

Victor's JUSTICE

By Thomas L. Harper

*T*raitor. No one made a sound in the makeshift courtroom, but that word hung in the air as if it were being shouted in

a deafening chorus. There were no bullets flying, no cannon balls raining down, yet as Captain Benjamin Allen stood in the sweltering courtroom, he felt a pang of fear in his gut normally reserved for the battlefield.

Ben remained rigid at the position of attention at counsel table, but he could feel the piercing stares from the packed gallery. Three days ago they were his brothers-in-arms, his friends — men he had fought and survived beside. Three days ago, he had been regarded as one of the finest young officers in his unit. Now he might as well be wearing the same dingy grey uniform of the client standing beside him.

How much can change in 72 hours, he thought.

FIRST CALL.

Night had long since fallen on the sea of tents that made up the 108th Pennsylvania

Infantry Regiment's encampment. Inside his tent, Ben toyed with his lantern, working to keep light on the bit of paper before him.

Josephine, my love,

I bring wonderful news. Our men fought gallantly and we have beaten back the enemy at a place called Jonesboro. By the time you read this Atlanta will no doubt have fallen and we will continue onward toward the sea. Know that you are in my thoughts always. Hold little Caleb and Mary close and tell them that we will be together again soon.

Yours ever,
Benjamin

Ben carefully folded the letter and paused as the sound of celebratory whoops filled his tent. Ben checked his pocket watch and was surprised when he saw the time. It was normal for the camp to be festive after a



victory, but exhaustion would usually drive even the happiest soldier to his bedroll by now. Ben shrugged it off when suddenly a set of hurried footsteps beat past the front of his tent. That's odd, he thought — soldiers didn't just voluntarily run anywhere after dark unless they were being ordered around or chased.

Ben grabbed his uniform coat and decided to go have a look. As he stepped outside, he heard several familiar voices nearby and headed in their direction.

"I hear he smoked a pipe and laughed while watching Sumter burn," said a voice to a chorus of incensed profanities as he rounded the corner. Several officers sat around the fire, their caps off and blue uniform coats unbuttoned.

"I'm looking forward to doing the same at his execution," replied Captain James Bridges from across the campfire. Ben and James, or "Stick" as he was affectionately nicknamed for his lanky build, went way back, having met while standing in line to volunteer for the war. The two had been inseparable

since then, having escaped death together more times than Ben cared to count.

"They say he never takes prisoners — we've been trying to capture that bastard since the start of the war," Stick added, a look of disgust on his face.

Sitting beside him was First Lieutenant Ezra O'Connor, an Irishman from Philadelphia who had an accent thick enough to cut with a saber. "Them stories are true. My cousin was at Bull Run helpin' to collect the bodies — said they stumbled upon 20 or 30 men, all cut down by his blade, hands still tied behind their backs."

Stick suddenly looked up, a wide grin breaking across his face. "Gentlemen, make way for the illustrious Captain Benjamin Allen!" Stick announced, beckoning Ben to sit beside him.

"Now what could have possibly drawn you out from your exciting nightly ritual of getting to bed at a reasonable hour?" Stick joked, handing him a jug of something that smelled strong enough to strip paint off a barn.

"I'd never miss ... well, whatever it is we're celebrating," Ben said, taking a long swig while fighting back a gag.

"You haven't heard about our esteemed guest?" Stick replied, rising to address the group. Spreading his arms wide, Stick bellowed.

"The 108th Pennsylvania Regiment, pride of the Commonwealth, has a great present for General Sherman sitting in this very camp. None other than Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Tremont — the Butcher of Bull Run himself!"

"Patrol found a whole bunch of locals in town, all shot in the back," O'Connor added. "Tremont cut 'em down like dogs as he ran."

"Think they'll just cut to the chase and let me put him down?" Stick asked.

"I'd shoot him myself, but he's not worth the ball," Ben replied.

The night wore on as they continued passing the jug around, talking about all the ways they'd get revenge on Tremont. It proved to be the most fun Ben had had in a long time.

REVEILLE.

Ben nearly shot out of his cot as the cold water hit his face. Stick stood nearby, bucket in hand and bent over in laughter.

"Captain Allen, as an upstanding officer you really should get the proper amount of rest," Stick said in a mock serious tone.

Ben collapsed back onto the edge of his cot.

"Did a horse kick me or do I blame you for this?" Ben asked with his head in his hands.

