



ROBERT R HAMLYN

The Story
Of One
Peter
Cleague

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“Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women. When it dies, no constitution, no law, no court can save it.”

Judge Learned Hand
Central Park, New York City, May 21, 1944.

“A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”

James Madison,
The Second Amendment to The Bill of Rights to the
Constitution, Ratified 1791

“... Madison did not invent the right to keep and bear arms when he drafted the Second Amendment—the right was pre-existing at both common law and in the early state constitutions.”

Thomas B. McAfee & Michael J. Quinlan, writing in the
North Carolina Law Review, March 1997

*“All that is necessary for evil to succeed is
for good men to do nothing.”*

Edmund Burke, 1729 – 1797 (common attribution)

This is a novel. It is a work of fiction assembled from my imagination. The characters are composite inventions and if they bear any resemblance to any real person living or dead, it is entirely co-incidental. Peninsular Island, Washington, does

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not exist. Port Cullis, Washington, does not exist. The 603rd Coast Artillery Battery did not exist. There is no Alders restaurant in Seattle. As of this writing the prohibitions of Brady II and the Arsenal Codes are fictional elements of this novel. Under no circumstances should the reader assume that this novel condones doing harm to government employees or to anyone else. This novel is provided solely for your entertainment.

Have fun,
R HAMLYN

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The November wind came off the ocean as a mild breeze. It blew through the dried sea grass, huckleberry, and weeds that covered the south end of the island. Peter Cleague jogged south along the sandy road from his house about a mile down to the bridge that joined the little peninsula-made-island community to the rest of the county. During World War II the Army Corps of Engineers dug a boat channel to enhance the logistical capacity of a military outpost located on the peninsula. It was Cleague's habit to take a casual jog every other day, swim in the summer (when it was warm enough), or ride his bicycle, or paddle his kayak around the island. He joked with his neighbors that he was in training for the Olympics: the Geriatric Division.

Today was his forty-fifth birthday. He smiled and gave a casual wave to the occupants of the sedan pulled off the road and facing north. As he passed their car and turned to call to Max, his Norwegian Elkhound, he noted the distance from the car to his house—about a hundred yards. He continued on toward the bridge and crossed over the strand just north of it. Scratching his legs on the short unyielding nettle plants as he passed, he made his way through the tough sea grass, onto the shingle beach down to the tide line where the wet pebbles were smaller. He made a point of wearing high top sneakers that covered his ankles when he ran on the cobbled surface. The higher up the intertidal zone, the bigger the stones got. Running on the beach did not seem to bother the dog; all was well other than the dark, heavy clouds from the northwest that threatened rain. Peter did not want to get caught in a downpour. The shingle strand was littered with the typical flotsam and timbers that settled on the beaches of the interior islands of Puget Sound.

Max stayed with him most of the time until he got bored and trotted off to investigate an interesting scent or examine a curious movement off Cleague's routine, and for the most part, predetermined jogging trail. Cleague ran north on the beach parallel to the hillocks, rocks and gravel backfill that formed the barrier between the rocky shoreline and the interior island. When he got about a hundred yards away from his little house on the beach, Cleague visually scanned the shore line to his left and caught a flash of reflected light low on the crest of one of the hillocks almost directly to his left. He ran on without breaking stride and remembered a T-shirt slogan with some irony: "If you try to out-run a bullet you only die tired."

As Cleague ran parallel to the barrier that obscured the view of his house from the water line, Max nonchalantly passed him in an effortless gait, stopped and stuck his nose into the rocky sand close to the water, pawed at some invisible sand vermin, and ran back passing Cleague at a furious gallop, splashing him with cold salt water.

Max seemed to enjoy being spiteful at times for no apparent reason. *It must be part of his Viking heritage*, Cleague reasoned. The dog then condescendingly joined Cleague once again as they made their way from the waterline to the end of the barrier, and again jetting away from him toward the house, out of sight. Cleague found this curious, Max usually ran off in the opposite direction from which Cleague was headed. Cleague came to the end of his two-mile run and walked toward his house when he saw who had captured Max's interest.

