

PETER MENNIGEN

COTTON

FBI

BONY BEACH



BASTEI ENTERTAINMENT 

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What is COTTON FBI?

Your name is Jeremiah Cotton. You are a small-time cop in the NYPD, a rookie that no one takes seriously. But you want more. You have a score to settle with the world. And anyone who calls you "Jerry" will be sorry.

A new time. A new hero. A new mission. Experience the birth of a digital cult-series: Cotton FBI is the remake of JERRY COTTON, the most successful series of German novels with more than one billion copies sold, and it tells an entirely new story in e-book form.

Cotton FBI is published twice a month, with each episode a self-contained story.

The Author

Peter Mennigen was born in Meckenheim near Bonn. He studied art and design in Cologne before he turned to writing fiction. His novels have been published by Bastei Lübbe, Rowohlt, Ravensburger and other publishing houses. He also writes scripts for graphic novels and audio dramatizations as well as screenplays for TV shows and series.

COTTON **FBI**

Bony Beach **Peter Mennigen**

Translated by Frank Keith

BASTEI ENTERTAINMENT 

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1

It all began when a couple of hikers found human remains on one of Chappaquiddick's beaches. The small island lies about a hundred and fifty miles northeast of New York City, is around 6 square miles in area, and is inhabited by fewer than two hundred souls. Two ferries and a bridge provide access to the neighboring island of Martha's Vineyard.

The discovery might never have happened if some tourists hadn't ignored the sign forbidding trespassing on this stretch of coastline. But another significant factor aiding the unearthing of the remains was the fall storms that had raged over the islands during the previous weeks. Wind and water had exposed the bones that had been buried beneath the sand all this time.

And so, the Dukes County Sheriff's Office started an investigation. At first, they assumed that there was a single dead body. The advanced stage of decay suggested that it must have been buried in the sand for several years. After the bones of at least a half dozen other victims were found within a radius of about twenty feet, the case grew beyond the capabilities of the tiny sheriff's department. And then eleven more skeletons were uncovered over the following four days. The individual remains were at times less than four feet apart.

It seemed that there was no end in sight.

*

"My God, Cotton," Special Agent Philippa 'Phil' Decker exclaimed when she saw her partner. "What happened to you? You look like you fell into a shredder."

“That’s how I feel,” Cotton muttered as he lifted his suitcase into the trunk of the FBI car and closed the lid. The sound of it slamming shut caused an eruption of pain in his head. Carefully, as if he were walking on raw eggs, he headed over to the passenger door. With a bit of effort, he managed to open the car door almost noiselessly. He slowly let his body slide into the seat. He had a terrible hangover, right down to every last strand of his hair.

While Cotton was dressed casually in a T-shirt, jeans, and leather jacket, Decker’s slim body was clad in an elegant dark pantsuit.

Cotton was suffering from the aftermath of an undercover operation the night before. Vodka had flowed freely during a meeting with terrorists from Azerbaijan. It had taken hours before he had managed to gather enough evidence and could finally give the FBI agents hiding nearby the agreed-upon signal to strike.

“You have no idea how much high-proof alcohol some people are capable of consuming,” he groaned, closing the door as quietly as he could and buckling his seat belt.

Decker’s brow furrowed as she shifted gears and drove out of the G-Team garage. The vehicle’s windows were darkly tinted to keep the sun out. But the light that did manage to seep through was enough to make Cotton’s eyes ache as soon as he looked outside. He pulled out a pair of sunglasses and put them on.

He breathed a sigh of relief when New York City was finally behind them. Traffic had been heavy, and in the city they had been forced to go at a snail’s pace. Now at last they were heading north towards Massachusetts at a reasonable speed. If it had been two months earlier, they could have enjoyed the Indian summer in New England with its brightly colored fall leaves.

“Would you be so kind as to tell me again what exactly it is we’re supposed to do on this island, Philippa?” he said

after some time had passed. "After yesterday's blackout, my memory is suffering from some significant gaps."

"Does the name 'Martha's Vineyard' mean anything to you?"

"Sure. Half the East Coast money-bags spend their vacations there or move there when they retire. What are we supposed to do there?"

"We're following up on a call for assistance that the local police department lodged with the FBI. It seems they made some mysterious discovery in the form of a number of skeletons. We'll find out more when we get there. To be precise, it's not Martha's Vineyard we're going to, but the smaller neighboring island of Chappaquiddick. I've heard that the inhabitants there are a bit more rustic and not very open to strangers."

"Well, I guess there aren't any famous people there!"

"Everyone on the island is a longtime resident, except for a few actors. Even though most make a living off of tourism, they don't like strangers that much — they don't really trust them."

The agents drove along the coastline on Interstate 95. They passed through Bridgeport with its white painted churches and decorative houses that looked like scenes from old-fashioned christmas-cookie tins — typical of New England. About forty miles after New Haven, they turned onto Interstate 395, heading towards Providence. After driving for almost three hours, they came to the harbor town of North Kingstown, Rhode Island. From there, a large ferryboat went out to Martha's Vineyard several times a day.

They parked the car on the ship's car deck. Ten minutes later, the ramp closed up and the ferry edged away from the dock to make its way out to the island.

Despite the bitter cold, Cotton spent most of the journey above deck. The fresh sea air did him good; it helped clear away some of the fog from his head. He took hold of the

railing and peered out over the greenish-gray waves of the Atlantic Ocean.

“I wouldn’t mind a nice hot toddy,” a woman’s voice suddenly said beside him.

Cotton turned and saw Decker, who had put on a coat before joining him. Leaning her forearms on the rails, she also peered out over the rough sea.

“Didn’t you say that we’re going to a vacation island?” Cotton asked. “It looks like we’re the only passengers on board.”

“Just be glad that the busy season is over. You should see the bustle on Martha’s Vineyard during the high season in summer.”

“How did the inhabitants of Chappaquiddick react to the skeletons?”

“They didn’t, because they know nothing about them. The local police are keeping things quiet to prevent any hindrances to the investigation. The official statement to explain the excavations is that they’re recovering barrels of toxic waste that washed ashore. This has been convincing enough to keep even the nosiest people away from the mass grave.”

The two agents spoke very little during the rest of the passage. The closer they got to Martha’s Vineyard, the more uptight Decker seemed to become, as though unpleasant memories from her past were on her mind.

2

Leaving the ferry's dock in Vineyard Haven, Cotton and Decker drove east to Edgartown. The FBI had reserved two hotel rooms for them in this community, the largest on the island. But before they checked into the hotel, they first wanted to take a look at the site where the skeletons had been found.

They made their way along the winding, bumpy road that skirted the coastline of Chappaquiddick. After passing some large beach houses, they came to the part of the coast that was free from human habitation. The beach sloped gently towards the water; behind it stretched acres of low sand dunes.

When they saw the yellow tape that marked off the excavation site, Decker reduced the vehicle's speed and eventually stopped the car. Cotton got out and scanned the sand dunes around them. Every few yards, there were heaps of sand piled beside holes. Seagulls sat on top of some of the piles, watching two young men wearing coveralls over their police uniforms shoveling sand.

The sheriff himself was supervising the work of his two deputies. He was a large, overweight man in his late forties; the large belly hanging over his belt made him look like a pregnant manatee. He watched the newcomers approaching with a grim expression on his face.

Decker went straight towards him.

"Hey — stay behind the tape!" Pearce bellowed at her angrily. "This section of the coast is off limits, and that goes for journalists, too!"

"We're not journalists," Decker called back, pulling out her ID. "I'm Special Agent Philippa Decker and this is my