

# The Lincoln Myth: A Novel (Cotton Malone)

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER 📖 A Cotton Malone adventure involving a flaw in the United States Constitution, a mystery about Abraham Lincoln, and a political issue that's as explosive as it is timely-not only in Malone's world, but in ours

September 1861: All is not as it seems. With these cryptic words, a shocking secret passed down from president to president comes to rest in the hands of Abraham Lincoln. And as the first bloody clashes of the Civil War unfold, Lincoln alone must decide how best to use this volatile knowledge: save thousands of American lives, or keep the young nation from being torn apart forever?

The present: In Utah, the fabled remains of Mormon pioneers whose nineteenth-century expedition across the desert met with a murderous end have been uncovered. In Washington, D.C., the official investigation of an international entrepreneur, an elder in the Mormon church, has sparked a political battle between the White House and a powerful United States senator. In Denmark, a Justice Department agent, missing in action, has fallen into the hands of a dangerous zealot-a man driven by divine visions to make a prophet's words reality. And in a matter of a few short hours, Cotton Malone has gone from quietly selling books at his shop in Denmark to dodging bullets in a high-speed boat chase.

All it takes is a phone call from his former boss in Washington, and suddenly the ex-agent is racing to rescue an informant carrying critical intelligence. It's just the kind of perilous business that Malone has been trying to leave behind, ever since he retired from the Justice Department. But once he draws enemy blood, Malone is plunged into a deadly conflict-a constitutional war secretly set in motion more than two hundred years ago by America's Founding Fathers.

From the streets of Copenhagen to the catacombs of Salzburg to the rugged mountains of Utah, the grim specter of the Civil War looms as a dangerous conspiracy gathers power. Malone risks life, liberty, and his greatest love in a race for the truth about Abraham Lincoln-while the fate of the United States of America hangs in the balance.

Praise for Steve Berry and his Cotton Malone series

"In Malone, [Steve] Berry has created a classic, complex hero."-USA Today

"Malone, a hero with a personal stake in the proceedings, is a welcome respite from the cold, calculating superspies who litter the genre."-Entertainment Weekly

"Steve Berry gets better and better with each new book."-The Huffington Post

"Savvy readers . . . cannot go wrong with Cotton Malone."-Library Journal

"Berry raises this genre's stakes."-The New York Times

"I love this guy."-#1 New York Times bestselling author Lee Child

Steve Berry is the New York Times and #1 internationally bestselling author of The Lincoln Myth, The King's Deception, The Columbus Affair, The Jefferson Key, The Emperor's Tomb, The Paris Vendetta, The Charlemagne Pursuit, The Venetian Betrayal, The Alexandria Link, The Templar Legacy, The Third Secret, The Romanov Prophecy, and The Amber Room. His books have been translated into 40 languages with more than 18,000,000 copies in 51 countries.

History lies at the heart of every Steve Berry novel. It's this passion, one he shares with his wife, Elizabeth, that led them to create History Matters, a foundation dedicated to historic preservation. Since 2009 Steve and Elizabeth have traveled across the country to save endangered historic treasures, raising money via lectures, receptions, galas, luncheons, dinners, and their popular writers' workshops. To date, nearly 2,500 students have attended those workshops. In 2012 their work was recognized by the American Library Association, which named Steve the first spokesman for National Preservation Week. He was also appointed by the Smithsonian Board of Regents to serve on the Smithsonian Libraries Advisory Board to help promote and support the libraries in their mission to provide information in all forms to scientists, curators, scholars, students, and the public at large. He has received the Royden B. Davis Distinguished Author Award and the 2013 Writers for Writers Award from Poets & Writers. His novel The Columbus Affair earned him the Anne Frank Human Writes Award, and his historic preservation work merited the 2013 Silver Bullet from International Thriller Writers.

Steve Berry was born and raised in Georgia, graduating from the Walter F. George School of Law at Mercer University. He was a trial lawyer for 30 years and held elective office for 14 of those years. He is a founding member of International Thriller Writers—a group of more than 2,600 thriller writers from around the world—and served three years as its co-president.

For more information, visit [www.steveberry.org](http://www.steveberry.org).ONE

O

Off the coast of Denmark

Wednesday, October 8

7:40 p.m.

