

# VORAKA

JULY 2023

10

*MUST-READ  
BOOKS*

—  
YOU CAN'T  
AFFORD TO MISS  
THIS SEASON!

*HOW TO CREATE  
A MINIMALIST  
WARDROBE*

—  
VORAKA CLOSET

"FASHION'S SHUTTER MAESTRO"

## *Reinhardt* KENNETH

EXPLORING THE ARTISTRY OF FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY  
THROUGH THE VISIONARY EYE BEHIND THE LENS



**Kim Jones and Delfina Delletrez Unveil  
Breathtaking Fusion of Fashion and Jewelry  
at Fendi Haute Couture Show.**

# Editor's letter

## Celebrating fashion and literature in this issue, with renowned Fashion Photographer Reinhardt Kenneth, the Haute Couture collections by Threeasfour & Valentino, and the Literary Gems from around the globe.

Renowned as a prodigious talent in the fashion photography industry, Reinhardt Kenneth, hailing from Indonesia, has stunned the world with his exceptional skills and artistic vision. Starting from humble beginnings, his ascent to global recognition has been nothing short of remarkable. Having garnered attention through local competitions, Reinhardt quickly made waves on the international stage, securing features in prestigious publications. His directorial debut at the iconic Millennium Biltmore showcased his innate ability to craft mesmerizing narratives, earning him widespread acclaim. With his camera lens gracing the covers of renowned magazines, Reinhardt effortlessly captures the essence of influential personalities, leaving an indelible mark on the fashion photography landscape.

We are proud to have a subscription audience reach of over 100,000 readers across the globe, including Spain, France, India, the USA, Canada, the United Kingdom, Thailand, Japan, Korea, and the Middle East. We are committed to continuing to grow our readership and provide high-quality content that appeals to a wide range of interests and preferences and keeps our readers engaged and informed.

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**Dear Voraka Readers,**

Welcome to the most awaited July 2023 issue of Voraka Magazine! Featuring Reinhardt Kenneth, the "Fashion's Shutter Maestro" on the cover. Through the lens of photographer Hugo Arvizu, this fascinating visual narrative captures Reinhardt's artistry and unique vision. With the skilled touch of HMUA Jael Serrano, the styling prowess of Priscila Natalina, and the beautiful location provided by 503 DTLA under the direction of Rafael Llamas, this editorial is set to mesmerize our readers. Assisting behind the scenes is Andrew Fabela, ensuring a seamless production. Special thanks go to The Archives & Showroom and UFO PR HOUSE for their invaluable contributions. This cover also highlights the exquisite designs of Kenneth Barlis, UBS GOLD, LanceVictor Moore, JNG, Asta Razma, BohemianSociety, and JAGNE, bringing a fusion of art and fashion to the forefront of our magazine.

For fashion lovers, we take great pleasure in presenting the fall 2023 lookbook of Valentino and Threeasfour. Their fusion of style and elegance, showcased through Pierpaolo Piccioli's "Un Château" haute couture collection and Threeasfour's exploration of a parallel universe, mesmerizes the fashion world. Each page is graced with the perfect blend of simplicity and paradoxes, challenging traditional notions and pushing boundaries. From the open-air runway at Château de Chantilly to the infusion of space and science fiction elements, their designs are spellbinding with imaginative clarity and masterful simplicity. The fashion industry is left in awe, as these collections redefine couture and defy expectations with their unique and fascinating designs. Last but certainly not least, we present a compilation of enticing books tailored for bookworms to enjoy during the monsoon season.

Thank you for choosing Voraka Magazine as your premier source for fashion, lifestyle, and literary content. Our dedicated team aims to curate the finest articles to evoke joy and inspiration within you. So sit back, relax, and enjoy reading this newest edition of Voraka Magazine. We hope these articles delight you, just as much as we took pleasure in curating them.

Sincerely,

  
**Anushka Singh, Editor-in-Chief**

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### **COVER LOOK**

We are delighted to unveil our fifth cover look, featuring the "Fashion's Shutter Maestro" Reinhardt Kenneth.

Photography by Hugo Arvizu

HMUA: Jael Serrano

Styling by Priscila Natalina

Location provided by 503 DTLA

Director: Rafael Llamas

Photographer's Assistant: Andrew Fabela.

BTS: Ralph Valle Special Thanks to The Archives & Showroom & UFO PR HOUSE

Fashion Designers: Kenneth Barlis, UBS GOLD, LanceVictor Moore, JNG, Asta Razma, BohemianSociety, JAGNE

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FASHION'S SHUTTER MAESTRO

# REINHARDT KENNETH

“ Exploring the Artistry of Fashion Photography through the Visionary Eye Behind the Lens. ”

**B**orn in 1997, Indonesian Fashion & Celebrity Photographer Reinhardt Kenneth started his journey at 14 years young. He picked up the camera, and truth be told, nothing was ever the same ever since. Raised in a fashion-driven family (son to a textile retail owner father and celebrity fashion designer mother), it was only natural that his vision embarks him on a glamorous journey, one that brought him all around the world.

He started photography by joining amateur-level local competitions, none that recognized his unique eye. Surprisingly, however, much bigger international institutions were the ones who truly recognized his talent. A few months into picking up the camera, he got his first feature in Vogue Italia online. This was followed by a couple of Art Basel Miami features, a digital exhibition at The Louvre (home to the Mona Lisa) at just 16, multiple press features (both international and national), and a feature from Vogue Italia's very own late Franca Sozzani, all before his 18th birthday. While doing this, interestingly, he hasn't even left the Asian continent and was stuck in high school finishing his International Baccalaureate degree.



Reinhardt eventually moved to LA in 2017 and studied photography at The Art Institutes of California - Hollywood. He was constantly awarded Best of Quarter and multiple awards for each course he was in. However, it was out of school that he truly expanded his wings. His work then was featured in magazine covers featuring the hottest celebrities, including Kyle Richards, Tana Mongeau, Nikita Dragun, Jessica Belkin, Tessa Brooks, and many more.

This project was soon followed by an even bigger, even more inclusive endeavor. Reinhardt (alongside Diana Couture) was chosen by Fashion Week in Bangkok, Thailand, and sponsored by Aston Martin Bangkok to direct a fashion film for their digital fashion week in late 2020. Reinhardt wanted his message of hope and unity to be the center point of this project. He gathered 7 very different women from very different backgrounds and orchestrated a story of finding hope through unity. The fashion film was shot at the iconic Millennium Biltmore in Downtown LA (home to many iconic scenes in the history of filmmaking), and Reinhardt's directorial debut was followed by a wildfire of press and magazine covers.

In 2021, his successes were followed with a more glamorous path. The publications that he is now shooting for include the likes of Harper's Bazaar, L'Officiel, and Elle, alongside features in Hollywood Life, GQ, and Marie Claire. The covers he had the honor to shoot for feature the likes of Juanpa Zurita, Andy Zurita, Farrah Abraham, Loni Anderson, Sir Daniel Winn, Luisito Comunica, Aaliyah Jay (Twisted Saints Campaign), and many more.



## EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH REINHARDT KENNETH

An acclaimed photographer known for his ability to capture mesmerizing moments through his lens. Join us as we explore the fascinating journey that led Reinhardt to pursue photography as his passion and profession.

### **How did your fashion-driven upbringing and early exposure to photography shape your unique vision as a photographer?**

Starting photography and being exposed to fashion at such an early age truly solidified my identity as an artist early on. It gave me the advantage of a head start at such a young age to really find my voice, vision, and perspective. One thing that I've been embracing so much lately is the soul of the inner child inside of me that had the dream to embark on this path.

Fourteen-year-old Reinhardt would've never thought he would be doing the things he's doing today, and it's been a pretty surreal, beautiful, and rewarding journey.

### **Please share a significant moment in your career when international institutions recognized your talent at a young age.**

I think my earliest memory was being featured in Vogue Italia at 14 years old, which was then followed by a digital exhibition at The Louvre, Art Basel Miami, and many more. It was when the late, brilliant, and iconic Franca Sozzani of Vogue Italia discovered me and posted my work on her Instagram account that I realized there was a place for me in the industry (and the world in general). I knew I had to spread my wings and fly away to a place where my work was appreciated, valued, and celebrated.

My work was ahead of its time in Indonesia. At that time, only my closest family and friends "understood" my work back home.

### **What inspired you to use fashion photography as a means to raise awareness and empowerment for Asian American communities during the pandemic?**

It was the identity, voice, and safety of the community. As artists, I truly feel like we have the power to create a wave of change. Sure, I didn't have

the power to regulate the politics of prejudice, but I had the ability to create art. Art that was relevant to those dark times, art that could move hearts, art that could spark change.

When I presented the idea of the fashion photography approach to "Hate is A Virus" to Michelle K Hanabusa (who later started the incredible movement with her admirable peers), it was out of anxiety. I had to tap back into my inner child that wanted to change the world with my work.

### **As a photographer, how do you balance staying true to your artistic vision while meeting the expectations and demands of clients and the fashion industry?**

Finding the balance between staying true to my artistic vision and meeting client expectations hasn't been easy, but it's been rewarding. In the past, I faced demands that didn't align with my values, but during the pandemic, I rediscovered my purpose. Now, I attract projects and clients who believe in my vision. While I respect project briefs, I incorporate my artistic touch. Success, to me, is when clients trust my vision and allow me to bring my heart and soul into the images. It's a delicate balance that drives me to create meaningful photographs.

### **Shooting for renowned publications like Harper's Bazaar and Elle, what has been the most exciting cover shoot you've done so far?**

Every project is special to me, but the recent cover shoot for Glamour Bulgaria featuring Skye Aurelia stands out as a favorite. Collaborating with an incredible team, we created a Renaissance-inspired yet futuristic story that embodied empowerment. It was a remarkable experience working with my creative tribe and bringing Skye's vision to life.

### **How do you approach photograph-**

### **ing high-profile celebrities, and what challenges and rewards come with it?**

I have a principal in every shoot, and that's the fact that no person is "above" another. I don't necessarily see them (or use) the word "celebrity", I think the word "artist" is more appropriate. They're so incredible in their craft, talent, and vision that they became these iconic personalities, and that to me, matters more than simply fame. I think the most rewarding part of shooting artists is the impact that each project reaches. The spirit of creative collaboration is always the absolute best feeling in the world. Challenge-wise, I'll just say that I have the absolute best agents who make the best shoots and situations work lol.

### **What sparked your interest in the NFT/Metaverse space, and how do you plan to use photography to inspire others in this new realm?**

I truly believe that some of the most incredible things the space has provided artists is the freedom, accessibility, and innovation. Bringing art into the "new age", where artists can showcase and monetize art in a very independent and modern way has been exciting to see.

### **Throughout your journey, what are the key lessons you've learned as a fashion and celebrity photographer?**

Humility, kindness, and persistence go a long way. It's one thing to have talent, but in a way, photography is a service job. You have to constantly make sure that you're not only delivering the very best but also in the most genuine way, remaining kind and humble. I've seen so many people lose their jobs over bad behavior. NEVER let your ego get in the way, and always treat people the way you want to be treated.

### **Are there any specific artists or**

**designers who have influenced your work? How have they inspired you?**

Oh my God, where do I start? My mom and I pretty much flourished together as artists, so she has to be one of my absolute biggest inspirations, whether that being artistically or in life. She's one of the most beautiful (inside and out), hardworking, talented, yet humble people that I've had the honor to meet. Apart from her; Lady Gaga, Alexander McQueen, Salvador Dali, Nick Knight, Franca Sozzani, Hayao Miyazaki, Iris Van Herpen, and Grimes.

**What are your goals and aspirations for the future of your photography career? Any upcoming projects or collaborations you're excited about?**

I used to write down very logistic-related, or milestone-defining goals at the beginning of the year. It was when I stopped doing that, trusted God in the process, and instead manifested "new heights" I never imagined before, was that I started truly excelling. Due to that, I'm going to speak it into the universe that I'll remain loved, abundant, blessed, ambitious, artistic, humble, and kind. In terms of upcoming projects and collaborations, the one thing I will say is that it involves a lot of traveling, yearning, and creating with the very best creatives.

