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SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW JUNE 2026

June, 2026 Awards won:

Best Television Script
Michelangelo and Me
 Colleen Shannon

Best Fantasy Screenplay
Michelangelo and Me
 Colleen Shannon

What is your script about? (Please describe the core theme and plot of your story.)

First, most helpful is how I got the idea which partly explains I think why this script is different (feedback I get from just about everyone). My Dorchester

editor asked me to write the lead book for their limited series on the Millennium. I came up with the idea for Heaven's Rogue when I was traveling on a national parks tour with my family. As the beautiful scenery passed I contemplated what it meant to us as individuals, with all our flaws and virtues, to be privileged to see the turn of a millennium, as so few live to see that date. So to me whatever I wrote had to touch on the core of the human condition, which doesn't seem to change much through the eons. Michelangelo's David came to mind immediately. To my knowledge historians have never figured out, and I researched a lot as I always do, who modeled for the David. So I made it up: What would happen, I wondered, if something magical made David, turned to stone by God for cursing him and all the angels, come to life in modern NYC? Only to face a mysterious quest he has to figure out one week over Christmas in a time and world he doesn't know and doesn't much like. A big difference in the script version is I bring the Sistine Chapel and God to life sorta as narrators. But hopefully in a light, fun way, relatable to just about everyone. So I tried to show more how God/Allah/Yahweh truly made us in his image and he has a few flaws of his own: temper, a God complex (lol) and most of all, He yearns to be a comic but can't get it down no matter how hard he tries to play Groucho Marx. I do understand the differences between scripts and novels and am as much a cinefile as a novelist. Still, I confess this conversion of the 400 page novel to the 100 page script was very, very difficult and it took me a long time to incorporate the theme because it's not easy to convey in visual only format. But that's the core of the story as requested.

The plot-- I hope I've succeeded in combining the same motors that move my novels: suspense, romance, history and action. In Michelangelo and Me, the romance portion is very similar to Heaven's Rogue as Dom is scared to take Honor, the art historian who wishes him into being, back with him to his more dangerous time, though he falls in love with her. He doesn't like the New World much. Honor has been half in love with him since childhood and is obsessed, as action opens, with proving he was a real man, Michelangelo's friend. She's not sure she believes in miracles, though she is Catholic and it's her plea before the Pope that brings her life-sized David, she believes the true original since this commission was so vital to Michelangelo, to NYC to allow her to research his provenance. This plot twist delights art all over NYC (we see and hear them but the characters don't early on, it's part of the arc and climax). Honor's former boyfriend Perry, who has made most of his millions forging art, plans to steal them and sell them to private buyers for millions, including

Michelangelo's works on loan from the Vatican. But art works die if they're not seen and adored, just as poets die when their words are no longer listened to. They all need David, King of all the art, to lead them down from their pedestals. Only then, they know, will God forgive his errant poster boy so they can be seen and heard and loved as their creators intended. To get home to his time, Dom must prove he cares for someone besides himself and become in truth the leader Michelangelo so brilliantly carved in stone. Because he believed in Dom. Honor believes in Dom. Her young aspiring artist friend Mike believes in Dom and helps on the quest. Honor's two friends, Nick and Rafe, reluctant participants at first, come to believe in and help Dom, too. At the end of the script I recently added original content. Cynical cop Nick has to go back to the Renaissance to save his son Mike. I wrote it not because I'm convinced a sequel will ever get made (but that would be way cool lol), but because I had to prove to myself that I could write such a challenging story with such a beloved comic. I think I succeeded....using several of his own quotes as I typically do in both scripts and novels. What's more challenging to a fiction writer than bringing both God and Robin Williams to life on the same screen with the same goal? Luckily I love a challenge. However, while this is my core idea, Michelangelo and Me works fine as a single story of hope, dreams and being the best of who God made.

2. What are your ambitions with your project? (e.g., seeking a producer, director, or entering major competitions?)

I've already entered some major competitions and won awards in the Chicago Script Awards and Outstanding Screenplays (Full Circle for the latter, my Hitchcock homage). I even won best script in the Florence Film Awards where the David was born. Of course I'd like to see my story produced and distributed world wide because I genuinely believe it has huge audience potential virtually everywhere. And heaven knows, if you'll forgive the term, we need stories of hope and joy...

