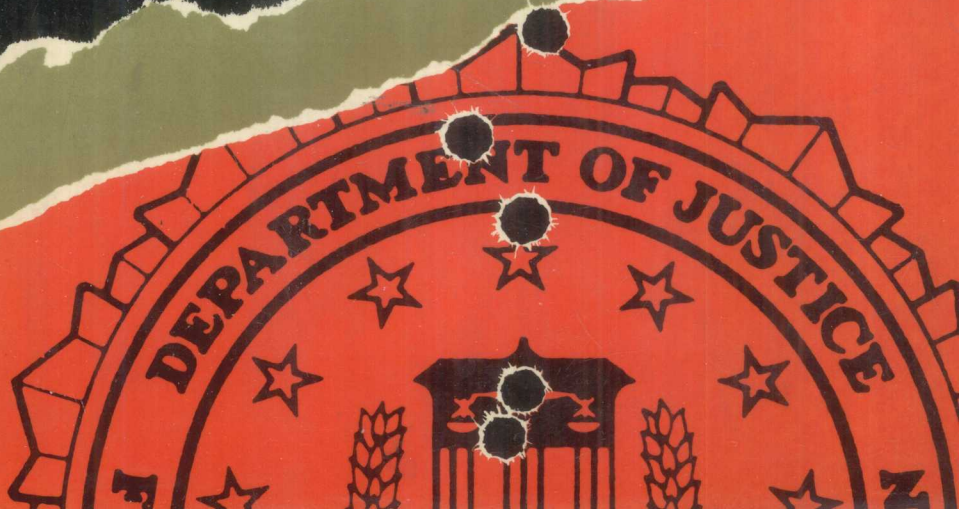


MARGARET
TRUMAN

Murder
at the

FBI



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A NOVEL



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1

HARRY JONES, WHO wore flowered Bermuda shorts, brown shoes, black ankle socks, and a white T-shirt that read *Akron Volunteer Fire Department-Ladder Champs '82*, said to his wife, Maureen, "I never been so hot in my whole life."

They stood in a long line outside the E Street entrance to the J. Edgar Hoover Building on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., home of the Federal Bureau of Investigation since the fall of 1975. Before then, it had been housed in the Department of Justice Building across the street.

The new building had been described by various critics as a prime example of Washington's New Brutalism wave of architecture, a hunk of exposed concrete aggregate dominating the capital's "Main Street"; an obscenely expensive tribute in buff to the man for whom it was named. It looked like a huge toaster with two slices of bread on top, standing as an imposing permanent monument to the name that was synonymous with the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, shaper of America's federal police force.

It was August 10, a Thursday. It had been hot and humid all summer, typical for Washington, but three days ago a high-

pressure front had stalled directly above the nation's capital and boosted what had been merely uncomfortable temperatures and humidity to intolerable levels.

"Jesus," Harry said as he wiped his face with a handkerchief. The strap of his camera bag dug into his beefy shoulder. His feet hurt and he shifted from one to the other. They'd been sightseeing since early morning, Harry and Maureen and their two children, Becky, twelve, and Walter, nine. It was now four o'clock in the afternoon. "Jesus," he said again.

"The line's moving," said Maureen.

A few minutes later they were blasted with blessed air conditioning inside the Hoover Building. A pert young woman wearing a blue blazer, gray slacks, and a white blouse invited Harry, Maureen, Becky, Walter, and 196 other tourists to take seats in a holding area. "Your tour guide will be with you in a moment," the young woman said into a microphone. "We ask that you not take photographs during the tour or use recording devices. We're pleased to see all of you here today and trust that your tour of the Federal Bureau of Investigation will be instructive and interesting. Please stay in your seats until your tour guide invites you to join her."

"I'm hungry," Walter whined.

"Shut up," his sister said.

"Don't talk to your brother like that," Maureen Jones said.

"Eat the Crackerjacks," Harry Jones said.

"I don't want 'em," Walter said.

"He's a nerd," said Becky Jones.

"Shut up," her father said to her. "Just shut up and sit still." He slipped out of his shoes and sighed.

Ten minutes later another young woman wearing a blazer and slacks stepped to the microphone and welcomed the final tour of the day.

