

SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER: A NOVEL by William Schreiber

Amazon & Barnes & Noble pre-orders Now Available. On Sale: May 26, 2020

Media Inquiries & Review Copies: Ben Gorman, Not a Pipe Publishing notapipelinepublishing@gmail.com

PRAISE FOR SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER

“With lovingly flawed characters and a touch of the paranormal, SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER is a heartfelt story about the complicated relationships within a family and the healing power of truth.

I could not put it down!”

Kelli Estes, USA Today Bestselling author of *Today We Go Home* and *The Girl Who Wrote in Silk*

“An honest slice of life, filled with tears of anguish and joy, loss and forgiveness.

This is one of the best stories I’ve ever read.”

— Mikko Azul, author of *The Staff of Fire and Bone*

SUMMARY

Hoping to learn from her estranged father the fate of a child a powerful family had secretly forced her to give up when she was a teen in the remote foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains, Lennie Riley returns home to Tennessee. But she’s too late. Her brother, John, tells her their father has died. Desperate and determined to reach her deceased dad, she sets out with skeptical John to find a



rumored *guardakin* angel in the Appalachian Mountains who can connect deceased parents with the children they leave

behind. Love builds and sustains families across generations. But can it bridge the divide between life and death? Lennie’s answer hinges on a daring leap of faith for a second chance with the child she never knew. Readers of Delia Owens’ *Where the Crawdads Sing* and Sue Monk Kidd’s *The Secret Life of Bees* will enjoy this moving Southern family saga.



Book trailer: <https://youtu.be/QbaRFPh7PEE>

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AUTHOR BIO

William Schreiber earned the 2019 *Rising Star Award* from the Women's Fiction Writers Association for his novel, **SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER (on sale May 26, 2020)**. The book was adapted from his original screenplay, which has won or been nominated for many competition awards, including the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' prestigious Nicholl Fellowship in Screenwriting, as well as numerous *Best Screenplay* awards at film festivals throughout the country. A native of Augusta, Georgia, he grew up in Fort Myers, Florida, along the Gulf of Mexico and now lives in Seattle, Washington, with his wife, Pam.



AUTHOR BIO BLURB

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Q&A WITH WILLIAM SCHREIBER

Where did the story idea for *Someone to Watch Over* come from?

The story was inspired by my father's unexpected death, an event I called upon in the book to set Lennie and John on their journey of rediscovery. My mom and four siblings asked me to write and deliver dad's eulogy. It was an emotionally overwhelming time. I began to question whether

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I could do it. I mean, how could I adequately capture the span of his life when, I realized too late, I didn't feel like I really *knew* him—and I mean *all* of him. That is, I knew him only as *Dad*. But he had a whole life of hopes and dreams before I or my brother and sisters came along. I began to wonder what those years were like for him. Did the years unfold the way he thought they would? There were so many basic questions I never thought to ask about his life because I was busy building my own. I suppose like most people, I always thought there would be more time to talk with him about the part of his life I never knew. But I never got the chance.

***Someone to Watch Over* revolves around the search for a child the main character had been forced to give up for adoption as a teen. Considering such deeply personal women's issues, you don't seem at first glance to be a writer whom readers might expect to pen such a novel.**

I certainly understand that. There's been a lot of conversation around the question of whether or not a writer can write about a life experience he or she hasn't had. Hopefully, the book will contribute to the conversation regarding these issues. I've found the most beneficial tools in my writer's toolbox are an ability to listen, be aware of what's happening in the world around me and pay attention to other lives being led.

With *Someone to Watch Over*, one of my life experiences that contributed to my perspective is my sister's profession. She's worked for 35 years as an attorney and a circuit court judge in the area of family law and has helped lead child advocacy efforts her entire career. The well-being of children caught in complex and often contentious situations created by the adults in their lives has always been of paramount concern for her, and I've learned over a period of three decades to be sensitive to social issues surrounding the lives of families and children. Although I was never conscious of it during the writing, I have to believe that at some subconscious level, Lennie's profound need to find her child, her need to protect the child she felt she had abandoned to the world, was my attempt to help Lennie shield her child from the consequences of the pregnancy she experienced at a time when, developmentally, she was still a child herself in a socially unjust setting and found herself in a circumstance she wasn't prepared for. The result of that had a huge impact on the trajectory of her life.

