

Afghany WHAMMY

PAUL AVALLONE



THE CRITICS GO BONKERS!

Simply put, it's *M*A*S*H* meets *Kelly's Heroes* meets *Stripes*, meets *Animal House*. —Book Me!

In the center of it is quick-talking schemer, scammer, grifter, ladies' man and Green Beret Captain Harry. If this had been written when I was twenty years younger, I'd have killed to play Harry in the movie. —Vince Vaughn

Take rule-smashing Captain Harry and put him on the scent of Bin Laden with his team of Green Beret misfits . . . It's *Catch-22* wacked out on steroids, but ten times quicker and a hundred times the lowbrow insanity. —Steven King

A wild, moving, shocking, hilarious, raging, exhilarating slapstick roller-coaster. —New York Herald Tribune

This book is not anti-war. Call it anti-bureaucratic incompetence. —Peter Principal

If when watching *Animal House* you hate John Belushi's Delta fraternity and root for Dean Wormer and the ROTC one, duct tape your head because it's sure to explode. —Cadet Neidermeyer

Culturally . . . historically . . . aesthetically significant . . . —Library of Congress

Wickedly funny. The author throws the politically-correct baby out with the bathwater. —Times Sunday Review

There are two ways to look at this novel. As a satirical mockery of the world's mightiest military who could not beat a bunch of goatherds. Or *Animal House* in Afghanistan. The first should make you angry. The second will make you laugh out loud and shout for an encore. —Movie/Blitz Weekly Variety

Captain Harry's non-stop banter is a kaleidoscope of an ad-hoc free-associating imagination in overdrive. His words shoot like a runaway machine gun spraying a carnival midway . . . and left me breathless. —Robin Williams

. . . a celebration of all that is irreverent, reckless, foolhardy, undisciplined . . . manic energy. It's a lot of fun. —Roger Ebert

The chapter titles alone are worth the price of admission. —E.D. White, PhD

Low humor of a high order. —Newsweek

Guaranteed, someone in Hollywood is going to turn this into a movie...and make a killing. —Rex Read

What *Dr. Strangelove* did to the Cold War this *Afghany Whammy* does to the Afghan War. —Peter Sellers

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Above blurbs provided by anonymous sources with NYT & MoPo bona fides.]

Afghany **WHAMMY**

PAUL AVALLONE

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Afghany Whammy

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If you can't laugh at the Afghan War, gosh, what war can
you laugh at? – Laurence Harlan Eugene Weltermeimer

AFGHANY WHAMMY

CHAPTER 0

WHERE'S WALDO?

SIX MONTHS INTO THE AFGHAN WAR, THE JOKE WENT SOMETHING like this:

—*Knock knock.*

—*Who's there?*

—*Waldo.*

—*Waldo who?*

—*Waldo Bin Laden. Bet you can't find me!*

'Cuz nobody could.

Yeh, for the first six months of the war, as team engineer Oddball would opine years later, "*All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't track down and waste Bin Laden.*"

By horses and men Oddball meant America's super-duper hard-charging warfighting elites, including:

- 1) Beribboned Pentagon four-stars canoodling global battle plans;
- 2) Besotted CIA spooks lugging dufflebags bulging with freshly-minted hundred-dollar bills; and
- 3) Bedraggled Special Forces operatives storming a

thousand mud-walled compounds and ten thousand caves.

Add em up, 1) + 2) + 3) = six months, and zilch.

As team junior commo Hollywood would eighteen years afterward narrate in the rough cut of his still unfinished epic mockumentary:

In their loud basso voices, the lordly generals and colonels were repeatedly demanding, "C'mon c'mon, what you got, where is he, did you find him?"

And in their meek sopranos, lieutenants and sergeants were repeatedly stuttering, "S-s-s-sir? . . ."

"Where?! Tell me where! Don't tell me you've come up dry! Again?!"

"Awwwwwww . . ."

Zilch.

From October to April, as for Target Numero Uno Osama Bin Laden, America's finest had come up with a fat goose egg.

Until there arrived on the scene one crazy dude named Frigg.

Harry Frigg.

Captain Harry Frigg.

Okay, granted, a captain by rank, at least by his ID card, and supposedly a Green Beret on top of that—if in fact both the rank and the beret weren't all an elaborate ruse and quasi-criminal scam—which with Harry one could never tell.

Regardless the questionable veracity and legality of his captainhood and green-beretdom, only a schemer and outside-the-box thinker like Harry Frigg could take the hunt for Bin Laden, as Oddball would tell it, *"Exponentially beyond where everyone else had quite predictably failed."*

The nub of it was, in less than a week Harry came so close to bagging that elusive al-Qaida snake that he could all but imagine the tickertape parades down Broadway and the twenty-five-million-dollar reward raining down on him and Oddball and Hollywood and the rest of their merry little team of Green Beret misfits.

Just how close?

Oddball's contention, *"A hair's breadth close."*

Without an ounce of help from those vainglorious chest-beating warfighters 1), 2), and 3) above.

Better, as was Frigg's quietly unprofessional nature, without letting them in on his plans in the first place. Neither asking their input nor approval nor permission.

"A lesson I learned as a kid," was Harry's way of blowing them off. *"From the nuns in the orphanage. Don't ever ask for what you know you aint never gonna get. Ask and ye shall **not** receive. Which the nuns made clear with a solid oak yardstick smacked down like a mallet on the back of your hand. Tough little cookies those nuns."*

Coming from Harry, that might have been true or not—both the nuns and the orphanage, any orphanage. Which didn't matter to the others on his team. Put best perhaps by acting team sergeant Cowboy. *"Half of every frickin word outta Cap'n Harry's mouth was frickin bullshit,"* was Cowboy's incisive characterization. *"Three-quarters. But a big fat ruler comin down sledgehammerin his frickin knuckles bloody on a daily basis, that I would believe. And it would frickin sure go a long ways explainin his aversion to authority of any stripe."*

With highest praise Cowboy would marvel at Harry's unalienable rebelliousness, contending, *"Cap'n Harry didn't just*

disobey any and all authority, he plain didn't frickin consider anyone havin authority over him."

Contrary, of course, to the very foundational structure of the unalienable authoritarianism of the military.

"Which is why yeh," Cowboy would brag on him. "Because he lived and breathed to make up his own rules 24/7, it was 'cuz of Harry and only 'cuz of Harry that we came closer to ropin Bin Laden than anyone else had and would for another ten frickin years. Count em. Years."

