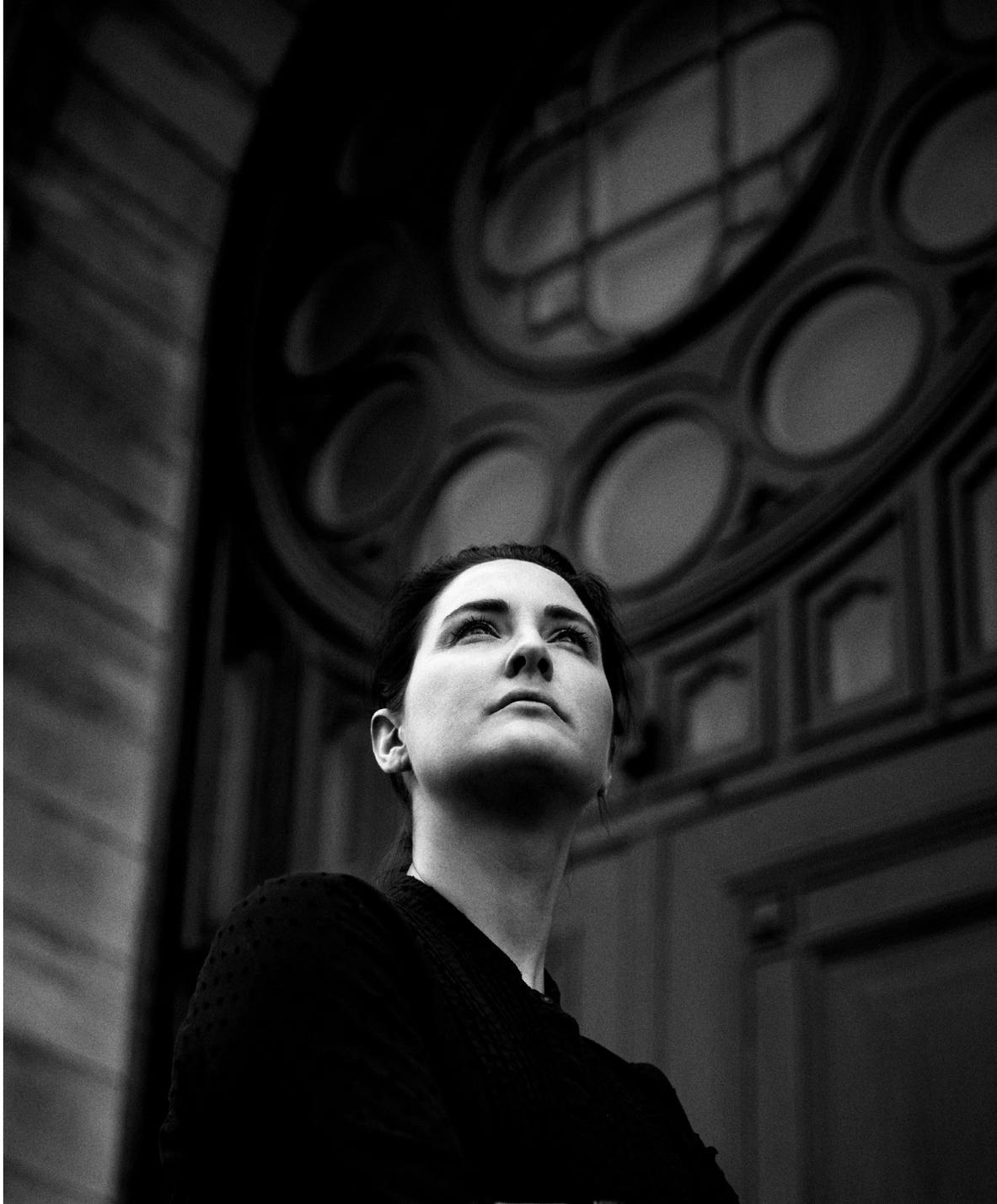
