

THE DESERTER

NELSON DEMILLE & ALEX DEMILLE

COMING 10.22.19



Dear Reader:

When my father first approached me about cowriting a novel with him, I wasn't sure if I was up to the task. He is a bestselling author with a unique voice and a large and well-deserved following, and I wanted to make sure that if I took this on I would have something to add to the collaboration. He assured me it would be easy, which I knew was a lie, and that it would be rewarding, which I am happy to discover was true. I was afforded the opportunity to both flex my creative muscle and learn a few things from a master of the craft. I checked my ego at the door, and was in turn rewarded with a lot of trust.

By the time I was approached about collaborating, my father had already landed on the concept of two Army CID agents, Warrant Officers Scott Brodie and Maggie Taylor, pursuing an Army deserter, Kyle Mercer, loosely based on Bowe Bergdahl. I suggested we promote our deserter to a Special Forces captain—as opposed to a hapless private—and that we take the action to Venezuela.

Why Venezuela? For one, I have always had a perverse fascination with authoritarian leaders and their attendant cults of personality, and Hugo Chávez seemed to embody the interesting contradictions of so many authoritarians, at once menacing and buffoonish. Chávez is dead, but his legacy and his memory still hold a spell over Venezuela that rivals that of their national hero, Simón Bolívar. Venezuela is currently in a struggle for its very survival, and what side of that struggle you are on depends a lot on your opinion of the beefy guy in the red beret whose image is plastered all over the country.

I also picked Venezuela because it is dangerous, and therefore it is interesting. Part of a storyteller's job is to build a dynamic world, and to put dynamic people in it, and to throw everything you can at those people and hope they rise to the challenge—or fail in an interesting way. Sending our heroes to Caracas seemed like a perfect way to screw up their day and see how—and if—they made it out alive.

When I told friends and acquaintances about this collaboration, one of the most common reactions I would get was about how difficult it must be to work with your parent. I didn't find that. Maybe it's because I grew up around the business, and admiring my father's creativity and work ethic, and with a certain reverence for storytelling that led me onto my own career path in filmmaking. We approached this project from a place of mutual respect, and I knew to defer to his instincts when differences came up. It's been an honor and a privilege to circle back to the creative form that first got me interested in narrative storytelling, and to collaborate with the man who first inspired me and showed me the way.

I hope you enjoy the read.

Best regards,

Alex DeMille

