



# DANIEL McINERNY MEDIA KIT



# ABOUT DANIEL McINERNY



DANIEL McINERNY is a native of South Bend, Indiana; a graduate of the University of Notre Dame (BA English) and The Catholic University of America (MA and PhD Philosophy); and an associate professor of philosophy at Christendom College, where he teaches courses on the Philosophy of Art and Beauty and Ethics and Imagination, among other topics. Daniel is a fiction author, dramatist, and screenwriter. His humorous Kingdom of Patria series for middle grade readers can be found on Amazon. Daniel and his wife Amy have three adult children and one preternaturally adorable grandchild, and they live in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. He imagines a renaissance in popular entertainment fueled by wonder, philosophy, and the quest for the good life at his Substack, The Comic Muse ([danielmcinerny.substack.com](https://danielmcinerny.substack.com)). Learn more about Daniel's work at [danielmcinerny.studio](https://danielmcinerny.studio) and follow him on Instagram and Facebook at [@danielmcinerny\\_thecomicmuse](https://www.instagram.com/danielmcinerny_thecomicmuse), and Twitter at [@comicmuse](https://twitter.com/comicmuse).

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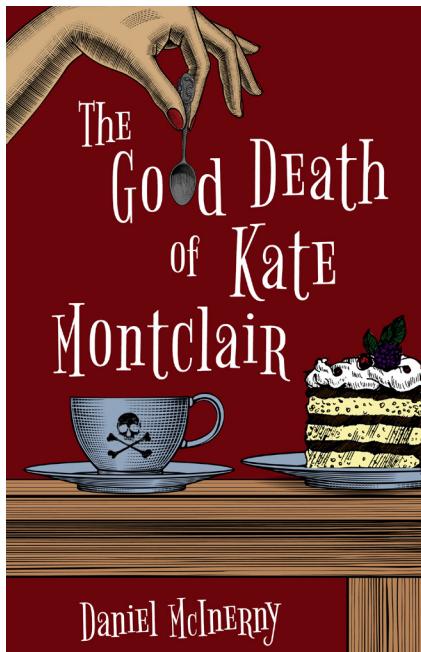
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# THE GOOD DEATH OF KATE MONTCLAIR



**KATE MONTCLAIR IS DYING.** She has arrived at late middle age loveless, childless, and having failed to achieve the career dreams of her youth. Now diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor, she sees the next fourteen months of suffering as an intolerable prospect. Kate is desperate—not only for a miracle cure, but for some sense that her life, and life itself, amounts to something more than a catastrophe.

When she sees an advertisement for the Washington, DC Death Symposium, Kate investigates and learns that the monthly discussion group is led by none other than the idealistic and inimitable Adele Schraeder, an old friend she has not seen since their teaching days in Rome. On Adele's advice, Kate soon decides to break Virginia law with an assisted suicide.

But Adele Schraeder is not the only person Kate reconnects with at the Death Symposium. Also present is Benedict Aquila, another friend from Rome, who has been living in DC while nursing his mother through her final illness. And then there is the strange, mentally ill street woman sitting in the corner, drawing pad in hand. Who is she? She is the Ariadne's thread that will lead Kate on a journey back through the years to her youth, forcing her to come to grips with the love affair she had with a married man and the catastrophe that took his life.

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“Witty, exacting, independent Kate Montclair is a beloved English teacher . . . with a past. When a surprise diagnosis forces her to wrap up her affairs, she’s got it all under control—but has she misread the story of her own life? *The Good Death of Kate Montclair* is an enchanting, page-turning novel with real spiritual depth. An instant classic of 21st century Catholic fiction.”

MAYA SINHA, author of *The City Mother*

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# PRACTICING FOR DEATH WITH ADELE SCHRAEDER

## A FICTIONAL INTERVIEW

*Adele Schraeder is the moderator of the Washington, DC Death Symposium and runs her own shop as a transition celebrant. The following interview was done with her personal assistant, Carly Brownhill, and was intended for publication in Skull & Crossbones, the newsletter of the International Death Symposium movement.*

### **Maybe you could tell those who do not know what the Death Symposium is.**

We live in a culture that sanitizes death, keeps it out of view. The result is that we don't know *how* to speak about it, and we don't *like* to speak about it. Have you noticed that we can't even say the word anymore? Dr. Dean Ashton, a psychologist from my native England, founded the Death Symposium to address our mass repression. That's exactly what it is—repression—and it's killing us. We're neurotically afraid of coming to the end of our lives, and the result is that we fail to live.

