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## **Stranger in Time**

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# **STRANGER IN TIME**

Paul D. Ellner

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## CHAPTER 1

### Guilford, Connecticut, 1790

Daniel Rowland did not know that this day was to be his last in this life. He drove along the Totoket Path, an old Indian trail, which took him to the mouth of the West River, a distance of some seven miles, where the best clams and oysters were to be found. En route he forded Horse Brook, the Neck and East Rivers, and passed the old Griswold House, where he turned on to a path that led to the beach. Daniel's heart was light with the joyful news that Elizabeth was expecting again. The baby would be born next spring.

The weather was beginning to cloud up, and the air had become hot and humid. By the time he reached Turkey Point, the sky had darkened and there was a sultry wind blowing in from the Sound. He tied Nell to a tree, took a rake and sack for the clams, leaving his shoes in the wagon. He walked along the beach towards Leete's Island, whistling tunelessly. The tide was out and finding the shellfish would be easy.

Daniel was the sole surviving offspring of Isaac Rowland. In 1759, Isaac, together with a company of men from Guilford, had marched all the way to Albany, New York, and then on to Vermont to fight the French at Lake Champlain. When Isaac returned from the war the grateful town fathers granted him and each of his fellow soldiers, 18 acres of fine farm land in the Hammonasset Meadows. Daniel's mother had died in childbirth when he was seven. The child was stillborn.

The Revolution started in 1775. Most of the people in Guilford were patriotic, and even those few loyal to King George felt that the newly imposed taxes were grossly unfair. There was little major fighting in Connecticut; a few skirmishes in Stonington, New Haven, and New London. The British were driven from Danbury by colonial troops led by Captain Benedict Arnold.

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In Guilford, the men had built a guardhouse on the coast and maintained a nightly watch of 24 men. Daniel took his turn on the watch, but otherwise he stayed on the farm with his father. Isaac was ailing, and Daniel was needed to maintain the farm. Isaac died in 1779 leaving Daniel the farm and a small amount of money.

Daniel had only dug a few clams when he saw flashes of lightning and heard the first cannonade of thunder. He tried to dig and walk faster, hoping to find enough clams before the storm broke. His attention was drawn to a peculiar cloud that was forming about a mile offshore. It was low over the water, black, with green fringes and frequent flashes of lightning. The cloud was unlike anything Daniel had ever seen. It moved rapidly toward the beach, appearing to roll over the water in his direction.

*I dare not wait here for yonder storm to catch me.* He began to run and was about five hundred yards from the wagon when the cloud reached the beach and swept over him. Daniel was suddenly encompassed by darkness. He could not even see the sand at his feet and was forced to stop running and stand still. It was like being shut in a dark closet. The air around him was hot and moist, and all the hairs on his body stood out. He was frightened and could hardly breathe. A humming sound grew louder and higher pitched, and his whole body was enveloped with a greenish glow. Suddenly there was a tremendous bolt of lightning that seemed to strike him, and he knew no more.

## CHAPTER 2

Earlier that day Daniel had awakened before dawn as he usually did and remained still for a few moments, transitioning from sleep to wakefulness. He had been dreaming; something about a small child. Daniel tried to remember, but already the dream was fleeting. Elizabeth lay on her side close to him, her warm body damp with perspiration. He quietly rolled out of the bed taking care not to disturb her and pulled on his clothes.

Daniel lit a candle and walked out to the humid darkness of the yard. The stars were still visible, and there was a gentle breeze. The cool, damp air was redolent with the mingled odors of hay and manure.

Buttercup was waiting for him at the edge of the field and he led her into the barn. He sat on a low, three-legged stool, resting his forehead against her warm flank, as he pulled on her teats and watched the rich, white fluid spurt into the pail with a musical sound. *I wish we had children to drink this good milk.*

Daniel thought of little Abigail which caused a lump in his throat. *We loved her so much.* He missed the weight of her on his shoulder, her sweet smell and her childish sounds.

Their life had turned dull after the death of the child. He and Elizabeth tried to comfort each other with prayer, but Daniel had an ache in his chest whenever he thought of the baby. He welcomed each day's labor as a diversion from his sorrow, and observed that Elizabeth seemed to be doing the same thing by busying herself with chores. In the evening they both sat quietly; Daniel read and Elizabeth sewed or spun until the twilight faded to darkness and the single candle barely lit the small room. In bed they often clung to each other silently and fell asleep in each other's arms.

Dawn was already beginning to lighten the sky when he turned the cow out to the meadow and checked to see that the six sheep were all there. Nell ambled over to greet him

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with a soft whinny, and he gave her an apple. Daniel loved horses.