A hair's breadth close?

"I'll tell you how close. We could smell that sum'bitch's stinkin goat breath waftin up from just down there, down them dark stairs goin down deep to that frickin cellar there."

Making Harry Frigg a legend today among real Green Berets past and present, living and dead. Right up there alongside John Wayne and Colonel Kurtz and Rambo.

No joke, this is exactly the way it went down, all starting one fateful late-April morning of '02 . . .

CHAPTER 1

HEEEEEEEEEEEERE'S HARRY!

THERE WAS CAPTAIN HARRY ALONE, DRIVING A SPANKING-new shiny black Toyota Land Cruiser SUV on the pockmarked asphalt road that wound through the desert from Kabul to Bagram. Nothing but a barren landscape of rolling hills of sand and dirt and rocks brightly bleached pale in the full morning sun. No sign of life. The road was empty but for the Land Cruiser. For all intents and purposes Harry could have been traveling on Mars.

Zippering along at sixty-five, with the CD blaring discordant Afghan music, he was beating time on the steering wheel, not a care in the world.

One look at him and you'd never imagine he was in the Army, and imagine less that he could be a captain, an actual officer and gentleman.

Having spent the last four or five days in Kabul doing who-knows-what with who-knows-who, Harry was sporting a week's stubble of beard . . . a 50's flattop haircut . . . classic Ray-Ban Wayfarers. In a wrinkled Hawaiian shirt, khaki pants, flip-

flops. No rifle, no pistol, nothing military visible in all the strewn clutter throughout the big SUV.

He growled like a panther to match the engine's purr, and floored the gas pedal up a rise toward the blind crest. With the speedometer pushing eighty he crested the rise, the big SUV took flight and he yelled Mel Gibson's primal *Braveheart* scream, "Freeeeedommm!!!" It thumped hard to the asphalt on its front wheels, then the rear, and Harry stomped the brakes, shocked seeing something ahead —

then barreled the Land Cruiser through a rock-improvised speed bump —

and swerved, skidding, crashing through a second one of boulders, with the headlights and grill exploding in a thousand shards —

and he just did manage to stop before a third obstruction — a steel I-beam resting atop a concrete-filled oil-drum on each end — not a couple of inches from smashing through the windshield!

Phewww, Harry breathed relief. Flicked down the volume of the Afghan CD to a background cacophony of squeezeboxes, kazoos, and bongos drowning the toneless wailing singer.

He ping-ponged his head to appraise the menacing collection of seven or eight men standing on each side of the road. Bearded Afghans. A glum, grim, scary collection. Expressions radiating rabid hate. These guys would give Harry's tough-cookie nuns the heebie-jeebies.

All wearing that loose cotton Biblical-era Afghan pajama garb — white, grey, tan or black, threadbare and filthy.

All with AK-47s. Each rifle casually aimed from their hips level through the windows on Harry inside.

Except for the one guy ahead on the other side of the I-beam, who had an RPG on his shoulder and the protruding grenade pointed directly through the windshield.

Harry lowered his window to meet the leathered mug of the guy right here at the door beside him. The assumed boss of this gang of thugs. Were they Taliban? Al-Qaida? Desert pirates? Carjacking highwaymen? The only thing more or less certain, they weren't selling Girl Scout cookies.

Harry grinned. "Salaam alaykum, how y'all doin'?"

The boss hawked a loogie of jade-green phlegm that splattered streaming across the car's hood and sizzled solid into a crusty scab. Pierced his jet-black eyes right into Harry's. Spat, "Am-reek-ken?"

"American? Me? Of course, I don't deny it. Hot dogs, apple pie, Chevrolet, you betcha, American born and raised, blood running pure red-white-and-blue. Not to mention, with a little bit of Spic, Dago, Pollock, Hebe, Limey, Cossack, Chink, Nip, Seminole, Osage, Yaqui, and a touch, just a touch now, a gene or two of Sub-Saharan. Congolese. Niger — just one g. Cameroon — two o's. And a wee bit Mozambiquean, if you can believe that."

"Am-reek-ken?!" the boss again demanded, with the entirety of Harry's gibberish English lost to him, going right by him, not that he would have cared anyway.

Not that Harry cared. "Yeh yeh," he gaily enthused. "Of course Am-reek-can. American. And humbled and delighted to be a guest in your lovely and quite charming country. Am-reek-can. Americano. Gringo. Yankee, redneck, you name it. One in the same, all in the one, but the important thing . . . I come in peace. No speak'a Englaysh?"

"Englaysh?"

"Yeh, Englaysh, you no a'speak'a a'no a'Englaysh?"

"Englaysh, naw!" And the boss again spat a stream of phlegm. With a thumb he pressed one nostril closed and blew out from the other a long wormlike string of blood-red snot.

"Aw, so you don't think much of the British, do you? Still hold those wars of the 1800's against them? Forgive and forget, I say, live in the spirit of kumbaya, we are the world, especially since you beat their pale-assed butts and chased their damn steak-and-kidney-pie tails outta here all the way back to India—"

"—Bagram?" the boss snarled, cutting him off, impatient and irked at Harry's endless blabbering. He pointed his AK ahead. Repeated his single demand, "Bagram?"

"You mean the big giant imperialistic Am-reek-can Army/slash/Air-Force base up the road a piece? Bagram? Now how'd you ever figure that out, is it that obvious? Golly gee whiz, one just can't sneak anything by an Afghan. Not a sharp wily-eyed Afghan, I've gotta hand that to you, bless your heart, and I'll be sure to note your incisive insightfulness in my After Action Intelligence Report and send it all the way up to the Joint Chiefs."

"Hurrummp," the boss grunted, but—

Harry just barreled on. "Yessireebob, Bagram Base—Baf being the proper military acronym, that is indeed my ultimate destination. Tell you what, you want me to pick you guys up something at the PX there? And a mighty well-stocked post exchange it is. Cigarettes? Candy bars? Twinkies? A tube of Copenhagen? Preparation H? Toothbrushes? Listerine? A girly magazine? Or two? Perhaps a Harlequin romance to get you

through the lonely nights out here sans a female companion, along with a case of hand cream?"

