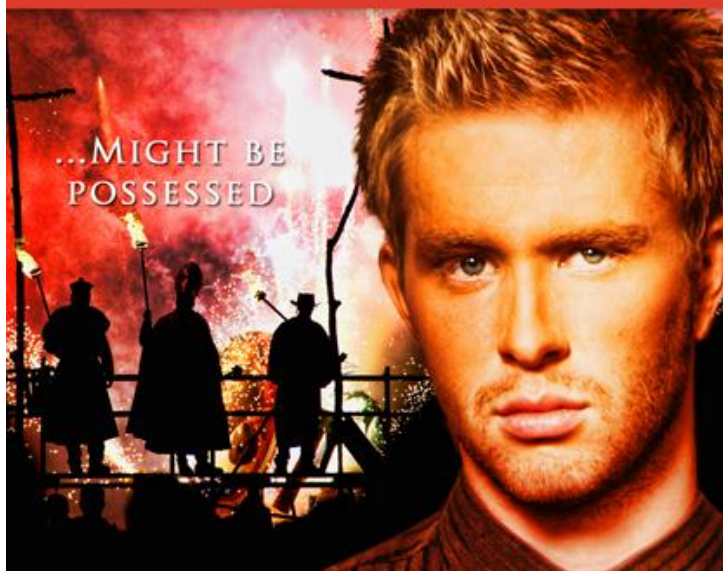


CLARE REVELL

Saturday's Child



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Dedication

I need to thank so many people for this book. So here goes.

Thanks to:

Ceryn for the roller-blading seventies disco.

Michael Duncan for his pastoral advice on a couple of scenes.

Pastor James for his advice, technical edit and constant prayers

My editor, Lisa, and editor in chief Nicola, for their support and encouragement in running with this idea JoAnn and Theresa for critiquing this for me. Massive chunks at a time in some cases.

Mum, Dad and Dean for the support

Philip Wilson for answering my random policing questions

Steph for being on the other end of the IM telling me "You can" every time I said "I can't"

And everyone from Carey and all the Pelicans, for the prayer cover.

Praise for Clare Revell

Times Arrow

I stand in awe of Revell's ability to pack an entire novel's worth of action and emotion into so few pages.
~Delia Latham

After The Fire

What a wild ride in *After The Fire*! Ms. Revell created a sweet romance within a beautiful setting, but don't let that fool you. There's plenty of action in this book as Freddie and Jason work to uncover the truth. Just when you think you're near "The End," Ms. Revell pulls out a few more surprises. ~ Dora Hiers

Monday's Child.

The blend of romance and suspense is superb, and the depth of emotion is so very touching. I am eagerly looking forward to the rest of the books in this series. Clare Revell is truly a master novelist. What a treat! I highly recommend *Monday's Child* to anyone looking for a GREAT story. ~ Mary Manners

Though they plot evil against you and devise wicked schemes, they cannot succeed.

Psalm 21:11

*Monday's Child must hide for protection,
Tuesday's Child tenders direction
Wednesday's Child grieves for his soul
Thursday's Child chases the whole
Friday's Child is a man obsessed
Saturday's Child might be possessed
And Sunday's Child on life's seas is tossed
Awaiting the Lifeboat that rescues the lost.*

Glossary of terms used

AGA – A large stove/range. It has several ovens, large hob with room for up to ten pans. It also contains a fire and can be used to heat the house.

Lekking – A group of butterflies is known as a kaleidoscope, swarm, rabble or a lek. The term used for their movement is swarming or lekking.

Dadcu – pronounced Dad-key. Welsh for Grandad.

Mamgu – pronounced Mam-key. Welsh for Grandma

Pice ar y maen – Welsh cakes.

E.D. – Emergency Department. (ER)

Cariad/Bach – Welsh for love

CPS – Crown Prosecution Service

Hymns referred to or used.

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The Royal Telephone by Frederick M. Lehman.
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Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing by Robert Robinson. Public domain.

