

***GUY THORNE***



***WHEN  
IT WAS  
DARK***

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# **When It Was Dark**

**Enriched edition. The Story of a Great Conspiracy**

*Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Jared Black*

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# BOOK I

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"The mystery of iniquity doth already work."

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# WHEN IT WAS DARK

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# CHAPTER I

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### AN INCIDENT BY WAY OF PROLOGUE

**M**R. HINCHCLIFFE, the sexton, looked up as Mr. Philemon, the clerk, unlocked the great gates of open ironwork which led into the street. Hinchcliffe was cutting the lettering on a tombstone, supported by heavy wooden trestles, under a little shed close to the vestry door of the church.

The clerk, a small, rotund man, clerical in aspect, and wearing a round felt hat, pulled out a large, old-fashioned watch. "Time for the bell, William," he said.

The parish church was a large building in sham perpendicular[1]. It stood in a very central position on the Manchester main road, rising amid a bare triangle of flat gravestones, and separated from the street pavement only by high iron railings.

It was about half-past four on a dull autumn afternoon. The trams swung ringing down the black, muddy road, and the long procession of great two-wheeled carts, painted vermilion, carried coal from the collieries six miles away to the great mills and factories of Salford.

The two men went into the church, and soon the tolling of a deep-voiced bell, high up in the pall of smoke which lay over the houses, beat out in regular and melancholy sound.

Inside the building the noise of the traffic sank into a long, unceasing note like the *bourdon*[2] note of a distant

organ.

Hinchcliffe tolled the bell in the dim, ugly vestibule with his foot in a loop in the rope, sitting on the chest which held the dozen loaves which were given away every Sunday to the old women in the free seats.

The clerk opened the green baize swing-doors and strode up the aisle towards the vestry, waking mournful echoes as the nails in his boots struck the tiled floor.

Saint Thomas's Church, the mother church of Walktown, was probably the ugliest church in Lancashire[29]. The heavy galleries, the drab walls, the terrible gloom of the vast structure, all spoke eloquently of a chilly, dour Christianity, a grudging and suspicious Sunday religion which animated its congregation.

In the long rows of cushioned seats, each labelled with the name of the person who rented it, Sunday by Sunday the moderately prosperous and wholly vulgar Lancashire people sat for two hours. During the prayers they leaned forward in easy and comfortable concession to convention. Few ever knelt. During the hymn times they stood up in their places listening carefully to a fine choir of men and women—a choir which, despite its vocal excellence, was only allowed to perform the most stodgy and commonplace evangelical music.

When the incumbent preached he was heard with the jealous watchfulness which often assails an educated man. The renters of the pews desired a Low Church aspect of doctrine and were intelligent to detect any divergence from it.

The colour of the building was sombre. The brick-red and styx-like grey of the flooring, the lifeless chocolate front of the galleries, the large and ugly windows filled with glass which was the colour of a ginger-beer bottle, had all a definite quality of cheerless vulgarity.

Philemon came out of the vestry door with a lighted taper. He lit two or three jets of the corona over the reading-desk. Then he sat down in a front pew close to the chancel steps and waited.

The bell outside stopped suddenly, and a tall young man in a black Inverness cape[3] walked hurriedly up the side aisle under the gallery towards the vestry.

In less than a minute he came out again in surplice, stole, and hood,—the stole and hood were always worn at Walktown,—went to the reading-desk, and began to say Evensong in a level, resonant voice.

At the end of each psalm Mr. Philemon recited the doxology with thunderous assertion and capped each prayer with an echoing "Amen."

The curate, Basil Gortre, was a young fellow with a strong, impressive face. His eyes had the clearness of youth and looked out steadily on the world under his black hair. His face was of that type men call a "thoroughly honest" face, but, unlike the generality of such faces, it was neither stubborn nor stupid. The clean-shaven jaw was full of power, the mouth was refined and, artistic, without being either sensual or weak.

During the Creed he turned towards the east, and the clerk's uncompromising voice became louder and more acid as he noticed the action; and when the clergyman, almost

imperceptibly, made the sign of the Cross at the words "The resurrection of the body," the old man gave a loud snort of disapprobation.

In deference to the congregation on Sundays, and at the wish of his vicar, Gortre omitted these simple signs of reverence. But alone, at Matins or Evensong, he followed his usual habit.

During the last low prayers, as dusk crept into the great church, and the clank and bells of the trams outside seemed to be more remote, a part, indeed, of that visible but not symbolic ugliness which the gloom was hiding, a note of fervour crept into the young man's praying which had only been latent there before.