"Georgia's finest, my friend. You can lodge a complaint with the rebs about the quality of their booze later, but right now the Colonel wants to see you," Stick declared.

"This would be a great time to tell me you're joking, Stick," Ben groaned, still keeled over.

"Afraid not, friend. You better get over there before we're both assigned to clean the pig pen," Stick warned before ducking out of the tent.

Ben wondered what the Colonel could possibly want with him. There was no such thing as a friendly meeting with the Colonel. Ben wracked his aching brain trying to think of what stupid mistake landed him in this position. Whatever it was, he'd soon find out.

A short while later, Ben stepped into the commander's tent. Colonel John J. Hastings towered over a table, intently studying a large map. In spite of his age, the Colonel was still an imposing figure. Barrel-chested and as tall as an oak tree, the soldiers joked that he probably wrestled oxen for fun.

"Sir, Captain Allen reporting as ordered," Ben let out, saluting.

The Colonel silently gestured Ben forward, still scanning the map. He raised his head, looking Ben over. "I hear you were a lawyer before the war, Captain."

"A-apprentice lawyer, yes sir — under my father," stammered Ben. He hadn't expected small talk, but the Colonel's sudden question about his seemingly distant past life had caught him off guard.

"That'll do just fine," the Colonel declared. "Captain, I have a special assignment that's right up your alley."

"You've no doubt heard that we recently captured none other than Lieutenant Colonel Tremont," said Hastings.

"Yes sir, the Butcher of Bull Run," Ben acknowledged.

"Butcher indeed," echoed Hastings. "You've also no doubt heard of his latest atrocity — gutlessly murdering some local civilians during his retreat."

Ben nodded, unsure of where the Colonel was headed.

"Captain, we are going to give Tremont the justice he deserves, but I find myself in a bit of a quandary — one I'm confident you can help me solve," said the Colonel, leaning against his desk.

"You see, our superiors will demand, from the comfort of their Washington offices no less, that we afford the Lieutenant Colonel fair treatment. Due process, they'll say — a trial, even!" he scoffed. "What they cannot comprehend is that we are an army on the move with a war to win. And that, Captain, is where you enter."

"Sir?" Ben questioned.

"I'm assigning you to act as Lieutenant Colonel Tremont's defense attorney. General Sherman wants this army ready to march in four days' time, come hell or high water. You'll have Tremont ready to stand trial in three," Hastings ordered.

Ben felt his heart drop into a pit as his face flushed hot.

"... Sir?" Ben repeated, in utter disbelief.

Colonel Hastings stood up, bringing himself to his full height. "Captain, I'm fully aware this job is not glamorous. But I will not allow General Sherman to be pestered by Washington bureaucrats, nor will I allow a single Confederate prisoner to delay our entire advance. This is a team effort and I expect you to play your role.

"Are we clear?"

"Clear, sir" Ben gritted.

Ben left the Colonel's tent, his head spinning. He was surrounded by a thousand men who would love nothing more than to put a knife into Tremont's belly. Now he was supposed to defend that man.



ASSEMBLY.

The next day, Ben sat pushing his rations around his tin plate. Seventy-two hours, he thought. In 72 hours he'd be free of this damned assignment that was hanging around his neck like an invisible yoke.

"Well I hear a certain someone made a new friend." Ben picked up his head to see Stick walking up.

"Word is that there's gonna be a court-martial for ole Tremont ... and the Colonel tagged you to defend him," Stick said, a smirk on his face. "If you were going to replace me as your best friend, you could've at least given me a heads up," he added, smiling wide.

Not amused, Ben hung his head.

"Maybe if I run away for a bit this whole thing will blow over."

Stick shook his head. "No can do. You'd just be making extra work for me since I'd be the one ordered to go drag your sorry tail back."

"Besides, everybody knows you got stuck with this and we all know how it's gonna end. Think of yourself less as a lawyer and more like ... Tremont's professional guide to the gallows."

Ben chuckled — Stick always had a twisted way of finding a bright spot.

"I suppose it's time to go see my client then," Ben responded sarcastically as they both laughed in unison.

In the heat of the day, Ben could nearly taste the stench of the camp pigsty as he approached. Another small pen bordered it, with a bit of rough canvas haphazardly set up in the corner as a crude shelter from the searing Georgia heat. Underneath it sat a gnarled chunk of railroad track with a man chained to it. It was the Butcher of Bull Run in the flesh.

