

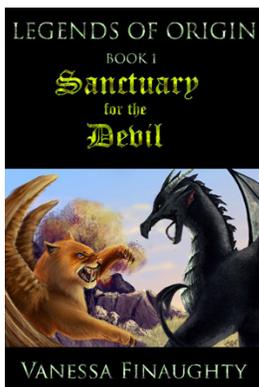
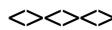
Character interview with Liam MacAskill from Vanessa Finaughty's sci-fi fantasy series, *Legends of Origin*



Liam MacAskill is an ex-private investigator and bodyguard who has taken it upon himself to find mankind's origins. His search began when he met Joshua, a demon hunter who became a close friend over time. Liam is spurred by his desire to answer the unanswered questions most people have regarding our origins. Where do we come from? Did we evolve or were we created? If the latter, *why* were we created? Do our lives mean anything

at all and is there a greater plan for us? What comes after death? In Book 2 of the *Legends of Origin* series, *Orion's Harvesters*, Liam thinks he's discovered mankind's origins, but, as he will discover in future books, our origins are a lot more complicated than meets the eye.

Although it may seem otherwise, Liam abhors religion and seeks real answers to these questions rather than the standard answers that one gets from followers of any organised religion. He's even come face to face with the Devil, though he is yet to discover the true nature of the 'fallen angel' we call Lucifer. In his journey to find the Creator of All, Liam was joined by the Tridorian monk, Arthean, who led him to safety in *Sanctuary for the Devil* when the land's ruler wanted him dead, and helped him to find the Garden of Origin. As odd a pairing as this might appear, the two work well together and have developed a strong friendship.



I was quite intrigued to have Liam MacAskill agree to meet me for an interview. This man is not easy to pin down, especially in light of the fact that his travels often take him off world. My first impression of Liam is that there is more to the man than meets the eye. He exudes a quiet intensity and, though he appears relaxed, there is a sense of tight control just beneath the pleasant exterior. I remind myself that he spent his formative years as a private investigator and bodyguard. Vigilance is a part of the job description and is probably second nature to him. His smile, however, is genuine and I feel entirely at ease as we sit down to brimming cups of freshly brewed coffee.

Upon asking Liam about his adventures and experiences before he began his quest to discover the origins of the human race, he confesses to being a typical young boy. He tells me that this included getting up to as much mischief as possible, playing Cops and Robbers, climbing trees and the like. He blushes quite unexpectedly as he admits that his teenage years involved a lot of drinking, and then shakes his head as he says that he also

tried a number of drugs. “I was a bit stupid back then,” he admits, shaking his head. “Anyway, I was working for a private investigation company when I met Joshua. My boss agreed to give me six months off work with no pay, with the guarantee of my job waiting for me after the agreed time. I never did go back, because he got hit by a car the same day and the company closed. Luckily, I have quite a nice balance in my savings account.” He grins. “So my life has always been quite exciting and action-filled, whether self-created or job-related.”

On asking Liam to further describe the mechanics of the teleportation crystals and what he experienced the first time he used them to travel to another world, he admits that he’s not very technically minded. “To be honest, thinking about that makes my head hurt,” he says, smiling. “I haven’t spoken to anyone who knows *exactly* how they work, but Vareck gave me a good idea. You visualise where you want to be, then the crystal somehow channels energy from the surroundings and makes it happen. When your mind is truly relaxed, its ability to move your body is enhanced, resulting in your mind and body moving as one.” He leans forward in his seat and takes a sip of his coffee cup before continuing.

“When this happens, your movements are more fluid and your reflexes faster. Somehow, this, when combined with the crystal’s ability to draw energy from the surroundings, enables a person to teleport. In more scientific terms, when you imagine being somewhere, that place or person is an anchor point. You obviously know where you currently are, and that’s the other anchor point. The crystal somehow creates links between the two anchor points that allow you to dematerialise and re-materialise without your cells being rearranged in the process. It’s almost like a super computer that can store your information down to the smallest particle, take it apart and then put it all back in place. The crystals can store energy too, so if you’re in a location without much energy, for example, an empty steel-enclosed room, they draw from the stored energy. They’re actually no different from any other quartz crystal – except only those mined from areas near nexus points work: those are the places where Earth’s ley lines meet. Oh, and they can also be used as matter transfer generators and to power spaceships, and can be programmed to specific time-space co-ordinates, but I have no idea how *that* works.”

