

Check out the jack-o-lantern my sister-in-law and her stepdaughter carved. I had to stare at him a while before I figured out what creeps me out about him: the evil eyes, the menacing grin, and that terrified little guy held perilously between his savage teeth. Scary like H.P. Lovecraft.

Fear is one of the most powerful forces within the human psyche. Danger surrounds. Adrenaline pumps. The rational mind shuts down. It's fight or flight, extinction or survival. It seems God created us with this fear instinct for physical self-preservation. But it can backfire on us, because it can be used to manipulate us.



- ✘ According to an FBI study of serial rapists, the most popular weapon used by rapists is the knife, because it inspires the most terror in the victim, which is what her attacker wants.
- ✘ Fear of contaminants in tap water is one reason people drink bottled water, even though an independent study by the National Resources Defense Council discovered elevated levels of toxic chemicals in some brands of bottled water. The NRDC also found that because bottled water is usually stored at room temperature, without any antiseptic agent like chlorine, that gives the bacteria in it time to grow.
- ✘ Fear of terrorism made possible the USA PATRIOT Act, which gives the government numerous controversial powers that Congress had previously rejected, because they have been criticized as not actually making us any safer and in fact of subjecting us to additional abuses of power by our own government.
- ✘ Here in Massachusetts, Ballot Question 1 would phase out the state income tax, cutting government budgets by 18%. Opponents fear this would defund police and schools, even though there are less important, less popular programs that could be cut.

And it will probably work, too, because we all know that if Question 1 were to pass, the politicians could indeed cut police and schools and blame it on us, the voters. Back

when I lived in Walpole, I watched what interesting things the town council spent our money on that were less important than police and schools. Then they came to the voters with a referendum to raise taxes to pay for renovations for the high school. None of my friends understood why I was upset about having real-estate taxes (and my rent) hiked so that my brother (who was in high school at the time) could have a better education. The referendum passed. I quickly learned that politicians do not spend tax money first on the important things, and then secondly to ask for money for less important projects. Rather, they dump as much money as they can into political projects first, and *then* they go back to the voters claiming that unless they get more money, education and civil order will fall apart, because the fear of bad schools and ineffective police is usually enough to get almost any

tax hike approved.

Fear works in ads, too. Clayton Makepeace, one of the world's top ad writers, explains that marketers "are in the business of fulfilling desires... But every benefit is just one side of a coin; the other side is a fear. Because while prospects desire all these things, they also fear NOT having them in their lives. They fear poverty and dependence, illness and pain, being abandoned and left alone, and being thought little of."

I've even resorted to fear tactics myself. Check out this offer for my first novel:

You can get the first novel in *The Conscience of Abe's Turn* series for the special, discounted, introductory price of only \$13.47—**46% off**—but only for a few more days. After election day, November 4, the price goes up to \$24.97.

Neat trick, huh? (That's a real offer, too. Go to <http://AbesTurn.com/book1>, and use the coupon code CLYDEWASHERE on the checkout screen.) This little trick, called "the limited-time offer," is one of the strongest tactics a salesman has to close a sale, because it invokes the fear of missing out on a deal. Fortunately, now that you know the trick, it becomes easier to see through it, even if not easier to resist it.

One of the first things I learned about writing fiction is that every good story thrives on conflict, which itself thrives on fear: fear that the hero will fail, fear of the villain, fear of missing out on the rest of the story. We love great stories because they invoke fear. That fear is what keeps you glued to your seat, unable to put down the book or stop watching the movie. Fear is an obvious component in horror stories and thrillers. But what you may not realize is that it's also a core element of every other fiction genre, from science-fiction to *Gilmore Girls*.

In fact, I extend the concept to non-fiction as

well. In non-fiction, what keeps you glued to the screen or the page is the fear of missing out on key information. So a lot of non-fiction starts with an overview or teaser that whets your appetite.

