

Noah Danby is a good bad guy

Guelph-native actor revels in playing tough guys, but his latest film casts him a hero

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A decade after leaving Guelph to pursue an acting career, Noah Danby landed back in Guelph -- this time in jail.

But don't get the wrong idea. Danby, the youngest son of the renowned artist Ken Danby, landed in jail when he landed a role in the TV series Flashpoint, parts of which were filmed at the former correctional centre in Guelph.

"I enjoy being the bad guy," Danby, 35, said earlier this week, as he described his role in the series. "I'm the evil dude who organizes a revolt in prison."

In the past few months, he's played two different bad guys for two different television series -- Flashpoint, the Canadian series about an elite tactical unit that handles extreme policing situations and that was picked up by the American CBS network, and The Bridge, another police drama slated to air this fall or next spring.

Since graduating from Ryerson's theatre program, he's earned a living playing thugs, gangsters and bullies, which is no surprise given his extensive training in martial arts.

But it was through his role as a good guy -- Connor King, the male lead in Painkiller Jane -- that he met his wife Kristianna Loken, who played the female lead Jane.

They were married in 2007, that fateful year that brought both joy and tragedy to Danby.

"I was doing Painkiller Jane, then I got hitched. Then my dad died and right after the funeral we moved to L.A.," he said, pausing a moment to regain his composure. "That was very painful when Dad died, and so unexpected."

Ken Danby died Sept. 23, 2007, while canoeing in Algonquin Park.

While dealing with the death, the younger Danby completed shooting a movie-of-the-week, The Summit. Once the couple moved to L.A., though, Danby was stuck in limbo, waiting for his green card so he could work again.

"I couldn't do anything. I couldn't come back, I couldn't cross the border, and I couldn't work. I shook a lot of hands and met a lot of people, but it felt like I was getting nowhere."

Two days after getting his green card, he got another job -- this one an ensemble piece filmed in South Africa. And bonus -- Loken was also hired for that film.

That little gem is called Darfur, about a group of journalists who go to Darfur to interview refugees. With a very loose script, the actors improvised and Danby said the previews look good.

"I'm the action hero in this movie. I provide security for the journalists," he said.

Tom Slater has come to know Danby very well since he started high school at John F. Ross 20 years ago. Slater heads the theatre program at Ross, but remembers his first brush with Danby was on the football field.

"I was head coach and we were playing a game against Centennial," Slater said. "Noah was just a rookie but I sent him into the end zone. He was surrounded but he jumped up and grabbed the ball in the air. After the play he came to me crying, thankful that I let him play. I thought, 'If he's not afraid to cry in front of a bunch of jocks, he should be in theatre.' "

And it's still where he should be, Slater said. "He's very talented, but the reason he's made it is his drive. He's coming into his own now. He's paid his dues.

"I think we'll be seeing Noah in bigger roles, very soon."

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