



## An Edina Crime Writer Asks, What If?

BY CATHELENE N. BUCHHOLZ

"What if terrorists used American children as weapons of mass destruction?" author Colin T. Nelson poses to his readers in his first crime novel, *Reprisal*. Nelson, who has worked as both a defense lawyer and prosecutor for over 30 years, is a voracious reader of a wide variety of books and uses his experience in the courtroom as material for his stories. "The court scenes, for the most part, are absolutely true. I don't have to make them up," he laughs.

### A Unique Protagonist

In *Reprisal*, Nelson introduces an unlikely main character named Zehra, an American-born Muslim woman, who is a progressive feminist and works as a criminal defense lawyer in Minneapolis. "I based the character on three Muslim women that I know of that are young lawyers," Nelson says. "They told me some of the stories about discrimination they've experienced." He hopes to send a message of tolerance to his readers—tolerance for people and ideas that are different. "I want to show readers that this is a person that is just as normal as the rest of us but happens to be Muslim."

Zehra is appointed to defend a Muslim terrorist—a man accused of killing a Somali boy who had returned to Minnesota after a mysterious disappearance. "There were a number of Somali men who were disappearing from the Twin Cities a few years ago," Nelson says. "At first, no one knew where they went. And so I thought, that would make a great mystery. What happened to them?"

The suspense builds around a terroristic plot to spread the small pox virus by way of American classrooms. "In a suspense story, you have to have something large—some threat that's more than causing a car accident or one person dying," he says. "I don't start writing until I get some type of kernel that I'm excited about. I have to have something—some idea, a plot, a situation, a problem—something that excites me enough so that I can finish the book. When I'm reading the newspaper or listening to the news, my antenna is up for ideas for a new book."

### Nelson's Back Story

"I was probably 10 years old ..." Nelson

says, "I used to visit my grandmother during Christmas vacation. She gave me a copy of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. I read it and I just got hooked on mysteries. I loved it. I read almost all of the Sherlock Holmes books when I was a kid."

He wrote a column both in high school and law school for the student newspaper. "I think that the response to it was such a positive one, it encouraged me. Somewhere around my late 20s, I thought, I'd love to write a novel."

### A Sequel

After the publication of *Reprisal* in 2010, Nelson followed up with *Fallout* in 2012. The book release party was held at Magers & Quinn in Minneapolis. "I think I set a record for book sales. I've been so touched. It's so thrilling to have people support you like that."

"What interests me," Nelson says, referring to the inspiration for the sequel, "are these international criminal networks that smuggle all kinds of things into Western



Europe and the U.S. And in *Fallout*, what kind of spooks me is some of the local American Christian terrorists."

Both books are set in the Twin Cities. "When I was writing back in the '80s, I remember I had an editor who told me that you can't set a crime novel in Minneapolis. Nobody cares about it." He adds that "20 years later, Minneapolis and St. Paul are very popular crime settings." He points out that a lot of crime writers particularly use the North Shore due to its dramatic scenery. "You've got the brooding spookiness of Lake Superior on a foggy morning. Foreboding."

### A Growing Series

Zehra appears in Nelson's third book as well. *Flashover*, just released last month, centers around a serial arsonist. "Arson is a crime that very few people write about. It's one of the fastest growing crimes, almost impossible to solve because everything burns up—all of the evidence, and serial arsonists are generally sociopaths."

### The Writing Process

Nelson generally tries to write five to seven days a week. "It could maybe be just a paragraph; it could be five, ten pages depending on how much time and energy I have." Before he begins writing, he asks himself 20 questions about his characters. "I may not follow that perfectly as the character develops, but it gives me a feel for that character before I start."

Every writer has a different process, and Nelson claims that outlining is too formulaic for him. Instead, he likes to discover the plot as he writes. "I kind of know how it's going to end, but then it could change depending on what happens in-between. Sometimes the plot turns become as interesting as the ending."

### Advice to Writers

"Balance is the key word," he says. Besides writing, working full-time as a lawyer, and family, Nelson plays saxophone and flute in a jazz band called BlueMood.

The best advice he offers writers is to "read, read, read." He also encourages investing time and membership in The Loft Literary Center and Sisters in Crime. "It's a potential network to meet other authors."



## Top Hunting Apps

BY THE TEAM AT IRISH TITAN

You know when it starts to feel like fall. Leaves are changing color and falling from the trees. The grass is crunching underfoot. The days are shorter and there is a slight chill in the air. And Geese are flying overhead going south for the winter, heralding the start of hunting season. Whether you're a casual partaker of the sport or a life-long enthusiast, hunting season can take many forms- from bow hunting to rifles, pheasant to deer, in Minnesota or in Canada, and everything in between. While you don't want to be on your phone the entire time you're out in the wilderness, there are a few handy little apps that can help you make the most of your hunting expedition. To make sure that we've truly got the best hunting apps on the market, we collaborated with our good friends and client, String Stalker ([www.stringstalker.com](http://www.stringstalker.com)). Be sure to check them out for additional hunting gear!

Quite possibly the most frustrating thing about going hunting (or fishing), is spending the day stalking your prey and coming home empty-handed. Enter **iSolunar Hunting & Fishing Times**. The iSolunar app gives you the best hunting and fishing times for your location (GPS connection required), allowing you to track the activity and feeding times for your desired hunt.

In case you missed the duck-calling day in boy (or girl!) scouts, Primos has got you

covered. One of the greatest hunting apps of all time, the **Primos Hunting Calls** app allows you to broadcast your desired animal call to attract the species you're hunting with their own calls or to flush them out with the sounds of their predators. It is kind of like Duck Dynasty on steroids.

Safety is paramount when going hunting, especially in high traffic areas. Gear yours and the other members of your group with the **ActInNature** app. This handy little app shows you where the other hunters in your area are, helping you to avoid them and make your way to less populated areas. It also allows you to create hunting zones for each of the members of your group.

Before you head out or after you've spent the day hunting, be sure to check out **Field & Stream Online**. All the best information from the World's Leading Outdoor Magazine is now available online, giving you access to the top shooting, hunting, fishing and survival information. You know, just in case you haven't gotten enough hunting yet.

Real hunting not your thing? Get **Big Buck Hunter Pro**! The classic, beloved arcade game has been app-ified and is a great way to practice your virtual target practice. They've also developed spin-off apps such as Big Buck Safari, which give you the chance to go hunting on safari.