

KRAMER GREENFIELD



**THE BLESSINGS
AND SORROWS
OF SCHLUMEL THE ANGEL**

The Blessings and Sorrows of Schlumel The Angel

By KRAMER GREENFIELD



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Dedication

I dedicate this book to my family for their support and inspiration, most of all, Harold, my father, Joel, my brother and Uncle Charlie, who showed me how a man could demonstrate humor, patience and love.

They all have passed this life, but will never be forgotten.

Thank you to Donna Lee Hanlon, of Seaside Business Services, Nahant, for all the hard work and moral support, without which this book would not have been completed.

Introduction

A writer is the ultimate spectator and the omnipotent ruler of the blank page. They can experience the event and write every detail, or imagine a scene on the page with lines and players. To be able to create is a gift. I offer thanks for this gift to many people. The gift of humor was instilled at an early age, by my Dad. He had a joke file extensive as any good comedian. If you got him started, he would do twenty minutes of one-liners and jokes, whether you laughed or not. To this day, my siblings and I, when we hear a corny joke call it a "Harold." The dinner table at our house was a spotlight for prime time. My mother was a great audience. She spoke broken English, which made her a great target for Dad's jokes.

I read every book I could get my hands on when I was a kid. I once read a whole wall at our Public Library. I give thanks to those authors who taught me the importance of communication by the written word. Don't get me wrong. I love to talk, but there is nothing like the beauty of a well-written phrase.

I give thanks to my writing group at the Derry Library, Derry, New Hampshire, for their support and encouragement. Margaret King has been a great friend. She is a prolific writer who gave me invaluable advice. Also, thanks to Emilio Paul, who guided me through cyberspace.

I give thanks to the Creator who created me, without whom nothing is possible.

Ramer Greenfield

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Prologue

How does one become an Angel?

1. Live a good life and die a natural death.
2. Live a good life and die an accidental death.
3. Live a good life, but then from “upstairs,” way, way “upstairs,” someone makes an error in calculation.

Schlumel the Mensch

Schlumel Angelwitz was uncomplicated. He went to work the same route every day, ate at the same restaurants, usually Chinese or deli, and stayed married to the same woman for over forty years.

Every Friday night just before sundown, he arrived at Temple to join the *minyem* for Sabbath prayers. After he said his prayers, he went home to Rachel.

His career as a partner in a Boston insurance agency allowed him to make a decent living. He and Rachel went on vacation two or three times a year. He flirted with the idea of retirement. After all, sixty-nine was no spring chicken and he wanted to spend his remaining years in a warm climate. Every succeeding winter, his arthritic hand cramped more and Rachel's sore knees rebelled.

It was Tuesday, so he supposed he would stroll over to the deli for a corned beef on rye. Monday, he usually brought a leftover brisket or chicken sandwich from Rachel's excellent Sunday dinner. Midweek was Chinese, a staff meeting with sandwiches took care of Thursday, and Friday his Rotary Club meeting with whatever *drek* they made him eat.

Schlumel was partial to pin striped suits, even if they made him look like he joined the rackets. The suits made him feel elegant with a red or multi-colored tie, and white or light blue shirt. He mourned the days when men wore hats outside; not those baseball caps, but real felt hats. For meetings, he wore a navy blue suit, and for funerals, a black suit. Considered a dapper guy, he had a nearly bald head with a bit of white hair, cut in a neat wreath and a clean-shaven chin.

The only drawback to his overall demeanor was his downcast appearance. Schlumel never seemed to achieve happiness. He looked woebegone. Although the world was not on his shoulders, he appeared to carry a lot of

gloom. When he smiled, his eyebrows formed an upside down “V” and made his smile appear weary and forced.

The only thing that lit his face was his three-year-old grandson, Sammie, who pulled at his tie and rummaged through his pockets for peppermints. Sammie was a jewel, and of course, his son Matthew was a lovely boy. He went to law school and married a great-looking girl, but that little one...well, Schlumel smiled just thinking of him.

On the last Florida trip, they brought back a bag of cleaned seashells for little Sammie. He acted like they were gold. Schlumel was amused at the way he lined them on the table, like rare treasures. He picked up each one and ran over to Granpapa to say thank you again and again. Maybe his son did those things too, but he was too busy back then making a living to notice. A grandchild gave Schlumel a second chance to enjoy life.

Rachel, also, was a piece of luck. She was beautiful and a good cook. Who could have known? He was so crazy about her back in the day that he would have eaten knockwurst and beans every night just to lie beside her. He still felt the same way. They had another child, Shayna, who died during a serious influenza plague when she was nine. If he hadn't had Rachel and Matthew, he might have faded away. He loved Shayna that much. She looked just like her mama. His frown deepened with that thought as the deli came into view.

High above Schlumel, workmen were replacing a cracked piece of glass. It was sizable, so two men on a scaffold, in harnesses, worked together for balance. Being a windy day, it became a trial to pull it out and sidle it back through the window frame for replacement. One of the men heard a snap as the scaffold gave way. Suddenly, he was swinging by his harness. The other man grabbed wildly for the large plate of glass, but it slipped and dropped sixteen stories to the ground.

At the funeral, they said Schlumel never knew what hit him. The coroner practically had to wire the man together, because he had been sliced in half. If Schlumel didn't have anything to be unhappy about before, he certainly did now. If he were alive, he might have quoted

his late, beloved mother, who said, "Don't complain, or God will give you something to complain about."

Floating above his split personality, Schlumel wondered what he did wrong. He was a nice guy. He took care of his customers, loved his family and attended Temple on a regular basis, not just the high holidays. Yet, cut down before enjoying retirement, well earned, while he worked his entire life. It wasn't right. God might not always be fair, but Schlumel was convinced His moves were just and right. In the chess board game of life, should he have moved left instead of right?

A voice boomed above him, "Enough with the self-pity, already. You give me a headache."

"Who's there?" Schlumel felt himself rise with fear.

"It's the High Mukhah Muk; God's right-hand man. He was a little busy taking care of major problems in the world, so he sent me to explain a few things to you."

"Like what, for instance? I'm dead, right? Dead is dead. What's to explain?"

"You're not exactly dead. It's a sort of limbo for those who are taken before their time."

"What do you mean? This is some mistake? I'm supposed to have lived longer and somebody goofed and knocked me off ahead of time?"

"There you go. We really apologize. It only happens once every thousand years or so, but when it does we try to make it up to the poor victim by giving special privileges."

"I'm dead. What do you do for an encore?"

"We make you a messenger of goodwill from heaven to Earth. You can fix some of the problems below without your human form. In fact, you are and will always be an angel."

Then he suspended Schlumel in time as we know it.

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