### **How can interested people become involved?**

Easy as pie. The Washington, DC Death Symposium meets every first Thursday of the month, seven-thirty p.m., at Cool Beans Coffee, just off Dupont Circle. No ticket or reservation needed. There's a seat at the table for everyone. Just come prepared to have a frank conversation on topics our death-denying culture has sadly made taboo. *How would you like to be buried? What sort of parting ritual would be most meaningful to you? How are you going to decide who gets your stuff? Would you like to be buried with your pet?* But we relax

and get to know one another, too. There is always a break for refreshments. For those who need a proper cup of English tea, we've got you covered.

### **What is your role at meetings of the Death Symposium?**

Merely to stir the pot. Raise this or that topic. Ensure that the participants are respectful to one another. I come in with no agenda. My role is to help others find their own agenda.

### **And what, generally, is the reaction of newcomers to the Death Symposium?**

Relief. Relief that they have found a place where they can talk openly about the most pressing matters in human life. People are so grateful to find this *haven* where they don't have to hide anymore. Where they can say aloud—as is our custom at the Death Symposium—“My name is X, and I'm dying!” We're all dying, you see, and we need to say it out loud.

### **Including saying the word “death” out loud.**

Absolutely. I abhor the euphemisms we use for death in our culture. You so often hear someone say: “So-and-so passed.” Human beings don't *pass*, darling. They are not gall stones. Human beings *die*. Life systems fail and we come to an end, full stop. That is our dignity. And this is our first rule at the Death Symposium: we refer to death by its proper name. No euphemisms. No fear.

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### **Does the Death Symposium have any religious or philosophical association?**

Certainly no religious association. We simply provide a venue for discussion and personal exploration. If there is any philosophical association, it is with the wisdom of Socrates, who believed that to live life well one must *practice for death*. Monks used to lie down in their coffins as a *memento mori*. Not a bad practice, that. If we cannot manage a coffin, we should at least put a skull on the desk next to the computers.

### **How did you become involved with the Death Symposium?**

When my father died, I never saw his body. I was on holiday with a friend in Prague, and by the time I got home the body was already at the morgue. It never occurred to me to ask to see it. I made the decision to cremate him so that I could spread his ashes in the Thames. I thought he would have liked that. But

even at the time I had a sense, a most inarticulate sense, that this was *wrong*. That this wasn’t the proper way to say farewell. Like everyone else, I buried the feeling—pardon the pun—and went on my way, not realizing that my inability to countenance death was stifling my satisfaction with life.

But then I heard Dr. Ashton give a lecture on the origin of the Death Symposium. Immediately, I realized, “*This!* This is what the world is yearning for and doesn’t know it.”

And before I knew it, I had finished my training as a moderator and was spreading the Good News of the Death Symposium to the United States.

### **But you also work as a transition celebrant?**

I see it as an extension of my work with the Death Symposium. I help people envision and plan the celebrations that will mark the most important

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turning points of their lives: weddings, divorces, birthdays and anniversaries and achievements of all sorts. And yes, their deathdays and funerals.

### **What is a “deathday”?**

People who are approaching death need to mark this greatest of life’s occasions *while they are still in the room*. A deathday is the opposite of one’s birthday. It is a celebration of the dying person’s life designed by that person. A birthday simply marks the time. A deathday provides a sense of wholeness and fulfillment.

### **You’re facilitating a very important deathday right now, aren’t you?**

Yes. My dear friend Kate Montclair has terminal brain cancer and is thinking through her deathday liturgy as we speak.

### **How long have you two known one another?**

Since our green girlhood, as Kate likes to say. We met in the mid 1980s, when we were both young teachers at Wildwood International Catholic School in Rome. I was twenty-seven or so. Kate was twenty-two. We taught for only a couple of years together at WIX before Kate went back to the States and I went on my merry way. But we kept in touch. Went on several holidays together over the years. Yet when Kate walked into the Death Symposium that night in September, we hadn’t seen one another in well over a decade.

### **Did Kate tell you right away that she was dying?**

Not right away. But I could tell something was wrong with my Kate the moment I saw her. I didn’t think she

had stumbled into Cool Beans Coffee that evening to talk about death with a group of strangers. I knew she had come to see me. I knew she needed my help. It was only later that I discovered why.

### **What will be special about Kate’s deathday?**

Kate desires to die at her ancestral seat in the Virginia countryside. Her deathday will involve just a few close friends. She is a career English teacher, so there will be readings of her favorite poems as well as passages from her favorite novels. There will be much laughter and the sharing of stories. I see it as a beautiful day. A triumphant day. A kind of peak from which Kate can look back on her life and say, “I lived my choices. Not the life that other people chose for me or expected of me. But my life. Mine. Kate Montclair’s life.”

