

Lindsay McKenna's Second Act

A ROMANCE ORIGINAL GOES INDIE IN A BIG WAY

By Jennifer Peters

WHEN LINDSAY MCKENNA started writing in the 1980s, the romance genre as we know it was still in its most nascent stages. In those days, subgenres like romantic suspense and military romance didn't exist — in fact, McKenna helped pioneer those now-popular categories. We talked to her about how the publishing landscape has changed, what goes into being such a successful author and her exciting new romantic suspense series, *Delos*.

You're considered a pioneer of several action-packed romance sub-genres, including romantic suspense and military romance, and you're also known for being one of the first to include female military heroes in your stories. What led you to so many firsts? When I entered the writing arena I kept two rules always in front of me: Write what I love to write and write what I know. I've never detoured from that and it has served me — and my millions of readers — very well.

I write about kick-butt, take-names heroines because I have a background and experience in it. I was in the military. I was a firefighter. I was a pilot and an EMT. I came out of a household that treated women as equals to men, and I've lived my life that way. So, my heroines do, indeed, reflect me in some facets of their characterization.

Now, it has expanded into a huge, thriving genre of its own. Nice to birth a baby, so to speak, and watch it grow up and become strong and vital.

Your new series, *Delos*, combines the action-packed romance you're known for with a sweeping family saga: The story focuses on a global charity, *Delos*, run by the Culver family, as well as their in-house security firm, *Artemis*. Can you tell us a little bit about this series and its inspiration? I'm a globetrotter and have been in third world to first world countries. I wanted to bring all my knowledge and weave it into romantic suspense stories that I know my readers will appreciate.

The *Delos* series will feature a global family, mixing American, Turkish and Greek bloodlines. The family has three adult children who will run *Artemis*, the in-house security company. *Delos* has 1,800 charities worldwide and they all need security in today's terrorist world. Charities and NGOs (non-government organizations) are no longer safe anywhere, and that's a fact. The stories that spin off after the introduction of the three children, Tal, Matt and Alexis, will then follow a mission to a given country, protecting the employees, the charity or the people who



Being indie, for me, means being free to be all I can be.

utilize it. The possibilities are endless, and it gives me a global palette to paint these intense love stories fraught with danger and adventure.

You published the teaser prequel to the *Delos* series, *Last Chance*, on your website in June and have made the title permanently free for readers.

What led to that decision? It's a very common business strategy as an indie to offer the first book of a series free. And it helps the reader orient to the new series in a lovely way — it's free. That way, the reader has the opportunity to "peek" into the series to see if it appeals to her. I have some very good indie writer friends, among them, J.m. Madden, Chris Keniston, J.C. Cliff, Jeff Rivera, Jessica Scott and Kallypso Masters. They have all been guiding hands helping me get my foothold as an Indie. One of the great things is that Indies help one another. They pay it forward. RT Booklover's convention was key to making such valuable contacts!

What drew you to indie publishing in the first place? I was tired of everyone using the writer to make good money off her. I only received six percent for each book for the first 20 years of my writing career; in 2000, I got bumped up to eight percent per book. The publisher made money off me, the literary agent made money off me. And, by the way, the agent takes 15 percent of what you earn, so you walk away with even less than before. I've railed about this all my 35 years as a writer. Everyone used us. And the poor, starving writer had no other choice available at that time. So, as the indie movement geared up, I decided to leave traditional publishing and go indie.

You'd been in romance for over 30 years before you moved into indie publishing. Did it feel like you had to learn something new to survive, or did it feel like an exciting new adventure, shifting into self-publishing? Becoming an indie publisher is a risk-taking adventure, but then, I've been a risk-taker all my life and it hasn't killed me yet. I believe in living life, every day, and being grateful. Being indie, for me, means being free to be all I can be. That's so exciting. I work hard, but I play hard, too. And I love being a part of the indie community — these girls and guys have my complete respect. They're truly bold, brazen and bodacious in the best of ways. I honor their heart and spirit for what they've created for the rest of us coming along. They are true trailblazers.

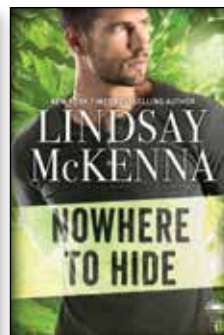
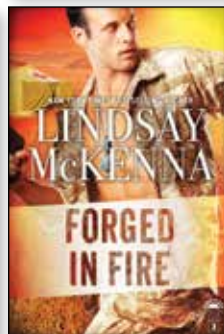
It's exciting to be a part of one of the most foundational changes in the publishing industry since Johannes Gutenberg invented the

printing press in 1440. Who wouldn't want to be part of this amazing time where a writer actually gets paid what she deserves for the first time in publishing history?

Since striking out on your own, you've been putting a lot of effort into social networking and digital marketing for your indie-pubbed books. Tell us a little bit about your strategy. It's

always a struggle to balance social media with my writing schedule. It's that way for every indie author unless she's rich and can hire assistants to help her.

I like blog tours, so for my next book, *Nowhere to Hide* (Oct.), the first full novel in the Delos series, I've booked a "virtual" tour through Tasty Book Tours, running Sept. 28 – Oct. 23. It's a great "shotgun" approach to let readers know about your book.



I think a writer has to figure out where her readers are or where she wants to reach them and put her focus in that direction. Indie writers are never bored. They are busy 16 hours a day, seven days a week. And you have to have strong boundaries to get it all done.

You've mentioned that you plan to release six books a year in the Delos series — a combination of full novels and shorter novellas. That's a lot of writing! Because I can write so fast, I can handle this schedule of release. I have my schedule already worked out from 2015 through 2020, with the

slots already written through 2017. I'm working on a 2018 "big book" right now. ✧

For more information about Lindsay McKenna, or to download a free copy of Last Chance, visit LindsayMcKenna.com.

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