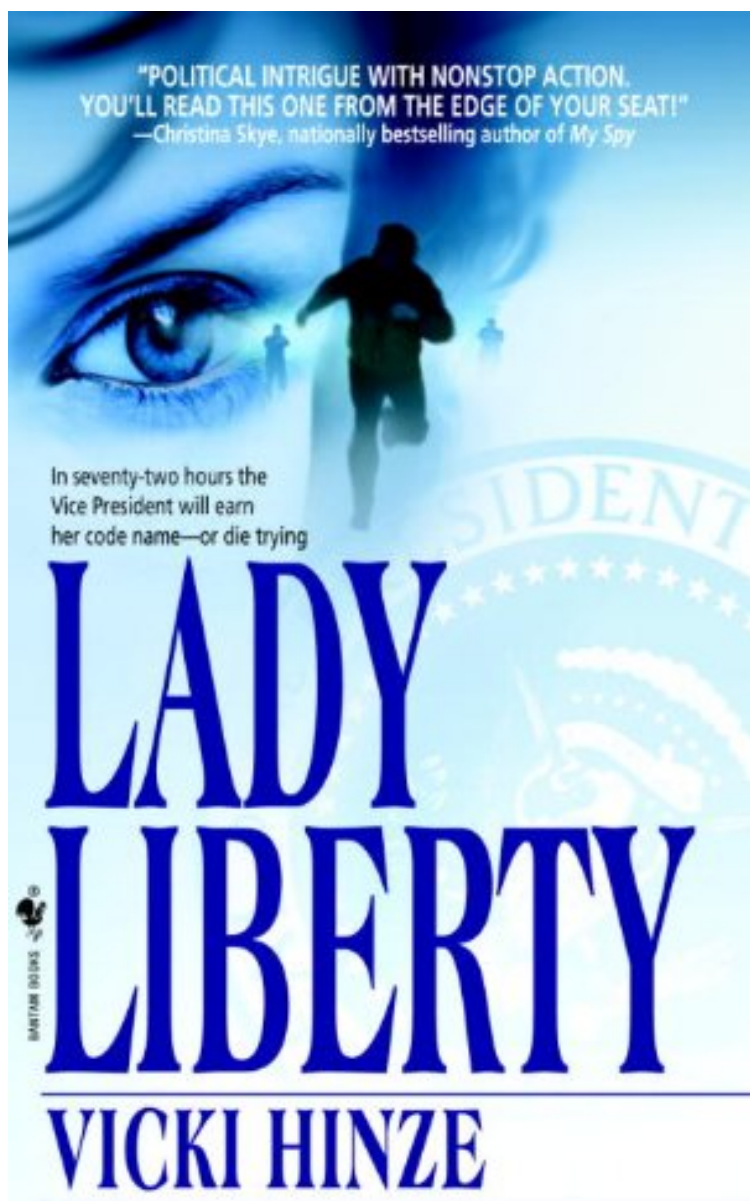


(Mobile book) File size: 62.Mb

# Lady Liberty



*Par Vicki Hinze*  
*DOC | \*audiobook | ebooks |*  
*Download PDF | ePub*

Dtails sur le produit Publi le: 2008-12-18Sorti le: 2008-12-18Format: Ebook Kindle

(Mobile book) Lady Liberty

**Par Vicki Hinze : Lady Liberty** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lady Liberty:

Download

Read Online

## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe fate of a country lies in one womans hands...U.S. Vice President Sybil Stone, code-named Lady Liberty, has proven she can hold her own against some of the worlds most influential power brokers. But now, negotiating a vital peace agreement in Geneva, Switzerland, Sybil receives an urgent message calling her back to American soil.In seventy-two hours disaster will strike, catapulting the United States into a war that will cost millions of lives. Only Sybil Stone holds the key to stopping it. Yet between Sybil and success lies a minefield of intrigue, betrayal, twisted motives, and three merciless enemies. Her

