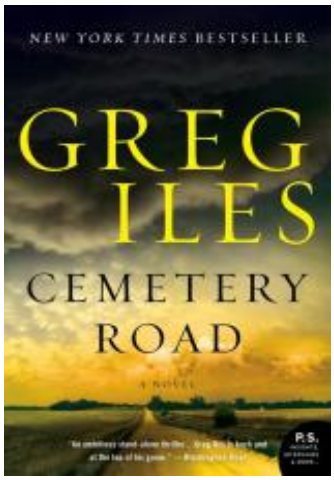
Cemetery Road

by Greg Iles



About the Book

The #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of the *Natchez Burning* trilogy returns with an electrifying tale of friendship, betrayal and shattering secrets that threaten to destroy a small Mississippi town.

When Marshall McEwan left his Mississippi hometown at 18, he vowed never to return. The trauma that drove him away spurred him to become one of the most successful journalists in Washington, DC. But as the ascendancy of a chaotic administration lifts him from print fame to television stardom, Marshall discovers that his father is terminally ill, and he must return home to face the unfinished business of his past.

On arrival, he finds Bienville, Mississippi, very much changed. His family?s 150-year-old newspaper is failing; and Jet Talal, the love of his youth, has married into the family of Max Matheson, one of a dozen powerful patriarchs who rule the town through the exclusive Bienville Poker Club. To Marshall?s surprise, the Poker Club has taken a town on the brink of extinction and offered it salvation, in the form of a billion-dollar Chinese paper mill. But on the verge of the deal being consummated, two murders rock Bienville to its core, threatening far more than the city?s economic future.

An experienced journalist, Marshall has seen firsthand how the corrosive power of money and politics can sabotage investigations. Joining forces with his former lover --- who through her husband has access to the secrets of the Poker Club --- Marshall begins digging for the truth behind those murders. But he and Jet soon discover that the soil of Mississippi is a minefield where explosive secrets can destroy far more than injustice. The South is a land where everyone hides truths: of blood and children, of love and shame, of hate and murder --- of damnation and redemption. The Poker Club?s secret reaches all the way to Washington, D.C., and could shake the foundations of the U.S. Senate. But by the time Marshall grasps the long-buried truth about his own history, he would give almost anything not to have to face it.

Discussion Guide

1. Discuss the circumstances that drove Marshall McEwan away from his home in Bienville, Mississippi. How does his past prepare him for his career as a top journalist in Washington, D.C.?

2. The drowning death of Marshall?s older brother, Adam, was a major tragedy that led to the divide between Marshall and his father, Duncan. Do you think that Marshall names his son Adam to memorialize his brother or to antagonize his father, or both?

3. Marshall compared the drama he experienced in Bienville to John Berendt?s novel, MIDNIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF GOOD AND EVIL. What examples does he provide for such a comparison? Do you agree that this is a good comparison?

4. When Marshall returns to Bienville and sees his now-terminally ill father, do you believe that decision was based on his desire to finally reconcile with his father, or does he see the visit as potential news fodder to further his journalistic endeavors?

5. When Adam also dies tragically, do you feel that event is supposed to signify a cruel case of karma, or is it the one factor that helps Marshall in his decision to face his father?

6. What role does the Poker Club play in both the history of Bienville and that of the McEwan family? Describe the stronghold it has over the town and how that may lead to an eventual confrontation spurred on by Marshall's return.

7. Buck Ferris was a friend and mentor to a young Marshall. His job as an archaeologist may have led to his murder. Talk about what Buck was hired to do, and how that digging made him a target of the Poker Club.

8. What role does the company from China play in this novel? Are they as culpable as the Poker Club for Buck?s death? Why does Marshall find that the majority of the town is willing to look past the murder of his friend in deference to the land deal made between the foreign company and the Poker Club?

9. Marshall takes over the local newspaper that his father had started specifically as a weapon against the Poker Club and to seek justice for Buck. With the entire town seemingly against him, he finds only one friend in town: Nadine Sullivan, the owner of the local bookstore. How would Marshall benefit from her friendship? Did you appreciate that there was a bookseller in this role?

10. Another difficulty is that one of Marshall's old girlfriends, Jet, is now an attorney. It is not her career but her husband that causes problems. Jet is married to Paul Matheson, the son of a major Poker Club member. Discuss this tangled triangular relationship. Who is Paul to Marshall, and why does their past history make things even more difficult for all involved?

11. What role does Jet and Paul's teenage son, Kevin, play in this novel? How does his existence make for far deeper troubles between his own family and Marshall?

12. CEMETERY ROAD seems to have set up a handful of inevitable confrontations. Discuss the following: the

reconnection of Marshall to Duncan as Duncan nears the end of his life; the complicated relationship and long-overdue clearing of the air between Marshall and Paul; and the big showdown between Marshall and the Poker Club, and how the end result of that impacts all of Bienville.

Author Bio

Greg Iles spent most of his life in Natchez, Mississippi. His first novel, SPANDEAU PHOENIX, was the first of many *New York Times* bestsellers. His *Natchez Burning* trilogy continued the story of Penn Cage, the protagonist of THE QUIET GAME, TURNING ANGEL and #1 *New York Times* bestseller THE DEVIL'S PUNCHBOWL. Iles? novels have been made into films and published in more than 35 countries. He was a member of the lit-rock group The Rock Bottom Remainders. Iles passed away in August 2025 at the age of 65 following a long battle with multiple myeloma.

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