

richard north patterson



A NOVEL

BALANCE OF POWER

BALANCE
OF
POWER

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**LARGE
PRINT**

Also by Richard North Patterson

Protect and Defend
Roses Are Red
Pop Goes the Weasel
Dark Lady

For Philip Rotner

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.

—THE SECOND AMENDMENT TO
THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

CHARACTERS

THE WHITE HOUSE

Kerry Francis Kilcannon, President of the United States

Lara Costello Kilcannon, First Lady of the United States

Ellen Penn, Vice President of the United States

Clayton Slade, Chief of Staff to the President

Kit Pace, Press Secretary to the President

Peter Lake, head of the President's Secret Service detail

Liz Curry, Director of Legislative Affairs

Alex Cole, Congressional Liaison

Jack Sanders, Chief Domestic Policy Advisor

Connie Coulter, Press Secretary to the First Lady

Francesca Thibault, White House Social Secretary

THE FIRST LADY'S FAMILY

Inez Costello, Lara's mother

Joan Costello Bowden, Lara's younger sister

John Bowden, Lara's brother-in-law

Marie Bowden, Lara's niece

Mary Costello, Lara's youngest sister

THE UNITED STATES SENATE

Senator Francis Xavier Fasano of Pennsylvania, Senate Majority Leader

Senator Charles Hampton of Vermont, Senate Minority Leader

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Senator Chad Palmer of Ohio, Chairman of the
Commerce Committee

Senator Paul Harshman of Idaho

Senator Cassie Rollins of Maine

Senator Frank Ayala of New Mexico

Senator Vic Coletti of Connecticut

Senator Macdonald Gage of Kentucky

Senator Dave Ruckles of Oklahoma

Senator Jack Slezak of Michigan

Senator Leo Weller of Montana

Senator Betsy Shapiro of California

Senator Kate Jarman of Vermont

Senator Hank Westerly of Nebraska

THE GUN LOBBY

Charles Dane, President of the Sons of the Second
Amendment ("SSA")

Martin Bresler, former President of the Gun Sports
Coalition

Bill Campton, Communications Director for the SSA

Carla Fell, Legislative Director for the SSA

Jerry Kirk, Vice President of the Gun Sports Coalition

Kelsey Landon, former senator from Louisiana and
outside legislative strategist for the SSA

THE LEXINGTON ARMS COMPANY

George Callister, President and CEO

Mike Reiner, Vice President of Marketing

Norman Conn, Manager of Quality Control

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COSTELLO VERSUS THE LEXINGTON ARMS COMPANY, ET AL.

Sarah Dash, cocounsel for Mary Costello

Robert Lenihan, cocounsel for Mary Costello

John Nolan, counsel for Lexington Arms

Harrison Fancher, counsel for the SSA

Gardner W. Bond, Judge of the United States District
Court for the Northern District of California

Avram Gold, outside counsel to President Kilcannon

Evan Pritchard, counsel for Martin Bresler

Angelo Rotelli, Judge of the Superior Court for the
City and County of San Francisco

OTHER VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Laura Blanchard, a sophomore at Stanford University

Henry Serrano, a security guard

Felice Serrano, his widow

George Serrano, his son

David Walsh, a security guard

THE WITNESSES IN COSTELLO VERSUS THE LEXINGTON ARMS COMPANY, ET AL.

Dr. Callie Hines, trauma surgeon, San Francisco
General Hospital

Charles Monk, homicide inspector, San Francisco
Police

Ben Gehringer, felon, member of The Liberty Force, a
white supremacist group

George Johnson, felon, member of The Liberty Force

Dr. Frederick Glass, expert witness for Lexington Arms

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Dr. Larry Walters, expert witness for Mary Costello

Dr. David Roper, expert witness for Mary Costello

THE MEDIA

Cathie Civitch of NBC, interviewer

Taylor Yarborough of ABC, interviewer

Carole Tisone, *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter

THE LOBBYISTS

Tony Calvo of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Mary Bryant of the National Association of
Manufacturers

John Metrillo of the National Federation of
Independent Businesses

THE PRESIDENT'S FAMILY

Michael Kilcannon, Kerry's father

Mary Kilcannon, Kerry's mother

James J. Kilcannon, Kerry's brother and predecessor as
Senator from New Jersey, assassinated while seeking the
Democratic Presidential nomination

