

**BORN**  
*to* **RUN**

## *A note from the publisher*

Dear Reader,

If you enjoy riveting stories with engaging characters and strong writing as I do, you'll love *Born to Run*. It's an edge-of-your-seat political thriller, action packed with terrorism... treason... and murder. It follows a nation's desire for Isabel Diaz to be the first Hispanic and female president... but can she win? And should she? I couldn't put it down... *Born to Run* is a gripping read. *Born to Run* is John's second novel.

Did you know that big-name authors, John Grisham and J.K. Rowling, were rejected many times by publishers? John Green's own experience of this was one of the many factors that inspired *Pantera Press*, and our aim to become *a great new home for Australia's next generation of best-loved authors*. We think we're well on our way.

But there's even more to us... Simply by enjoying our books, you'll also be contributing to our unique approach: *good books doing good things*<sup>TM</sup>. We have a strong 'profits for philanthropy' foundation, focussed on literacy, quality writing, the joys of reading and fostering debate.

So let me mention one program we're thrilled to support: *Let's Read*. It's already helping 100,000 pre-schoolers across Australia develop a love of books and the building blocks for learning how to read and write. We're excited that *Let's Read* now also operates in remote Indigenous communities in Far North Queensland, Cape York and Torres Strait. *Let's Read* was developed by the *Centre for Community Child Health* and it's being implemented in partnership with *The Smith Family*.

Simply buying this book will help us support these kids. Thank you.

Want to do more? If you visit [www.PanteraPress.com/Donate](http://www.PanteraPress.com/Donate) you can personally donate to help *The Smith Family* expand *Let's Read*, find out more about this great program, and also more on the other programs *Pantera Press* supports.

Please enjoy *Born to Run*.

And for news about our other books, sample chapters, author interviews and much more, please visit our website: [www.PanteraPress.com](http://www.PanteraPress.com)

Happy reading,

*Alison Green*

# BORN *to* RUN



**JOHN M. GREEN**



**PanteraPress**

*good books doing good things<sup>SM</sup>*



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To my three amigos

“When I was a boy I was told that anybody could become president. I’m beginning to believe it.”

— *Clarence Darrow, defence attorney and writer (1857–1938)*

“Can a woman be president of the United States?  
At present the answer is emphatically ‘No’.”

— *Eleanor Roosevelt, “Women in Politics”  
(Good Housekeeping, 1940)*

“Yes, absolutely. I think, you know, because why not?”

— *Arnold Schwarzenegger on allowing foreign-born Americans  
to run for president (60 Minutes, 2004)*

“The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time  
with the blood of patriots & tyrants.”

— *Thomas Jefferson (1787)*

## THE FINISH LINE...

**F**OR ONCE, HILLARY Clinton and Sarah Palin are in synch, privately spitting their venom at the cloying barrage of TV images that show a beaming Isabel Diaz sprinkling her pixie dust. Even their own supporters, in a distressing groundswell these two political foes once craved for themselves, are leaping to their feet across the country, punching the air and chanting “Bel... Bel... Isa-bel.”

As the race to win the White House hurtles into its final straight, candidate Isabel Diaz streaks lengths ahead. “She’s not only smart, personable and visionary, she’s got an impressive record of accomplishment,” says *The New York Times*. “The nation, and the world, will be well-served if this woman occupies the Oval Office.”

Diaz’s well-chronicled slog to success is tunnelling her deep into the nation’s psyche, making it very tough for her opponents. It’s hardly wise politics to slam a minority woman who crawled out of a rank pit of poverty, alcohol and violence to emerge as the big-hearted owner of an admired family restaurant chain, and an active philanthropist to boot. What little mud her rivals have been able to dig up and toss at her isn’t sticking.

It’s true that some see her as too good to be true, but for

most, in a nation deflated after so many pumped up promises of change, Isabel Diaz offers a credible breath of fresh air.

On policy, not only has she won over the Democratic heartland for her stance on moral issues, offers of relief for the middle class, and her doable list of programs of leg-ups for the underdog, but the Tea Party also loves her for promising low taxes, small government and family values. Her running mate, the more traditionally conservative Hank Clemens who hails from North Carolina, helps her shore up the religious right.

