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ISSUE 12

FEBRUARY 2008

Pie From the Sky

It's officially winter. Everyone is back to school, including myself. For about the first two weeks of term, I live on constant anxiety.

How will I ever complete all of these assignments? Am I the dumbest person in my Spanish class? Am I neglecting my children? OMG I haven't written a poem in weeks!

Then usually I settle in and realize this is just how my life goes right now, and my children could be in much worse situations. LiteraryMary has survived her first year with no major dilemmas, and the results for the poll so far are pretty interesting.

We've had a few good suggestions for the forum, such as blogs in the profiles, perhaps a sort of rating system, and a section where people can work in groups.

Someone suggested we start using forum quotes in the newsletter, which

sounds like fun. It's also been good in letting us know what people aren't aware of, for example the Bonus Track forum and the Spoken Word and Song forum.

By the time this is out, results should be posted, or close to, and we will begin making some changes to suit the needs and desires of our members.

I appreciate everyone who took the time, and I hope as a reward the forum will become, even more, a place you want to spend your time.

Ping Pong is undergoing a change this year. We are dropping the format of writer interviewing writer in exchange for writers being interviewed by myself.

We've decided to go this route so that we can explore topics more in depth and really take the time to get to know each member one by one. The posts will still be left open so if any-

one has any questions for the interviewee themselves they can feel to post away.

I'm going for a Barbara Walters edge. I'm going to try and make each writer cry by the end of the interview.

This month's interview is Voodoo/J/Jeremy. Oh yes, you all know him- the banned one. I thought it would be interesting to give him a voice and see what he did with it. I think you might find it surprising.

That's really all I've got this month. I hope everyone is well and happy and cozy.

ms. vodka





Hot Cakes

Motivation

Needless to say, it's definitely not always easy to keep yourself motivated and organized when it comes to writing. Life events happen. We lack the will power to get our bums sitting down so we can write. Or, even when we do, we suddenly find the words won't come.

(The laundry never looks interesting until you sit down to write.)

Whether you write for a newspaper, a blog, or yourself in a novel in progress, we all struggle at one time

or another with our writing. It's no surprise that along with [inspiration](#), [motivation](#) is a very hot topic for writers.

I recently read a post on the [Blogging Tips](#) blog that lists [twenty-seven ways to be a smarter writer in 2008](#). Don't be fooled by the blog title, though – these tips also serve as excellent advice for non-bloggers.

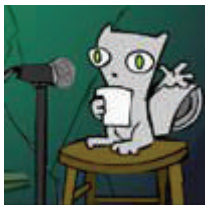
With tips like “Practice Every Day”, “Go On Location” and “Get Your Writer and Editor a Divorce”, they provide one of the best tips for writers list I've come across.

They even point out things I've mentioned like taking a pen and paper with you wherever you go.

I've found that if you have a problem – of any sort that you have some control over – then taking an active role in solving the problem is the first step in the right direction. This list might not work for everyone, but quick tip lists are often the best place for people with limited time/attention spans.

I think I am going to start with switching away from the computer and back to pen and paper for a while. It should prove interesting.

Write for the LM Newsletter?



Do you have something to say about...anything?

Do you have articles, essays, humor pieces, or even your own comic that you would like to see put in the monthly LM newsletter?

Would you like to feel cool and special like Pete does every month?

Literary Mary likes your gifts for her newsletter.

Even if you don't have any work on hand or don't know what to write about, but you would like to contribute, that's fine. The LM newsletter editor, Silver, is here to help you realize your newsletter writer dreams.

(Dreams you didn't even know you had...)

If you have an article or idea, feel free to PM Silver to discuss it. She can talk to you about ideas, what she's looking for, your dealer, or your pet dog.

Her private messaging is open to everyone seven days a week and twenty-four hours a day so why not send her a message.





It is my immense pleasure to bring you the last author interview of 2007, an interview with the funny and straightforward fantasy author Jim Melvin. He's the author of *The Death Wizard Chronicles*, which he is going to talk about today. Please join me in welcoming him to Fiction Scribe.

Hello and thank you for talking with me today, Mr. Melvin. Tell the readers a bit about yourself.

