

IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

L.D. Beyer



OLD STONE MILL
Publishing

This is a work of fiction. The events that unfold within these pages as well as the characters depicted are products of the author's imagination. Any connection to specific people, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

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Cover design by Lindsey Andrews

ISBN: 978-0-9963857-1-8



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Battle Creek, MI

<http://www.ldbeyer.com>

For Mona, who patiently supported my follies from the very beginning

*NEARLY ALL MEN CAN STAND ADVERSITY,
BUT IF YOU WANT TO TEST A MAN'S CHARACTER,
GIVE HIM POWER.*

- Abraham Lincoln

PROLOGUE

September

As the clay disk sailed out of the trap house, the president swung his gun, tracking the target. A gentle squeeze of the trigger and the target exploded, nothing left but dust in the air.

One for one.

The Secret Service agent standing ten feet behind him nodded. President Thomas Walters was a life-long member of the NRA and former winner of the Marines' Expert Marksmanship Badge. The man was lethal with a gun.

It was a typical fall day for northern Maine. The morning sun had just cleared the tree line but wasn't yet strong enough to burn away the fog seeping out of the woods. Although the air was chilly, the president and his entourage of agents didn't seem to mind. Trap shooting was something that the many demands of his office prevented the president from enjoying as often as he would have liked. The way he looked at it, he could escape for a few moments while his Secret Service detail enjoyed a change of scenery. Besides, today it seemed the foliage was at its peak. The red, orange, and yellow leaves, together with the scent of autumn, reminded him of hunting trips with his father long ago.

The clay bird shot off to the president's left, but he swiftly adjusted his aim and fired.

Two for two.

His father was the one who had taught him how to shoot, the one who had told him again and again that ammunition was expensive—a precious commodity not to be wasted by a bad shot. His skill had come from necessity.

The president changed his angle as another target sailed past the shooting line.

Three for three.

One of his father's friends, a buddy from his old platoon, owned a cabin on a lake up in Michigan. Every year in November, his father had gone hunting while the future president had stayed home with his mother and sister. Tom Walters was thirteen when his dad had first asked him to come along. He remembered how excited he'd been on the ride up to the cabin; how happy he'd been that his dad thought that he was old enough, man enough, to go. Almost instantly, the happy memory vanished as he recalled how humiliated he'd felt on the way home.

Another clay bird exploded over the field.

Four for four.

On the second day of the trip, he had missed a buck that was grazing fifty yards away. He had hesitated, waiting for the animal to turn for a better shot, a perfect shot. That one second had cost him, as the deer, sensing danger, bolted. He had squeezed off a wild shot, knowing as he did so that it was hopeless. God, how he had wished he could relive those few seconds. He had wanted so much to hear his father tell him how proud he was. The rest of the week was horrible as he dreaded the long ride home....

“What the hell’s the matter with you, boy? There’s no reason you shoulda missed that shot. Hell, I’ll bet your sister coulda hit that buck. Maybe I’ll bring her next year and leave you home!”

It was four more years before his father asked him to go again.

Five for five.

His father was the one who had pressured him to enlist, told him that the Corps would make a man out of him. The president felt a twinge of guilt wondering what his dad would think now when the story broke. Jesus! The press would be all over him like vultures on an animal carcass and all for something that happened almost forty years ago.

Six for six.

At one point, back when his career was beginning, he dreaded that his past “indiscretions” would suddenly surface and his budding political career would wither and die. But, as time passed and his career progressed, the fears had faded.

The target shot out in front of the president. He swung the gun, but not with the same fluid motion. The clay bird broke into several large pieces.

Seven for seven.

As the president reloaded his shotgun, he could almost hear his father:

“Concentrate now, boy! You almost missed that time! People will think I’m raisin’ a sissy!”

He had just been discharged from the service and entered college on the GI bill. Like many young men away from home for the first time, away from authority, he lived the life of a rebellious freshman, going to beer parties, skipping classes, trying to get every girl he met in the sack. In a few short months, the disciplined life he had led while in the Corps seemed a vague memory. At the end of his first semester, after final exams, he celebrated with his roommate and some coed friends by drinking shots of tequila and playing strip poker. The poker game soon gave way to sex, and after they each had made love to both women, Walters and his roommate watched as the two women made love to each other. He must have had a lot of tequila—before he realized what he was doing, he was having sex with his roommate.

What might have been excused as a drunken college stunt or youthful experimentation probably would have been except for two things. First, over the next several years, he and his roommate had continued to fool around. Second, one of the women managed to capture a few intimate moments of the future president and his roommate on her camera.

He had thought the whole incident long forgotten until two months ago. Tyler Rumson, an aggressive, two-term Republican Senator from New Jersey, showed him the pictures and suggested that he reconsider running for reelection. When he refused, Rumson had threatened to leak the pictures to the press. He had increased the pressure over the last several weeks, and the president had finally realized that even if he agreed to drop out of the race, Rumson would give the pictures to the press anyway. It was odd, Walters thought, that the possibility of losing the presidency, of losing his wife, and possibly being cast aside as a social pariah didn’t bother him nearly as much as the prospect of facing his father. He was a sixty-six-year-old man, he was the President of the United States, and he was still afraid of his father.

The president called for the next target. As the clay bird flew out of the trap house, he turned the gun, stuck the barrel in his mouth, and pulled the trigger.



L.D. Beyer worked for over twenty-five years in the corporate world, most recently as a senior executive for a Fortune 500 company. His career involved extensive travel, several relocations, and the opportunity to live and work in Mexico for a few years. An avid reader, he fed his appetite for fiction by reading for years before finally deciding to pursue a writing career in 2010. L.D. Beyer lives in Michigan with his wife and three children.

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