

# **SLEAZEFORD**

**(SLEAFORD NOIR 2).**

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## **PLOT SUMMARY:**

One sleepy Fenland town. Two Polish chancers eager to make a fast buck with no questions asked. A group of businessmen with funny handshakes wanting to rake off big money from town planning contracts. A neo-Nazi bigot who'll jump at the chance of becoming Mayor seeing it as the first stepping stone on his march to global power. His bunch of thuggish skinhead hangers-on. Add a huge, abandoned industrial complex on the edge of town ripe for redevelopment. Mix them all together and what

could possibly go wrong? Except that matters soon escalate way beyond anything any of these groups expected.

Welcome to Sleazeford...

## **DISCLAIMER:**

This book is a work of fiction. It is not an accurate representation of local government in Sleaford, Lincolnshire or indeed anywhere else in Great Britain. There is no such organisation as Sleaford Urban Council. In reality, Sleaford is governed by three tiers of local authorities: Sleaford Town Council, North Kesteven District Council and Lincolnshire County Council each with their own officials, responsibilities and budgets.

Therefore, none of the events described here could possibly happen.

Although considered by many to be a far-right, fascist organisation, the British National Party is a legitimate British political party that I am sure would not openly condone the views or actions of Peachornby or his followers.

Also, everyone knows that local politics is a model of honesty, integrity and transparency. Men and women stand for election to become councillors solely in order to serve and represent their communities. These are all selfless people. Nobody enters local government in order to become involved with graft, corruption or under the table deals. Nor do they wish to grandstand in the local media, poke their noses

into other people's business or throw their weight about on committees while claiming large expenses. These are well known facts. Therefore the events depicted here are impossible.

I have also taken a few liberties with the geography of Sleaford for the sake of the story.

Remember, this book is a work of fiction and the town depicted is more accurately Sleazeford rather than the real life Sleaford...

"We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White Children."

David Lane 1938-2007, US White Supremacist



## CHAPTER 1. THE LAST DAYS OF THE WEST.

They say when you die, your whole life flashes before you. Len Weston's life must have been very short – which it wasn't – or he only got very edited highlights. Because Len was dead before he hit the floor.

Not like his death was the biggest surprise of the year. The guy was seventy, chronically overweight, smoked like a chimney, drank like a fish and loved his fry-ups. The concepts of healthy living and eating five portions of fruit and veg a day had passed him by. To top it off, he'd had two heart attacks already. After the second, he'd had a triple bypass operation.

At his follow-up examination the Consultant read him the riot act. "Cut out the cigarettes, the alcohol, the fry-ups and take-aways and avoid stress," was the core of his message. Len nodded. After the first he was worried but after the second, he was genuinely scared. Terrified would be a better word. No way did he want to meet the Grim Reaper just yet.

His wife, Glenda, sat next to him. She herself was no svelte bride any more – she looked like one of those fat, jolly matrons on a saucy seaside postcard, her body all boobs, jelly-roll belly and bum. No neck but with a laughing face on top. But not today. She sat, hatchet-faced as the Consultant laid it on the line for Len.

On the drive home, Glenda turned to her husband of over forty years. "That's it. Salads for you from now on. And you'll take some exercise..."

"I'll walk to the pub?" Len said, like many men trying to make a joke of his fear.

"No you won't. You're staying away from there. And you're keeping out of the Club House..."

"C'mon," said Len, hoping to use the skills he'd learned as a Trade Union negotiator all those years ago. "I'll stick to orange juice. And the Doctor said I could play bowls in a couple of months."

At the time, Len sincerely meant what he said. He'd looked into the face of Death and didn't want to see it again any time soon. He looked at his wife as she drove. "Don't make me give up the Urban Council. I'm certain to become Mayor at the next elections. It's not stressful or anything – mostly opening fêtes and prize-givings. And I think you'd like it, dearest."

Glenda pulled up at the lights. Despite her hard-set face, Len spotted the twinkle in her eye. He'd won. "You lose a stone by election time and I'll be your Lady Mayoress. Deal?"

"Deal," said Len. They shook hands. Len would agree to give up everything but he desperately wanted to become Mayor. That would be the high spot of his life – the prize he'd been working for all his political life. His name would be inscribed in gold leaf on the ornate Victorian plaque inside the Town Hall, there for all future generations to peruse.

Despite his age, it was easier than he thought to shed the pounds. That second attack had scared him stiff. Salads, cutting out the booze and even taking the stairs rather than the lifts helped to shift the weight. Sure, he was out of breath at the top but the exercise must be doing him some good, he thought. But he didn't like the feel of his heart racing like it wanted to fly out of his chest. It'll get easier as more weight comes off, he reassured himself.