Fear is also one of the strongest inspirations for writers. To come up with story ideas or topics to write about, one writer advised, start by listing your most painful memories, your biggest mistakes, your most difficult experiences, and your greatest fears.

I certainly drew upon fear in order to come up with *Abe's Turn*, and that's why it breaks from the cliché. The cliché in fiction is that corruption and personal ambition plagues foreign enemies, but not our own country. I just rented *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* on DVD. The bad guys were Russian, whereas in the earlier *Indiana Jones* movies, set during World War II, they were German. I've also been watching through the old *Mission: Impossible* episodes, because I want to do an *M:I*-style episode for *Abe's Turn*. In those stories, the bad guys usually speak in a Russian or German accent and rule some third-world country. They have to do that, because it's the cliché. But do a Google News search on "bribery," and you'll find plenty of stories from U.S. politics. Everyday events remind us of the dirty little secret, that American governments are made up of the same humans in the same positions of power as those third-world dictatorships and police states. And frankly, it's terrifying:

✂ A videographer, a native of Poland during Communism, where they didn't have "free speech" like we do, accidentally records U.S. police as they goad protesters into a confrontation, so that they can arrest the protesters and quash the protest. He posts the video on YouTube.¹ (cf. *Abe's Turn*:

1 <http://AbesTurn.com/youtube/freedom-death>

Season 1, Vol. 1, p. 142)

- ✘ Official FBI guidelines now allow racial profiling and investigations of innocent Americans without any meaningful suspicion of wrongdoing.² The cops used to investigate crimes; now they can investigate people, no crime necessary. (cf. *Abe's Turn: Season 1, Vol. 1, p. 88*)
- ✘ Nicholas Monahan is arrested when he talks back to a TSA agent for feeling up his wife's breasts, in public, bringing her to tears. The arrest report is distorted to justify the arrest.³ (cf. *Abe's Turn: Season 1, Vol. 1, pp. 25, 30*)
- ✘ Police manufacture evidence against one of their own by bribing a convict to introduce false testimony against him, and then they withhold evidence that could clear him.⁴ That's illegal, by the way. (cf. *Abe's Turn: Season 1, Vol. 1, pp. 53, 231*)
- ✘ New Orleans police raid a business and plant drug evidence, in order to bring charges.⁵ (cf. *Abe's Turn: Season 1, Vol. 1, p. 192-193, 204-205*)
- ✘ A police detective badgers Beverly Monroe, an innocent suspect, until she gives him circumstantial evidence to support his accusation.⁶ She spends a decade in prison before her conviction is vacated. (cf. *Abe's Turn: Season 1, Vol. 1, pp. 230-231*)
- ✘ Police beat up Nick Brooks, a press photographer covering the Republican National Convention, using excessive force.⁷ (cf. *Abe's Turn: Season 1, Vol. 1, pp. 25, 226*)
- ✘ Miami cops jump into bed with a sup-

posed criminal organization.⁸ They only get caught, because the supposed criminal is actually an undercover FBI agent. (cf. *Abe's Turn: Season 1, Vol. 1, p. 186*)

- ✘ Federal agencies can investigate almost anyone for any reason, and a federal prosecutor can get a criminal indictment on almost anyone, if he wants to, for breaking some law and can use it to threaten him to falsify his testimony, so says Congressman Louie Gohmert in a panel discussion at the Heritage Foundation.⁹ (cf. *Abe's Turn: Season 1, Vol. 1, p. 63, 79*)

Of course, these are just a few examples I dug up using Google. They are just instances of broader patterns I drew on. I did my research. I fabricated very little of what is seen in the government of Abe's Turn. That is, the abuses you read about in the story have real-world counterparts. One reviewer compared Abe's Turn to a TV crime drama (and that's a fair comparison). "The one difference," she wrote, "is that the law in Abe's Turn is corrupt." What she didn't say is that this is only a difference compared to modern TV crime dramas; it's not always a difference compared to real life.

