

Novels By Russ Fine

January, 2025

The new year has arrived and with it are hopes for a better future. I decided not to make any resolutions this year since I usually ignore them by January 2nd.

Last month I combined my two *Frank Craver Mysteries* short story books into a single hard cover volume. It is currently available at Amazon and at my signing events.

At my signing events many of the people I have spoken to told me they prefer electronic versions of books to the printed versions. It enables them to change the font size making the book easier to read. I have also had requests for audio versions of my books. All of my books are available on Amazon in Kindle format but eBooks have an advantage. In addition to allowing you to alter the font size there is free software available that will read the book to you. So, on my website all of my books are now available in eBook format for instant download.

To read, or have an eBook read to you, I recommend using ReadERA if you have an Android device. For Apple devices the Apple app BOOKS is perfect if you want to read the book. If you want the book read to you I suggest using NaturalReader.

As I mentioned before, shortly after we moved to Tennessee I joined a local writers group. We had weekly assignments. However, I don't remember what prompted the attached story, which is titled *The Gift*. I hope you enjoy it.

If you have any comments or suggestions regarding my novels please let me know. I look forward to hearing from you.



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Book Signing Events

01/03/25 - 01/04/25

11:00 - 5:00

Kroger

507 N. Foothills Plaza

Maryville, TN 37801

01/16/25 - 01/18/25

11:00 - 4:00

Kroger

234 E. Emory Road

Powell, TN 37849

The Gift

April 23, 1677

Today was Elizabeth Williams' fifteenth birthday. It was the custom in her mother's family to pass down to the eldest daughter the only piece of jewelry they owned; a small silver coin on a thin silk rope. The coin had been in her mother's family for a long time, but no one knew how or when the family acquired it. The coin had strange markings on it. They thought it was some sort of writing, but none of them recognized the language.

Before giving the gift to Elizabeth, her mother, Joan, reminded her that some of the previous owners of the coin reported strange dreams of future events. She also told Elizabeth if she experienced any of these dreams not to discuss them with anybody outside the family.

The Williams family emigrated from England to the New World in 1675. Caleb, Elizabeth's father, was a skilled carpenter and cabinet maker. There was a shortage of skilled workers in the Massachusetts Colony and Caleb felt his family would be able to prosper there. When the family left England, there were four of them, but Elizabeth's younger brother, John, died during the four month journey across the Atlantic.

Caleb did well, working six days every week. For the first time the family had a little extra money. He had enough work to keep him busy until winter.

The family was well known and lived in Salem Village. Like everyone else in town they attended church regularly, and their social lives centered on church events.

Three days after receiving the coin from her mother Elizabeth began to experience the dreams her mother warned her about. Neither her mother nor grandmother had experienced the dreams, so Elizabeth was surprised when they started.

At the beginning the dreams were very brief; a quick glimpse of the future. She saw what looked like wagons moving without any animals pulling them. She saw broad paved streets and large buildings that appeared to be made of metal and glass.

After having the dreams every night for a week she decided to tell her mother about them. That evening at dinner she said, "Mother, a few days after you gave me the coin I began to have dreams. I saw things I know don't exist, but they seemed so real. Do you think I'm seeing the future?"

Joan thought for a moment and said, "Yes, they probably are visions of the future. For your own safety, never mention this to anybody else. Do you understand?"

"Yes, mother."

Over the next several weeks the dreams continued. They became longer and slowly a more complete story began to emerge. Elizabeth saw a line of self-powered wagons. Some had roofs and others were open. She saw a man and woman riding in the back seat of one of the open vehicles. Then she saw the man's head explode. There was blood everywhere. Then the dream ended. Her only other memory from the dream was a date; November 22, 1663.

At first the dreams frightened her, but as she experienced additional details she began to look forward to seeing more.

Several weeks later, Elizabeth experienced a dream that frightened her again. This one was in Salem Town, and in her dream she saw a woman named Bridget Bishop hanged for the crime of being a witch. The date was June 10, 1692. There was a family named Bishop in town, but none of them were named Bridget.

The same dream occurred every night for two weeks. She wanted to talk to her mother about it, but she already knew what her mother would say. She decided to tell somebody else about the dream. After thinking about it for a while she decided to tell the church deacon. He was a very nice man and she felt he would understand her concern.