It would be my pleasure. I was born in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., but spent more than forty years of my life in St. Petersburg, Fla. I now am 50 years old and live in Clemson, S.C. I graduated from the University of South Florida (Tampa) with a B.A. in Journalism in 1979. I was an award-winning journalist at the St. Petersburg Times for twenty-five years and retired in 2004 to become a full-time novelist. At the Times, I specialized in science, nature, health and fitness, and I wrote about everything from childhood drowning to erupting volcanoes.

I am a student of Eastern philosophy and mindfulness meditation, the latter of which helps to clear my mind for long bouts of writing. I am married and have five daughters. The *Death Wizard Chronicles*, a six-book epic fantasy series, marks my debut as a novelist.

What brought you into the world of writing? When did you start?

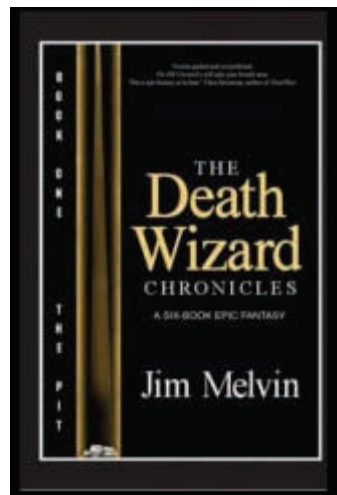
When I was a junior in high school, I boldly decided that I wanted to become a best-selling novelist, and I went around telling everyone I knew that I was going to make \$75-million. Keep in mind this was the mid-1970s, so that's probably around \$300-million if you figure in 21st-century inflation.

When I was 20 years old, I wrote a horror novel entitled *Sarah's Curse*, believing then that my dream was un-

Interview with an Author

Jim Melvin

der way. An agent who was a family friend shopped it around a little, and though it received some nice responses, it never found a publisher. But I wasn't overly concerned because I believed my second novel would be the one to hit it big. In the meantime, I started my career as a journalist at the St. Petersburg Times in Florida. For me, the rat race officially began. Soon I was working 50-hour weeks and rais-



ing a family – and there never was a second book. Twenty-five years later, I was fortunate enough to be able to semi-retire. In September 2004, I wrote the first word of Book One of *The Death Wizard Chronicles*. Seven-hundred-thousand words later, I'm in the final revision process of Book Six.

You're currently on virtual tour for your novel *The Death Wizard Chronicles: The Pit*. Could you tell us a bit about the book?

I describe my series as a cross between J.R.R. Tolkien and Stephen King – Tolkien because it contains many aspects of epic fantasy, King because it's pretty darn scary and rough. *The Death Wizard Chronicles* is a classic tale of good versus evil, with lots of action, monsters, and magic. It also contains a very compelling love story.

But what separates my series from most others is that I am an active student of Eastern philosophy, which fuels my world view. The concept of karma and the art of meditation play key roles in the symbolic aspects of my work.

Book One is entitled *The Pit* because my main character has been imprisoned in a magical pit bored into the solid rock of a frozen mountain. He spends most of book one attempting his escape – and once he does, things really take off.

Though my series takes place over a millennia, about 90 percent of the action occurs over a period of just a few months. It's a rollercoaster ride from start to finish.

Karen Haymon Long, book editor of *The Tampa Tribune*, has said, "Adult Harry Potter and Eragon fans can get their next fix with Jim Melvin's six-book epic *The Death Wizard Chronicles*." Do you compare your book with *Harry Potter* and *Eragon*?

In the commercial sense, I would take 1 percent of either. Ha!

In the literary sense, I believe Ms. Long's excellent review was making the point that my series is highly entertaining for adult readers of fantasy. By adult, I'm talking R-rated – more like Steven Erikson or George R.R. Martin than J.K. Rowling or Christopher Paolini.

This is not for 12 year olds. I would say 18 and above is probably pretty safe, but maturity levels vary widely. I don't want to alienate any part of a potential audience, but neither do I want to offend anyone. It's better to be honest up front, even if it costs some sales.

