

WHISPER DOWN the LANE

BY CLAY McLEOD CHAPMAN

BOOK CLUB KIT





HELLO, READERS!



Did you ever fib as a kid? I sure did. I remember getting caught in an innocuous lie once when I was younger. It was for something completely harmless, probably my mom wanting to know if I'd brushed my teeth or if I had snitched an extra cookie from the cookie jar. But when I found myself at the crossroads of confessing to this simple fib or doubling down . . . I chose to stand by my lie. At a certain point, the lie ossified into the truth. I believed my own lie. It led to more lies.

The power behind a lie is that at a certain point people will believe it. Even the originator of the lie might begin to believe. And there lies the danger in falsehoods—when they become beliefs.

Whisper Down the Lane is about that alchemy between lies and belief. Where truth no longer matters and lies harden into faith. Here's hoping you enjoy it . . . and that you can hold onto what's real.

—Clay McLeod Chapman

THAT SOUTHERN FLAVOR

Transport your guests to the American South
with a perfect arrangement of foods and drinks.

QUICK SNACKS

Sunflower seeds
Dried peaches
Boiled peanuts
Zapp's or Route 11 potato chips
Cracklins
Ghost pepper chips
MoonPies
Goo Goo Clusters

FANCY APPETIZERS

Cheese straws
Deviled eggs
Fried pickles
Bourbon balls
Pralines
Fried okra
Fried green tomatoes
Hush puppies
Seitan bites
Pimento cheese (and crackers)
Devil's food cake
Peanut butter pie

REFRESHING BEVERAGES

Sweet tea
Cheerwine
Royal Crown Cola
Peanuts and Coke



SATANIC PANIC PLAYLIST

Ward off the devil with this mix of Satanic Panic– and *Whisper Down the Lane*–themed songs, curated by author Clay McLeod Chapman. Listen to this playlist at spoti.fi/3n4wbQk or use these tracks as a starting point for your own playlist!

“Raining Blood” by Tori Amos

“Don’t Shake Me Lucifer” by Roky Erickson

“Satan Is Real” by The Louvin Brothers

“Devil Inside” by INXS

“Devil Throw Roses” by Shayfer James

“Evil Eye” by Franz Ferdinand

“Me and the Devil Blues” by Robert Johnson

“Way Down in the Hole” by Tom Waits

“Montero (Call Me by Your Name)” by Lil Nas X

“Stairway to Heaven” by Led Zeppelin

SATANIC PANIC TRIVIA

Test how well your group knows the '80s, and break the ice with these trivia questions.

1. What popular “nonfiction” book, written by psychiatrist Lawrence Pazder and his patient Michelle Smith that recounted Michelle’s satanic ritual abuse and recovered memory, helped kick off the Satanic Panic era?
2. What trial, which ran from 1983 to 1990, is widely regarded as one of the earliest criminal Satanic Panic trials?
3. What popular children’s cartoons did author Phil Phillips and pastor Gary Greenwald suggest were teaching kids witchcraft? Was it . . .
 - A. *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*
 - B. *ThunderCats*
 - C. *The Smurfs*
 - D. *Rainbow Brite*
 - E. *Care Bears*
 - F. All of the above
4. What heavy metal band was sued for \$6.2 million by parents who alleged their child had attempted suicide due to satanic lyrics and subliminal phrases such as “do it” and “let’s be dead” hidden in their songs?
5. What popular tabletop game allegedly led to the disappearance of James Dallas Egbert III in 1979 due to its satanic undertones?
6. Follow-up question: What is the name of the made-for-TV movie based on James Dallas Egbert III and his mysterious affinity for this pagan tabletop game, starring none other than Tom Hanks in his first lead role?
7. In 1982, what company (hint: the makers of Pampers diapers) found themselves fielding so many calls claiming their logo was secretly a mark of the devil that they had to set up a press conference to deny it?
8. What popular '60s sitcom had two evangelists in 1986 claim that when you played the theme song “A Horse Is a Horse” backward, you could hear satanic messages like “The Source Is Satan”?
9. What is the name of the sensationalist journalist who made a two-hour special for NBC to draw attention to Satan worshippers in 1988?
10. What famous fast-food chain had to publicly announce in 1978 that its franchise founder was not a financial supporter of the Church of Satan?