*You are important to us, old girl,* he thought patting her neck. *You pull my plow, drag logs, draw the wagon and sometimes even serve me as a mount. Lord knows what we would do without you.*

Daniel's thoughts turned to Elizabeth. He had first seen her at church. She was 18; a slim, pretty girl with blond hair and a face unmarked by smallpox. Daniel sat behind her for several Sundays during the long service before he was able to find a plausible reason to start a conversation with her. His prayer was answered by a sudden gust that blew her bonnet off as she and her parents walked from the meeting-house. He rushed to retrieve it as it rolled along the muddy ground.

"Now truly, miss," he said, returning the hat to her, "I presume this bonnet must belong to you."

"Indeed, sir, I thank you." Her blue eyes twinkled. "I am sure no one has ever chased my bonnet so well." Daniel's ruddy face turned a deeper shade of crimson.

"Now, Elizabeth . . ." her father admonished, seeing Daniel's embarrassment.

"If it is not an indecorum," Daniel managed to say, "I would fain call on your daughter." Her father smiled and nodded his assent.

Daniel was a quiet young man, reticent with strangers, but affable enough with friends and neighbors. At 30, he was well regarded in Guilford as an honest and industrious farmer. His gray eyes looked keenly at whatever he encountered, reflecting the intelligence and kindness within.

Elizabeth's parents favored the relationship, and Daniel began to call on her every Sunday. They were married after a two-year courtship. A year later their cup of happiness overflowed with the birth of Abigail, a beautiful child they both adored.

Daniel sighed and started back to the house.

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The August sun rose in a cloudless sky, heralded by the fanfare of a trumpeting rooster and the cawing of a squadron of crows passing overhead. Elizabeth became aware of the clucking of hens. She opened her eyes and slowly stretched. The smell of new mown hay drifted in through the open window, and a few flies began to buzz around the small room. A wave of nausea came over her, and she lay quietly until it passed. She contemplated the bare walls, the small chest of drawers, and the empty rocking cradle resting in one corner. *Now I am certain. I missed my last monthly and my breasts have grown heavier. I am carrying a child. I must tell Daniel.*

The sickness soon left her, and she rose, put on a linen shift, a calico dress, and went into the main room to prepare breakfast for Daniel. Elizabeth was putting warm johnnycake and a mug of milk on the table when he walked in.

"Good morning, Elizabeth. Another hot day."

"Pray sit down," she said with a smile. "I have news for you."

"Not ill news I trust."

"Nay, I deem it good news." She walked behind his chair and placed her hands on his shoulders. "With God's blessing, I will have a child." Daniel rose and took her in his arms.

"Of a certainty?"

"Verily," she blushed and looked away. "My monthly flow was due three weeks ago." His face lit up.

"Now truly that is the best of news. Let us go tell little Abigail that she will soon have a brother or a sister."

They walked to the small grave behind the house. Daniel picked a bunch of wildflowers and placed them in front of the wooden marker. Together they knelt in silence for a few minutes and then rose, hand in hand to return to the house.

"Daniel, could you mayhap go to the marsh and dig some clams? I had a fancy to make some chowder." He smiled, nodded and went to harness Nell to the wagon.

"Will you come?" he called.

"Nay, the garden wants weeding, and the wretched beetles are devouring the cabbages."



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"Very well, then. I will return before dark."

She waved as the wagon pulled away. *He is so pleased. We need this child.*

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The storm broke shortly after Daniel left. After several hours the storm passed, but he failed to return. Elizabeth waited for Daniel through the night. At first light she walked the few miles to their nearest neighbor who agreed to take her in his wagon to look for Daniel. They found the wagon with Nell still tied up. Daniel's shoes were in the wagon, but there was no sign of him. Later, the neighbor rounded up a small group of town folk to help. They searched the marsh and the beach for several days but found nothing. The storm had washed away any footprints that Daniel might have left. They assumed that in some inexplicable way he had been washed out to sea, but his body was never recovered.

Elizabeth was overcome with grief. She wept as she thought of her fatherless child. She spent a few days with her parents in town where the minister and friends paid condolence calls, but she insisted on returning to the farm. Elizabeth remained there and continued the daily chores until she felt the time was at hand for the baby. She arranged with a neighbor to care for the livestock during her absence, harnessed Nell to the wagon, and drove to her parent's house in town. A week later she went into labor and delivered a healthy boy. She named him Noah.

Elizabeth stayed with her parents for a month and then, despite their advice, returned to the farm with her son. The neighboring farmer harvested her crops and sheared the sheep; Elizabeth cared for Noah, milked the cow, fed the chickens, and tended her garden.