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## EXCERPT

# EDITOR'S PREFACE

Let the record reflect that I refused this job when first offered—that cold November morning, puffs of mist rising in the mountains like rifle smoke from a Blue-Gray skirmish, as I sat beside Kate on her bed holding her hand.

“You’re going to refuse my dying wish?” she said.  
“That’s cold, dude.”

“I can’t do it, Kate. Ask Adele to do it.”

“I want *you* to do it.”

“I can’t.”

“Why? Is it because you don’t agree with my decision?”

“It’s not that.”

“Then why?”

“Because I’m in love with you, and that doesn’t make me the best candidate for a cold-eyed editor.”

I felt the pressure relax on my hand. “You can’t fall in love with all the dying girls, Benedict.”

“No? Watch me.” I let go of her hand and placed mine gently over hers. “I don’t expect you to say anything, Kate. I just need you to know it.”

“Thank you.”

I looked down at my grubby boots.

“I guess it must be love,” she continued, “because I haven’t showered in four days and I smell like rotten eggs.”

“You’re beautiful.”

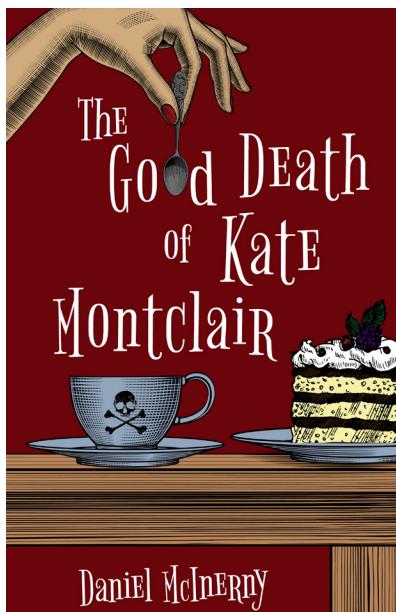
“You’re delusional. Anyway. I’ll have Miranda put the manuscript and a zip drive with the file in the

bottom drawer of my desk downstairs. If you change your mind...”

A few moments later, she added, “I know this is cold comfort, Benedict, but in other circumstances, I would have liked to have given us a try. I’ve enjoyed seeing you again. Playing detective. I appreciate the fact that you didn’t pity me. But the thing is, I have to catch a bus. I’m afraid I’m on a pretty tight schedule.”

Pretty tight indeed. Kate Montclair’s bus departed the next morning, November 2, All Souls Day. Regrettably, I was not present when her death occurred. The reasons for this are complicated and not ones I’m particularly proud of. The thing is, I did disagree with her decision. Not for all the best reasons but simply because I wasn’t ready to let her go. I really was in love with her. Even so, I failed to act as I should have done. I left the house, and for my punishment, I live with the fact that I wasn’t there for her when she needed me most.

No, that’s not right. Kate didn’t need me in the end; she passed out of this world just fine without me, on the terms she had accepted, with dignity and grace. I just wish I had been there beside her, to feed on her impressive fortitude and to let her know that I was with her. When I left Five Hearths, Kate’s house in Fauquier County, I did not take her manuscript or zip drive with me, and I never expected to see her memoir again.



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I did, however, go back to Five Hearths briefly on the afternoon of November 3. I needed to retrieve a bag with my passport in it that I had left in the guest room. As I drove up to the house, I was jarred by the sight of yellow barricade tape across the front door as well as the side door into the mud room and kitchen. I parked my rental car and, with the extra set of keys Kate had given me, opened the side door and slipped underneath the tape into the house. Entering the familiar kitchen, seeing her ROMA apron hanging on the doorknob of the pantry, the thought struck me as it had not yet done with such force:

*She is not here. She is no longer part of this universe, and I will never see her again.*

I went upstairs to get my bag, but both curiosity and grief would not allow me to pass her bedroom without going in. Yet the door was not only closed but locked; I supposed by the police. I found my bag in the guest room and slung it onto the bed. I started rummaging for my passport when I noticed something underneath a pair of jeans. It was the manuscript of Kate's memoir, with the zip drive taped to the front page. Cheeky monkey. I could just see her giving Miranda directions to leave it, not in her office desk downstairs, but here in my bag. I don't know how I might have reacted to this if the events of the day before had not occurred, but now, more than ever, I was determined to have nothing to do with this memoir. When I had found my passport and repacked my bag, I hurried downstairs, tossed the memoir and zip drive onto the desk in Kate's office, and left the house, I thought forever.

