

## A New Time

By A. C. Zito

Eugene Simmons sat down in his pew. It was where he always sat in St. Thomas Aquinas' Episcopal Church every Sunday morning at 9:19 a.m. before the worship service began. Eugene checked his clock:

*9:20 a.m.* he thought to himself. This is perfect. He had only ten more minutes. The morning wasn't too brisk out even though fall was already in the air. He looked outside and saw the leaves were changing into reds, yellows, oranges but, for the most part, there were mostly just greens on the trees still.

"Not for long," Eugene whispered to himself. He began looking around at all the surrounding pews. There, two rows in front of him, sat Mary Katherine and her mother Patricia. The Hildridges had on their Sunday best as did Eugene. Mr. Simmons was working a button-down orange and black plaid vest with his yellow kerchief stuffed inside his dark brown button-down dress shirt. His light brown khaki pants accompanied his upper torso's fashionwear ever so elegantly that Mr. Simmons almost believed that nothing could ruin his good-natured mood.

*Maybe I'll go talk to Lillian and Pauline about brunch sometime later on in the week* he thought to himself. He began scanning the pews as they started filling up until he was struck dead as he saw the man and the woman standing in the front of the church next to the altar. Mr. Simmons knew exactly who that young woman was: it was Mary Anne Coolidge's daughter, Eva.

"Ms. Coolidge; what is your mother doing letting you run around with a black boy? And in *our* church too," He said this out loud, loud enough for Cary Mathews and her little boy, Henry, to hear him. They got up from their pew and moved away.

*Henry must have to go to the bathroom* Mr. Simmons thought to himself. But it was better off that young Henry leave the area before Ms. Coolidge and her little *friend* was escorted out the vicinity. He began getting up when suddenly:

"DON'T... get up," a voice boomed louder than thunder itself. Mr. Simmons had a heart attack. He felt himself fall back down onto the pew and die for close on to nine to twelve seconds before he felt himself revived again back to life once more by the touch of an icy cold hand resting its bony fingertips on his shoulders.

"Who... who are *you*?" Mr. Simmons whispered out feeling the dread leaking down his left leg. But then, suddenly, the memory of what came of Mr. Simmons' fright vanished from his pants as what Mr. Simmons saw was an actual hand of just bones wave passed his crotch area and the damp clothing became dry again once more.

"We don't want anyone to smell anything foul, now do we Mr. Simmons?" Mr. Simmons looked at the hooded figure and asked:

"Are you?" The hooded figure nodded.

"And I'm not here to take your life just yet, Mr. Simmons. But that will come another time. I'm here to rid you of the foul stench that is the racism that lies deep in the undercurrents of your wicked heart along with inside that beady-eyed head of yours. But there's no way to extract it so I must do something quite different that I've never done before today. Look around, Mr. Simmons." Mr. Simmons began doing just that but quickly shut his eyes and locked them shut due to the inexplicable horror that lay before him.

"*What did you do to me?*" He whispered out in fright. The cloaked figure rubbed his two fingers together as he replied:

"They all look like me, don't they? Look at that beautiful young couple standing by the alter, Mr. Simmons. Look at how in love they are. They are going to get married at that alter. I know because I know everything. And do you still see what color their skin is anymore, Mr. Simmons? No, and you'll never be able to see the color of one's skin ever again! BECAUSE NOW NO ONE EXCEPT YOURSELF NO LONGER HAS ANY SKIN!" And the cloaked figure let out a wicked laugh while Mr. Simmons trembled before him. And the cloaked figure vanished and, then, over came Lillian and Pauline to come sit next to him.

"Oh, hi Eugene!" Pauline said, sitting next to him.

"Hi, Eugene!" Lillian said as well.

"Eugene, you look as white as a ghost!" Pauline exclaimed, looking at him, concerned.

"Oh, speaking of skin, Pauline," Lillian said, "Feel my skin. See how soft it is! I just went over to that little store over by Elma's house and got some new lotion! Doesn't it make my skin feel so soft?" Pauline felt Lillian's arm and exclaimed:

"Oh, wow! It does make your skin feel soft!" turning to Mr. Simmons, "Eugene! Feel how soft Lillian's skin is from that new lotion she got!" Mr. Simmons' looked at the two of them, only seeing their skeleton bodies and then looked down at Lillian's bone of an arm. He touched it. But no... no skin was to be found for Eugene Simmons... no skin, only bone.