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## Gregg Hurwitz

**The Kill Clause**  
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*In August 2004, William Morrow Publishers will publish The Program by Gregg Hurwitz. Just turned 30, he's got Harvard/Oxford credentials, three thrillers under his belt and top flight praise from Michael Connelly, Jonathan Kellerman and Robert Crais. When not writing top-tier commercial fiction, he writes Jungian analyses of Shakespearian plays for Ivy League journals. Not your average guy. Here's an interview with Gregg for The Kill Clause, now available in paperback.*

### **Tell us about your early influences.**

I hail from a long line of Jewish atheist humanitarians with a socialist bent. My undergraduate university was predominantly liberal. The intellectuals and academics that largely composed my community harbored a strong distrust of government intelligence agencies and an inherent dislike for the military establishment. To say the least, expressions of patriotism were not commonplace. You could fetishize the First Amendment, but not the flag; you could adore environmental agencies but the faintest show of respect for the CIA or Navy SEALs sent eyes rolling heavenward. Patriotism was so, well, "blue collar." It was propaganda that believed itself.

### **And how did that sit with you?**

In my senior year of college, I remember expressing an interest in exploring the FBI vocationally and receiving a condescending grin from a professor at a dining table. "You're going to stamp out crime, are you?" he asked. Since when is this a disreputable aim? This professor has the peaceful luxury to bask in his smugness between bouts of teaching Balzac only because federal agents are risking their lives to hunt down serial killers, break up drug rings, and investigate terrorists, not to mention the dozens of other dangerous responsibilities with which they're tasked.

### **Can you tell us about *The Kill Clause*?**

Sure. Tim Rackley, a Deputy U.S. Marshal is forced to explore his own deadly options when his daughter is brutally murdered and her killer set free on a legal technicality. His search leads him to "The Commission," a vigilante group of six men and one woman like him — streetwise operators who have lost a loved one to violent crime, seen the killers set free, and are now intent on righting the justice system. It's only a matter of time before Tim's new secret life comes unwound and he finds himself in a battle for his marriage, his ethics, and his own life. If this book were a movie, the tag line would be: "Justice is about to have its day **out** of court."

### **Why did you choose to make Rackley a Deputy U.S. Marshal?**

The various branches of the intelligence and law enforcement communities have all had their reputations tarnished in one manner or another over the years, and because of extensive media coverage or depictions in films, it seems everyone has preconceived notions of, say, the FBI or LAPD. I started poking around my contacts, asking, who are the most stand-up, ethical guys you've worked with? And the answers kept drawing me back to the Marshal Service. As a thriller novelist, I've had the pleasure to interact with a wide range of consultants, from police officers, to Army Rangers, to FBI agents, and I'm proud to count many of them now among my friends. They have none of the ivory tower insecurities about expressing admiration and affection for enduring values and their moral compass is unwavering.

### **So you needed a protagonist with unwavering morality to contrast with the vigilante group he'd come to know?**

It's not as black and white as that. *The Kill Clause* address issues such as: how long will we permit procedural irregularities — expired warrants, Miranda violations, and tainted chain of custody — to override the merits? If we know someone is guilty and they are turned free due to a botched knock-and-notice, at what cost do we countenance that? If they kill again? If they kill your daughter? My protagonist seeks to answer some of these questions on his own, outside the system. He doesn't like what he finds, but at least he has the courage to go looking.

### **The issues addressed in *The Kill Clause* are indeed just words until it happens to you. Is it your hope to effect change by writing a thriller that makes these dilemmas personal as we get to know the characters?**

We need to suss out — in vigorous debate, in media inquiry, and in our cinema and literature what our responses are to issues of honor, security and freedom. We shouldn't be picky about which voices are chiming in to join the chorus. One can learn as much about American attitudes surrounding Vietnam by reading *First Blood* as *The Things They Carried*. Because O'Brien is a more literary writer doesn't necessarily make his stories more important, or more thought provoking. We need a multitude of stories right now. We're not living in an age where we can eschew alternative perspectives."