



8

THIRST FOR ADVENTURE

I have long been a fan of award winning international journalist Kitty Pilgrim. Now, I am a fan of Kitty Pilgrim, adventure novelist, speaker, and role model.

Her first novel, *The Explorers Code*, got me hooked on the characters and their life of intrigue. I imagined myself as one of them, living the very James Bond (female version) life that she depicts. The books are engaging, thrilling, and fun, and I admire

how the excitement and storyline is maintained from book to book. When it comes to Kitty Pilgrim, there's so much to ask about.

As an award winning journalist who traveled the world and raised two boys, you seem to have lived a very fabulous and full life; are the characters' adventures in your books modeled after your own life?

Kitty says that she has been fortunate to “live a wonderful life that is richly diverse.”

I think the secret to how I do this is that I keep grounded. I lead a life that is based on simple values of companionship, and love, home and hearth. I adore my friends and my family, and that gives me the ability to occasionally step outside my comfort zone and go to places that are distant and exotic, and sometimes a bit terrifying. But fundamentally I know that any forays into the wider world will end with the return home. I know that in the end, the world I have built for myself is a happy one. And no matter how exotic my travels are, there is nothing better than returning to a loving family.

I still wonder how difficult it was to juggle a career and single parenthood.

I was on my own with my boys from when they were a very young age. In one respect, it was easy. I think one advantage was that I had boys, who were very active and wanted to do adventurous things, which I liked to do also.

We only had the three of us in the house, and consensus was pretty simple. When I was home, we always spent the day together. For example: the vote to go to the zoo (which my son Beau liked) was always unanimous. Or to go hiking (which my son William loved). We would pack a picnic, and just take off, the three of us together in a little Jeep. I loved the ocean, so we would go to the beach. For longer vacations we would go overseas, or take an ocean liner on a transatlantic sea voyage, or go somewhere tropical and exciting – my son Beau adored parrots for a while, so we all went to look at them together. One time we did a western vacation to Wyoming, which we all still talk about.

I spent a lot of time at work and our free time together was always special. It motivated us to do wonderful, exciting things when we had time off from work and school. In that respect I think I had so much more quality time with my sons, because we made such an effort to create memories. These excursions are the things we all remember, now that the boys are now adults.

As far as “juggling” I found it to be a wonderful mix. At work as a international journalist I was in an entirely adult world, engaged with the big issues of the day. At home I was 100 percent a mom, which was also a joy. I truly think I had the best of both worlds.

I am personally of the opinion that women are extremely adept at juggling all that life hands us, yet I ask the question: is it possible to “have it all”?

Kitty is quick with her reply:

Yes! Absolutely! There really are no societal limits on women these days – at least in the developed world. Although most of us would agree that globally we have a long way to go. But the life most of us enjoy here in the United States, we face no real societal limits.

Of course, we could make progress in terms of gender advancement in the field of science for example, or in politics, or in addressing the salary disparity in the corporate world. But when you really get down to it, the gender gap is closing rapidly. Women who refuse to accept limits on themselves, lead very rich lives. Refusal of limits is the first step. Think of Amelia Earhart, Sylvia Earle, Isabelle Bird or Martha Gellhorn, Isak Dinesen or Eleanor Roosevelt, to name a few of the women who inspire me. They never accepted limits, and lived the way they wanted to.

Your books offer readers a very glamorous, exciting and educational journey that keeps us enthralled from start to finish – and wanting more – how do you manage to keep the characters so interesting across the three novels?



I write my books the same way I did my reporting job. First I go to a place and experience it. Then I write. I cannot lock myself in a room and just invent fictitious events. I believe this “journalistic” approach to fiction helps the reader experience the scene, instead of just reading about it.

Sometimes I go to five star hotels and restaurants, other times I go to the ends of the earth to see nature at its most raw and primitive state. I think the reader enjoys both situations.

The true challenge for any novelist is finding wonderful characters. I hit the jackpot with John Sinclair, my hero who happens to be an archaeologist. By putting him in this profession, he automatically had permission to go to exotic and interesting places. My female protagonist, Cordelia Stapleton, is a diver. This give me permission to dive and explore as much as I like. I literally live the life of my characters, and that makes them very real to me.

You involve your readers fully and make us feel as though we may actually get to meet Cordelia and John at an event or on our own travels; how do you keep coming up coming up with twists and turns for them throughout your books?

My books are not plot driven, but rather location and science driven. For example in *The Summer of Fire*, my latest book, I started with the concept of volcanoes. I thought they were fascinating. So I traveled to many in Greece and Italy, climbed a few – including the majestic Mount Vesuvius, and talked to volcanologists about the science of their field. This gave me the base for building the plot. It is the foundation of the “house” of the novel.

After that construction begins. I basically dream up incredible scenes, and put them in luxurious locations, so the reader is transported to a fascinating and luxurious world. I want my



novels to be a pleasurable experience. They are completely escapist. The reader goes on a five star trip through some of the most exotic and luxurious places in the world. People tell me my novels are a wonderful time-out from the real world, and yet at the end, they have learned real scientific information. My motto is “inform and entertain.”

As a women traveling in areas of the world during politically unstable climates do you consider yourself a “risk taker?”

Most women who explore always get asked that question. I don't believe in unnecessary risk. I don't explore for the thrill of risk taking. I explore to learn more about the world. There are times when I realize that I am in a less secure place than I would like to be. At those moments, I retreat, and make other plans. I head to safety.

The purpose of travel is to broaden one's outlook on the world and its people. I like to push my comfort zone a bit. But it is an increasingly dangerous world. And I plan on being around for a very long time . So that does not involve pushing the limits of what I deem as safe. If you talk to any eminent explorers, they feel the same way. It's the adrenaline junkies who are the amateurs in the field of exploration. True explorer's know when they have reached the limit of safety.

Would you have been able to write the characters in your books if you had not experienced similar situations in your life? What do you believe empowers women? I would not have been able to write if I had not gone to the places first. I consider myself foremost a journalist. That involves field reporting. Some very talented novelists can lock themselves in a room and invent places and situations. I cannot. However, my weakness as a novelist leads me to some of the most exotic places on earth. The locations I go to, for example the arctic, or tombs in Egypt, are thrilling. I love my research methods.



A women's empowerment comes from her own drive. If she is self motivated, she will succeed. The women who look for societal approval have a harder hill to climb. The world is a very competitive place. And women have to accept the fact that if they want to be treated as equals, they must compete with both men and women. Women have the obligation to empower themselves. And look to other role models, both male and female, to inspire their efforts. For example I take equal inspiration from both Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. Each had their challenges. And they both overcame them.

I write about many types of Exploring Women throughout the world, and they come from different backgrounds, lifestyles and professions, yet they all share a passion for adventure, travel and experiencing new things. They are also humble about their achievements and generous in spirit and time with others.

Kitty Pilgrim is a woman who has lived a life of adventure, passion and exploration across continents. Her quest for knowledge continues to be shared through her novels and speaking presentations.

I highly recommend reading the trilogy as *The Stolen Chalice* and her current book, *Summer of Fire*, will leave you feeling very worldly, sophisticated and as impatient for her forthcoming novel, *The Marble Goddess*, as I am.

Until our next adventure... pack away your wrinkle cream and put on your traveling boots....