He was reading the third collect when the few gas jets above his head began to whistle, burnt blue for a few seconds, and then faded out with three or four faint pops.

Some air had got into the pipes. Old Mr. Philemon rose noisily from his knees, and shuffled off to the vestry coughing and spluttering. Outside, with startling suddenness, a piano organ burst into a gay, strident melody. After a few bars the music stopped with a jerk. A police constable had spoken to the organ-grinder and moved him on.

Gortre's voice went on in a deep, fervent monotone, unmoved by the darkness or the dissonance—

*"Lighten our darkness, we beseech Thee, O Lord; and by Thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night[1q]; for the love of Thy only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ."*

The faithful, quiet voice, enduring through the dark, was a foreshadowing of the great cloud which was breaking over the world, big with disaster, imminent with gloom. It foreshadowed the divinely aided continuance of Truth through such a terror as men had never known before.

It meant many things, that firm and beautiful voice—hope in the darkest hour for thousands of dying souls, a noble woman's happiness in time of dire stress and evil temptations and a death worse than the death Judas died—for Mr. Schuabe the millionaire and Robert Llwelllyn the scholar, taking tea together in the Athenæum Club three hundred miles away in London.

*"—by Thy great mercy defend us from all perils  
and dangers of this night."*

Mr. Philemon returned with a taper, an old and wrinkled acolyte, in time with his loud and sonorous AMEN.

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# CHAPTER II

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## IN THE VICAR'S STUDY

**T**HE vicarage of Walktown was a new and commodious house with tall chimneys, pointed windows, and a roof of red tiles.

It was more than a mile from the church, in the residential quarter of the town. Here were no shops and little traffic. The solid houses of red brick stood in their own rather dingy grounds, where, though the grass was never really green, and spring came in a veil of smoky vapour when the wind blew from the town, there was yet a rural suggestion.

The trees rose from neatly kept lawns, the gravel sweeps of the drives were carefully tended, and there was distant colour in the elaborate conservatories and palm-houses which were to be seen everywhere.

Mr. Pryde, the great Manchester solicitor, had his beautiful modern house here. Sir John Neele, the wealthy manufacturer of disinfectants, lived close by, and a large proportion of the well-to-do Manchester merchants were settled round about.

Not all of them were parishioners of Mr. Byars, the vicar of Walktown. Many attended the more fashionable church of Pendleborough, a mile away in what answered to the "country"; others were leaders in the Dissenting and especially the Unitarian worlds.

Walktown was a stronghold of the Unitarians. The wealthy Jews of two generations back, men who made vast fortunes in the black valley of the Irwell, had chosen Walktown to dwell in. Their grandsons had found it more politic to abjure their ancient faith. A few had become Christians,—at least in name, inasmuch as they rented pews at St. Thomas's,—but others had compromised by embracing a faith, or rather a dogma, which is simply Judaism without its ritual and ceremonial obligations. The Baumanns, the Hildersheimers, the Steinhardts, flourished in Walktown.

It was people of this class who supported the magnificent concerts in the Free Trade Hall[4] at Manchester, who bought the pictures and read the books. They had brought an alien culture to the neighbourhood. The vicar had two strong elements to contend with,—for his parochial life was all contention,—on the one hand the Lancashire natives, on the other the wealthy Jewish families.

The first were hard, uncultured people, hating everything that had not its origin and end in commerce. They disliked Mr. Byars because he was a gentleman, because he was educated, and because—so they considered—the renting of the pews in his church gave them the right to imagine that he was in some sense a paid servant of theirs.

The second class of parishioners were less Philistine, certainly, but even more hopeless from the parish priest's point of view. In their luxurious houses they lived an easy, selfish, and sensual life, beyond his reach, surrounded by a wall of indifferentism, and contemptuous of all that was not tangible and material. At times the rector and the curate

confessed to each other that these people seemed more utterly lost than any others with whom the work of the Church brought them in contact.

Mr. Byars was a widower with one son, now at Oxford, and one daughter, Helena, who was engaged to Basil Gortre, the curate.

About six o'clock the vicar sat in his study with a pile of letters before him. The room was a comfortable, bookish place, panelled in pitch pine where the walls were not covered with shelves of theological and philosophical works.

The arm-chairs were not new, but they invited repose; the large engraving over the pipe-littered mantel was a fine autotype of Giacomo's *St. Emilia*. The room was brightly lit with electric light.

Mr. Byars was a man of medium height, bald, his fine, domed forehead adding to his apparent age, and wore a pointed grey beard and moustache. He was an epitome of the room around him.

