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Publisher Profile-University of Virginia Press

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ATG: *We understand that you are also a published author. How does it feel to have your novel “Ministers of Fire” named a notable work of fiction by the Washington Post (perhaps new owner Jeff Bezos will make something of it on Amazon?) and listed as one of the Wall Street Journal’s top ten mysteries/thrillers of 2012? How did you come to write it? And are there other mysteries in the offing?*

MS: The seeds of the novel go back as far as the late 1970s, when my father was working in the State Department, and to 1989 when the Tiananmen Square massacre kindled my interest in China. 9/11 brought the themes and characters together into a plot that made sense. The novel received about as nice a reception as any first novelist could hope for, so I feel thankful and very good about it. I’ve been working on another political thriller but my day job gets in the way.

ATG: *Besides writing acclaimed novels what else do you like to do with your time outside of work? Any chance we’ll see you at the Charleston Conference this November?*

MS: I spend a lot of time with my family, skiing and mountain biking and boating and coaching and watching my kids play sports. In the summers, we go to Maine. We have an old house that I enjoy working on, and of course I read like a fiend. I look forward to Charleston every year; *Rotunda* has exhibited there since there was still empty space in the ballroom, and the food is great!

ATG: *We know that this is particularly busy time for you, so we truly appreciate your taking the time to talk to us.*

MS: Thanks to you, too. It’s been a pleasure. 🍷

against the grain

publisher profile

University of Virginia Press

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The Nemesis Returns

Three visionaries walk into a bar in Utah. Well, they actually were there to debate at an international conference. Two were staying at The Inn at Temple Square (Fantasy alert — in real life this Hotel has been demolished). And they all agreed before their meet-up to drink the same thing in the spirit of solidarity. One of them might have liked a martini. One, since the meet up was from 3pm to 5pm, would have preferred High Tea, and the third really wanted Coca-Cola, no caffeine. When they arrived, they discovered the only thing the bar served was Near Beer. In accordance with their previous agreement, all ordered the same thing. Knowing nothing about Near Beer, with smartphones in hand they Googled and learned from Wikipedia that: “A study conducted by the Department of Psychology at **Indiana University** claimed ‘Because non-alcoholic beer provides sensory cues that simulate alcoholic beer, this beverage may be more effective than other placebos in contributing to a credible manipulation of

expectancies to receive alcohol’ making people feel ‘drunk’ when they physically are not.”

To strengthen our metaphor, the bar was serving Green Near Beer for the day. (It might have been St. Patrick’s Day, but Near Beer was the only bar drink available since this wasn’t a “private” club.)

The three are respectively a Consultant, an Arch Evangelist and a Librarian, all with a strong perspective and position on Green OA. Finding they could not all agree on the ostensible topic of the meeting (Green OA), they fell to considering the situation of Green Near Beer, a topic that at first blush seems unrelated to the topic, but to which topic each discovered affinities as they debated.

The consultant felt that Near Beer was too cheap, and besides, would drive real beer out of the marketplace. So he came down firmly against the whole idea of Green Near Beer. The Arch Evangelist saw the potential of Green Near Beer because of its lower impact

on driving skills and simpler production process and the ability to make people happy to be the next great wave, and the librarian opined that it would reduce the cost of going to a bar (something he’d never done before) and might mean more people could get something for almost nothing and could spend their meager dollars on something else. (I did warn you this was a fantasy, didn’t I?)

Would Green Near Beer drive real beer out of the marketplace, or could the consultant save the world of higher production value real beer? Would the Arch-Evangelist’s hope be fulfilled? Would the librarian get his wish? Stay tuned for the next fantasy meeting report from your intrepid fly-on-the-wall reporter. AKA — the Nemesis. 🍷

