



What's Happening With... John R. Maxim

by Brian Skupin



JOHN R. MAXIM READING LIST

Platforms (1980)

Abel Baker Charley (1983)

Time Out of Mind (1986)

The Shadow Box (1996)

Haven (1997)

Mosaic (1999)

Whistler's Angel (2000)

THE BANNERMAN SERIES

The Bannerman Solution (1989)

The Bannerman Effect (1990)

Bannerman's Law (1991)

Bannerman's Promise

(originally A Matter of Honor) (1993)

Bannerman's Ghosts (2003)

"I'm hoping to get death threats."

That's what John Maxim has to say about the manuscript he recently completed. It's been five years since his last book, *The Bannerman Solution*, came out, and he says he's been writing this one ever since.

"It was a hard book to write," he says.

While this is not another book in the Bannerman series about a former government agent, fans will be happy to hear that *The Aisha Prophecy* does feature a familiar face from the Bannerman series. Elizabeth Stride, the redheaded assassin who was tortured by Saudis and later recruited by the Mossad, originated in the stand-alone novel *Haven* but made her last appearance in *Bannerman's Ghosts*.

Maxim, born in Manhattan, was an ad agency executive in the late 1970s when he started writing, although the genesis goes further back.

"For my seventh birthday, I received my first hardcover book. Ever since then I pictured myself with a pipe and a golden retriever at my feet while I wrote." When Maxim divorced, he took a year off work to spend time with his children, and started to write what would become his first novel *Platforms*.

"I picked out books similar to mine and sent a query letter to five editors." He received answers from all five, and offers from four. How did he decide which one to take?

"I accepted the first! I didn't know there were going to be any more."

Maxim wrote more standalone thrillers, then was asked by an editor to write a book about a secondary character, Lesko, from one of them. "Bannerman started out as a small character in that book, but his role just grew, and the book ended up being *The Bannerman Solution*."

Maxim has relationships with experts who can help him maintain authenticity. He has two friends who used to be in the

CIA who have provided a lot of detail, and when traveling in Moscow, Maxim met a police captain.

"I was at a hotel bar, when these Japanese businessmen tried to smuggle some hookers in by dressing them in their overcoats and homburgs. The police were called in and one of them tried to grab a hooker, but he missed her and fell down.

"I laughed, and he got up and poked me in the chest and yelled at me in Russian. The other officers were calling his name and trying to get him to stop wasting time." Maxim slapped the policeman's hand away, called him by the name the other cops had used and told him to leave him alone. "But he wouldn't stop, so I gave him a shove, and he fell down again."

At the police station, Maxim found out that the Russian word he'd heard the other cops use was not the officer's name, but "schmuck." The police captain who released Maxim after a short lecture became a friend and an important source of information. He even appeared in one of the books under his real name: Alexei Levin.

Lately, Maxim has been corresponding with a senior member of the Social Services wing of Hamas in order to get details about Islam for *The Aisha Prophecy*.

In the new book, which is now with his agent, a prophecy comes to light which heralds the coming of a feminist heroine who will free Muslim women. When Maxim first came across the prophecy, which some claim is real, he was excited at how closely the people mentioned in it mirror two of his characters.

"The prophecy talks about the coming of the 'lady of the camel,' in white, who is from the East but whose banner will unfurl from the West. In my books Aisha, who wears white, was born in the Middle East but has been brought to the United States

for safety. Aisha in history was one of Mohammed's warrior wives. And the prophecy talks about a 'flame-haired angel' to guide her who sounds a lot like Elizabeth Stride."

In the book, Islamic authorities and others are trying to determine if the prophecy is true, and if so, to whom it refers, and Stride and others must protect Aisha against a host of global enemies.

Because the prophecy is feminist in nature, it will be anathema to fundamental Muslims, which is why Maxim expects the death threats.

"Read the real prophecy," he urges. "You can Google 'Aisha Prophecy' and see that it's already stirring up a lot of emotion." He expects this book to be his most controversial and successful to date.

"I think it's going to turn the world on its ear." ✦

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