



The Taking of Pelham 123

By John Godey

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Four men take a New York City subway train hostage—along with all of its passengers. Their demands are simple: deliver \$1 million, or the men will start killing hostages. Fast-paced and intensely psychological, this novel tells the story from the point of view of each of the hijackers—revealing each man’s motivations, desperations, and fatal flaws.

Tensions build as the four hijackers begin to fight among themselves—and the passengers take advantage of their weakness. Despite their meticulous planning, the kidnapping attempt starts to go awry—and the hijackers’ escape seems impossible. Made into a blockbuster movie in 1974 starring Walter Matthau and Robert Shaw, and remade in 2009 with Denzel Washington and John Travolta, this novel will have you on the edge of your seat until the last page.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Godey is the alias of Morton Freedgood (1913–2006), an American novelist born in New York City. While working in public relations for 20th Century Fox, Paramount, and other film companies, he published numerous short stories in magazines such as Esquire and Cosmopolitan. He published more serious novels under his own name, and used the alias “John Godey” to write crime novels.

It was under his alias that his writing saw the most success. Some of his most successful works include A Thrill a Minute with Jack Albany, a series that later became a Disney movie; and The Taking of Pelham 123, a 1973 best seller later made into a blockbuster motion picture.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Chillingly real."--*Houston Chronicle*

"A cliff-hanger."--*The New Yorker*

"Harrowing, terrifying, and so, so good."--*Business Week*

About the Author

John Godey is the pen name of Morton Freedgood, who achieved commercial success with the books *A Thrill a Minute With Jack Albany*, *Never Put Off Till Tomorrow What You Can Kill Today*, and *The Three Worlds of Johnny Handsome*. *The Taking of Pelham 1 2 3*, his novel about the hijacking of a New York City subway train, was a bestseller in 1973 and was made into a hit movie starring Walter Matthau and Robert Shaw in 1974. A remake starring Denzel Washington and John Travolta is scheduled to be released in summer 2009.

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ONE

STEEVER

Steever stood on the southbound local platform of the Lexington Avenue line at Fifty- ninth Street and chewed his gum with a gentle motion of his heavy jaws, like a softmouthed retriever schooled to hold game firmly but without bruising it.

His posture was relaxed and at the same time emphatic, as if a low center of gravity and some inner certitude combined to make him casually immovable. He wore a navy blue raincoat, neatly buttoned, and a dark gray hat tilted forward, not rakishly but squarely, the brim bent at a sharp angle over his forehead, throwing a rhomboid of shadow over his eyes. His sideburns and the hair at the back of his head were white, dramatic against the darkness of his complexion, unexpected in a man who appeared to be in his early thirties.

The florist's box was outsize, suggesting an opulent, even overwhelming burst of blooms inside, designed for some once- in- a-lifetime anniversary or to make amends for an enormous sin or betrayal. If any of the passengers on the platform were inclined to smile at that joke of a florist's box, in respect of the unlikely man who held it so negligently under his arm, aimed upward at a forty- five degree angle toward the grimy station ceiling, they managed to suppress it. He wasn't a man to smile at, however sympathetically.

Steever did not stir, or show any sign of anticipation or even awareness, when the approaching train gave off its first distant vibrations, gradually increasing through various levels and quantities of sound. Four-eyed—amber and white marker lights over white sealed- beam headlights— Pelham One Two Three lumbered into the station. Brakes sighed; the train settled; the doors rattled open. Steever was positioned

precisely so that he faced the center door of the fifth car of the ten- car train. He entered the car, turned left, and walked to the isolated double seat directly facing the conductor's cab. It was unoccupied. He sat down, standing the florist's box between his knees, and glancing incuriously at the back of the conductor, who was leaning well forward out of his window, inspecting the platform.

Steever clasped his hands on the top of the florist's box. They were very broad hands, with short, thick fingers. The doors closed, and the train started with a lurch that tilted the passengers first backward, then forward. Steever, without seeming to brace himself, barely moved.