The election result was closer than he expected. Sure, some of it was down to party politics at a national level. Politicians weren't flavour of the month – when are they ever? – but also Len Weston's ill-health had hit the local press. The *Sleaford Standard* ran several articles and Len's request for his coronary to be hushed up had been politely ignored.

If he was a younger man – and in better health – he'd like to give that muck-raking journo, Butler, a good thumping out back. Wouldn't like it would be the first time he'd used his fists to further the cause. When he was an up-and-coming Union convenor – back in the seventies, that was – he'd bashed a few scabs and blacklegs. But that was then and this is now and those days were behind him.

So the result was closer than he'd liked, but even a win by one vote is enough for victory. And Len knew he wouldn't be seeking re-election. One term as Mayor of Sleaford would be enough for him. He'd milk it for what he could take and then resign on a greatly enhanced pension.

Len enjoyed the status and respect that came with the title. He loved wearing the gold chain of office and opening things. He loved his big office at the Town Hall even more. Okay, it overlooked the car park but so what? If he craned his neck, he

could just see the spire of St Denys church. His office even came with a pretty secretary, Donna, and Len wasn't stupid enough to mention her to Gladys.

The only drawback were the civic functions and feasts. Canapés, vol-au-vents, snacks, gateaux and in the evening, as often as not, a seven course banquet. Soup, fish course, a sorbet to cleanse the palate, then the main course – usually a roast with potatoes and all the trimmings – then dessert, always richly slathered with cream. These courses were all washed down with beer or wine, depending on the company. Of course, then came cheese and biscuits.

Len had a big weakness for cheese, especially blue cheese such as Stilton, Gorgonzola or Danish Blue. He always helped himself to a large wedge. In truth, several wedges. Finally, coffee and chocolate mints to finish the meal. If there was time between announcements and speeches, he'd step outside and enjoy a whisky and cigar, the rich smoke enhancing the meal. Usually, he swapped non-PC jokes and anecdotes with his friends.

Despite Gladys's nagging and his family Doctor's warnings, Len's weight crept up and soon overtopped his previous peak. Behind his back, people started calling him Taft, after the heaviest American President in history.

However, with all the enjoyment of Mayorship, memories of his heart attack receded to the back of his mind. Occasionally, when he remembered, he chose boiled potatoes over roasties. Or soda water instead of single-malt scotch. But usually, life carried on as before and his laugh was heard at many functions and events in and around the district.

Every month, one function Len never missed was his Masonic Lodge. He was a Past Master of Eslaforde Lodge, which met every third Tuesday between September and May at Sleaford's Masonic Hall on Watergate. The name Eslaforde was taken from the old name for Sleaford. He wore a dark blue apron liberally encrusted with gold braid which showed he was an officer of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Lincolnshire. Now he was Mayor, Len secretly hoped that he'd be promoted to Grand Lodge. Should be, he thought, he'd done enough for Freemasonry over the years. He'd dug deep for all the non-stop charitable requests.

This month's meeting was fairly quiet. A lecture on the early history of Freemasonry. Having heard it all before, Len snoozed through it until the Director of Ceremonies nudged him in the ribs when his snores became noticeable.

It was at the dinner afterwards that he came into his own. Len was a born raconteur – more than one brother had told him he should have been on the telly. Len grinned modestly. As a Trade Union convenor and then a local politician, he'd made more money than most struggling comedians on the circuit. Tonight, he stood in the centre of the U-shaped tables with his Masonic brethren laughing and banging their glasses on the tables in applause.

"... and then the golfer raised his club and said..." Len's hand flew to his chest. "Ag..." was the last thing he said, a strangulated choke. Len toppled over, his free hand moving feebly to protect himself but, like a falling oak, he crashed to the floor.

As one, the brethren gasped; an indrawn hiss. As one, as if a part of their ritual, they all stood looking down at Len's body. It lay still, unmoving. One of

younger members, a Steward, dropped the raffle tickets he was flogging and hurried over. He touched his late brother's body.

"Len..., Len..., are you alright?" he asked.

"Of course he isnae." A more senior member, Dr. Collinson knelt by the body. "I think it's tae late but go call the ambulance, laddie." Under stress, his Scottish accent became more pronounced. Muttering to himself, Dr. Collinson did a brief examination before starting CPR while the Worshipful Master shepherded the others out.