Elizabeth's parents visited almost every week, trying to persuade her to sell the farm and live in town with them where life would be easier. But she was determined to stay.

"This is our Rowland farm," she insisted, "and so it shall remain. That is what Daniel would have wished."

## CHAPTER 3

### Hamden, Connecticut, 2005

Joseph finished the last morsel of his bacon and eggs, and leaned back in his chair. He drank some coffee and briefly regarded the bird activity at the feeder outside the window. He felt calm and content.

"You know, Lin," he told his wife, "this is the first Saturday I've had off since the end of the semester. Why don't we all do something?" Linda looked up from the newspaper she was reading.

"Sounds like a good idea. What do you have in mind?"

"How about a picnic? Drive to the Westwood Hiking Trail over in Guilford, walk to the beach, and picnic there. I'll ask the kids."

Joseph Pellegrini, Ph.D., was a third generation Italian-American. Almost six feet tall, with a thickening waist and a bald spot on the crown of his head surrounded by black hair, he had the appearance of a tall monk. Joseph had been interested in history since childhood. He read every book he could lay his hands on that dealt with history. At City University in New York he majored in History and entered graduate school at the University of Connecticut. His field of specialization was the American Colonial Period.

Joseph and Linda met at the UConn Student Union. She majored in Education and planned to be a teacher. They began dating regularly, often going to The Creamery for ice cream or the Clark House for a hamburger. Joseph and Linda received their degrees at the same commencement exercise; an M.A. for her and a Ph.D. for him.

Two weeks later they were married. Joseph accepted a position as instructor in the History Department of Quinnipiac University in Hamden. Linda found a job as an English teacher at Hamden High School. After a few years, they were

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able to buy a home in Hamden where they raised their children.

Nick and Cathy were on the couch in the den watching cartoons on TV, sharing a bag of tortilla chips. Both wore faded jeans, dirty white sneakers, and sweatshirts. Joseph had to stand directly in front of the TV, blocking it to get their attention.

"Would you guys like to go on a picnic?"

"Where?" Cathy asked. At 14, she demanded to know the details of everything.

"Mom and I thought we might hike the Westwood Trail to the beach in Guilford, and . . ." Nick leaped from the couch, causing his New York Yankee baseball cap to fall off his head.

"Can I drive, Dad? You promised you'd take me out for practice." Nick was preparing to take his driving test, having turned 16 a month ago.

"Well, we'll see."

They traveled east on the Interstate with Nick at the wheel, Linda and Cathy in the back. Nick wore his baseball cap backwards and concentrated intently on his driving. Joseph tried to appear relaxed. They turned off I-95 at the Guilford Exit, passed Bishop's Apple Orchard, and then turned on to Dunk Rock Road that led to the trail.

Nick and Cathy carried the cooler and walked ahead. Linda and Joseph followed with blankets and a jug of lemonade. The trail wound through the marsh toward the beach. As they neared the beach, the trail turned, so that the children were out of sight. Moments later they heard Cathy scream and Nick yelling, "Dad, Dad!"

Joseph and Linda dropped their burdens and raced ahead. The children were standing on the trail pointing excitedly to something on the ground. As Joseph and Linda came up to them, they could see it was the body of a man.

The man lay prone with his arms at his sides. His eyes were closed. Joseph knelt to examine him. The man was breathing but unconscious. Joseph carefully rolled the man over. There did not appear to be any obvious wounds. He was

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young, muscular, dressed in a white vest and close fitting pants that ended at the knees. He wore no shoes. A colonial style three-cornered hat lay on the ground nearby.

"Is he dead?" Cathy asked, clinging to her mother's hand.

"No, he's breathing," Joseph said, "but he's sick or hurt."

"We need to get some help, Joe," Linda said. "I'll call 911. I left my cell phone in the car." She hurried away.

"Why is he dressed like that, Dad?" Nick asked.

"I don't know. Maybe he's an actor in a play or something," Joseph told him.

Ten minutes later, they heard the approaching siren and soon Linda returned leading two paramedics carrying a stretcher. They examined the prostrate figure.

"I don't smell any alcohol on him," one of the paramedics said. "Let's get him to the hospital."

"Where are you going to take him?" Joseph asked.

"Yale-New Haven."

"I'm going to go with them," Joseph told Linda. "I want to learn more about this. I'll see you guys at home."

He followed the paramedics carrying the inert figure back to the ambulance and with lights flashing and siren wailing, they raced toward New Haven.

## CHAPTER 4

The ambulance bearing Joseph and the unconscious Daniel backed into the receiving bay at Yale-New Haven Hospital. The paramedics wheeled the stretcher into the Emergency Room where they were met by a triage nurse. Joseph stood nearby.