1) *Michelle Remembers*; 2) The McMartin preschool trial; 3) F. All of the above; 4) *Judas Priest*; 5) *Dungeons and Dragons*; 6) *Mazes and Monsters*; 7) Procter & Gamble; 8) Mr. Ed; 9) Geraldo Rivera; 10) McDonald's

DISCUSS WHISPER DOWN THE LANE!

Review the following questions to help jump-start conversation about *Whisper Down the Lane*.

1. *Whisper Down the Lane* is based on a true-crime event known as the McMartin preschool trial, which kicked off the Satanic Panic era of the 1980s. If you're familiar with the event, how did you see it reflected in this novel?
2. Storytelling and memory are two important themes in *Whisper Down the Lane*. What do you think the book is ultimately trying to convey about the act of storytelling and recounting history?
3. There are many parallels between Richard's and Sean's storylines. Which ones stood out to you, and why?
4. Chapman connects the anxiety parents felt during the Satanic Panic to the anxiety parents feel today. How did you respond to this comparison? Do you agree or disagree with it?
5. There are many Easter egg references to classic horror novels and movies sprinkled throughout the book. Which ones did you catch? What do you think Chapman is trying to convey with these references?
6. Richard's storyline is told from the first-person point of view, and Sean's is told from the third-person point of view. Why do you think Chapman made this choice? How did this impact your perception of each character?
7. Sean tells his initial lie because he thinks it's what his mother wants to hear. What did you think about this explanation? Did your opinion change once it became clear Richard was narrating Sean's story?
8. At times, Richard wonders if he was responsible for the incidents at the Danvers School. Why do you think he suspected himself? Did it make you reconsider Richard's version of his own story?
9. The letter at the end of the novel gives an explanation for the events we've witnessed in Richard's storyline. Do you sympathize with this explanation? Do you question it?
10. Discuss this novel in the context of other novels, movies, and TV shows about mass hysteria and large-scale conspiracies. How is Chapman's depiction of this phenomenon similar to or different from other pop culture depictions? Do you think it was successful in conveying how and why people get swept up in conspiracy theories?



PRINTABLE *WHISPER DOWN THE LANE* BOOKMARK!

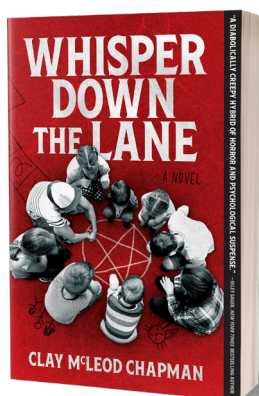
Print this sheet for a double-sided *Whisper Down the Lane* bookmark! Cut along the dotted lines, fold in half where marked, and tape & trim to your taste.

Cut here.



Fold here.

LEARN MORE ABOUT **WHISPER DOWN THE LANE**!



“A diabolically creepy hybrid of horror and psychological suspense that thrills as much as it unsettles. You’ll keep turning the pages even as your hands shake.”

—Riley Sager, *New York Times*

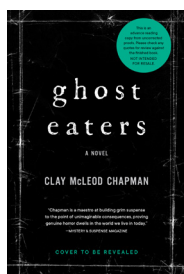
best-selling author of *Home Before Dark*

Now in paperback, a pulse-pounding, true-crime-based horror novel inspired by the McMartin preschool trial and Satanic Panic of the '80s.

Richard doesn't have a past. For him, there is only the present: a new marriage, a first chance at fatherhood, and a quiet life as an art teacher in Virginia. Then the body of a ritualistically murdered rabbit appears on his school's playground, along with a birthday card for him. But Richard hasn't celebrated his birthday since he was known as Sean . . .

In the 1980s, Sean was five years old when his mother unwittingly led him to tell a lie about his teacher. When school administrators, cops, and therapists questioned him, he told another. And another. And another. Each was more outlandish than the last—and fueled a moral panic that engulfed the nation and destroyed the lives of everyone around him.

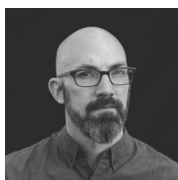
Now, thirty years later, someone is here to tell Richard that they know what Sean did. But who would even know that these two are one and the same? *Whisper Down the Lane* is a tense and compulsively readable exploration of a world primed by paranoia to believe the unbelievable.



Keep an eye out for Chapman's latest horror thriller

GHOST EATERS

coming in Fall 2022!



Clay McLeod Chapman writes novels, comic books, and children's books, as well as for film and TV. He is the author of the horror novels *The Remaking* and *Whisper Down the Lane*. Visit him at claymcleodchapman.com.