One glance and Cotton Malone knew there was trouble.

The Øresund, which separated the northern Danish island of Zealand from the southern Swedish province of Scania, usually one of the busiest waterways in the world, was light on traffic. Only two boats in sight across the gray-blue water—his and the fast-approaching profile of the one slicing toward them.

He'd noticed the craft just after they'd left the dock at Landskrona on the Swedish side of

the channel. A red-and-white twenty-footer with dual inboards. His boat was a rental, secured at the Copenhagen waterfront on the Danish side, a fifteen-footer with a single outboard. The engine howled as he plowed through the moderate surf, the skies clear, the crisp evening air devoid of breeze-lovely fall weather for Scandinavia.

Three hours ago he was working in his bookshop at Højbro Plads. He'd planned on dinner at the Café Norden, as he did almost every evening. But a call from Stephanie Nelle, his former boss at the Justice Department, changed all that.

"I need a favor," she said. "I wouldn't ask if it wasn't an emergency. There's a man named Barry Kirk. Short black hair, pointy nose. I need you to go get him."

He heard the urgency in her request.

"I have an agent en route, but he's been delayed. I don't know when he'll get there, and this man has to be found. Now."

"I don't suppose you're going to tell me why."

"I can't. But you're the closest to him. He's across the water in Sweden, waiting for someone to come get him."

"Sounds like trouble."

"I have an agent missing."

He hated to hear those words.

"Kirk may know where he is, so it's important to secure him quickly. I'm hoping we're ahead of any problems. Just bring him back to your shop and keep him there until my guy comes for him."

"I'll take care of it."

"One more thing, Cotton. Take your gun."

He'd immediately gone upstairs to his fourth-floor apartment above his bookshop and found the knapsack beneath his bed, the one he always kept ready with identification, money, a phone, and his Magellan Billet-issued Beretta, which Stephanie had allowed him to keep when he retired.

The gun now nestled against the small of his back, beneath his jacket.

"They're getting closer," Barry Kirk said.

Like he didn't know that. Two engines were always better than one.

He held the wheel steady, his throttle three-quarters of the way engaged. He decided to max out the power and the bow rose as the V-hull gained speed. He glanced back. Two men occupied the other boat—one driving, the other standing with a gun.

This just kept getting better and better.

They were not yet halfway across the channel, still on the Swedish side, heading diagonally southwest toward Copenhagen. He could have taken a car, crossing the Øresund Bridge that connected Denmark to Sweden, but that would have taken an extra hour. Water was faster and Stephanie was in a hurry, so he'd rented the bowrider runabout from the same shop he always used. Far cheaper to rent than to own a boat, especially considering how little he ventured out on the water.

"What do you plan to do?"

A stupid question. Kirk was definitely annoying. He'd located him pacing the docks, exactly where Stephanie had said he'd be waiting, anxious to leave. Code words had been arranged so they both would know they'd found the right person. Joseph for him. Moroni for Kirk.

Odd choices.

"Do you know who those men are?" he asked.

"They want to kill me."

He kept the boat pointed toward Denmark, its hull breasting the waves with jarring lunges, throwing spray.

"And why do they want to kill you?" he asked over the engine's roar.

"Who are you, exactly?"

He cut a quick glance at Kirk. "The guy who's going to save your sorry ass."

The other boat was less than thirty yards way.

He scanned the horizon in every direction and spotted no other craft. Dusk was gathering, the azure sky being replaced by gray.

A pop.

Then another.

He whirled.

The second man in the pursuing boat was firing at them.

"Get down," he yelled to Kirk. He ducked, too, keeping their course and speed steady.

Two more shots.

One thudded into the fiberglass to his left.

The other boat was now fifty feet away. He decided to give his pursuers a little pause. He reached back, found his gun, and sent a bullet their way.

The other boat veered to starboard.

They were more than a mile from the Danish shore, nearly at the Øresund's center. The second boat looped around and was now approaching from the right on a path that would cut directly in front of them. He saw that the pistol had been replaced with a short-barreled automatic rifle.

Only one thing to do.

He adjusted course straight for them.

Time for a game of chicken.

