parted like a curtain—two moving to one side, two to the other—and there, seated at the table behind them, was a fifth man who, by his bearing, was the unmistakable master of everything he surveyed.

J. K. Jarves's clean-shaven face revealed a jaw of granite. His eyes were fixed and hard, harder than those of the brass lion on the front door. His chair scraped the floor as he rose to an impressive height. And when the man spoke, Harrison had a flash of insight of what it would be like to stand before God on the Day of Judgment.

"Step forward," said the voice.

The request was simple. Compliance, however, was not so simple. Intimidation is to memory what an eraser is to a blackboard, and all of a sudden, Harrison forgot the difference between forward and backward.

## BILL BRIGHT &amp; JACK CAVANAUGH

He was sure he told his feet forward. But somehow they stepped backward, onto the toes of the house servant, who had at some point sneaked up behind him.

Harrison mumbled his apologies and, with a second effort, coaxed his wobbly knees forward.

“You are Harrison Shaw?” said the voice.

It was a ridiculous question. A “huftymagufty”—at least that’s what they called them at the lodge. A nonquestion pretending to be a question. A question with an answer so obvious, it never should have been asked. Jimmy Wessler was the master of huftymagufties. He’d ask a person who held a half-eaten roll in his hand what he was chewing. Or a person who was sitting on a newspaper, “Are you reading that?”

Harrison couldn’t help being amused. Here he was, in the interview of his life, and the first question asked him was a huftymagufty. He’d arrived at the interview time for Harrison Shaw. He’d been announced as Harrison Shaw. They had Harrison Shaw’s papers in front of them on the desk. Who else would he be except Harrison Shaw? If Jimmy Wessler had asked that same question, Harrison would have said, “No, I’m President Buchanan’s parrot.” However, it wasn’t Jimmy Wessler standing in front of him. It was J. K. Jarves, without question the most celebrated lawyer in New York. So Harrison swallowed hard and said, “Yes, sir. I’m Harrison Shaw.”

But there are some impulses that master you; you don’t master them. And before Harrison could stop himself, he added, “And you are J. K. Jarves?”

The words were greased pigs. They slipped past his lips despite his best effort to hold them back.

He regretted them immediately. The four lawyers, who moments before had served as curtains, frowned at Harrison in unison. The man behind the desk glowered at him with those steely eyes, boring a hole through Harrison large enough to drive a locomotive through. After a seeming eternity of uncomfortable silence, he sat down behind his desk



## PROOF

and began examining a sheaf of papers Harrison recognized as his application for the position of J. K. Jarves's legal intern.

For a time nothing was said. Jarves read. The four curtain men watched him read. The house servant, who had put some distance between himself and Harrison, watched Jarves read. Harrison watched him read. The man was the center of the world. All of life radiated out from him in concentric circles.

A minute later the door behind Harrison clicked shut. A backward glance revealed the house servant was gone.

Jarves picked up a pen and used it to guide a systematic review of the document. He launched into a series of questions. "You're twenty-six years old?"

"Yes, sir."

Jarves scratched a note on the application. "You attended Washburn School of Law?"

"Yes, sir."

Jarves looked up. "Where exactly is Washburn?"

"Brooklyn."

"Really? Hmm." Jarves returned to the document. He wrote something. "It says here you graduated top of your class."

"Yes, sir."

"How many matriculated?"

"Fourteen, sir. No, fifteen. Teddy Green made it back from his father's farm upstate in time to take the final exam. None of us thought he would."

Jarves stared at Harrison. "Teddy Green made it back, did he?"

"Yes, sir."

"We didn't get that report here. We can all breathe easy now."

One of the curtain men—the one with the sideburns—sniggered.

With the preliminaries out of the way, Harrison was pelted with questions for over an hour, both personal and pertaining to the law. The four curtain men took turns reading to him from papers he'd written at

## BILL BRIGHT &amp; JACK CAVANAUGH

Washburn, challenging his logic, his conclusions, sometimes both. Harrison defended his positions.

“You realize, don’t you,” said one of the curtain men, “that being selected for this internship would be an unparalleled honor.”

“It’s an honor if only to be considered,” Harrison replied.

“Is it now?” Sideburns approached Harrison. The man had a snooty air about him. He made no effort to conceal his feelings for Harrison. “Do you realize how much of an honor it is just for you to be standing here? To be standing in the same place as candidates from Princeton and Harvard and Yale? To be considered with men who graduated with honors, at the top of their class, from the best law schools in America?”

For all Harrison knew, Sideburns was a state supreme-court judge. Despite Harrison’s earlier lapses, he decided self-control and discretion were the order of the day.

