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More from Richard Armitage | Your Questions Answered!

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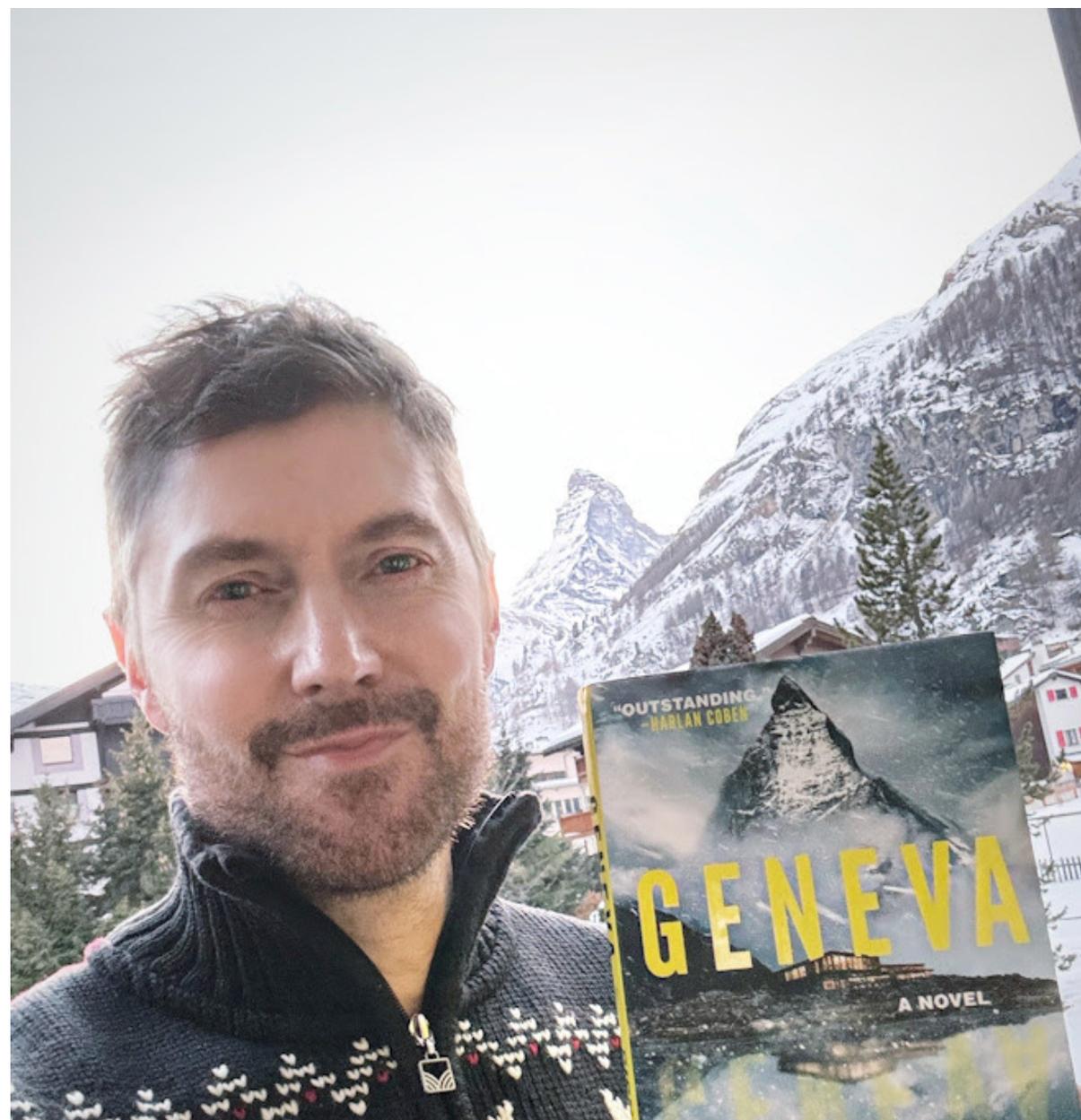
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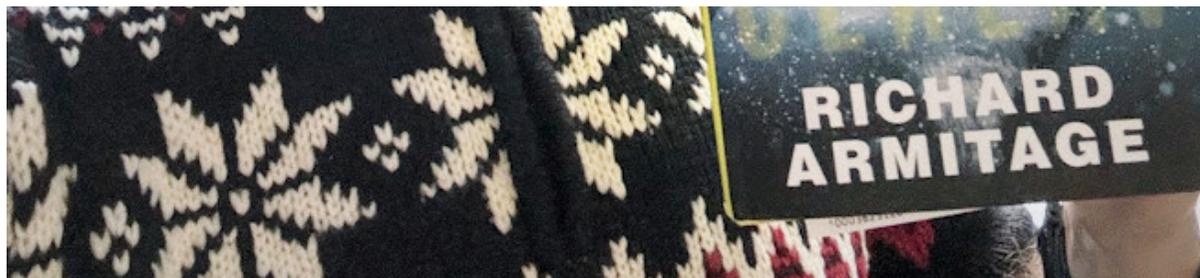
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I'm writing this from the base of the Matterhorn in Switzerland, which was featured on the cover of *Geneva*.