The volumes on his shelves were no ancient and musty tomes, but represented the latest and newest additions to theological thought.

Lathom and Edersheim stood together with Renan's *Vie de Jésus* and Clermont-Ganneau's *Recueil d'Arch. Orient*, and Westcott guarded them all.

The ivory crucifix which stood on the writing-table completed the impression of the man.

Ambrose Byars at forty-five was thoroughly acquainted with modern thought and literature. His scholarship was tempered with the wisdom of an active and clear-headed man of the world. His life and habits were simple but

unbigoted, and his broad-mindedness never obscured his unalterable convictions. He lived, as he conceived it his duty to live in his time and place, in thorough human and intellectual correspondence with his environment, but one thought, one absolute certainty informed his life.

As year by year his knowledge grew greater, and the scientific criticism of the Scriptures undermined the faith of weaker and less richly endowed minds, he only found in each discovery a more vivid proof of the truth of the Incarnation and the Resurrection.

It was his habit in discussions to reconcile all apparently conflicting antichristian statements and weave them into the fabric of his convictions. He held that, even scientifically, historically, and materially, the evidence for the Resurrection was too strong to be ever overthrown. And beyond these intellectual evidences he knew that Christ must have risen from the dead, because he himself had found Christ and was found in Him.

His attitude was a careful one with all its conciseness. An anecdote illustrates this.

One day, when walking home from a meeting of the School Board, of which he was a member, he had met a parishioner named Baxter, the proprietor of a small engineering work in the district. The man, who never came to church, on what he called "principle," but spent his Sundays in bed with a sporting paper, was one of those half-educated people who condemn Christianity by ridiculing the Old Testament stories.

They walked together, Baxter quoting the *Origin of Species*[\[5\]](#), which he knew from a cheap epitomised

handbook.

"Do you really think, Mr. Byars," he had said, "do you really believe, after Darwin's discovery, that we were made by a sort of conjuring trick by a Supreme Power? Seven days of cooking, so to speak, and then a world! Why, it's childish to expect thinking people to believe it. We are simply evolved by scientific evolution out of the primæval protoplasm."

"Very possibly," said the vicar; "and who made the protoplasm, Mr. Baxter?"

The man was silent for a minute. "Then, Mr. Byars," he said at length, "you do not believe the Old Testament—the Adam and Eve part, for instance. You do not believe the Book on which your creed is founded."

"There are such things as allegories," he had answered. "The untutored brain must be taught the truth in such a way as it can receive it."

The vicar lit his pipe and began to open his letters with a slight sigh. Of all men, he sometimes felt, he was the least possible one for Walktown. For twelve years he had worked there, and he seemed to make little headway. He longed for an educated congregation. Here methods too vulgar for his temperament seemed to be the only ones.

The letters were all from applicants for the curacy which Gortre's impending departure would shortly leave vacant.

"It will be a terrible wrench to lose Basil," he said to himself; "but it must be. He will have his chance and be far happier in London, in more congenial environment. He would never be a great success in Walktown. He has tried nobly, but the people won't understand him. They would

never like him; he's too much of a gentleman. How they all hate breeding in Walktown! There is nothing for it, I can see. I must get an inferior man this time. An inferior man will go down with them better here. I only hope he will be a really good fellow. If he isn't, it will be Jerrold over again—vulgar cabals against me, and all the women in the place quarrelling and taking sides."

He read letter after letter, and saw, with a humorous shrug of disgust, that he would have little difficulty in engaging the "inferior" man of his thoughts.

The best men would not come to the North. Men of family with decent degrees, Oxford men, Cambridge men, accustomed to decent society and intellectual friends, knew far too much to accept a title in the Manchester district.

The applications were numerous enough, but obviously from second-rate men, or at any rate from men who appeared to be so at first glance.

A Durham graduate, 40, with five children, begged earnestly for the £120 a year which was all Mr. Byars could offer. A few young men from theological colleges wanting titles, a Dublin B.A., announcing himself as "thoroughly Protestant in views"—they were a weary lot. A non-collegiate student from Oxford with a second class in Theology, a Manchester Grammar-School boy, whose father lived at Higher Broughton, seemed to promise the best. He would be able to get on with the people, probably. "I suppose I must have him, accent and all," the vicar said with a sigh, "though I suppose it's prejudice to dislike the lessons read with the Lancashire broad 'a' and short 'o.' St. Paul probably spoke with a terrible local twang! and yet, I

don't know, he was too great to be vulgar; one doesn't like to think that——"

Mr. Byars was certainly a difficult person for his congregation to appreciate.