Ben had never encountered Lieutenant Colonel Tremont on the battlefield, much less even seen a painting of him. Based on the rumors, Ben always imagined him as a hulking brute, one step removed from a savage wild beast. The man chained in the pen was anything but that. Tremont's uniform hung loosely on his body as if it were a size too big. His face was gaunt and

framed by a ragged grey beard. What looked to be a fresh burn peeked up over Tremont's collar. He probably hadn't been taken without a fight, Ben thought. Ben had expected to look upon the embodiment of cruelty when he met Tremont. Instead, he simply saw a broken and exhausted old man.

Ben stood there silent for a moment. "Tremont?" He finally blurted out.

Tremont didn't look up. "It's *Lieutenant Colonel* to you," he retorted, his southern drawl dripping with contempt. "I suppose it's time then?"

"Time for what?" Ben asked.

Tremont looked up and met Ben's eyes for a moment. "The hangman's noose," he said, matter-of-factly.

Ben had come prepared to lock horns with a terror of a man, but now he was knocked off-kilter.

"N-no," Ben stammered. "Well — not yet at least. The Colonel has ordered that you stand trial first."

Tremont kicked back his head and belted out a mock laugh. "Well, how genuinely kind of your Colonel."

Ben felt a spark of anger.

"And when exactly is this grand trial?" Tremont asked.

"Two days from now."

Tremont grunted in amusement. "What charges, pray tell, do I have to answer for?"

"The locals you murdered during your retreat," Ben replied coldly.

Tremont's chuckle halted and he locked his eyes with Ben for a moment before dropping his head back down.

"Well, Captain, I thank you for being the Colonel's dutiful messenger."

Ben gritted his teeth. "I'm not the messenger. I'm your defense counsel."

Tremont once again brought his gaze up to meet Ben's, a look of amusement again painted on his face.

"Oh are you, now? You may wear Captain's bars, but you look to be about 14. How long have you been a soldier?"

"Nearly two years."

Tremont let out a snort. "And what's your experience defending accused war criminals?"

"Well I was apprenticing as a lawyer before the war —"

Tremont cut him off, erupting into a full-throated laugh. "Well, Captain, please tell your Colonel that I am much obliged for his commitment to justice."

Ben's anger flashed. "He's giving you a chance, which is more than you deserve."

Tremont's laughter abruptly died. "I'm chained up, accused of murder, and my only ally is someone who's neither a soldier nor an attorney. That's some chance. Why don't you come get me when the noose is ready, Captain."

Back in his tent, Ben paced back and forth, still furious. He'd only met Tremont once and already wanted to personally march him in front of a firing squad. How could he possibly defend such a man? As his mind feverishly worked through ways he could get out of the assignment, he noticed the folded paper of his last letter home.

A stab of guilt shot through him as he took it into his hands. His wife had begged him not to volunteer for the war. He had reassured her that he was answering a higher calling — it was a fight for the soul





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of this nation, he had told her. If she knew how he was acting now about defending Tremont, she'd point out that his grand speech was nothing more than a load of sanctimonious garbage.

His guilt grew white hot as he thought of his children. They had beamed with pride the first time he'd donned his uniform. Ben was their hero, their knight in shining armor. Now he cowered in his tent, tears welling up in his eyes. Ben took a deep breath, wiping his face. He had no clue where this road was leading, but he was certain that sitting in his tent was not where he belonged.

RETREAT.

Darkness had fallen as Ben walked up to Tremont's pen. The only light came from a small fire crackling near the prisoner.

"Let me guess. The Colonel saw how lovely it is tonight and decided to move up my execution?" Tremont growled, barely lifting his head.

"With what I've heard about you, I'm amazed they didn't just shoot you on sight," Ben remarked as he walked up and took a seat nearby.

Tremont chuckled dryly. "I'm sure you would have appreciated that sort of due process."

"No different than what you gave those boys at Bull Run," Ben fired back.

Tremont studied him. "What sort of man do you think I am, Captain?"

"Cruel beyond measure. Someone with no regard for human life," Ben answered without hesitation.

"Believing that a man is soulless makes killing him a heck of a lot easier," Tremont replied.

"Or easier for a jury to find you guilty and send you to die," Ben added coolly.

Silence hung in the air for a moment.

"Is the story true — did you execute those prisoners at Bull Run?"

Tremont met Ben's eyes. "I thought my trial was about dead locals, not some bit of ancient history."

Ben kept his stare locked on Tremont.