Harry pointed to the guy out front whose RPG was aimed straight at him. "Now that, that is one dandy-looking bazooka there. Quite the carnally suggestive phallic symbol, if I must say. Whaddaya think, wanna swap it? How about—..."

He pulled a Bic pen from the clutter on the dash. "Pen?" he offered, as all Afghans back in those early days of the war incessantly begged of the American conquerors pens, pens, pens, ad infinitum pens. Not that one in twenty could write. Or scribble.

The boss snatched away the pen. Ignored Harry and barked fast incomprehensible Pashto across the roof to the guys on the other side, and two of them climbed in—one in the front, one in the seat right behind. The boss pointed his finger in Harry's face. Ordered, "Bagram," meaning the two inside, to take them.

"Yeh yeh, no problem, be my pleasure. Baf it is. I shall deliver your comrades as if my life depended upon it. Can't promise that I can actually get them through the front gate and onto the base, being as that could be a tad even beyond my capacity as a fully-credentialed warrior-servant of the President of the U-S of Am-reek-caw. But, Captain Harry Frigg at your service, I will do my absolute best to provide a safe comfortable conveyance for your compatriot buddies. Always a pleasure doing my part to bestow trust and mutual reciprocity between allies. Tally-ho, Bagram or bust!"

The boss' hand to Harry's chest stopped him. He wasn't quite through with Harry.

CHAPTER 2

YOU SAY YOU WANT MY WHAT?

HARRY HAD THOUGHT HE'D DONE ALRIGHT WITH THE THUGS, having avoided kidnapping, death, or something even worse, and was eager and ready to speed away, until the boss' hand placed on his chest had told him otherwise and had stopped him cold.

The boss' eyes smiled just a wee bit, radiating a hint of a coming gloat. He pointed to the music playing from the dash CD. He snapped his fingers, he wanted it. Motioned *Here, give it over*.

"Why of course, most naturally — ..." Harry ejected the CD and presented it as if on a silver platter. "Share and share alike. And when I come back through in a couple days or a week or two or three weeks, y'all just keep it 'til then, enjoy it, and try not to scratch it up too badly —"

Again the boss' hand to Harry's chest stopped him. He still wasn't through. He grinned a mouthful of orange-stained teeth. Locked his stare on Harry's Wayfarer sunglasses. Said two words, "Ray? Ban?"

"Yepsie-depsie, Ray-Bans. And they're genuine too. Not cheap Chinese knock-offs, not these. Wayfarers Gen 4. One-hundred percent UV blockage and top-notch scratch and glare resistance. Nigh near Xray vision in the right light. I can pick you up a pair at the PX and drop em off the next time I'm coming through —"

—the boss snapped his fingers in an angry *Shut up*, enough with Harry's fast-talking incomprehensible bullshit! Simply held out his palm, he wanted the sunglasses.

Harry hesitated, did not touch the Wayfarers, wasn't going to give them up. Not so easily. Tried again his best negotiation. "No really, you really don't want these, they're yesterday's fashion, way out of vogue, like wearing black in the summer, white in the winter, you want a pair of Oakleys. Wiley-Xs. Or Bolles, they're what's hip today. I can get you some —"

"—Ssssshhtp," the boss slapped the door! Shot a round off into the air, *kablang!* Spat a green-phlegm loogie over the car's roof and the heads of his men on the other side. Got control of himself. Breathed slow and easy. Leaned in through the window and put his chapped lips right to Harry's ear. To whisper something—a couple of words at the most, audible only to Harry. Whether Pashto, English, or Swahili, it did not matter, they were clear enough to immediately register and strike Harry with shocked surprise.

Reality settled in, and still Harry did not move, did not want to comply to whatever those couple of words demanded. The boss' obsidian eyes bored right through the Ray Bans into his, and Harry knew there was no way out. He had hoped otherwise, but knew that he had played it as far as possible and had as much as lost.

Slowly he removed the sunglasses. He slid them onto the boss' face, careful like an optometrist. Snug over his ears. Comfy and straight on the bridge of his nose. Whispered to him his own confidential message, a single sentence, a blessing of sorts: "May your most vile enemy put a bullet through each lens and leave you blind like Oedipus..."

Not that the boss understood, or cared. He had his Ray-Ban Wayfarer Gen 4s and could not be happier, preening and showing off for the rest of his gang and firing an entire magazine into the air, *kablaratatatatatatat!*, as they too laughed and hooted and whistled and shot off their AKs, *kabangity-bang-bang-bang*. And he ordered them to raise the I-beam. Pointed Harry, *Get outta here, move it along!* To which Harry again offered a "Pen?", and the boss snatched it even faster than the first time.

Harry saluted him, "See you later, alli—...asshole," and stomped the gas, peeling away, before he might have to give up even more. Like his Rolex Chronograph. Or the Land Cruiser and everything in it. Or his life.

CHAPTER 3

TWO MOHAMMEDS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

HARRY APPRAISED HIS TWO NEW PASSENGERS. LONG MATTED beards. AKs in their laps, their fingers on the triggers, the muzzles pointed his way. Filthy attire. Angry glares.

Regardless their hostility, to Harry they were company. An audience. Any audience. "That went well, wouldn't you say? Your godfather there coulda left me dead back there, all chopped up splayed out naked for the buzzards to pick over with a fine-tooth comb, and wouldn't no one be the wiser. I know good luck when I encounter it, meet it eye-to-eye, 20/20 vision, hindsight and foresight. And I'm grateful. Mighty mighty grateful."

He introduced himself, forcing a handshake with each. "Me Harry Frigg. Harry. Harrrr-reee. Rolls off the tongue. You, you guys? Yoouuur naaaame? Naaaaaaaaaaaaame? Nom, is that it in Pashto? Nom? Aw c'mon, loosen up, we still got a good little drive ahead of us. You've got a name, of course you've got a

name. Nom? You—" Harry pointed to the front guy, "You first. Nom?"

"Mohammed," the guy said.

Same with the guy behind. "Mohammed."