3. How was the writing process? What pleasantly surprised you while developing this story?

I'm probably closest to a character writer less than plot. I come up with a time, a place, a dilemma, and then create a character who world builds for me, almost like standing over my shoulder. He/she helps me devise the best, most moving romance, suspense to keep you interested, history for accuracy and compelling action sequences. I do think my love for great action films like Die Hard, Predator and more recently, The Accountant, kinda lead my plotting big

action sequences which also appear in my novels. And yes, I can outline and use synopses, always have in selling my novels, but the best parts of scripts, and I've seen this confirmed by well known screenwriters, come in the doing. Until I rewrote Michelangelo and Me for the gazillionth time I didn't think of using the Sistine Chapel; when I incorporated the chapel I didn't think at first of making God a Groucho Marx wannabe. The latter idea is what led to the idea of having Robin Williams teach God how to be a comic. I absolutely love the art of fiction-- no limitations but your own imagination-- and will be writing it to the day I die whether I ever sell a script or not.

4. For what target group is your screenplay?

Worldwide, all ages and genders. Michelangelo and Me, in several different versions, has won major awards on five continents. I think about marketing too, my master's from USC guiding that. However, I'm also a very detailed thinker; I went to Barnes and Noble when I was working on my first novel, Wild Heart Tamed, never posted because it was a learning experience for me, and made notes on the NY publishers publishing books similar to mine. I sold to Berkley myself, no agent, in less than a year because in both business and film, paying attention to your target audience is key to creating something memorable people want to read or see. This philosophy helped, I think, while in my mid twenties, by doing this targeting though obviously there's always luck involved in finding the right eye balls for something as subjective as fiction.

5. How would you specify your writing style? What characterizes your dialogue or narrative structure?

Aside from being a character writer first, the other difference in my career has been good editorial guidance. My editor almost always asked for trilogies because series books are so popular with readers. So before she accepted the first final manuscript for Heaven's Rogue (she loved it, had been a romance editor for years and told me she'd never seen anything like it) she asked me to suggest some sequel ideas. Hence the da Vinci part, where I literally flipped the script and sent a cynical cop who ruined his life last time he tried to be a hero, back to the Renaissance. When my editor and I discussed the final book there was only one logical conclusion: 3000 when we've moved to the stars. Rafe, my wounded SEAL. And I don't just do this planning for novels; I kinda plant seeds as I go partly because stories that both satisfy and leave me wondering a bit are my fav.

6. Why did you decide to become a screenwriter?

For love of film on the world's best stage. But I gravitate to broad, rich stories with interesting characters and if I mix in some accurate history, the entire story becomes both more interesting, and challenging, to me which is what I need to do my best work.

7. Who is your greatest role model in writing or cinema?

I've answered this question before with my three fav screenwriters: William Goldman, Aaron Sorkin and Bill Dubuque. However, I started reading at six and wrote my first short story at eight because of my grandmother. She always read to me and we had books and intellectual magazines like National Geographic around which increased my interest in history. I was in Junior Historians in junior high and that skill set of being good at research has served me extremely well, in both business and creative endeavors. Including writing my own queries to famous people when I can't find the answers in libraries or online. I have two signed letters answering science questions from two Nobel Prize winners and many historic site managers have also helped me, such as the director of Fort Concho, where my in revision script Time Will Tell is partly set. He read the Fort Concho portion and made a few suggestions. On the business end I once cold called a famous medical building developer when I was a VP of development (MRED USC 2003) because I was costing out one across the street from a very high end retirement community in Century City (I worked in LA for ten years) my company was developing. I expected to get his assistant but it was the end of the day and he answered himself. When I told him who I was, he was very gracious and told me how to calculate the parking revenue from the proposed medical building via times and days of the week. That one call added almost a million in residual land value to our project because his revenue projection was a lot higher than mine. This part of LA is very parking constrained.

So yes, I'd have to credit my grandmother, who ran my grandfather's water drilling business and worked in a law office in an age where most women stayed home. I credit her mostly for making me who I am. Being from Midland, I know we're still a lot of dreamers, risk takers and entrepreneurs. That part, Landman nailed. But my own predilections have also molded me as I'm intellectually curious which also leads to a lot of my ideas and makes me unafraid of contacting people I don't know.

8. Which movies are your favorites? Why? Have they influenced your own

work?