Jim Melvin Interview

My target audience is any adult who likes action-packed epic fantasy, but it extends beyond that. The DW Chronicles is literary in nature and has a lot going on between the lines in terms of symbolism, foreshadowing, parallel construction, and allegorical elements. So anyone who enjoys reading literature also will enjoy my series. I believe it will stand the test of time. I just hope I'm not one of those authors who dies of old age before my work is discovered by the masses!

What inspired you to write *The Death Wizard Chronicles*? Where did the idea begin?

I grew up on an island that jutted into Tampa Bay (Florida) and was lucky that about ten other boys my age all lived on the same street. We hung out morning, noon and night and played all the usual sports that young boys love: football, baseball, basketball, "kill the carrier," etc. But we also, as a group, were obsessed with fantastical games that contained magic, monsters, and super heroes. We played games based off popular TV shows of that era (the late 1960s) such as *Lost in Space* and *The Man from Uncle*.

When I was a boy, I had white-blond hair, but I became a big fan of Robert Vaughn, who played Napoleon Solo. Vaughn, of course, has brown hair, and one summer I convinced my mom to dye my hair brown. Being a smart mom, she chose to use cheap hair dye, and within a couple of days my hair turned green. I spent the rest of the summer with green hair. That wouldn't seem so unusual today, but back then I was the talk of the island. Anyway, my love and fascination for magic and monsters stayed with me into adulthood.

After writing *Sarah's Curse* at age 20, the first seeds that eventually became *The Death Wizard Chronicles* began to germinate in my mind — and for the next 25 years I spent thousands of hours daydreaming about the series,

formulating the plot, scenes and characters. Life has an unusual sense of humor, and for a quarter-century my dreams of writing the series were put on hold.

That said, those 25 years ended up serving a valuable purpose. As a reporter and editor, I learned the craft of writing and met a lot of interesting people, significantly expanding my worldview and talents. When I finally began writing my epic fantasy series in 2004, I realized that work and family weren't to blame for all those lost years. Instead, I wasn't ready as a writer. Finally, it all jelled. This is my time.

My first wife and I divorced about 15 years ago, and I then remarried. My second wife is a Western-convert Buddhist in the Theravada tradition, and she introduced me to Buddhism. The philosophical aspects of Eastern philosophy really rang true for me and helped to further shape the person I have become.

My series is steeped in Eastern philosophy and contains an ancient language that is directly translated from Pali, a dialect closely related to Sanskrit but now extinct as a spoken language. When translated to English, it is beautiful and erotic.

What character do you relate to the most and why?

Certainly, my main character is my favorite. For one thing, he's 7 feet tall, weighs 300 pounds, and is extremely handsome and muscular, so I modeled him after myself. (Ha!)

But though he is larger than life physically, emotionally, and spiritually, he is the character (of which there are dozens) who most speaks in my voice and represents my world view.

One of the key aspects of this series is my own exploration of death and the enormous effect it has on the human

psyche. My MC is named Torg, and he is called a Death Wizard — or more accurately, a Death-Knower. While deep in meditation, Buddhist monks have had recorded heart rates of less than 10 beats per minute. My main character takes this to the extreme.

In an original twist never before seen in this genre, the Death Wizard is able to enter the realm of death during a "temporary suicide." Through intense concentrative meditation, he stops his heartbeat briefly and feeds on death energy, which provides him with an array of magical powers.

This poem from Book One says it best:

Only a Death-Knower can die.
And live again.

Only a Death-Knower can return
from death.
And remember.

Only a Death-Knower can tell us
what he has seen.

Not all care to listen.

What is your favourite part of the book?

The series contains six books, all being published by Rain Publishing Inc. (www.rainbooks.com). Book One is entitled *The Pit* and was available September 2007. Book Two (*Moon Goddess*) was available October 2007. Book Three (*Eve of War*) is available for the first time today (Nov. 20). Book Four (*World on Fire*) will be available December 2007. Book Five (*Sun God*), January 2008. Book Six (*Death-Know*), February 2008. My favorite parts of all these books are their endings. For me, the endings make everything else worthwhile — and yes, I cry my eyes out each time.

Jim Melvin Interview

Are there any authors who have inspired you in your writing?

