

KILLING JOSEPH SMITH

Written by
Matthew Akisan

(A work of fiction influenced by true events)

makisanya@hotmail.co.uk

MONTAGE OF PENCIL SKETCHES ON PAPER

The Sun highlighted in a harmonious, graceful sky surrounded by tranquil clouds.

The Sun is partially covered by blackened, sinister clouds. We hear a sharp crack of thunder.

The Sun has gone, totally shrouded by depressing dark clouds. The sound of heavy rainfall begins.

Wind forced rainfall descending diagonally. The roar of the shower grows louder with each second.

The fifth sketch shows a greater abundance of rainfall. The shower of rain becomes much heavier.

Still on the fifth sketching, we slowly descend. A powerful, authoritative voice speaks.

JOSEPH SMITH (V.O.)
I am going like a lamb to the
slaughter.

Reaching the bottom of the drawing, a TWO-STOREY JAILHOUSE in a small western town.

JOSEPH SMITH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I have a conscience void of offence
toward God and all men.

The next sketch again focuses on the jailhouse, but it is night and the rain has stopped. The sound of rainfall gently fades out as jeers and hostile voices become louder.

The same sketch again but the jailhouse is surrounded by angry townspeople, some holding torches and pitchforks.

We slowly start to move closer to the jailhouse.

JOSEPH SMITH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And it will be said of me, 'He was
murdered in cold blood'.

Stopping at the door, with a wooden sign reading 'CARTHAGE JAIL'.

FADE IN:

EXT. JAILHOUSE - NIGHT

The same scene at the jailhouse door, illuminated by a lamp on the side. The wooden sign is heavily dilapidated.

SUPER: Illinois, June 1844.

CYRUS WHEELOCK (30s), hurriedly comes to the door and knocks on it. A gaunt, nervous looking fellow, his tight black suit and stovepipe hat suggest a creepy funeral director.

Cyrus looks back anxiously as an angry voices behind him become more threatening.

Cyrus bangs on the door three times more forcefully.

The door opens slightly and CHESTER (late 40s), African-American, pops his head out looking fearful.

Cyrus is about to say something, but seems confounded that a black man has opened the door.

The door opens a bit more to reveal a rifle barrel over Chester's shoulder, pointing directly at Cyrus.

Cyrus shoots both hands up.

VOICE BEHIND CHESTER (O.S.)
What's your business mister?

CYRUS
Don't shoot! Please!

VOICE BEHIND CHESTER (O.S.)
Out with it!

Cyrus reaches for his bag in a quick motion. The unseen man cocks the rifle, Chester jolts.

CHESTER
(to Cyrus)
Slow down fool!

Cyrus slowly holds out some rolled up papers.

CYRUS
My name is Cyrus Wheelock,
administrator of the Nauvoo Legion
and missionary secretary of the
office of the true church.

The door fully opens to reveal Deputy MORRIS (40s), dishevelled, sarcastic and tough talking.

Morris raises the gun off Chester's shoulder. Chester dashes back inside, leaving Morris facing Cyrus.

MORRIS

What kind of manure are you
spoutin' undertaker? You here to
see Smith?

Cyrus nods his head a bit too enthusiastically.

CYRUS

I have important correspondences
for General Joseph Smith from
Governor Ford and the saints in
Nauvoo.

Morris lowers his gun, shakes his head in commiseration and
goes right up to Cyrus' face.

MORRIS

You just had to say ye...

A gunshot hits and destroys the lamp. Cyrus and Morris
scramble for cover. Cyrus' hat falls to the ground.

Morris grabs Cyrus and drags him into the jailhouse.

INT. UPPER BEDROOM/ JAILHOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE UP - PENCIL SKETCH PAPER ON TABLE

Same as the fifth sketch, but with the addition of a giant
eye in the clouds watching the jailhouse below, the Eye Of
Providence.

A HAND with a red cedar pencil adds light rays to the eye.

A male voice is singing the Mormon hymn 'High On The Mountain
Top' seemingly to dampen the shouts of the hostile mob
outside.

JOHN TAYLOR (O.S.)