"Did you kill those men, Colonel?"

"We're at war, son."



"Did you kill those men?" Ben demanded.

Tremont narrowed his eyes. "My job in all this madness is simple — to defeat my enemies, no matter what the cost — something I wouldn't expect a pup like you to understand."

Ben's fingers curled into fists. "I suppose those civilians were a fair price to pay so you could save your hide?"

"You're my lawyer. I'm about to stand trial in the middle of a war. Does the truth make much of a difference?"

"It does to me. If I'm going to help you, the least you can do is be honest."

Tremont stared distantly into the fire.

"You have children, Captain?"

Without pausing, he continued. "I had a daughter. Emily. She managed to fight and live for 10 months. Ten months longer than her mother," he continued.

"By the time I learned Alice was carrying our baby, I had seen enough war for a lifetime. That baby was my ticket to redemption — to a better life. Alice gave her life to bring Emily into this world."

"After that, keeping Emily alive was all that mattered." Tremont gritted his teeth. "It was my only purpose in life and I failed."

He paused again, looking Ben directly in the eyes. "Don't think for a moment that I want to bear the burden of causing another innocent person's death. I kill my enemies in combat because it is *required*. I make no apologies for that. I'm prepared to answer before the Almighty for my deeds on the battlefield, but killing those civilians is not one of them."



Ben sat silent for a moment.

He then stood up and regarded Tremont. "Get some sleep, sir. We've got work to do tomorrow."

TATTOO.

The sun had barely peeked above the tree-tops as Ben pored over a battlefield map and a stack of field reports from the Jonesboro battle.

"Knock knock," Stick announced as he stepped into Ben's tent. "I see someone is back to trying to make the rest of us look bad."

"It's Tremont," Ben replied distractedly, his eyes still scanning the map.

Stick cocked his head. "If you're trying to figure out how we could have whipped him more quickly, there'll be time for that later."

Ben didn't lift his head. "I'm trying to pin down which units would have been in the area when those civilians were killed."

"Wait. Are you actually doing *lawyer* work here?" Stick said, the playfulness disappearing from his voice.

Ben handed a pair of reports to Stick.

"Take a look at these. That first one is from Captain Jewett of the 15th Infantry. His men made the initial sweep through town after we broke the Rebels. Jewett reports encountering civilians as they went house to house seizing supplies."

"Now go to the second report, the one from the 10th Ohio Cavalry. They reported finding the bodies that same day."

Stick turned the page, reading silently.

"Seems like a normal report to me."

"I thought so too until I read them together," Ben replied. "The Ohio Cavalry reported being out on patrol for supplies when they found the bodies. But look at the timing of the report."

Stick furrowed his brow. "1900 hours — so?"

"So why would a patrol go for supplies just four hours after Captain Jewett's men had been through the same houses?" Ben questioned.

"Army efficiency at its finest. It wouldn't be the first time two units got sent to do the exact same thing," Stick argued, unmoved.

Ben shook his head. "True, but Jewett interacted with the townspeople and didn't report any casualties. Why would Tremont flee the battlefield and then risk coming back just to murder people?"

Stick shrugged, handing the reports back. "Maybe Jewett missed the bodies or maybe your new friend is an even bigger monster than we thought. Who cares?"

"I'm supposed to defend him, Stick. Maybe Jewett and his men would be able to tell us a little more."

Stick screwed up his face. "Maybe you should head over to the aid station to get checked because you're sounding crazy."

Ben felt stung. "You know the Colonel stuck me with this job. I could use your help on this one, Stick."

Stick stepped backwards. "I'm not playing any part in this. Tremont deserves to die and that's the end of it." And with that, he left.

A short time later Ben strode across camp towards Captain Jewett's tent. A soldier on horseback suddenly came riding up, flagging Ben down. "Sir, the Colonel wants to see you immediately." What now, Ben wearily thought.

Ben entered Colonel Hastings' tent and was greeted before he could even report.

"Captain Allen, I trust everything is in order for tomorrow?"

"Not yet, sir. Getting things together in less than three days has been a challenge."

"General Meade only needed three days to beat Lee at Gettysburg, Captain. Surely you'll be ready to walk a man into a courtroom in that amount of time," Hastings retorted derisively.

"And what's this I hear about you wanting to talk to men from the 15th Infantry?" Hastings added.

The question caught Ben off guard. He hadn't talked to anyone except for Stick about the 15th Infantry.