Harry groaned as he wedged his heels into his shoes, stood, and fell in line with the rest of the group. They walked for an hour, from one exhibit area to another, the guide giving an enthusiastic explanation of what they were seeing. They learned many things—besides meaning Federal Bureau of Investiga-

tion, the initials stood for Fidelity, Bravery, and Integrity; authentic shields carried by special agents (*all* agents were called *special* agents) were the size of a half-dollar and had a raised seal covering an eighth of an inch of the agent's photo; there were almost 9,000 special agents, nearly 600 of them female; 176 million fingerprints were on file, and 25,000 were processed each day; blood type could be determined through the examination of a minute trace of saliva, and the lab could tell whether the saliva came from a human being or from a dog or cat; the firearm rooms contained 4,000 types of weapons, including 2,600 handguns and 11,000 different types of bullets; there were 10,000 types of paints used on automobiles, and the lab could differentiate between every one of them. . . .

An hour later they reached the highlight of the tour, the firing-range demonstration. This was what the half million visitors a year, especially the kids, seemed to remember. Walter, who'd complained every step of the way, was now alert and wide-eyed as they filed into a dimly lit, tiered and carpeted room and took seats. In front of them was a wall of bulletproof glass covered by heavy beige drapes. The curtains opened at the press of a switch, revealing the firing range, a long, brightly illuminated room. There was a table at the end nearest the glass wall. On it was an assortment of weapons. An overhead trolley ran from the table to the far end of the range; targets used during training could be electronically brought closer or moved farther away from the firing position.

A door inside the range opened and a tall, slender, handsome black man wearing a blue blazer, gray slacks, white shirt, and muted red-and-blue tie came through it. Harry Jones slipped his camera from the bag. One of four young women in blue blazers quickly came to him and whispered, "No picture taking allowed, sir."

Harry grinned sheepishly and put the camera away. His wife looked sternly at him. So did his daughter. "I just figured . . ."

The black special agent in the range said into a hand-held microphone, "Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'm special agent Harrison and I'll be demonstrating various weapons

used by the bureau. We're issued three standard weapons—the .357 magnum revolver with a three-inch barrel, the Model 870 Remington pump-action twelve-gauge shotgun, and the M-16 automatic rifle, which has recently replaced the Thompson submachine gun. I'll be demonstrating the M-16 and the .357 magnum today."

He picked up the revolver and looked down the length of the range. Forty feet away was a large sheet of opaque white paper hanging from the overhead trolley. Drawn on it with thick black lines was the crude form of a person's head and torso. The target's "heart" was represented by a small circle outlined in black.

Harrison suddenly raised the revolver with both hands and squeezed off a quick succession of shots. He turned, placed the spent revolver on the table, picked up the microphone, and said, "I'll fire the M-16 on single-shot, then semiautomatic, then full automatic." He traded the microphone for the M-16, faced the target, and within seconds had discharged in all three modes of the weapon, ending with a machine gun-like burst.

Walter Jones giggled and grabbed his father's hand.

Special agent Harrison turned off all lights in the range except for a single lamp behind the paper target. The holes in the target were now visible. Every shot he'd fired from both weapons was neatly contained within the paper heart.

The crowd gasped, as it always did. There was applause.

"Jesus," Walter Jones said out loud.

Special agent Harrison entered the spectator room. He said slowly and quietly, "I'll be happy to answer any questions."

They came from all over the room, questions about how special agents are selected, what training they go through, how the bureau worked with local police organizations, questions about famous cases and whether television shows were representative of how the bureau really worked. Harrison answered each question thoughtfully and pleasantly, smiling at times, appearing somber at others. Maureen Jones noted how erect he was and how perfectly his clothing fit him. Walter Jones told his father he wanted to ask something.

"Go ahead," his father said.

The boy raised his hand and waved it at Harrison, who spotted it and said, "The young man over there. Go ahead, son."

"How many—how many of you been shot dead by . . ."

Special agent Harrison smiled. "By the bad guys? There have been twenty-six special agents killed in the line of duty. Thank you for coming today. I hope you found the tour interesting. Your guides will show you out."

The Jones family was staying at Maureen's sister's house in Rockville, Maryland, during their visit to Washington. They'd seen many things that day—the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum, the Washington and Lincoln memorials, the Capitol, and the White House, but the FBI tour dominated their dinner-table conversation that night.

"Jesus," Harry said over coffee, "that agent was some cool customer. He—"

"*Special agent*," his wife corrected.

"Yeah, whatever. This guy put every shot right in the heart. And people criticize things like the FBI. Jesus, it's a good thing we got 'em on our side." His son held up an imaginary automatic rifle and mowed down everyone at the table.

"We've never even been there," Maureen's sister, Helen, said.

