

Interview with the author Nicholas Kinsey of "White Slaves: 15 Years a Barbary Slave":

Q: I have heard that your novel is gathering excellent reviews on BookSirens and is already a Kindle bestseller on Amazon, B&N, etc.

A: Yes, the ebook and paperback print versions are doing very well.

Q: What is your background exactly? I noticed you have both British and Canadian nationalities and you've directed several feature movies and television dramas.

A: I was born in Canada but my parents were English so we returned to the UK after several years in Canada and the US. I went to an English public school in Bristol before my parents moved permanently to the US. I went to university in the US and then moved back to Canada in the 1970s to avoid the American draft. After completing a Master's degree in Science in Quebec I dropped out to become a film cameraman. Basically I fell in love with film production and threw it all away for a career in film.

At the time there were few decent screenplay writers in Canada so I was often the one who took on the writing tasks which helped me become a director. My first feature was a comedy entitled "Short Change" which came out in 1989. I wrote, directed and photographed the movie. My second feature was "Women Without Wings", a story about vowed virgins which we shot in the mountains of Albania. Other features that I wrote and directed include "Killing Ruth", "Leatha Accidents" and "Tree Line." Over the years, I produced eight feature movies in 35mm and a television drama series.

I have never really been a film goer. As a producer, I went to all the major film festivals including Cannes, Berlin, etc. and could have screened a lot of international movies but I never did. I am not very interested in other people's movies. I have always preferred books to cinema and in recent years I've strayed from the film industry. I lost interest in movies and film production, although I still work as a director of photography and cameraman from time to time.

Q: Tell me about your first novel *Playing Rudolf Hess*.

A: *Playing Rudolf Hess* was actually based on a television mini-series script that I wrote for a Toronto production company and a Scottish co-producer. When the mini-series went nowhere, I decided to try to adapt it in the form of a novel. I had a great imposter story and I knew it would sell everywhere so the idea of creating a novel made sense. The script for the television drama series came in at around 250 pages, so it wasn't a monumental task to convert it into a novel.

I learned a lot writing that first novel. Writing for the big screen is different and often more superficial. The characters are not as well defined. With a novel, you have to go deeper. You don't have time in a television script to explore your characters as much. Also I learned to work with an editor which is not something you do very often with a film script. The writing is never as important in a movie since the director and actors often change things and rewrite the dialogue.

I really enjoyed myself working on that first novel. In the film industry you spend almost all your time trying to please producers, commissioning editors, and funding agencies who haven't got a clue as to what makes a decent script. Whereas if you are working on a novel, you don't have to fight those battles, particularly if you are self-publishing. Of course, you argue over the content with your editor, but that's often an enjoyable experience if you are working with

someone you trust. And the results can be quite extraordinary in that it forces you to enrich your work with new characters and actions.

Q: *Playing Rudolf Hess* is an imposter story while your second novel *An Absolute Secret* is a spy thriller. How did you come to write a spy thriller?

A: *An Absolute Secret* was a story mentioned in one of the history books about Rudolf Hess. The author had come across this sensational story about the surveillance of a German spy in Stockholm in the last years of the war. The real story didn't come out until the year 2000 because of the Official Secrets Act in Britain that prevented anyone from publishing it. As soon as PRH was complete, I started writing this new novel which took off with a bang. The story just seemed to write itself. It all just came together so quickly. It was amazing. I published PRH in 2016 and then AAS in 2017. These two novels were easy to write since there was so much information in the historical record. They were true stories about events during WWII, so there was a bit of a crossover.

Q: Your third novel *Shipwrecked Lives* is about the inquiry into the *Empress of Ireland* passenger liner and its sinking in the St. Lawrence River. How did you come to write this novel?