"No, you're kiddin, really? Wow, like that's gotta be a new one. You wouldn't be sired from the same father, would you, and he wouldn't by chance be a Mohammed too, would he? No matter, genealogy smenealogy, I just hope you aren't planning anything funny with those Kalashnikov rifles there, 'cuz I've got my 9-mil Beretta around here somewhere, under the seat or in the back there somewhere. Yeh yeh, I know, the Beretta isn't quite of the same rustic simplicity as those Kalashnikovs there, but it'll do in a pinch if push comes to shove. If I can remember where I put it. Eng...lish. The in...ter...na...tion...al lang...u...age. Englaysh. You can't expect us invading infidels to have to learn what, Pashto and what, the other fifty languages all you all speak here? Eng...liissssssh. Bet you know the language of money. Dollll...errrr. Mon...neey. Cash. Twenty-five million bucks, big reward money, paid in cash, twenty-five mill, we'll split it half-and-half, you tell me where Osama Bin Laden is. Half-and-half, fifty-fifty. O Saw Maw. You know where he is? Osama. Where?"

"Osama Bin Laden?" Front Mohammed asked.

"Yeh, twenty-five big ones, I'll give you a finder's fee, ten percent, ten grand apiece. Osama—you know where? Lo...cay...shion? O Saw Maw. Wheeeeeeeeeeeere?"

Front Mohammed pointed ahead, east. "Pakistan."

"Yeh yeh yeh, everyone says that. Pakistan. Where in Pakistan? Big city, town, village, cave? Presidential Palace?

You got the exact zip code? And what's it matter anyway, huh? We can't go there, Pakistan's off-limits. Off. Limits. We aint allowed in, get court-martialed if we even think about tiptoeing across, can't get anywhere near there, they're our allies, our best buds, almost kissin cousins, and of course he knows it, oh yeh does ol' Osama know that. And that leaves us where? I'll tell you where. S-O-L. You know S-O-L? Three most important words in the English language. Shit outta luck. S-O-L. You sure neither one of you speaks any English? Englaysh, yes, no, maybe?"

"Englaysh," Front Mohammed shook his head.

Rear Mohammed as well, *nope, no Englaysh.*

Which didn't stop Harry, not Harry Frigg. Once his stream-of-conscious stand-up improv kicked in, there was no stopping him. "Aw, it's all politics, stinking politics, sewer-dwelling politicians. Left, right, and right down the middle. If they really wanted to get Osama, they'd let us stomp through Pakistan like Attila the Hun. You know Attila the Hun? Hun, Mister Attila, a big German guy, Germanic-Hungarian-Slovakian, whatever. With a big long beard, down to here, like you guys, just like his, your beards, like him and his Huns, you've all got that same thing for facial hair, don't you? Ever think of cuttin it off? No one's told you that chicks dig clean-shaved faces? Clean. Smooooooth." He ran a palm down his own cheek, as if he himself wasn't sporting a week's stubble. "Cheeks softened with Olay. Baby soft. Beards went out with Ulysses S Grant and the Smith Brothers. Unless you're ZZ Top. Or Santy Claus. Grizzly Adams. I wouldn't shit ya, really, except for a goatee, beards are a real fashion faux pas nowadays."

He sucked in a deep breath. Winced. "While we're at it— soap and water, it's a new thing out, heard of it? Lifebuoy, Dove, Irish Spring, Lava, Borax Soap, y'know, the 20 Mule Team. Deee...ooo...derrr...rant. Comes in small little plastic push-up little things. Works wonders on that fetid B-O. Hint, take it from a debonaire fella who knows a thing or two about the fairer sex. B-O will put the brakes on a hot babe faster'n you can say Right Guard—

"Naww!" screamed Front Mohammed—

"Naw what? If you understand English, I'm really up shit creek—"

"Nawww!" repeated the Front guy, and Rear Mohammed echoing it, "Nawwww!", with both frantically pointing ahead *Go go go go, faster!* to scoot around a second gang's roadblock of two black Datsun pickup trucks and a dozen thugs with AKs—

"What? Go? Stop? Yes? No?" Harry was genuinely confused—

"Naw!" Front and Rear both screamed, motioning *Go go go go go!*—

CHAPTER 4

SPRAY-AND-PRAYING LIKE A GIRL

BOTH MOHAMMEDS' FRANTIC GESTURING *GO GO GO GO GO* registered with Harry when, *bang bang*, Rear Mohammed shot out the passenger door window behind Harry's head—

then, *bang bang*, Front shot out his own front door window—

and Harry floored it, swerved—

as the road gang let loose with their AKs, raking the vehicle—

while Rear Mohammed emptied a magazine at them—

and Harry swerved the other way, down off the blacktop into the sand, fishtailing and bouncing—

with Front Mohammed's AK sticking out the window returning fire at the gang—

until Harry managed to bring the Land Cruiser back onto the blacktop—

with the gang's continued fusillade crumbling the rear window—

and both Front and Rear each fired another magazine back through the vehicle in return—

with the gang's final few random shots cracking by as the Land Cruiser put distance between them.

Body count in here, zero. Not a scratch. Which Harry and the two Mohammeds quickly checked themselves to confirm.

Body count back there, probably the same, not even a scratch. Which neither Harry nor his Mohammeds were going to turn around and go back to confirm.

Another bloodless Afghan firefight. Your everyday typical Afghan exchange-of-fire. Spray-and-pray. With any serious thought of acquiring a target through precision aiming never considered. To Afghans it was the shooting that mattered, the explosive aggression, a sexually pent-up guttural scream, orgasming in those deafening loud *bang bangs*.

Harry stuck a pinkie finger into first one ear, then the other, as if to clear them. "Next time you're going to do that," he told his Mohammeds, "give me a warning, would you? So I can put in some ear protection. Y'know, you only get one set of ears. Not two, not three. One. Eardrums are a terrible thing to waste."

Front Mohammed was grinning, giddy with triumph. Held up his palm to Harry. "High five."

Harry looked him down . . . *Huh?*

Again from Front, "High five."

And Rear said the same, "High five," and he and Front smacked palms *high-five*.

Harry was amazed. "You don't speak a half a word of English, not half a word between you, and you know high five? High five?"

Again from Front, "High five," with his hand held high.

"What the hell...—" Harry high-fived him. And Rear. And Front a second time. Then motioned the blown-out windows all around. "I'll give you this much. That is one way of getting fresh air streaming through and your B-O diluted to the proper EPA standard parts-per-million. Deodorant be damned, huh,

who needs Arrid Extra Dry when a couple hundred rounds 7.62 will clear the air. Let me guess—they were the tribe next door, those rambunctious gents back there. The Hatfields and McCoys, you and them, you've all been going at it since the sixth century. You've sure got one wacky country—gotta love this wild 'n crazy place. Like an acid flashback. To the nth degree. Combat make you guys thirsty? This acrid taste of cordite whet your thirst buds? The adrenaline rush dry you to the bone? Thirsty? Thirrrrrrrrrssss...ttttyyyy? Drrrrrrr...iiii-nnnk? You know, Coca-Cola? Pep...si? I don't know about you, but gunfire always makes me crazy thirsty. If there was a McDonald's here in the middle of this pathetic wasteland, we'd drive through and buy you both a coupla 32-ouncers and a coupla Happy Meals. Option B—..."