"You never . . . ?" Harry laughed. "You live right here."

"I know," his brother-in-law said. "That's always the way it is." He looked at his wife. "How about tomorrow? I'm off till Saturday." His kids were all for it.

"Just don't try to take pictures," Harry said. "I think they got cameras all over the place. Jesus, no wonder they're the best in the world. I always had respect for Hoover and the FBI but now—every shot right on the money. You got more coffee, Helen?"

2

HARRY JONES'S SISTER-IN-LAW, her husband, and their three children were in the first tour group to be admitted to the Hoover Building on Friday morning. The youngest boy carried with him a rifle-shaped water gun and was told pleasantly by a young woman in a blue blazer to leave it at the desk.

At precisely nine o'clock the tour guide invited everyone to follow her.

Special agent Paul Harrison looked at his watch. Nine o'clock. "Damn," he muttered. A car had broken down on the Key Bridge and traffic was at a standstill. He didn't want to be late; the first tour group would arrive at the firing range a little before ten, and he liked to have a few minutes to relax over coffee before demonstrating firearms to the tourists. He enjoyed the assignment, knew he was given it because he was one of the best. He'd excelled in the use of weapons at the FBI academy at Quantico twelve years ago, and had always placed in the top 5 percent in the bureau's semiannual firing-range exercises. His wife had told him he'd soon be bored with it, but it hadn't happened—yet. There was a pleasant satisfaction in

the response of the tourists when he back-lit the target and all the holes were in the heart. He especially enjoyed the kids' expressions. "Face it," he told himself, "you're a ham."

He finally squeezed past the disabled vehicle and stepped on the gas. His car had been having radiator problems and in this heat . . . He looked at his watch again. He'd make it, but there'd be no time for coffee this morning.

Special agents Christine Saksis and Ross Lizenby sat in the outdoor café portion of Au Pied De Cochon, on Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., in Georgetown. They'd had freshly baked croissants and coffee. Lizenby put money on the check, sat back, and smiled. "What's on the agenda today?" he asked.

Chris Saksis made a face. "Meetings, all day, at the Bureau of Indian Affairs. If only they'd talk less and do more." She was one of a half dozen FBI agents assigned to a unit investigating crimes on federal Indian reservations—which came under bureau jurisdiction—and she often attended conferences at other agencies pertaining to Indian affairs. Her father had been a full-blooded Maine Passamaquoddy. Her mother had been a Christian Scientist from Vermont. That Chris was half American Indian surprised no one. Her hair, which she usually wore pulled back into a loose chignon, was so black it seemed blue. Her cheekbones were high and prominent, her coloring a simmering copper that took on a burnished sheen in the summer. She was five feet, eight inches tall—and lean, although her bosom was surprisingly full for an athlete. She'd been a nationally classed half-miler and would have made the Olympic team if an injury hadn't sidelined her during the trials.

Whenever Chris Saksis and Ross Lizenby went out as a couple, which had only been happening the past few months, heads turned. He was as handsome as she was beautiful. They'd had little time to explore areas of mutual interest—except for sports. Lizenby had no peer in martial arts during his FBI training at Quantico. He was an avid tennis player and jogger, and a powerful swimmer. He usually beat Saksis at tennis, but just barely. They were a good match.

They walked to the street where their cars were parked. "Will I see you tonight?" she asked.

He shook his head. "Sorry. Pritchard's got the whole SPO-VAC team in high gear for the next couple of days. Nights, too. Maybe Monday, Tuesday."

"Okay." They kissed, a gentle touching of the lips, then a little harder, careful to keep their bodies apart for the sake of onlookers.

"I'll call you," he said.

The first tour of the morning was ushered into the tiered theater for the firing-range demonstration. The curtains were drawn over the bulletproof glass. The 200 tourists spoke in hushed tones; the room created that aura. There was something sacrosanct about it. Too, there was the anticipation of what they would see. Almost everyone had heard from someone else who'd taken the tour about the deadly proficiency they would witness. Would he miss this morning? Most hoped he wouldn't so that they could tell *their* friends of the marksmanship they'd seen on their tour of the FBI. A few hoped he *would* miss, but those were the ones who always hoped for failure in others.

Special agent Paul Harrison entered the range through its interior door. He knew he was upset at having to rush and told himself to calm down. Good shooting depended on relaxed muscles and a slow heartbeat.

He looked down the range. A fresh paper target was in place. The weapons were on the table. He quickly checked them. They were loaded.

