

When Fiction Cuts Close
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I rarely review novels, relegating my readings to just fun for me. But I did recently review a novel by Stacey Abrams, who is running for Governor of Georgia. Her novel, *While Justice Sleeps*, provided so much insight into what goes on in the lives of Supreme Court justices that for this alone, the novel was a valuable read. But in addition, the plot was so clever and Abrams' knowledge of chess made this extra fun to read.

This time, I am reviewing a novel by Hillary Clinton and Louise Penny: *State of Terror*, because this work is not just the usual excitement of a thriller, but provides a picture of something that we have not explored enough: a new presidential administration following four years of a wrecking ball incompetent who did major damage to government.

This is also a particular kind of novel: what the French call "Roman \340 clef," which means Novel with a key. The key is about only slightly fictionalized real people amidst real life events. One can identify the fictional characters easily (in this case, former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton herself). This novel, I think, should be required reading for those who fear for the close call that our country faced in the coup attack to overturn an election.

The story takes us to the opening weeks of a new administration in which Ellen Adams, the fictional Secretary of State, finds the State Department hollowed out of former area experts (driven out by the former President), and now staffed with very bright but inexperienced replacements. She is also faced with a new President who appointed her, but obviously does not like her.

Unlike Hillary Clinton herself, this fictional Secretary has a background in publishing, resembling more the late Katherine Graham, owner of the *Washington Post*.

"Inside the Beltway" issues fade when there is a terrorist bombing of a bus in London, a bus in which an Iranian nuclear scientist is killed. Within hours, there is another exploding bus in Paris, and then shortly afterwards, another one in Frankfurt, Germany.

The US is now braced for a comparable event (or worse) in the US. What does the Administration do to respond to this threat? Who are the State Department experts who are able to help? Who in the President's inner circle might be clandestinely helping the enemy---and is this enemy possibly Vladimir Putin in his endless attack on our Democracy? Does Putin have willing dupes in our very government?

This scenario is very frightening to me because it is not far removed from possible events. The possibility of a suitcase size nuclear bomb is out there. What could be more destabilizing to this country than such a device detonated in Washington and a half dozen other cities? How long would it take us to recover government?

Many years ago, Tom Clancy wrote a novel in which a crazy Japanese pilot with a plane load of passengers deliberately crashed into the dome of Congress on the night of the annual President's State of the Union address, attended by the entire Congress, Supreme Court, and important Cabinet officials. In this story, the one person not attending was the Vice President, who had the job of restoring government.

This scenario so frightened President Reagan that he sent two of his cabinet members, Rumsfeld and Cheney, to create a plan to restart government if such a disaster occurred. His fictional blueprint seemed very good to me, and I am sure it is part of the real plan.

In Hillary Clinton's novel, a general, talking to Hillary's aide, suggests that if the current president were to die in such an attack, the former president might be manipulated by his handlers (the Russians, neo-Nazis already in Congress, and his True Believers) to seize control again.

Former President Eric Dunn (Trump) is a Trojan Horse, an empty vessel into which his base have poured their ambitions, their outrages, their hatreds and insecurities. They think they are patriots, returning their country to the good old days when the rich and powerful males ran everything?

Could this happen?

684 words