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## Everything Is Jake: A T. R. Softly Detective Novel (2021)

Jethro K. Lieberman

# Everything Is Jake

a T.R. Softly Detective Novel

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*Everything Is Jake*  
by Jethro K. Lieberman

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For Jo

*who wondered one day  
why I hadn't written a book  
something like this one*

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# Everything Is Jake

## PROLOGUE

EXACTLY WHAT BEFELL THE PRESIDENT OF the United States has never been fully understood. His last misadventure in office—an occasion his unshaken supporters were certain could not arise—was explained as an illness or a tragic mistake or a failure of handlers. Not even the First Lady accepted his oft-proclaimed view that he'd been defrauded. Now, some years after he departed down a trail of denial and recrimination, the prurient details have faded. Most Americans have let their recall crumble and have moved on, preferring to repress the episode as they have forgotten the man. But the truth always remains, even if buried or rejected. The truth, or some part of it, clings to memories or hibernates in closets until someone comes poking.

So held T. R. Softly, consulting detective, whose motto, *Felix vir qui potest rerum omnium cognoscere causas*, he took loosely from Virgil: "Happy is the man who understands the causes of all things." It was a maxim that up to now had carried him far.

But in an era of complexity, confusions, and Rumsfeldian unknowns—that is, some short time after the evolution of sea slugs—even the most accomplished investigator cannot grasp all things, like which dark corners require light. Or as Reggie, Softly's man at the newsstand, unflaggingly proclaimed when countering doubts about who did what in the neighborhood: "'Cuz you ain't found it in the papers don't mean it didn't happen."

What Reggie meant, properly considered, is that no event, no matter how spectacular, has but a single root. "Defeat is an orphan,"

the saying goes, but of course defeat has as many forebears as victory—indeed, more; they're just in hiding. So it was that the river of the White House scandal was fed by multiple streams, most of them far below ground and therefore uncharted, and the primal one, perhaps, too narrow to navigate.

The current that Softly cruised began in an odd courtroom proceeding that had, as far as he knew when he took on the quest, nothing to do with him or the president. Only later did he begin to suspect he was not the author of his story but a character in it, not a member of the audience but a puppet without strings confronting a body he could never have been expected to encounter on a stage without clues. Still he pressed on, buoyed by a cheery optimism that he would soon get to the bottom of it. This is the record of his journey and of the cause of it all.

## Dry Run

*Most crimes occur in the shadows.  
This one plays out in court in plain view  
of an observing world.*