RYDER

Ryder withheld the token for a part of a second— a pause that was imperceptible to an eye but that his consciousness registered— before dropping it into the slot and pushing through the turnstile. Walking toward the platform, he examined his hesitancy with the token. Nerves? Nonsense. A concession, maybe even a form of consecration, on the eve of battle, but nothing else. You lived or you died. Holding the brown valise in his left hand, the heavily weighted Valpac in his right, he stepped onto the Twenty eighth Street station platform and walked toward the south end. He stopped on a line with the placard that hung over the edge of the platform, bearing the number 10, black on a white ground, indicating the point where the front of a ten- car train stopped. As usual, there were a few front- end haunters— as he had taken to thinking of them— including the inevitable overachiever who stood well beyond the 10 placard, and would have to scurry back when the train came in. The front- enders, he had long ago determined, expressed a dominant facet of the human condition: the mindless need to be first, to run ahead of the pack for the simple sake of being ahead. He eased back against the wall and set his suitcases down, one on each side of him, just touching the edge of his shoes. His navy blue raincoat touched the wall only lightly, but any contact would ensure picking up grime, grit, dust particles, even, possibly, some graffiti freshly applied in hot red lipstick and even hotter bitterness or irony. Shrugging, he pulled the brim of his dark- gray hat decisively lower over his eyes, which were gray and still and set deeply in bony sockets, promising a more ascetic face than the rounded cheeks and the puffy area around his lips justified. He leaned more of his weight against the wall and slid his hands into the deep slashed pockets of the coat. A fingernail caught on a fluff of nylon. Gently, using his free hand outside the pocket to anchor the nylon, he disengaged his finger and withdrew his hand.

A rumbling sound heightened to a clatter, and an express train whipped through on the northbound track, its lights flickering between the pillars like a defective movie film. At the edge of the platform, a man glared at the disappearing express, then turned to Ryder, appealing for communion, for sympathy. Ryder looked at him with the absolute neutrality that was the authentic mask of the subway rider, of any New Yorker, or perhaps the actual face New Yorkers were born with, or issued, or, *wherever* they were born, assumed once they won their spurs as bona fide residents. The man, indifferent to the rebuff, paced the platform, muttering indignantly. Beyond him, across the four sets of tracks, the northbound platform provided a dreary mirror image of the southbound: the tiled rectangle reading "28th Street," the dirty walls, the gray floor, the resigned or impatient passengers, the rear- end haunters (and what was *their* hangup?)...

The pacing man turned abruptly to the edge of the platform, planted his feet on the yellow line, bent at the waist, and peered back down the track. Down- platform, there were three more leaners, supplicants praying to the dark tunnel beyond the station. Ryder heard the sound of an approaching train and saw the leaners retreat, but only a few inches, giving ground grudgingly, cautiously challenging the train to kill them if it dared. It swept into the station, and its front end stopped in precise alignment with the overhanging placard. Ryder looked at his watch. Two to go. Ten minutes. He came away from the wall, turned, and studied the nearby poster.

It was the Levy's Bread ad, an old friend. He had first seen it when it was newly installed, pristine and unmarked. But it had begun accumulating graffiti (or defacements, in the official language) almost at once. It pictured a black child eating Levy's bread, and the caption read YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE JEWISH TO LOVE LEVY'S. This was followed by an angry scrawl in red ballpoint ink: BUT YOU DO HAVE TO BE A NIGGER TO CHEAT ON WELFARE AND SUPPORT YOUR LITTLE BLACK BASTARDS. Beneath that, in block letters, as if to cancel out bitterness with the simple antidote of piety, were the words JESUS SAVES. But still another hand, neither raging nor sweet, perhaps above the battle, had added PLAID STAMPS.