My flight from Dulles to Heathrow didn't leave until the next evening, so I spent a sleepless night in a hotel room in Gainesville. I lay in bed through the early morning hours like a shipwrecked sailor, exhausted by the awful business of death. I had been in the States since early in the summer. I had come to be with my mother during her final illness, and after

her burial, while I was still in DC packing up her apartment, I happily reconnected with Kate, only to discover that she too was approaching her last end. It had been a grim six months, full of catastrophe as Kate would say, and I'd had enough. I wanted no part of whatever "final transition celebration" Kate had planned with Adele—such a thing had nothing to do with me. I just wanted to get on a plane.

The next morning, as I was checking out of the hotel, the woman behind the desk informed me that someone had left me a package. She handed me a manila envelope, inside of which was Kate's memoir and zip drive. I glanced around the lobby of the hotel, wondering from what hiding place Miranda was watching me.

"I don't suppose she left a phone number or address?" I asked the woman behind the desk.

"A man left that for you."

"Oh." I smiled wearily. "Of course."

Not having any interest in the memoir but uneasy about throwing it away, I put it with the zip drive on a closet shelf in my London apartment and did my best to forget about it. I never read the thing—never even glanced at it. Kate was going to be part of me for the rest of my life, and I would treasure until my own dying breath those precious days we spent together during her final week, but I refused to spend even one more second with the decision she recounted in her memoir and her desire to publicize it to the world.

I resumed my sere and fugitive existence. I had one or two requests for service to consider, and after the new contracts were signed, I was off again. I spent some weeks in Paris, followed by several months in Spain. By the next September, I was in Scotland, in a market town called Dumfries. I had been brought there by the tottering sanctuary of the thirteenth-century church of St. Teneu, otherwise one of the most intact Romanesque churches in Scotland, which

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I and my team had been commissioned to restore. I had been staying in Dumfries for nearly two months, in yet another Airbnb—a simple but pleasant cottage attached to a larger house owned by a voluble widow named Deborah. Deborah was lonely, and often when I got home in the evening, she poked her head out the door and invited me in for a “wee dram.” She never asked me to wear a mask or whether I was vaxxed. I spent many summer evenings in an easy chair in Deborah’s sitting room enjoying the golden flame of her scotch spreading through me while she talked of her husband, long dead, and her children far way in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and London. I was happy to listen to her—or rather, I was happy to smile and half-listen, for like Deborah, my one comfort was memory. While she spun her stories, I let my memory drift back to those days in Rome, when Kate, Adele, the Codys, and I were young, and to the tragedy that brought us, or offered us at least, a little wisdom. I reflected on how the aftermath of that tragedy had dogged us through the years and into middle age. I thought about how it had brought me to that bedroom in Chappaqua, New York, where once I sat with Veronica Cody and told her that I loved her, and how it had brought me to that other bedroom at Five Hearths, where once I sat with Kate Montclair and, improbably, told her the same.

One September evening, I had just said goodnight to Deborah and returned to the cottage with the nightcap she insisted I take with me when my mobile rang. The caller ID indicated “Unknown Number.” For the past ten months, whenever a call came in from a number I didn’t recognize, my chest seized at the thought that it might be Miranda. I had not heard from her or any report of her since I left the States. The police had alerted homeless shelters and indigent mental health facilities across the Atlantic seaboard and beyond, but no one had reported seeing her. She had gone underground, and this time, though I did

not quite admit it to myself, I reckoned I had lost her forever.

But when I picked up the call, I was greeted by her uncharacteristically bright and cheery voice.

“Heidy-ho, neighbor! What’s going on, Benedict?”

“Miranda? Thank God! Where are you?”

“How’s the editing of Kate’s memoir coming along? It’s got a great plot twist, but you’ll need to write that up. You’ve been working on it, haven’t you? Kate needs that book out, like now.”

“Miranda, where are you?”

“I’d give you three guesses, but it’d be a waste. I’m here again. I’m at Five Hearths.”

Thus began my slow realization that Kate’s story was not yet over. She still had something important she wanted to say, and she needed me, not only to edit her memoir, but to complete it.

What I present before the reader is the full account of Kate’s final illness. Out of necessity, I have had to put the ending in my own words, but by then it was my story, too, mine and Miranda’s and the Codys’ and, of course, Adele’s. In a way, it has been one story all along, the story that has been unfolding since our youthful days in Rome—the story that came to such a foul and joyous resolution in the good death of Kate Montclair.

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