

READERS' GUIDE

The Lost Expert by Hal Niedzviecki

INTRODUCING *The Lost Expert*

When Chris, an unambitious young waiter, walks through the park on his way home from work, he stumbles onto the set of a Hollywood film — and is promptly mistaken for the missing lead actor.

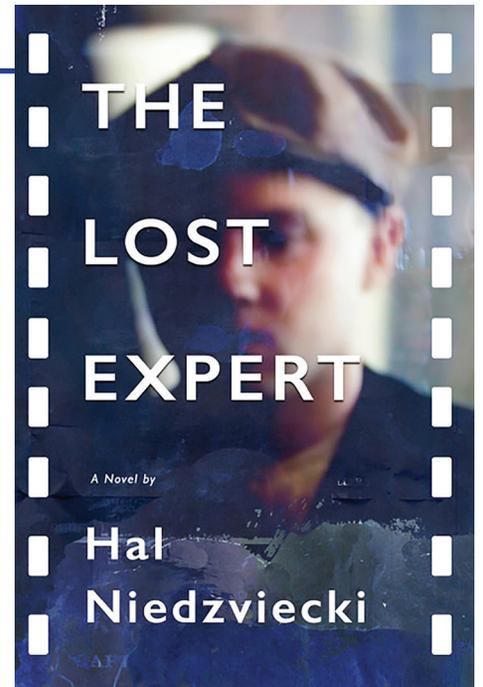
Corralled into filming a scene for “The Lost Expert” — director Bryant Reed’s last-ditch effort to restore his reputation — Chris assumes the identity of international action star Thomson Holmes, and disconnects from his real life. He falls deeply into his newfound identity as Holmes and as his character in the film, a struggling young man who has the ability to find lost people and things.

Tensions mount as Chris gradually learns of the real Thomson Holmes’ scandals and accusations of sexual misconduct. Meanwhile, the real Thomson Holmes has disappeared and Chris has reason to fear he’ll be next. As he tries to figure out what happened to the actor, he grapples with his role as imposter and whether he can — or even should — extricate himself from reinvention.

IMPORTANT THEMES

Identity – *The Lost Expert* says at one point, “We all get lost sometimes” (p 28). A major theme in *The Lost Expert* is being lost both literally and metaphorically. The Lost Expert character finds people who are literally lost and as him, Chris is able to search for himself.

Cult of Celebrity – The novel comments on the cult of celebrity in its depiction of how various people treat “Thomas,” from his assistant to strangers on the street.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss Chris's life before he became Thomson Holmes and after. What's changed?
2. Have you ever been mistaken for someone else? Would you pretend to be that person if you were?
3. Why did Chris go along with the assumption he was Thomson Holmes?
4. Discuss the novel's format. What did you think of the mixture of prose and script?
5. Discuss being "lost" in regards to the novel.
6. Why doesn't Chris call Laurie after his first day as Thomson Holmes?
7. How are Krunk and Chris different? How are they similar?
8. Alison seems suspicious of Chris at first; does she know he's not actually Thomson Holmes?
9. How does the narrative of the script affect your interpretation of the narrative of the rest of the story?
10. How does *The Lost Expert* comment on the cult of celebrity?



ABOUT HAL

Hal Niedzviecki is a writer, speaker, culture commentator, and editor whose work challenges preconceptions and confronts readers with the offenses of everyday life. He is the author of eleven books of fiction and nonfiction, including *The Archaeologists*, which was shortlisted for the Mary Scorer Award for Best Book by a Manitoba Publisher. Niedzviecki is also the founder and publisher of *Broken Pencil: The magazine of zine culture and the independent arts*. He lives in Toronto, ON with his wife, two daughters, and the family animal.