"What's the story on this one?" she demanded.

"He was found unconscious in a marsh in Guilford by this gentleman," one of the paramedics said. "No obvious wounds or bleeding. Pulse, respiration, and blood pressure are O.K. We drew a blood sample and started a Coma Cocktail." An IV containing dextrose, thiamine, and Narcan, an antidote for narcotics, was dripping into Daniel's vein.

"O.K." the nurse directed. "Put him in that cubicle."

The paramedics placed Daniel on a bed in a small booth separated from the corridor by curtains. Joseph watched as one of the emergency room physicians began to examine Daniel.

Gradually, as if from a great distance, Daniel became aware of unfamiliar voices.

"Get me a chem-screen," he heard, "blood alcohol and a tox panel, skull films and. . ." The voice trailed off.

Slowly, Daniel's memories began to come back. The beach—digging clams for Elizabeth—the storm—the black cloud. Daniel opened his eyes. At first, everything was blurred. He was in an unfamiliar place. His vision began to clear, and he saw a man standing over him. The man wore a white coat and had tubes coming out of his ears. The tubes were touching Daniel's chest. Another man, wearing strange clothes, stood at the foot of the bed.

"I think he's waking up," the man in white said.

Daniel tried to sit up, but the man in the white coat gently pushed him back down.

"Easy does it. Just stay lying down for a little while."

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*Easy does it? What does that mean?* Daniel looked around. There was a tube running into his arm dripping water from some kind of a bag. *What are they doing to me? Who are they? Where am I? What is happening?* Daniel struggled wildly to get up, but the man in white restrained him.

"Get me some Haldol!" the man in white shouted. A black nurse brought something with a needle and stuck it into Daniel's arm.

Daniel panicked. He continued to struggle and thrash around, but the man in white was leaning on his chest. *They are trying to kill me!* "Please!" he screamed. "Please spare me, I beseech you!" Then, a ringing in his ears, the room began to spin, and darkness overcame him.

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When Daniel woke again he found himself in bed in a large room. Light came from some kind of lamp in the ceiling; daylight from a window. His wrists were tied to the bed. The man in the strange garments approached his bed and smiled at him.

"How are you feeling?" Joseph asked.

"Indeed sir, I am most wretched. Pray tell me what this place is?"

"We're in the Yale-New Haven Hospital."

"Hospital? What is a hospital? And why am I bound?"

"A hospital is a place for taking care of sick people," Joseph told him. "And you were pretty wild in the Emergency Room."

"Pretty wild?" Daniel said. "Your speech is strange."

A black nurse entered the room and attempted to take his temperature with a thermometer that she placed in his ear. Daniel shook his head from side to side. "Lie still now, this won't hurt you," she ordered.

"Is this your slave or indentured servant, sir? Pray tell her to leave me be."

"Can he be untied?" Joseph asked.

"It's O.K. with us as long as he doesn't get violent."

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The nurse left, and Joseph released Daniel from the restraints.

"Truly sir, I am most grateful to you. May I ask your name?"

"Joseph. Joseph Pellegrini. You can call me Joe."

"An unusual name, Joe. And your speech is strange. Are you a foreigner?"

"No, I'm from Hamden. What's your name, and where do you live?"

"My name is Daniel Rowland. I live on my farm in Guilford where my poor wife Elizabeth must surely be distraught waiting for my return. What day is this?"

"It's Friday, the twelfth of June."

"Now truly, friend Joe, that cannot be. When I left my farm this noon it was the ninth of August. Is there a chamber pot beneath the bed? I need to. . ."

"Use the bathroom, Daniel. That door there." Daniel got out of bed a little unsteadily. He had on a hospital gown. He opened the bathroom door and was stunned by the array of porcelain and chrome plumbing.

"Upon my word! What is all this?"

Joseph pointed to the toilet. "Use that."

While Daniel was in the bathroom, Joseph examined Daniel's clothes that were on a chair. The vest was of a fabric that seemed to be linen; the pants had no pockets and were of similar material. There was a pair of short homespun drawers. All appeared to be hand sewn; there were no labels. Tied to the leather belt was a piece of cloth containing two copper coins. They bore the bust of a man wearing a laurel wreath and the words: AUCTORI:CONNEC. The other side of the coins showed the figure of a woman holding a long staff in one hand and an olive branch in the other, with the words: INDE:ET.LIB: 1785. Joseph slipped the coins into his pocket.

Daniel called out from the bathroom, "Sir, this great roll of paper. . ."

"Please use it!" Joseph responded.