(singing)

For God remembers still. His
promise made of old. That he on
Zion's...

The noise of a window breaking, bringing the sound of the
mob's anger more audibly into the room.

The man drops the pencil, a bead of his sweat drops unto the
sketch.

INT. PASSAGE AREA/ JAILHOUSE - NIGHT

Morris and Chester finish blocking the entrance door with a heavy cupboard placed on its side.

Deputy WARWICK (late 50s), holds Cyrus by the shoulder with one hand and uses his other hand for a cane to support his bad leg. Warwick is a pragmatic, cantankerous fellow.

SHERIFF ROTHERHITHE (50s) storms in from the back holding a rifle, a tough John Wayne type. He stops and eyes up Cyrus from head to toe.

MORRIS

You can forget our reinforcements
gettin' through that rabble. They
ain't going nowhere 'till they see
Smith's blood spillin'.

ROTHERHITHE

No one is gonna stop the legal
process runnin' its natural course.

Rotherhithe sticks the barrel of his rifle into Cyrus' shoulder.

ROTHERHITHE (CONT'D)

Even if it's a blood bath.

MORRIS

It may come to that Sheriff.

Warwick angrily limps to the back.

WARWICK

I don't wanna die 'cause of some
stinkin' Mormon!

Rotherhithe signals to Chester with a nod.

Chester goes up to Cyrus and pats him down. Cyrus looks irritated, like he is being violated.

Chester shakes his head to Rotherhithe.

ROTHERHITHE

Thanks Chester. Help Warwick seal
up the place. I don't want even a
Comanche able to get in.

CHESTER

Yes Sheriff Rotherhithe sir.

Cyrus looks at Chester bemused as he dashes off to the back.

CYRUS

You have the seed of Cain in your employ?

MORRIS

Old Chester? He's a deputy's deputy freed man, and one and a half times more reliable, resourceful than any white man.

Rotherhithe grabs Cyrus by the arm.

ROTHERHITHE

There's no prejudice in this jailhouse mister. Now you want to see your prophet general or what?

INT. PARLOUR ROOM/ JAILHOUSE - NIGHT

Warwick and Chester use their shirts to cover their noses and mouths as they lock up the window cell bars.

Prisoner, WILLARD RICHARDS (30s), a slightly stout fellow, covers his mouth with a handkerchief as his fingers check the neck of a SICKLY MAN, laying still in blood stained sheets. There is a bowl of water and some basic medical instruments beside him. There is another body covered up in the corner.

Willard shakes his head.

WILLARD

I'm afraid the heinous bullet has done its work.

Warwick and Chester turn round to face Willard, both downcast. Warwick looks particularly aggrieved.

WILLARD (CONT'D)

(looking at covered body)
Deputy Mitchell has joined Deputy Collins in the spirit world.

Trying to conceal he is on the verge of tears, Warwick hastily hobbles out of the room.

Chester runs over and uses the sheets to cover the body. Willard bows his head and puts his hands together.

As if in response to Willard's prayer, the noise outside starts to subside rapidly. Both Chester and Willard look up in welcome bewilderment.

INT. CELL ROOM/ UPPER LEVEL/ JAIL HOUSE - NIGHT

The jail cell and the room are empty. The door leading to the passage is open.

Rotherhithe walks past in the passage.

Cyrus passes in the passage. He then stops and looks back into the cell room with curiosity.

CYRUS

Have they escaped?

ROTHERHITHE (O.S.)

Keep up undertaker!

INT. UPPER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Prisoner, HYRUM SMITH (early 40s) sits on the bed reading The Book Of Mormon, trying to calm his nerves.

Prisoner, JOHN TAYLOR (30s), sweeping broken glass with a broom, turns to look out of the broken window.

John smiles with relief as the angry voices outside completely cease.

JOHN

They're dispersing! Praise God!

Hyrum springs up, drops the book and joins John looking out the window.

HYRUM

But for how long?

Overjoyed, John drops the broom and starts to sing another hymn, 'Adam-ondi-Ahman'.

JOHN

(singing)

Hosanna to such days to come, the
Savior's second coming.