only hope of survival--and the worlds--rests with Agent Jonathan Westford, a judiciously ruthless operative with one goal: in the face of overwhelming odds, to keep Lady Liberty alive. Time is running out and trust is running thin. But Lady Liberty and Agent Westford know they must succeed--or the first-strike missile will launch...From the Paperback edition.ExtraitChapter OneGeneva, Switzerland \* Wednesday, August 7 \* Local Time: 21:30:27"Lady Liberty is on the move."Agent Jonathan Westford stilled. The message had transmitted through his earpiece clearly, but what he had heard couldn't be accurate. Three agents had been assigned to the security detail guarding Sybil Stone, the Vice President of the United States. Three. Westford as mission chief; Harrison, an old-timer; and Cramer, who was new to working Special Detail Unit's international details. Right now Liberty was supposed to be sequestered, having dinner in a private dining room with the other dignitaries, and Harrison was supposed to be standing watch. So why the hell was Cramer calling in her moves?Forgetting his half-eaten dinner of steak and potatoes, Jonathan snatched his napkin from his lap and left the sanctuary of the Grand Palace Hotel's dining room, silently damning budget cutbacks, reduced manpower, and Home Base for allowing itself to be forced to assign a rookie like Cramer to any Level-Five SDU mission, much less to one involving Liberty.The main lobby was littered with guests, many of whom had been identified as press and more who had not been identified. The hotel was far too public, in Jonathan's opinion, but it had been the one place Peris and Abdan's leaders had agreed to meet, and when the president of the last superpower in the world employed you and he said go, you went or you resigned. Since Jonathan hadn't been ready to resign, he'd gone.Keeping a sharp watch for oddities, he strolled across the expansive lobby, longing for the days of summit meetings at Camp David or places equally secluded and less complicated to secure. Why was Liberty on the move? And why were Harrison and Cramer not reporting?As soon as he cleared the watchful eyes of the press, Jonathan broke into a full run, hurdled the velvet-rope barrier restricting public access to the diplomatic wing, then barreled down the deserted hallway leading to the conference room where Liberty had spent the last four days trying to broker a peace agreement between the leaders of two of the former Soviet nations, Abdan and Peris.She alone had succeeded at getting them to the negotiating table. So far, she had managed to keep their tempers simmering, though threats of eruptions hung as heavily in the air as their threats for war. Fired up over a mineral-rich land dispute, both countries had been stockpiling arms for months, and in the past few weeks, they had escalated their purchases significantly.Both had nuclear weaponry in their arsenals. Both had demonstrated the will to use them.Vic Sampson, the hotel's chief of security, intercepted Jonathan at the mouth of the corridor. Years of hard choices seamed his lean face. "What's up? Why is she off-schedule?" "I don't know yet." Admitting that grated at Jonathan, and he sniffed. Citrus? "What am I smelling, Vic?" "Air freshener. It's in the climate-control unit." "Bad news all around. "Lose it." Jonathan doubled his pace.Vic lifted his walkie-talkie to his mouth, then issued the order. Seconds later he issued another. "I don't give a damn how you do it, just shut down the unit and get rid of it--now." He slid the device back into its case at his belt. "Why did I do that?" "Fragrance can mask contaminants." Jonathan spared him a glance. "Maybe lethal contaminants." Vic paled.It was a serious mistake, and Vic had made it. No more needed to be said. He hadn't been crazy about taking on the elevated risks of terrorist attacks or any of the other thousand extra challenges that came with hosting the summit, but he and his staff had been professional and extremely accommodating. To minimize security risks, they had blocked off an entire wing and had provided each of the peace-seekers and their staff suites, conference rooms, and offices with comfortable salons. All in all, the message to the peace-seeking entourage was unqualified, clear--and mirrored unilaterally throughout the world: Be successful.No one in power wanted these negotiations to fail.No sane person wanted war."Clear behind us." Vic reported a rear check. "Potential attack?" "It's possible." Before Liberty's plane had left D.C., two groups of terrorists, Ballast and PUSH, had threatened attacks. Vic had been warned and the Grand Palace had quietly given its employees "heavy-traffic" bonuses for working during the summit. But anyone with half a clue would know that this was "hazardous-duty" pay. Unfortunately, it was justified.Jonathan rounded the corner and spotted Liberty walking toward him. Flanked by the other leaders, their guards, three Russian translators, and Cramer, she looked tiny--a blue-eyed blonde, about five-five in pumps, with a pretty girl-next-door face and a trim body polished by nature and healthy habits. Typical confident stride, purposeful yet not overbearing. No obvious distress. Actually, the woman was smiling, amused by something the Peris leader had said."She looks okay." Vic summarized his visual check. "But I'll hang close, just in case."Jonathan nodded and continued with his own assessment. Though dwarfed by the tall, thick-shouldered men surrounding her, Liberty had a presence that had nothing to do with her navy power suit or her political clout. It signaled to even the most casual observer that she was in charge, which of course she