The following morning, after having the dream about Bridget again, she was certain she had to tell Deacon Perkins about her dreams. She went to the church that morning and found Deacon Perkins kneeling in prayer. She waited until he was finished and approached him.

“Good morning Deacon. May I speak to you about something?”

“Of course my child. How can I help you?”

“I have been having strange dreams. They started several weeks ago.” Elizabeth spent the next several minutes telling Deacon Perkins about her dreams. As she told him about the dreams the expression on his face changed. His smile changed and he appeared to be frightened.

When she was finished, the Deacon said emphatically, “You must go home now. I have to discuss this with the other church elders. We will come to your home this afternoon.”

Elizabeth thought she would feel better after telling the Deacon about her dreams. Instead, the look on the Deacon’s face and the tone of his voice terrified her. She ran all the way home.

When she told her mother what happened her mother yelled at her, “I told you not to tell anybody about your dreams! They are going to accuse you of being a witch. You must leave here immediately. Give me the coin.”

Shaking, Elizabeth took the coin from around her neck and handed it to her mother.

Her mother took the coin and said, “Wait here. I must speak to your father.”

Joan went to Caleb’s workshop and found him working on a cabinet he was making for them. She told him what Elizabeth had done. Caleb immediately went to a shelf and picked up a small box. The box contained all the money they had saved over the past year. He took the money and handed it to Joan. He said, “Elizabeth must leave here immediately. Give her the money and tell her to go to Boston. She is on her own now, we can’t help her.”

Joan took the money and gave Caleb the coin. “This coin is cursed. Take it somewhere and hide it. I don’t want it to ruin another life.”

Joan went back to talk to Elizabeth. Caleb was still holding the coin wondering where he could put it so it wouldn’t be found. He decided to build a small hiding place in the cabinet he was working on and hide the coin inside of it.

June 12, 2002

Billy Price just graduated from High School. Despite the fact he was an excellent student, he had absolutely no interest in going to college. Billy's father, Steve, had a business in Albany, New York that made custom furniture for many of the area's wealthiest families. Billy had taken an interest in his father's work when he received some woodworking tools for his eighth birthday. That was ten years ago, and now Billy had developed the talent and expertise to make himself a valuable asset to Steve's business. After Billy graduated, Steve change the name of his business from Steve's Custom Furniture to Steve & Billy's Custom Furniture. Billy now owned 45% of his father's business.

In addition to building custom furniture, Steve and Billy took trips to some of the more rural areas of the New England area to look for old furniture. They were leaving on their next trip in two days.

They stopped in Salem, Massachusetts for lunch in a local diner. Steve asked the waitress if she knew of anybody that had furniture from the colonial era for sale. She said her father had several old cabinets. She wasn't sure how old they were, but she was sure her father would sell them. She gave Steve directions to her father's farm.

After an excellent lunch, Steve and Billy drove out to see Dennis Trimble, the waitress' father. Steve introduced himself and Billy and told Dennis what his daughter had said about him having some old furniture for sale.

Dennis smiled and said, "I have some old cabinets that have been sitting in a store room in the barn for as far back as I can remember. I think they may have belonged to my grandfather. I'll be glad to show them to you."

Steve and Billy followed Dennis to the barn and then into the store room. Dennis pulled a large dusty tarp off of the furniture, and underneath were three beautifully made cabinets that Steve guessed were made around 1700. Steve and Billy both examined the cabinets. There was some damage to all of them, but it was all repairable.

Steve said, "These are exactly what I was looking for. Billy and I like to restore old furniture, and these are probably from around 1700. I'll give you \$7,500 for them."

Dennis said, "I had no idea they were worth anything, but if you think they are worth \$7,500, I would guess you are probably willing to pay \$10,000. Am I right?"

Steve wanted the cabinets, and he thought his first offer was fair. He said, "I'm going to take another look at them and I'll let you know if you're right." Steve and Billy both took a closer look at the cabinets, talked for a few minutes, and then Steve said, "I'll give you \$9,000. That's my final offer."

Dennis, with a big smile on his face said, "You've got a deal. If you hadn't offer so much in the first place I probably would have sold them to you for \$50 each."

"That's okay. I always try to pay people a reasonable price for the things I buy. Is a check okay? If you prefer cash, I can go back to Salem and get it."

