

VOLUME 2

PASSAGES™

THE MARUS
MANUSCRIPTS



GLENNALL'S BETRAYAL
DRAVEN'S DEFIANCE
FENDAR'S LEGACY

PAUL McCUSKER

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Glennall's Betrayal is an awesome book! I really love the powerful friendship that James and Glennall develop throughout the story. This book portrays forgiveness, redemption, and true friendship.

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VOLUME 2

PASSAGES[™]

THE MARUS
MANUSCRIPTS

GLENNALL'S BETRAYAL
DARVEN'S DEFIANCE
FENDAR'S LEGACY

PAUL M^CCUSKER



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PASSAGES™

MARUS MANUSCRIPT 4



THE CHRONICLES OF THE BETRAYED
GLENNALL'S BETRAYAL

Manuscript date: March 21, 1934



James waited in the bushes until the black-and-white police car passed by. The two men inside were looking for him.

He waited, crouched like a small animal hiding from a predator. When he was sure the road was clear, he grabbed his bundle of goods—bread, cheese, and a slice of apple pie—and stood up. He adjusted the suspenders that were buttoned to his tattered wool trousers. His shirt, once white, was smudged with dirt and grass stains.

His Aunt Edna would scream if she saw the state he was in! She'd make him wash his face and comb his short brown hair, which now stuck out like a porcupine's quills. But Aunt Edna was probably screaming anyway, he figured. Why else were the police looking for him? This was the third time he'd run away from her in as many weeks.

He gave his cap a tug and sprinted across the black tar to the field on the other side. The weeds were tall, almost like wheat, and would give him easy cover if someone came. He looked ahead to the forest that would provide his way of escape. It was about 100 yards away, across the sea of weeds that moved like waves beneath the gentle breeze.

It was a beautiful spring day, perfect for escaping Aunt Edna.

He was determined not to get caught this time. He had no intention of going back to Aunt Edna and her strict ways. She was a cruel ogre as far as he was concerned, and no law or lectures could persuade him otherwise. When his parents were still alive, they never

made him wear the awful clothes she made him wear. Or forced him to read all those books. Or made him do sums and fractions. Or dragged him to church every Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. His parents let him do what he wanted.

“You don’t understand what it’s like,” he had said to her during their last argument.

“But I *do*, child,” she replied.

But how could she understand what it was like to have your parents lose all their money and their home in this thing called the Great Depression? How did she know what it was like to be left behind with *her* while they packed his two sisters off to nicer relatives around the country? What made her think she knew how it felt when the news came that his parents had been killed in a bus crash on their way to California? Killed while going to find work; while going to find a new home; while going to find *life*.

“You don’t know! You *can’t!*” James had shouted at her, slamming the door to his bedroom as a punctuation mark.

Later, when she had gone out to shop, he had collected his belongings: a torn photo of his family that he shoved into his trouser pocket and his father’s ring—given to him after the accident, of course—which he tied on a string and put around his neck. After wrapping up the food in a rag in case he got hungry later, he had slipped out the back door, crept down the alley to avoid the tattletale eyes of the neighbors, and dashed away from the musty old houses.

James wasn’t sure where he’d go. Maybe he could find his two sisters, and then they could all escape together. Maybe they could start a new life in California as their parents had wanted. Maybe—

A horse’s whinny caught James’s attention. He looked in the direction of the sound—over there near the woods—and was surprised to see not only one horse but two, and a couple of wagons, at the edge of the trees. The wagons were large and enclosed, with doors at the back and windows on the sides that were shuttered.

James had seen similar wagons when his parents took him to the circus a few years before.

Hope rose in his chest. Maybe a circus had come to a town nearby. Maybe he could join it and become a world famous trapeze artist and tame lions and get fired out of cannons and travel all over the country!

As if to affirm his hope, a man dressed in an odd costume rounded one of the wagons. He wore a shirt with a rainbow of colors going up and down both sides of it, and he had knee breeches and long white stockings and black boots. He walked up to a large campfire and began to kick dirt on it, as if to put out the flames.

Funny, James thought, the horses, the wagons, and the campfire all look like they've been here awhile. But I didn't notice any of them when I started across the field. How did I miss them—or that mist that's moved toward me from the forest?

It was strange to have mist like that in the middle of a sunny spring day. Yet somehow the mist didn't mute the colors of the scene. The green grass, the rainbow colors of the man's shirt, and the remains of the fire were all so vibrant, as if they'd been hand-painted on glass, like stained-glass windows in a church.