# MONSOON

READING SELECTION

◦ MUST-READ BOOKS ◦  
FOR JULY 2023

## 'MANIACS, MONSTERS, AND A BUMP IN THE NIGHT' by G. RICHARD EVANS

What are you afraid of? Debt? Rejection? Bullies? Humiliation? G. Richard Evans in *Maniacs, Monsters, and a Bump in the Night* takes our deepest fears and turns them up to eleven with (twelve) terrifying short stories that go from novellas to ones that comprise only a few pages. All of them have a fantastic or supernatural element, with some leaning heavier into the paranormal and others much more into realism. One story, for instance, titled "Scream It's Dark" deals with one of humanity's most primal fears: darkness. But why is Peter scared of the dark? And why, if he has this phobia, does he prowl poorly lit nightclubs looking for women?

The stories are relatable, which makes them even scarier. Most of us won't find a demon or a ghost in our lifetime, but the core themes, such as envy, superstition, or addiction, are common to the human experience. This book has something for everyone. Paranormal enthusiasts will find their fair share of witchcraft, demons, and ghosts, while pragmatic readers can see characters who struggle with more realistic fears, such as humiliation. "Ask Your Daughter" is about a junkie, and the talented and sinister pen of Mr. Evans will put you through such an inferno of aches and chills you will understand what a junkie feels. Every word in this book is planned for maximum effect. He doesn't fatten up his stories with unnecessary gore for shock value but uses each word carefully to create unforgettable moments of fear. The amazing narrative abilities of the author make even the most innocent of themes a frightening one. We've all had a cough, right? After you read "You Bet Your Wife" you might never again look at a cough as a simple, annoying malady. This story is also a great example of how even the titles are creative and work as an appetizer for what comes next.

Every narrative aspect of these tales is perfectly executed, but the endings were my favorite part because they surprised me every time, with one story (I won't tell which, so as not to spoil the fun) even having a relatively happy ending.

Finally, G. Richard Evans doesn't limit to a glum narrative tone but includes hints of humor and even some thought-provoking passages such as the following reflection: "He knew that things aren't always as we think they are and that he had been buried in his own conception of life for much too long." (p. 25). Enjoy.



### AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND:

G. Richard Evans was taught to read by his grandmother when he was very young and was reading at a 3rd or 4th-grade level when he began 1st grade. He started writing in high school, nothing fancy, just playing with words to make song poems. But life got in the way when he joined the Navy instead of going to college, and his writing got left behind for many years.

He was in his late 30s when the bug to write bit him once again, this time with short stories as opposed to song poems. Three of the stories in his

first book were written back then and published in small-press magazines. Once again, life got in the way though, and he went back to school. Going to college full-time, working full-time, and dealing with a family left little time for him to write, and all of his ideas got stuck in a drawer.

After obtaining his Master's degree, he worked in two careers, counseling and teaching, which still left him no time for writing, until he retired. He was finally ready to sit down and write, but his wife got sick, and he had to nurse her through cancer. Unfortunately, she passed away, and after a time of mourning, he opened up that drawer and started writing again. The result is the stories in this book, "Maniacs, Monsters and a Bump in the Night."

These stories run the gamut, from the horrible things that can come from revenge to the wonderful things that can come from sacrifice and suffering.

There is darkness and horror, with a bit of fantasy and science fiction as well. These stories reveal how poor decision-making, treating people with contempt, or the abuse and punishment of a child can have serious, even deadly consequences.

He passionately expresses that the act of writing, especially horror, science fiction, and fantasy, has been an immensely therapeutic and liberating journey for him. As an ardent reader since his early years, the indelible memory of witnessing his own work in print, even many years ago, has remained a constant source of inspiration and motivation. When the opportune moment finally arrived, the undeniable call to write became too strong to resist. Driven by an insatiable creative impulse, he enthusiastically embarked on crafting these amazing stories, eager to share his imagination with the world. When the time to write became a reality, he couldn't keep himself from writing these stories.

# Exclusive Interview with G. Richard Evans

**How did your Grandma ignite your passion for reading and writing?**

My grandmother started reading to me when I was just a toddler before I can remember. She read to my brother Mike as well, and my brother Chuck when he came along. By the time I was around four years old, I was beginning to read myself, and when I entered 1st grade I was already reading at a 3rd or 4th grade level. My passion for writing sprang from my love of the written word and English, which was my favorite and easiest subject through grade school and on into high school. I was blessed with a very good singing voice back in those days and in 7th grade I found that I had a talent for putting words together writing song poems and poetry.

**What made you rediscover your love for writing after decades?**

In my mid 20's, as a state guest, a social worker discovered my poetry and challenged me to write a story. That night, I began crafting a tale inspired by my Navy days in Iceland, called The Quonset Hut. Surprisingly, I developed four chapters, receiving praise and advice from the social worker. Motivated, I enrolled in college and found my talent in Creative Writing, with some stories making it into Maniacs, Monsters and a Bump in the Night.

**How did your diverse careers influence your storytelling in Maniacs, Monsters, and a Bump in the night?**

The stories in this book draw inspiration from my life experiences: meeting a witch in New York City, a cooking mishap as a chef, saving a life as a teenager, childhood nightmares, and counseling addicts. Real people and situations fueled my writing, and I've lived an adventurous life, even spending time in prison when the social worker encouraged me to pursue writing.

**Can you share a glimpse into the range of emotions readers will experience in your book?**

My stories evoke diverse emotions as they touch upon relatable themes like envy, anger, superstition, addiction, and fear. Maniacs, Monsters, and a Bump in the Night offers something for everyone, from paranormal elements like witchcraft and demons to characters grappling with realistic fears. It has the potential to elicit emotional responses from a wide range of readers.

**How did writing horror, science fiction, and fantasy serve as a powerful outlet for you?**

Writing for me, especially horror, science-fiction, and fantasy, has been a very cathartic process. My childhood was not a pleasant time for me as I grew up in a very

dysfunctional atmosphere, and writing these stories allowed me to put some of that into words. What I like about fiction writing is one can get even without getting into trouble.

**Who are your literary idols that shaped your unique writing style?**

I was reading Edgar Allen Poe by the time I was in 4th or 5th grade. I remember Bradbury, Heinlein, Sturgeon, Asimov, Spillane, Richard Matheson, and many more in those early years. But I suspect Stephen King, Robert McCammon, and Dean Koontz had the most dramatic impact on what and how I write. I was reading their work before any of them became famous, and I fell in love with the world of horror, fantasy, and science fiction. In addition, movies played a role in shaping my thoughts when it comes to horror. Movies like Psycho, Creature From the Black Lagoon, and Tarantula piqued my interest in the genre.

**What exciting projects are you currently working on and can you give us a hint about what readers can anticipate?**

I am currently working on a novel that will probably be in the 150,000 to 200,000-word range. It has to do with Spontaneous Human Combustion and is tentatively titled Lucifer Unleashed.

**What impact do you hope your stories will have on readers, and why should they dive into Maniacs, Monsters, and a Bump in the Night?**

Treating others with dignity and respect, and trying to do the right thing is a common thread running through these stories that I believe anyone reading them will pick up on. Readers should dive into these stories because they are bite-sized, perfect for a lunch break, or a brief interlude to get away from TV or household chores. In addition, every single one of these stories has a bit of a twist at the end and should delight anyone reading them.

**What practical advice would you give writers struggling to find time for their passion?**

Don't do what I did. I allowed life to get in the way and keep me away from my writing. What I should have done was sit down and make writing a habit. Pick a certain time of the day, get away from phones, TV, and people, and write. If you need to research it first, fine, but do the research and then write. You have to make it a habit, and the only way to do that is to sit down and write. You should also carry a notebook or tablet with you so you can jot down ideas as they come to you. Be on the lookout for colorful characters you can incorporate into your stories and jot down your description of and thoughts about them.

## 'FINDING THE GOLD' by CARLA MORENO

Featured in Voraka Magazine's June issue is a riveting memoir titled "Finding the Gold," penned by real estate investor, author, and former president of the National Association of Real Estate Professionals (NAREP), Carla Moreno. Hailing from Seattle, Moreno's memoir explores her relentless journey from facing severe adversity to becoming a millionaire through real estate investing, interweaving her spiritual growth and self-love with wealth creation.

Within a brief span of four years, Moreno remarkably amassed a seven-digit net worth, acquiring 16 doors across the U.S. and Mexico, predominantly vacation rentals, with a unique investment strategy. However, the book extends beyond a simple wealth-building guide. Moreno offers readers a refreshing take on achieving financial success, emphasizing the integral role of mindset, self-discovery, and personal healing in attracting prosperity.

Dark moments dotted Moreno's path to success, from a jail sentence and looming deportation to initial business failures before her breakthrough in real estate. But resilience and perseverance characterized her journey. She found solace and healing in shamanic spiritual medicine, ayahuasca, which helped her navigate the pain associated with coming out as gay and processing childhood trauma.

Drawing on ancient spiritual concepts of alchemy and the Hermetic philosophy of ancient Egypt, Moreno embraced a transformative approach to life, applying these teachings to her journey. Her memoir resonates deeply, echoing the universal truth that everyone endures trials and tribulations. Yet, as Moreno eloquently notes, "In the end, if you can see it in your mind, you

can hold it in your hand."

Moreno's "Finding the Gold" finds its roots in influential entrepreneurial works like 'Think and Grow Rich', yet provides a distinct angle by intertwining spiritual growth with financial prosperity. Readers gain a dual benefit - a practical, step-by-step guide to wealth creation and profound insights into the mindset required to cultivate wealth.

Pat Hiban, co-founder of Gobundance and New York Times bestselling author, lauds the memoir, "Finding the Gold is an amazing story of struggle, acceptance, and embracing the power of Universal forces to transform the self on the quest to achieve riches."



### AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND:

Carla Moreno, acclaimed author, renowned real estate investor, and former president of the National Association of Real Estate Professionals (NAREP), has carved a niche for herself in the industry through her unwavering dedication and entrepreneurial spirit. Born and raised in Guadalajara, Mexico, Carla stepped onto U.S. soil at age 18 with just \$500, fueled by her determination to realize the 'American Dream.' Her robust work ethic and resilient spirit set the stage for her entrepreneurial journey, as she founded her

first business in the medical industry by the tender age of 19.

A transformative gap year unveiled Carla's passion for real estate and land development, which she has since cultivated over five years, gaining expertise in diverse domains including land development, commercial property investment, and Airbnb property acquisition using the BRRRR method. Moreover, she guides individuals toward achieving financial freedom through her real estate investing coaching. In 2020, Carla's leadership prowess and profound industry knowledge led her to the helm of the Seattle Chapter of the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals. Advocating for inclusivity, she tirelessly creates opportunities for diverse communities within the real estate sector. As an investor and property manager, she oversees 16 properties across the United States and Mexico, predominantly vacation

rentals. Carla's remarkable journey of personal and financial growth is narrated in her memoir, "Finding the Gold." The book, a compelling account of her rise from adversity to amassing a seven-digit net worth, intertwines her personal experiences with the practical strategies she employed in her wealth creation process. The memoir illuminates her theories on wealth attraction, which she argues is as much about mindset and self-discovery as it is about strategic planning.

As a real estate advisor, Carla is lauded for her personalized attention, transparency in communication, and commitment to her clients' needs. Her professionalism, coupled with her commitment to excellence and unwavering integrity, distinguishes her in the industry. Carla Moreno's story is an inspiring testament to the power of resilience and determination, making her a significant figure in the realms of entrepreneurship, real estate, and beyond."

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# Exclusive Interview with Carla Moreno

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**Please share the key moments that shaped your journey from a young entrepreneur in the medical industry to a renowned real estate investor and author.**

Life is a thrilling adventure filled with unexpected twists. Setbacks hold hidden opportunities. Fate introduced me to a mentor who inspired my dreams, but falling short of medical school led me to real estate. Surrounding myself with influential mentors, I embraced calculated risks and built a successful portfolio. These experiences inspired me to write a book about my transformative journey.

