

Greetings Club Member

Just got back from a bush trip. For those not from this neck of the woods, South Africa experienced unusually heavy rains, even flooding, in late summer. Good for the dams, vegetation and animals, but also transformed many gravel roads into gouged-out gullies. So whilst thick vegetation made game viewing a challenge (and the migratory birds had already deserted us for the Northern Hemisphere) we certainly tested our off-road driving skills.

Following up on my last last newsletter concerning story settings. Like every other aspect of a novel they require extensive research. I also make every effort to visit the places I write about. For *Those Who Favour Fire*, I travelled to Istanbul, Paris, the African East Coast, Zanzibar, Aqaba and the Wadi Rum. In Jordan I explored forts and battle sites, boarded historic carriages of the Hejaz Railway and ate a traditional Zarb dinner with Bedouins.

It's not always possible though. The Syrian conflict for one, curtailed a visit to Damascus. Fortunately being the world's oldest continuously inhabited settlement there's a rich history of literature about the place. I also consulted a former Syrian tour guide.

Nevertheless you can't beat visiting a setting to get a feeling for the place and to soak up the atmosphere.

But there's more to it than that. It's called credibility. I recall reading a novel by a New York Times best-selling author which is partially set in Johannesburg. Two or three pages in, I realised he'd never been here. It bugged me to the point where that's all I recall about the story. Not memorable characters or what was at stake. Just a flawed portrayal of the setting.

Getting back to the Wadi Rum though. I used it as a setting in *Those Who Favour Fire*. It's vast, otherworldly landscape is surreal. One of a series of pictures I took from the air is the cover photo on my Facebook page. You can check it out here:

[Colin Grieve Author's FB page](#)

And so it came as no surprise to discover it also served as movie locations for, *The Martian*, *The Dune Part 1 & 2*, *Star Wars: Episode IX - The Rise of Skywalker*, *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* and of course the epic, *Lawrence of Arabia*. As I said, otherworldly.

That's it for now. Thank you for joining me on this journey and look forward to catching up with you next month.

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