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Have you always known you wanted to be a writer?

My nose was always in a book as a kid. I was big into Clive Cussler and *The Hardy Boys*. I won a blue ribbon in a writing competition in sixth grade, so that felt pretty good. Then I started writing poetry in high school, which I had always intended to turn into songs as a member of a rock band I was in at the time. But I never did, so now I have a big bag of old poetry in my music room closet. I didn't know what I wanted to do after high school. I was working on a loading dock in the hundred-degree Florida heat, and that taught me what I *didn't* want to do for the rest of my life. I recalled the natural kind of joy I felt when writing, so I went back to school to study journalism, and I worked my way up on a couple of magazine staffs until I was the editor at the University of Florida magazine. There, we did a piece on a faculty member in the English department, a Southern grit lit writer named Harry Crews, who helped define that genre. He was a fascinating guy who sat on his front porch and wrote in longhand on a legal pad. He got me thinking about trying narrative fiction.

Is there someone who was instrumental in your becoming a writer?

My sixth grade English teacher, Gerald O'Hara. Mr. O'Hara insisted we understand how the language works, piece by piece. We learned how to diagram sentences into their component parts, how to conjugate verbs, all the foundational building blocks of language and writing. In journalism school at the University of Florida it was a professor named Ben Patterson, who'd been the editor of a national magazine. He really challenged me when I got into writing human interest features. That's when I started to think about character.

How did you learn screenwriting or how to write a novel?

After graduating from the University of Florida, I worked as a magazine writer and editor. Then, I had a chance to write my first screenplay after my wife and I moved to Athens, Georgia, which was produced as a feature film called *Captiva Island*. I had never written a screenplay before. So, I approached it based on an understanding of music theory, which I had taken in college. I write and play music, and I sensed parallels between songwriting and storytelling, both of which create

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emotional experiences rooted in expectations and defying those expectations. There are structures and movement, set-ups and resolves.

After *Captiva Island*, I began to study the screenplay form, which is essentially the three-act structure of most films. And, it turns out, it can generally apply to novels as well. Knowing screenwriting helped immensely writing the book because I was able to transition the story's three-act, screenplay structure into a different literary form built on the same structure. And I worked with a wonderful editor who helped me transition from thinking as a screenwriter to thinking as a novelist. There's a huge difference between the two literary forms: screenplays are written from the outside-in, and novels are written from the inside-out. I thought writing screenplays was hard and, no doubt, it has its challenges because of the necessary economy of language and time restrictions, but writing this novel was exhausting! In a screenplay, you're painting visual impressions with a broad brush, but in a novel you have to paint every little piece of the canvas.

How long did it take you to write *Someone to Watch Over*?

The story actually began its life as a screenplay I wrote living in Athens, Georgia, where I was working as a freelance writer. The script had won or had top finishes at an array of industry and film festival writing competitions, including the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' Nicholl Fellowship in Screenwriting Program.

I wanted the eyes of Southern readers on it because it's set in the South, and I wanted to make sure it resonated in its authenticity. I entered it in screenwriting competitions at the Nashville Film Festival, the Asheville Film Festival, the Austin Film Festival, Worldfest-Charleston and the Charleston International Film Festival, where it either earned the Best Screenplay award or had a top finish.

As time passed, I grew frustrated not being able to get the picture made for reasons I finally came to accept were out of my control. However, writing a book and getting the story out *was* within

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my control, and so I decided to write *Someone to Watch Over* as a novel based on what turned out to be a solid three-act story outline. The book went through a number of drafts over a period of a couple of years from 2017 to 2019.

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