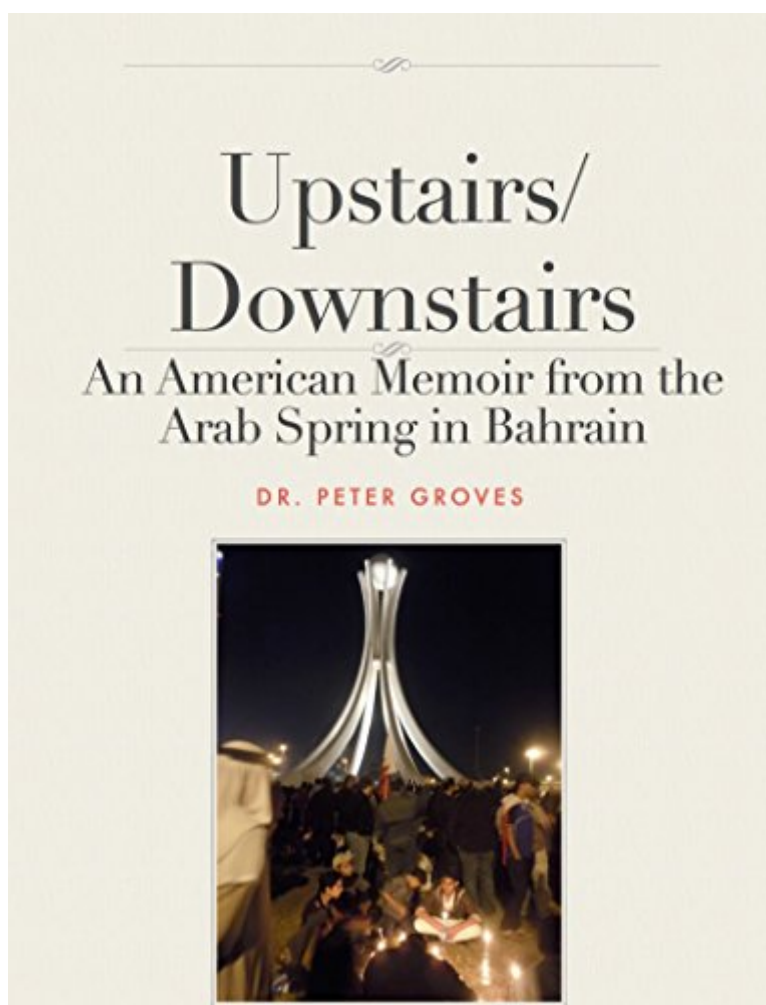


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Upstairs/Downstairs: An American Memoir From The Arab Spring In Bahrain



Synopsis

The Arab Spring of 2011 happened in each of the Muslim countries, but there was only one "Day of Rage" that happened right under our noses - the Navy's Fifth Fleet is only five miles from the infamous Pearl Roundabout, where protesters were brutally repressed after a month-long protest. I was a physics Ph.D. working on location in Bahrain for a DC think-tank. As time passed and I witnessed American apathy in the political situation in the country, I grew angry. We were the inventors of freedom and democracy. That was what I grew up believing. Yet here we were, sitting inside the walls of the Navy base, eating at the "Liberty Grocery," buying trinkets at the "Freedom Souk," and buying beers at the officers' club, watching, just watching... the injustice, beatings, and killings going on in the country, and just praying it all would go away. As the protest at the Pearl Roundabout went on and on, I grew closer to my Bahraini friends and protester friends. I also grew more and more embarrassed by our American foreign policy. Shouldn't we be leading the fight for civil rights instead of sitting on the sidelines, and just hoping that things will work out? I attended the protest at the Pearl Roundabout. After the crackdown, I spent my time in Bahrain afraid to write anything down for fear of arrest, torture, extra-judicial killing, deportation, or firing - I truly didn't know what would happen. When I came home at night, I used to open it slowly and grab a tennis racquet that I kept by the door, because I truly thought someone might be waiting to put a bag over my head, beat me, and bury me in the desert. But now I don't live there any more. I promised my Bahraini friends that I would tell their story. This is that story.

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