Hands-down, J.R.R. Tolkien influenced me more than anyone. I have read *The Lord of the Rings* at least 20 times. But in terms of content, my writing is closer to Steven Erikson's or Stephen Donaldson's than Tolkien's. As I mentioned above, my series is not for young adults. It contains graphic violence and sexual situations. I pull no punches. If it were made into six movies (I wish!), the movies would be R-rated. All that said, without the inspiration of Tolkien, my series wouldn't exist. To me, he is an unparalleled genius.

What are you working on now?

I am in the revision process of Book Six, the final book of the series. Like a lot of my characters, I'm kind of worn out — but there's still plenty of fight left.

I've been so obsessed with *The DW Chronicles*, I really haven't given much thought to my next book. But it most likely will be a standalone horror novel. I'm not big into standalone fantasy. To me, it takes too long to build a world to do it in one book. That said, if my series becomes a big hit, I'd have no problem writing prequels and sequels!

What are your dreams for your writing?

I face the same challenge that any author faces who hasn't signed with a large publishing house backed by a mega-marketing machine. How do you make people aware that your books even exist? Rain Publishing is a mid-sized house based in Canada, and it's been doing a great job for me, thus far.

But it falls to the author to do a lot of his or her own marketing. I have spent the past several months doing everything in my power to market this series. I've contacted newspapers buddies all over the U.S. in hopes of in-

creasing my chances of securing reviews.

I've spoken and read at a major book festival and appeared at six book stores. I've done video and audio interviews. I've been featured in newspapers and on popular blogs. But as an author, you can never do enough. So every day I spend at least a couple of hours on the marketing end of things. For the most part, it's not much fun. But I believe in this series, and I'm willing to fight for it.

All that said, my dream would be for my series to somehow gain a large audience. If so, I believe it could have a long and fruitful life and compare favorably to the best that's available in epic fantasy. Almost everyone who has read the first couple of books have told me that they love them. But no matter how good your work is, it still can become lost in the crowd and quickly forgotten. I'm working my a— off in hopes that this won't happen.

When you're not writing novels, what do you do? How do you find time to write?

For the first time in my life, I am playing the role of house-husband while my wife supports our family as a features editor at a nearby newspaper. Our three youngest daughters, ages 13, 11, and 8, were adopted from Cambodia — and they keep me plenty busy during the day with school and athletic functions.

Despite all the chores involved with raising children, I write every day, almost without fail. I probably write about 340 days out of the year. I write almost exclusively in the evening between 8 and midnight. When I'm working on the first draft, I'll take note of the word count and then begin with the goal of writing at least 1,500 words — and I won't allow myself to stop until I reach that total. Because of this, I was able to average about 45,000 words a month.



stop before midnight, usually out of exhaustion more than anything else. Then I spend about an hour some time during the following morning editing what I wrote the night before. When I'm in the revision process, I just try to edit as much as I can before I wear out. I'm not the type who can sit down and churn out 50 pages in one sitting, but neither do I ever suffer from writer's block. I steadily produce about 5 to 7 pages per day, and it eventually adds up.

Do you have any advice for writers?

Write from the heart. Pull no punches. Don't try to guess what readers want to read. Write what you want to write, and then let the chips fall where they may. Write with passion about large issues. And cry real hard when you're finally finished. Then, do your best to get an agent, and work hard every day at getting published. Even then, there'll be no guarantees. But at least you'll be able to look yourself in the mirror and know that you've given it your best shot.

Thank you very much for your time.

It was an honor.

Forum Cereal - The Tasty Way to Start Your Day

TWO: PREPERATION

Silver walked out of her bedroom while twisting her hair up into a clip.

"You should leave it down," one of the muses said. The same muse who had found her nudity so inspiring. Rooze's muse.

Silver ignored her and sat down on the couch. Her clipboard, notepad and pen were still on the coffee table where she had left them the night before. She took them all around the flat as if she thought she would actually write something valuable at any moment.

She never did. Not anymore.

Wolf had already helped himself to Silver's store of vodka from the refrigerator, she noted with both amusement and annoyance. That would be one bottle of vodka she'd never drink out of anymore.

Wolf wasn't one to use glasses.

"So let's get to the point. You want me to write. I don't want to write the story."

