

Why do you write?

I write because I reflect on the experiences I have in this world and want to make sense of them. In the end, I believe that words make a difference in the world and all we leave behind. I write because I love world-building... but I also write because I believe the world needs more stories – stories that represent people like me from people like me. I hope to uplift and inspire and encourage my family, the younger generation of Wilson's to chase their big dream like I have. I believe that words can shine a light on dark places, have a huge impact on your fate – telling *stories* has a huge impact. And if I could impact even *one* person's life, I would feel incredibly fulfilled.

In *The Nephilem*, Hyienna is quick to remind himself that he is a man that doesn't know a great deal about anything, but he has a great memory for nuggets of wisdom. He carries an anchor to deal with his naval gazing. I have to say I am a lot like that myself, certainly in the past when I was going through a hard time. It was important that my fiction carries home truths and I think this is what will resonate with audiences.

What inspired the characters of Hyienna and Nathaniel in *The Nephilem*?

This probably will be a big surprise to those of you who read the book but perhaps not those who know me, but Hyienna started off as a gangster type character. When I first conceived of the story that would eventually become the book, its backstory, *The Eternal Game* was originally called The Kartel of the Blood and Hyienna was part of the group but called Hyena Bendosa. A couple years later, I restarted the story throwing away quite a lot of the original ideas, I found myself trying to pick the bones to use for the new version and I was watching Layer Cake which has Sienna Miller in it. I've always liked her name and decided to try a masculine version of Sienna and came up with Hyienna. They rhyme. From there I built Hyienna based a little on my own traits and habits and on Charlie Brown which I reference in the book too via Sarah.

Nathaniel on the other hand was a gift given to me by Jay Astill. I met Jay in 1999-2000 or thereabouts, who at the time was an aspiring pulp short story crime writer whilst loading pallets at Boots the Chemist warehouse. We'd both get public transport home and so had plenty of time to discuss our hopes and dreams as we were young, late 20's -30 somethings. He shared this idea for a short story starring Nathaniel, Solomon Vaughn, and Seth. I don't remember much about the crime story itself, but I loved the characters. I asked him if I could use the characters to develop it into a graphic novel. The graphic novel morphed into a novel as a couple decades went by, the characters morphed into people I totally developed away from Jay's idea, but I kept a few of their original traits. I'm still not sure what he thinks of what I've done to them!

What inspired *The Nephilem*? What made you want it to be your debut novel?

The Nephilem is a story that I lived with in my imagination for 20 years. The way I approached doing the novel is probably not a way anyone should do really – In my mind this was going to be my Magnus Opus, my greatest hits of literary devices and influences. It was only going to ever be one book in my life, then this would be it. The book was an obsession for me. I woke up and each morning it was the first thing on my mind. Any idle moments I had at work or in the company of others, and the story was on my mind. There were lines in the book I would recite to myself daily. The book became a ceremony and ritual, then finally when I set down to complete it, it became sacrifice.

It happened like this for me because I was connecting to the characters. I quite literally fell in love with the idea — of these characters experiencing loss, recovery, and hope; having two characters connecting to help each other heal in ways they wouldn't have been able to alone. My story did not begin as a love story but through living with them in my mind I learned through my own life circumstances this story would teach me to fall in love again. Not just romantic love but for the love of your children, between brothers, and for your friends.

What made you want to become a writer?

I never wanted to become a writer, but I always loved to write. I'm a geek for learning how creative people execute their creative thing. I find all that fascinating. I fell in love with stories when I was growing up by watching Kung-Fu theatre. I was a terrible reader growing up despite my dad's best efforts to force me to sit and read 1 hour a day. I must say it must've had the desired impact because by the time I reached my teens I was creatively charged. I started by writing poems because I was inspired by the plight of Anne Frank and I would write my poems, at first in her voice until I eventually found my own, then moved on to music lyrics and short stories. I can't say any of it was any good, but it was a good outlet to keep me off the streets. What inspires and motivates me now to become a writer is telling the long tale of *The Eternal Game*. I must tell this tale while I am still of sound mind!

What is your best advice for an aspiring writer?

Aspiring writers are so worried about someone stealing their story idea and remain clenched fist about it sharing it or getting help. Any two people can have the same story where the same thing happens. What makes your story yours is not *how it happens* but *how it affects and transforms the characters*. And this comes from telling your truth through your characters. So, stay the course and people will connect with your story and you as an author.