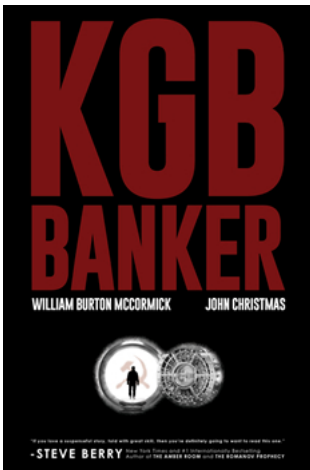


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3 WEEKS AGO

KGB Banker by William Burton McCormick & John Christmas

by GEORGE EBEY ([HTTPS://WWW.THEBIGTHRILL.ORG/AUTHOR/GEORGE-EBEY/](https://www.thebigthrill.org/author/george-ebey/)).

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(<https://www.amazon.com/KGB-Banker-William-Burton-McCormick-ebook/dp/B09GTBX6ZQ/?tag=thbith-20>).By

George Ebey (<http://www.georgeebey.com/>).

In their new novel *KGB BANKER*, authors William Burton McCormick and John Christmas bring us a work of suspense fiction that was inspired by real-life corruption.

What if you returned to the land of your ancestors and someone tried to kill you?

When Chicago banker Bob Vanags takes a job at ominous Turaida Bank in Latvia, he hopes to learn of his heritage and to fight economic fraud and corruption. But exposing his company's secrets comes with being framed for murder—and the threat of never returning home.

The Big Thrill checked in with co-author Burton McCormick to discuss the novel and how it came about.

What do you hope readers will take away from this book?

But equally important, John and I hope to inform readers about the countries of Eastern Europe, particularly Latvia, inform about international banking and the mass fraud that exists there, and specifically inform about a certain kind of criminal scheme John exposed in real life. KGB BANKER is a work of fiction, but we hope those who enjoy the fiction will investigate the real crimes that inspired it. John has been talking about those crimes and the millions, perhaps billions, stolen for years from the EU/UK/US, and ideally this novel will help pique interest in the reality behind the fiction.

How did you and John meet?

John and I were introduced by my landlord in Riga, Latvia, a gentleman named Karl Sarkans. Karl was familiar with John's whistleblowing against a real-life banking scam that affected much of Europe. I read up on the true events and John's efforts to reveal the wider scandal to the world. Meanwhile, Karl gave John a copy of my first book, the historical novel of the Baltic Republics, *Lenin's Harem*. So thanks to Karl, we both became aware of each other's work. That led to a conversation and got the ball rolling.

What led you to decide to collaborate on this project?



(<https://www.thebigthrill.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/william.jpg>)

William Burton McCormick

John wanted to get the word out about the true life scandal. But I'm not a journalist, I'm a fiction writer. I know my strengths and weaknesses. However, as we talked, it became evident we were both very familiar with Latvia (the key country in much of our story), and as we discussed things, it seemed more and more we could collaborate on some type of book. So we decided to use our mutual experiences and talents to write a fictional thriller inspired by real events. John knows banking and has experiences similar to our protagonist. He also is a novelist in his own right (or maybe I should say "own write"!). I'm experienced at suspense, mystery, action scenes, and writing thrillers for major crime magazines. So we complemented each other well.

What was the most challenging part of the co-authoring relationship?

For me, I think it was getting up to speed on all the financial aspects as well as finding a way to merge our writing styles. John's previous novel was dystopian science fiction, while I worked in historical thrillers. We had to find an authorial voice that worked for both of us. That, and we were often on different continents with different time zones, which meant at least one of us was reading the other's work at awful hours.

I can't speak for John, but I'd imagine he'd say his co-author was cranky, pushy, and sent incomprehensible emails at 3 a.m. And he'd be right!

What was the biggest challenge this book presented? What about the biggest opportunity?

John wanted me to add my series character, Latvian investigative reporter Santa Ezeria, to the manuscript. Finding her role in the story in a way that would please Santa fans without the character stealing too much of the spotlight from our main protagonist, banker Bob Vanags, was a challenge. But I think we hit on the perfect balance for both characters, and the final product is far greater than the sum of the parts.

The biggest opportunity without a doubt is to alert readers to a massive financial fraud that is still going on worldwide.

What elements do you feel are essential for a great suspense story?





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