Three separate entries followed, whose message Ryder had never been able to fathom:

VOICE IDENTIFICATION DOES NOT PROVE SPEECH CONTENT. PSYCHIATRY IS BASED ON FICTION NOVELS. SCREWORMS CAUSE SPITTING. After that, the ideologue took over again, riposte following riposte: MARX STINX. SO DOES JESUS CHRIST. SO DOES PANTHER. SO DOES EVERYBODY. SO DOES I. Such as it was, Ryder thought, it was the true voice of the people, squeezing out their anxieties into the public view, never questioning that they deserved a hearing. He turned away from the poster and watched the tail of the train whip out of the station. He put his back against the wall again, between his suitcases, and looked casually down- platform. A figure in blue was walking toward him. Ryder picked out his insignia— a Transit Authority cop. He noted details: one shoulder lower than the other so that he seemed to be listing, bushy carrot- colored sideburns curling down to a point an inch below the earlobes... A car length away the TA cop stopped, glanced at him, then faced squarely outward. He folded his arms across his chest, unfolded them, took his hat off. The hair on top of his head was reddish brown, several shades darker than his sideburns, and it was matted from the pressure of the hat. He looked into his hat, then put it back on his head and folded his arms again.

Across the tracks a northbound local arrived, paused, and moved on. The TA cop turned his head and found Ryder looking at him. He faced front immediately and straightened his back. It brought his low shoulder up and improved his posture.

BUD CARMODY

As soon as a train cleared a station, the conductor was expected to step out of the shelter of his cab and provide information and other assistance as requested by the riding public. Bud Carmody was well aware that too few conductors followed this regulation. More often than not they just hung around in the cab staring at the colorless walls racing by. But that wasn't the way *he* ran the job. He did it by the book, and more: He *liked* maintaining a neat appearance; he *liked* presenting a smiling countenance and answering dumb questions. He enjoyed his work. Bud Carmody regarded his affection for the railroad as a matter of inheritance. One of his uncles had been a motorman (recently retired after thirty years on the road), and as a boy Bud had admired him extravagantly. On a few occasions— on calm, lazy Sunday runs— his uncle had smuggled him into the cab and even let him touch the controls. So, from boyhood on, Bud set his sights on becoming a motorman. Right after graduating high school, he took the Civil Ser vice test, which offered the option of being a conductor or a bus driver. Although driving a bus paid better, he wasn't tempted; his interest lay in the railroad. Now, when he became eligible by serving six months as a conductor— only forty days more to go— he would take the motorman test.

Meanwhile, he was having a good time. He had taken to the ...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Michael Green:

Now a day individuals who Living in the era wherever everything reachable by interact with the internet and the resources in it can be true or not require people to be aware of each data they get. How a lot more to be smart in acquiring any information nowadays? Of course the correct answer is reading a book. Studying a book can help folks out of this uncertainty Information especially this The Taking of Pelham 123 book because book offers you rich information and knowledge. Of course the knowledge in this book hundred percent guarantees there is no doubt in it everbody knows.

Ian Hall:

The reserve untitled The Taking of Pelham 123 is the publication that recommended to you to read. You can see the quality of the book content that will be shown to an individual. The language that creator use to explained their ideas are easily to understand. The article author was did a lot of study when write the book, so the information that they share for your requirements is absolutely accurate. You also can get the e-book of The Taking of Pelham 123 from the publisher to make you far more enjoy free time.

Abigail Shelton:

Precisely why? Because this The Taking of Pelham 123 is an unordinary book that the inside of the reserve waiting for you to snap the item but latter it will jolt you with the secret the item inside. Reading this book adjacent to it was fantastic author who have write the book in such remarkable way makes the content inside easier to understand, entertaining technique but still convey the meaning fully. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this any longer or you going to regret it. This phenomenal book will give you a lot of advantages than the other book include such as help improving your skill and your critical thinking way. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I ended up you I will go to the book store hurriedly.

Naomi Dillon:

Playing with family in a very park, coming to see the coastal world or hanging out with buddies is thing that usually you might have done when you have spare time, after that why you don't try factor that really opposite from that. One particular activity that make you not experience tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition associated with. Even you love The Taking of Pelham 123, you are able to enjoy both. It is excellent combination right, you still want to miss it? What kind of hangout type is it? Oh can happen its mind hangout folks. What? Still don't understand it, oh come on its called reading friends.

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