He skidded the Land Cruiser to a stop. Hopped out. Cringed at the sight of the string of bullet holes stitched front-to-back. As if to touch it up, he punched out a couple of the random sections remaining of the crumbled windows. Yanked open the passenger door behind his and dug through his mess, shoving things out of the way—

a hand-woven prayer rug—

a single combat boot—

a black bra—

a pink one—

a full M4 magazine—

a carton of Gauloises cigarettes—

a nine-foot belt of linked machinegun ammo—

a *Sponge Bob* videotape—

a single black stiletto high heel—

a paperback, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*—

a coffeetable hardback, *The Illustrated Kama Sutra*—

a Beretta 9-mil holster, empty—

a second one, just as empty—

a Bollywood xxx videotape, *Indira Does New Delhi*, and—

a poncho liner, to—

a jumble of Pepsi cans, which, "Have at em, boys," Harry instructed his Mohammeds. "Drink your fill, take the rest in a doggie bag, you deserve it after that courageous display of combat prowess."

He went around to the rear and raised the bullet-riddled hatch. Lifted aside one of three flak vests impregnated with bullets to uncover an Igloo ice chest that the vest was protecting. Dug from the ice a bottle of Heineken. Told the Mohammeds, "Sorry, not for you, this I can't share. I will not be a party to corrupting a devout Muslim with alcohol. This touches your lips and your Muslim brothers back there find out, there goes your seventy-two virgins, you'll be burning for eternity in hell."

He drained the beer in one long guzzle. Tossed the bottle behind him to shatter on the asphalt. Grabbed up a bottle of Beck's. "And I, Captain Harry Frigg, a sworn officer of the United States Army Special Forces...—" He drained that too in one guzzle. Tossed the bottle. Finished his thought. "I will not be a party to having that on my conscience when I stand before Saint Peter and have to explain to him how I lost two innocent Islamic souls to the clutches of Beelzebub."

He grabbed up another Heineken, slammed the hatch shut and went back around and climbed behind the wheel. Pulled a CD from between the seats. "This now, gentlemen, this is a perennial Billboard Hot 100 favorite." He slid it into the player.

Gushed, "You're gonna love it..." Turned the volume to max and stepped on the gas, and the Toyota Land Cruiser shot ahead on the empty two-lane blacktop, with an entire marching band of trumpets, trombones and tubas blasting John Philip Sousa's *Stars & Stripes Forever*—

Dah dahhh da da dahh da da dahhhhhhhhhh, da da dahhh da da dahhhhhhh da da dahhhhhhh dahhh.....

CHAPTER 5

**LIEUTENANTS ARE EASILY
MIFFED**

HARRY DROPPED OFF HIS TWO MOHAMMEDS IN THE STREET lined with open-air shops and pushcart vendors just outside Bagram's fortress entrance gate.

He gave each a Bic pen, with a last bit of Frigg advice. "You-all stay safe now. And next time I expect you to hold up your end of the conversation. And remember, O...Saw... Maw. You get word on him, you go there to the gate there and you ask for Harry Frigg, Captain Harry Frigg. You bring me the head of Alfredo Bin Laden, there are more pens where those came from. A whole heap more."

At the entrance he was stopped by a collection of armed MPs. Every one of them dumbstruck by the sight of the shot-up Land Cruiser. Not a window left but for the windshield, and it spiderwebbed. Front-to-back the body covered with bullet holes. Every light shattered, even the blinkers.

It's no wonder the MPs all stood motionless in awe.

Harry cleared his throat to get the attention of the Corporal. "Young man, you want to do me the service of swinging open that barrier, please? As you can see, I've just ridden through hell—Cherokees, Apaches, Arapahos, the whole nine yards, and I've got an urgent message I must deliver asap to General Custurd."

"Aw... Aw..." the Corporal was in a daze, lost. "I guess...sure." He motioned the others to open the gates. Then remembered to ask Harry, "Do you have ID, I'm supposed to ask for ID. Yeh, you got ID?"

Harry flashed him his military ID card. "Frigg, Harry Frigg, No Middle Name. Captain O-3. Serial Number, Triple-X Double-X 6969." The gates swung open, and Harry thanked him. "I appreciate your speedy and exemplary compliance in allowing me to continue unmolested on my confidential mission. Come see me in my office later and I'll write you up for an Army Commendation Medal. Stay cool. Toodles...—"

—a Lieutenant stormed out of the sentry booth, "Hold on, hold on there! What gives, buster?!"

"It's Captain Buster to you." Harry flashed him his ID card. "O-3 Captain Buster—" he said, and added with contemptible condescension, "O-1 Lew—ten—naaant." And quickly went easy on him, cheered him up. "No hard feelings. Dabgummit, you too, come see me later and I'll write you up for a Meritorious Service Medal."

"Just what the hell—" the Lieutenant demanded, about the ravaged Land Cruiser. "What in the Sam-hell do you think this is?"

"Toyota. Land Cruiser. Special edition, XLG All-Wheel 4WD. Last year's model, but still rather spritely, I might add."

"You know what I mean!" the lieutenant screamed. "What is thissssssssss!"

"You tell me. There's a war going on out there."

"Out where? Where have you been?!"

"Kabul."

"Kabul's off-limits! It's a court-martial offense! The road from here to Kabul is off-limits, one-hundred percent off-limits, by order no less than the general!"

"Oh well now you tell me...—" whined Harry, and he shot the vehicle through the gates . . . leaving the shocked Lieutenant to yell after him, "Wait! We've got to check and make sure you're not bringing in any alcohol!"

All the Lieutenant and the Corporal were left seeing was Harry's arm outside his window waving *So long*...

CHAPTER 6

TUCKER TUCKER BO BUCKER, BANANA FANNA FO F--KER

"JESUS H CHRIST, HARRY, HOW ARE YOU GONNA EXPLAIN THIS?" was how Tucker put it about the shot-up Land Cruiser.