**In your memoir, "Finding the Gold," you emphasize the importance of mindset and self-discovery in attracting wealth. How do these concepts align with strategic planning?**

Attracting wealth requires aligning thoughts and beliefs with aspirations. Dreams need energy and purposeful action. Strategic planning bridges mindset and results, offering structure and guidance through challenges. It transforms ideas into reality, empowering individuals to navigate uncertainties and manifest their desires.

**As a real estate advisor, how do you maintain personalized attention, transparency, and commitment to clients while managing multiple properties across different locations?**

In order to deliver exceptional customer service, I firmly believe in harnessing the power of automation and delegation. By automating tasks whenever possible, I liberate valuable time and energy, allowing me to focus on the areas that truly demand my personal touch. This approach enables me to dedicate my attention to those aspects of my clients' needs that require my undivided presence and expertise.

**What led you to become an advocate for inclusivity within the real estate sector? How do you create opportunities for diverse communities?**

NAHREP (National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals) ignited my passion for inclusivity in real estate. I witnessed the power of sustainable homeownership in reducing the wealth gap. Committed to supporting the Latino community, I educate clients about real estate investing, emphasizing house hacking as a path to financial freedom and wealth creation.

**What motivated you to write "Finding the Gold"? What message do you hope readers take away from your book?**

'Finding the Gold' was born from a transformative period I faced, often labeled a "midlife crisis." From rock bottom, I realized the power of choice: victimhood or empowerment.

Life's unpredictability is a given, but our response and perception determine outcomes. This book encapsulates my journey and highlights the message of personal empowerment.

**How do you effectively prioritize your time and resources to manage your 16 properties across different countries?**

To manage our 16 doors across Mexico and the US, prioritization is crucial. I begin by prioritizing self-care through non-negotiable activities like reading, meditation, exercise, and quality time with my spouse. With personal priorities in place, I focus on business responsibilities, utilizing systems and automation. Living intentionally and building our business around what truly matters is my guiding principle.

**What are your future plans and goals as an author and real estate investor?**

As an author and real estate investor, I am always filled with thoughts of my next project. However, in the midst of the excitement surrounding my upcoming plans and goals, I understand the value of embracing the present moment and immersing myself fully in the launch of my new book. This book has been a labor of love, through which I have poured my heart and soul onto the pages. Therefore, my current focus is on embracing this experience, making sure that every aspect of sharing my book with the world is cherished and celebrated.

**What advice would you give to aspiring authors who are looking to share their own personal stories or experiences through writing?**

First and foremost, I want you to remember that your voice matters. Each and every one of us has a unique perspective, a story that only we can tell. Your life experiences, triumphs, and struggles hold immeasurable value, so don't hold back. Embrace your authenticity and fearlessly dive into the depths of your truth. Your personal stories have the power to not only touch lives but also ignite a fire for change, creating a ripple effect of empathy and understanding.

Now, the writing process can be a wild ride. There will be moments when doubt tries to sneak in and when the words don't flow as smoothly as you'd like. But creativity doesn't operate on a schedule. It's a journey, and it takes its sweet time. So be patient with yourself, because the most incredible stories often emerge from the spaces where vulnerability and perseverance meet. And finally, embrace wisdom from others. Learn, grow, and let their stories enrich your writing. Step outside your comfort zone for personal growth.

## 'SKY CHASE' & 'SKY EMBERS' by AUTHOR LAUREN MASSUDA

Sky Chase is part one of the Flight of Ships trilogy, following a young captain seeking redemption after tragedy strikes her home. What makes Sky Chase unique is its setting. It takes place in a world called the Caelum Islands, where transportation is by airborne ships, and levitating islands dominate the sky. The main character, Cordelia is captain of The Raging Storm, a crew of young men and women who protect the islands from danger. One day, however, their home is attacked by a monster, and Cordelia is struck by its poisonous tail. Cordelia is on a race against time to find a cure, meanwhile, she's struggling to conquer her inner demons as nightmares plague her mind. Cordelia is a strong yet flawed character that readers may find unlikable at first but will learn to sympathize with throughout her journey. Readers also gain insight into other characters' thoughts and feelings as the story is divided into several different perspectives. Even the main antagonist gets his own chapter.

While Sky Chase is short for a fantasy book, it makes up for it for its plethora of imagery that brings everything to life. It'll surely transport readers to another world and leave them wanting more. The second book, Sky Embers, takes place five years later and follows a few new characters who were minor in the previous one. While Sky Chase revolved around the race against time, Sky Embers is unraveling a mystery. The third and final book in the trilogy will primarily focus on Cordelia's younger brother, Caleb, and his journey to becoming a captain like his sister.

The final book will focus more on the dynamics between the two siblings, as family has always been a prominent theme throughout the series. Another theme dealt with is grief, whether it's the death of a loved one or the loss of something else precious, the theme

showcases that the series is more than just a regular young adult book. There's a stigma against young adult books that they're cheesy and immature, but not all of them are like that. They can deal with serious topics such as death and grief, and Sky Chase does just that. There are still silly moments to lighten the mood, but as the story takes on these topics, as well as others, it goes to show that the young adult genre can still be read by older adults and not be limited to one age group.

Sky Chase can be purchased through Amazon, Barnes and Noble's website, Alibris, AbeBooks, Bookshop.com, Apple Books, Square, Google Books, Discover Books, Blue Willow Bookshop, and Scribd. The book's available in hardcover, paperback, and Kindle.



### AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND:

Lauren Massuda daydreamed a lot when she was little, and those daydreams became words on paper. Lauren wanted to be a writer ever since her grade school principal awarded her for a poem she wrote when she was 12. The principal even read her poem to the entire school. At that moment, Lauren wanted to write stories that would inspire and take readers to different worlds. Lauren graduated from Goucher College with a B.A. in English and a Creative Writing concentration. She also participated in UCLA's Professional TV

Writing Program. One script she wrote for the program was a finalist in the 2020 ScreenCraft Drama Competition. Lauren had turned that particular script from a TV pilot to a screenplay, and finally into a novella that she hopes will be published one day. She also has a crazy dream for that novella to transfer to the silver screen, guess you could say she's still a daydreamer.

Throughout the years, Lauren published stories in various literary magazines and wrote several unpublished books, but she finally got her first book published in 2021. Sky Chase is a YA fantasy about a young captain who seeks to redeem herself after tragedy strikes her home. The book was published by Water Dragon Publishing and won the FireBird Book Award in the Young Adult category. Sky Chase was also featured in the HERstory on the Rocks podcast. In the podcast, Lauren discussed how she first started the

book back in college for a creative writing class, and it took her several years for her to finally finish it. Lauren had also finished the second book in the series, Sky Embers, which will be published sometime this year.

Sky Chase and Sky Embers are part of a trilogy, but the third and final book hasn't even gone past the first word yet. Lauren has unfortunately dealt with depression and anxiety throughout her life, and that sometimes takes a toll on her writing.

Regardless, she still strives to bring her work out there and make some sort of impact. Besides writing, Lauren's creative pursuits span across various mediums. She immerses herself in the world of painting, crafting concept art that complements her storytelling. Video games and binge-watching TV shows provide a wellspring of inspiration, igniting her writing with fresh ideas and captivating narratives.



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# Exclusive Interview with Lauren Massuda

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## How did daydreaming as a child shape your journey as a writer?

The mind is both strange and fascinating because it can create scenarios that we'll never experience in our lifetime, so I wanted to make those scenarios more vibrant and detailed in writing. I wanted to explore deeper into the imagination and share those ideas with others, because it's not fun having only these thoughts to myself.

## What was the defining moment that made you decide to pursue writing professionally?

In 5th grade I wrote a poem for a class. It was a little poem about the Earth, but my teacher loved it so much that she showed it off to all the teachers. During an assembly, my principal called me up to the stage, and gave me an award for my poem. He asked me if I wanted to read my poem, but I was too shy, so the principal read it to the entire school. That was when I wanted to become an author.

## How did your college experience influence your writing style?

I took several creative writing classes that focused on different styles. One focused on non-fiction, which was probably my least favorite style to write. It's not that I don't enjoy non-fiction, my creativity simply has a limit with reality. I also took a few playwriting and scriptwriting classes, and while learning how plays and movies are crafted was exciting, the number of details I had was limited too. The classes that focused on short story and novel writing helped me expand my craft. I didn't feel limited, I could be creative however I wanted to be.

## How did you adapt your TV pilot script into a novella, and what drove that decision?

While creating a pilot was a cool experience, I thought a novella fitted better for the story. I had so many details in mind, but I couldn't fit it in the script because there's only so much you can fill in. I was limited by the amount of world building, action and descriptions, so I took the dialogue that I already had for the pilot and wrote the story around it. Plus, I have a much better chance of getting a novella published than getting a pilot adapted to the small screen.

## How have your experiences with publishing in literary magazines and writing unpublished books shaped you as a writer?

Before writing books, I wrote short stories that were only a page or two long. They were simple stories, but I added in enough substance to make them engaging. It's awesome having stories in magazines, though no one is going to remember that as much as publishing a book. So, I've worked around a few genres like romance, fantasy,

mystery, horror, etc to create a few books. I've also tried my hand at ghostwriting books, but again, I wanted my own work to be remembered, so I keep going back to these books and fixing them up so that they're good enough for publication. I tried self-publishing as well, but that also didn't work out. Eventually, I found a publisher who thought my book was good enough to be out there. What I learned is that writing takes a lot of patience, experimentation, and practice. I've tried different techniques, different genres, but in the end, I'm doing my own thing.

## What inspired the story and protagonist of "Sky Chase"?

Originally the protagonist, Cordelia was a minor character from an unpublished book I wrote. I had been trying to get that book published for several years but haven't had any luck, but I really liked the characters I created and wanted to see if one of their stories could at least be published. I don't exactly remember what inspired Cordelia since it's been a long time since I created her, but I knew I wanted a story with a strong but flawed protagonist. As for the story, the story takes place in a world with floating islands and airborne ships, and ever since I was little, I've always liked the idea of exploring that kind of world and finding out what adventures lie ahead.

## How did you stay motivated and overcome challenges while writing "Sky Chase" over several years?

Whenever I was stuck with Sky Chase, I worked on other writing projects to help me out. But sometimes those other projects kept me away from Sky Chase, which is one of the reasons it took me years to finish. I also shared bits and pieces of Sky Chase with friends to get their opinion, and hearing praises about the story—especially my use imagery—was good motivation.

## Can you give us a sneak peek into what readers can expect from the upcoming sequel, "Sky Embers"?

Sky Embers takes place five years after Sky Chase. There are more characters and more at stake. The world is expanded upon and there's a mystery to unravel. It's also somewhat darker, and due to some changes in my life, the story got affected by it, as did the characters. I can't explain much without going into what happens in Sky Chase, because one subplot deals with the fate of one of the characters from the first book, and how the rest of the cast copes with it.

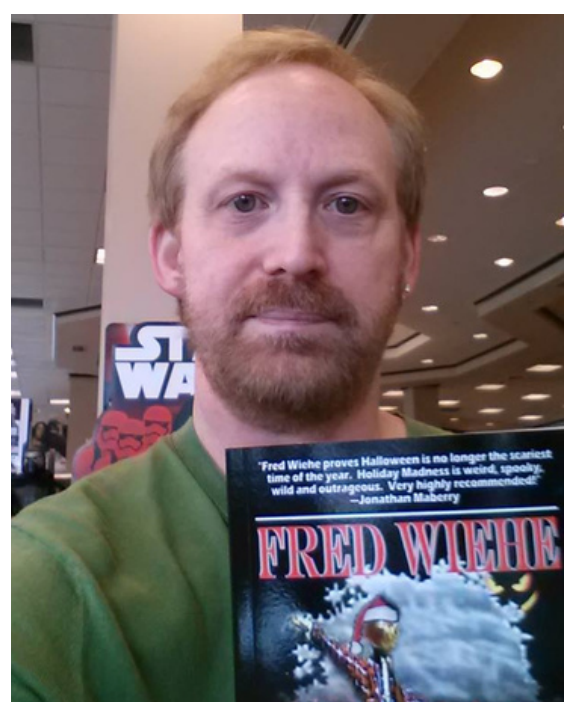
With that said, I aim for the story to evoke deep emotions in readers, just as the characters experience. I hope the readers will be profoundly impacted by the narrative, forging a strong connection that lingers long after they turn the final page.

