

A CONVERSATION WITH SUSAN KLAUS

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF, HOW AND WHEN YOU STARTED WRITING.

I wrote my first novel about mermaids 30 years ago, but never did anything with it. In 2004, I was a movie extra in *Ocean's Eleven* with Brad Pitt. He was mobbed by the extras and inspired the idea for the Harpy Trilogy of novels. When breeding Thoroughbreds and hoping for a big winning colt, I wrote the thriller, *Secretariat Reborn* about the cloning of Secretariat. I wrote *Shark Fin Soup* out of disgust that sharks were facing extinction because of a Chinese soup.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE YOUR NOVEL?

I hope to wipe out indifference like my character, Christian, and make people aware that sharks are in real trouble.

HOW DID YOU USE YOUR LIFE EXPERIENCE OR PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND TO ENRICH YOUR STORY?

Many of the scenes in *Shark Fin Soup* came from true experiences that happened to me in Florida, the sailing the Bahamas, and visiting Costa Rica and New York.

ANYTHING AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL IN YOUR NOVEL?

Obviously, Christian and I share the same passion for nature, animals, and the environment.

ARE ANY CHARACTERS BASED ON PEOPLE YOU KNOW?

The protagonists in all my books are a young Brad Pitt, and all other characters are people I know or meet including Vince, the mobster.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE OR MOST SYMPATHETIC CHARACTER? AND WHY?

Christian. He is the most complex character I've ever written...gorgeous, tragic, angry, and even deadly, yet he's intelligent and caring, a bad boy with a heart. Some readers will fall in love with him while others might hate him.

WHO IS YOUR LEAST SYMPATHIC CHARACTER? AND WHY?

No real bad guys in this book, only the repulsion of shark fin soup.

WHAT PART OF WRITING YOUR BOOK DID YOU FIND THE MOST CHALLENGING?

Research, making every detail accurate.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE THAT READERS WILL TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR BOOK?

That our planet is in trouble and we need to wake up before it's too late.

HOW DO YOU DIAL UP THE TENSION TO KEEP YOUR READERS ON THE EDGE OF THEIR SEATS?

Keep the characters in a dilemma and the action constant.

WHAT WRITERS HAVE INSPIRED YOU?

Dennis Lehane and his beautifully written thrillers. In fantasy, Piers Anthony, Frank Herbert, and George R.R. Martin.

WHAT IS THE WRITING PROCESS LIKE FOR YOU?

Wake up early and write until the inspiration and energy runs out.

WHAT IS THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE ABOUT WRITING THAT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

When done with a book, hire a good professional editor who knows your genre.

WHAT IS THE WORST PIECE OF ADVICE ABOUT WRITING THAT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

Being told I didn't need an editor.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU? ANY NEW BOOKS IN THE PIPELINE?

I'm still working on *A Murder in Sarasota* based on a true story, and I've started a cat book, untitled at this time. I'm also thinking about Christian's next adventure and the second Harpy novel, finished but needs a rewrite.

ANY FINAL WORDS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY ABOUT YOUR NOVEL?

I can guarantee that no one will fall asleep reading *Shark Fin Soup*!