Just as I Am, Without One Plea by Charlotte Elliott.
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Saturday's child might be possessed...

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? Psalm 22:1

Was he cursed? Could it simply be a string of bad luck, or was there something else, some darker force at work? *Something* or *someone* was determined to take his home and land. It had been one crisis after another. Now Aaron Field was at his wits end and tied up in so much legal red tape that he couldn't see a way out. How was he meant to find a quarter of a million pounds by the end of the financial year to prevent his stepmother selling the farm to her development company?

Aaron pushed a hand through his hair, his fingers touching the jagged scar above his right eye, before he tugged his flat cap back over his head. His wife hadn't believed in luck or curses—said they were pagan—but then Aaron didn't exactly believe in God the same full-on-change-your-life-way that his wife had either.

No sir'ee.

Not that he was an atheist. After all, he was English, and England was a Christian country the last time he'd checked.

In his mind, God existed.

He'd attended church most of his life—until just a few years ago—and knew without a doubt that God was real. His heart, however, remained untouched.

And naturally, if a man believed in a Supreme Being who was totally good, there had to be an exact opposite, a being who was pure evil—the devil—who, no doubt, had his own followers. They may not attend services on a Sunday in pretty churches, but they were there.

Aaron stood by the farm gate, slid both hands in his pockets, and surveyed the empty land. When his old school friend, Pastor Jack Chambers, had first broached the subject of using the farm for the traditional bonfire and firework display on November fifth, Aaron agreed as a favour. But the more he thought about it, the more it seemed like something his stepmother would hate, which was altogether a better reason for doing it.

At least the organization would take his mind off things. Or he hoped it would. Sorrow filled him. Everything he, Dad, Grandad, and Great-Grandad had worked for would be gone in a few short months. Four to be precise. He sighed. All the more reason to do some good with it now. Go out with the proverbial bang. Well, literal bang in this case.

He had just over a week before his land would be overrun for the evening by hundreds of people from Headley Cross Baptist, eating, drinking, enjoying themselves, and probably churning the grass to a sea of mud. Especially if it rained. It was bound to rain. The South of England got more than its fair share of rain in the autumn. Would they go ahead in the rain or call the celebrations off? Would they pay him in the event of a cancellation?

Sure, it was no more than a token payment, but he needed the money. Needed every penny he could lay his hands on.

He shuffled his feet. That made him sound like a penny pinching miser. A scrooge of the nth degree. Far from it. There was a time when he enjoyed a party as much as the next man. There simply wasn't anything to celebrate anymore. Not since Nancy...

Enough, Aaron. She's gone. No amount of wishing will bring her back. Or Dad. That life is over. Best come to terms with it quickly.

Quickly? That was a joke. It had been three years now. He was stuck in a rut. He couldn't go backwards and couldn't go forwards, either. His father's death had been something he knew would happen at some point. Children bury their parents. It's a fact of life. And he knew from growing up on a farm all too well how things lived and died. There was no getting away from it. Especially at the rate he was losing the sheep. Almost every week one turned up having been mauled by some wild animal.

So, yes, he knew about death first hand. What he hadn't anticipated was the fact his father would die so suddenly at the age of fifty-nine. Or that it would be followed by the devastating loss of his young wife so soon afterwards. It had shaken him to the core.

He'd gone from being Aaron Field the farmer's son, to Aaron Field the farmer—just like the card game of happy families he'd played as a kid with his brother and sister. Not that he believed in happy families any longer. Not since his mother had died giving birth to his baby sister, and everything changed. His father had remarried his step-aunt when Leah was six months old. Tanis gave a whole new meaning to the term

wicked stepmother.

For the brief years of his own marriage, things had looked up and Aaron had hoped it would last. But it hadn't. Nancy's death had only cemented his impression that no one lived happily ever after.

He pulled his train of thought back to the matter in hand—getting the grounds in order for such a large crowd. November the fifth, *Bonfire Night*—a very British tradition going back to 1605 when a terrorist plot to assassinate King James was thwarted, the success of which was celebrated by Royal decree every year since.