He picked up the letter and was re-reading it when the door opened and his daughter came in.

Helena Byars was a tall girl, largely made and yet slender. Her hair was luxuriant and of a traditional "heroine" gold. She was dressed with a certain richness, though soberly enough, a style which, with its slight hint of austerity, accentuated a quiet and delicate charm. So one felt on meeting her for the first time. Sweet-faced she was and with an underlying seriousness even in her times of laughter. Her mouth was rather large, her nose straight and beautifully chiselled. The eyes were placid, intelligent, but without keenness. There was an almost matronly dignity about her quiet and yet decided manner.

The vicar looked up at her with a smile, thinking how like her mother the girl was—that grave and gracious lady who looked out of the picture by the door, St. Cecilia in form and face. "Eh, but Helena she favours her mother," Hinchcliffe, the sexton, had said with the frank familiarity of the Lancashire workman soon after Mrs. Byars's funeral four years ago.

"I've brought *Punch*, father," she said, "it's just come. Leave your work now and enjoy yourself for half an hour before dinner. Basil will be here by the time you're finished."

She stirred the fire into a bright glow, and, singing softly to herself, left the study and went into the dining-room to see that the table looked inviting for the coming meal.

About seven o'clock Gortre arrived, and soon afterwards the three sat down to dine. It was a simple meal, some fish, cold beef, and a pudding, with a bottle of beer for the curate and a glass of claret for the vicar. The housemaid did not wait upon them, for they found the meal more intimate and enjoyable without her.

"I've got some news," said Gortre. "The great question of domicile is settled. You know there is no room in the clergy-house at St. Mary's. Moreover, Father Ripon thought it well that I should live outside. He wanted one of the assistant clergy, at least, to be in constant touch with lay influences, he said when I saw him."

"What have you arranged, dear?" said Helena.

"Something very satisfactory, I think," he answered. "My first thought was to take ordinary rooms in Bloomsbury. It would be near St. Mary's and the schools. Then I thought of chambers in one of the Inns of Court. At any rate I wrote to Harold Spence to ask his advice. He was at Merton with me, you know, lived on the same staircase in 'Stubbins,' and is just one of the best fellows in the world. We haven't corresponded much during the last three years, but I knew a letter to the New Oxford and Cambridge would always find him. So I wrote up. He's been University Extension lecturing for a time, you know, and writing too. Now he tells me that he is writing leaders for the *Daily Wire* and doing very well. I'll read you what he says."

He took a letter from his pocket, glanced down it for the paragraph he wanted, and began to read:

... "—and I am delighted to hear that you have at last made up your mind to leave the North country

and have accepted this London curacy. I asked Marsh, our ecclesiastical editor, about St. Mary's last night. He tells me that it is a centre of very important Church work, and has some political and social influence. Of all the 'ritualistic' parishes—I use the word as a convenient label—it is thought to be the sanest. Here you will have a real chance. I know something of the North, and came in contact with all sorts and conditions of people when I was lecturing on the French Revolution round Liverpool and Manchester for the Extension. They are not the people for you to succeed with, either socially or from a clergyman's point of view—at least, that's my opinion, old man. You ask me about rooms. I have a proposal to make to you in this regard. I am now living in Lincoln's Inn with a man named Hands—Cyril Hands. You may know his name. He is a great archæologist, was a young Cambridge professor. For three years now he has been working for The Palestine Exploring Society. He is in charge of all the excavations now proceeding near Jerusalem, and constantly making new and valuable Biblical discoveries."

The vicar broke in upon the reading. "Hands!" he said; "a most distinguished man! His work is daily adding to our knowledge in a marvellous way. He has just recently discovered some important inscriptions at El-Edhamîyeh—Jeremiah's grotto, you know, the place which is thought may be Golgotha, you know. But go on, I'm sorry to interrupt."

Gortre continued:

**28** A French-derived term for the mistress or female head of a large household or castle, responsible for managing domestic affairs and servants; here it denotes Mrs. Bardilly's role as hostess of the estate.

**29** Latin for "from the chair," originally describing an authoritative teaching position (especially papal pronouncements); in this context it means speaking in a solemn, authoritative manner.

**30** A Hebrew/archaeological term (often spelled kokhim) for narrow, horizontal burial niches or shafts cut into rock in Jewish tombs of the Second Temple period; used here to argue the tombs were Jewish rather than Christian.

**31** Plural of arcosolium: an architectural form in early Christian and Roman tombs — a recessed, arched bench or niche used to receive a body; contrasted here with the Jewish kokhim.

