

Interview with T.C. Southwell

By Vanessa Finaughty

Q. If you weren't writing, what would your perfect career choice be?

A. I don't know, really, since I don't like working. It would have to be something else I enjoy, like art, or perhaps a fighter pilot, since I'm a speed freak. Of course, I'd love to be a space explorer, but that will have to wait for another lifetime.

Q. Has your motivation for writing changed throughout your career, and if so, how?

A. No, not at all. I still write because I love the stories in my head and want to enjoy them again, so I write them down. The fact that others enjoy them too, and I can make a living from the books, are bonuses.

Q. What is the most rewarding experience you have had and what made it so?

A. It was probably when *Demon Lord* was first published in SA in 2006, although that turned into something of a nightmare. The first time I held an actual copy of the book, though, was truly special. Since then, receiving my first paperback copy of *The Queen's Blade* has been more rewarding, even though it's not for sale yet. There's something amazingly satisfying and uplifting about seeing my book in print and showing it to my friends and family.

Q. Who are your top two favourite authors and why? Do you feel they have influenced your own writing in any way?

A. Steven R. Donaldson and C. S. Lewis are my all-time favourites, the former because his *Thomas Covenant, Unbeliever* series gripped me totally and transported me into his world, and the latter because he introduced me to fantasy and the concept of imaginary worlds. Donaldson inspired me to write books that would also transport me into their depths, and Lewis made me want to create my own worlds to escape to.

Q. When you were in school, did any of your teachers say anything negative (or positive) about your writing that stuck in your head, and how did that affect you?

A. A teacher accused me of plagiarism once because, apparently, she couldn't believe I had written the essay she marked. I was never able to convince her otherwise, either; in those days, fifteen-year-olds didn't argue with their teachers. So I got an 'F' for it, but I knew it was original, so it didn't faze me too much. I was just annoyed that she couldn't believe I wrote it.

Q. Do you sometimes get the impression that reviewers have written reviews on your books without actually reading the book first?

A. Yes, I'm convinced the one review I got for *Demon Lord* was based purely on the blurb on the back cover, since the reviewer only commented on what was in that. More often, I feel that some reviewers don't understand the book, or see what they want to see in it, even when it's not there. For instance, the reviewer who saw 'simplistic Christian imagery' in *Children of Another God*. That's a ridiculous thing to see in a book written by a New Age spiritualist! I've never even read the Bible, so any such 'Christian imagery' was coincidental or the product of his/her imagination.

Q. What do you think of fan fiction?

A. It's very flattering that fans want to write about the characters in my books, but it's also strange for me to read about them doing things I couldn't ever imagine them doing, or that are out of character for them. So I'm happy fans feel enough for my characters to want to write about them, but I'd rather not read fan fiction.

Q. If you had to pick between all your characters, who would you rather have as a friend, and why?

A. I think that would have to be Sabre, because he's got such a great personality with a fabulous sense of humour and fun-loving, helpful nature; a perfect friend. With his abilities, he'd also be mighty useful if I ever needed help! So would Bane, probably more so, but he'd be less inclined to be helpful.

Q. What's your worst bad habit?

A. Wow, that's a loaded question! I have lots, but let's leave out the personal, embarrassing ones. Of the ones I'm prepared to share, my worst is probably my smoking addiction, but I also have oddball sleeping habits, which tend to be nocturnal. Smoking is the worst, though, so kids, don't start smoking!

Q. What advice would you give to any budding novelist?

A. Write lots of books that inspire you and that you love to read over and over again, without ever getting bored with any part of them. Cut out any boring bits. Always write them for yourself, not your potential audience, and never allow anyone or anything to influence you in a way that detracts from your stories, in your opinion. Be yourself, and, of course, self-publish!

Q. What drives you/makes you tick?

A. I honestly have no idea, although I'd guess the wish to enjoy my life makes me do the things I do in order to have fun, like writing books.

Q. What annoys you the most?

A. Reviewers who give bad reviews to books they should know they won't enjoy. Someone who doesn't enjoy romance, for instance, shouldn't be reading books in the space opera genre, even if they love sci-fi. Space opera is, by definition, romantic sci-fi, and the sci-fi is secondary to the romance. To then trash the book in a review that accuses it of being sappy and romantic is like someone who hates political drama reviewing a book in that genre and trashing it for being political and dramatic. Reviewers should stick to their preferred genres if they want to enjoy the books. Of course, reviewers who only want to give bad reviews are bound to find loads of ammunition if they read books in genres they hate, but that gives a skewed opinion. Then again, anyone who knows what space opera is should take a review that trashes a book in that genre for being romantic with a pinch of salt.

Q. When do you expect your next book, *When Angels Fall* (the seventh book in the *Demon Lord* series), to be completed, and what adventures do you take the reader on in this book?

A. *Demon Lord Book Seven, When Angels Fall*, has been delayed yet again, unfortunately, as I'm unable to complete it at this time. It's a case of 'can't think; brain's numb; inspiration won't come'. I have tried repeatedly, and just about everything I've written has ended up being thrown out. I can't force it, with the way I write, and trying to has just been a waste of time and effort. In *When Angels Fall*, the story of the quest continues, with more confrontations with dark gods for Bane in his efforts to save Sherinias' domain. The modern people who live there are particularly troublesome, with their attempts to retain control of their world putting them into conflicts with Bane and Kayos, both of whom become rather fed up with them.

Q. Do you foresee Mirra and Bane ever leading a normal life together?

A. Yes, although perhaps not totally normal, given his nature, but certainly a close approximation of normality, for a time, at least. Being what he is, he can make that happen quite easily, by opting out of his role as a god. Mirra is the driving force that wants him to do good, not only for the sake of those he helps, but for his own self-esteem. The time is fast approaching, however, when she will want to settle down and have a family, and I'm sure Bane will be more than happy to oblige.

Q. Where can readers purchase your books?

A. All the e-books are available at Smashwords.com, Barnes & Noble, Apple, Sony, Kobo, Diesel, Scrollmotion, Amazon.com and Amazon.uk. They will also soon be converted into apps for cell phones. In addition, I'm in the process of converting the books to print-on-demand paperbacks, which will be available at Createspace.com.