OTHERS

Elise Hampton, wife of Senator Chuck Hampton

Allie Palmer, wife of Senator Chad Palmer

John Halloran, District Attorney for the City and
County of San Francisco

Marcia Harding, Chief of Halloran's Domestic Violence
Unit

Caroline Masters, Chief Justice of the United States
Supreme Court

Anna Chen, Lara's bridesmaid

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Nakesha Hunt, Lara's bridesmaid

Linda Mendez, Lara's bridesmaid

The Reverend Bob Christy, Head of the Christian
Commitment

Warren Colby, former United States Senator from
Maine and predecessor to Senator Cassie Collins

Leslie Shoop, Chief of Staff to Senator Rollins

Lance Jarrett, President and CEO of Silicon Valley's
largest chipmaker

Rep. Thomas Jencks, Speaker of the United States
House of Representatives

The Prime Minister of England

The Prime Minister of Israel

The President of the Palestine Liberation Organization
Mahmoud Al Anwar, terrorist and leader of Al Qaeda

PART ONE

THE WEDDING

JULY 4-LABOR DAY WEEKEND

ONE

FEELING THE GUN AGAINST THE NAPE OF HER neck, Joan Bowden froze.

Her consciousness narrowed to the weapon she could not see: her vision barely registered the cramped living room, the images on her television—the President and his fiancée, opening the Fourth of July gala beneath the towering obelisk of the Washington Monument. She could feel John's rage through the cold metal on her skin, smell the liquor on his breath.

"Why?" she whispered.

"You wanted him."

He spoke in a dull, emphatic monotone. *Who?* she wanted to ask. But she was too afraid; with a panic akin to madness, she mentally scanned the faces from the company cookout they had attended hours before. Perhaps Gary—they had talked for a time.

Desperate, she answered, "I don't want anyone."

She felt his hand twitch. "You don't want *me*. You have contempt for me."

Abruptly, his tone had changed to a higher pitch, paranoid and accusatory, the prelude to the near hysteria which issued from some unfathomable recess of his brain. Two nights before, she had awakened,

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drenched with sweat, from the nightmare of her own death.

Who would care for Marie?

Moments before, their daughter had sat at the kitchen table, a portrait of dark-haired intensity as she whispered to the doll for whom she daily set a place. Afraid to move, Joan strained to see the kitchen from the corner of her eye. John's remaining discipline was to wait until Marie had vanished; lately their daughter seemed to have developed a preternatural sense of impending violence which warned her to take flight. A silent minuet of abuse, binding daughter to father.

Marie and her doll were gone.

"Please," Joan begged.

The cords of her neck throbbed with tension. The next moment could be fateful: she had learned that protest enraged him, passivity insulted him.

Slowly, the barrel traced a line to the base of her neck, then pulled away.

Joan's head bowed. Her body shivered with a spasm of escaping breath.

She heard him move from behind the chair, felt him staring down at her. Fearful not to look at him, she forced herself to meet his gaze.

With an open palm, he slapped her.

Her head snapped back, skull ringing. She felt blood trickling from her lower lip.

John placed the gun to her mouth.

Her husband. The joyful face from her wedding

album, now dark-eyed and implacable, the 49ers T-shirt betraying the paunch on his too-thin frame.

Smiling grimly, John Bowden pulled the trigger.

Recoiling, Joan cried out at the hollow metallic click. The sounds seemed to work a chemical change in him—a psychic wound which widened his eyes. His mouth opened, as if to speak; then he turned, staggering, and reeled toward their bedroom.

Slumping forward, Joan covered her face.

Soon he would pass out. She would be safe then; in the morning, before he left, she would endure his silence, the aftershock of his brutality and shame.

At least Marie knew only the silence.

Queasy, Joan stumbled to the bathroom in the darkened hallway, a painful throbbing in her jaw. She stared in the mirror at her drawn face, not quite believing the woman she had become. Blood trickled from her swollen lip.

She dabbed with tissue until it stopped. For another moment Joan stared at herself. Then, quietly, she walked to her daughter's bedroom.

Marie's door was closed. With painstaking care, her mother turned the knob, opening a crack to peer through.

Cross-legged, Marie bent over the china doll which once had been her grandmother's. Joan felt a spurt of relief; the child had not seen them, did not see her now. Watching, Joan was seized by a desperate love.