Rotherhithe enters the room with Cyrus.

ROTHERHITHE

Shut up with that song singin'
Taylor!

John stops singing, and with Hyrum, look at Cyrus with tremendous suspicion.

ROTHERHITHE (CONT'D)

Two of my men are now dead because
of your molestin' mayor messiah.

Hyrum and John are still speechless, their eyes locked on
Cyrus.

Rotherhithe looks to the man sitting at the desk with his
back to us.

The unseen man continues to doodle on the sketch. The desk
has organized piles of paper, and a stack of Book of Mormons.
A first edition of The Book of Abraham is also on the desk.

ROTHERHITHE (CONT'D)

Smith! One of your apostles,
disciples or whatever you call 'em
here to see you.

The man slowly turns his head to them, prisoner JOSEPH SMITH
(late 30s), brother of Hyrum.

Joseph is naturally charismatic, his face full of the boyish
adventurous charm depicted in the many paintings of him. He
is calm, but with some uneasiness of his predicament.

CYRUS

General. Thank Heavenly Father that
you are safe.

As Cyrus moves forward, Hyrum and John immediately form a
protective wall between Joseph and Cyrus.

Joseph tilts his head so he can see Cyrus.

JOSEPH

Brother Cyrus. It is gratifying to
see you in these dark days.

CYRUS

Sir, I urgently need to pass verbal
communication to you alone.

HYRUM

You have anything to say, say it
where you stand Wheelock!

Joseph gets up and puts his hands on Hyrum and Taylor's
shoulders, gently pushing them apart.

JOSEPH

Calm yourself Hyrum. This man is a
courageous watchdog of the saints.

INT. PARLOUR - NIGHT

Chester and Willard carry the covered body and put it next to the other dead body against the wall. Warwick stands by the open door. He wipes the sweat off his brow.

WARWICK

We can't keep them here. This heat won't quit.

CHESTER

A summer in Carthage is as hot as hell and damnation...

The sound of running footsteps that suddenly stop, like a poltergeist.

Willard looks up in fear.

The clanking of metal is heard in the passage then are crash. All three men look spooked.

Warwick clumsily rushes out of the room.

INT. PASSAGE - NIGHT

Missing his step, Warwick falls to the floor. He groans in pain and grabs his bad leg.

He looks along the passage, no one there.

INT. CELL ROOM - NIGHT

Joseph stands with Cyrus, as Morris stands by the door lighting his pipe of tobacco.

Joseph takes off the shawl from his neck and uses it to dab the light sweat on his forehead.

JOSEPH

So how are the saints? How is Emma?

CYRUS

All are well, and praying every hour that Heavenly Father will soon unloosen your chains.

Joseph turns and walks towards the far wall. Cyrus looks increasingly edgy, he puts his hand under his shirt.

JOSEPH

I fear this could be my Golgotha.

Morris closes his eyes as he inhales his pipe.

CYRUS

I would be honored to go with you.

Joseph turns round and walks calmly towards Cyrus.

JOSEPH

What are you saying?

Cyrus lights a match in one action. Joseph looks perplexed.

Cyrus lifts up his shirt to reveal a strap of dynamite sticks around his waist, like a suicide bomber!

Joseph is taken aback as Cyrus slowly moves the lighted match to the dynamite fuse.

Joseph quickly snaps to his senses and grabs Cyrus' wrist with the match.

The two grapple as Joseph tries to get the match.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Morris!

Morris opens his eyes and spits out his pipe as Joseph and Cyrus' struggle and fall to the ground.

Morris dives in and clutches Cyrus' arm. Surprisingly, lanky Cyrus is able to hold his own despite his arms being pulled by both Joseph and Morris.

MORRIS

(shouting)

Sheriff! Get in here! The undertaker's lookin' for business!

Cyrus pathetically moans and groans.

Joseph moves nearer to Cyrus' feet, looking him straight in the eye.

Cyrus taps his left shoe heel on the floor. The heel pops open slightly.

Joseph quickly reaches for the heel and pulls out a compact DERRINGER PISTOL, then closes the secret compartment.

Chester, Warwick and Rotherhithe rush into the cell.