Her car was parked at the end of the gravel drive. She was leaning against the quarter panel of her rental car fawning over the dog. She saw Cleague and stood up tall and straight. With her sunglasses atop her head, hair tight in a ponytail, her

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leather jacket open despite the November chill, gray sweatshirt and comfortable faded jeans, she grinned from ear to ear as she watched him make his way toward her with carefully measured self-control.

John W. Luther had been summoned at an ungodly hour that morning to meet the Attorney General of the United States and the Director of the Bureau of Public Safety at Andrews Air Force Base. It took less than an hour for Luther to drive from his home in Arlington, Virginia to Prince Georges County, Maryland. The three of them shared a ride in a Lear Jet to McChord Air Force Base, Washington. A short shuttle trip by vehicular conveyance transported them to Gray Army Airfield, Fort Lewis, Washington. En route from Andrews AFB, the AG's party had notified and tasked Command Group, I Corps, to provide transportation support.

Luther was a senior investigator for the Department of Justice and as he surveyed the scene before him some things simply did not square with the information he had been given at his initial meeting with the AG that morning. *Why was all the Military equipment here? Why was a full-scale special-operations assault team necessary for somebody who was allegedly making firecrackers in their shed?* Luther mused. *If the BPS initial press release had been correct, why had a news crew been invited to film the suspect's arrest if it was only about fireworks?* Somebody on the government's side was going to have to get their story straight and soon. This thing had the hallmarks of a potential civil liberties calamity.

Drawing on what he had already been told and on what he could see around him, John Luther was able to assess the following: apparently the press was at hand when the BPS came in to arrest this person of interest, one Peter Cleague. This meant that the press had notice of the arrest, and of the case, and what the government was going to do some time prior to the arrest. And it was leaked by the government to the

press so the press could be on hand, which may have been in violation of Federal criminal laws that deal with privacy.

Well, at least he didn't have to write the damned thing. But he couldn't escape the feeling of waiting for the other shoe to drop. Although he had not yet been told, John Luther knew why he was here.

The three VIPs had borrowed a walkie-talkie from the deputy to allow them to monitor radio traffic as they toured the area. They followed the crime scene tape to its end and then continued on beyond it. The forensic techs were still trying to determine how much of the area was actual "crime scene" and they had not yet decided where to establish the outside boundaries of last night's incident. As the three men walked slowly around the debris of what had been a house back toward the road which bordered the property, Luther suddenly stuck his arm out in front of the Attorney General who had been surveying the scene, sweeping his gaze from horizon to horizon, trying to take it all in.

"Watch your step, sir." Luther advised firmly preventing the AG from making any further forward movement. "We probably shouldn't be walking this close to the debris, sir." Luther prudently suggested.

"Oh, and why is that Mr. Luther?" the AG responded. Luther simply indicated with a nod of his head at what lay in the AG's path.

"What the hell is that?" the AG responded with a curt inquiry.

"It appears to be part of an animal, sir, maybe a dog of some sort. The rest of the area seems to be covered in internal tissue, sir. Probably human," Luther surmised. Surveying the area from where they stood, given their proximity to the house debris to the road, speckles and globules of glistening pink, gray and white bits of an as yet undetermined substance

or substances dotted their path. The larger identifiable pieces of anatomy: hands, lengths of bone, tangible bits of muscle, etc., had already been tagged and plotted, later to be removed.

“Hey, you three, get the hell out of there! This is a crime scene, goddamn it.” The man wearing the raid jacket emblazoned with the BPS logo on its back could immediately be heard on the walkie-talkie demanding to know why that sheriff’s deputy had let these three tourists into his crime scene.

“Jesus Christ!” The AG was seldom given to such public display. “What the hell happened here last night? I fail to believe that federal agents died serving an arrest warrant for a two-bit gun law violation.” The AG exclaimed, clearly out of very real frustration at what he saw before him. Luther’s ears pricked up at this first indicator of what this whole mess had been about, but he had yet to be briefed.

“Luther,” the AG commanded in a sharp staccato, “...As of now you are in charge of this investigation. I want a complete and thorough report. Thorough. And I want it before the scale of this debacle gets leaked to the press.”

Too late for that, Luther thought.

