



# THE AXEMAN'S ENCORE

Based on true events

A novel by  
**BRADLEY PAGE**

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# Chapter 1

Thursday, March 13th, 1919 – 6:15 AM

George Reese had just finished his breakfast, black coffee and toast, his morning ritual. He was preparing to leave for work, eyes flicking to the clock to make sure he left on time. Miss the streetcar, and he'd be late. And in the newspaper business, lateness could be the difference between landing a front-page story or getting stuck with a fluff piece about someone's prize-winning tomatoes.

On the ride to The Times-Picayune, George watched the city stir awake. People bustled along the sidewalks, clutching their newspapers, faces pale, eyes buried in the same grim headline:

*March 18 Approaches, Will the Axeman Strike Again?*

The killings had rattled New Orleans to its core for the past 4 years in a row. The only known motive being the date, March 18th, after midnight. Somewhere in the city there was a killer, waiting, who left no witnesses, no clear motives, only blood, silence, and an axe. To the public, it felt random. Unstoppable.

But George had begun to suspect there was a rhythm to the madness, something colder and more deliberate than chance.

Fear clung to the city like swamp fog, and it wasn't letting go.

There were few witnesses, fewer still who survived. One described the Axeman as "dark, tall, heavy-set, wearing a dark suit and a black slouch hat." A curious, almost theatrical image. Beyond that haunting sketch, the police had little to go on. No fingerprints. No motive. No progress.

Tivoli Circle, George's stop. He could ride the streetcar all the way to the Picayune's front steps, but he preferred to detour to the corner café. It was a quiet place with strong coffee and a better view of the city waking up. The second half of his morning ritual.

After his second jolt of caffeine, George made his way into the newsroom. The sound of clacking typewriter keys hit him like a drum-roll.

"Morning, George," said Suzy, the receptionist, barely looking up from her work.

"Morning, Suzy. Any messages? I'm expecting something from Fred Monroe about the Axeman murders."

Suzy hesitated. "He hasn't sent anything yet. Honestly, I hope he doesn't. This whole thing's got me sleeping with the lights on." She glanced around and lowered her voice. "They say he only strikes in the dead of night, around the same time, every year. March 18th's coming... I haven't had a peaceful night in weeks."

George offered a sympathetic nod.

"Oh," she added, holding up an envelope. "This came in, no return address. Nobody else wants to touch it. You want it?"

George took the envelope, weighing it in his hand. "Probably just Mrs. LeBlanc complaining about the noise from the trolley again."

He headed back to his office, the envelope tucked under his arm, unaware that inside it was a letter that would change the course of New Orleans history forever.

George slid off his overcoat and hung it on the rack as he entered his office. He dropped the envelope onto his desk and sat down, thumbing through a notepad. Nothing new. He needed more information about the Axeman. Everyone was talking about him, and if George could just squeeze something out of the police, he could finally write a story worthy of the front page.

Then, as if his thoughts summoned him, a knock sounded at the door. Police Inspector Fred Monroe stepped in. A man of average height and thin build, with a pencil mustache that made him look more like a stage magician than a cop.

"Fred, come on in, have a seat," George said, practically salivating for a lead.

“Hey George,” Fred replied, sinking into the chair with a tired sigh. “Look, I know you’re hungry for something new, but we’ve got nothing. The guy strikes once a year, same night, and then vanishes. No witnesses, no fingerprints, no trail. Just a body, a bloody axe and a clock stopped at whatever time it happened. It’s the same thing every year.”

George blinked. “Nothing? Not even some flimsy lead I could twist into a headline?”

Fred shook his head. “Not a damn thing. One witness from a few years back swears she saw a man in a dark coat, but hell, that description could fit half the Quarter after midnight. And no one’s seen him since.”

He stood, rubbing his temple. “If that changes, you’ll be the first to know. Until then... it’s like trying to catch smoke.”

As the door clicked shut behind him, George sighed. “Great. Well, let’s see what Mrs. LeBlanc’s gripe is today.”

He picked up the envelope and ripped it open. A curious line caught his attention almost immediately:

**Hell, March 13, 1919**

“Hell?” George muttered. “Well, at least they got the date right.”

But as he read further, his smirk faded. His heart beat faster. This wasn’t a complaint letter, this was front-page material. He leaned in as his eyes scanned the page:

*Esteemed Mortal,*

*They have never caught me, and they never will. They have never seen me, for I am invisible, even as the ether that surrounds your earth. I am not human, but a spirit and a demon from the hottest hell. I am what you Orleanians call the Axeman.*

*When I choose, I claim a victim. I leave no clues, only my bloody axe, slick with the brains of those I send below to keep me company.*

*You may warn the police not to anger me. Not that I expect them to be bold, they have amused both myself and His Satanic Majesty with their incompetence. Still, they’d do well to stay out of my path.*

*I am, as you may guess, quite fond of jazz music. On Tuesday night, at exactly 12:15 AM, I will pass over New Orleans. In my infinite mercy, I offer this: any*



*home where a jazz band is playing will be spared.*

*If everyone plays, all the better. But those who remain silent... will get the axe.*

*Well, as I am cold and crave the warmth of my native Tartarus, and it is about time I leave your earthly home, I will cease my discourse, for now. Publish this, that it may go well with thee.*

*I have been, am, and will be, the worst spirit to ever exist, in fact or fantasy.*

## *The Axeman*

George was in shock. Not only did he have new information, he had *the* story. A confession, a taunt, and a warning rolled into one. His hands trembled as he set the letter down, his journalist instincts warring with the chill crawling up his spine.

He stood and paced, heart pounding like a snare drum. The language... the tone... the signature. It wasn't just murder, it was performance, ritual, madness laced with purpose.

He stopped, staring at the words again.

"Crave the warmth of Tartarus..." he whispered. "What the hell does that even mean?"

George reached for the phone, then hesitated. No. This was too big for a call.

He bolted from his office and out the front doors, just in time to catch sight of Monroe stepping onto the streetcar.

"Fred!" he called out, his voice urgent.

Monroe turned, eyebrows raised. "What is it, George? Everything okay?"

"No, and yes. You need to come back to my office. Right now. I've got something you have to see."

**Tuesday, March 18th, 1919 – 1:15 AM**

The music had finally stopped. Everyone in the city was still buzzing with disbelief that every jazz musician in New Orleans had played through the

midnight hour.

All had gone eerily quiet again. Those that were alive were left to wonder if the Axeman had struck.

In a small, smoke-filled nightclub off Burgundy Street, a man stood alone behind the bar, sleeves rolled, shirt damp with sweat. He moved to the phonograph, gently lifting the needle off the spinning record. The room seemed to exhale.

He took the record carefully between both hands and slid it into a white sleeve with black, hand written lettering:

*Sonic Sigil*

Without a word, he crossed the room to a wall safe, turned the dial, and locked the record away.

He stood still for a moment longer staring at the safe, spun the dial once for luck, and disappeared into the shadows.

No Axeman murders were reported that night.