WARWICK

Damn crazy funny-looking frog bastard!

Warwick sticks his cane with great force into Cyrus' wrist. Cyrus immediately drops the match and screams in agony.

Cyrus recovers quickly and bites his teeth into Warwick's bad leg. Warwick drops his stick and yells in excruciating pain.

With no eyes on him, Joseph quickly slips the pistol down his sleeve.

Chester and Morris jump on Cyrus and hold him down.

Morris punches Cyrus in the face.

Hyrum and Willard run into the room.

HYRUM

You're unhinged Wheelock! Unhinged!

Rotherhithe sticks his shoe on Cyrus' chest. He then knocks out Cyrus cold with the buttstock of his rifle.

EXT. JAILHOUSE - NIGHT

Still quiet outside. The sign on the door hangs diagonal, having been ripped off on one side, and rope noose hangs on it.

INT. CELL ROOM - NIGHT

Cyrus, still unconscious, is tied tightly to the bars of the cell upside down, arms spread out, St. Peter crucifixion style. His bloodied face indicates he has taken another beating.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Morris and John look out the window. Chester watches Rotherhithe march around the room in thought.

Hyrum sits on the bed, wiping the sweat off his brow, exhausted by the heat.

At the other end of the bed, Warwick sits as Willard finishes putting a bandage on his injured leg.

WARWICK

Should've let me shove a dynamite stick in that creepy bastard's hole Sheriff, and light it.

Joseph is at the table continuing to sketch. Morris marches up to Rotherhithe.

MORRIS

Christ, Hell! The townsfolk ain't comin' back! I've been on my feet for thirty hours!

Morris heads for the door.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

We've got to get those stinkin' corpses outta here! And I need some steak.

Rotherhithe marches over and stops him.

ROTHERHITHE

Nobody is goin' anywhere until I say so.

Morris bangs the wall in frustration.

ROTHERHITHE (CONT'D)

Stop actin' like a sulkin' squaw. I'll go out and check at dawn.

Chester looks over Joseph's shoulder, at the giant eye on the sketch.

CHESTER

Is that an eyeball Mister Smith?

JOSEPH

It is the Holy Spirit that watches over every man.

Morris marches over to Smith and grabs the picture.

MORRIS

Smith, you wouldn't know the Holy Spirit from a fart in the wind!

Morris sees that he has picked up two sheets of paper. He looks at the paper underneath which is folded.

Morris unfolds the paper and is flummoxed by what he sees.

The unfolded paper is a sketch of the White House, expanded into a glorious Mormon temple, with stained glass windows, Freemason symbols, tiled gold pavements and a steeple of the prophet Moroni.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
Shit! Smith, you think you can
still run for President? Chester
here has more of a chance!

Rotherhithe takes the sheet from Morris.

ROTHERHITHE
Go downstairs and cool off!

Morris storms out of the room.

MORRIS
American Mohammed my ass!

INT. CELL ROOM - NIGHT

Heavy footsteps cause Cyrus to wake.

A shadow covers him, he starts to murmur in dread.

INT. UPPER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joseph looks upward, smiling to himself.

ROTHERHITHE
What you grinnin' at Smith?

JOSEPH
I was just thinking of fishing in
my home town...

Rotherhithe grabs one of the Books of Mormon from the table.

ROTHERHITHE
If I were you, I'd be thinkin' how
far down in Hell this so-called
book is going to get you.

Joseph is about to respond but Rotherhithe doesn't give him
the chance.

ROTHERHITHE (CONT'D)
I've been all over this country
dealing with the fallout from
crazies like you. Quakers and
Freemasons, peddling all kinds of
God forsaken shit.

JOSEPH
No man knows my history, I can...

ROTHERHITHE

Just for whores, squaws, power and money. Is it worth it to end up six feet under?

Rotherhithe throws the book to the side of the room.

John scurries to pick it up the book.

WARWICK

(to John)

You'd do better to take that cursed book and use it for target practice son.

JOHN

No bullet can pierce the Book of Mormon!

The door bursts open. Morris enters, grabbing a bloody wound on his chest.

