



INTERVIEW ARCHIVES

JULY 2011

REAWRITE
WITH KELLIE

REAWRITE [RW]: If you could try any profession (besides a writer), what would you choose?

SARAH MILLER [SM]: Trapeze artist, maybe?

[RW]: What are you doing when you're not writing??

[SM]: Telling myself I should be writing.

[RW]: What does your writing space look like? Clean with no distractions or cluttered with things that inspire you?

[SM]: Tidy, yet crammed.

[RW]: The pictures included with the book are stunning. Were they part of your research or something included when the book was published?

[SM]: By last count, I have about 4800 digital images of the imperial family. They were very much a part of my research. I also have half a bazillion pictures of their palaces and yacht. I still squeal every time I find a new one.

[RW]: A lot of different things have been said about Rasputin. I was a little surprised he wasn't featured more prominently in the book. What is your take on Grigori Rasputin and how did you decide what role he would play in *The Lost Crown*?

[SM]: The popular view of Rasputin as a lecherous, power-hungry demon who refused to die isn't much more than a modern tall tale. Recent scholars who have made an effort to dig beyond the rumors and legends have found that in real life, he was much more ordinary and much less powerful than most people expect. Although he did give in to temptations outside of the palace (he was prone to drinking in his later years and was not consistently faithful to his wife), the fact is that his interactions with the imperial family were almost completely innocuous. He also had far less contact with the Romanovs than popular mythology would lead you to believe. Telling the story through the imperial family's eyes meant that his appearances would be limited, and that I could show only his virtuous side.

[RW]: Obviously the Romanov children had an idealized image of their father, one very different from how he was viewed by the Russian people. Do you feel Nicholas II played a large role, leading to the Russian revolution? Or, like children believed, was he just a convenient scapegoat during troubled times?

[SM]: A bit of both, I think. The whole antiquated system was crumbling and Nicholas II just didn't have the personality to hold it together. He was a passive and genial fellow, which isn't generally an effective combination for an autocrat. He would have done very well in a figurehead role like Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, but he was too stuck on tradition to give up absolute power. By refusing to change, he played a large role. That said, I think anyone in that place at that moment would have had his work cut out for him, so in that sense Nicholas II was also something of a scapegoat.

[RW]: History is obviously a passion of yours. If you could go back in time and visit any three points in history, when and where would you go?

[SM]: 1. Aboard the yacht Standart, summer 1914 2. Tuscumbia Alabama, spring 1887 3. Whatever time and place I choose for the setting of my next historical novel

[RW]: Would you be an observer or an active participant?

[SM]: Even if I tried to participate, I'd probably end up observing. I'm an observer by default.

[RW]: Writing a piece of fiction around historical events obviously takes a lot of work and some clever interpreting. Looking back, is there anything you would have done differently?

[SM]: Sooner or later I'm bound to think of something, but for the moment I'm pretty well satisfied with how this book turned out.

[RW]: Are there any other historical figures you hope to one day write about? Do you think you will always write standalone books or is there a possibility of a series in your future?

[SM]: I have a whole list of historical crushes I cycle through – Anne Frank and Laura Ingalls Wilder being the most recent – but most of them have been already been done to death in literature. As a reader I'm not usually a big fan of series books, but who knows?

[RW]: Thank you so much Sarah for answering all these questions! I can't wait to see what you come out with next!!