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**THE BOOK THAT KILLS**

The Book is small and lethal, and everyone is fighting to possess it. It is worth a great deal of money and may have been written by the Marquis de Sade. Yet this mysterious, erotic book is intimately connected to a series of deaths and suicides of young women before it left France.

The Book – *The Memoirs of a Novice* – has its roots in events that go back to the French Revolution, and has now become crucial to the present-day ambitions of a beautiful, young politician named Olympe de Chavagnac, a potential President of the French Republic when the present incumbent, Alphonse Lambaud, gives up his fourth term. Olympe is a monarchist who believes she is descended from the last Bourbons, executed during the French Revolution.

So passionate is Olympe's belief in her re-incarnation, that she will stop at nothing to own the Book and with its authority become elected President, then restore the Bourbon Monarchy to France. And when she meets Guillaume Lemaitre, who becomes her sponsor and frustrated lover, Olympe forms an alliance with a modern de Sade – with terrifying consequences for the world.

Inspired by author Garry O'Connor's discovery of an anonymous volume – *Les Mémoires de Saturnin* – in his garage loft after his family moved into their fifteenth century courthouse on the Oxfordshire/Northamptonshire borders in 1995, **The Book that Kills** is de Sade in a modern context, a powerful, erotic psychological thriller, murder mystery and historical intrigue.

**About the author**

**Garry O'Connor** is a playwright, biographer and novelist. His many publications include acclaimed biographies of notable actors and a highly praised biography of the late Pope John Paul II. His most recent play is *Debussy Was My Grandfather*, and other recent publications include *Subdued Fires*, a biography of Pope Benedict XVI, and *As Luck Would Have It*, the memoir of the distinguished actor Sir Derek Jacobi, which Garry co-authored with Jacobi.

**Front cover painting:**

*Still Life of Book and Lillies* by John O'Connor



GARRY O'CONNOR  
THE BOOK THAT KILLS

GARRY O'CONNOR



AESOP MODERN

A human shape is beginning to form before our eyes. I inspect Stratos's face, and confirm that he sees it too. And Sylvie: she stares back at me and then to the wall again, sceptically transfixed. Faint lines of red appear in the wall. Clever stuff, but these days you can do anything with optics.

'A surface painted with cinnabar is damaged by the action of sunlight and moonlight. It will not stay. I would ask you to put on a loose mask of bladder skin to prevent your inhaling...'

'Ah!' I gasp with horror.

Here is a definite face; lips and eyes are emerging. 'Whose face is it?' I call out as the curator has risen. He slaps some foul-smelling organ over my face and mouth.

'Whose but the one you love?'

I watch in even greater horror as the face digests more of its red-lead contours. 'I think you have the wrong person!' I blurt out through my mask. 'This is not Olympe at all.' Sylvie gives a sudden start.

She hasn't expected me to say the name – 'Olympe'. Is she beginning to slip from guarded uncertainty into a more sympathetic frame of mind? Has she decided, whatever her feelings towards me are, to keep them a secret? But that Olympe should be seen by her as some kind of a rival is just as unlikely as unforeseen – if not this, then what makes her so on edge?

The curator jumps in the air and utters a string of coarse words. The music packs up as suddenly. He paces up and down in front of us, agitated beyond reason.

'The Book, the Book that kills, beware!' he shouts. 'I want no more of it! It is not the magic which doesn't work; it is the Book speaking out with its own mind. Come another time... Not today of all days!'

From *The Book That Kills*

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