“This is all I need right now with Congress in summer recess in an election year. And with the Constitutional Convention coming up this year!” the AG proclaimed.

“Yes, sir. I understand.” Luther started “...I’m going to need...”

“Fine, do it. Just get it done.” The AG cut him off. “You have my authorization. You will report directly to me, understand?” the AG nearly barked.

“Yes, sir,” Luther simply replied. With that the AG turned on his heel and made way for the deputy’s patrol vehicle, making little muffled retching noises as he began to recognize some of the body parts he had been treading upon

thus far in his sojourn through the aftermath of “Operation Clean Sweep.” The Director of the BPS and John Luther shared a look as the Attorney General of the United States receded toward the deputy’s Ford Expedition.

The Bureau of Public Safety was an agency within the Department of the Interior, but the Attorney General could, as the senior law enforcement officer of the US, conduct an investigation regarding any branch of the cabinet, and suspend individuals from duty pending that investigation’s outcome. If circumstances warranted the Attorney General could appoint a special counsel. But first a preliminary fact-gathering process would be conducted to determine if the appointment of a special counsel was required. Although it had not been said, Luther knew that the results of his investigation would form the basis for the AG’s decision of whether or not to appoint a special counsel. Careers could be toppled. Fiefdoms could be vanquished. Luther could make a lot of enemies, all depending on what he committed to the report in the course of his preliminary investigation. As far as Luther was concerned, the AG’s decision was irrelevant; his job was to conduct an investigation and report his findings.

The Director of the BPS simply arched an eyebrow and gave a little shrug.

“Well, I’ll leave you to your investigation, Mr. Luther. Keep in touch.”

“Yes, sir.” John Luther was not insensitive to the director’s droll wit. Luther was simply doing his best to keep from being overwhelmed with the immensity of the task that lay before him, as he surveyed the remnants of “Operation Clean Sweep.”

Alexander Sherman watched the streamer crawling across the bottom of the TV picture. According to the ticker on the bottom of the screen, at the behest of the majority of the states, the United States Congress would meet in special session to convoke a Constitutional Convention, the purpose of which would be to repeal the Second Amendment.

The main image of the television screen showed the Speaker of the House and The Senate Majority Leader on the steps of the Capitol announcing to the press that the recommendation to convoke a Constitutional Convention had been sent to the President of the United States, while the streamer at the bottom of the picture continuously proclaimed the vote to hold the Constitutional Convention.

Alexander Sherman was from Idaho. He was just about two-thirds of the way through his second, and he had decided, last term in the Senate. He had never considered himself naïve, but now he could concede that maybe he had been just a touch idealistic in believing that he could make a difference. Once again the Capitol was awash in scandal. Influence peddling, pay to play, quid-pro-quo, the names changed from session to session but it was always the same—everybody in government seemed to have a price. He had grown tired of the realpolitik. What had he been thinking?

The American electorate had grown weary of the serial antics coming out of the nation's capitol on a seasonal schedule. The mood of the people that put the Congress in office could be described as monumental ambivalence at best. The common wisdom held that if you scratched a politician, you'd get a liar. Politicians are liars, liars are politicians: simple as that. Why would anybody vote for a professional liar? Sherman resented deeply the notion that he should be

thought a liar just because he ran for office. Then he looked at the TV screen again. He could see how the public had come to its conclusion. When Sherman took his oath of office he promised: “I, Alexander Sherman, do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God.” That was the oath he took and that was the oath in which he believed.

And there stood the congressional leadership on the steps of the capitol, gaily announcing that they were going to host a party to rip the Second Amendment out of the fabric that formed the nation. It made his chest ache. From his vantage point in his second term he could see that the scandals were merely symptomatic of something deeper: the legislative body, this branch of government called the Congress had lost its sense of direction, its moral compass had been irreparably broken and tossed away.

Sherman thought about all those people: other Senators, staff members, the endless parade of lobbyists and buttonholers, and everybody who thought they could extract a buck out of the saturated sponge that was the Federal Treasury by using him as the sieve. They were taking money in exchange for favors and were enticing him to do the same. *Fucking whores*, he thought, not that anyone in his party had a monopoly on morality. As practiced in the Capitol, morality seemed to be a moving target.