

**In Sheep's Clothing (Matthew Richter Thriller #1)**  
**Excerpt**

**Prologue**

September 2009

As the clay disk sailed out of the trap house, the President swung his gun, tracking the target. With a gentle squeeze of the trigger, the target exploded, nothing left but dust in the air.

One for one.

The Secret Service agent standing ten feet behind him nodded. President Thomas Walters was a life-long member of the NRA and a former marine awarded the Expert Marksmanship Badge. The man was lethal with a gun.

It was a typical fall day for northern Maine. The morning sun had just cleared the tree line but wasn't yet strong enough to burn away the fog that seemed to seep out of the woods. Although chilly, the President and his entourage of agents didn't seem to mind. Trap shooting was something that the many demands of his office prevented the President from enjoying as often as he would have liked. The way he looked at it, he could escape for a few moments with a pastime from his youth, while his Secret Service agents enjoyed a change of scenery. Besides, today it seemed the foliage was at its peak. The red, orange and yellow leaves together with the scent of autumn reminded the President of hunting trips with his father long ago.

The clay bird shot off to the President's left, but he swiftly adjusted his aim and fired.

Two for two.

His dad was the one who had taught him how to shoot, the one who had told him again and again that ammunition was expensive, a precious commodity not to be wasted by missing. His skill had come from necessity.

The President changed his angle as another target sailed past the shooting line.

Three for three.

One of his father's friends, a buddy from his old platoon, owned a cabin on a lake up in Michigan. Every year in November, his father went hunting, while the future president stayed home with his

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mother and sister. President Walters was thirteen when his dad first asked him to come along. He remembered how excited he was on the ride up to the cabin; how happy he was that his dad thought that he was old enough, man enough to go. Almost instantly, the happy memory vanished as he recalled how humiliated he felt on the way home.

Another clay bird exploded over the field.

Four for four.

On the second day of the trip, the future president had missed a buck that was grazing fifty yards away. He had hesitated, waiting for the buck to turn for a better shot, a perfect shot. That one second had cost him, as the deer, sensing danger, bolted. A young Tom Walters had squeezed off a wild shot, knowing as he did so that it was hopeless. God, how he had wished he could relive those few seconds over. He had wanted so much to please his father, to have his dad tell him how proud he was. The rest of the week was horrible as he dreaded the long ride home.

“What the hell’s the matter with you boy? There’s no reason you should ‘a missed that shot. Hell, I’ll bet your sister could ‘a hit that buck. Maybe I’ll bring her next year and leave you home!”

It was four more years before his father asked him to go again.

Five for five.

His dad was the one who had pressured him to enlist, told him that the Corps would make a man out of him. The President felt a twinge of guilt as he thought about his father, wondering what his dad would think when the story broke. Jesus! The press would be all over him like vultures on an animal carcass and all for something that happened almost forty years ago.

Six for six.

At one point, back when his career was beginning, he dreaded that his past indiscretions would suddenly surface and his budding political career would wither and die. However, as time passed, and his career progressed, the fears had faded.

The target shot out in front of the President, interrupting his thoughts. He swung the gun, but not with the same fluid motion. The clay bird broke into several large pieces.

Seven for seven.

As the President reloaded his shotgun, he could almost hear his father.

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“Concentrate now boy! You almost missed that time! People will think I’m raisin’ a sissy!”

He had just been discharged from the service and had entered college on the GI bill. Like many young men away from home for the first time, away from authority, he lived the life of a rebellious freshman, going to beer parties, skipping classes, trying to get every girl he met in the sack. In a few short months, the disciplined life he led while in the Corps seemed a vague memory. At the end of his first semester, after final exams, he celebrated with his roommate and some coed friends by drinking shots of tequila and playing strip poker. The poker game soon gave way to sex, and after they each had made love to both women, Walters and his roommate watched as the two women made love to each other. He must have had a lot of tequila—before he realized what was he was doing, he was having sex with his roommate.

What might have been excused as a drunken college stunt or youthful experimentation probably would have been except for two things. First, the future president and his roommate continued to see each other. Second, one of the women managed to capture a few intimate moments of the future president and his roommate on her camera.

He had thought that the whole event was long forgotten until two months ago. Senator Tyler Rumson, an aggressive, two-term Republican from New Jersey, showed him the pictures and suggested that he reconsider running for reelection. When the President refused, Rumson had threatened to leak the pictures to the press. Rumson had increased the pressure over the last several weeks and President Walters had finally realized that even if he agreed to drop out of the race, Rumson was going to give the pictures to the press anyway. It was odd, Walters thought, that the possibility of losing the presidency, of losing his wife, and possibly being cast aside as a social pariah didn’t bother him nearly as much as the prospect of facing his dad. He was a sixty-six year old man, he was the President of the United States, and he was still afraid of his father.

The President called for the next target. As the clay bird flew out of the trap house, much to the shock of his Secret Service agents, he turned the gun, stuck the barrel in his mouth and pulled the trigger.

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