Aaron eased his shoulders under his wax jacket. He turned, climbed back into the tractor cab, and released the brake. He headed up to the north field to finish the plowing. He derived immense satisfaction from plowing—keeping his furrows straight and even. It focused the mind and took his thoughts away from places he didn't want them to go.

At the halfway point across the field, the phone vibrated. He yanked the handbrake and pulled the mobile from his pocket. He scowled when he didn't recognize the number. Probably another telesales agent wanting to pitch insurance he didn't need. He'd love to have just five minutes alone with whoever decided selling mobile phone numbers was a good idea.

"Hello." He tried not to snap down the phone, but so help him if this was another unwanted call whoever it was would get short shrift.

"Hello, could I speak to Farmer Field please?"

He winced at the name and the underlying laughter in the Welsh lilt. Obviously, she thought 'Farmer Field' was hysterically funny—just like everyone else did. Except him.

"Speaking."

"Hi. My name is Meaghan Knight. I'm ringing from Headley Baptist about the bonfire next week."

"Oh, right. Hello." He assumed he'd be dealing with Jack, not some chit of a girl. But Jack was probably busy with pastoral stuff. "What can I do for you, Miss Knight?"

"I was wondering if it would be possible for me to come over and talk with you in person. Take a look at the field; make the arrangements, and so on. I appreciate the fact you're busy, so thought I'd ring first, rather than just descend on you."

Her lilting voice washed over him like a fresh spring breeze. Like sunshine following rain, or the first daffodil peeking through the ground after a long hard winter. He wanted her to say something else just to hear her speak.

"Are you still there?"

"Yes, I am. Sorry, my mind wandered for a moment. When were you thinking of coming?"

"How about now?"

How about no? The thought formed before Aaron could stop it. Fortunately, he had the presence of mind not to vocalize. Cute accent or not, he had a lot to get done, but he wasn't going to be rude. After all, she'd rung to ask before she came. And he'd get to hear her accent in person. "All right, I can do that. You know where the farm is?"

"Yes. Pastor Jack gave me a map."

"OK. I'm in the north field finishing the plowing."

"I'll find you. I'm not sure how long it'll take me to drive out there as I don't know the area well yet. See you soon."

The phone clicked off and Aaron slid the handset

back into his jacket. So much for getting this finished before dark. *What's the betting she'll appear in high heels and a suit skirt?* He shook his head, a faint smile teasing his lips at the image of a petite blonde, hair in a bun, short skirt and heels, struggling over the stile and up the hill to where he was going to suggest they build the bonfire.

Slamming the tractor back into gear, Aaron chugged across the field, keeping the furrow straight. He prided himself on his work. The farm was his life. He hadn't time for anything else and hadn't had a day off since the funeral three years ago.

Actually the farm was his *whole* life. And now it was ending. He had no idea what to do with his days when it changed. Nothing he, Isaac or Leah could do about it. Not that his brother or sister had any interest in what went on here anymore. They'd moved out after Dad died, got a flat in town together, and didn't look back.

Fifty minutes later, he finished another furrow, and turned to start again. He paused, his attention caught by a figure standing at the gate. Black hair pulled into twin plaits lying across her shoulders, green jacket over black jeans and green Wellington boots. It could only be one person.

Guiding the tractor to a stop, Aaron turned off the engine and jumped down. He wiped his hands on his brown corduroy pants and walked over to her. "Miss Knight?"

"That's right. Are you Mr. Field?" A broad smile lit up a pair of sparking brown eyes. Her cool hand shook his warm clammy one. Her voice was even more delicious in real life and she was nothing like what he'd pictured. She was cute.

He didn't have time for cute.

"Yes, I am." He looked at the path behind her. No car. "Did you walk up?"

She nodded, her plaits bouncing on either side of her head. "I did. Someone called Hal gave me directions. It's a nice day, and the air here is wonderful. Clean and fresh. It reminds me of home."