In fact, the biggest challenge I face is to make reality seem plausible. I can't just take real news stories, drop them into Abe's Turn, and say, "There's another episode." Because the real news stories seem so otherworldly, as if I had made *them* up. So I need to put the real-world pattern into a fictional context, make up a back-story that makes it seem plausible. That's where much of the creativity comes in.

Freakin' terrifying.

But it makes for great drama.

Frankly, I think there's a part of the human animal that actually *wants* to be scared. Maybe it's the rush of emotion that entices us. Studies

2 <http://AbesTurn.com/aclu/fbi-guidelines>

3 <http://AbesTurn.com/lewrockwell/monohan>

4 <http://AbesTurn.com/nytimes/bad-prosecution>

5 <http://AbesTurn.com/nola/planting-drugs>

6 <http://AbesTurn.com/richmond/monroe>

7 <http://AbesTurn.com/downtownexpress/brooks-rnc>

8 <http://AbesTurn.com/miamiherald/corrupt-cops>

9 <http://AbesTurn.com/heritage/everything-a-crime>

have shown that we remember emotionally charged events more vividly than we remember other events. This includes events associated with fear. Also, it is the emotion itself that helps us remember, not whether or not the event is important.

Or maybe it's just that we have an instinct for self-preservation. We are always watching for danger, always ready to respond. And today's "dangers," as it were, attack us constantly, and there's little we can do about them: Rush-hour traffic on the way to work. The boss's withering stare. Having bounced a check. And then there are politicians and ad writers who expertly prey on the fear response every day. All of these evoke fear. And this excess fear can make us paranoid and cause us to overreact, even when we are not truly in danger. Over time, it can even cause a buildup of stress hormones, causing hypertension, headache, fatigue, depression, and other symptoms.

But we have less to fear now than ever before in history.

With simple rules that we teach all our kids, children are safer now than ever before. Children are 4 times more likely to die of heart disease and 17 times more likely to commit suicide than to be abducted by a stranger.

Schools are safer. As much as I hate the government school system, the fact is that kids are 50 times more likely to be murdered out of school than in school, and 150 times more likely to commit suicide.

Crime rates are lower than they've been since the War on Drugs started. Even through the crime scare of the 1990's, crime rates continued to decline.

You are probably more likely to be killed by lightning than by a terrorist attack, and much more likely to be killed in a car accident. Do I even have to go there? Okay, let's.

In a 2004 report, John Mueller of the Cato Institute examined the damage caused by ter-

rorist attacks.¹⁰ (Note how McCain has changed his tune since then!) Mueller came to a two-fold conclusion (and I quote):

1. Assessed in broad but reasonable context, terrorism generally does not do much damage.
2. The costs of terrorism very often are the result of hasty, ill-considered, and overwrought reactions.

In other words, terrorism is a minor issue at worst, except when we freak out about it and cause more problems than we had to start with.

You wouldn't know this by watching the evening news. But remember that the evening news caters to its viewers, and the viewers love to be scared shitless. And remember that George W. Bush's approval rating went up faster than had any other president's, in September 2001.

So read *The Conscience of Abe's Turn*, enjoy the fear and the drama, be informed, and then kick back and relax.

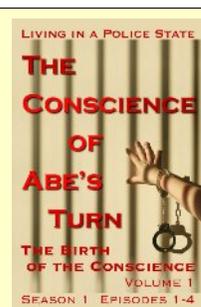
Happy Halloween!



Somewhere in America, the people live in a police state. This is the story of four civil-rights activists who resort to espionage in order to challenge the police-state tactics of their hometown of Abe's Turn. They form an underground organization to serve as "Conscience" to the government around them. This premier volume includes:

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- Prologue
- Preface: Why *Abe's Turn* is significant
- Bonus, behind-the-scenes essay: "Whatever Happened to Zorro?"
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10 <http://AbesTurn.com/cato/terrorism-unlikely>