## 'BLOODTHIRSTY', 'BLOODLUST', & 'BLOODBATH' by AUTHOR FRED WIEHE

**Bloodthirsty:** Do multiverses exist? If so, does a duplicate of everyone exist in each reality? These are questions Lieutenant Sean (Mac) McGrath and Sergeant Randy Dexter must come to terms with to solve a murder and stop the widespread use of a new psychotropic drug dubbed Bloodshot. Almost simultaneously, Gemma Gaynor is murdered and Bloodshot hits San Francisco's streets. Taken through the retina and optic nerve, it degrades and disrupts the neural network and central nervous system, turning people into crazed killers and bloodthirsty cannibals. The investigation quickly takes the cops down a strange path that borders on science fact and science fiction, a path that reveals horrors more akin to nightmares than the real world, a path where they begin to doubt their own already fragile sanity.

**Bloodlust:** The devastating effects of Bloodshot intensify. McGrath and Dexter thought they had seen it all. But the mayhem, murder, exploding heads, and cannibalism plaguing their city is taking its toll on their resolve. Their sanity is being tested as undeniable proof points to the existence of multiverses and a suspect—physicist Wyatt Kole—who has developed a device that opens portals to travel from one parallel universe to another in order to murder his girlfriend time and time again. Moreover, an exact duplicate of McGrath lies dead in the morgue and a body found in the Santa Cruz Mountains is identified as Kole. As impossible as it may seem, the only plausible explanation is the existence of duplicates from a parallel universe, which forces them to face their suspicions that Kole is a universe-hopping murderer and drug dealer. But they need proof. Before Kole opens a new portal and disappears. Taking Bloodshot with him to plague yet another reality.

**Bloodbath:** After being shot and left for dead in a parallel universe, Dexter survives and makes a life for himself among strangers with familiar faces. With McGrath's help, he is back on the force and promoted to lieutenant. He's also dating Gemma, who's alive and well. Life is good. But that's all about to change; Bloodshot has stalked him to this new reality. Has the Kole of this world followed in his counterpart's footsteps? Is Gemma in danger? The cops race to Kole's but what they find is unexpected. Kole is the one dead. A portal to another universe is open. Gun in hand, eyes bleeding, Gemma's making good her escape. Before the portal closes, Dexter follows. But can he save her from Bloodshot? The only other alternative is to kill her. For she must be stopped. Because in her wake is a bloodbath of half-eaten corpses.



### AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND:

Fred Wiehe is a bestselling author and a member of the Horror Writers Association. He was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, and graduated from the University of Cincinnati with a degree in Secondary Education. After graduating, he somehow survived hitchhiking across the country to San Francisco, CA. He's lived in the Bay Area ever since. He's taught Creative Writing and Academic Writing to children ages 5-18 and adults throughout the years. His first novel *Starkville* was published in 1997, launching his writing career. Since then, he's

published eleven more books—*Night Songs*, *The Burning*, *Strange Days*, *Holiday Madness: 13 Dark Tales for Halloween, Christmas & All Occasions*, *Holiday Madness: The Special Limited Edition*, *Aleric: Monster Hunter* (his first bestseller), *Fright House* (his second bestseller), *The Collected Nightmares*, and most recently his three-book, sci-fi/horror series *Bloodshot* (Book 1: *Bloodthirsty*, Book 2: *Bloodlust*, and Book 3: *Bloodbath*). He's also published a non-fiction book, *Creative Writing: Get Started Writing Fiction*, that he uses to teach his classes. He's written two screenplays: *Fright House* (based on his novel) and *Under the Protection of Witches* (based on his novella of the same title in *The Collected Nightmares*). Although Fred is first and foremost a horror writer, his works crossover genres into science fiction, urban fantasy, suspense, and crime thrillers. His stories are often inspired and motivated by

actual events in his own life. For example, *The Collected Nightmares*—a collection of twelve short stories, seventeen dark poems, and two novellas—was born out of a near-death horse-riding accident, which resulted in a concussion, memory loss, six broken ribs in eight places, a collapsed lung, a broken wrist, and a ruptured tendon in his left-hand thumb. The long and painful recovery process and the physical and emotional trauma inspired many of the stories. His 3-book sci-fi/horror series, *Bloodshot*, was inspired by the death of his high school girlfriend and their years of an on-again and off-again relationship, exploring the fine line between love and hate.

Fred lives in San Jose, CA with his wife Suzy. He has two sons: Jesse and Ian. He continues to pour his heart and soul into his writing. He's currently working on another collection of stories, poems, and novellas titled *Stories and Poetry that Haunt the Mind and Soul*.

# Exclusive Interview with Fred Wiehe

**How did your hitch-hiking adventure across the country to San Francisco influence your writing career?**

I don't recommend hitchhiking today, but in 1978, I embarked on a risky journey. The hardships and dangers I faced taught me valuable lessons. Along the way, I encountered a diverse array of people who shaped my perspective on humanity. Their different points of view influenced my ability to create compelling characters in my writing. Characters that readers will love or love to hate, make the story come alive.

**What motivated you to explore multiple genres, such as horror, science fiction, urban fantasy, suspense, and crime thrillers?**

Although I'm a horror writer first and foremost and a member of the Horror Writers Association, I don't like being pigeonholed into one genre. The fine line between genres these days can be easily crossed, and I think make for better stories. For instance, my Bloodshot series delves into physics and multiverses. Definitely science fiction. But I also introduce a psychotropic drug that degrades and disrupts the neural network and central nervous system, turning people into crazed killers and bloodthirsty cannibals. Definitely horror. But then to complicate things further, I introduce two cops who must solve a girl's murder and figure out the source of this new drug that's ravaging San Francisco. Now we're talking crime thriller. It's all connected. And hopefully suspenseful. The mixture of these genres is what makes this story tick and drives it forward. It's so much fun writing these kinds of stories and hopefully fun for people to read.

**Can you share a specific incident or event from your life that directly inspired one of your stories? How did your near-death horse-riding accident shape the creation of *The Collected Nightmares*?**

During the writing of *The Collected Nightmares*, a life-altering accident occurred. The ensuing physical pain and emotional trauma plunged me into darkness, which seeped into my stories. Writing became a cathartic release, allowing me to confront inner demons, explore pain, and confront mortality. Through my stories, such as *The Reckoning*, I sought retribution against those who caused harm during my recovery. The accident was caused by acquaintances' horses, and their broken promise to cover medical expenses led to legal action and rumors that fueled bullying. The bullies faced their comeuppance in my writing.

**Why did you decide to write a non-fiction book on creative writing, and how has teaching influenced your own writing process?**

I started teaching creative writing to children in after-school

and weekend programs back in 2007. I also started teaching adults for several different school districts that offered adult education programs. Writing the non-fiction book *Creative Writing: Get Started Writing Fiction* seemed like a natural progression in that pursuit. It allowed me to create and organize my own curriculum and served as a great companion text for my students. It also allowed me to revisit all the intricacies of writing that I had come to take for granted over the years. It took me back to when I first started writing, reminded me how little I knew then, and made me much more empathetic to my students and new writers just starting out.

**What can readers anticipate from your upcoming collection, *Stories, and Poetry that Haunt the Mind and Soul*?**

Much the same as in *The Collected Nightmares* but maybe not quite as dark. I'm in a better place now than I was when writing *The Collected Nightmares*. But I still pull from my personal life, the successes and challenges of living, and my own fears that keep me up at night.

**How does your personal life, including your family and living in San Jose, California, influence your writing and creativity?**

My wife and children (now adults) have always been very supportive of my writing career. They are my first readers and sometimes my harshest critiques. They keep me on my toes and keep me striving to satisfy them as readers. The Bay Area has influenced my writing from the very beginning. Most of my stories take place or at least partially take place in the Bay Area—San Jose, San Francisco, Half Moon Bay, ect. It's a great place to live and to write about.

**What unique challenges did you face when adapting your own novels and novellas into screenplays?**

Novels delve into characters' inner thoughts and feelings, revealing and developing them for readers. Screenplays rely on actions and dialogue to do the same for viewers, a more challenging task. Novels use descriptions to create mood and suspense, while screenplays are more straightforward in their presentation.

**How do you approach incorporating elements of suspense and horror into your storytelling across different genres?**

No matter the genre, writing is writing and storytelling is storytelling. Complicate, complicate, complicate, and then complicate some more is the basic rule of storytelling whether writing horror or science fiction or fantasy or any other genre. If you remember that, it doesn't matter what genre you're writing.

## 'DAUGHTER OF THE BORICUA' by AUTHOR OLIVIA CASTILLO

Daughter of the Boricua, finalist of the 2022 Reader's Favorite Award and the 2022 Literary Titan Silver Award, is book two of the epic trilogy, Songs of the Boricua. This sweeping saga continues the story of the award-winning book, Song of the Boricua, and the lives of three generations of women.

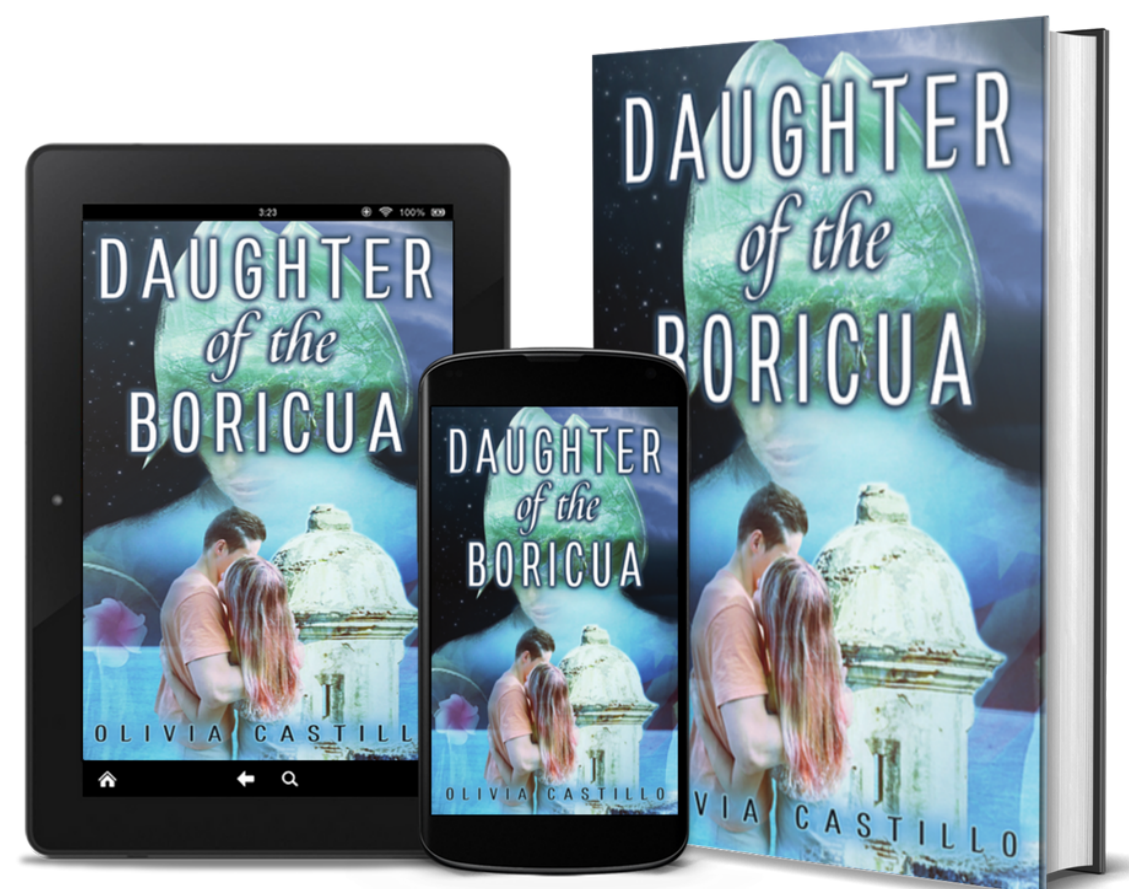
**Liani;** A Taíno beauty torn between the love of a handsome Spanish officer Estefan, and her Taíno roots, its traditions, and her family's continuous fear of its conquerors, the powerful United States of America. She is facing a new world order, the changing of the Spanish guard in early 20th century Puerto Rico. Can she overcome her fears to find true love?