"Let me unhook the plow, and I'll drive you back down. The field I want to use is right by the barn. Can you open the gate for me?"

"Sure." She slid her hands into her pockets and leaned against the gate. Her brown eyes followed his movements as he released the attachment and restarted the tractor. As he headed to the gate, she swung it open and stood to one side. He tipped his cap to her and waited while she shut the gate behind him.

He leaned across the seat and opened the door. He held out a hand to help her up, raising an eyebrow when she leapt in unaided, her beaming smile making his stomach lurch. "Not your first tractor then."

For crying out loud, man. She's not the first woman to cross your path. Can you not think of anything sensible to say? She'll think you're a complete country clod.

"I grew up on a farm in Wales." Meaghan raised her voice over the engine sounds. "Mainly sheep, along with a few ducks, geese, and horses and bit of everything else."

Aaron nodded. "So what brings you to the city?"

"I want to work in the church. I'm doing an apprenticeship at Headley Cross Baptist."

"A *what*?" He swallowed hard. "You're a preacher?"

She laughed. "No. Da would have a blue fit and go up in smoke if I dared get up in a pulpit and preach.

'Only a man can give voice to the word of God, Meggie, and don't you forget it.' She grinned as she impersonated her father. "I'm learning other stuff—children's work, ladies ministry, evangelism—that kind of thing."

"I see." *Meggie*...the name suited her. Everything about her radiated goodness and beauty, and part of him couldn't get enough of her, longed to know her better. But he didn't need a religious do-gooder trying to bring him back to the church. Been there, done that and heaven forbid he start...

Aaron pulled his thoughts up short. He wasn't about to start praying to a Deity he no longer had faith in, no matter how engrained it was in him. He suddenly realized Meaghan was speaking to him and he had no idea what she'd said. "Sorry?"

"I said I hadn't seen you in church."

"I don't go. There's too much work here and all that."

"Oh." The disappointment was evident in her voice.

He nodded brusquely. "I'm doing this as a favour for Jack. We went to school together. It was this or no bonfire, so..."

Meaghan nodded. "Yeah—apparently last year's event was a big hit. They reckon this one will be, too."

Aaron took his gaze off the path and glanced at her. "Perhaps. I stopped going to the Bonfire Night festivities years ago. It's a silly tradition, if you think about it."

"Why's that?" She twisted in her seat, her interest coming across in her voice.

"Everyone knows Guy Fawkes was 'hung, drawn and quartered' for his part in the gunpowder plot, not burnt at the stake, so why sling the guy on a bonfire

each year? Witches were burnt. Being hung, drawn and quartered was reserved for those committing treason."

She nodded. "True. And they don't even use that as a punishment for treason, these days." She paused. "Though it is fun actually building the guy. We used to make one with Da's old clothes and stuff it with newspaper, before traipsing around the streets asking for money. We'd have sparklers around a bonfire, eat jacket potatoes and hot dogs out of paper serviettes, with hot tomato soup in those thick paper cups, and watch the fireworks in the local park."

"We went to the school bonfire, but nothing else." He shoved away his feelings. Bonfires meant something else as he was growing up. He had vague memories tucked away in the dark recesses of his mind that he didn't want tapped.

"Here we are." He parked the tractor and leapt out. Trotting around the other side, he yanked open the door and offered her a hand.

This time she took it. "Thank you."

Not prepared for the way her cool touch warmed him or the way his heart pounded, he almost let go. Just as well he didn't, or she would have fallen hard. And he didn't want to spoil her pretty face with cuts and scrapes.

Meaghan looked around as she let go of his hand. "This field here?"

Aaron nodded, moving over to the gate. Best keep this businesslike; it was safer, and anyway, where did the thought even come from that a relationship with Meaghan could be anything other than business? "Yeah. I'll leave the gate open on the night. There's a slight incline, but it levels out half way. It's far enough from the main road not to cause a problem with