As many of you know, I'm often found up a mountain at New Year's and it felt right to celebrate 2023 in this place. I hadn't quite realised that my story would be a kind of love letter to Switzerland (albeit a dark one).

Well, now it's 2024 and I would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year. As usual it is always a shock when the year ends, as we all remark, 'where on Earth did the time go?' Last year absolutely flew by. Filming *Fool Me Once* (Netflix) and *Red Eye* (ITVX) took up most of the first half of the year - along with the promotion of *Obsession* (Netflix), it was a busy period and a very exciting time, as the wheels were also in motion towards the publication of *Geneva*. Who knew what went into the making of a book!

Sadly, in early July my father passed away unexpectedly while I was filming *Red Eye*. I will never forget the morning I had to go to work just after I learned of his passing, having only left him the previous day. Two things happened in that moment: my work suddenly felt so unimportant.

... things happened in that moment, my work suddenly felt so unimportant, and yet at the same time it became a safety net.

It's safe to say that 2023 was a year of highs and lows. Indeed, the pendulum of life often swings like that. I began the *Geneva* book tour which took me to Harrogate, London, Manchester, Birkenhead, Sheffield, Sevenoaks, Thurrock, Oswestry, New York, Los Angeles and, finally, Reykjavík, Iceland. Never in my wildest dreams would I have imagined I would be invited to tour for a book that I had written and to have been welcomed by the crime-writing community with such open arms, to have had the support of so many other writers, who not only endorsed *Geneva* but also came out in person to events I was taking part in. So I would like to say a huge thank you to: Clare Mackintosh, Lucy Foley, T. M. Logan, C. J. Tudor, Harlan Coben, Bryan Fuller, A. J. Finn, L. J. Ross, Jo Callaghan, Imran Mahmood, Lucy Clarke, Sarah Hilary, Alice Feeney and Helen Fields.

The invitation to the Iceland Noir festival has to be the absolute highlight of the year, I think. Apart from my curiosity about the country and its landscape (which we did manage to take time to visit), I was lucky enough to meet Ragnar Jónasson, Dan Brown and Neil Gaiman. I was asked to interview Neil which turned out to be one of the best nights of the year. I left having made some firm friends. A final thank you to A. J. Finn and Hattie Adam-Smith for including me on the guest list – I was truly honoured.

So, what does next year have in store? Well, a return to the West End stage is emerging through the mist. Look out for an exciting announcement a little later this year . . . A number of TV projects are also on the cards. I finally finished writing the first draft of my second novel, *The Cut*, on Christmas Eve. And there will also be the paperback edition of *Geneva* coming out in September.

Lots to look forward to, then. It's going to be a wonderful year. I hope you will join me.

RA

Your Questions Answered . . .

Thanks to everyone who submitted a question to Richard. Here he answers a selection:

Q: Why Switzerland and Geneva? (Nicole, from Switzerland!)

A: I am an avid skier and I love the mountains. The altitude and the isolation. I also felt Switzerland, with its connection to the pharmaceutical industry, would make the perfect dramatic location for my story.

Q: What emotional part of yourself did you draw on to create the characters of Sarah and Daniel? (Vera / Lady Midnight)

A: I suppose Sarah's nursing of her father had a personal connection. Also the dynamics of a professionally competitive marriage interested me. I work in a very competitive profession so was able to draw on the frustrations and fears of mediocrity.

Q: Just wondering if you created soundtracks for the characters in your book whilst you were writing? (Jenny Johnson)

I didn't create a soundtrack, in fact silence was the soundtrack to *Geneva*. However, I did a lot of sensory research: the sounds of the mountain, how many different ways

there were to describe the cold, and also the feeling of disorientation. It gave me more of a soundscape. The different characters' voices were also part of the 'music'.

Q: What excites your mind when writing a novel? (Valentina Ancilotti)

I'm excited by compelling characters who can either be aspirational or seriously flawed, probably both. But then it's very exciting to throw them into a storyline that tests them to the point of breaking. I call it 'the stress test'. It's also important that the story is relatable to some extent and also that the writing is accessible (i.e not too clever for its own good!). I also read every word aloud to ensure it really is a story and not a thesis.

Q: Are you approaching your second book at all differently from your first? Are there aspects of the writing process that you want to approach in a new way based on what you learned writing your first book? (Crystal)

There is a very different leaping off point for *The Cut*: the seed of the idea came from a real experience. The understanding of how I work is clearer now. Constructing a watertight outline, like the scaffolding of a building to be finished in many later stages, was a faster process, although the plot of *The Cut* is far more complicated. It's a juggling act.

Q: What makes, for you, the perfect crime novel? (Marian Oosting)

A: I love a really unexpected plot or character twist, but I also like to feel that as a reader/detective I'm not completely lost on the path to discovery. However, sometimes it can be as thrilling to know what is coming as it is to be surprised.

Q: What was your sister-in-law Terri's reaction to the use of her name for the blogger in *Geneva*? (Cristina)

I think she was amused by it. Disclaimer: she is absolutely nothing like Terri Landau!

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