**Isabella;** A direct descendant of Aztec princess Isabella Moctezuma and Hernán Cortés, is caught up in the Puerto Rican diaspora, living in the mainland United States and the resulting aftermath of the Puerto Rican migration to the mainland state and the racism they face. Isabella survives an abusive marriage to find true love, but can she overcome her past and trust another man?

**Josie;** Scarred from her parents' dysfunctional divorce, and her mother's escape, Josie is torn between her clairvoyant powers and her desire to be an independent woman, choosing between tradition and 21st-century love. Josie struggles with letting go, learning to love again, and showing her children a fully realized woman, proud of her Puerto Rican heritage.

These three generations of women must also contend with a centuries-old curse spoken by Moctezuma as he lay dying, cursing the descendants of Cortés, unknowingly dooming his own progeny. Centuries later the curse is strengthened by an old witch, a Puerto Rican jabao, who double hexes Moctezuma's original curse on the future descendants of Hernán Cortés—that true love

would continue to elude these women and affect the daughters of each generation. They continue to struggle against the curse while navigating old-world traditions and fears trying to survive their country's continuous limitations for women and race. Daughter of the Boricua also tells the story of Puerto Rico and the political problems she faced at the end of the 19th century and the Spanish-American War of 1898, to modern-day Puerto Rico. It continues to examine the continuing conflict between Puerto Rico's struggle to have a voice while existing as a commonwealth of the United States. Daughter of the Boricua looks at the lives of these women and ask the questions: Are these women forever cursed? Is Puerto Rico an island doomed to exist in a gilded cage? Will love and the island triumph, or will their lives and Puerto Rico converge and end with the storm of the century?



### AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND:

Olivia Castillo is a New York City native. After going to the prestigious Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts, she went on to study graphic design at Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles. Olivia Castillo has always enjoyed writing, journaling, and writing poetry. As a child, she was introduced to literature by her mother who loved books. Learning to read at an early age, Olivia Castillo's favorite authors as a teenager were F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Steinbeck, Leo Tolstoy, and the Brontë Sisters.

Olivia Castillo attended an online UCLA writing course and when she completed it began to come up with the idea of writing her own book. She contemplated writing a Western before deciding to write a historical fiction book loosely based on her Puerto Rican roots. Olivia Castillo wanted to understand her own Puerto Rican heritage and to bring to light some of the problems Puerto Rico faced in the historical fiction genre. She hoped to bring awareness to the plight that Puerto Ricans faced in the 21st century, especially after the devastating effects of Hurricane Maria on the island. She began writing the first of the trilogy Songs of the Boricua ten years before she completed her first novel, Song of the Boricua. After publishing her book, she appeared on the award-winning Atlanta-based "Kelly Show" and the San Diego radio show hosted by Marcus Noel, "The Soul Suite." Song of the Boricua won the

Reader's Favorite Bronze Medal for historical fiction in 2019. Olivia Castillo began writing her second novel, Daughter of the Boricua, in 2020 and completed it in 2022. She appeared in an extensive interview with "The Kelly Show." Daughter of the Boricua won the 2022 Literary Titan Silver Award for historical fiction, along with placing as a finalist for the 2022 Reader's Favorite Award for historical fiction. Along with being an entrepreneur, she is the mother of three children and grandmother of two. In between dedicating time to writing and enjoying precious moments with her family, Olivia Castillo indulges in globetrotting escapades, exploring diverse cultures, and painting captivating landscapes. Amidst her creative pursuits, she diligently crafts her third novel, "Heart of the Boricua," with aspirations to bring it to completion by the year 2024, weaving a compelling tale that will captivate readers' hearts.

# Exclusive Interview with Olivia Castillo

**How did growing up in New York City shape your passion for writing?**

Growing up in vibrant, multicultural New York City, the sights, sounds, and diversity served as an artist's inspiration. Encouraged by creative parents, the environment ignited a desire to tell stories reflecting the experiences around and within me. Being a first-generation Puerto Rican and hearing my parents' tales of childhood and facing racism fueled a passion for writing about social injustice.

**How has your background in graphic design influenced your storytelling style?**

I studied advertising and graphic design, and what was very important was the presentation and packaging and seeing the details along with the big picture. How it translates for storytelling is in how I visualize the scene, see the story to the end, envision the characters, and how to get inside of them and their emotions. I try to make logical sense of certain actions that would be true to them.

**Who were your teenage literary heroes, and how did their works inspire your own writing?**

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* captivated me with its modern portrayal of self-reliance, trusting instincts, and unwavering authenticity. Jane's journey resonated deeply, defying societal norms and remaining true to herself—a refreshing perspective for its time. Similarly, in Alex Haley's *Roots*, I connected with Kunta Kinte's quest to find his roots and the multilayered storytelling intertwined with historical significance. These works inspired me to write an epic saga, embracing a multigenerational approach to storytelling.

**What sparked the idea for your debut novel, "Song of the Boricua," and why did you choose historical fiction as the genre?**

Originally intending to write a western, I heeded my daughter's suggestion to explore my own history. *Song of the Boricua* loosely reflects my family's experiences and my quest to understand our heritage and the complexities of Puerto Rico as a commonwealth. The book delves into the Puerto Rican diaspora and the ongoing struggles faced by Puerto Ricans. Historical fiction, with its lessons from the past, captivates me due to my love of history and growing up surrounded by its presence in New York City. Inspired by Rafael Hernández Marín's "Lamento Borincano," the title embodies my aspiration to share the stories of Puerto Rico's women, encompassing their joys and sorrows.

**How did you hope to shed light on the challenges faced by Puerto Ricans through your book, particularly after the impact of Hurricane Maria?**

It is astonishing how many Americans are uneducated about Puerto Rico, unaware that it is a commonwealth and its citizens are Americans. Through storytelling, I aim to educate readers on the struggles Puerto Rico has faced in the last century. Shedding light on the modern-day struggles of Puerto Rico, I seek to raise awareness about its treatment as a colony and the lack of autonomous government. Without representation in federal elections, Puerto Ricans lack a real voice and governing power. The aftermath of Hurricane Maria brought attention to existing problems such as outdated infrastructure and inadequate communication with the government, which often assumes an authoritative role.

**Can you share a glimpse into the journey of writing your debut novel? What were some of the hurdles you encountered along the way?**

For six years, my manuscript lay unread and untouched until I found the courage to rewrite and share it with the world. I realized that one voice, through small steps, could reshape perceptions of Puerto Rico and its people. This realization empowered me to make a difference, no matter how small. Attending a book party and witnessing authors who pursued their dreams inspired me to publish my own work. Researching self-publishing, traditional publishing, content editing, format editing, and book design became an educational journey in itself.

***Song of the Boricua* winning the Reader's Favorite Bronze Medal for historical fiction must have been exciting. How did that recognition affect your writing career?**

Attending the Readers Favorite Awards ceremony was a dream come true for me. I couldn't believe a debut novel would get recognition and get positive reviews and acknowledgment for something I had had such trepidation about was truly a life-changing experience. It made me feel more confident in my writing and storytelling abilities and inspired me to continue to write and go on with book two, *Daughter of the Boricua*.

**Can you share a glimpse of what readers can expect from your upcoming novel, *Heart of the Boricua*, the third installment of your trilogy?**

In the final book, *Heart of the Boricua*, I conclude the trilogy by exploring the male characters and their journeys. I uncover the profound influence of Africa on Puerto Rico and its culture, delving into the painful legacy of the slave trade and its impact on families. The book also examines modern-day Puerto Rico, addressing its commonwealth status, the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, and the hopeful resolution of the long-standing curse.

## 'CAN'T SEE AROUND THE CORNERS' by AUTHOR JOSIE TOWNSEND

The epic rise and fall of Sharon and Annie Karce, socialite twin sisters of the Karce Empire in Australia. An intense, tragic, family saga with a pinch of supernatural elements thrown into it. The fast-paced twists and turns are most unexpected. The betrayals and secret alliances are astonishing to discover and will keep the reader guessing right until the very end.

What the book is really about is that greed can ruin a good character, bringing out the darker side of humanity and it doesn't matter who you are.

The story is out of the box and quite funky. The plot is fast-paced and it has enough drama to keep the reader guessing. There are a lot of allegories used to convey that money doesn't make a person good and character is what really matters at the end of the day. Money also makes people who are too greedy do unthinkable things.

There are lots of twists and turns that are most unexpected, ensuring a rollercoaster of surprises for the reader. With masterful storytelling, the author skillfully sets up the readers to think one way about the characters, only to reveal something completely different about them, leaving their perceptions shattered. Just when you believe you have unraveled the mysteries, another revelation hits you with its shocking impact, leaving you breathless and eager for more. You'll never know what's coming next.

### SYNOPSIS:

It is a story about two fraternal twins, Sharon and Annie who are born into opulent wealth and are the only children of Edna and Warren Karce. The girls have accomplished studying for their degrees and look forward to their once-in-a-lifetime trip to Europe. The sisters' love for one another is obvious to the bystander but a

sinister undercurrent of malicious feelings dwells profoundly beneath their facade of shared contentment. Once abroad and with their hypervigilant parents absent, penetrating treachery, deceit, and wickedness develop intensely between the girls and their relationship advances into the vilest possible nightmare, changing their lives forever. The discovery of an ancient, mysterious pendant formerly owned by Vlad the Impaler from Dracula's Castle, begins an epic spiral of demonic incidences that traumatizes not only the twin girls' lives while in Romania but has the ability to penetrate their family's existence back home in Australia.

"Shadow Bear" is the forthcoming book by author Josie Townsend. This book promises to be a must-read for the booklovers.



### AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND:

Josie Townsend. She started writing about nine years ago, at the age of 55 years, after her husband died suddenly on their farm, leaving her to raise three small children on her own without any financial or family support. Ultimately, she was by herself. His tragic suicidal death left her feeling devastated and alone.

After fleeing her hometown due to ongoing persecution and rejection from those she believed would support her, she moved far away from family and everything she was accustomed to, and

started a new life. However, her trauma haunted her so much that her therapist suggested she start writing down her feelings. It took her three years to achieve, but unknowingly, that's when her first novel, "There Was Once a Girl," was born. This marked the beginning of her writing career. From using the writing medium initially for therapy, she evolved from writing what she knew to writing what she wanted to do: supernatural thrillers. She has always been a huge fan of Steven King and Steven Spielberg movies and marveled at their skill of telling creepy, thrilling stories without using high-impact violence, blood, and gore. To her, that's a creative skill and art form that is truly inspirational.

Her novel, "Can't See Around Corners," was a liberating experience because she went from writing something factual that she knew to write something foreign to her: fiction. She enjoyed designing a story based on imagination and

creating fictional characters while being able to stage-manage their destinies. Writing supernatural thrillers has unchained a passion in her that she never knew existed.

Olivia advises others to find their dream and never let go of it or let anyone tell them that it's impossible to achieve. She is a living testimony of people telling her she wasn't any good at anything and that her writing dreams were only just that... a pie-in-the-sky dream. She encourages everyone to look onward and upward always. She is also a vision-impaired writer, but she has never let that stifle her writing dreams. She has never let go of her aspirations of where she wanted to be in life, and that's her heartfelt truth. She believes that we all need to encourage each other, to keep striving onward and upward, to stay strong, and be the best we can be in the changing and turbulent world we live in. Cheers to all, and God bless.