Morris falls to the floor. Willard goes down and checks the wound. The others gather around them.

WARWICK

What the...

MORRIS

The... The jail!

INT. CELL ROOM - NIGHT

A CLOAKED STRANGER stands in front of Cyrus, blocking him from view. Cyrus is groaning. The stranger wears a Permafelt Cavalier hat complete with white feather.

Rotherhithe and Warwick rush in the room, pointing their rifles.

ROTHERHITHE

Stop right there stranger!

The stranger slowly turns around.

The stranger wears a theatrical mask that has the Masonic Square and Compasses symbol on it, but instead of a G, it has the skull and crossbones symbol.

His eyes pierce through the slits on the mask.

Rotherhithe looks intimidated for a moment in what he sees in the stranger's hand, a decapitated peacock, the blood pouring from the neck unto Cyrus chin and face.

WARWICK

What the hell are you doing?

STRANGER

Blood atonement. I don't want to be stained by the murder of this imbecile when I enter paradise.

The stranger draws a sword from a sheath at his side, a beautiful piece of craftsmanship with a golden hilt.

Warwick and Rotherhithe pull the triggers but the rifles don't fire to their chagrin, they are empty.

WARWICK

I told you to reload the rifles
Morris, you lazy fuck!

The stranger makes a bloodcurdling chuckle.

The stranger drops the bird carcass and holds his sword up at Warwick and Rotherhithe.

The stranger slowly starts to pace towards Warwick and Rotherhithe. In response, the pair start to pace backward.

STRANGER

I will not allow the delay of the completion of my mission.

ROTHERHITHE

What?

STRANGER

The assassination of he who has stolen our precious secret knowledge and rituals and molded them for his own ends.

EXT. PASSAGE AREA - CONTINUOUS

Rotherhithe and Warwick pace out past the cell room door.

Rotherhithe's eye catches Chester standing by the door, holding a pitchfork, ready to strike.

The stranger slowly approaches the door.

STRANGER

By order of the Imperial Grand
Lodge. On this very night, Joseph
Smith will surely die.

As the pointed sword comes through the door, a bead of sweat drops from Chester's chin and silently drops on the floor.

Before he can strike, the stranger unexpectedly jumps out, turns and pierces Chester in the chest with the sword in swift coordinated movements.

Chester falls to the ground.

A gunshot hits the stranger through the upper shoulder, he spasms backward.

Morris on the floor, clutches unto the pistol he has just fired. His blood trails on the floor from the bedroom.

Hyrum and Willard look out of the slightly open door.

The stranger straightens up and quickly gets ready to strike.

Morris fires the pistol. The bullet goes right through the stranger's heart. He falls on top of Morris.

Morris groans in pain.

Rotherhithe runs up to Chester on the floor and puts his hands on his shoulders reassuringly.

CHESTER

I think I'm a dead man sir.

From the cell, Cyrus looks at the scene, blinking excessively.

Warwick helps Morris roll the dead stranger off him.

Hyrum and Willard come out of the room, Joseph follows behind them cautiously.

Rotherhithe gazes at Chester as he dies in his arms.

ROTHERHITHE

Y'see all these nuts you're
bringin' to my jail Smith?

Morris grabs the sword. His greedy eyes take in the golden hilt.

Warwick snatches off the dead stranger's mask. He is an ALBINO, (20s), with a baby face and a splendid mop of curly hair.

ROTHERHITHE (CONT'D)
What the hell?

MORRIS
Don't look like a black fella.

WARWICK
He's not white or Chinee either.

CYRUS
He's a nefarious Lamanite! If only
we could summon the Danites!

Warwick briskly staggers into the cell and kicks Cyrus in the face with his good leg.

WARWICK
Shut up undertaker!

Cyrus is out for the count.

Suddenly the room is filled with the unwelcome sound of the angry mob, more vicious and enraged than before.

They all look up in great consternation.

Rotherhithe quickly goes to a drawer chest against the wall and opens it.

ROTHERHITHE
Smith! Get in the room! Lock the
door!

Joseph runs to the bedroom, Hyrum and Willard follow.