“A man can do no more than make the most of the opportunities presented to him,” Harrison stated. “While I was not given the chance to attend the schools you mentioned, I was, through the sacrifice of a dear friend, granted the privilege to attend Washburn where, I’m confident, we studied the same law that is studied at Princeton and Harvard and Yale. Sir, I believe I can hold my own against any of the other applicants in a court of law.”

“Well said,” Jarves cried from behind the desk.

Harrison felt a rush of satisfaction, the kind he’d imagined he’d feel in a courtroom when the judge ruled in his favor.

“There’s only one thing left to say,” Jarves added. He eyed the curtain lawyers, then Harrison’s sleeves. “Nice coat.”

The house servant was summoned, and Harrison was led back through the house the same way he’d entered. He had no illusions regarding the outcome of the interview. He consoled himself with the thought that the experience had equipped him with a couple of good stories to tell

## PROOF

the boys at the lodge, not the least of which was the stuffed bird under the bell jar.

Just as they reached the entryway, a feminine shout came from the back of the house. Not a frightened scream, but an alarm.

The house servant's hand froze on the door latch.

The next thing Harrison knew, he was surrounded by a mob of house servants, every one of them staring angrily at him.

A female servant stepped forward. "The master's pocket watch is missing!"

The four curtain attorneys came running.

"The master's pocket watch is missing!" she told them.

J. K. Jarves himself arrived.

"Your pocket watch, sir," she reported a third time, "the one in the sitting room under the glass jar. It's missing!"

All eyes shifted to Harrison.

The house servant who had been his guide stood between him and the door. On the other side of Harrison was a choir of scowls, two rows deep.

Harrison knew he hadn't lifted the watch, yet he felt guilty. They were staring at him, waiting for some kind of response. He had an overwhelming urge to confess.

What should he say? To deny taking the watch is exactly what a guilty person would do.

He fidgeted under their gaze. His hands went to his pockets. Should he turn them out and show them he didn't have the watch? But then, why should he? Why had they assumed he was the one who took the watch?

Just then Harrison felt an unfamiliar bulge in his coat pocket. His fingers traced a thick, circular shape. And at that moment, he knew exactly how the stuffed bird felt. He was being fitted for a glass bell display.

"Do you know anything about the missing watch, Mr. Shaw?" Jarves asked.

"Search his pockets!" Sideburns shouted.

The male house servant took a step toward him.

Their actions came a little too quickly, as though they'd been rehearsed.

## BILL BRIGHT &amp; JACK CAVANAUGH

“That won’t be necessary,” Harrison said. He reached into his pocket and produced the watch.

A housemaid gasped. The curtain attorneys voiced their dismay in unison. Everyone talked at once. In the midst of it all, Harrison was certain he heard someone giggle.

“Summon the police,” J. K. Jarves demanded.

No one moved. They seemed to be awaiting Harrison’s reaction.

“Yes,” Harrison replied. “Yes, by all means, summon the police. And quickly.”

Everyone fell silent. They stared at him. Obviously, this wasn’t the response they were expecting.

Harrison turned to the house servant. “Didn’t you hear Mr. Jarves? Be on your way, man! Summon the police!”

The house servant balked, uncertain as to what to do. He looked to Jarves for instructions.

J. K. Jarves approached Harrison. “An interesting reaction. Why would you be eager to be arrested?”

“Eager to be arrested?” Harrison cried. “Certainly not. What do you take me for, a fool?”

“Then why summon the police?”

“To prevent an injustice.”

“An injustice?”

“Certainly, an injustice. It’s not likely that I’m going to get a fair hearing in this venue, hence the injustice. I prefer presenting my case to an objective authority.”

The senior attorney grinned wryly. A superior grin. The grin of a chess master sizing up his next victim. “Case?” Jarves said. “You have no case, Mr. Shaw. Look around you. All these witnesses saw you pull the watch from your pocket.”

“True enough,” Harrison conceded. “However, I believe at least one person can testify that I wasn’t the one who put the watch into my pocket.”

Jarves was intrigued. “And who would that be, Mr. Shaw?”

## PROOF

Harrison took a deep breath to brace himself, very much aware that his reputation, and possibly his freedom, rested on what he said next. “Well, there’s me,” he began. “I know I didn’t put the watch in my pocket.”

“A thief declaring his own innocence is hardly a defense, Mr. Shaw.”

“Then there’s the person who did put the watch in my pocket. That person knows I didn’t steal the watch.”

“You can produce such a person, Mr. Shaw? Someone who will admit the crime?”

“I believe so, yes. But before I expose the true criminal, there’s a witness I wish to question.”

“A witness?” Jarves’s eyes narrowed appreciably. “You’re trying my patience, Mr. Shaw.”

