

FEATURE

Scottish publisher sought for a trilogy penned in Pennan

Author Glen Reynolds explains how he hopes to kick down the door of stereotypes and prejudice with the couple at the heart of *The Monas Novels*

LITERATURE

Glen Reynolds has lived many lives but, he believes, he hasn't yet used them all up! And that's good news for the literary world. For Glen, of Pennan, has written a series of three books, *The Monas Novels*, which publishers are very much interested in. However, Glen is also a patient man and he's holding out in hopes of signing with a Scottish publisher. He explained: "I want the deal to be good for Aberdeenshire, as well as me. "The *Monas Novels* all feature Pennan and nearby archaeological sites, as well as Aberdeen and major global cities. "The idea behind them is that they will, hopefully, form part of the growing

literary and film interest being generated in the area. "I want, as an author, to be part of the regeneration that is needed in the coastal villages of Aberdeenshire." If the internet reaction to the books is anything to go by, any publisher who signs 57-year-old Glen will have a hit on their hands. The novels Facebook page received nearly 17,000 'likes' overnight and the recently launched website accompanying the project - www.themonasnovels.com - has proved highly topical. With two unconventional main characters, the novels' contemporary settings combine religion, science and the paranormal, with a dash of modern day politics, all focusing on the prospect of global conflict over water. Of his main characters, Glen said: "Think Iranian woman with a shade of Amy Winehouse and a Roman

Catholic priest who is a Father Brown of the 21st century and you have a clue as to their chemistry! "Their relationship will hopefully kick down the door of stereotypes and prejudice, as they involve a partnership and unfulfilled love of a Muslim Iranian woman and a priest born in Aberdeen. "Several years back, maybe as a result of staring at the sea too much, I began to explore the basis of water as the next cause of international tension, after oil. "Water was my common denominator in bringing together politics, science and religious tensions in a world where corporate greed is forecast to take ownership of the most basic of our natural resources." When Glen writes, he does so from experience.

He started his professional life in London as the youngest partner in a leading solicitor's law practice, specialising in celebrity libel work. His caseload was, however, of a far more clandestine variety, involving investigative journalism and corruption, not least as a lawyer for Private Eye magazine, before running Mirror Group Newspapers litigation department. He said: "By the time I was 28 I'd received my first credible death threat, from an international arms dealer. At times, my office was sealed off because I'd received suspicious packages that could have been explosives. "For 15 years my life evolved into something that would have made a very good

Graham Greene novel; pubs, clubs, MI6 and bodyguards from the SAS led to me being part of their world. "Much of this cloak and dagger context is in the novels." Glen spent a lot of his time working abroad, including countries where radical Islam was on the rise. He said: "I once witnessed a man being executed in Iran and stared into his eyes as the death procession went past. You do not forget that. "Nargess, the Iranian woman in the novels, is rescued from a similar fate. "But an important point to grasp in these novels is that they do not portray an Islamic woman who makes concessions convenient to the western world. "She is proud to wear her hijab, to call herself a Muslim and to be a strong woman. "She may well be the stronger of the two main

characters. What she wants is the freedom to choose how she lives and dresses." Moving to Pennan in 2007, Glen and his wife Lesley raised their family while he wrote and worked at Aberdeen University as a tutor in theology. He said: "Pennan is a place that has changed from a few hundred people a couple of centuries ago, through the great storm of 1953, to now where there are only a dozen or so full timers. "Many people have a generational attachment to the village. For others, it is a playground they run to. "For those who are lucky to be able to live in Pennan full time, the connection is maybe of a different nature. "This fundamental issue - the relationship with land and water and an attachment to where you live - is an underlying issue of the spirit reflected in the novels."



Inspiring prose...Glen Reynolds (inset) love of Pennan helped inspire *The Monas Novels*, in which Iranian woman Nargess (inset) is a very modern heroine.

It was like a Betty Ford clinic

Dr Glen Reynolds is, among other things, a Franciscan communications advisor to the RC Bishop of Aberdeen, a libel lawyer, a military intelligence analyst and clinical hypnotherapist. He believes that a double life is almost natural for a novelist. He said: "It could be said that I have not only had a number of lives but have been lucky that I have not used them all up!" Glen worked all over the world - Colombia, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia, South Africa, China - before turning to a more spiritual dimension. He said: "I worked for a year among the Zulu population of Kwa Zulu Natal in South Africa, and that was the beginning of a turning point for me. "It was the time of the first Truth and Reconciliation hearings and for a year, as I ploughed my way through war zones and investigated corruption after the apartheid era (for which he received a commendation from

Nelson Mandela), I began to study religion. "This led to me receiving a Doctorate in theology in the UK and teaching theology at Aberdeen's King College." While living in London, Glen met many notable figures but it was his lifestyle there that, ultimately, led him to Pennan. He said: "I was living in Soho and during the 1980s and 90s, my drug of choice was alcohol. "I was a member of what was arguably the most exclusive private club in London at that time, the Colony Room, which was an elephants' graveyard for people who drank too much. "Its clientele included writers, journalists and painters. "You had to be articulate to stand half a chance. It was indeed the best of times and the worst of times as drink took its toll. "I was washed up in Soho but I then found myself on the shores of Pennan. "It was like booking into the Betty Ford clinic for rehab."

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