Any call from the Masonic Hall is treated as top priority and the ambulance broke all records getting there. From experience, the two paramedics realised it was a hopeless job but, with Dr. Collinson's help, did their best. Still working on him, they put him in the ambulance and then full speed ahead to Grantham and District Hospital.

Forewarned, the emergency crash team stood waiting. As Len Weston was a local VIP, they did their very best for him but, after twenty minutes of fruitless labour which produced nothing but a flat-line, the Senior House Officer stood and flexed her back. She looked at the others on the team for their opinions. They all shook their heads.

"I pronounce him dead at..., " checking her watch, "...twenty-two fifty hours." Before she could say anything else, her pager beeped. "Here we go again. No rest for the wicked."

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The following week, it was a sombre group of men who met at the Masonic Hall's bar. Brother Len had been universally popular and his death left a big hole in Eslaforde Lodge. He'd been one of the longest serving members so there weren't many who remembered a time before Len's booming bonhomie enlivened their meetings.

Afterwards, when most had left, the Worshipful Master took a select group to one side. They sat in an alcove towards the back, beneath a painting of a magnificent stag gazing out over a Scottish moor.

"You know what this means?" Jeremy Sandiford asked. In his day job he was a senior partner at Gilbert Greene and Ellison, Solicitors.

"Fresh elections," one of the others said. This man was James Naismith, the Deputy Mayor of Sleaford. Although nominally subordinate to the Mayor, he was the man who really controlled the Town Hall. He wasn't looking forward to the extra work as his in-tray was overflowing.

"That's right. Who do you think will win?"

Naismith thought for a moment. "It's between our Brother Charles Langton-Gore for the Tories and Danielle Rice – the Labour woman. This time it's too close to call, I think."

Sandiford shook his head. "Not this time. Not the usual suspects. How about a wild card?"

Naismith frowned in concentration. "What do you mean?"

Lowering his voice until it was little more than a whisper, Sandiford said, "How about somebody who'll draw all the attention? Somebody who'll carry the can when things go wrong? We don't want Charles to get into trouble."

"Why? – I mean, what have you got in mind?" Although he had an idea what Sandiford was hinting at. Already wealthy, like many rich men, Naismith wanted more. You can never have too much money.

"There's some big planning applications coming up, isn't there? Don't worry – my practice has done the legal work on some of them so you're not betraying any confidences." Sandiford looked the epitome of the successful small-town solicitor. He was well-fed with a bay-window belly with a thick walrus moustache grown in compensation for his balding dome. He wore a dark grey suit, MCC tie and highly polished shoes.

Naismith nodded. "Possibly. So what are you thinking, Worshipful Master?"

"Somebody too dim to notice he's being set up for a fall. How about the British National Party fellow – Kenneth Peachornby?"

Naismith nearly choked on his Glenfiddich. "Peachornby! He's got no chance of winning an election – the man couldn't get elected as dog-catcher, as the Americans say. He only picks up a few hundred votes from his football hooligan friends and a handful of closet racists. That's an impossible task."

The Worshipful Master lowered his voice so even his select group of brethren had to strain their ears to hear. "Elections can be fixed – it's been done before."

"Not in Sleaford!"

"Hush, man," Sandiford said. "It's a hard charge to prove. Don't forget, all recent cases involving fraud have been postal voting in mostly Asian areas so nobody's going to suspect it in a white area like Sleaford."

Naismith thought for a minute while the others watched. One of the group, a man called Atkinson ordered another round. He passed the drinks around.

"It could be done," Naismith said. "I've got a new guy working on the Urban Council who looks like he'd be up for it. The good thing is, he's Polish so he has few contacts among the English so he's not likely to talk. I'll sound him out."

"Even better," said Sandiford. "He sounds like the boy for us."

Atkinson spoke up. "Only fly in the ointment I can see, old chap, is convincing people that a no-hoper like this Peachornby could actually win the election."

Naismith laughed. "That's the easy part. There's a lot of anti-immigrant feeling about at the moment – you know the type of thing; all the Poles coming over and taking all the jobs. Together with a dislike of the main political parties, then the BNP's win will look plausible."

"As the man on the spot, can I leave you to set it up?"

Naismith nodded. "Yes, I'll get in touch with the Electoral Commission and set the wheels in motion."

"Think of the money we'll make, brethren. And remember, not a word to anyone," Sandiford reminded them.

The group shook their heads.

"We know our obligations. Nothing goes further than these four walls,"  
Atkinson said.

"Remember, once these plans go through, we'll be in the big leagues soon.  
And this fool Peachornby will get to carry the can if it all goes wrong," said  
Sandiford.

"Which it won't," said Naismith.

Famous last words.



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