"Sir, I — I have some questions about what they saw —"

"Captain Jewett and his men are extremely busy," the Colonel interjected.

"I understand, sir, but I would only need a bit of their time."

Hastings rose from his chair. "Captain, I thought I had made myself clear about your assignment."

"Sir, I'm defending Lieutenant Colonel Tremont as ordered."

"I ordered you to play a part, Captain," Hastings spat back, his voice rising.

Ben reflexively locked up at the position of attention, staring straight ahead as Hastings continued.

"You will not be speaking with Captain Jewett or anyone else for that matter. You will have that monster ready to face justice tomorrow, or you'll face your own court-martial."

Ben felt as though he'd been hit square in the jaw.

"You're a fine officer, Ben. Don't waste it all on a murderer. You're dismissed."

"Yes sir," Ben sputtered before leaving.

Night fell over the camp as Ben walked aimlessly among the tents, still reeling from the Colonel's words. Tremont wasn't owed



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much, but he deserved to know the truth about what to expect tomorrow.

As he made his way towards Tremont's pen, he heard an awful howl rise up. Ben broke into a sprint, but came skidding to a halt when he came upon the pen.

Tremont lay on the ground with his hands up, still chained to the railroad track. Three soldiers stood around him, their jackets off and sleeves rolled up. The sergeant standing in the middle held a long piece of metal with a red-hot tip.

"Stick him again!" one of the other soldiers yelled excitedly.

"STOP!" Ben blurted out as he burst through the gate. The soldiers turned around, looking unconcerned. Tremont's filthy shirt was opened and several fresh burn marks lay across his chest as he writhed in pain.

"This man is a prisoner of war, what are you men doing?" Ben demanded.

"Sir, we're just carrying out our orders," the sergeant calmly countered.

"Orders from whom?"

"Stand down, Captain Allen," came a voice from behind Ben. He wheeled around to see Stick approaching.

Ben felt his stomach drop into his feet. "Stick — d-did you know about this?"

Stick looked past him. "Sergeant, why don't you tell Captain Allen the good news?"

"Sir, the prisoner confessed to us that he killed those locals," the sergeant said.

"Was that before or after you branded him like a piece of livestock?" Ben shot back.

"Well that's beside the point now, isn't it?" Stick interjected, smiling. "You asked for my help, so I wanted to do my part. Now your job tomorrow is simple."

"Get the hell out of here. All of you," Ben replied, disgusted.

Stick stood firm. "My men have things under control here. Why don't you go rest up for your big day tomorrow?"

Ben drew his revolver and leveled it at Stick, cocking back the hammer as his hand trembled. "Leave, Captain Bridges."

Still smiling, Stick slowly raised his hands. "Boys, why don't we leave Captain Allen to his *friend* here."

Ben kept his revolver up as Stick slowly backed away, winking at Ben as he and the other soldiers disappeared into camp. Ben remained frozen in place for a time, the barrel of his gun visibly shaking. He slowly holstered it before collapsing beside Tremont.

TAPS.

The town's clapboard church was packed to the gills the next day, its pews filled with soldiers rather than parishioners. Tremont's court-martial had drawn a reasonable crowd at first. But when word got out that Ben had opened the trial by demanding that Lieutenant Colonel Tremont be transferred to Washington, soldiers had flocked to the makeshift courtroom.

Ben sat gazing up at the sanctuary that now served as a makeshift bench for the tribunal. Tremont sat to his left, looking as if he'd just been plucked from the battlefield. Shackles still bound his hands to his ankles, as if a man in his condition could make it any further than the first few pews. Stick sat in the first row, his stare boring holes into Ben's back.

Ben had been surprised when the presiding officer allowed him to proceed with his argument for a change of venue. Each bit of evidence he offered had been met with a volley of boos and protests from the crowd.

A riot nearly broke out when Tremont testified about his treatment. After presenting the last of his evidence, the tribunal's mood appeared to range from boredom to outright annoyance. A feeling of resignation began to seep into Ben's mind.

"Have you anything else to present, Captain?" the presiding officer asked.

Ben nodded and slowly rose from his chair.

"I do not stand before you to proclaim Lieutenant Colonel Tremont's innocence or demand that he receive special treatment. All that I ask is that he be given a fair chance — the same chance that any one of us would want if we were in his place."

Ben turned to the crowd behind him, seeing Stick with a disgusted look on his face.