They were on the gravel pathway behind the barracks tents of the Special Forces compound. Harry had most of his stuff out of the SUV and strewn about in disarray.

Overweight, not a bald spot in his graying mane, Tucker was a Master Sergeant with more than twenty years in and ran the Green Beret HQ Command S-1. He could have easily passed for Sidney Poitier's equally handsome twin, carrying himself with the same proud bearing, refined intelligence, and proper elocution . . . but for the 100/120 lbs extra he bore around his middle like an overripe pumpkin and the thick folds of flab hanging from his jowls.

As for S-1, that's Personnel, translated in the civilian world as Human Resources. A paperwork jungle. Records and pay and awards—the important stuff without which no war is

effectively run. [EDITOR'S NOTE: Scratch the awards.] S-1 was Tucker's entire life from private to master sergeant, and he loved it and was very good at it, knowing every reg and sub-reg and sub-sub-reg, and every in and out and every way straight at something or sideways around it. Needless to say, Harry treated him like a brother.

Looking on with Tucker was his trusted assistant, a peach-fuzz dorky Pfc clerk-typist nerd who gave a first impression of the dictionary definition of *pasty nebbish white boy*. Out of exaggerated irony Harry had affectionately nicknamed him Killer, which didn't faze the kid, not one way or the other, as if it didn't even register with him.

"Really, Harry," Tucker insisted. "How are you going to explain it? What did it have on it when you signed it out, ten miles, fifteen? I mean, Christ, look at it!"

"Eh," said, Harry. "They can buff it out in the motor pool."

"That's not going to wash, Harry."

"I didn't say wash. Buff. A little elbow grease, this will be back in showroom condition in no time. What else do those slackers have to do in the motor pool? Besides otherwise spending all day sunup to sundown buffing their own meat."

"Harry, Harry, Harry..."

"Com'on, Tuck, what do I gotta explain? We're in a combat zone. It's a mighty dangerous road to Kabul."

"Which is exactly why it's off-limits. Command Directive Number 13, may I remind you. Straight from General Custurd. The single only authorized transportation between here and Kabul is—"

"—Helicopter, I know. You requisition one, Tuck, and I'll sign off on it. We'll make it a field trip. How would you like

that, PFC Killer, you up for a field trip, make it a weekend overnighter, take in a girlie show or two, you've never really seen burlesque until you've seen an Afghan gal strip out of her burqa. Oooohie, shake that bootie. The quickest way to make a man outta you, Killer, put hair on your chest and twelve inches of rebar in your penis, can I pencil you in for that field trip, make it a threesome—you, Tuck, and your friendly neighborhood tour guide moi?"

"Earth to Captain Harry," Tucker corrected him. "Not in Kabul nor the length and breadth of Afghaniland is there or has there ever been a girlie show."

"And how, pray tell," Harry teased right back, "would a workaholic socially handicapped and chaste Master Sarge Tucker know, who's never stepped a toe outside the confines of this base? Huh, tell me that?"

"Because if there were your burlesque shows in Kabul..." Tucker now had Harry, and knew it. "General Custurd would be going every chance he got."

"By which you mean," Harry reversed it, besting Tucker. "He'd be breaking his own Command Directive Number 13?"

Except, "He'd have a chopper on standby 24/7," Tucker nailed it. "Which still begs the question, Harry...." About the destroyed Toyota Land Cruiser. "I told you about going there, taking this there, I warned you, don't say I didn't warn you, because you know I did."

"No no no, don't say that, no you didn't, I don't remember you knowing a thing. You want to stay out of it, Tuck. The bursting radius of a Frigg grenade is lethal if you're caught too close. You don't know me, you never met me, never seen me a day in your life before. Same with you, Killer, not that anyone

could get a word out of you even through two months of three-times-a-day waterboarding. Relax, don't worry your pretty heads about it, I've got it all under control, Captain Harry Frigg is working on it."

From the rear of the Land Cruiser Harry tossed out the three bullet-impregnated flak vests, asking of Tucker, "Do me a favor, would you, and get these back hanging in your office."

Tucker was incredulous. "These are the colonel's?"

"And the XO's." As well, Harry pointed to Pfc Killer—*his*. "You don't think I was going to use my own, do you?"

Whereupon he dug into the Igloo ice chest and came up with two Heinekens. He snapped off the caps and forced one each on Tucker and Killer, who just stood there, wouldn't raise them to their lips. To Harry's chagrin. "Com'on guys, they aint gonna get no colder, you forget how to tilt one up?"

Tucker was torn. Oh how he wanted the beer, but, "Jesus H Christ, Harry," he pled. "The colonel's really taken seriously General Custurd's—"

"—Yeh yeh yeh," Harry cut him off. "The general's Command Directive Number 5,383. Any drop of alcohol found on base is an automatic court-martial. Now the longer you two stand here holding those, the more chances of someone seeing you, whereas and whereby, once in your belly, voila, magic, poof it's gone, and the colonel along with his highness the general can't prosecute you when you've drank down the incriminating evidence. Drink up, down the hatch, and ye shall be set free!"

Tucker took a tentative sip, careful to appreciate the first taste of alcohol in months. Killer followed his example. Then both drained their bottles.

"Help yourselves to the rest, would you, on me. Here, can you two help me with this—" Harry asked about the huge Tuffbox that the flak jackets had protected. "I seemed to have thrown my back out in the ferocious firefight. Then if you can get all this crap inside and adequately secured, I would very much appreciate it, as I'm late already for a date with a sweet girl I dare not keep waiting much longer."

Tucker was in disbelief. "A girl, what girl? You have a date? Who is she?"

"That, my good eunuch Friar Tuck, is classified. For my eyes only. And hands."

The Tuffbox was so heavy, Tucker and Pfc Killer struggled to slide it out of the back and barely managed without losing their grip to get it—

"Careful, boys! —"

—down to the ground without tilting and dropping it.

"What do you got in here?!" Tucker protested.

Harry clomped his foot on the lid. Solidly. "Tch tch tch tch," he warned them. No peeking, no prying eyes. "It too is classified."

"For your eyes only?"

"Tch tch tch," again from Harry, and he would not remove his foot from the huge box.

Pfc Killer didn't care, none of it meant anything to him.