Though fascinating, I can fully understand why the subject makes his head hurt! Turning my thoughts to another subject of somewhat morbid fascination, I feel compelled to ask his overall impression of the Devil. Many people simply refuse to believe that he exists at all and I am forced to wonder what Liam’s first impressions of the Devil was and if he, too, once held this viewpoint. “You’re going to think I’m nuts, but in spite of the fact that I’ve seen him for myself, a part of me still believes Lucifer doesn’t really exist; that he was invented for the purposes of one group maintaining perverse power over the masses.” His cheeks redden as he makes this admission, but then he shrugs rather nonchalantly and relaxes back into his seat. “Being in the same room as Lucifer isn’t something I ever want to do again,” he says tonelessly, shuddering before his eyes glaze over for a moment. His attention seems to wander before he visibly shakes himself in an attempt to snap himself out of the recollection. “Honestly, I was so terrified my legs almost refused to hold me up.”

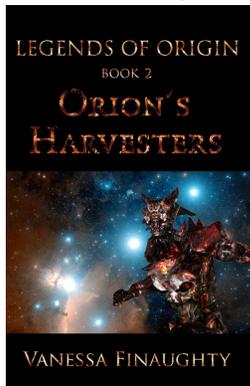
In total contrast, I ask what his first impression was of the Ilanenorian people. He tells me that they are Arthean’s friends. “Arthean had already proven he could be trusted – with my life, and I mean that literally – so I trusted them by association. They look a little

different to us, but after travelling to planets no human has set foot on before, a little blue skin and pointy ears didn't shock me. Their voices sound like ours too, just smoother, if that makes sense." At the mention of travelling to planets no human has set foot on, I am led to wonder if Liam was ever homesick for Earth while he was on Tridor. "I always get a little homesick no matter where I am," he says. "Earth has the potential to be a beautiful planet again, if only humanity could see how badly we've screwed it up. Still, the homesickness didn't really bother me on Tridor's Earth, because it's so similar to ours, just unmarred by technological wars and overpopulation."

On hearing this statement, I feel compelled to ask Liam if he has ever considered taking up permanent residence on Tridor's Earth, which is the more pure version of Earth itself, particularly in light of the fact that its general population is kinder and gentler than your average Earth resident. "Certainly, especially after I met Nairel, a ryokin. He's unlike any other creature you'll ever come across. In fact, I'm still considering retiring to Tridor's Earth one day, but I don't like to plan anything too far ahead of time; I usually end up changing my mind." His grin is infectious.

I ask Liam if he ever feels like giving up the fight and leaving all the horror to someone else to deal with, especially in light of the fact that he's lost Zac and Joshua to this fight.

He admits that, at times, yes, it has occurred to him. "The thoughts of giving up never lasted long, though. I'm too stubborn to admit defeat when a little perseverance could end well, and there are other friends who still need me in the fight, now more than ever – without me, Arthean would probably try to rescue Lenora by himself, for example, and I'm sure he'd get himself killed."



At the thought of losing another friend, I dare to risk what I know must be a painful question. I wanted to know if he would ever consider getting another dog after losing Zac. He answers without hesitation. "Not for a second. I suppose that might have been different if I hadn't found Nairel. Zac is irreplaceable, but Nairel is a unique type of special. More importantly, Nairel doesn't need looking after, so I don't have to worry about him as much as I'd worry about a dog." This answer leads me to my next question and we discuss the bond that Liam has formed with Nairel and what he thinks are the ryokin's best character traits. "His reliability," he admits. "He's always there when you need him. I also quite enjoy his mischievous nature even though it irritates me a lot of the time – if you tell him I said that, I'll deny it!" We both chuckle at this comment, then discuss his friendship with Arthean and the difficulties with maintaining a friendship that spans two planets. He assures me that he has enough teleportation crystals to pop in for a visit at any time, as he's found a reliable source for them. Knowing that he's unlikely to reveal that source, I ask instead what he does to kick back and relax.

I am unsurprised by his response. Liam seems to be your typical man's man in many respects, so I can only nod knowingly as he tells me that he enjoys watching wrestling on TV with a cold beer in hand. He is quite happy to hang out with friends around the pool or to enjoy an afternoon braai, a distinctly South Africa tradition, and he's no stranger to a game of pool. He grins as he says, "I find Aikido training relaxing too, but most of my training partners wouldn't agree." I can only nod in agreement.

