

Scott Morro's latest young adult novel is about hidden treasure in Bethlehem!

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Bethlehem is the location of Bethlehem resident Scott Morro's sixth novel, [The Washington Pursuit](#) (2020).

My Young Adult novels are set here in Bethlehem for very specific reasons. Though I was born and raised in Nazareth, Bethlehem is my home now. It's where I've lived for the past 24 years . . . where I've raised my family and put down roots. My wife is a Bethlehem native, and we decided to live here once we were married. The vibe this town gives off, the fabric holding Bethlehem together, is woven into the DNA of everyone who visits or calls this place home. The downtown area is filled with history, legends, lore — what's not to love? I'm proud of where I live. Such buildings as The Sun Inn, the Gemeinhaus, the Brethren's House, God's Acre Cemetery . . . you can just feel the past when you cross the thresholds of these special places. They get under your skin and grab a hold of you and don't let go. There's so much to see and experience here — I want to celebrate that in my books. Bethlehem doesn't need my help promoting itself. But I want to do for Bethlehem what Ian Rankin has done for Edinburgh . . . what Dennis Lehane has done for Boston . . . make the city a living, breathing entity. Major cities like Philly, Chicago, LA, New York seem to get all of the literary love. I want to bring that feeling, that exposure here. I write about places I'm vaguely familiar



with. Before writing, I have a general idea of where the story will take place, why the settings are important, and how they help breathe life into the book. After the first draft is written, I'll take tours of places in the books to make sure what I remember is accurate. Accuracy is important to me. I want the locations on paper to reflect the actual structures in real life. Yes, I've made minor tweaks to locations and buildings — I needed to in order to make my plot work. But I carefully, methodically try to portray the spaces here and in every novel as accurately as possible.

In *The Washington Pursuit*, Freedom Middle School student Ernie seeks the “Moravian Enigma,” an elusive treasure stolen by the British, recovered by George Washington’s troops at the Battle of Brandywine, and not seen since — a treasure that consumed his mother’s thoughts, and when she failed to uncover it, she lost her purpose in living. Here Ernie and his friend Bobby ponder the last clue to the treasure’s whereabouts, a clue that leads them to the Sun Inn.

Excerpt from *The Washington Pursuit* (2020):

Rick finished describing the history of the area to the group, and we spread ourselves out to survey our new surroundings. Bobby and I nodded to each other, grateful for the opportunity to sit and ponder our latest bit of evidence, while the others scattered like aimless snowflakes.

Finding a bench nearby, we sat and read the clue again.

*Beneath the sun in Bethlehem,
Where Washington laid his head,
Lie the riches of those men
Who in Brandywine now lay dead.*

“Bethlehem doesn’t have a gigantic sun. It’s got a star.” Bobby said, puzzled.

“I know. I’ve been wondering about that, too. I mean, Bethlehem is the Christmas City. That star atop South Mountain can be seen for miles, and it’s constantly lit, but there’s no way Jonathan Stockwell would have known about that. He was dead and buried by the time electricity was invented, well before that star was mounted on the hill.”

“Maybe Washington and his men camped out on the hill where the star is, and the Brandywine treasure is buried there. I mean, it’s the highest point in the area, and when the sun is high in the sky, it certainly looks like it rests on top of the mountain. Maybe Stockwell’s clue has nothing to do with the Christmas star, just the area atop the mountain.” Bobby was grasping at straws, but at least he was trying.

“I thought of that, too,” I replied. “But all of the other clues had one thing in common, one central theme running through each of them.”

“Yeah. . . .” Bobby said, still not fully understanding.

“Each clue, each place, was somehow associated with the Moravians. Whether it was the church, the college, whatever. The next clue would have to be linked with the Moravians, too, dont’cha think? I know the star is definitely Moravian, but it’s modern, not historic like the others.”

Bobby nodded, the full weight of my explanation saturating his senses like a flooding river. Other members of our group sloshed by on their way to other parts of the cemetery. Rick was chatting on his cell phone, and my thoughts melted into the quiet surroundings. A few snow geese flew overhead while the soothing hum of traffic lulled me into a daydream.

I thought of Jonathan Stockwell again, and his passion for puzzles. I thought of my mother and her unending desire to solve the mysteries Jonathan Stockwell set upon the Lehigh Valley. I thought of my father and his beer cans. I thought of journals and clues, of bell towers and ancient drums.

I thought of bishops and brethren, of professors and pamphlets.

Pamphlets . . .

Beneath the sun in Bethlehem . . .

I snapped back to reality, rummaging through my backpack with a feverish purpose and intensity.

“What’s the matter, Ernie?” Bobby said, his words laced with surprise.

“Where’s the pamphlet Rick gave us when the tour started?”

“The pamphlet . . . why do we need that? We’re looking for a sun, remember?”

“I remember,” I said sarcastically. “But if you show me that pamphlet, I’ll show you the sun.”

*Scott Morro has written **six Young Adult novels**: *Last Ups* (2005), *The Cross Over* (2006), *Danni’s Gift* (2008), *What’s Brewing in Boston* (2009), *Fortunate* (2018), and *The Washington Pursuit* (2020). Scott was born in Nazareth, lives in Bethlehem with wife Lisa and sons Connor and Ryan, and is in his 26th year as a 6th grade English teacher at DeFranco Elementary School in Bangor. The Morro family has a strong Bethlehem connection: Scott, Lisa, and Connor are all Moravian College graduates. History, humor, and the struggles of growing up lie at the heart of every Morro novel. Born in Nazareth, living in Bethlehem, Scott’s love of history comes naturally. He’s researched the Moravians, and he even contributed royalties from one of his novels to the Nazareth Moravian Church to help combat the chronic vandalism of Indian Tower, a Northampton County and Moravian Historical Society landmark. Scott makes frequent appearances at schools, book clubs, libraries, and reading conventions. *The Washington Pursuit* is his second novel with **Creators Publishing**, a classy publishing house with a perfect family, small-town feel. Stay in contact with Scott at <https://scottmorro.com/> and <https://www.facebook.com/scott.morro>.*

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