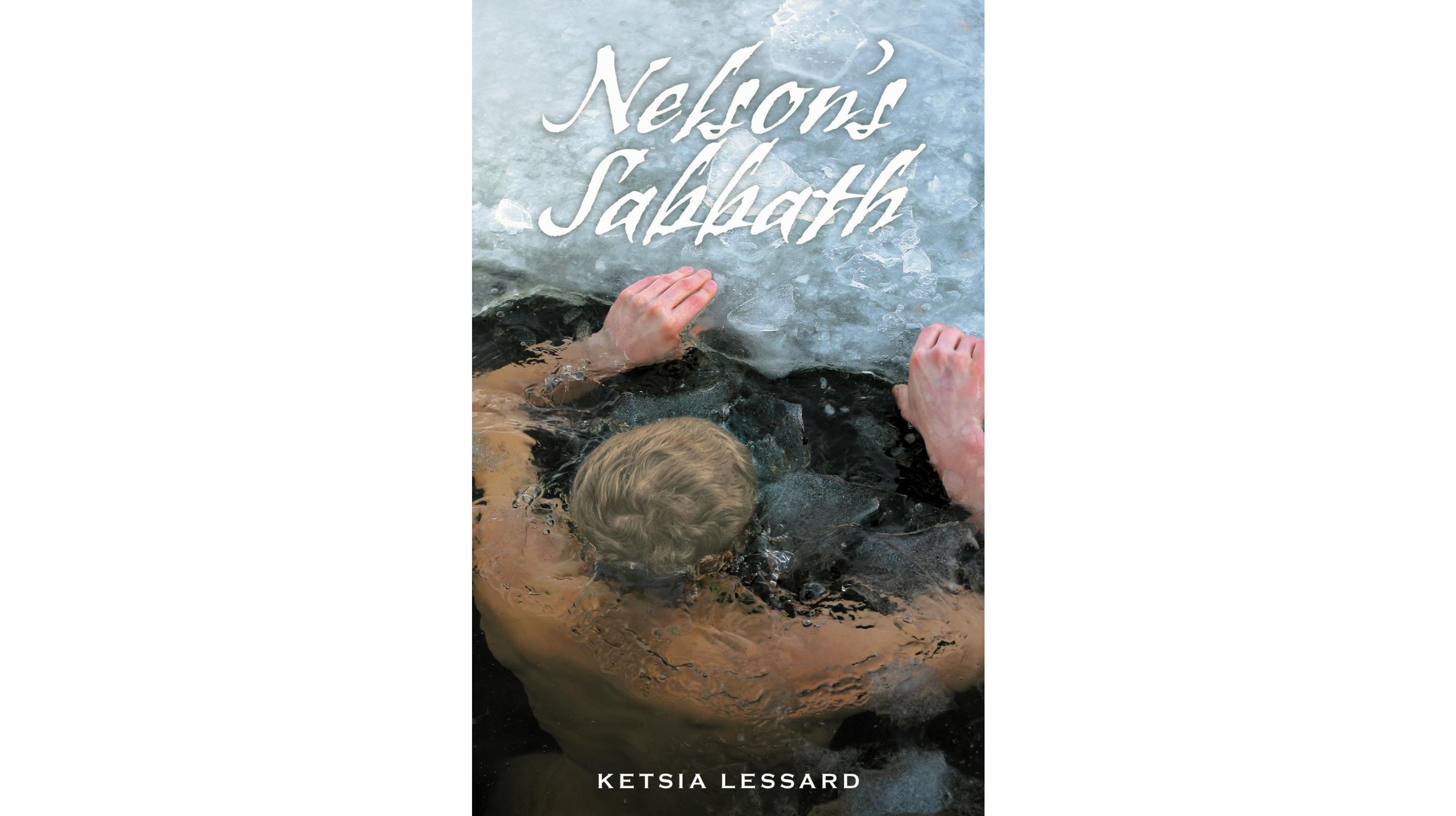


