

**FLEEING
THE 51ST
STATE**

"I started reading it right away and I told my wife this morning I can't put it down!" – *Murray Nurse – Salt Spring Island, BC, Canada*

"Just finished reading your gripping new book! Even with zero knowledge of boats or sailing it still captivated my interest." – *Judy Nurse – Salt Spring Island, BC, Canada*

"...It is a well-crafted tale with great attention to detail of the day by day steps necessary to pull off such an escapade. Peter also has great insight into the human relationship experiences that would occur in such a scenario..." – *Philip Bysber – Salt Spring Island, BC, Canada*

"...a novel that makes you think about an unimaginable scenario and how you would react in such an eventuality. As each character in the novel reacts in their own way, you sympathize with them as they face struggles, and cheer for them as they overcome adversity..." – *Arvita Cotter – Squamish, BC, Canada*

"...You've managed to create a gripping adventure story that draws you into turning the page to see what happens next, just using the kind of things that happen when sailing a boat in both tricky inshore navigational waters and offshore, without resorting to egregious devices like encounters with pirates, being attacked by sea monsters or suffering shipwreck...." – *Alex Zimmerman – Victoria, BC, Canada*

"...I felt the fear and anticipation from the beginning to the end of the journey...I felt the emotion of the ocean whether it was calm or angry. I felt the camaraderie of the shipmates grow. I watched and felt the respect that developed by all for each other. A respect and value for what each person brought to the whole. I felt a kinship with each of the characters..." – *Maria Michelle Fitzpatrick – Lethbridge, AB, Canada*

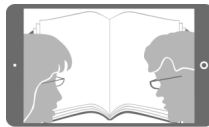
"...The writing is excellent, and I read from start to finish completely engaged. There's a lot of meticulous sailing detail that might overwhelm some readers but I'm not a sailor and it engaged and informed me...." – *John Beaton – Qualicum Beach, BC, Canada*

"...Peter's words rush in like a wave and carry you on a watery action packed nautical adventure as beautiful and changeable as the ocean itself creating imaginative worlds and painting interesting yet believable and lovable characters...." – *Carmen Casanova – Salt Spring Island, BC, Canada*

FLEEING THE 51ST STATE

A Voyage of Resistance and Hope

PETER FREEMAN



Tablet Publications

VANCOUVER, BC

Fleeing the 51st State
Peter Freeman

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This book is dedicated to the mature and courageous people who accept all other peoples as their equals regardless of how diverse they are in race, religion, age, or the many genders, and include and invite them to participate in all structures of our society.





The first hundred days fractured the landscape of American governance.

Executive orders, sharp and swift, redefined borders, military service, and foreign aid. Pardons, controversial and sweeping, echoed through the halls of power, leaving a lingering unease in their wake. Deportation efforts surged, reshaping the nation's demographics, casting long shadows of uncertainty across communities.

The executive branch underwent a rapid transformation, its personnel shifting like pieces on a chessboard, as new agendas took hold. Trade policies, implemented with abruptness, sent tremors through global markets, and the stock market reacted with volatile swings—sharp declines followed by uncertain rebounds, a clear signal of the prevailing economic chaos.

Beyond these sweeping changes, the administration also moved to reshape the very structure of government. Key agencies saw their funding slashed, and a wave of deregulation rolled back existing protections. Debates over the extent of executive power intensified, raising questions about the balance of authority. Proposals, audacious and expansive, hinted at a redrawing of the nation's very map, stretching the boundaries of what seemed possible.

The air was thick with change, the ground shifting beneath familiar institutions, as a new era dawned with heightened peril and an uncertain future.



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Prologue

It happened so fast that it was over in a couple of weeks. Greg Peckingham remembered the day it all started. He was riding his bicycle in the cool predawn air when he heard the steadily increasing engine noise of aircraft approaching from the south. He coasted to a stop at the next intersection and wheeled his bicycle onto the curb beside an old fire hydrant. He spun the pedal around and used it to prop up his bike against the hydrant.

The sky in the east showed the first sign of the approaching dawn, the yellowing horizon lighting up lines of cirrus cloud with a dark red fringe. He took off his helmet and craned his head back. In the sky to the south, numerous aircraft were heading towards him. He suddenly realized that the lines of cirrus cloud were contrails from a vast armada of aircraft lit up by the hidden sun. He tried to spot the machines, but the sky was still too dark, and the approaching planes were too high.

What's going on? he thought. *Is there an air show this weekend?*

He re-mounted his bicycle and continued on his journey to Oak Bay, where he planned to spray the first coat of polyurethane paint on the topside of a boat he had been working on over the past month. He reached Estevan Avenue and stopped outside the Old Farm Market, where he sometimes dropped in to pick up fresh fruit. It was early in the morning, and the store was still closed. The bamboo screens were drawn down over the plate-glass windows. The roar of aircraft engines was much louder now, so he pulled over to the side and leaned his bike beside a Canada Post commercial mailbox. The sky had lightened considerably, and he could now see aircraft overhead. Some of the contrails showed him that a large group of aircraft had reversed course and were heading back south. He spotted another set of vapour trails in the east that appeared to be heading for Vancouver.