**32** A Near Eastern term for a reddish earth or a rubble-and-plaster mixture (from Arabic/Semitic roots) used in ancient building and burial contexts; the text refers to fragments of such material found at the tomb entrance.

**33** A small compartment, stone slab, or niche used to receive a single body in ancient tombs (Latin for "little place"); in the passage it denotes the stone slab for a burial within the chamber.

**34** Places of worship for Unitarians, a Protestant movement emphasizing the oneness of God, individual conscience, and reasoned faith; Unitarians were influential among dissenting and liberal religious groups in 19th-early 20th century Britain.

**35** Abbreviation for Member of Parliament, an elected representative in the UK House of Commons; used here to indicate Constantine Schuabe's role in national politics.

**36** A formal, authoritative decree issued by the Pope, historically sealed with a leaden bulla; such documents have been used to communicate major doctrinal or administrative decisions in the Catholic Church.

**37** A long-established British Catholic weekly newspaper (founded in the 19th century) that reported on Church affairs, doctrine, and public issues relevant to Catholics in the UK and abroad.

**38** Short for the Royal Albert Hall in London, a large public concert and assembly venue opened in 1871 and commonly used for concerts, public meetings, and large gatherings.

**39** Reference to Erastianism, the doctrine that the civil authority should have supremacy over the church in ecclesiastical matters; the phrase implies a tendency to defer to the state rather than to church courts or autonomy.

**40** The Latin title of the Christian Christmas hymn commonly known in English as 'O Come, All Ye Faithful'; traditionally sung at Christmas services.

**41** A French phrase literally meaning 'foot on the ground,' used in English to denote a small city apartment kept for occasional use rather than a main residence.

**42** A traditional Scottish woolen cap, often with a pompom, named after the Robert Burns poem; commonly worn in Britain in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

**43** A travelling rug decorated in the Paisley pattern, a teardrop-shaped motif originating from Paisley, Scotland,

frequently used for shawls and textiles in the 19th century.

**44** The text refers to a German hotel called the 'Sabîl' in Jerusalem; the specific establishment is identified in the novel as lodging used there, though modern spellings or exact historical identification may vary.

**45** An English rendering of Yıldız Kiosk (part of Yıldız Palace) in Istanbul, which in the late Ottoman period was a residence and administrative complex associated with the sultan.

**46** Plural of 'vali' (also spelled 'wali'), an Ottoman term for a provincial governor responsible for administering a vilayet (province).

**47** In the novel this name denotes a London daily newspaper, described as a powerful rival of the Wire; such named papers serve as contemporary journalistic outlets in late 19th-early 20th-century fiction.

**48** A muezzin is the person who calls Muslims to prayer from a mosque (traditionally from a minaret), announcing the five daily prayer times in Islam.

**49** Greek for “I, Joseph of Arimathea,” a New Testament figure traditionally associated with providing the tomb for Jesus; inscriptions invoking his name refer to that biblical association.

**50** ‘Consols’ refers to British government consolidated annuities (long-term government bonds) and the figure ‘sixty-five’ indicates their market price or value level; consols were commonly quoted in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

**51** A reference to the Greek myth in which Pandora opens a container releasing evils into the world (with Hope

remaining inside); used here as a metaphor for unleashing unforeseen calamities.

**52** A chemical sedative and anticonvulsant widely used in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to calm the nerves and reduce agitation, as described in the passage.

**53** One of the four Inns of Court in London — a professional association and group of legal chambers for barristers; historically (and in the period of the novel) it was a well-known legal and residential district around Holborn.

**54** A major church in Jerusalem's Old City traditionally believed by many Christians to enclose both Golgotha (the site of the Crucifixion) and the tomb of Jesus, and a principal pilgrimage destination since the early medieval period.

**55** A tower associated with the first-century fortifications of Jerusalem built under Herod the Great; tradition links the name to a Roman figure Hippicus and its remains lay near the modern Jaffa Gate area.

**56** A mountain near the modern city of Nablus (biblical Shechem) that is important in Samaritan and biblical traditions as a sacred site and place of blessing; it overlooks the West Bank town of Nablus.

**57** 'Pasha' is an Ottoman honorific for a senior military or civil official; Tewfik (Tawfiq) is a common Arabic personal name, so this designation likely indicates a local Ottoman officer or notable rather than a single uniquely identifiable historical individual without additional context.

**58** Rendered as a French commercial name, with 'et Cie.' meaning 'and Company', this is presented as a banking/merchant house operating in Jaffa, Jerusalem, and