"A check will be fine."

Steve wrote Dennis a check and then Steve and Billy carefully loaded the three cabinets into the back of their pickup for the one hundred fifty mile trip back to Albany. They were both very happy with the purchase.

The following morning Steve and Billy unloaded the three cabinets and put them into their workshop. Billy told his father he wanted to begin working on one of the cabinets immediately. Steve said that was okay.

Billy decided to work on the smallest cabinet first. It was a wonderful example of colonial furniture. The cabinet was four feet high, forty inches wide, and two feet deep. It had four drawers that were thirty six inches wide and ten inches high. The top, sides, and front were all made of walnut, and the drawers were poplar. The cabinet stood on four small round feet. It was in fairly good condition, except for some scratches on the top and sides. Some of the drawer fronts were scratched as well. The drawer slides would all need to be replaced, but that was not unexpected.

He removed each of the drawers in order to inspect them more closely. On the back of the second drawer there was a small box. He had never seen anything like that, and it was the only drawer on the cabinet that had a box on it. He looked at the box closely. Unlike the rest of the cabinet it didn't appear to be well made. It looked like something the cabinet maker assembled very quickly.

He decided to remove the box from the drawer back. With a small chisel from his tool board he quickly removed it. He was surprised to see a small silver coin in a copper holder inside the box. There was a hasp on the copper holder and threaded through it was a thin black silk rope. He studied the coin for a while. There was writing on it, but he had no idea what language was used. Then he inspected the silk rope. The cabinet was more than three hundred years old, but the silk rope showed no signs of wear. It was in perfect condition as were the coin and the copper holder. Everything looked brand new. There was something else unique about the silk rope. It was not tied anywhere. It looked like one continuous strand of silk.

Billy continued to study the coin and finally decided to take it to a local coin dealer to see if they knew anything about it. He put the coin in a small plastic bag and put the bag in his pocket. He spent the next several hours working on the cabinet.

That evening at supper Billy told his father about finding the coin. He showed it to him and Steve studied it for several minutes. He then gave it back to Billy and said, "I think you should take it to a dealer tomorrow and find out what it is and if it's worth anything."

"I already planned to do that."

Billy searched that evening for a coin dealer that specialized in old coins. He picked one based on his website. The next morning after breakfast he drove to the coin dealer's shop. When Billy walked in the man behind the counter looked up at Billy, smiled, and said, "Good morning, how can I help you?"

"Good morning. Yesterday I was working on an old cabinet and I found this inside. I was wondering if you could tell me what it is." Billy handed the coin to the man.

The man looked at the coin for a few seconds. He retrieved a large magnifying glass from a drawer and continued studying the coin. Finally he said, "I think the writing is Sumerian, but I have no idea what it says. Someone at the Museum of Natural History in New York City might be able to decipher it for you. If the writing is Sumerian the coin must be several thousand years old, but it looks new. I wish I could help you, but I really don't know what it is."

"Do you think it's valuable?"

"If it really is a Sumerian coin, it would be quite valuable." The man handed the coin back to Billy.

"I don't have either the time or the desire to go to New York City. So, I guess I'll just put it away somewhere safe for now. Thank you for your time."

"You're welcome."

Billy left and went back to the workshop. He decided he liked the way the coin looked so he put it around his neck and tucked the coin inside his shirt. At dinner he told his father what the coin dealer told him and they decided the next time they went to New York City they would take the coin to the museum.

By evening Billy was very tired. He got ready for bed quickly, not bothering to take off the coin. He fell asleep almost immediately. An hour later he woke up. He had the most realistic dream he ever had. He didn't remember a lot of detail. He was standing on the sidewalk in a downtown area of a city. All the signs appeared to be written in German. Without any warning he suddenly found himself under water, as if the area was hit with a flash flood. That was when he woke up. He fell back to sleep again, and slept soundly for the rest of the night.

For the next several nights the dreams got longer and more detailed. He soon knew the name of the city; Dresden, Germany. And the date the flood would occur was August 17, 2002. The dreams stopped, but he could not stop thinking about it. He was never interested in the news from Europe, but as August approached he began to check the news every day. On August 13th there was a flood in Prague. That evening at dinner he told his parents about the dreams and now it looked as if they were coming true. He was still wearing the coin, but he made no connection between the coin and his dreams. It had been almost two months since the last dream.