A burst of gunfire cut across the air. He dove to the deck, keeping one hand on the wheel. Rounds whizzed by overhead and a few penetrated the bow. He risked a look. The other boat had veered to port, swinging around, preparing to attack from the rear, where the open deck offered little cover.

He decided the direct approach was best.

But it would have to be timed just right.

He kept the boat racing ahead at nearly full throttle. The second craft's bow still headed his way.

"Keep down," he told Kirk again.

No worry existed that his order would be disobeyed. Kirk clung to the deck, below the side panels. Malone still held his Beretta but kept it out of sight. The other boat narrowed the distance between them.

And fast.

Fifty yards.

Forty.

Thirty.

He yanked the throttle back and brought the engine to idle. Speed vanished. The bow sank into the water. They glided for a few yards then came to a stop. The other boat kept coming.

Parallel.

The man with the rifle aimed.

But before he could fire, Malone shot him in the chest.

The other boat raced past.

He reengaged the throttle and the engine sprang to life.

Inside the second craft he saw the driver reach down and find the rifle. A big loop brought the boat back on an intercept course.

His feint worked once.

But would not again.

Nearly a mile's worth of water still lay between them and the Danish coast, and he could not outrun the other vessel. Maybe outmaneuver, but for how long? No. He'd have to stand and fight.

He stared ahead and grabbed his bearings.

He was five miles or so north of Copenhagen's outskirts, near the spot where his old friend Henrik Thorvaldsen had once lived.

"Look at that," he heard Kirk say.

He turned back.

The other boat was a hundred yards away, bearing down. But out of an ever-dimming western sky a high-wing, single-engine Cessna had swooped down. Its trademark tricycle landing gear, no more than six feet clear of the water's surface, raked the other craft, its wheels nearly smacking the driver who disappeared downward, his hands apparently off the wheel as the bow lurched left.

Malone used the moment to head for his attacker.

The plane banked high, gained altitude, and swung around for another pass. He wondered if the pilot realized that there was an automatic weapon about to be aimed skyward. He headed straight for the trouble, as fast as his engine allowed. The other boat had now stopped in the water, its occupant's attention totally on the plane.

Which allowed Malone to draw close.

He was grateful for the distraction, but that assistance was about to turn into disaster. He saw the automatic rifle being aimed at the plane.

"Get up here," he screamed to Kirk.

The man did not move.

"Don't make me come get you."

Kirk rose.

"Hold the wheel. Keep us going straight."

"Me? What?"

"Do it."

Kirk grabbed hold.

Malone stepped to the stern, planted his feet, and aimed the gun.

The plane kept coming. The other man was ready with his rifle. Malone knew he'd have only a few chances from a bumpy deck. The other man suddenly realized that the boat was coming at the same time as the plane.

Both a threat.

What to do?

Malone fired twice. Missed.

A third shot hit the other craft.

The man darted right, deciding the boat now posed the greater problem. Malone's fourth shot found the man's chest, which propelled the body over the side and into the water.

The plane roared by, its wheels low and tight.



Both he and Kirk ducked.

He grabbed hold of the wheel and slowed the throttle, turning back toward their enemy. They approached from the stern, his gun ready. A body floated in the water, another lay on the deck. Nobody else was on board.

"Aren't you a ton of trouble," he said to Kirk.

Quiet had returned, only the engine's throaty idle disturbing the silence. Water slapped both hulls. He should contact some local authority. Swedes? Danes? But with Stephanie and the Magellan Billet involved, he knew partnering with locals was not an option.

She hated doing it.

He stared up into the dim sky and saw the Cessna, now back up to a couple thousand feet, making a pass directly over them.

Someone jumped from the plane.

A chute opened, catching air, its occupant guiding himself downward in a tight spiral. Malone had parachuted several times and could see that this skydiver knew the drill, banking the canopy, navigating a course straight for them, feet knifing through the water less than fifty yards away.

Malone eased the boat over and came up alongside.

The man who hoisted himself aboard was maybe late twenties. His blond hair appeared more mowed than cut, the bright face clean-shaven and warmed by a wide, toothy smile. He wore a dark pullover shirt and jeans, matted to a muscular frame.