“A single witness, one that could prevent a miscarriage of justice. Surely that’s not too much to ask, is it?”

Jarves folded his arms. “Very well, Mr. Shaw. Call your witness.”

“I can’t,” Harrison said, sheepishly. “Don’t get me wrong, I can produce her. It’s just that I can’t call her, because . . . well, I don’t know her name. But she’s”—he pointed across the crowded entryway—“she’s hiding behind that marble column over there.”

The servants who stood between Harrison and the marble column parted, as though his finger was a loaded pistol. The pillar came into plain view. No one appeared from behind it.

“She must be shy,” Harrison said.

“If you’re there, come out,” Jarves ordered.

For a long moment, no one came out. Then, with a swish of petticoats, a young woman appeared. She was dressed elegantly, all in white. Her head was tilted proudly upward. She walked with practiced dignity.

“Victoria?” Jarves said.

“Another house servant?” Harrison quipped.

The young woman shot Harrison a withering glance.

“My daughter,” Jarves said quickly.

“Oh.”

## BILL BRIGHT &amp; JACK CAVANAUGH

Jarves spoke to her. "Victoria, dear, Mr. Shaw claims you are a witness to the theft of my watch from under the glass bell in the sitting room."

"He is mistaken," Victoria said.

Harrison raised an objecting finger. "If you'll pardon me, sir, I never used the word *theft*. In point of fact, I do not believe a theft actually occurred. It is my contention that your watch was, shall we say, pressed into service. And furthermore, begging your pardon, I believe this is my witness. If you have no objections, I believe it is my right to question her first."

Jarves raised a threatening finger. "Do not forget that you are talking to my daughter."

The warning was unnecessary. It wasn't a woman Harrison saw step from behind the marble column, but a goddess descending from her heavenly throne. As befitting her position, Victoria Jarves made Harrison come to her. They stood beneath a canopy of angels looking down at them.

Harrison's nervousness registered on two levels. First, regardless of the attitude of gamesmanship he was projecting, he was fully aware that he was on trial. And second, because Miss Jarves's beauty was so formidable, it struck him dumb whenever he looked at her.

"Miss Jarves," he said, with lowered gaze so he could think, "early today, when you were in the room where the watch is on display—"

"You're mistaken, sir," Victoria replied. "I was not in the sitting room earlier today."

"You weren't?"

"I haven't stepped foot in that room for weeks."

"For weeks? You're certain?"

Victoria Jarves nodded, pleased to refute his assumption.

Harrison scratched his cheek and glanced at Jarves. The senior attorney wore an amused smile. Behind him was a backdrop of smirking attorneys and servants.

"Let me ask you this then, Miss Jarves," Harrison said. "Tell me, when was the last time you looked into the room?"

## PROOF

“The hallway door to that room is normally closed,” she explained. “While I may have passed by the room, I would not have been able to see inside it without entering it.”

“Unable to see without entering it. That’s not exactly true, is it, Miss Jarves? Perhaps I can clarify the question. Miss Jarves, when was the last time you looked into that room from a place other than the hallway?”

Victoria Jarves didn’t answer immediately. She cocked her head and looked at him as though she were attempting to read his mind. Harrison prayed she had no mind-reading abilities, for if she did, she’d see 10 percent of his mind attempting to phrase the next question, and 90 percent of his mind totally agog to be standing this close to her.

“I’m not sure I understand what you’re asking,” Miss Jarves said.

“What perfume are you wearing?”

“I beg your pardon?”

“Your perfume. It has a name?”

She looked at her father.

He shrugged.

“Desire du Paris,” she answered.

“Desire du Paris? Really? Hmm. All right. Desire du Paris it is. Tell me, Miss Jarves, how many other people in this household wear Desire du Paris perfume?”

“I don’t see how that is any of your—”

“You’re wasting our time, Mr. Shaw,” Jarves said.

Harrison persisted. “Miss Jarves, do any of the house servants wear Desire du Paris perfume?”

“They couldn’t afford it.”

“Do any of these fine gentlemen attorneys, all neatly dressed in black, wear Desire du Paris perfume?”

“Mr. Shaw!” Jarves warned.

“Mr. Jarves, I’m simply trying to establish the fact that only one person in this house wears Desire du Paris perfume, an important fact considering that I distinctly remember smelling that fragrance while waiting in the sitting room.”

## BILL BRIGHT &amp; JACK CAVANAUGH

Victoria started to say something.

Harrison cut her off. "Miss Jarves, please don't attempt to deny it. It was your fragrance that alerted me that you were lurking behind the marble column a few moments ago."

"I don't lurk!" Victoria Jarves protested.

