

## **Interview Questions**

### **What can you tell me about your latest novel, *The Foreigner*?**

*The Foreigner* is the second novel in the Dutch Bennett series. The action starts in 1965 when U.S. Navy specialist Hector Ruiz intercepts a Soviet communication deep inside Syria. Soviet special forces are fast approaching the Israeli border with enough chemicals to wipe out the Hebrew nation. But when all conventional efforts fail to defeat the advancing threat, the Soviet soldiers meet a quick and disastrous fate. Years later, space law expert Dutch Bennett is hired to help litigate a billion dollar case against the United States for its role in the deaths of the Soviet soldiers. For Dutch, the case could catapult his career and earn him title as the world's top space law attorney. For the United States, however, political tensions are escalating and the integrity of a nation is at stake.

### **What inspired you to write, *The Foreigner*?**

Two things. As I began to outline and write *The Foreigner*, the terrorist acts of 9/11 occurred. And second, when I was editing the book, my uncle died from complications arising from diabetes. For years and years my uncle suffered from the ravages of diabetes. It is one of the most debilitating diseases that will take organs and limbs, often one at a time and at a slow yet tormenting pace.

### **If you had to describe the spiritual theme of *The Foreigner* what would it be?**

The novel asks an age-old question. If God is really all powerful and loving, why does he let bad things happen to good people? Through its characters, *The Foreigner* will challenge the reader to consider some thoughts and perspectives that may help in their quest for resolution.

### **How does the main character, Dutch Bennett, change from the last novel?**

Besides being a little older, Dutch is starting to mature as a lawyer. It's at this point that he starts to feel like he's seen and argued pretty much every issue in space law at least once. But that type of complacency is his greatest flaw. As every lawyer knows, there are more convoluted fact patterns and traps in the law than anyone could ever imagine. In addition, Dutch is still too trusting. He is learning though; albeit the hard way.

### **You've done it again with another powerful woman character. Tell everybody what Samantha Lankford is like?**

You have a choice. Slice open a lemon, bite into it, and then run in front of a bulldozer. Or you can meet Samantha. Both will leave you feeling run over with a bitter after taste. And it's really a shame because she's a very attractive attorney that happens to be clawing her way up to the top at the expense of the few friends and family she has left.

### **What made you move part of the story into the courtroom?**

The courtroom is suspenseful and full of conflict. It is also a place where people go to get resolution, or sometimes just to get even. It has been said that there are three sides to every court case: The plaintiff's story, the defendant's story, and then the truth. And let us not forget about the person in charge of this three-ring circus-- the judge. A human with flaws; just like the rest of us. He or she is supposed to be unbiased and objective but what happens during a bench trial when the judge also acts as the jury? Newly appointed Federal Judge Rudy Gardner struggles with his personal biases during a bench trial in *The Foreigner*.

**How challenging was it to begin a story with a Russian translation that was captured on tape through espionage?**

Very challenging. Ruiz continues to intercept Soviet communications and his job is to interpret them for the U.S. Navy. All you get when you listen to a tape is audio. And to make matters worse, Ruiz is translating the voices on this tape from Russian to English. The audio is a mixture of pure dialogue and sounds. The dialogue has to be rich enough to help you understand what is going on and who is doing the talking. But more importantly, Ruiz's descriptions of the sounds on the tape are what really tie you into the story.

**What was it like to combine military suspense elements with a legal thriller?**

The two really go hand in hand. The military world is full of regiment, discipline, and code. And with the legal world, there is a courtroom procedure, laws to obey, and codes of ethics. Both worlds are filled with conflict and loads of action.

**I didn't realize there were nuclear powered satellites overhead. Has one ever re-entered and crashed on Earth?**

Yes indeed. On January 24, 1978, a Soviet nuclear powered satellite re-entered and crashed into a remote area of northern Canada. Nuclear material was scattered over a swath of wilderness spanning 124,000 square miles, or about the size of Austria. Fortunately no loss of life or property damage was reported. If, however, the crash had occurred over a populated area, the effects would have been disastrous. Inhaling one single particle of plutonium is enough to cause lung cancer.

**Is there any chance that Dutch and Samantha get together?**

They really don't like each other. Samantha is rude and abrasive, and Dutch doesn't like constantly defending himself when he's around her. They battle outside the courtroom and spar like two prizefighters inside the courtroom. And to make things worse, they're on the same side! But you know what they say, "opposites do attract."

**Can you give us a glimpse of the next installment in the series?**

The third novel in the series will be *Flawless*. It takes you deep inside the corrupt world of diamonds and the powerful cartel that has preserved its fortune and vitality for generations. Many have tried to threaten the cartel's existence, but none have succeeded. For years, the secretive cultured diamond industry that grows real diamonds in a scientific pressure cooker has failed to produce an undetectable diamond that could endanger the cartel. Until now. By growing diamonds in the microgravity environment of low Earth orbit, Dr. Rajkumar Mehta, has finally made a breakthrough that will turn the diamond district in Antwerp on its head. Under fire and on the run, Dr. Raj turns to the only person who can protect both his life and his outer space discovery, Dutch Bennett.