On the seventeenth the flood hit Dresden hard, causing billions of dollars in damage and killing more than one hundred people. Billy had no idea how he knew about it, but the knowledge frightened him. He was very glad the dreams had disappeared.

Two nights later he had another dream. It took almost a week before he could remember it. The space shuttle would blow up returning from a mission on February 1, 2003.

He talked to his father about it who assured him it was only a dream and he shouldn't be worried about it. But it was more than a dream. The Columbia disintegrated upon entering the Earth's atmosphere at 9:00 that morning.

Billy didn't think much about the coin until after the Columbia disaster. For the next several months Billy had more dreams about the future and they all came true. He dreamed about Earthquakes, fires, snowstorms, and occasionally murders. He began to wonder if he could somehow profit from his dreams of the future. Not all of his dreams were bad. In December 2004 he had a series of dreams about a man named Albert Simpson. In 2035 Albert invents a new energy source that will replace all the current forms of energy being used. It will provide all the power needed for cars, homes, businesses, trucks, ships, and even airplanes. It was self-contained and about the size of a car battery. It worked like a battery too, except it never ran out of power. He didn't know a lot of the details except for one thing; the primary component of the device was a silver alloy rod.

He was sure his dreams were the result of wearing the coin and decided it was time to find out more about it. Billy told his father he wanted a week off to go to New York City. He left the following morning and arrived at the museum in the afternoon. As he approached the information desk an attractive young lady looked up from the desk, smiled, and said, "Good afternoon. How can I help you?"

"Good afternoon. I found this coin a while ago and a coin dealer said it was probably Sumerian. I was wondering if someone here could look at it and tell me something about it." Billy handed her the coin. She looked at it for a few moments, gave him back the coin,

and then said, "I think Dr. Griffin is here today. I'll call him and see if he has the time to speak with you."

"Thank you."

The woman spent several minutes on the phone. Then she looked up at Billy and said, "Dr. Griffin was quite excited about your coin. He'll be here in a few minutes."

A few minutes later a casually dressed man who appeared to be in his mid-thirties walked up to the desk. The woman pointed to Billy and the man walked over. He extended his hand and said, "Hi, I'm Doug Griffin. Brenda said you had a Sumerian coin to show me."

"Yes, I was told it's Sumerian but I'm not sure. Actually, I was hoping you could tell me what it is. By the way, I'm Billy." Then he handed the coin to Dr. Griffin.

Dr. Griffin studied the coin for a minute and said, "Please follow me. Where did you get this?"

"I found it in a hidden compartment in a colonial era cabinet I was restoring."

They walked for several minutes finally arrived at Dr. Griffin's office. They sat at a large, but messy desk. Dr. Griffin had a large lighted magnifier on the desk and he spent several minutes examining the coin. Then he said, "This is definitely Sumerian. It mentions the God Enik. He was, among other things, the God of knowledge. I don't think this is a coin. I think it's some kind of talisman; perhaps to give the wearer some kind of knowledge."

Billy was excited because now he was sure the coin was causing his dreams. He was going to tell Dr. Griffin about them, but instead he decided to ask, "If it's thousands of years old, why does it look new?"

"That's a good question. Let's see if we can figure this out." Dr. Griffin went to a table at the back of his office that had a large digital microscope. He put the talisman on the microscope stand and turned it on. He spent several minutes examining it. Then turned toward Billy and said, with excitement in his voice, "This may be the discovery of the century! I need to check one more thing."

He walked over to a shelf and took down a small device and said, "This thing checks the hardness of materials. I'm sure you know diamonds are the hardest things on Earth. They register 10 on this device."

He proceeded to check the hardness of the talisman. It was 9.7, almost as hard as a diamond.

"This is amazing! The hardest metal we know of is chromium, and it registers only a little over 8. That's why it still looks new."

"So what does that mean?"

"It means all the stories about ancient aliens meeting with the Sumerians may be true. This could be the proof people have been looking for."

All Billy could say was "Wow!"

Dr. Griffin continued, "There's something else I noticed. The rope is not any kind of fabric. It's actually thin strands of metal woven together to form a rope. The talisman looks like it's made with two different kinds of metal, but it's all one piece. It has been cut with something like a laser to form the images on the surface. I have no idea how the outside ring was made to look like copper. If you want to sell it I'm sure the museum would pay you a lot of money for it."