He drew a series of deep breaths, then flicked the switch. The curtains opened with a "whoooooosh." Staring at him from behind the glass wall were 200 eager faces. He picked up the microphone, turned it on, and welcomed the crowd. He told them what weapons he'd be using, weighed the .357 magnum in his long, slender hand, raised it, and discharged its rounds. He took the M-16, saw that it was on single-shot, and fired a few rounds, then changed to semiautomatic and then full auto-

matic. As he fired he detected a slight tremor in his left hand and hoped it hadn't interfered with another perfect performance. If it had, the gasps would not be as loud, the applause more polite than enthusiastic. It had happened only once before in his four months as firing-range demonstrator. One bullet had strayed an inch from the paper heart. The tour guides had kidded him about it, and although he'd laughed along with them, he hadn't appreciated it.

He killed the lights in the range and turned on the single lamp behind the target. It took him a few seconds to realize that the light wasn't shining through the holes. "What the—?" Then, the reason became shockingly apparent. The body of a man in a blue suit hung on a hook from the overhead trolley behind the target. It pitched forward, tearing through the paper and landing face-first on the concrete floor.

Special agent Paul Harrison started toward the body, then remembered the 200 people behind him, most of whom were standing to get a better look. He quickly closed the drapes, picked up a telephone, and punched in a single digit. A member of the internal security force answered.

"This is Paul Harrison on the range."

"Yeah, Paul, how are you?"

"Not too good. Get somebody's ass down here right away. We've got a big problem."

"Did he kill him?" Harry Jones's niece asked her father.

"I think so. I think he did."

✓ His wife's eyes rolled to the top of her head and she fainted.

3

TEN MINUTES LATER the dead man in the blue suit rested on a steel table in the FBI's forensic laboratory. Identification had been made the moment Harrison and others from building security looked down at the body on the firing-range floor. His name was George L. Pritchard; he'd been a special agent for seventeen years. He'd worked in field offices for most of his career, but a year ago had been brought into headquarters to establish a new tactical division known as SPOVAC—Special Office of Violent Activities (Criminal). Its focus was on “serial killers” and mass murderers.

A dozen men in white medical coats surrounded the steel table. Each was a forensic specialist, most were medical examiners from cities around the country who happened to be in the lab that morning as part of an FBI training seminar on new techniques of using lividity to determine the time of death in murder victims. The FBI did little actual forensic work, functioning more as a statistical and research center, but it was fully equipped and staffed for autopsies. Two other steel tables against the wall held corpses the visiting physicians had been working on when Pritchard was rushed into the lab.

“Boy, oh, boy,” one of the doctors muttered, referring to the

gaping hole in Pritchard's chest, created by the series of bullet wounds in a circle three inches in diameter. "Some shot."

"Look here," another doctor said, pointing to a single bullet hole slightly higher than the rest. It had been made by a small-caliber weapon. "A .22," the doctor speculated.

By now, the doorway and hall were jammed with people who'd heard about what had happened. Ross Lizenby, Pritchard's assistant on the SPOVAC team, pushed through the crowd. "Let me through, come on, move," he said as he gained access to the lab. He couldn't see past the wall of white coats. "Is it George Pritchard?" he asked.

Lizenby wedged himself between white coats. "It is," he said to himself. He looked around. "I'm special agent Lizenby," he announced in a loud voice. "Director Shelton is awaiting my report. I want everyone to vacate this room with the exception of the lab chief and any agent who happened to be here when the deceased was delivered." When no one moved, he shouted, "Now, damn it!"

Soon, Lizenby stood next to the steel table with the head of the forensic lab and a young agent who'd been there observing the seminar out of curiosity. Lizenby picked up a phone and dialed the office of the director of the FBI, R. Bruce Shelton. He identified himself to a secretary and was immediately put through. "The deceased is special agent George Pritchard, sir. Death appears to have been caused by multiple gunshot wounds to the chest." He listened for a moment, said, "Yes, sir," and hung up. He said to the lab chief, "Seal this room off, and that means to everyone. Get a staff together for an autopsy, but wait until I get back to you. I'm meeting with the director now." He started to leave and then glanced back at the young agent. "You were here?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Come on."

They went to the seventh floor and entered the reception area of the director's office suite. A middle-aged woman behind a desk immediately said, "He's in the dining room, Mr. Lizenby. He said for you to go there."