I could write my own catalogue so this is a difficult question for me. Growing up, I was exposed to Frank Capra (to this day I love Mr. Smith Goes to Washington and It's a Wonderful Life), Alfred Hitchcock (Notorious, Rear Window and North by Northwest are my favorites but he's done many more I admire too, like Rope, a very difficult story to make as suspenseful as he did because it was based on a play and set totally in a fancy apartment). My tastes, then and now, tend to track the most respected auteurs-- The Princess Bride, Molly's Game and of course all the three original Star Wars films which also inspired me to try my hand at screenwriting. That said, I'm not just a blockbuster gal. I like some little known, quirky films too. I enjoy every genre, horror, comedy, romance, suspense, sci fi, fantasy as long as the world building keeps me involved, which is a lot trickier than it looks and IMO more contingent on characters than plot. Plot is infinite; characters need to be relateable to the audience with believable motivations as if they were real. I loved Gladiator and Troy and I can't wait to see the Odyssey. Newer films: Maverick, the final Jurassic Park because I loved seeing the old cast reunited and it was a good story, but a couple of lesser known films I like are Revenge, about an imprisoned girl fighting back and rallying other cheerleader types, and I just saw Mads Mikkelsen in The Night Riders. I loved its blend of quirky characters, humor, action, suspense and family. Even the gore seemed to fit. I admire South Korean films too, The Tiger I've seen at least four times, and it's in subtitles. Another little known film from Scandinavia is Alpha, a prehistory what-if that poses the story of how the wolf was domesticated into our dog companions. No English dialogue, little dialogue at all, but great story, believable characters, gorgeous cinematography. Those elements I keep mentioning: suspense, action and history, though no romance as the main character is still in his teens. This is what great fiction is to me and it's what I want to write and sell, hopefully.

9. Where do you look for inspiration for your characters and their journeys?

I get more ideas than I have time to write from many sources: articles, other films, current events, history I want to tell, on and on. Maybe it's because I've been writing fiction so long and I'm both creative and analytical, which is why I've come up with a fairy tale family film, a romantic thriller centered on Hitch and his films and a more traditional action romantic comedy in Foster Justice. This list doesn't include the scripts I haven't posted or the many novel partials I haven't worked on enough because I've been concentrating on screenplays.

10. How would you rate the quality of current filmmaking and screenwriting?

Chaotic and not good business practices on the part of too many but then the whole world seems a mess right now. I'm hopeful film can help inspire a few along the way. It still can, and does.

11. What are your next projects?

Most urgent right now is the reissue I'm working on for my third Berkley book. The interior book has been typeset after I revised it down 7K words as my style was much more flowery then, and added new content, including a new epilogue in 1814 and a reference list for an historical romance lol. But I really did spend almost six months researching The Hawk's Lady at Duke University. It's set during the Barbary wars, our first war on terror as a nation, opening in 1799 as a pirate/captive romance. On its face, anyway....it's much more and is actually in the Library of Congress. Someone at the library stumbled across it somehow and saw how accurate my history is. I have the box and reference number but when I called to see if I could check it out, the Library told me it was circulating and not available digitally but I could check it out at the library. I asked if they want a new deluxe hardcover, which I'm working on now that will be sold only from my web site, to replace the old paperback and they gave me a link to contact the department that selected the book, one of many things I still have to settle. I only ordered 30 hardbacks because with all the deluxe features they're quite expensive. I'm not sure if this is self publishing or not, which I haven't yet done, and I'm also trying to get distribution because it's perfect for our anniversary. However, that's not as important as the larger themes that show distinctly that those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it: call it my own No Kings placard. The larger conflict between the main characters is incited as usual, by politics. Federalists who want a strong navy battling Democratic Republicans headed by Jefferson who fear exchanging one tyrant for another. Arguments over the separation of powers and events like the Alien and Sedition acts and the XYZ affair are also mentioned. Depressingly relevant to today....but if it inspires even a few people to pick up a history book, I've done my job. I'm hoping to have time to do a live reading of a few scenes to post on You Tube and Tic Toc. But it will be close to the end of June before I have the books, I think. I just want them to be ready for sale, both hardback and soft cover, by July 4th. After that I can breathe. And decide whether to focus on my thrillers or scripts.

As for scripts, I've barely started Monster Mash, an animated family spoof on monsters which I may do as a ten page teaser, and Time Will Tell, already in

revision. It's been through five other really good writers and I'm incorporating their comments. I may turn Travis Justice into a script, haven't decided. I own 100% of the film rights to all my books.

Learn more:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colleen_Shannon_\(novelist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colleen_Shannon_(novelist))

<https://go.authorsguild.org/members/13029>

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