"At this point I have no idea what I want to do. I'm going to have to think about this for a while."

“Okay, I understand. May I take some photographs of it?”

“Sure.”

Dr. Griffin spent the next ten minutes photographing the talisman before giving it back to Billy. He gave Billy his business card and said, “Call me anytime.”

“Thank you for all your help. When I know what I want to do I’ll call.”

Dr. Griffin walked back to the information desk with Billy. They shook hands and Billy left. He started to drive home but decided he wasn’t ready to go home yet. He stopped at a motel, had a nice dinner, and tried to sleep. It was useless, he couldn’t stop thinking about the talisman. He finally got up at 5:00 and drove home.

He never told his parents about his visit to the museum. They had forgotten about the coin a long time ago and he didn’t want to remind them of it.

Dr. Griffin called Billy frequently regarding the talisman, but Billy always told him he wasn’t ready to sell it yet.

In the spring of 2008 two major events happened in Billy’s life. Billy met Marcia, the daughter of one of their furniture clients. She was everything he wanted in a woman. She was smart, pretty, and fun to be with. They fell in love almost immediately. Also, Billy’s father was hurt when a piece of furniture he was working on fell on him and severely injured his back. The family had always been healthy and had no insurance. The surgeries and medical care needed to repair Steve’s back cost more than \$150,000. They didn’t have that much money set aside for medical expenses. With Steve unable to work, Billy had to run the business. He did his best, but he simply could not do the manual labor he had always done and manage the business at the same time. Sales began to slip and that put them into a serious financial bind.

Billy thought about calling Dr. Griffin and selling the talisman, but then he had another dream. This one was about who was going to be the next president of the United States. He had heard about Barack Obama, but he never thought the country would ever elect an unknown, first term, black senator. He desperately needed money, and his dreams had never been wrong. He decided to check the betting odds on Barack Obama winning the presidency. He discovered it was illegal to bet on elections in the United States, but he could place a bet in London. In early May the odds of Barack Obama winning the election was thirty to one. A \$10,000 bet would give him enough money to pay for his father’s medical care and give them some extra cash as well.

He never told either of his parents, but on May 10th he placed a \$10,000 bet on the presidential election. By early October the family was on the verge of bankruptcy. The bank account was almost empty, business was getting better, but was not nearly what it had been. Steve was getting better too. The doctor said he would probably be able to return to work by the beginning of the year.

On November 4, 2008 Barack Obama won the election, and on the following Friday the London casino where he placed his bet transferred \$300,000 to Billy’s bank account. Billy decided not to say anything about his windfall yet.

By Christmas his father was ready to go back to work. Billy handed him a card that morning and inside the card was a cashier’s check for \$300,000. Steve opened the card, looked at the check and asked, “Is this a joke? Where did you get this much money!”

Billy simply said, “I had a dream.”

Marcia was coming over for Christmas dinner, and now that his financial problems were a thing of the past, he decided it was time to ask Marcia to marry him. She agreed immediately.

Billy also decided that day to sell his talisman. He wanted to buy a house for him and Marcia and was sure he would get enough from selling it for the down payment. Besides, he liked the idea of the future being a mystery again.

The following Monday he called Dr. Griffin and told him he was ready to sell the talisman. He also told Dr. Griffin about the dreams. They talked for a while and Dr. Griffin promised to call him soon. Fifteen minutes later he received a call from Dr. Griffin. They agreed to pay Billy \$250,000 for the talisman.

Billy and Marcia went to New York after the first of the year and met with Dr. Griffin. Billy told him more about the dreams, but spent most of the time talking about Albert Simpson's power source. The following day Billy and Marcia went house shopping and Billy began buying silver. He was sure silver would be a good investment because it was the primary component of the power source that would be invented in the future. *

In January 2009 when Billy began buying silver the price was \$12.00 per ounce. Once again the talisman predicted the future correctly. After the invention of the power module the price for silver quickly rose to \$1435.00 per ounce. Billy had managed to purchase six thousand ounces of silver, and he never paid more than \$40.00 per ounce. So, Billy, Marcia, and their four adult children were set for life.

***For more information about the power source in Billy's dream read the *Future World History Trilogy*.**