

# Meet YA Fantasy Author Alpha Cing

*Interview by Vanessa Finaughty*

YA fantasy author Alpha Cing is a rare jewel who stands out from the crowd as a passionate author and remarkable person. The enigmatic talking cat in Cing's debut novel, *Vexyna's Awakening*, could very well have been referring to the author when he said 'magic comes in many forms'. The book hooked me from the start, and I thoroughly enjoyed it despite the fact that I'm nowhere near 'young adult' age.

Vexyna is driven from her village by external forces beyond her understanding, setting her on a collision course with fate. On her journey to save her land from the Red Empress who engineered her village's destruction, Vexyna begins to discover her hidden heritage and teams up with an ever-hungry thief named Cateran, a crystal-generated life force named Phantasmine and a few other intriguing characters.

*Vexyna's Awakening* was originally written for a women's video game in 1992, and was more a horror than a fantasy, in which Vexyna's character was a vampire called Zillah. This was before today's vampire craze, so, when the story was turned into a novel, a new, more powerful, original and intriguing character emerged – Vexyna. The story took only one month to write for video game. Cing says, "It's easier to write an outline than a novel." Since then, dozens of edits and re-writes have brought this story to its current pleasing form.

When asked if any of the characters were based on someone she knows or knew, the author says, "The only character based on a real person was done so for her looks and physical prowess. That would be Cateran. Ages ago, there was a young woman with sublime looks and incredible flexibility. She had shiny, red hair in a page boy cut. The hair moved, but always flipped back into place without a ruffle. She would bend over and touch her forehead to her knees. Then she'd lift one leg straight up and touch her shin to her face. It was amazing."

Cing is able to write pretty much anywhere, though she doesn't have a writing schedule, as events would get in the way too often. However, if she spends too much time away from writing, her muse tends to shout at her, she says. "This usually happens when I'm doing dishes or going to the bathroom, which doesn't help." Cing goes on to say she sometimes misses her manual typewriter. "It was my magic machine. I'd sit down, put in a fresh piece of paper, and the ideas would just flow."

Cing prefers to write in silence, and, when asked how she deals with unwanted noise that's out of her control, such as an incessantly yapping neighbour's dog, she says, "Never underestimate the power of a good crossbow. Seriously, though, I usually jot down the gist of the idea and get back to it later."

Since she started writing, Cing has realised that she's more philosophical and disciplined than she thought. "I wanted to create a story that would teach young adults in solid, straightforward language how to achieve anything they desired. The 'Lessons of Alexander' do just that. Anyone who reads that chapter will have the secrets of the universe revealed to them. Real magic and how it works. Young people deserve to know what they have to do to get what they want while helping others."

For Cing, Vexyna's best attribute is her ability to grasp new concepts and situations with ease. Vexyna has her faults, but she's the type of strong character the author favours. If Cing could have anything from the world she's created, it would be 'the food created and automatically spiced to the exact taste of the individual', though she says she'd live there just for the zero gravity travel and absence of cars.

In line with living in fantasy worlds, if the author is ever dunked in slimy green gunk that gives her a super power, she would like it to be the ability to stop any machine, whether mechanical or electronic. “Take that, you stupid thumper car idjit. Guess you won’t be waking up the neighbourhood with your bass-boosted stereo anymore. ‘This ATM isn’t working. I’ll have to go elsewhere’. Yes, you do that. Hehehe. You won’t be able to get on Facebook on that one, either. Moron. Now maybe I can get some banking done.” I might have thought the author insane at this point, except I can see the benefits of such a super power.

Cing’s sharp wit extends to serious situations, too. Although she tends to avoid confrontational or relentlessly annoying people, sometimes it simply isn’t possible. While she worked at a major department store’s service counter, a customer came in one day to lodge a complaint. “I was busy under the counter looking for a price gun or something. The other girls tried to be as helpful as possible, but this jerk just kept insulting them and badgering them. Finally, he said, ‘Look, I want a name!’ So, from under the counter, I asked loudly, ‘Why? Didn’t your mother give you one?’ The man was livid. I popped up from under the counter to see the manager behind the irate customer. The manager couldn’t contain his laughter and promptly escorted the man off the premises – it turned out he’d come to the wrong store in the first place.”

When Cing isn’t working or writing, she enjoys reading, particularly her favourite author, the prolific Isaac Asimov. “He gives just enough detail to bring the reader into the story without beating them to death. His genius is in his simplicity. Plus, he had a wicked sense of humour. Nobody could spin a limerick like Dr. A.” *I, Robot*, the movie starring Will Smith and based on Asimov’s collection of short stories, made the author want to cry. “If you want to read what the movie should’ve been, get your hands on the script written by Harlan Ellison. It was the one Isaac wanted. Better still, read *I, Robot* and the rest of Asimov’s robot stories and novels. I do enjoy Harlan, but he’s a much more complex read. I read *Shattered like a Glass Goblin* in one sitting and thought my brain was going to run out my ears.”

Other pastimes the author enjoys include menu-driven video games and baking, and Cing says she makes killer brownies. It wasn’t clear if this is a literal description of brownies intended for a yapping neighbourhood dog or if it means they’re delicious... so I picked up the courage to ask the author if she’s ever been in trouble with the law. The response: “Why? What have you heard? No, I’ve never been caught. I mean, uh, no, I have never been in contravention of any laws.”

Cing advises other authors to hire an editor before publishing their books. “You’re too close to see your mistakes. Get your ideas down first. Then worry about form and function. If you get too caught up in the semantics and rules, you’ll find yourself stifled. It’s hard to let your imagination flow when you’re worrying about structure.” Another important factor that can make or break your book sales, Cing says, is formatting. “Don’t publish anything before it has been formatted properly and edited professionally.”

Fans will be pleased to know that Cing’s next book is due to be published in 2013. This will most likely be the next Vexyna book, *Cateran’s Calling*, but it’s dependent on the muse, as two other books also want to be completed – *A Soul’s Sojourn* and *The League of Amateur Detectives: Meet the LADS*. Whichever comes first, we’re in for a treat, though *Cateran’s Calling* is my first interest, as the author says, “There’s a lot more going on in the world of Antasta than is revealed in *Vexyna’s Awakening*. Some of it can be found in *The Master of Dimensional Intrigue*, but more will be unveiled in *Cateran’s Calling* and *Phantasmine’s Fate*.”

If you haven't already read *Vexyna's Awakening* or *The Master of Dimensional Intrigue*, don't miss out – grab a copy from [Barnes & Noble](#), [Smashwords](#) and various other distributors.