Tucker did, he was curious, really curious. Knowing Harry, it could be anything in that box. "Com'on," he said, itching for a looksie.

A TUFFBOX FULL OF COURT-MARTIALS

HARRY'S *TCH TCH TCH* DID NOT AT ALL CUT IT WITH TUCKER. "Yeh right," he said. "Classified what? Top Frigg? Com'on, Harry, what you got in here?"

Harry pressed his foot down harder on the Tuffbox lid, and with his hand brushed Tucker's away, chastising him, "Nyeept!" And laid down the law. "Not for public viewing. Classification: Ultra Super Top Secret O-9 And Above Eyes Only."

"And what O-9 four-star general do you know? Com'on, this is Tucker. If you know something, by all rights I have to know it, otherwise how else am I going to save your lily-white ass when that whoever O-9 who you don't know comes down a'knocking, 'Master Sergeant Rufus Jefferson Tucker, tell us all you know about this Captain Harry Frigg that the President's been hearing some awful strange going-ons about?' Come on, Harry, open up. The name's Tucker, not Sucker. What do you

know that I don't, that I shouldn't? What classification do you want?"

"Say the secret word, win a peek in the box."

In a perfect imitation of Groucho, including miming a cigar to the mouth, "Swordfish," Pfc Killer offered without really thinking about it or caring.

"Aw he speaks," Harry offered in return. "He has arisen from his eternal silence. Sorry, kid, that was yesterday's secret word."

Tucker had had enough. "We're out of here, I've got work to do. Com'on, PFC, let's get this" —the Tuffbox— "back up inside here and let Captain Frigg deal—"

"—Wait wait, no," Harry cut him short. "It's for your own protection, Tuck, I'm doing it for your protection."

"My protection?"

"Some things you don't want to see. Trust me on this."

"Trust me, Harry," urged Tucker.

"All right, don't say I didn't try and protect you and our little Groucho Marx over here from the possible ramifications, hellfire spat from O-9s and the White House above going all batshit on us—"

"—Yada yada yada. What's in it?"

Harry hesitated. Building the suspense. Then whispered, "Osama Bin Laden. Dismembered. Packed in formaldehyde. And dry ice. We've got to execute this with precision, Tuck, I mean, Omega timepiece precise clockwork precision, time it just so, keep it completely hush-hush, play our cards like Vegas magicians. It aint gonna be easy, but we've got to massage the system with a locksmith's feel to..." He didn't finish it, left it hanging.

"To what? Vegas magician locksmiths to what?"

Again Harry hesitated. Wanted to be crystal clear. "Simple, Tuck. To get the twenty-five million reward."

"Which, com'on, Harry, you know the rules. Military personnel can't collect. Not a dime. Not a penny."

"Yeh, well, I'm figuring my BFF Master Sergeant finagling genius that he is would be aching for the challenge to put his nose to the grindstone to figure out a way around that. How about it? We're talking twenty-five followed by six zeroes."

"Really, com'on, what's in here?"

"What, you don't think I wasn't hunting Bin Laden there in Kabul? Oh, Tuck, ye of little faith. Thinketh thou so little of thine captain and superior officer that he wouldst not make most prudent use of his time abroad with the colonel's vehicle and flak vests?"

"You raid the Afghan Treasury? Got gold bars in here?"

"Better."

"Refined opium paste? Because if that's what it is, Harry, count me out, I'm outta here."

"I do not and shall never make a profit from or enable junkie scumbags, and frankly, Master Sergeant, I'm a little perturbed that you would think so lowly of me, even though after all I am an officer."

"Fine, open it up, let's see—let's see what Osama Bin Laden looks like all cut up in little pieces."

Once again Harry hesitated. "You sure you wanna see? Not afraid of burning your retinas out? You think it's okay with Killer here, that he won't soil his Fruit-of-the-Looms? Okay, don't say I didn't give you fair warning. Shield your eyes, boys..."

Harry slowly lifted the lid . . . revealing nothing but bottles of liquor packed tight as sardines every which way, you couldn't squeeze a postage stamp anywhere between them. From whisky to gin to scotch to vodka to rum to tequila to cream liqueurs . . . and peppermint schnapps.

Tucker just shook his head. "Twenty-five followed by six zeroes? What I'm looking at is I'm seeing twenty-five to life in Leavenworth." For Harry. "Do Not Pass Go."

"They're not for consumption. They're trading goods. One needs the lure of contraband merchandise to obtain the kind of information that will land us that twenty-five-million-dollar footloose and fancy-free Saudi Arabian rascalion."

"Milo Minderbinder," Pfc Killer mumbled.

Harry feigned shock. "Who me? Since when do you know Milo Minderbinder, kid?"

Tucker answered for Killer. "We watched the movie the other night."

"You break my heart, Killer, break it in a thousand pieces. I'd be flattered that you would think I am of an equal when it comes to the business acumen of Milo, but Milo Minderbinder was a cold-hearted amoral cad, he didn't care who won the war, he'd as soon it lasted forever. I on the other hand, your humble captain and noble warrior in the War On Terror—I want nothing more than to bring this military engagement to a quick close by personally bringing Mr Bin Laden to the justice that he rightfully everlastingly forevermore deservedly deserves."

"Amen," said Tucker. "Along with the twenty-five mill."

"One can't look a gift horse in the mouth, can he?" As for the Tuffbox, Harry suggested, "You guys take one apiece of

your choosing, just one, mind you. Then throw a padlock on it, Tuck, would you? These officers' tents are running rife with kleptomaniacs." He got in behind the wheel of the Land Cruiser.

"Not that you'd care," Tucker advised him. "But the colonel's getting more than just a little suspicious, not seeing you at the morning briefings for the past what, five days? I'm running out of excuses, Harry."

"Where was I this morning?"

"The other side of the airfield. Coordinating with some jingle trucks to transport bottled water and halal meals to a village north of here caught in a torrential flashflood."

Harry's mind was already calculating the possibilities. "How many meals?"

"There were no meals."

"How much bottled water, how many cases?"

"There was no bottled water. Or flashflood. Or even a drop of rain."

"Good job, Tuck. Splendid. Fill out a Distinguished Flying Cross for yourself. I'll sign it. One for Killer as well while you're at it."

"I'm not kidding, Harry, the colonel's pissed. He said he's got something he says is urgent for you, and he wants you to report directly to him asap. Like, three hours ago."