This must be a military exercise, he thought. *I don't remember hearing about it.*

He walked his bike back to the road, threw his leg over the top tube, and clipped into the pedals. He reached Beach Drive, turned right, and pedalled south towards the marina. He could see agile planes flitting around the group of larger lumbering aircraft like seagulls harassing eagles. He kept his eyes on the surface of the road, looking up occasionally to see if there were any

changes. Five minutes later, he arrived at the concrete ramp that led down to the docks and boat yard. Greg coasted down the ramp, stopped at the bike rack, and locked up his bike. On impulse, he walked back up the ramp to get a better view and looked to the south. That was when he spotted the parachutes.

It must be an exercise. It's a big one, too. I wish I had known about it.

He was about to head back down the ramp and make his way to the yard when he heard the explosions. First, there was a small crump, a larger one, two more, and then silence. The sounds were coming from somewhere to the west of him. Greg shrugged and headed back down the ramp. He satisfied himself that it must be a joint military exercise between the U.S.A. and Canada.

Greg reached the equipment shed, unlocked it with the key Mike had given him, and walked into its dark interior. He found the light switch and flipped it upwards. The fluorescent tubes flickered a few times, then began to glow, steadily increasing their brilliance until the space was filled with light. Greg wheeled out the warehouse cart from the corner and loaded it with his spraying equipment, cream polyurethane paint and its hardener, solvent, and a mixing pail. He reached into the cotton waste bin and selected enough cloths for the job. He chose a fifty-foot electrical extension cable on one of the wall hooks and placed it in the mixing pail. Greg carried his gear to the outside of the shed, turned off the lights, and locked up the equipment shed. He carried the gear to one of the boats standing on his keel high-and-dry on the hard. He laid his equipment down on the sandy gravel nearby, plugged an extension cord into the electrical outlet mounted on a stubby utility post, and filled the spray gun canister with paint. He was ready.

Greg finished the port topside an hour later and rearranged his equipment to spray the starboard side. He used an airless spray gun to minimize over-spray that might land on adjacent boats. Although the sun had risen, it was early in the morning and the thermal wind had yet to start. Greg wanted to finish spray painting the boat before the wind would make his job more complex and the resulting finish less professional. He also wanted to ensure the paint was dry before the wind kicked up dust from the ground and stuck to wet paint. He had plenty of time. The hardener in the paint would quickly polymerize it to a tough sheen. It would be a job of which he could be proud.

Greg squeezed the trigger of his spray gun. Nothing came out; the motor never started. He checked the electrical connections and the plug in the end of the extension cable, pulling it out and reinserting it. It was good. He went to the other end of the extension cable and did the same at the receptacle

mounted on the utility post. He fetched an electric drill and plugged it into the receptacle. No power. *The breaker must have tripped*, he thought.

Greg walked over to the marina office and saw through the window that Mike was sitting in the dark on his chair in his office. *The power must have gone out*, he thought. *Could it have anything to do with those explosions?* Greg walked into Mike's office.

"Hey, Mike. How come we have no power?"

"I dunno. It just went out about five minutes ago. I checked the breakers and they're good. Maybe BC Hydro is working on the lines nearby?"

"Yeah, could be. But what's with all the planes flying around? And the parachutes coming down out of the sky? Is there a training exercise happening over at Esquimalt? Did you hear the explosions an hour or so earlier?"

"What planes? What parachutes? I didn't see or hear anything," Mike answered.

"What time did you get up this morning, Mike?"

"Bit after seven. Why?"

"You would've been asleep then," Greg said.

"I'll check the BC Hydro site to see what they say about this outage. Just a sec."

Mike pulled his chair up to the desk and picked up his smartphone. He selected the browser and thumbed in the search text. The loading icon spun and spun. He looked at the signal strength.

"The power to the cell tower must be down; I'm getting nothing. No bars either."

Greg pulled his smartphone out of his pocket and activated the screen.

"Same here. What the hell is going on?"

"Let me check the radio," Mike said.

He turned on the portable transistor radio that sat behind a pile of paper and waited. There was no sound, only white noise. Mike tried another FM station. The station was quiet. He tried the Canadian Broadcasting Commission, or CBC, as it was known. Garbled and attenuated voices could be heard through white noise, but they could decipher some of the words.

"This is weird," Mike muttered.

Mike continued to turn the dial until he found a station where he could hear a female voice. He turned up the volume so Greg could listen too. There was a lot of swearing, and the woman spoke fast and hysterically. She broke down and began sobbing.

"What station is that, Mike?"

"Just a sec."