Rotherhithe throws Warwick a box of ammunition.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Willard locks the door.

Joseph and Hyrum move around the room with increasing anxiety.

John, looking out the window, grabs his head, trembling, the sound of the mob ever increasing.

JOHN
(hysterical)
They're hundreds! Hundreds!

Hyrum and Joseph attempt to move the bed to the door, but stress has weakened them.

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Still on the floor, Morris points his pistol at the door, ready for action.

Rotherhithe slowly descends the stairs, holding his rifle and a pistol.

Warwick is at the top of the stairs pointing his rifle.

Vicious banging at the door, trying to bash it open.

MAN OUTSIDE (O.S.)
You're a dead man Joseph!
Deeeeeeeeeead!

Rotherhithe cocks his pistol.

The door is bashed open slightly, the cupboard holds, but is cracked. The yelling and jeering outside is like a wild concert.

A rope noose is thrown in from the door. A look of fear quickly leaves Warwick's face.

The door is forced open a bit more, two pairs of hands come through, trying to push the cupboard out of the way.

Warwick fires a shot through the open door. A man yells in agony.

A barrel enters from the opened door and fires.

The shot hits the light and the whole place is plunged into DARKNESS.

WARWICK (O.S.)
Sheriff! I can't see!

A gunshot briefly lights the front door bashed open.

The sound of heavy, determined footsteps running in and rushing up the stairs.

The vicious barking of a dog is heard.

The dog bites into something it seems. Warwick is heard yelling in agony.

The blast of a gunshot. The dog whimpers and falls silent.

The thuds of someone falling down the stairs.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

John is stuck to the spot in fear. He looks at his watch, the sound of it ticking is deafening.

The door lock has been broken. Hyrum, Willard and Joseph are holding the door as the men heard on the other side try to break it down.

The door is forced open slightly, a WHITE MAN pushes his head into the room. His face is covered in cork, looking like a crude attempt at blackface.

John snaps out of it. He picks a book of Mormon from the desk and throws it at the man's head. The man is knocked out and falls behind the door.

John joins in trying to push the door, and it goes back slightly, but two pistol barrels come through.

One of the barrels faces John and he steps away in panic.

The pistol fires and hits John's watch. The sound of ticking stops.

The pistol fires again and hits John's leg. He falls, whimpering.

Willard grabs one of Warwick's canes by the door. He knocks the pistol from the man's hand.

The door is finally bashed open, Joseph, Hyrum and Willard are tossed back.

Another WHITE MAN with cork on his face springs in the room, pistol drawn.

Cork face wastes no time in firing his rifle. He hits Hyrum in the neck. Hyrum goes down, grabbing the spurting wound.

JOSEPH
(sorrowful)
Hyrum!

Willard quickly crawls under the bed.

As tears run down his face, Joseph pulls the Derringer pistol from his sleeve and fires it, hitting the cork face smack in the middle of his forehead. Instant death.

Joseph fires a second bullet, that hits ANOTHER CORK FACE entering. He falls into the room.

Joseph grabs one of the Book of Mormons from the desk. He runs to the window.

YET ANOTHER CORK FACE enters and fires his pistol at Joseph. The bullet goes through the Book of Mormon and into Joseph's chest.

MONTAGE OF PENCIL SKETCHES ON PAPER

Joseph in the bedroom, his face contorted in great agony. He grabs his chest as the Book of Mormon falls.

JOSEPH (V.O.)
(in agony)
Oh Lord, my God!

From the outside of the jail, Joseph falling outside the bedroom window, a massive crowd gathered. The sound of a terrible thud The jeers of the people fall silent.

Then, the mob forms a great circle around Joseph's body on the ground. An explosion of cheers and joviality.

A close up of five people around Joseph's body. A woman spits downward. Another man with his young son on his shoulders looks down happy.

Another two men shake each other's hand. Another man who looks like a youthful Brigham Young looks downcast and defeated.

Willard and John looking down the bedroom window grieved and sorrowful. John is heard whimpering and sobbing.

WILLARD (V.O.)
(hysterical)
Joseph! Joseph!

THE END