# Exclusive Interview with Josie Townsend

**Please share more about the personal journey that led you to start writing. How did the tragic loss of your husband and the challenges you faced shape your decision to become an author?**

Ten years ago, at the age of 55, my writing journey began after the sudden death of my husband, leaving me to raise three young children alone without support. Struggling with the devastating loss and fleeing persecution in my hometown, I started a new life far away. Seeking therapy, my therapist encouraged me to write down my feelings, leading to the birth of my first novel, "There Was Once a Girl." This marked the start of my writing career, transitioning from writing for therapy to crafting supernatural thrillers, following my passion.

**What prompted you to see a therapist and how did their suggestion to write down your feelings impact your writing journey?**

Following the shocking discovery of my husband's deceased body and the subsequent unraveling of the reasons behind his suicide, I sought therapy to navigate the overwhelming emotions and consequences. During counseling, I was advised to journal my astonishing experiences, which eventually led to the creation of my first novel. Immersed in the process of writing, I found solace and decided to continue writing. Embracing my favorite genre, supernatural thrillers, I penned my second novel, "Can't See Around Corners."

**What inspired your transition from writing what you knew to exploring supernatural thrillers?**

I realized that I'd discovered my gift for creative writing. I thoroughly enjoyed the fictional characters I imagined as they liberated me from my own mundane life. I enter into a world of my own, intimately visualizing my character's physical attributes and complex personalities. I loved orchestrating their lives and constructing their pathways throughout the story. I know my characters personally and prudently think about how to produce unexpected twists and turns in their fictional lives. I even miss them when I'm not writing, absorbed with the unforeseen journey of the story's twists and turns and the characters ensuing destiny and fate.

**How have the works of Steven King and Steven Spielberg influenced your approach to storytelling without relying on violence and gore?**

I've always been a huge fan of Steven King and Steven Spielberg movies and marveled at their skill of telling creepy, thrilling stories without using high-impact violence, blood, and gore, and to me that's a creative skill and art form that is truly inspirational. To write vivid, lively words that

build a paragraph making the hair on your neck bristle, without using explicit violence and gore, is a true talent.

**What was the most exciting part of involving in the world of fiction for you?**

I find the most exciting part of involving myself in a world of fiction is that I can do anything I want to my characters with no consequences because they don't exist. Writing fiction expands the mind, delving into different scenarios that make up the story. Most times while I'm writing fiction, a character will suddenly take shape during the process that I never knew was going to be part of the story and I find this mentally stimulating because these additional characters surprise even me.

**How has writing supernatural thrillers ignited a passion you never knew existed?**

As a kid, I use to write poems and each one had a "spooky" element and message to them. My penchant for thriller movies has also complimented my creative narrative and the struggles and survival of my characters. I love telling my stories and entertaining people, transporting the reader from their reality into a fantastical, fictional world. Writing supernatural thrillers has unchained a passion in me that I never knew existed.

**What advice would you give aspiring writers facing skepticism or negativity from others?**

Find your dream and never let go of it or let anyone tell you that it's impossible to achieve because I am a living testimony of people telling me I wasn't any good at anything and that my writing dreams were only just that..... a pie in the sky dream. If you have a passion for writing, whatever your genre, always believe in your authentic self and your unique talent, and don't let the "knockbacks" unnerve your devotion to telling stories. Always look onward and upward.

**What are your future aspirations and any upcoming projects you're working on?**

My future aspiration is to continue writing supernatural thrillers, and I am currently in the final stages of completing my latest novel, "Shadow Bear." The story revolves around Kane, a boy growing up in a secluded Buddhist monastery nestled in the Japanese Alps. He grapples with his unique physicality, which sets him apart from the other boys and makes him a target for their cruelty. Trained rigorously in ninjitsu by the strict high priest monks, Kane's life takes a fateful turn when a sparring match ends tragically, forcing him to flee the monastery. Pursued by relentless ninjas, Kane embarks on a journey of self-discovery and transformation, embracing his true identity and unlocking his extraordinary powers.

## 'CAPITOL CORRUPTION SERIES' by AUTHOR LINNY LAWLESS

### MEET THE 3 KINGS OF CORRUPTION

#### **PUSHED - Story 1:**

Everyone knows what they need to about me. I'm a dangerous man with a dark and twisted soul. A killer. I'm in the business of power, and money flows through every corrupted vein in my body. They call me Push. I run the wicked streets of Washington D.C. I have everything I could possibly want, except one thing – Nadia. She's like a delicious drug running through my sinister veins. But I've held myself back, keeping my need for her hidden. I've seen the fear that flashes in Nadia's eyes when she looks at me, but she can't hide the lust accompanying it. Now her life is in danger, and she's come to me for protection. I think we both know I'll keep her alive, but she'll not be safe. Not from me.

#### **COBALT - Story 2:**

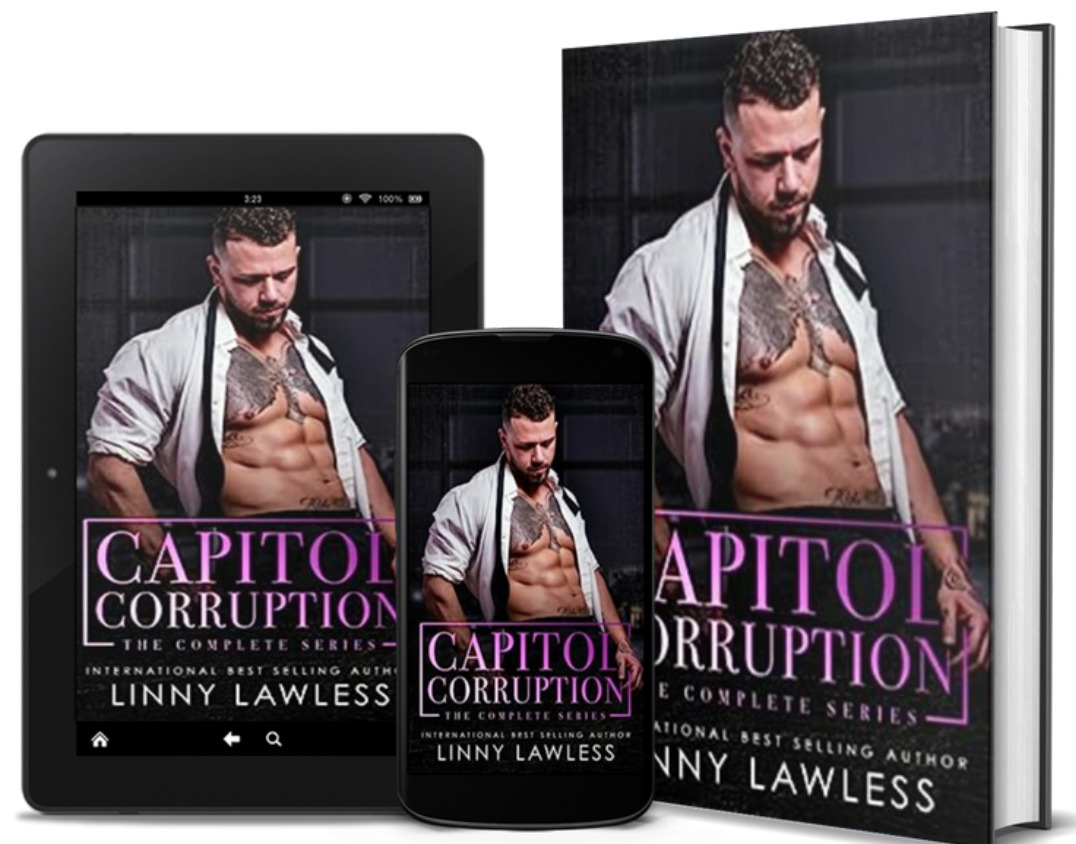
Nolan Reynolds likes women the way he likes money – as much as he wants, anytime, anywhere. He works hard and plays harder, running the sleazy and corrupt business that comes in and out of the MGM National Harbor Casino in the heart of Washington, DC. There are only a few men Nolan trusts, one of them being Dane Neri—the boss of the corrupt empire in Atlantic City. After Dane's sister gets into trouble, Dane entrusts Nolan to watch over her. Gina is stunningly beautiful and drives all his senses into a deranged frenzy. Nolan even marries the feisty little brat to keep up the fake-ass charade until Gina is almost taken from him. Now his feelings are anything but fake, and he'll set the city on fire to keep her safe.

#### **DANE - Story 3**

Dane Neri is the King of Atlantic City, and no hooker, gambler, or business spends a dollar outside of his corrupt network. Dane's

enemies are many, but he destroys them, using their blood and wealth to expand his ever-growing empire. Dane could never get Aurora Owens out of his mind after they'd spent one amazingly erotic night together five years ago. Today, Aurora is the notoriously rich and feisty Maryland Madam, running her corrupt enterprise of satisfying the sexual appetites of rich men and shady politicians. But now she's become Dane's enemy and his next target to destroy.

"Outlaw Redemption," is the fourth installment in the BERZERKERS MC Series, a contribution to the Merciless Desires: A Dark Romance Collection, authored by the talented Linny Lawless. Mark your calendars for the exhilarating release date of 10/10/23, as this dark romance will take you on a thrilling journey. This book promises an irresistible combination of passion, danger, and intense emotions.



## AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND:

Linny Lawless grew up, lived, and worked in the Northern Virginia area close to Washington, DC. She's a bookworm, biker chick, and international best-selling indie author. Linny published her debut novel, "Salvation in Chaos," in January 2018 and is passionate about writing suspenseful and action-packed stories. If Linny is not busy traveling, working, and writing, she spends her days at home in Front Royal, Virginia, with her husband, Norman, and 2 Brussel Griffons named Verdy and Simon.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Linny mostly read historical romances, and her two favorite authors are Jean M. Auel and Anne Rice. In 2015, self-published authors Linny connected with on social media inspired her to dive right in and write her own stories. Since 2018, Linny has attended book signing events in the United States, connecting with talented authors, photographers, models, editors, and avid readers. Linny has found her true passion in life as a self-published author. She recently branched out to design book covers and graphics and help new indie authors with tips and advice based on her experiences in the industry. Linny's stories will be the legacy she leaves behind, hoping readers will enjoy.

Linny writes fictional characters who are far from perfect and have many flaws. The anti-hero is her favorite type of character to write about - the bad

guy you should hate but end up liking because you can relate to him somehow. Linny wants the reader to feel her characters' sadness, happiness, love, and hate. Her favorite story theme is vengeance, and her favorite romance trope is enemy to lovers. Linny Lawless is not only a remarkable writer but also a true inspiration to aspiring authors worldwide. With her dedication, boundless creativity, and fearless exploration of complex characters and themes, she has carved a unique place for herself in the literary world. Linny's ability to evoke raw emotions and engage readers in gripping narratives is truly exceptional. Her commitment to connecting with her audience and sharing her knowledge and experiences further exemplifies her generosity and passion for the craft. With each new story, Linny Lawless continues to leave an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of readers, solidifying her status as an exceptional author.



# Exclusive Interview with Linny Lawless

## **What inspired you to transition from being a reader to becoming a self-published author?**

In 2015, I was reading e-books and discovered self-published authors who write romance and other sub-genres. I engaged with these authors on social media and met them at book signing events. The indie author community was so inspiring to me because they did everything themselves and it didn't involve a large publishing agent. I did some research, networked, and learned from people in the indie author community. I had a story idea and began to write it in the fall of 2017, then in January 2018, I published my debut novel, "Salvation in Chaos".

## **How would you describe your writing style in three words?**

Action-packed, gritty, and engaging. Can you share an impactful experience from attending book signing events and connecting with industry professionals? Positive impacts for me have been participating with many talented authors to write short stories for several book event anthologies. It's an honor to donate 100% of the sales proceeds to different charity organizations from helping United States war veterans to helping children who have suffered and survived abuse.