A: *Shipwrecked Lives* was based on my script for a television mini-series. I had pitched a movie script about the *Empress of Ireland* to the funding agencies back in the 1980s, but no one showed any interest. As a film producer I had often shot relatively low budget movies so I thought I might be able to shoot the movie as a courtroom drama in the actual location of the inquiry in Quebec City. The problem was the fact that the "palais de justice" where it had all happened back in 1914 now belonged to the Quebec government and was filled with bureaucrats working on the Quebec budget and they didn't want a film producer hanging around while they put together their top secret plans for the budget. So the idea was to shoot the movie over the Christmas break in 2012 with a lot of British and Norwegian actors, but unfortunately at the last minute we had to postpone. That basically killed the movie project.

I owned the script for the movie and later developed it into a television mini-series which I thought would sell better. In 2018 I took the plunge and wrote the novel based on the 250-page script. *Shipwrecked Lives* is today a bestseller on Amazon, so I must have been right about something.

The book trade has taught me that there is an audience out there for my kind of historical fiction based on true events. My books sell really well to older readers who have a passion for historical events and stories. If you can find a great story in the history books, then a fictionalized version of these events can often have great potential. In the film industry we have a term for this, we call them high profile stories that command reader attention. Unfortunately these are few and far between in today's movie industry which is often risk adverse to anything that is deemed historical.

Q: After *Shipwrecked Lives*, you came out the following year with *Remembrance Man* which is a story about the 1832 cholera epidemic.

A: Yes. *Remembrance Man* was published in 2020 just as the COVID pandemic was happening. I had written a feature length western twenty years ago about the cholera epidemic. It was a great Canadian story but as it often the case, there was never enough interest to make it into a movie. So again I took a script I had written and adapted it as a novel. I made a lot of

changes fleshing out the novel. I added characters and events and the novel became a much richer story. It is set in a small frontier town in Western Ontario and shows how the cholera epidemic created so much fear and despair in society. It is a tale of murder, greed and deceit, and the breakdown of society. Family members turn against family members, friends against friends, and soon everyone is out for themselves. Cholera victims are simply abandoned on the roads, and wagons are sent around to collect the bodies and bury them in cholera pits. The novel has become very successful and is now a bestseller on Amazon.

Q: So where did the idea for your fifth novel *White Slaves* come from?

A: It came out of the blue as they often do. I read this incredible story about the Baltimore captives. 109 men, women, and children were seized by the famous Dutch corsair and pirate Murad Reis from a village in Southwestern Ireland in the summer of 1631 and taken on a 38-day voyage down the coast of France and Spain before they were sold into slavery in Algiers. The history books provided a lot of detail including the names of the kidnapped, the date of their arrival in Algiers and how they were ransomed 15 year later by the British Parliament. Remember this story is almost 400 years old and the historical detail is amazing! There was, however, one thing missing in the history books. What happened to the captives during that 38-day voyage? I felt immediately the need to tell the story of how they survived that horrific voyage. What went on in the hold of those two ships and how they were treated by the crew and the janissary soldiers.

It was a novel with a lot of characters. It took me some time to get to know each of the characters, but once they were captured by the corsairs and hauled off to the coast of France, the story just flowed onto the paper. You see they had to sail down the coast of France and Spain to get to Algiers. They needed fresh water and game to feed the large numbers of captives, crew and soldiers on board the two ships. So I needed to work out where they would go to avoid the French and Spanish naval vessels who were busy searching for corsairs along the coast. Remember that the white slave trade saw over a million European Christians forced into captivity in the Barbary States of North Africa. Whole villages and towns in England, Ireland, France, Italy, Spain and even Iceland were depopulated by corsair slavers.

I wrote the first draft in less than six months. The slave market, however, required a lot of additional research as did the development of the new lives of my characters in Algiers. How did they adapt, where did they go? There were some 35,000 white Christian slaves living in Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli in the 17th century. Most of these slaves were never ransomed and simply got on with their lives in North Africa. Today there are over 100 million descendants of these white slaves living in Europe, North America and the Middle East.

Q: Do you have a new project in the works?

A: Yes, I'm thinking about several ideas, but I won't share them until I've started to write.

Q: Thank you, Nicholas.