When I ask what he misses most about his old life before the discovery of the Garden of Origin and the T'Acan, he grins cheekily and tells me that he got to sleep in on some weekends. I can only laugh at his cavalier attitude. I finally plucked up the courage to ask, "How did you feel when you discovered the creators of the human race and the reason they created us? What is the predominant emotion in the face of that knowledge?" The mood in the room turns sombre as he responds. "I was – and still am – appalled. I try not to focus on it, though, because the fact that we weren't personally created by some almighty magical being doesn't mean there isn't a Creator of All or that this being doesn't care about us. Who created our creators, then?" I think that, for any of us, this is a difficult realisation.

I ask him about the powerful weapon used by the monks to fire on the T'Acan spaceship and if he thinks a portable version might have been of assistance when he was actually on the T'Acan ship. He responds saying that it is a powerful weapon, perhaps too powerful, with the likelihood that a portable version, when fired, would not only have incinerated its intended target, but quite likely would have blasted a hole in the hull as well. This interviewer thinks that might not be a bad idea at all...

On asking if he has ever considered joining the warrior monks, his answer is: "No. Their world is full of secrets. I do understand the need to keep some knowledge secret, but I think everyone has the right to know the truth about our origins and what's out there. If the entire planet had expected the Harvesters' arrival like the warrior monks did, fewer human lives might have been lost." I can't help but agree with him. So much might have turned out differently if only we'd had the knowledge beforehand. I then asked a question that I'd been wondering about, concerning Liam's inside knowledge of the T'Acan and if he'd ever considered the idea of liaising with the government to enlighten them about all he knows.

He states rather firmly that the government has no idea he exists and that he'd prefer to keep it that way. "On record, I'm just an unemployed ex-PI who lives off his savings. Given the opportunity, I think they'd probably involve themselves too much in greater affairs and screw it up for all of us." He is very likely not far off the mark.

"What advice can you give to readers about preparing for the next invasion? We all know that the Harvesters have taken up residence on Kepler 22-b. How long do you think we have to prepare before they come back?" I ask. Liam isn't sure when or even if they'll come back to Earth once they're done taking the inhabitants of that distant planet and his advice is that, should they return, the best is to stay indoors. He tells me that their teleportation equipment only seems able to take a person when they're out in the open, so it's best to keep out of sight where possible. He's not entirely certain that they can't take you indoors as well, but why take the chance of being in plain sight?

I ask about Jack and what Liam's feelings are considering the news that Klarion delivered. "If you're referring to when Jack neglected to tell me about his discovery of our creators, I didn't really believe it at first. I still don't know why he would hide that from me. In the end, I was more disappointed than angry."

I wonder aloud if Liam thinks that we might expect aid from Klarion and the Zephlo, but he has some very definite ideas on the subject. He trusts a Harvester far more than he'd trust a Zephlo, especially after how Haias betrayed them on board the ship, and is sure they'd give up the human race to save their own species. Klarion's species is under

attack and they're probably far too busy fighting off the Harvesters themselves to offer us any aid. "It would be nice to see him again, though," he tells me.

I find Liam's frankness quite refreshing and it was interesting to spend some time with this down to earth, yet intriguing character. I've more or less got him to agree to an interview some time in the future, somewhere in between fighting the Devil and battling the T'Acans. Watch this space!

Those who find Liam as intriguing as I do can read his story in the *Legends of Origin* series.

A word from Liam's creator, fantasy author Vanessa Finaughty

Writing the *Legends of Origin* series has been quite rewarding. In a way, the series serves to further my personal exploration into enlightenment, though myriad opinions are presented so the reader isn't stuck with just mine. The series explores mythological beliefs and various current religious beliefs, along with a few unusual ideas. Of course, the idea is to *enjoy* the read, so there's plenty of action throughout and the series has what, so far, most readers agree is an entertaining plot.

One reader, in particular, boosted my ego rather nicely when he stated in a review that he usually only downloads free books to read, or those priced lower than this series (\$3.99), but enjoyed Book 1 so much that he purchased Book 2 and intends to purchase the rest, too, as they're published. That's how I want all my readers to feel about my books, and it's a big part of the reason I welcome feedback of any sort.

Liam is a particular joy to write. He's similar to me in some ways, but completely different in just as many ways – for example, I can't see myself teleporting on board a mysterious alien ship just to see what they're up to! I got a real kick out of seeing Liam come alive in an interview – the only greater highs are publishing a book and reading fan mail.