## **What intrigues you about flawed characters and writing anti-heroes?**

My favorite characters in books and movies are anti-heroes that go against the grain, or rebellious like Tony Soprano in the TV Series, "The Sopranos" or Michael Corleone in "The Godfather". They are the bad guys but leave an effect on the audience. Flawed characters are much more fun to write and I hope the reader can relate in some way. Who wants to read about the perfect character that has everything they desire? There should be conflict, then throw in some flawed characters to keep the reader engaged.

## **Why is vengeance a recurring theme in your stories, and how do you explore it? What intrigues you about the enemy-to-lovers romance trope?**

I enjoy writing stories with a vengeance theme because my characters who've been wronged in some way always get even at the end. Enemies-to-Lovers trope is fun to write because the characters are in denial about their feelings for the love interest and tension builds. Then once they reveal their feelings of love it's emotional and sexy at the same time.

## **How has designing book covers and graphics enhanced your journey as an indie author?**

Designing my book covers and graphics has helped cut costs instead of paying other designers to do them for me.

In the past few years, I've designed covers and graphics for other authors which helps me to make money and promote my brand. Designing journals and coloring books is a new venture I've started and another way to explore my creativity.

## **How do you manage your time between writing, traveling, and other commitments?**

I manage three calendars: my professional job, my writing profession, and my personal day-to-day. I use spreadsheets to help plan out book signing events, writing goals, and publishing deadlines. Last but not least, I do take time out of my busy schedule and go on vacation!

## **What is one valuable tip you would give to aspiring indie authors?**

marketing and promotion play a vital role in reaching readers. I live by the motto "Stay humble, be fierce," embracing the need to humbly appreciate support while fearlessly promoting my books and connecting with readers.

## **What do you hope readers will feel or take away from your stories?**

One of my greatest hopes as an author is for readers to form deep emotional connections with the characters I create. Whether they love or hate them, I want readers to invest their emotions, feel their joys and sorrows, and be fully engaged in their journeys. By evoking strong emotional responses, I aim to make the reading experience impactful and memorable.

## **How have your favorite authors influenced your writing style or storytelling techniques?**

I'm a big fan of the famous gothic fiction author, Anne Rice who unfortunately passed away in 2021. Her storytelling influenced me to co-write with my author friend, Rowan St. George, a book titled, "Blood Moon". It's a paranormal romance about a group of men who shift into werewolves and the setting is New Orleans, Louisiana. The story begins during the United States Civil War and a Union Army soldier is near death but is saved by an enchanting witch who lives in the forest alone.

## **What legacy do you aspire to leave behind as an author?**

I aspire to leave a legacy of bringing enjoyment to readers through my stories, transporting them to captivating worlds and evoking a range of emotions. By providing moments of escape and connection, I hope my words continue to be cherished long after I'm gone as I believe that stories have the power to touch hearts, provoke thought, and inspire change.

## 'ALIE NATION' by AUTHOR JAYMA ANNE MONTGOMERY

"One day she will belong." This was the narrative of Jayma Anne Montgomery's childhood and the mantra that had fueled her through much of her adult life. What happens when she fulfills the so-called American dream only to find herself feeling more estranged than ever before?

AlieNation is her six-volume memoir that is divided into a two-book series. The Imitated Life contains the first three volumes of stories that explore her quest to assimilate her Jamaican heritage with American culture. It further details her struggle to reconcile the Black American racial normative, the complex dynamics of her blended family, and the impossible standards of modern womanhood with a life that proves far more complex than widespread narratives would have you believe. If you sometimes find yourself feeling distant or disconnected from your own life, she hopes her stories bring you laughter, healing tears, companionship, and hope along the way.

With her memoir, Jayma offers a lifeline to those who have felt distant or disconnected from their own lives. She gracefully weaves laughter, healing tears, companionship, and hope throughout her stories, creating a profound sense of camaraderie and understanding.

Jayma's writing embodies the courage and resilience she possesses as she navigates the unexplored territories of identity, culture, and the quest for belonging. Through her bold proclamation, she extends an inclusive invitation to readers, encouraging them to embrace and celebrate the inherent richness found in the diverse tapestry of human experiences. By challenging societal norms, she inspires others to wholeheartedly embrace the intricate beauty of life, where every unique thread

weaves together to create a vibrant and interconnected whole.

The Memoir "Alie Nation" by author Jayma Anne Montgomery is her bold proclamation that belonging, at least in a traditional sense, is overrated. It is a transformative experience that will ignite conversations, provoke introspection, and reshape our understanding of what it means to belong. Jayma Anne Montgomery's words have the power to fascinate hearts, expand minds, and bridge the gaps that divide us. In a world that often seeks to oversimplify and overlook the complexities of identity, culture, and human experience, Jayma's call is one of profound wisdom and inclusivity. Join her in welcoming categories that embrace nuances rather than pretending they don't exist.



### AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND:

Jayma Anne Montgomery is a Jamaican immigrant and an Army-trained Internal Medicine Physician turned blogger, author, and social commentator. She began This Woman's ThoughtLife in March of 2022 to process her jumbled thoughts and reframe them through the perspective of her faith.

AlieNation: The Imitated Life is her publishing debut. It is the first of a two-book memoir series divided into six volumes of personal essays. In the first book, she explores themes such as womanhood, race, ethnicity, assimilation,

socioeconomics, and the dynamics of growing up in a blended family. In AlieNation II, she will delve into her Evangelical upbringing, her medical and Army careers, and the perils of identifying her political identity. At the heart of both books is a lifelong quest to belong, ultimately finding acceptance and identity in the family of G-d.

She has a passion for medical missions and underserved care. She loves to cook, explore other cultures, delve into the arts, and engage with the beauty of nature. She is pursuing a master's certificate in creative writing and continues to work as a part-time physician in the inpatient and outpatient settings. Her next project is called "Ward Stories", a work of fiction based on her medical experiences and most meaningful patient interactions told from various points of view. "Ward Stories," takes a different creative direction as a work of fiction.

Through this project, she aims to capture the essence of her encounters in a compelling and engaging manner. Through her memoir series and her upcoming fiction project, she shares her personal journey, inviting readers to join her in navigating the complexities of life, faith, and self-discovery. With each page, her insightful observations, heartfelt reflections, and thought-provoking narratives resonate deeply, inspiring individuals from all walks of life to embrace their own stories and find solace in the power of connection.

Jayma Anne Montgomery's diverse background, professional expertise, and passion for storytelling enable her to offer readers a unique perspective on various aspects of life, faith, and the human experience. Her work serves as a platform for thought-provoking discussions and introspection while emphasizing the importance of acceptance and finding one's identity in the family of God.

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# Exclusive Interview with Jayma Anne Montgomery

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**What inspired your transition from an Army-trained Internal Medicine Physician to a blogger, author, and social commentator?**

My career took an unexpected turn in 2021-2022 with repeated experiences of workplace hostility. Forced out of those jobs, I reflected on the common denominator: myself. This realization led me to reevaluate the kind of life I wanted to live. Turning to writing, I found solace and inspiration, leading to the creation of my blog and the ideas for my first books.

**Can you give us a glimpse into the themes explored in your debut memoir series, *AlieNation: The Imitated Life*?**

As I crafted my memoir, I discovered recurring themes that allowed me to organize the stories by theme rather than chronology. The book explores my immigration experience, the complexities of my blended family, and my journey into womanhood, including struggles with pregnancy loss, alopecia, and mental health. Writing this book helped me confront toxic thought patterns and heal, and I hope to offer that healing to others on their journeys.

**How does your faith play a role in reframing your thoughts and experiences, as showcased in *This Woman's Thought Life*?**

My faith is more than just a set of private ideas and beliefs. It shapes my worldview, my relationships, and every aspect of the way I live my life. I strive for authenticity and consistency not necessarily perfection. It's not about never making mistakes or having all of the answers to the hardest questions. It's about staying faithful to the teachings and the person(s) (G-d, G-d's Spirit, Jesus) whom I claim to love. This means I need to understand church history, be actively involved in a local church community, have spiritual disciplines that help me to grow in my faith, and constantly examine my life to see what areas are falling short of Jesus' life example.

**What motivated you to delve into your Evangelical upbringing, medical and Army careers, and political identity in your upcoming book, *AlieNation II*?**

Originally, I planned for one book, but it became too lengthy. Splitting it into two books was the right choice, with the first book laying a strong foundation. I explore my Evangelical roots, acknowledging their influence and discussing the importance of asking difficult questions and exploring diverse church traditions. Finding solace in the Anglican Church, I appreciate its nuanced yet consistent approach to complex issues. I also address the intertwined nature of political and spiritual identities and my personal reconstruction process. And of course, I incorporate captivating elements of military and medical experiences.

**How does your passion for medical missions and underserved care influence your writing and perspective on healthcare?**

When it comes to issues like poverty, immigration, healthcare, and criminal justice, it's easy to form opinions based on media influences. However, encountering real people shows the interconnectedness of these issues. While there are abuses, they don't represent the majority. Our current healthcare system is broken, and we can learn from other countries. Returning decision-making to clinicians, not businesses is crucial. These topics fuel my passion and often find their way into my writing.

**How do your diverse interests in cooking, exploring other cultures, and the arts contribute to your creativity as an author?**

I'm thankful my parents nurtured my love for cooking, the arts, and language. Recipes sparked my curiosity for travel. I'm learning Portuguese, and planning medical mission trips. The arts remind me of goodness. Recently, I discovered writing as an artistic expression, tying my passions together. Words offer a new perspective, allowing me to appreciate almost anything in a different light. They weave a tapestry of creativity, connecting cultures, history, and the profound impact of art on our lives.

**Could you briefly tell us about your current project, *Ward Stories*, and how your medical background shapes your approach to writing fiction?**

I write from a deeply personal place, exploring the layers of truth. *Ward Stories* follows a female doctor's thirty-year medical career, delving into the patient-doctor relationship, the business side of medicine, burnout, and more. Through a character, I reimagine my career and speculate about the future, allowing me to blend patient cases into a coherent story without compromising real experiences. It's a chance to envision the ending of my own medical journey.

**What advice would you give to aspiring authors looking to find their voice and share their unique stories with the world?**

My answer is always the same. Just start writing and keep writing. Worry about making it good later. Read people who are masters within your genre and read outside of your genre. Great writing comes from reading widely and frequently. Finally, participate in a writing community. I say this as an introvert who recognizes that many writers are also introverts. You cannot see your own blind spots or accurately edit your own work. Take a class, participate in a critiquing group, or budget for a thorough editor. There is no substitute for thorough constructive feedback from an experienced writer.

## 'FLAMES OF EADER' by AUTHOR CARINA STEINBAKK

Flames of Eader is a journey of discovery of origin and purpose for Grey, a young man who stumbles into the world of combat fairies, wonder and magic. After escaping into books and video games, his journey intertwines with the battle between light and darkness which outcome holds the fate of the planet in its grasp. Grey meets the fierce Darby, who steals not just him from his home, but also his heart which he resists at every stage. There is also the feisty Lay and facetious Callan, and Grey learns how to navigate his shadowy past. He is challenged by not just the shadows, but also the light threatening to reveal his inner secrets, both within and on this new path. To conquer these, he learns how to control his inner darkness, throw himself off the tops of castles, and hurtle towards the destiny that has been laid out for him, since before he was born... The Flames will reveal Grey's true nature, and lay out his path... Will he rise to meet this new challenge?

Experience the Unforgettable Struggle Against Darkness in an Urban Fantasy Novel: Embracing the Triumph of Light Amidst the Shadows! It is a gripping tale that explores the relentless battle our world faces, where darkness threatens to consume us all. This extraordinary narrative reveals the insidious nature of darkness, highlighting its ability to infiltrate our lives and overpower us. However, within the encroaching shadows, a glimmer of hope emerges, urging us to fight back and allow the radiant light to conquer all.

Within the pages of Flames of Eader, a diverse cast of characters takes center stage, embodying the resilience and bravery required to confront the looming darkness. Through treacherous paths and harrowing challenges, they uncover ancient wisdom and hidden truths, empowering them to resist the malevolent forces that seek

to engulf our world.