It had gotten noticeably cooler in the past few minutes, though, and James's skin went goose-pimply.

The weirdly dressed man spotted James and stood watching him with his hands on his hips. James wondered if he should run in another direction, just in case the man was the type to take him back to Aunt Edna. But the man was so unlike anyone James had seen around town that he wanted to believe he'd be friendly, if not sympathetic. The man might even give him a ride somewhere in his wagons. James started walking toward him.

"Hello," James said when he was close enough to the man to be heard.

"Hail," the man replied in a deep, resonant voice. He was a

dark-skinned fellow with black hair, a thin black mustache, and a gold earring in his left ear. His eyes were bright and piercing. He looked like the picture of a gypsy James had once seen. "What brings you to us?" the man asked.

"I was walking across the field and saw you," James said, then abruptly added, "Are you a gypsy?"

"Gypsy?" the man asked.

"Or part of a circus?"

The man looked perplexed, as if James had used words that made no sense. He said, "We are traders. Are you here on an errand? Perhaps you are a message boy for someone who wishes to do business with us?"

James didn't understand what the man was saying either. "No. I'm by myself," he replied.

"Pity."

"Are you going into town?"

The man shrugged indifferently. "We are going up the mountain, if that is what you mean."

"Mountain? What mountain?"

The man gestured toward the mist-covered woods.

James was truly confused now. No mountain stood behind those woods. Any mountains the man expected to find were in the other direction.

Suddenly a young woman came around from the back of the wagon. "We are ready, Papa," she said, then saw James. "Oh."

James was taken aback by her appearance. She had wild dark hair barely contained by a red scarf. She wore a torn peasant dress that hung loosely from her shoulders. But her eyes really caught his attention: dark and piercing, just like her father's. James thought she may have been the prettiest woman he'd ever seen.

"Who is this?" she asked the man.

"Some boy," he said and began to kick dirt at the fire again. "I want to make sure this fire is out. It wouldn't do to be blamed for burning down the mountain. Connam would have us imprisoned."

"Or one of his sons would execute us."

"All the same."

The young woman turned her attention to James. "Why do you linger, boy?" she asked. "What do you want?"

James was going to say he didn't want anything. He changed his mind when he suddenly heard car tires screeching to a halt behind him. He spun around and felt his heart jump into his throat as he saw, through the mist, a police car on the road. Two officers climbed out and pointed in his direction. One called out to him.

"Oh no," James gasped.

"What is the matter with you?" the young woman asked, craning her neck to see what he was looking at.

"The police. I can't let them catch me," James cried as he tried to think of what to do. The woods. They were his best hiding place, he thought.

The young woman looked at James. "The po-*what*?"

"The police! I ran away from my Aunt Edna, and they'll take me back." James watched as the two officers stepped into the field and made their way quickly toward him. "See?"

The young woman looked at James, then followed his gaze across the field. "I see nothing but a field in the sunshine."

"Sunshine! What about the mist?" James exclaimed. It engulfed him now, so that the police came in and out of view. One second he could see their badges flickering in the waning light, their batons swinging from their belts against their legs. The next second, they were lost in a gray curtain. "I have to hide," he said, then ran toward the woods. Ducking behind the largest tree he could find, he waited. He hoped they hadn't seen where he went.

James heard the young woman say in a pleading voice, "Papa!"

"No," the man said, stamping out the last of the fire. "We don't have time for children who are not right in the head."

"Papa, please."

"He's not one of your stray puppies, Fantya."

"You heard him. He needs our help."

"From what? He talks about mist when it is clear and sunny. He uses words that make no sense. *Po-leese*. What does it mean?"

James ventured a peek around the tree. The officers still hadn't arrived. Maybe they were lost in the mist.

"Papa, *please?*" the young woman said softly.

The man sighed. "We can take him as far as Dremat," he offered, sounding like a man who had lost this argument many times before. "He could run away from there, if that's what he wants. Does that satisfy you?"

"Yes, Papa. Thank you." Fantya turned and approached James at the tree. "Boy?"

"Go away," James said in a harsh whisper as he ducked behind the tree again. "I don't want them to know where I am."

Fantya waved a hand toward the field. "There is no one there."

"They're in the mist."

"There is no mist," she said firmly. "Look."

James cautiously peered around the tree again. His mouth fell open in astonishment.

The mist was gone.

The police—and their car—had vanished.