

1. What was your childhood like?

It was another world and utterly unique. I remember it as bright and beautiful. My family was wealthy. There were maids, chauffeurs, and governesses, and from that, one might get the impression that my childhood was perfect. It wasn't. As one ages, one tends to forget the pain that accompanies growing up, or under what circumstances. Everyone struggles as they mature, with different burdens and issues. For me, it was the level of competence and success that was expected, and I was neither competent nor successful. The accomplishments of one's ancestors, particularly if they were famous, create their own demands, and that pressure is subtle, persistent, and relentless. I had no clearly defined purpose for myself, and so I floundered for many years. Writing saved me.

2. Who was the first person you shared your first ever story with?

My brother. He was a good storyteller, better than I was. We would tell each other stories before we went to sleep each night until I went off to boarding school at thirteen. Telling stories also has another definition, telling lies. Lying was highly discouraged by the world I grew up in, and I learned to circumvent that prohibition by not answering the question. With a highly intelligent household, this was not easy to do. I've come to learn over the years that what is not said is often as important as what is said, and that the absence of a thing is often more significant than its presence. This element can take storytelling to a much higher level of sophistication, but that skill came to me much later.

3. What kind of cultural value do you think reading and writing have/brings?

The classic novels that have stood the test of time contain the essential parts of what a culture considers essential to itself. Without such works, we have no real idea of what a culture is, and what it considered important. Storytelling started with tales around a fire. Information, techniques, mores, and values could be passed to others in the form of stories. All cultures developed this method, but it was the Ancient Greeks who took this simple art to a higher level of permanence and sophistication. Orators spoke epic poems before large audiences. These stories had to be delivered at a high level of craft and were told over a period of several days. They were part of religious festivals and were in essence ecstatic experiences. Greek tragedies followed and were written down. From them sprang all that we consider entertainment in the Western World, whether it's novels, plays, TV shows, films, and even comic books. Knowledge is cumulative, and it is through reading and writing that what is known and considered important is passed to future generations. The value of reading and writing is in its ability to teach and to act as a long-term memory. We learn a great deal by reading. We immortalize by writing.

4. At what age did you begin writing? Do you remember the first story you ever wrote?

I started at aged six. I do remember the first story I ever wrote. It was published in the school magazine called *The Dawn*. It was about a little African boy that left home, killed a lion, and then returned home. I think it was all of three sentences long, but it had a beginning, a middle, and an end and managed to encapsulate the hero's journey in a few simple sentences.

5. What developed your love for writing?

I never loved to write until late in life. It was a relationship that took years to develop. The problem for me was that I was good at writing, and so I never gave it a second thought. We tend to value only what

requires effort to accomplish. It took me years to disabuse myself of that idea. Our greatest gifts are always disarmingly easy to perform, else they wouldn't be gifts. Unfortunately, because such gifts are easy, we discount their real worth. We err in thinking that anyone else can do the same, and likely better than we can. Yes, talent requires craft to reach its full potential, but if one fails to see the talent in the first place, what is there to craft? Craft is what determines the level of competency and skill that all great works reflect. The craft part for me, came from the translation of my nonfiction articles from English to Spanish while I was working for my wife's translation company. The clarity of thought and the precision of expression demanded was considerable since the articles were seen by teams of highly educated translators and editors. I had to become a professional, and with that decision, I think I became a writer. Over time, I discovered there was nothing like it. And I knew what it was I had to do. I had finally matured. What is surprising to me is that it wasn't that long ago.

6. Your thoughts on conventional vs. self-publishing? What route did you choose and why?

The paths we take are more often determined by what can't be done, rather than what we can. I tried to go the conventional route, but it was a dead end. No one wanted to read what I had written. There were so many other works by acknowledged authors to consider, and who had the time to consider a novel of 160,000 words in 542 pages written by a complete unknown? Nobody. If I had been in their position, I would have done the same. The self-publishing route was the only one available to me and so I took it when my wife offered. If she and the rest of my team hadn't been convinced that my writing was worthwhile, I wouldn't have taken that route either.