# Author Bio

Ketsia Lessard was born and raised in Montreal, Quebec and graduated from the University of Quebec with a creative writing degree. She wrote *Nelson's Sabbath* during a depressive episode, and her characters' reflections are a verbalization of her anguish, her struggle to make sense of life's hardships and recover. The subject matter is heavily researched, including retired RCMP officers' testimonies, PTSD victims' experiences, and the Missing 411 phenomenon.

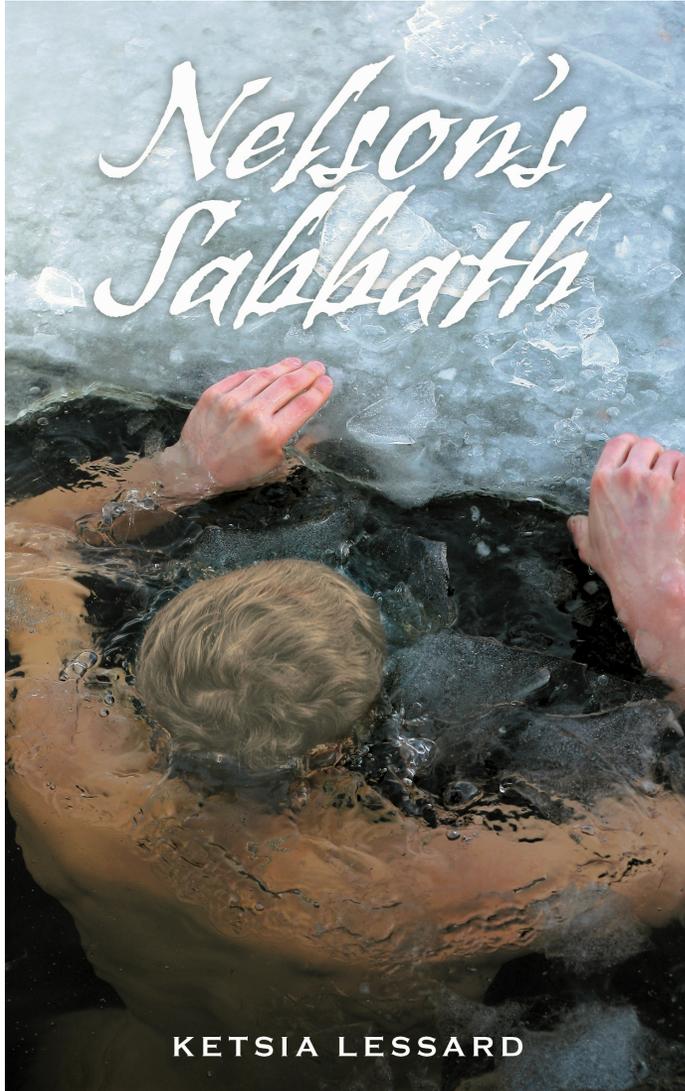
Ketsia Lessard is also a painter and a church musician.



A photograph of a person submerged in water, with their hands resting on a layer of ice floating on the surface. The person's head and shoulders are visible above the water, and their hands are pressed against the ice. The water is dark, and the ice is a light, translucent blue. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

*Nelson's  
Sabbath*

KETSIA LESSARD



# Nelson's Sabbath

After an attempt to unveil corruption nearly costs him his life, Jasper Nelson resigns from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in disgrace. Refusing to let the matter drop, the workaholic tries his hand at investigative journalism, but his efforts are met with scorn by the media, where bias and misinformation are gaining ground. Dejected and tormented by painful memories from the field, Nelson sinks into life-threatening despair. The only thing standing between him and self-destruction is his half-sister, Heidi Finlay.

In order to cheer him up and teach him to rest, Finlay and her Inuvialuit friend, Ruben Alunik, accompany the suicidal man on an excursion to Vancouver Island where Nelson mysteriously vanishes, “swallowed up” by an 800-year-old cedar tree.

Inspired by documented wilderness disappearances, this sequel to Lessard's debut novel *On Duty* takes readers on a journey into the human psyche. Narrated by Heidi Finlay, *Nelson's Sabbath* is a symbolic tale in which the servile ideal retreats to allow an authentic spiritual connection.

For more information, please visit:

[www.ketsialessard.ca](http://www.ketsialessard.ca)

## Nelson's Sabbath

**Ketsia Lessard**

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## PRESS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

### THE VANISHING POINT

#### Missing 411 Phenomenon Meets PTSD in New Psychological Novel

[MONTREAL, QUEBEC] Over the past several years, the mental health of first responders has become a priority for physicians, policy makers and academics. Recent studies show law enforcement officers are at a higher risk of suicide than any other profession. Can one recover from dealing with pain, death and corruption for decades? What if the corruption has reached the institutions one trusted? Can hope be found in a fallen world? Author Ketsia Lessard's own bouts with mental issues led her to tackle this very subject in *Nelson's Sabbath*, a sequel to her debut novel, *On Duty*.

*Nelson's Sabbath* tells the poignant story of Jasper Nelson, an ex-Mountie and aspiring journalist living in the Arctic, who sinks into depression and is put on suicide watch by his half-sister, Heidi Finlay. Believing the "strange and bitter events" they experience are worth recording, Finlay shares her workaholic brother's struggle as he faces a corrupt RCMP, an equally corrupt media, suffers from PTSD, and eventually disappears during an excursion to Vancouver Island, when he inexplicably vanishes into a hollow tree. As Finlay searches for her missing brother, the gritty woman comes to terms with her own distress and faces the figurative and literal demons oppressing them.

