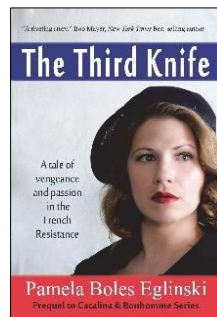


On Writing

The Third Knife

History Retold

Pamela Boles Eglinski



As the German army overran northern Italy, and the Allies invaded from the south a young woman was confronted with a terrible dilemma: remain with her family in Torino and face the vicious German onslaught, or escape to France and seek refuge with her aunt and uncle in Nice.

Her father made the choice.

“Catalina, it’s too dangerous for you to stay here,” he said. “The Germans are advancing, and I’ve heard terrible stories about their treatment of women, especially young and beautiful ones like you.”

“No! I will not leave you and mother. We can hide together. I know places.”

Nico shook his head. “There is another reason you must go.”

“And what could be more important than our lives?” she pleaded.

“The blue diamond necklace. It must be hidden. It’s been in the family since the French Revolution. The Germans know about it and will come looking. You must take it to France and hide it.”

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This begins *The Third Knife*, a prequel to *Return of the French Blue* and *She Rides with Genghis Khan*. For me, it was a novel waiting to be told. The story anchored my contemporary characters with their past, the family members who influenced them and made them what they were today—spies for the CIA and the French Directorate.

*The Third Knife* is an historical novel, and with this genre comes a great deal of research and responsibility. I needed to keep my readers in mind at all times. I had to keep my readers in mind, at all times. My facts had to be valid, and they needed to resonate.

There were a lot of questions that needed answering before I could begin to write. The setting was critical. I decided on the south of France. But what did it look like during the war—the buildings, colors, streets lined with men in uniform, and the strain of war etched on the faces of the French.

Next, I asked myself how I'd integrate the Resistance movement into this setting. I decided to focus the novel on a small band of *maquisards* (those who fought guerrilla warfare in the French countryside). How could they remain hidden and still communicate with other *Maquis* cells up and down the French Riviera?

What was the personal story behind each character? What motivated them? How did they avoid the Gestapo? Or did they? Would they survive?" What major WWII battles influenced their actions, and how did the *maquisards* connect to the British war effort in France?



All these questions, and many more needed answers. The credibility of an author comes into question if facts are wrong—characters, geography, and settings misrepresented.

I read books and interviewed experts. I studied incidents and weapons. The internet broadened my research. I consulted international newspapers, Google Earth, atlases, and films that focused on the war. And, I did on-site research in France.

One of my goals in the prequel, was to link settings, geography, and sites depicted in *Return of the French Blue* with those in *The Third Knife*. Knowing what would happen in the future, shaped my characters and their actions in the past.

To remain credible I had to “teach” the characters to shoot guns and throw knives. Likewise, they needed to execute sabotage attacks with a goal to destroy Germany’s war effort in France. Most of all the characters had to hold secrets of their own—functioning as a surprise to both readers and other characters. Wartime or not, people needed to act like normal.

To understand the settings and the emotions of Resistance fighters I viewed *Charlotte Gray*, and the PBS series *Wish Me Luck*. A John Wayne classic, *The Longest Day*, helped me capture the emotion of the Allied invasion at Normandy. I traveled to Normandy, and will never forget the sound of quiet sobbing among visitors who walked through the cemeteries high above Omaha beach.



There are so many personal experiences that transpire while traveling in a foreign country, and France was no exception. As a writer I had to keep my story in mind at all times. Pure serendipity is God’s gift.

One of those special moments happened in Vence, a lovely hill town above Nice. Vence, to this day, retains its old Medieval layout—with a large flat, graveled area in the center of the village for gatherings such as Saturday markets, games of *boulé*, and special events. One Saturday morning we wandered into the market and discovered about a dozen WWII Resistance fighters—the *Maquis*. They’d set up folding displays around the perimeter of the graveled area. Each *maquisard* chatted with passers-by, pointing out vintage newspaper clippings, Gestapo want ads, old folded messages, and medals bestowed after the war. Most of all, I suspect this was a chance for the aging fighters to tell “old war stories,” and chat among themselves – recounting courageous acts of sabotage against the German occupiers. Oh how I wish I could have spoken French. But I couldn’t, so I simply sat down on a bench and observed the noble fighters who

“fought the good fight” and lived to tell about it. Heroes every one.

If you’ve read my novels: *Return of the French Blue*, and *She Rides with Genghis Khan*, you’ll recognize *Nonna* and *Edouard*—grandmother to *Catalina*, and father to *Nicholas*. They are the key protagonists in *The Third Knife*—and members of the French *Maquis*. This is their story, and these are examples of what they saved. Beautiful country, gracious people, forever thankful.



## The Third Knife

*A Tale of Vengeance and passion in the French Resistance*

If you’d like to know what it is to fight for your nation in a time of war, and join a band of courageous *maquisards*, read *The Third Knife*. As a friend of mine said when she finished the novel, “I learned about a time and place I’d never imagined.” Then she added, “I think this would be a great movie!”

I hope you enjoyed this peek into the writing of *The Third Knife*. If you read my book, please review it on Amazon when finished. Thoughtful reviews are an author’s reward for hard work. Thank you, and keep on reading.

1. If you’d like to “look inside,” or purchase *The Third Knife*, please click: [www.amazon.com/dp/B017CJ1H8K](http://www.amazon.com/dp/B017CJ1H8K)
2. If interested in my other novels, please click here: [www.amazon.com/Pamela-BolesEglinski/e/B007GORNJ4](http://www.amazon.com/Pamela-BolesEglinski/e/B007GORNJ4)
3. If curious about the inner-workings of an author’s mind go to: <https://www.facebook.com/pamela.b.egliniski.fans?fref=ts>
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