"Pity. Like right now I've got a noon tryst with a knockout 19-year-old waiting on me. 39-24-39. That, Tuck, take note—a tryst, noon or any time, that is the proper and only textbook definition of urgent."

"I'm serious, Harry. The colonel is fit to be tied."

"He'll get over it. Afghany whammy, Tuck."

"What?"

"Afghany whammy. A BBC dude I met there in Kabul. Been everywhere, to every shithole in the world. Said this place takes the cake. Couldn't get over it. All he could say, just shook his head, and those two words."

"Afghany whammy? What's it mean?"

Harry put the Land Cruiser in gear. Shrugged. And took off, leaving Tucker and Pfc Killer standing amid his piles of stuff.

Killer did an absolutely perfect impersonation of Harry. "Afghany whammy, Tuck."

"Yeh, whatever... He's got a date. A noon tryst. 39-24-39. And what do we got?" Tucker surveyed Harry's stuff. Sighed, "I guess we'd better get all this inside. And get a padlock on that—..." The huge Tuffbox full of booze.

Killer again did a perfect Harry. "Afghany whammy, Tuck."

Exactly. Them left stuck dealing with all his crap.

CHAPTER 8

WHEN HARRY MET SHIRLEY

HARRY WASN'T KIDDING ABOUT AIR FORCE XRAY TECH Shirley measuring out at 39-24-39. Nor her youthful 19 years and the fresh virginal lusciousness implied therein.

Had he added natural brunette, 5'10" in bare feet, cream-colored porcelain skin, and lips like ripe strawberries, he still wouldn't have been kidding.

There she was with those strawberry lips puckering all over his face, they could not get enough of him. She and Harry were in the hospital supply tent, in a closet behind its locked plywood door. They were at the point where she was running her fingers down his chest, quickly unbuttoning his Hawaiian shirt, and his hands were pressed into her surgical scrubs over her butt, pulling her close.

"Don't be gone so long next time," she groaned. "You said it was only going to be two days."

"Two and two, they add up quickly, you know, when you're doing the government's business. Two and two and two, who's counting?"

She cupped her hands under her breasts beneath her stretched-tight cotton scrub top. "These two. They missed you."

"And I them," Harry buried his face between them, biting at the cloth.

Shirley raked her red fingernails through his flattop and bit at the nape of his neck. "In the embassy did you meet any other girls?" she asked. "Did you?"

"You know diplomat corps girls," he managed to mumble there buried between her breasts. "All of them Ivy League." He pulled his head up to be clear. "Vassar, Smith, Oberlin, Bryn Mawr. One and all flat-chested like Kansas, you could run a John Deere combine from one side to the other and not encounter a raised freckle. Butch haircuts, nose rings here, sometimes two. Cold as dead mackerel. High-fallutin, Shirl, aristocrat artistes, nose-in-the-air types. Snooty as the Swiss, every last one of them likes other girls more than guys."

"And in the British Embassy?"

"Oh the Brit lasses, regular gals, they've got knockers—" He cupped hers. "No problem there. Hungry too, 'cuz they're not getting any from all the effete UK guys, but oh my god, their teeth! You know the Brits' teeth, it's like a horror movie. The colonel better never send me to Kabul again, that's a fact, I won't go, I'll refuse the mission. A horror movie, I tell you. *Scream!*"

She laughed, and planted her perfect pearly whites against his and sucked, sucked, sucked. When she pulled away, she sweetly asked, "Did you bring me something from Kabul? Like you said you would?"

Of course he did. But first she would have to remove her scrub top. She did. Revealing nothing but a thin lace under-

shirt, tight, barely containing her braless breasts whose enticing nipples were nearly poking through. The air of sensual arousal was so heavy in the small closet that if there was such a thing as sexual spontaneous combustion the whole supply tent would have burst into flames.

Harry pulled from a sack a bundle of powder-blue cloth. "The latest in seventh century fashion," he said and unfurled a burqa. Worked it over her head then down her full length—loose folds of material from her crown to her toes, not a bit of flesh exposed, and only a hint of her eyes visible under the mesh over her face. "A shame to cover such a glorious enticing frame," he said. "But heck, when in Rome . . ."

She purred like a tigress.

"Can I quote you on that?" He purred... And teased, "Bin Laden wouldn't be hiding under there, now would he?"

Her hands whipped out from under the burqa, and "Let's see!" she growled, and pulled his face under, pressing him hard against herself, and—

"Praise be to Allah!" he shouted, even as the door rattled aggressively, followed immediately by a ferocious fist-pounding and a voice ordering—

"Captain Frigg, Captain Harry Frigg! MPs! Open up!"

"There's no one by that name in here," Harry called back, still hidden under the burqa.

"We know it's you, Captain Frigg! Unlock this door!"

"Oh that Captain Frigg. He left about an hour ago. You might check out the chapel. He said he was scheduled to conduct afternoon prayer services—"

"—It's you, Captain, and you can't hide from the colonel! If you don't open this door, we'll—"

"—I've kinda got my hands full. We're developing Xrays in here. Can you come back in about twenty minutes?"

There was no answer. Not a sound from the other side of the door. Cautious and leery, Harry pulled his head from under the burqa, finger-lipped *Shhhhhhhhh* to Shirley, looked around for a way to escape—

and two burly MPs crashed through the door!



With a dual-track career as a crackerjack screenwriter and an unexemplary Green Beret, Paul Avallone spent four-plus years in Afghanistan playing around first as a Green Beret then as a freelance journalist.

His previous novel of the war is the literary stunner ***Tattoo Zoo***, the flip side of ***Afghany Whammy***.

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M*A*S*H meets KELLY'S HEROES meets STRIPES meets ANIMAL HOUSE.

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There are two ways to look at this novel. As a satirical mockery of the world's mightiest military who could not beat a bunch of goatherds. Or *Animal House* in Afghanistan. The first should make you angry. The second will make you laugh out loud and shout for an encore. -Movie/Biz Weekly Variety

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Gut-wrenching slapstick!

-Kerkus Reviews

Wickedly funny. The author throws the politically-correct baby out with the bathwater.

-Times Sunday Review

Read it; laugh and learn.

-Karl Marmellas

With more than four years in Afghanistan, first as a Green Beret then as a freelance journalist, Paul Avello's previous novel of the war was the award-winning literary masterpiece *Tattoo Zoo*.



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