"Vivid descriptions bring the remote and unfamiliar setting to life...An engaging and heartfelt tale of two former constables doing the right thing." -*Kirkus Reviews*

Ketsia Lessard's *Nelson's Sabbath*, produced by FriesenPress, is available for order from major online book retailers, including Amazon, Chapters/Indigo and Barnes & Noble. The eBook is available for Amazon Kindle, Apple Books, Kobo, Nook, and GooglePlay.

#### About the Author

Ketsia Lessard was born and raised in Montreal, Quebec and graduated from the University of Quebec with a creative writing degree. She wrote *Nelson's Sabbath* during a depressive episode, and her characters' reflections are a verbalization of her anguish, her struggle to make sense of life's hardships and recover. The subject matter is heavily researched, including retired RCMP officers' testimonies, PTSD victims' experiences, and the Missing 411 phenomenon.

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# KIRKUS

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# REVIEWS

Two half siblings chart a new course when their police careers end.

In this follow-up to Lessard's novel *On Duty* (2019), the author continues the story of half siblings and Royal Canadian Mounted Police Constables Jasper Nelson and Heidi Finlay. Jasper and Heidi, who met and discovered their relationship as adults, work together in a rural community in the Northwest Territories until their refusal to cooperate with the bootlegging, lies, and corruption of a cabal of civic leaders. Jasper and Heidi survive an assassination attempt and resign their positions. Jasper sinks into depression as his efforts to set the record straight have little success. Heidi takes care of him as he becomes suicidal, and they both seek help from friends and former colleagues—including a minister, who suggests the sabbatical that provides the book's title. When Jasper seems to be recovering, he suggests a visit to Cathedral Grove in British Columbia ("They have some of the highest and largest trees in the country"). While admiring the trees, Heidi and a friend are stunned to see Jasper mysteriously disappear into the grove. As the search for Jasper goes on without results, Heidi is left wondering whether he has harmed himself or she actually saw supernatural forces at work. Then Heidi reaches her own moment of crisis. Although the novel opens with an article by Jasper explaining the corruption that sets the plot in motion, Heidi's narration guides most of the story. The book is an easy read, and the vivid descriptions bring the remote and unfamiliar setting to life. Despite the deep themes of morality, religion, and free will, the text is straightforward, focusing on the characters' experiences rather than the underlying questions. Readers may find the role of Freemasonry in the corruption that upends Jasper's and Heidi's lives a bit far-fetched, but it is a minor part of the plot. Readers who are new to Jasper and Heidi's story will have no trouble starting with this sequel.

An engaging and heartfelt tale of two former constables doing the right thing.

# Sample Questions

**Q: What inspired you to write this story?**

A: After publishing *On Duty* in the spring of 2019, readers who enjoyed the book expressed a wish for a sequel, feeling like the tale had been left with an open ending. I replied that inspiration would have to strike pretty hard for a second part to emerge, but it did when I came across David Paulides' work in December of 2019. David Paulides is a former policeman who became interested in the many unexplained disappearances that occur in North America's national parks. He documented hundreds of these cases in his *Missing 411* book series. The idea for *Nelson's Sabbath* came after reading *Missing 411: Canada* in which the mysterious vanishings of Myron Shutty and the late Margaret Andersen, who both went missing in British Columbia, caught my attention. Margaret Andersen, 49, was found dead forty hours after she'd "disappeared behind a rock" as her husband who was following closely behind described. Myron Shutty, who was five at the time of his disappearance, was walking with his family on a campground near Nelson when his parents noticed he was no longer with them. He was brought back two days later by an unidentified teenager who found and carried little Myron down a mountain and across a creek and led him to the search and rescue team, never showing his face but going "back into the woods" in Myron's own words. British Columbia is a cluster for such disappearances, and since *On Duty* ended with the possibility of a trip to the province, a plot soon emerged.

The Inuvialuit Communications Society's documentary work has inspired me immensely for the novel's Arctic elements. Suzanne Crocker's films as well. So many ideas have sprung from watching their footage of daily life in the territories.