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Daniel emerged from the bathroom. He had not flushed. Joseph showed him how to flush and to use the sink.

"This water, sir, where does it come from? Where does it go?" Before Joseph could explain there was a knock at the door. A young doctor entered and addressed Daniel.

"Hi, I'm Doctor Levin. How are you feeling?"

"You need not concern yourself, sir, I am fit save for the confusion and amazement of this place."

"I'm a friend," Joseph volunteered.

"Just a few questions, Mister. . . What is your name?"

"Daniel Rowland."

"Well Mr. Rowland, all your lab tests are fine. Where do you live?"

"My farm is in Guilford."

"Do you have any family?"

"Nay, there is only my poor wife Elizabeth who must surely be worried to distraction."

"Mr. Rowland, do you know today's date?"

"Why, it is the ninth of August."

"What year?"

"Seventeen ninety." Doctor Levin wrote rapidly on his pad. Daniel stared at the ballpoint pen.

"What manner of pen is that?" Daniel asked.

"It's just an ordinary ballpoint."

"Where does the ink come from?" Daniel persisted.

"It's inside the pen. Mr. Rowland, do you know the name of the President?"

"Now truly, the President is George Washington."

"I see. And where is the White House?"

"The White House?"

"Where does the President live?" the doctor asked.

"Bless me, he lives in New York of a certainty. How does the ink get inside the pen?"

"Well, thank you, Mr. Rowland." The doctor turned to leave.

Joseph asked him, "Could I speak to you outside for a minute?"



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In the hall, Joseph asked, "What do you think?"

"Physically he seems to be fine. Mentally—I don't really know. Maybe he's psychotic. He obviously has delusions. I'm not a psychiatrist."

"Is he dangerous? I mean, do you think he would hurt someone?"

"I doubt it. I think he's harmless."

Joseph re-entered the room to find Daniel staring wide-eyed out of the window.

"My God! I dare not look again. We are so high. Those houses—buildings are so huge. The—things on the street below that move so fast. What is this place?"

Joseph gently took Daniel's arm and tried to lead him away from the window.

"It's O.K.—it's all right, Daniel. It's all right."

Daniel was stunned. He could not turn away from the window. Joseph picked up the phone to call Linda. Daniel turned to watch Joseph talking.

"Hi, Lin? Look, I'd like to bring that guy we found home to stay with us for a while. Is that O.K.? Great. Could you pick us up? At the entrance to the Emergency Room. We'll be waiting. Bye."

"Who are you talking to, friend Joe? And what do you hold in your hand?"

"It's a phone. A telephone. I—you can talk to someone far away."

"A wonder!" Daniel said.

"Please put on your clothes, Daniel. You can wear those slippers. I'm taking you home with me for a visit."

While Daniel dressed, Joseph went to the nursing station and checked him out. He returned and took Daniel to stand before the elevator door. Daniel jumped back as the door slid open, but Joseph took his arm and they entered. As the elevator started down, Daniel crouched and yelled. The few people in the elevator turned to stare at him. The elevator made several stops on its way down. Joseph held his arm. By the time they reached street level Daniel was a little calmer.

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Joseph cursed himself for not having explained elevators to Daniel.

Joseph did not know what to make of Daniel. *Is he a homeless person, maybe an alcoholic or a drug addict? Doctor Levin said he was some kind of psycho. But his speech, his complete unfamiliarity with everything, and those coins, is it all an act? Anyhow, he seems harmless and very vulnerable, poor guy.*

Daniel seemed dazed while they stood outside of the Emergency Room.

"So many people! Pray, sir, what are these coaches? How can they move without horses?"

"They have engines that—burn fuel and—make them go."

"For the soul of me I would never have believed it. Now truly, I would to heaven I knew where I am and what is happening to me."

Linda pulled up in the Toyota. Joseph opened the rear door and urged Daniel to get in.

"Daniel, this is my wife, Linda."

"Hi, Daniel," Linda said with a smile as she pulled away from the entrance.

"I am pleased to make your acquaintance, goodwife."

Daniel sat on the edge of the seat, wide-eyed, clutching the front seat with both hands.

"We are speeding very fast," he murmured. Joseph pushed him back gently.

"Relax, Daniel. Sit back and enjoy the ride."

Daniel Rowland, a young farmer from colonial Connecticut, is mysteriously transported through time to the 21st century. Awed by technology and the lightning pace of modern life, he struggles against rejection as an imposter and experiences legal and medical problems. Ultimately, Daniel finds love with a Jamaican girl who befriends him. The novel contrasts present day society and culture with those of the 16th century, and details much of the history of the intervening years.

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