"But you do spy, don't you, Miss Jarves? If I were to inspect that room, or ask the police to inspect that room, I would discover that there is a secret passageway behind the walls, wouldn't I? One that allows a person to see into the room without being seen by anyone in the room. Were you spying on me, Miss Jarves?"

"I certainly was not!" Miss Jarves sputtered.

Harrison pointed to the heavenly dome. "Under God, Miss Jarves. Remember, your testimony is under God."

Victoria looked up. Cherubs looked down.

Before she could reply, Harrison turned to Jarves: "And while I believe that Miss Jarves witnessed the person removing the watch from beneath the glass bell, that still doesn't explain how it got into my pocket, does it?"

"You had an accomplice," Jarves suggested.

"So it would appear. However, what kind of thief would I be to steal a watch and, at the same time, have something of mine stolen from me?"

Jarves snapped, "What the devil are you talking about, Shaw?"

Harrison turned his trousers pockets inside out to reveal nothing was in them. The house servants, the curtain attorneys, Victoria, and even Jarves himself stared at the two white tongues protruding from the sides of Harrison's trousers.

"When I entered this house for my interview, I had in my possession a silver dollar, dated 1831. It has a nick just above the eagle's left wing. It's an heirloom of sorts. I carry it for good luck. And why wouldn't I? Today of all days, when I had such an important interview. I distinctly remember rubbing it between my thumb and forefinger just before one of your house servants mistook me for a delivery boy. And now it's gone." He flapped both trousers pockets. "Not there."



## PROOF

Harrison felt ridiculous standing in the entryway of a million-dollar mansion on Fifth Avenue with his pockets turned out. It wasn't exactly how he'd envisioned his interview would go.

"So, by all means, summon the police," Harrison pressed, "because once they question Miss Jarves, I believe they'll learn that she concealed herself in a secret hiding place and that she can identify the person who removed the watch from the sitting room. I further believe that when they search the pockets of the house servants, they will find my 1831 silver dollar. I believe they will conclude, as I have, that the person who stole the coin is the same person who lifted the watch, for reasons of his own."

The house servant, the one who had served as Harrison's escort, felt his vest pocket. His eyes grew wide with alarm. Reaching into the pocket, he withdrew a coin. A silver dollar. It had a nick on the edge.

"Sir!" he cried, his eyes imploring, "I didn't . . . I wouldn't! I have served this family honorably, with pride, doing everything you've instructed me to do, without question . . . you know I wouldn't—"

"Summon the police!" Harrison cried.

"No!" the house servant pleaded. "Tell him. Tell him, sir. I was only doing as I was instructed!"

Jarves calmly approached the servant. He held out his hand. The man handed him the coin. Jarves turned and handed it to Harrison. "Mr. Shaw, you will be notified of the results of your interview at an appropriate time."

Harrison was shown the door.

After the door was shut, Harrison stood outside, on the steps, his heart racing. He fortified himself with deep breaths of crisp air. As his pulse returned to normal, disappointment set in.

*Well, he thought to himself, your first trip uptown is your last.*

He'd be a fool to think otherwise. He consoled himself with the thought that he'd made it this far in the interview process. That said something, didn't it? If nothing else, it would look good on his résumé.

Tugging on the sleeves of his coat, he took another deep breath and

## BILL BRIGHT &amp; JACK CAVANAUGH

sauntered down the steps, fully intending to ogle the line of mansions with their stately columns, empire windows, and impressive lots. The boys back at the lodge wouldn't believe some of the things he'd seen.

Yet, despite his ogling intentions, as he turned homeward, images of Victoria Jarves dominated his thoughts—her flawless, pale skin, the feminine rustle of her dress, the feisty glint in her eyes.

He found himself smiling at the realization that when he got back to the lodge, he would tell Isaac and Jimmy about the mansions and all the things he saw in the sitting room and the entryway cherubs, but the memories of Victoria Jarves he would keep to himself. Some treasures were best left uncirculated to preserve their value.

The sound of an upper window opening and the flutter of curtains pulled him from his reverie, followed by an explosion of glass at his feet. Startled, Harrison jumped back. The concentrated scent of Desire du Paris engulfed him, so strong it made his eyes water.

Harrison looked up at the open window. No one was there.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our heartfelt thanks go to Helmut Teichert, for recognizing our mutual passion for national revival and our belief in the power of fiction; if not for Helmut, this book would not have been written, for it is he who brought us together; Tom McKennett and Tim Grissom for sharing with us their historical research on revival in America; your research is not only first-class material, it inspired us as well; Steve Laube, friend and agent, ever faithful and supportive; and Howard Publishing for sharing our vision.