With each page turned, the author skillfully crafts a narrative that enlightens and captivates, reminding us that even in our darkest moments, hope remains steadfast. Through vivid settings and intricate plotlines, this urban fantasy novel invites us to discover the transformative power that lies within us—a power to overcome shadows and embrace the triumphant reign of light.

This urban fantasy novel talks about the battle our world finds itself in, and how the darkness can seep through and overcome us. Though if we know where to look, we can fight back and let the light concur with the shadows.

"Flames of Eader" is an absolute must-read and highly recommended to all the bookworms out there who are fans of fantasy novels.



### AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND:

From the magical fjords and mountains of Norway to the mythical highlands of Scotland, and down under to the mystical red sands of Australia, Carina Steinbakk has gathered the inspiration for her debut fantasy novel, Flames of Eader. Being an author has always been her dream. After working on short stories, creating characters in her everyday life, and naming most of the inanimate objects she owns, Carina started Grey's Story in 2016, which was written with geeky passion integrated with a love for science and magic. You

see, Carina works as an energy engineer by day, then disappears into the realms of fantasy at night. After completing an MSc in Energy and Environmental Engineering, with a business degree on top from Aberdeen, she now works in Queensland, with a goal of producing clean energy and new fantastic worlds.

Carina's wild imagination, sprinkled with life experiences, and her engineering background shed a colorful yet critical light on Earth's wayward yet extraordinary ways in this twilight tale. She is also highly particular about her taste in chocolate and pet doggies and believes in unicorns. She is now working on the next chapter for the world of Eader, as part of a 4 book series, and will continue to use inspiration from her experiences and people she meets on her travels to build out this magical world.

With her unique blend of imagination, personal encounters, and technical acumen, Carina breathes life into her literary creations, inviting readers to embark on unforgettable journeys through her magical realms. The next installment of the Eader series holds the promise of further exploration, discovery, and the unearthing of hidden wonders, all born from Carina's remarkable ability to infuse her narratives with the essence of the extraordinary.

Carina's literary contributions are a gift to the literary world, and her unique blend of intellect, creativity, and imagination sets her apart as a truly remarkable author. Her stories have the power to ignite our spirits, expand our horizons, and remind us of the boundless possibilities that lie within the realm of literature. Carina's enchanting narratives will continue to leave an indelible mark on readers, leaving us yearning for more.

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# Exclusive Interview with Carina Steinbakk

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**How did your travels to Norway, Scotland, and Australia inspire the creation of *Flames of Eader*, your debut fantasy novel?**

I have put a lot of myself in this story, from places I have lived, and my characters are inspired by people I have met on my travels. I always felt a special connection to Scotland, and its warm people, magic highlands, and dark, foggy nights. And then this was so abruptly contrasted by the beauty of Australia, with the fantastical sunsets, beaches, and interesting use of the English language. It all inspired this book and the flow of the story.

**As an energy engineer by day and a fantasy writer by night, how do you balance your scientific background with your creative endeavours?**

The one endeavour easily feeds the other, where my passion for the creative helps me gain new perspectives in my day to day work and life, and vice versa.

**How has your experience in energy and environmental engineering shaped the themes and messages in *Flames of Eader*?**

As I see it, magic is simply science we are yet to understand, so they go very well hand in hand. It was so much fun to intertwine both worlds in my book, and see how the worlds came together. Energy is all around us, if it is in the Force, in a wand or in your car, and for me writing it into my story came as natural as flicking on a light switch.

**Can you share your writing process and how you bring the magical world of *Eader* and its characters to life?**

These characters have been developing for years, and have taken shape through my own experiences, dreams, and people I have met in my life. I often take on themes that matter to me, such as friendship, standing up for what is right, not just doing what is easy, but what is right, and my character's life by these truths. For me the story was always there, I was just lucky enough to be allowed to write it.

**What can readers expect from the next chapter in the world of *Eader* as part of the four-book series?**

When you read *Flames of Eader*, you will quickly realise the stakes, and that this adventure is far from over. There will be further puzzles and worlds to explore, and it is all tied together through magic and energy. Stay tuned!

**How does your love for chocolate influence your writing, if at all?**

Chocolate is my soul food, much as coffee is Grey's, the male protagonist of *Flames of Eader*. I think it is more how we have different foods, things, and activities that give us joy, and that will light up your life, and that has seeped into my writing.

**Have any encounters or experiences during your travels significantly influenced your storytelling or character development?**

My readers will find that the names of the characters have double meanings, as well as other names in the book as well. A little bit of Scottish, Australian, Norwegian, and more. One example is the female protagonist, Darby Teine, whom a good friend of mine inspired.

**As a busy professional, how do you manage to find time for writing? Any advice for aspiring authors juggling day jobs and creative pursuits?**

Writing for me is an outlet, something I do to relax and escape from everyday stress and worries. I will say that when I wrote the bulk of *Flames of Eader*, I was also writing my Master's Thesis for my degree in International Business Management, so it is also a great tool when procrastinating is required. I make it a mission to always set aside time for the things I love, which gives me energy for my other projects.

**Share a memorable moment or achievement from your writing journey so far.**

The day I got my book delivered and I got to hold it in my hand. The new book smell, the feel of the pages, and the realization that I had done it, I was living my dream. I am still smiling.

**Which authors or books have had the greatest influence on your writing style or storytelling approach?**

Reading has been my passion since I was 5, and I dove into the world of fantasy head first, led especially by J.K. Rowling, Rick Riordan, and Kevin Hearne. Harry Potter of course was a and still is a world I am in love with, and the character and world-building were so natural. The Percy Jackson books are also some of my favorites, with the Greek and Roman legends built into teenage drama and heroics. Which I also found in the Iron Druid Chronicles, with the added joy of humor and cheeky writing. It made me realize that my way of writing could work and had an audience.

**What are your future goals and aspirations as an author? Do you plan to explore other genres or storytelling mediums?**

I cannot wait to continue Grey's journey, and hope that readers of the world will go on the journey with me. I must say I am very much in love with the fantasy genre, so will get good and comfortable here first, though would love to get my books told through audio books, and maybe one day on the big screen!

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Threeasfour pushes boundaries, exploring a parallel universe with their latest couture collection. Confusion between real and virtual pieces adds intrigue. As technology advances, discerning between the two becomes crucial. The collection combines manual craftsmanship with computer programs, rejecting complete reliance on artificial intelligence. Threeasfour infuses space and science fiction elements, collaborating with Uni band members. The collection's closing features a unique, out-of-this-world design, perfect for a parallel universe.

”

# THREEASFOUR

FALL 2023 LOOKBOOK



**LOOK2**  
THREEASFOUR



**LOOK 3**  
THREEASFOUR





**LOOK 4**  
**THREEASFOUR**



**LOOK 5**  
THREEASFOUR



**LOOK 6**  
THREEASFOUR



**LOOK 7**  
**THREEASFOUR**

**LOOK 8**  
THREASFOUR

**LOOK 9**  
**THREEASFOUR**

**LOOK 10**  
**THREEASFOUR**



# VALENTINO

## FALL 2023 LOOKBOOK

Pierpaolo Piccioli's haute couture collection, titled "Un Château," embraced the concepts of simplicity and paradoxes. Held at the Château de Chantilly, the show challenged the symbolism of status and power associated with historical sites. The open-air runway represented the liberation from elitism, accompanied by a magical ambiance. Piccioli aimed to redefine couture by showcasing simplicity in its purest form, free from extravagant distractions. Draping techniques added vitality to sleek silhouettes, while inventive paradoxes like silk denim jeans and ethereal feathered ruffles showcased the atelier's craftsmanship. Valentino's collection celebrated imaginative clarity with masterful simplicity, defying expectations.



LOOK 2  
VALENTINO



**LOOK 3**  
**VALENTINO**



LOOK 4  
VALENTINO

# HOW TO CREATE A MINIMALIST WARDROBE

TIPS FOR DECLUTTERING YOUR CLOSET

**A** minimalist wardrobe is all about keeping things simple, streamlined, and intentional. It's about owning clothes that you love and wear regularly and letting go of the excess that only takes up space and creates clutter.

Creating a minimalist wardrobe may seem overwhelming, but with these seven tips for decluttering your closet, you'll be well on your way to a more streamlined and stress-free wardrobe. By implementing the following tips, you can create a minimalist wardrobe that reflects your style, reduces decision fatigue, and promotes a sense of calm and simplicity in your daily life.

## 1. ASSESS YOUR CLOTHING

Take the time to thoroughly assess your entire wardrobe. Remove each item from your closet and evaluate it individually. Consider factors such as fit, condition, and whether it aligns with your personal style and current lifestyle. Be honest with yourself about items that no longer serve you or bring you joy. This process helps you identify what to keep and what to let go of.



## 3. PRIORITIZE QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

Instead of chasing trends and accumulating a large quantity of inexpensive clothing, focus on investing in high-quality pieces that will stand the test of time. Look for well-made garments with durable materials and classic designs. Quality pieces often fit better, last longer, and can be more versatile, allowing you to create various outfits with fewer items.



## 2. DONATE OR SELL UNWANTED ITEMS

Once you've identified the items you no longer need, consider donating them to a local charity or selling them online or at a consignment store. Donating allows your clothing to find a new home where it will be appreciated, while selling gives you the opportunity to recoup some of your investment. This step not only declutters your space but also promotes sustainability by extending the lifecycle of your clothing.





## 4. STICK TO A COLOR PALETTE

Simplify your wardrobe by choosing a color palette that suits your preferences and flatters your skin tone. Opt for neutral shades such as black, white, gray, beige, or navy as the foundation of your wardrobe. Then, select a few accent colors that you enjoy wearing and that complement your neutrals. By sticking to a cohesive color scheme, you can easily mix and match different pieces, creating a harmonious and versatile wardrobe.



## 5. LET GO OF EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENTS

Many of us hold onto clothes because of emotional attachments, whether it's a sentimental piece that no longer fits or an item we wore on a special occasion. However, holding onto these items can create clutter and prevent us from making space for new and more relevant pieces. Instead of holding onto these emotional attachments, try to let go and focus on the present moment. If you're having trouble letting go of certain items, try taking a picture of them or keeping them in a memory box.



## 6. CONSIDER YOUR LIFESTYLE

When creating a minimalist wardrobe, it's important to consider your lifestyle and what types of clothes you need for your daily activities. If you work in a corporate office, you may need more formal pieces such as blouses and dress pants. If you work from home or have a more casual lifestyle, you may opt for more comfortable and casual pieces such as leggings or t-shirts. By considering your lifestyle, you can create a wardrobe that fits your needs and makes you feel comfortable and confident.



## 7. CHOOSE VERSATILE PIECES

When selecting items to keep in your wardrobe, choose pieces that are versatile and can be mixed and matched in different ways. This will allow you to create more outfits with fewer items. Neutral colors such as black, white, and gray are great options, as well as classic pieces such as a well-fitted blazer or a pair of dark-wash jeans.

# BALENCIAGA

FALL 2023 COUTURE

At the Balenciaga haute couture show, Demna Gvasalia expressed his connection to clothes as a form of armor. Inspired by Joan of Arc, he presented a chrome-laminated 3D printed suit of armor, symbolizing self-protection and resilience. Demna emphasized his love for creating clothes and bridging the past with the present through couture. The collection explored the fusion of tradition and innovation, with a focus on tailoring and menswear. Hidden handcrafted techniques brought a sense of trompe l'oeil to the fabrics, mimicking fur and patterns. While some designs reflected movement, others exuded elegance and drama. The collection showcased the balance between visible and invisible techniques, paying homage to Cristóbal Balenciaga's legacy. Advanced technology and craftsmanship came together to create unique pieces, combining costliness with publicity-generating appeal, encapsulating Demna's vision.

VORAKA **MAGAZINE**

# BANGKOK FASHION WEEK

AWAITS YOU FOR NOV 2023 SHOW IN

## BANGKOK, THAILAND