7. What inspired the plot of your novel, *Eye of the Moon*?

The plot was inspired by the ghost stories my father told me about my grandmother, Alice Astor. She was a noted philanthropist, Egyptologist, and socialite. She was also a student of the occult and a friend of Aldous Huxley. *W Magazine* published an article about her, and it mentioned that she might have been murdered. This was news to me. I considered their hypothesis unlikely, but if she was murdered, how could it have been done, given what I knew about the circumstances of her death? She had died reading an *Egyptian Book of the Dead* under mysterious circumstances. The idea was complex and interesting enough for me to make the attempt at a novel. The result was *Eye of the Moon* and its sequel *Shadow of the Son*.

8. What's the strangest thing you have ever had to research online for your book?

The strangest for me was to find out what it was like to experience real ecstasy, and its relevance in a modern technological world based on science. By ecstasy, I don't just mean what it's like to take LSD, DMT, or ayahuasca. I did want to know that, but more importantly I wanted to know about connection to other worlds. Does existence continue after death, or is it finished? What is Religious Experience, and is it valid? Are we spirits separate from the body? Where did this idea come from, and how did it evolve? Why are we here, and how do we discover meaning? Why is there only one of us? These are deep questions that interest me. I researched everything in the novels I have written, from the best vintage of a particularly fine Bordeaux to the time it takes for spaghetti to fall fourteen stories. I've learned so much.

9. Why did you decide to publish your book in the Spanish edition?

I have always felt that my novels would initially do better in the Latin world than in the United States. Call it intuition, but I felt it vitally important that they were translated into Spanish. The Latin culture is one I thoroughly enjoy and has far more experience with what I have written about, not just in the family dynamics, speech patterns, and magical elements, but in the emotional charge delivered to the reader. On the other hand, I was able to introduce various elements uniquely North American, such as contracts. Such an element may seem dull as dish towels, but contracts figure heavily not only in business transactions but in dealings with the occult, demons in particular. Marriages, friendships, relationships, promises, and the consequences if they are broken are all contractual in nature. Translating my works into universal Spanish also meant that it had to go through our rigorous translation process, which is quality oriented and intense.

10. Which is your favorite place to have coffee?

On my patio looking out at the lawn with my wife at the start of a new day. I either drink espresso, black, or a Vietnamese Instant coffee called G7, three in one.

11. What does writing mean to you?

One thing: connection.

12. What makes your characters real to you? Do you ever find yourself forgetting sometimes that they aren't real people?

The characters are real to me, as real as anybody else in my life. What makes them real is what they do, and what they say. I know them all, and each has a unique voice, feeling, and way about them. What is interesting to me is that they aren't static. They grow and transform as the events in the novels unfold. I like them a great deal. They say such amazing things. I want to be with them, and the wonder of it is, I can be with them whenever I want. I either pick up and reread what I have written or start the next chapter.

13. What advice do you have for any budding writers out there?

Write. Write what you want to read. If you don't know how to write well, read more. Look up words in a dictionary if you don't know that they mean. Learn grammar. Read as much as possible. Read the greats—not to copy their style but to discover why it is they moved you and how they did it. Write what moves you. Write what you think, not what others think. Find your own voice by being true to yourself and what you truly believe. Make it all up if it's fiction. Create your own world. You don't need permission. Cite your sources if it's nonfiction. Be precise, but above all be clear. Your job is not to be liked but to be clear in what you want to say. Find a person who is supportive and believes in you. Have them read what you write. Listen to what they say. Become your *favorite* author. It is a fact that you will read your writing more than any other writer, living or dead, and if you don't love reading what you've written, then you are not writing what you love to read. The logic is irrefutable. (Did I mention classes, software programs, gurus, teachers, agents, publishers, key words, important topics, what's in vogue? I did not. As I wrote earlier: the absence of a thing is often more significant than its presence.)

14. What book ideas are you currently working on?

I am mid the third novel in the Eye of the Moon series. It is a collection of stories held in place by an overarching tale on which the shorter stories are strung like pearls. That's the idea, at least.

15. How has your experience of being associated with AllAuthor been?

It's been good although I must admit, I probably should utilize the resources AllAuthor provides more fully. So far, I have used the book mockup tool and the featured listings. I look forward to the New Release feature when we have upcoming projects ready to announce.

Thank you for your questions.