"That water is cold," the young man said. "Sure appreciate you waiting around for me. Sorry I was late."

Malone pointed to the fading sound of a prop as the plane kept flying east. "Someone on board?"

"Nope. Autopilot. But there isn't much fuel left. It'll fall into the Baltic in a few minutes."

"Expensive waste."

The young man shrugged. "The dude I stole it from needed to lose it."

"Who are you?"

"Oh, sorry about that. Sometimes I forget my manners."

A wet hand was offered.

"Name's Luke Daniels. Magellan Billet."

TWO

O

Kalundborg, Denmark

8:00 p.m.

Josepe Salazar waited while the man gathered himself. His prisoner lay semi-conscious in the cell, but awake enough to hear him say, "End this."

The man lifted his head from the dusty stone floor. "I've wondered . . . for the past three days . . . how you can be so cruel. You are a believer . . . in the Heavenly Father. A man . . . supposedly of God."

He saw no contradiction. "The prophets have faced threats as great as or greater than those I face today. Yet they never wavered from doing what had to be done."

"You speak the truth," the angel told him.

He glanced up. The image floated a few feet away, standing in a loose white robe, bathed in brilliance, pure as lightning, brighter than anything he'd ever seen.

"Do not hesitate, Josepe. None of the prophets ever hesitated in doing what had to be done."

He knew that his prisoner could not hear the angel. No one could, save for him. But the man on the floor noticed that his gaze had drifted to the cell's back wall.

"What are you looking at?"

"A glorious sight."

"He cannot comprehend what we know."

He faced his prisoner. "I have Kirk."

He hadn't received confirmation yet on what happened in Sweden, but his men had reported that the target was in sight. Finally. After three days. Which was how long this man had lain in this cell, without food or water. The skin was bruised and pale, lips cracked, nose broken, eyes hollow. Probably a couple of ribs broken, too. To increase the torment a bucket of water lay just beyond the bars, within sight but not reach.

"Press him," the angel commanded. "He must know that we will not tolerate insolence. The people who sent him must know we will fight. There is much to be done and they have placed themselves in the middle of our path. Break him."

He always accepted the angel's advice. How could he not? He came directly from Heavenly Father. This prisoner, though, was a spy. Sent by the enemy.

"We have always dealt with spies harshly," the angel said. "In the beginning there were many and they inflicted great harm. We must return that harm."

"But am I not to love him?" he asked the apparition. "He is still a son of God."

"Who are you . . . talking . . . to?"

He faced the prisoner and asked what he wanted to know. "Who do you work for?"

No reply.

"Tell me."

He heard his voice rise. Unusual for him. He was known to be soft-spoken, always projecting a placid demeanor—which he worked hard to maintain. Decorum was a lost art, his father had many times said.

The bucket of water lay at his feet.

He filled a ladle, then tossed its contents through the bars, soaking his prisoner's bruised face. The man's tongue tried to savor what little refreshment it could find. But three days of thirst would take time to quench.

"Tell me what I want to know."

"More water."

Pity had long abandoned him. He was charged with a sacred duty, and the fate of millions depended on the decisions he would make.

"There must be a blood atonement," the angel said. "It is the only way."

Doctrine proclaimed that there were sins for which men could not receive forgiveness in this world, or in the world to come. But if they had their eyes opened, made able to see their true condition, surely they would be willing to have their blood spilled in forgiveness of those sins.

"The blood of the son of God was shed for sins committed by men," the angel said. "And

there remain sins that can be atoned for by an offering upon an altar, as in ancient days. But there are also sins that the blood of a lamb or a calf or a turtledove cannot remit. These must be atoned for by the blood of the man."

Sins such as murder, adultery, lying, covenant breaking, and apostasy.

He crouched down and stared at the defiant soul on the other side of the bars. "You cannot stop me. No one can. What will happen is going to happen. But I am prepared to show you some consideration. Simply tell me who you work for and your mission, and this water is yours."

#### Other Books

MatchUp. Collects stories written by best-selling thriller authors, 11 women and 11 men partnered in male-female literary pairings, in anthology that includes contributions by such favorites as Sandra Brown, John Sandford and Eric Van Lustbader.

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