**Q: Are any of your characters based on real people?**

A: Pastor Donley who counsels Jasper Nelson is based on the actual Steven Donley who was pastor at the Inuvik Baptist church in 2008-2009 when the story is taking place. I got in touch with him to ask if I could include him when I began writing the book. He had read *On Duty* and felt that my writing was respectful, so he agreed to it. I listened to some of his teachings online to capture his style. I am also a Baptist, so we share a theology and it was easy enough to imagine how he might counsel a depressed man. I received some counselling from my own pastor during my depression, so I experienced this sort of exchange firsthand.

Adnan Sadek, the “Teflon reoffender”, is based on a notorious criminal named Talal Khatib who was often arrested for bootlegging and drug dealing in Inuvik. In spite of his house being raided many times and illegal substances found by the RCMP, the charges were often stayed. In one newspaper article, a Mountie expressed his confusion at how this man kept getting away with crime in spite of the detachment’s efforts to stop him. I drew much inspiration from his case.

**Q: Are there any specific authors whose writing styles or subject matter inspired your book?**

A: Yes, I feel indebted to Charles Portis’ *True Grit* for helping me establish the narrative style, especially for Finlay’s voice. I also read memoirs and testimonies from retired RCMP officers such as Ian Parsons’ *No Easy Ride*, Janet Merlo’s *No One to Tell* and Paul Palango’s *Above the Law*.

John Zada’s *Veils of Distortion* was very informative when it came to describing issues with our failing news media. As an insider with a critical eye, he has a very objective view of these things.

Activist and abuse survivor Erin Merryn’s *Stolen Innocence* was another source of important information regarding PTSD and its daily effects on the individual.

David Paulides, a former policeman who now invests his efforts in researching unexplained wilderness disappearances, wrote a series of books on documented missing people cases. *Missing 411 Canada* was a major inspiration for this novel.

**Q: How long have you been writing or when did you start?**

A: I was about 10 years old when I began writing my stories down, but I have been making them up as far as I can remember.

**Q: Have you ever traveled as research for your book?**

A: The road trip I describe in *Nelson's Sabbath* is mainly inspired from things I saw in August 2014 when I visited British Columbia with my brother and his family.

I was born in Montreal and still live there, but my mother's family comes from northern Quebec and I visited often. Inuvik and Quebec's north shore share many similarities when it comes to the landscape and culture, so this helped. I did attempt to pick akpik berries there once, and as a greenhorn, I did abandon the quest because of all the flies and mosquitoes.

**Q: What is the most difficult part of your writing process?**

A: The editing process is generally the most grueling. But in this case, even the initial writing part was difficult because I was quite depressed and unmotivated when I wrote the book. Yet, my moments of deepest anger and despair would often produce the best sentences, and writing them down was cathartic.

**Q: Which of the characters do you relate to the most and why?**

A: Jasper Nelson's relationship with his demanding mother is inspired from my own, but I can't relate to his attractiveness or golden boy status at all. I am more like Heidi Finlay for the jaded aspect of her personality and her struggle with ideals of femininity.

**Q: Did any of your inspiration for this book originate in your real-life experiences?**

A: I suffered a depressive phase following *On Duty*'s publication. Many hardships and disappointments hit me at once, and I sought psychological support for the first time. During therapy, I discovered that many symbols I had inserted in my writing were based on my own life. Among other things, the concept of a false self created by a child with an exacting mother to placate her. He enters adulthood working hard to please; he can project the image of a well-rounded individual, yet a profound loss can catapult the outwardly healthy person into a life crisis. I believe this very thing happened to me and it made me grasp how the golden boy Nelson and the illegitimate Finlay were two sides of a same coin.

Heidi Finlay, ignored by her father, nearly annihilated by her mother and unknown to her brother until adulthood, is the exiled self cut off and kept at bay. She is found and treated with kindness by her brother; as Nelson is now autonomous enough to make his own decisions, he looks back on the past, rediscovers his repressed identity and learns self-compassion. He stops living out of duty and feels an urge to enjoy life instead of performing it.

Finlay's spiritual struggle as she questions God's goodness mirrors my own as the heavy demands imposed on me in my youth were often justified with Scripture, producing a distorted vision of the Almighty. I sometimes saw in God's plans another version of my authority figures' plans when I felt that they did not care about my well-being but only valued their ideals for my life and their own. Yet it is in this inner battle and angry prayer that one finds a true connection. A window into Heaven is opened. Finlay recovers her brother because she is entirely authentic with God and has learned to "come boldly unto the throne of grace".