was. In many ways, she was a remarkable woman: classy, competent, and cool but not distant. She had presence; he knew it, and others knew it. That was enough. He stopped in the hallway in front of the office door, just steps away from the conference room they had been using for negotiations, and lifted a hand to snag her attention. "Excuse me a moment please," Liberty told the others, her voice soft and husky. She walked over, stopped beside Jonathan, and smoothed back her pale, chin-length hair. A Band-Aid on her finger? His breath locked in his lungs. What the hell was she doing with a Band-Aid on her finger? And why the hell hadn't he been notified? "Agent Westford?" Her brow furrowed, puzzled. "Is everything all right?" "I need a moment, ma'am." He had to work at keeping his voice level. She had to work at holding her smile. "Of course," she said, then stepped into his office. He followed her to the doorway, stared Cramer to a stop outside, and then spoke into his transmitter. "Harrison. My office. STAT." "On my way, sir." He turned to Cramer and ordered, "Do not move." When he nodded, Jonathan entered the office, shut the door, and then flipped the switch to activate the electronics installed to create white noise and keep conversations private. Between satellite and high-tech surveillance equipment, few places existed where sound waves couldn't be intercepted. White noise minimized the risks. That was important. If overheard, this conversation would have immediate international repercussions. Liberty stood waiting in front of his desk. "Is something wrong?" He glanced down at her hand. "What happened to your finger?" "I hope, nothing." She frowned. "The waiter slipped and the edge of his tray cut me. It bled a ridiculous amount." "He gave you the Band-Aid, then?" She nodded. "Waiters always carry Band-Aids." "The hell they did. Jonathan grabbed a pair of scissors and then cut off the bandage, careful to use the scissor tips to grasp the bandage and not contaminate it or himself. "Don't touch that wound." Rounding the corner of the desk, he removed an evidence bag from the bottom left drawer, dropped the blood-soiled Band-Aid inside, and then sealed the bag shut. The scissors went into a second sealed bag. Liberty looked at him with pure dread. "Why did you bag that?" He held up a finger and again spoke into his transmitter. "Harrison, get a Band-Aid from Grace, alcohol and peroxide, and get the mobile lab on site." Grace, Liberty's personal assistant, was the consummate professional and always prepared. "Possible Code Red." "On my way." "Agent Westford." Liberty reclaimed his attention. "It's a scratch from an ornate silver tray, not a mortal wound." He raised her hand and examined her finger. "Was the waiter holding any cutlery?" "No, just the tray. Why?" "This isn't a scratch, ma'am." He lifted his gaze to meet her eyes. "It's a knife wound." "A knife wound?" Her shock was evident. "I didn't see a knife." "Must have been hidden beneath the lip of the tray. "Clean. Deep. No jagged edges." He glanced up from her hand to her eyes. "Definitely a knife wound, ma'am." Her expression soured. "Even so, calling a Code Red, summoning the mobile lab--isn't that a little overkill?" The incident had occurred in the presence of Peris and Abdan's leaders and security staff. Either could claim it an attack by the other side and end negotiations. Obviously, she was worried that they would. "Not if the knife blade was contaminated." "Listen, I appreciate your diligent attention to details, but the waiter wasn't a terrorist. The poor man was eighty years old. He just slipped while carrying a large tray." She was deliberately minimizing the gravity of the situation; he read it in her face. "And he apologized profusely for it, and you accepted the Band-Aid from him to avoid hurting his feelings." Resignation that he knew what she was doing settled in, and a steely look glinted in her eyes. "An overt reaction on my part would have given Peris and Abdan's premieres an excuse to halt the talks and leave the table. That would have meant war." "Vintage Liberty. "So taking the Band-Aid was a calculated risk and not a synapse misfire?" "Of course." He cocked his head and raked his lower lip with his teeth. "High risks." She hiked her chin. "High stakes." "Too high. Jonathan put a hard edge in his voice. She'd heard it before and would know what it meant. "Please refrain from accepting aid, assistance, or anything you ingest from anyone except me, members of my team, or approved hotel staff. Anyone--even an eighty-year-old waiter--can be a terrorist. And even a seemingly innocent incident can be a third-party terrorist attack." "But I explained why--" "No buts, ma'am," he interrupted. "We're in Gregor Faust's backyard and a stone's throw from PUSH. We know they're hostile and they want you to fail here. We'd be foolish to forget it, and we are not foolish people." "Of course not." She had the grace to blush but neglected to promise it wouldn't happen again. Odds were, it would. First time Liberty deemed it necessary, she'd put herself right back in the line of fire. Unfortunately, she was right about Peris and Abdan. Both premieres felt that being together made them more vulnerable to attack and their meeting increased the possibility of danger to their own lives. They could have blamed the incident with the waiter on each other and walked away. Still, Jonathan felt duty-bound to remind her of the terrorist threats. "With Gregor Faust at the helm, Ballast has become one of the most feared international terrorist groups in the world--and if the CIA's suspicions are accurate, he's also the arms dealer supplying Peris and Abdan with weapons." Less

