



Brad Meltzer - From Suspense to Superheroes

BY SUSAN F. DAVIS

The tunnels under the White House, mine shafts as deep as 8,000 feet... and Griffin Road in Broward County. What do all of these things have in common? Brad Meltzer! Each of these figures prominently in one of this best-selling author's popular novels of suspense.

Whether it is his first published work, *The Tenth Justice*, the craftily plotted *Dead Even* or his latest, *The Book of Fate*, Meltzer leads the reader through a maze of well-researched, spellbinding stories peopled with characters who are not perfect, but who are, in every sense of the word, "real."

"It takes me about a year to a year and a half to write a book," reveals Meltzer. "I spend about two months doing character sketches – who are these people and what are they like?" That becomes clearly obvious throughout any one of his six novels, all of which have found their way onto *The New York Times* Best Seller List.

"Every teenage boy has two fantasies: writing a comic book...and dating a Playboy centerfold. Only one of them is actually worthwhile," Meltzer shares. And one of those fantasies became reality when he began writing the relaunched comic book series the Justice League of America.

Meltzer describes these tales of superheroes as the "original morality tales." It was a different sort of writing, according to Meltzer. "You're locked into characters. You can't just kill Superman or Batman!" He went on to add, "I was so honored. Here I was actually writing American history!" In so doing, Brad Meltzer made history himself by becoming the first author ever to reach the #1 spot on both *The New York Times*

Brad Meltzer: The Book of Fate

and the Diamond Comic Book best seller lists simultaneously.

It stands to reason that any reader of a novel by this popular author would want to know how he became a writer. His answer, like Meltzer himself, was clever and made perfect sense. “When I graduated from the University of Michigan, I had a job offer from a man who used to run *Games* magazine. So I moved all my stuff to Boston. And... the publisher left the magazine. I thought I had wrecked my life,” he recalls.

“So I did what all of us would do in that situation. I said, ‘I’m gonna write a novel.’” He did, and grew to love the process more and more each day – despite the fact that his first novel received 24 letters of rejection, which according to Meltzer, he sent directly on to his mother, “a force to be reckoned with.”

Did he always know he wanted to become a writer? No, he did not. But Brad Meltzer always liked writing. Like many other writers of renown, he gives credit to two particular teachers for recognizing something special in him and encouraging his creativity. “It was my ninth grade English teacher who insisted I do honors work,” he points out. And so he did, growing and learning until his 12th grade English teacher nominated him for his first writing award.

Brad Meltzer, now a lawyer as well (with a degree from Columbia Law School), and his family are living happily in Fort Lauderdale. “We just love it here. It’s a place where we felt well-grounded.” And, he loves the area so much that it has become the setting for his next novel.

“Yes, the new book is a thriller. No, there’s no lawyer in it.” That’s it; that’s all we get to know for now. But, knowing Brad Meltzer and the compelling qualities and tightly plotted schemes in his suspenseful novels...that’s enough! ★

Susan F. Davis is a writer and retired drama teacher.

Six minutes from now, one of us would be dead. That was our fate. None of us knew it was coming.

Trailing Deputy Chief of Staff Boyle and holding my leather shoulder bag out in front of me, I jumped into the back of the armored limo, where the President was dressed casually in a black windbreaker and jeans.

Hunched over as he headed for the back left seat, Boyle’s suit jacket sagged open, but he quickly pressed his hand over his own heart to keep it shut. I didn’t realize until later what he was hiding. Or what I’d just done by inviting him inside.

Three and a half minutes from now, the first gunshot would be fired. Two of us would crumble to the floor, convulsing. One wouldn’t get up.

As we neared our destination, President Manning stared silently through the light green tint of his bulletproof window. “Y’ever hear what Kennedy said three hours before he was shot?” he asked, putting on his best Massachusetts accent. “You know, last night would’ve been a hell of a night to kill a President.”

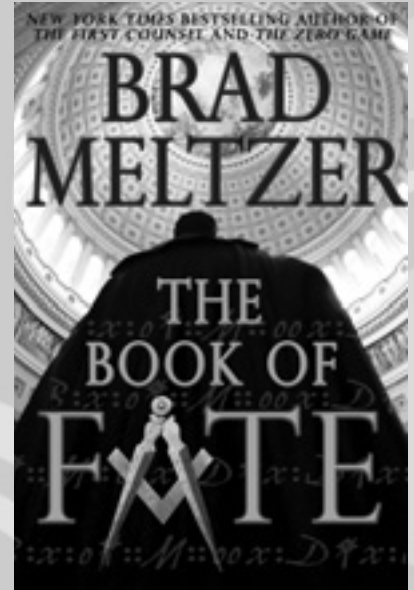
I’d been his aide for over seven months. If I was doing my job right, we didn’t have to talk to communicate. We were in a groove. I couldn’t help but smile.

That was my last, big broad grin. In three minutes, the gunman’s third bullet would rip through my cheek, destroying so many nerves, I’d never have full use of my mouth again.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, the President of the United States!” the announcer bellowed through the P.A. system.

Pop, pop, pop.

That’s all I heard. Three tiny pops. A firecracker. Or a car backfiring.



I was still smiling as the first scream tore through the air.

Oh, no. *Boyle*. His forehead was pressed against the pavement, his face screwed up in agony. He was holding his chest, and I could see the blood starting to puddle out from below him.

I felt a bee sting in my right cheek.

I slapped my own face, trying to kill whatever just bit me.

Falling backward, I crashed into the limo. I still see it all in some out-of-body slow motion: me trying to keep my balance...slapping my hand against the car’s hood...and the splat from my impact. The world was still black-and-white. Everything except for my own red handprint.

That day, because of me, Ron Boyle died.

Eight years later, he came back to life.

Reprinted by permission. Read more and learn more about the Freemasons at www.bradmeltzer.com.