"Lieutenant Colonel Tremont presents us with a mighty struggle that cuts to the very heart of why we are fighting. I'll be the first to admit that I thought he should have been executed on sight. Why should we give mercy to an enemy who offers none in return?"

"But this war isn't being waged to simply crush our enemies into submission. We fight in defense of a union that our forefathers sacrificed so much to forge — a union built upon a set of values and the belief that *all* men are created equal and are bestowed with certain unalienable rights. It is *those* values that must guide our conduct. War may be hell, but it is no excuse to cast off the very values that set our union apart and make it something worth fighting and dying for.



"Lieutenant Colonel Tremont stands accused of awful crimes. But neither the severity of those crimes, nor his status as an infamous enemy officer is cause to forfeit his basic right to be tried fairly and to defend himself. It is rare to find certainty in war, but the evidence today has shown an undeniable truth: He cannot receive a fair trial here.

"If our sacrifices are to mean anything, we cannot yield the moral high ground, no matter how easy, convenient or tempting it may be. If we do, it will forever be a black mark upon all that we are fighting for. I ask, therefore, not that you excuse Lieutenant Colonel Tremont, but that you send him to a place where can be impartially judged, as all men deserve."

Deliberations had taken what felt like an eternity, but the tribunal finally marched back to their seats. "Accused and defense counsel, please rise," the presiding officer intoned.

Ben's stomach twisted into knots, his heart hammering in his ears. Much had changed in the last 72 hours, but while Ben stood against the withering stares of his brothers-in-arms, he couldn't help but feel that he was the same soldier that he'd always been. Though the battleground he fought on had changed, he was confident that he was fighting for the same cause that had driven him to volunteer in the first place. As Ben prepared for the inevitable defeat, he found solace in knowing that he had not lost himself in all this madness.

The presiding officer spoke, but it was as if his words were uttered in a foreign language. Ben shook his head, looking to the altar with confusion. "Excuse me, sir?"

The presiding officer sighed. "Captain Allen, I said that while our decision was not a unanimous one, it is the decision of this tribunal that Lieutenant Colonel Tremont shall be remanded to military police custody for immediate transport to Washington, D.C. This proceeding is adjourned." As the church erupted in pandemonium, Ben stood there in bewilderment. Two soldiers acting as bailiffs hurriedly escorted Tremont out of the raucous church, yelling at the crowd to keep

back. Ben stood there, watching the mayhem as if it were in slow motion, barely noticing the gap where Stick had been.

Outside, Ben stood looking on as several military police prepared to load Tremont onto a wagon. He should have felt a sense of victorious triumph in that moment. Instead, Ben felt helpless, for he would soon be back on the march, his path diverging from Tremont's as quickly as their two worlds had come crashing together. Tremont looked up in Ben's direction and for a moment they locked eyes. Still shackled, Tremont came to the position of attention and raised his right hand as best he could in a salute.

Just then, Stick approached, flanked by a pair of rifle-wielding soldiers. A set of iron handcuffs dangled from his hand. "The Colonel's requested your presence, Captain Allen," Stick said.

"Now would be a good time to tell me you're joking, Captain Bridges," Ben replied.

"Afraid not, *friend*," Stick replied, a certain twisted satisfaction in his voice. Ben didn't know what his future held, but for once he finally knew why the Colonel wanted to see him. ☛

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"My background as a military attorney and my interest in historical fiction combined to help spark the story," says fiction contest winner Thomas Harper, who, in addition to practicing in the areas of general counsel work, business and real estate transactions, land development

and municipal law, is also a major in the U.S. Army JAG Corps (Army Reserves). "Having both advised on the law of war in Afghanistan and handled numerous criminal cases, I have seen the moral and ethical tension points portrayed in 'Victor's Justice' play out first hand. Beyond my own experience, the concept of an attorney's ethical duty to represent their client is one that fascinates me and is something to which most attorneys can relate." As to his own fiction favorites, Harper said, "Being dad to a toddler means that the fiction I read these days generally involves puppies, Sesame Street characters, or Dr. Seuss creations. When I do have the time to read for myself, I tend to escape to the world of 'Star Wars' fiction novels, which are something I have loved since I was a kid. While it is impossible to pick favorites, I find myself coming back to Claudia Gray's writing again and again. She is a former attorney whose work extends well beyond 'Star Wars.' Her stories are exceptionally engrossing and do not shy away from tackling difficult moral issues, albeit in the galaxy far, far away."