intelligence had been gathered on PUSH, or People United, as it was sometimes called. "And it's true that PUSH operates mostly in Western Europe and North Africa, but that doesn't mean it can't pull an attack here." "I've read the reports, Agent Westford," Liberty said. "And I've heard the rumors that PUSH has developed ties to China." "Whether or not the rumors are true, PUSH has been pumping out strong signals to the terrorist community that it's eager to expand its arms sales and take down Ballast's stronghold in Eastern Europe. That's significant, ma'am." It was. The simple mention of Faust's name sent shockwaves through more countries than were members of NATO--and ripples of terror through the heart of every man or woman responsible for the safety of the people in those countries. "I've been thinking about that." She lifted a finger. "To take on Ballast, PUSH has to be formidable. Far stronger than we believed." "Formidable, or suicidal." He waited for the analogy between PUSH's behavior and her own to occur to her. When it did, she frowned. "You're right, okay? You're right." Liberty stepped back and rested a hip against the desk. "I--I'm sorry." She looked down at her fingertip. "I will try not to do it again." "I appreciate your consideration." He took the compliment that she trusted him to do his job as such, but it fell short of a promise. Still, it was the best he was going to get, so he had to object. "It isn't in your best interest to take risks right now. Particularly not here." "Worry darkened the irises of her eyes to a smoky blue. "Do you think one of the terrorist groups contaminated the knife blade?" "Maybe. But don't discount Peris or Abdan." In the past, the warmongers had committed worse acts. "We'll check with the lab to be sure." A rap sounded at the door and Jonathan called out, "Come in, Harrison." Flustered and tense, he entered with the requested first-aid supplies. "I take full responsibility--" Jonathan silenced him with a look, cleaned Liberty's wound, and then applied a new Band-Aid. "There you go, ma'am." He backed up and forced a smile to ease her mind. "Sorry for the interruption. Harrison will escort you back to the conference room. I'll take over momentarily." "Thank you, Agent Westford." She turned for the door and paused, dipped her chin. Sleek and smooth, her hair swept forward and brushed against her jaw. "You'll let me know--" "It'll be a while, but when I know, you'll know." When she nodded, he added, "Gabby called. She needs to talk with you ASAP." Gabby was Sybil's oldest friend, the closest thing to family she had left, and from his days on her detail, Jonathan knew Gabby often called Sybil to chat, though she rarely interrupted Sybil's missions unless she had information that was of vital interest or bad news. "I'll call her now." "Yes, ma'am." Jonathan watched Liberty go. Harrison followed her, his concern burning through his masked expression. Jonathan motioned Cramer inside and closed the door. The man was good at general domestic details, which made him a strong candidate for Special Detail Unit and international details. He was thin and wiry but fast, sharp-minded, a master marksman and--judging by the look in his brown eyes and the rigid tension in his stance--appropriately worried right now. Since he was new to international and to working Jonathan's SDU details, he supposed he would have to cut the rookie a little slack even though his natural inclination was to cut the idiot's throat for allowing this to happen. "Why were you standing watch?" "Harrison got the runs, sir." "Why wasn't I notified?" "I would have had to be obvious. You ordered us to be discreet when the other guards were present, and one was posted on either side of me. I thought Harrison would brief you, but I guess he was preoccupied with making it to the rest room." Presentation de l'diteur The fate of a country lies in one woman's hands... U.S. Vice President Sybil Stone, code-named Lady Liberty, has proven she can hold her own against some of the world's most influential power brokers. But now, negotiating a vital peace agreement in Geneva, Switzerland, Sybil receives an urgent message calling her back to American soil. In seventy-two hours disaster will strike, catapulting the United States into a war that will cost millions of lives. Only Sybil Stone holds the key to stopping it. Yet between Sybil and success lies a minefield of intrigue, betrayal, twisted motives, and three merciless enemies. Her only hope of survival--and the world's--rests with Agent Jonathan Westford, a judiciously ruthless operative with one goal: in the face of overwhelming odds, to keep Lady Liberty alive. Time is running out and trust is running thin. But Lady Liberty and Agent Westford know they must succeed--or the first-strike missile will launch... From the Paperback edition.