The media are chorusing that Isabel Diaz is a shoo-in, and that her rival Robert (Bobby) J. Foster is outfoxed and outpaced.

Buoyed for weeks with a 70-percent approval rating—higher than the rapture for Barack Obama at his peak—the presidency is within Isabel's grasp.

And deep behind the scenes, a shadowy circle of zealots is conspiring to guarantee just that.

# 1

JAX MASON HAD heard of Isabel Diaz. Who *didn't* know about the famous Burger Queen? But the twenty-five-year-old Australian had no clue he was about to sacrifice his life for her.

Bent over tying his laces, his shoe on his skateboard and his fringe flopped over his glasses, he heard the elevator ping and, at 5 AM, he thought it had to be the night guard doing his final rounds. Jax looked up, expecting that at any second the doors would slide open on the old guy's barrel stomach and customary can of Pepsi Max.

Though Jax was currently visiting London from New York, where he rented an apartment, he really lived on the internet. He was a prolific contributor to WikiLeaks (though he'd never actually met Julian Assange), as well as Anonymous and various conspiracy theory sites. His thick Coke-bottle glasses exaggerated his nerdiness and helped him suit the label of the typical young math genius, though it was called maths where he was born, in Melbourne. His straggly brown hair was so greasy it looked black even in a good light, and his pasty skin was proof he was a night-owl, especially with his skateboarding. Neither travel nor late nights troubled him. Jax was not big on mixing with other people and even dismissed

“social networking” as an ironic misnomer. His computer was his closest companion, closely followed by his skateboard. The only thing neat about him was his beard, a slightly ginger mouse-tail that made him look as though an amber exclamation mark was pointing under his lip.

If the Silicon Valley environmental software firm that had flown him to the UK had bothered with a face-to-face interview, they would have had second thoughts. Instead, they hired him on the strength of a single phone call after hearing of his reputation from his PhD work, even though it was unfinished. He’d dumped Princeton University and skipped to New York as a contractor, mainly so he could work on his pet project away from the prying eyes of deceitful supervisors. Like the creep Jax had overheard in the hallway mocking his stutter.

His current employers had installed their patented software for running the environmental features of a new five-star-rated building at Canary Wharf, London’s modern financial district, but due to a serious systems glitch the local authorities were refusing to hand over their completion certificate so none of the tenants could move in. Jax was over here to fix it. “Don’t leave the building till it’s done,” was his simple brief, but it was one he ignored daily, stealing a few hours here and there to take in the sights since he hadn’t been to London before.

He flicked back his hair but, from out here on the terrace across the empty blacked-out floor, all he could make out was the elevator’s flashing “14”. He squinted, and when the doors shushed open, two occupants stepped out, not one. With the light behind them, he couldn’t glimpse their faces but neither of their body shapes was anything like the nightwatchman’s. Jax’s smile dropped, sending a glint of reflected moonlight from his lenses to the visitors.

“Jax Mason, is that you over there?”

She was British, Jax decided, hardly surprised. He couldn’t make out the badge she seemed to be waving in front of

her, but her confident strides toward him and her stubby companion's menacing swagger instantly made Jax's skin crawl, and his head suddenly squirmed with the thought that 14th floors were usually 13ths.

A frosty wind blew up from the River Thames two hundred feet below, though he wondered if it was nerves.

"Jax Mason?" she insisted.

"Yeah, that's m-me. Y-you?" Jax tried to calm the anxiety trembling out of him. He stammered at the best of times, though this didn't seem like one of them. He took her hand, but her sneer suggested he should have gripped it harder, or maybe first wiped the sweat off his own hand on his jeans. She was an eye-ful, for sure, but that only increased Jax's edginess. He wasn't good around women. Or men. But especially women.

"I'm Diana Hunter," she lied and, tilting her head toward her slightly hunch-backed colleague, continued, "And this is Lucky."

Even in this dim light, Jax noted that Lucky's face looked like he shaved with a chisel, possibly why he had the chipped front tooth.

"We're MI6," Diana explained, brushing back a strand of her blonde hair, but not so far back that Jax could have guessed it was a wig, even in good light.