

Kevin Gerard – First Person Story

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Why do I write? I guess the answer is twofold. I always wanted to write but never found the courage. I took one creative writing course in college and wrote the first twenty pages of Conor's story. The class loved it. The teacher encouraged me to write more of it.

Fifteen years after leaving that class I met a martial arts instructor who had written a conditioning book for Tae Kwon Do. I asked him how he found the initiative to write an entire book. I took home what he told me and failed miserably, but something about what he said sparked another idea. I decided I would write one double-spaced page every day. It worked, for the next five years I wrote every day. It started out as one page; eventually it became five pages a day. I've never moved beyond that amount, but I've written every single day. Two things happen when you do that; you get into a habit and your writing gets better very quickly.

The second reason I write comes from my education and profession. I've taught sociology and statistics for the California State University for about six years. I also taught at community and private colleges. What I've come to realize after ten years of academic involvement; extensive reading, writing and discussion, is that we are deep trouble. By us, I mean the world's population. Invite whatever dialogue you wish, global warming, the cesspool of global politics, profit above all concerns, even human life, and it becomes clear that in the very near future, those without the financial means to protect themselves will be as they say in academia, "in a world of shit." I do

not wish that for my wife, my children, or for myself, so I write and promote like a madman, in order to escape the inevitable.

A crushing personal experience cemented my decision to write for publication. I received a master's degree in sociology in 1996. I came back to San Diego County and worked hard to build my resume. When I felt I was fully prepared, I began applying for higher paying jobs. For over five years, I interviewed every week, sometimes more than once a week, and never once received a job offer. The experience nearly killed me, and it didn't do my marriage any good either.

What I began to realize terrified me. At forty five years old I was done. I had no career, no prospects, and I knew what the world had in store for me. I can tell you with absolute certainty that desperation is a powerful motivator. I heard someone say once that "all great things come out of desperation." I believe that, and I believe in Conor's story.

I wrote the Conor and the Crossworlds story for a variety of reasons. First and foremost concerns Purugama the magical cougar. This particular creature has lived inside my head for more than forty years. When I was a young boy I used to lie in bed at night and imagine a great beast exactly like Purugama floating down and landing by my bedroom window. After crawling out of bed and dressing, I would step through the window and climb aboard the mighty cougar. I would instantly be transformed into a massive warrior, and off we'd fly toward our thrilling adventures.

I never intended Conor's story to go beyond one book. A tragic event caused me to continue the story and create the characters for Book Two. The

Lord of the Champions, Maya, actually belonged to a close friend of my wife's. An extraordinary cat, Maya befriended me when I married my wife and moved to San Diego. He was extremely proud, he had a right to be; he was a magnificent creature and an amazing individual. One day his mistress called our home with terrible news, Maya had been attacked by a rampaging pack of pit bulls. He had literally been ripped to pieces. I cried openly on the telephone, and then I told our friend that I was going to make him immortal. I knew then he would become the Lord of the Champions. It fit perfectly anyway, an alley cat in charge of the great wild cats the creators had chosen to be protectors of the Crossworlds.

This is how Therion, Eha, Ajur and Surmitang sprang into existence. If there was to be a force of champions, they would have to be like no other group of saviors anywhere. Oversized with the gifts of speech and magic, all of the champions have distinct personalities. From the second book forward their personalities continue to grow and become more interesting. For the longest time I cherished Surmitang over all the others. He is so proud, so in love with himself, and so sure of his abilities, and yet such a fragile internal child. As time went on and the story reached four and then five books, I began to admire Eha more and more. He is such a happy fellow. He loves being a champion, he loves the Lady of the Light, he loves Conor, and he loves to laugh. One of the great moments in the series is during the initial stages of the battle for the Crossworlds in Book Four. Maya directs Eha to lead the horde of slayers and keepers out onto the plain. Using his magnificent speed, Eha keeps ahead of five hundred thousand angry

enemies, laughing hilariously the entire time. Even though I favor one or another of the cats from time to time, all of the champions have intriguing characteristics; they are quite a magnetic group.

The amazing aspect of this series, from an author's viewpoint, is the trust I gave to the story and to the characters. When I began writing the third and fourth books, I honestly had no idea what would happen, where the story would go, and what would be the final outcome of each novel. I didn't know until the second she appeared that the Lady of the Light had a twin sister, the Lady of the Shadows. I didn't know that Seefra would rise from the rubble of his castle to torment Conor and Janine again, nor did I understand the importance of Ajur's sacrifice at the end of Book Four. As an author, I am extremely organic, and I like it that way. I think if a writer plans too much, it takes away from the spontaneity of the story. Some of the best passages from the Conor and the Crossworlds series occurred when I allowed myself to "go where the characters wanted to go." I followed and found amazing plot twists around every corner.