They walked thirty feet to the executive dining room and

knocked. "Come in." They opened the door. Seated at an oval dining table having his hair trimmed by the kitchen's head chef was R. Bruce Shelton, director of the FBI since his appointment by the president four years ago. It was a ten-year appointment, but rumors had been thick lately that he intended to resign within the year.

"Good morning, sir," Lizenby said.

"Good morning," Shelton answered. He pulled off the cloth that kept hair from falling on his white shirt and said to the chef-barber, "That's fine, thanks, Joe." When Joe was gone, Shelton asked of Lizenby, "Who's this?" nodding at the young agent.

"He's, uh—"

"Special agent Jankowski, sir."

"Agent Jankowski was in the lab when the body arrived," Lizenby said.

"And?" Shelton said to Jankowski.

"Well, sir, I was just there for a few minutes. I was on my way to my office and stopped in because I was curious. They're having a seminar on forensic medicine and—"

"Please, get to the point," Shelton said.

"Yes, sir. Two gentlemen from building security, accompanied by a special agent, brought the deceased in and placed him on the only empty table. He appeared to have been shot numerous times in the chest."

"And?"

"And . . . that's all I know, sir. I intended to leave but—"

"Who were the security men and the agent who accompanied the body?"

"Names? I don't—" He looked to Lizenby.

"We're getting those, sir," Lizenby said.

Shelton swiveled in his chair and brushed away loose hair from the back of his neck. "It happened on the firing range? On our own goddamn firing range? Who did it?"

"We don't know that yet, sir," Lizenby said.

"It was an accident," Shelton said, standing and walking to a large window.

"We presume that, sir, but at this stage it's impossible to know what did exactly happen."

"Witnesses?" Shelton asked, his back to them.

Lizenby took a few steps toward the director and said, "Sir, I think we need a little more time to come up with the answers. It just happened. I suggest I get back downstairs and—"

Shelton slowly turned. He fixed Lizenby with steel-cold gray eyes and said, "I want this entire matter resolved before the day is out. I want nothing said to anyone about this except for those who must know. There is to be a total blackout about this. Does anyone outside this building know what's happened?"

Lizenby hesitated before saying, "Sir, there were two hundred tourists at the range as part of the tour."

"Two hundred—where are they?"

"I believe they were allowed to leave the building."

Shelton slammed his fist against the wall. "I hope that's not true, Mr. Lizenby. If it is, I hold you personally responsible."

"Sir, I wasn't even—"

"Get me answers. Good ones, and fast."

"Yes, sir."

Shelton said to the young agent, "Mr. Jan—what was your name?"

"Jankowski, sir."

"What office are you in?"

"A temporary assignment to administration, sir."

"Go to your office and stay there. Talk to no one. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

Ross Lizenby went directly to the firing range. He took the back stairs instead of the elevator, thinking with each step that he wished he hadn't been where he was, and when, at the time Pritchard's body was discovered. He'd just walked into his office at SPOVAC when his phone had rung. It had been Wayne Gormley, one of three assistant directors named by Shelton shortly after his appointment as director. Gormley's division was investigation. SPOVAC came under it. The other

two directors managed the administration and law enforcement areas of the bureau. Gormley's message to Lizenby had been short and to the point. There had been a shooting death on the firing range. The deceased appeared to be a special agent. "Check it out and report to the director and me immediately."

Lizenby was tired. He'd been in the building until two that morning working on a SPOVAC report that was due on Gormley's desk that afternoon. He'd planned to spend the night with Chris Saksis, but when he called her at two she vetoed the idea. Breakfast would have to suffice. He was tired, edgy, and irritable. And he didn't like R. Bruce Shelton, hadn't from the day he arrived as director. He hadn't particularly liked George Pritchard, either, but that didn't matter anymore.

He opened the door to a closet-size office just off the firing range where Paul Harrison was cleaning a revolver. "Hello, Paul," Lizenby said.

Harrison slowly shook his head. "I don't believe it," he said.

"You might as well. Pritchard's dead. What in hell happened?"

Harrison shrugged. "I was giving the demo and— Hey, Ross, are you here on official business?"

"Official?"

"You taking statements?"

Lizenby nodded. "The director has me on this."

Harrison raised his eyebrows and smiled. "I never saw him," he said. "I fired and wondered why the back light wasn't coming through the holes. Then, he falls off the track, right through the target."

"You never saw him?"

"Right."

"He didn't move?"

"No."

"He was hanging there knowing he was going to get a gut full of bullets and he never said anything?"

"Nothing. I never saw him. Look, Ross, I was late, didn't