"It's your story to write," Wyndstar said.

"You know what happened last time. The last time I wrote one of these stories. You *know* what happened."

The siblings remained silent.

"Aren't you going to at least tell me what it's about? Where I'm supposed to start?"

"It seems to me that you've already started," one of the muses said, speaking up for the first time. "You have your pen. You have your paper. What more do you need?"

Silver bit back a smart remark – literally, her tongue smarting with the effort – and looked at Geisha's muse. It wouldn't do her any good to start annoying the muses any more than she already had. Especially since her own muse, wherever he or she was, refused to show.

"Okay. I get it. But what's in this for me. I'm not a creative writer anymore."

"Yes, you've done a good job of convincing yourself of that," Wyndstar said. "You're forget-

ting that if I cut you deeply enough, you bleed words."

Silver looked Wyndstar over, wondering where and how many weapons she was hiding on her body.

"This story is bigger than any you have written." She held up her hand to stop whatever Silver was going to say. "It will take energy. It will take time. But it will also solve a rather... big problem we have."

"Problem?" Silver cocked her head to one side. "Then why don't you talk to...me at the Library."

Again, they said nothing. All of Silver's snarky comments had left her blank with only the seriousness of the situation left behind. She didn't need to know the details of the situation. In fact, it was probably better she didn't.

She always did better starting out writing on pure inspiration rather than detailed outlining.

"Okay. I'll write it. But this is the last one."



This is Not a Test!

From post made by Hawke
Yep, Literary Mary has its own VIRB (<http://www.virb.com/literarymary>). It is a place to showcase you—LM's members—as well as a place to say, “These are the people we have here at Literary Mary. These are the people you want to be with. They are the people you’ve been searching for—the ones who will knock your socks off with their works and help you with your own. They are the good folk.”

But to do that, I need your help.

The VIRB is, and will remain, set to feature you and things from you, if you will allow it. Things you wouldn't mind putting out there. Things you have no plans to submit. Even your thoughts on writing in general, fiction, sci-fi, poetry, lyrics, erotica, this site (please be nice), yourselves, summer, BBQ's, pie, your new puppy, a comfy shirt, etc., etc. There is no word count—no maximum or minimum whatsoever.

I am also asking (begging, groveling, pleading) for your picture, a reasonable facsimile of your picture, or even

your avatar pic would be fantastic! Please.

Thank you all in advance.

To date (and in order of appearance), the following authors have graciously donated their works and have been featured on the VIRB:

- * ms vodka.....Confessions of a Modern Day Poetess (poem)
- * Gallivanting.....The Life I Save May Be My Own (poem)
- * Pete Carter (eggo)...Even God Makes Mistakes (short story)
- * G.K. Fralin.....Old Timer's Disease (poem)
- * Chris Miller.....The Writer (entry)
- * J.R. MacLean.....Hunchback (poem)
- * Silver.....1589.81 Miles (poem)
- * Hawke.....Excuse me, but... (entry)
- * Gary Wagner.....Danglers (short story)
- * Pinchus.....Men of Bees (poem)

- * Hoochmonkey.....Protector (poem)
- * Strangedaze.....Street Barbie (short story)
- * Dannyboy.....Wendy Leaves (short story)
- * TsuTseq.....Cowichan Sweater (poem)
- * Sy.....Maggie (poem)
- * Rooze.....The Price To Be Paid (poem)
- * Ariel.....My Brother's Hunt (poem)
- * Genevieve.....Separation Anxiety (poem)
- * Olaf.....Commander Poetry (poem)
- * ms. vodka.....Blue Bedsheets, Beige Room (poem)
- * MSW.....Broken Glass
- * Hawke.....Living Room Writing
- * Chris Miller.....Not Right for Asimov's
- * G.K. Fralin.....Mystery House
- * MSW.....Mirror, Mirror

Thank you all so much!
Hawke

Helping Literary Mary

You know Mary. You love Mary. You might even want to have Mary's babies.

Want to know how you can help Mary out?

Show your love for Mary by linking to her on your blogs and websites.

The best kind of advertising is word of mouth and Mary loves all your mouths.

Spread the word and the love to help this site grow.

kkthnx,
Mary