

JANUARY 2018

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Books 'N Pieces Magazine

Beyond "A Million Steps" ~ Author Kurt Koontz, Traveling Man

Interview with **YA Author,**
Kelly Charron, Short Story
by **Alexander Greene,**
Book Cover Power, Freebies
and more!

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January 2018

Dear Readers,

Happy New Year, now already a few weeks in the past—we come out mid-month, so our issue date is a bit deceiving. Nonetheless, the sentiment is genuine, as is my thanks for your continued support.

A favor, first. I am trying to grow this publication. BNP Magazine is an excellent venue for new writers to gain exposure. Please share this with your friends. BNP Magazine is **FREE** and I would like to keep it that way.

We had many terrific responses to our interview with the great sci-fi writer, Robert J. Sawyer, in our last issue. You can see some of those comments in our Letters section.

This issue offers interviews with YA star Kelly Charron, author Kurt Koontz, with whom I enjoyed a Boise luncheon, and a short story by Alexander Greene offering a reflection of a life. In addition, I offer an article on book covers and why they are so important.

Enjoy this issue. Feel free to share with your friends. If you download any books, or request any Beta reads, please do leave a comment for the author—it really does help them.

My very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'William Gensburger', with a stylized flourish at the end.

William Gensburger

Interview

Kelly Charron



Kelly Charron writes horror, psychological thrillers and urban fantasy novels, as well as YA books. When you see her author photo, you have to wonder what lies behind that normal-looking, attractive face, and whether her smile is indicative of some impending doom. I'll let you decide.

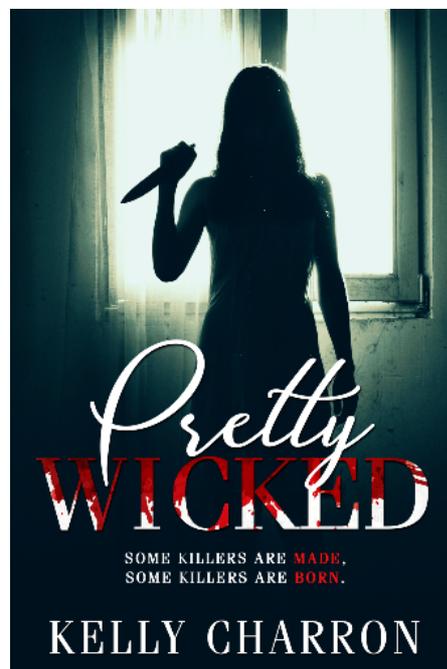
Q1) Your debut novel "Pretty Wicked" (now earning 4+ stars from over 97 reviewers on Amazon) was in 2016. Since then you have published a sequel "Wicked Fallout" and also have two other YA books to follow. Now that you have hit that sweet spot of good responses, solid following, and hopefully encouraging sales, do you find that psychologically it has become easier to write compared to getting that first novel out?

Luckily, I have the gift of being able to block the outside world out when I write. I write for myself first and then in revisions will consider my audience and figure out if what I'm doing still works. I read a lot in the genres that I write in, so I feel like my natural instinct for reader expectations is fairly attune. You're always nervous when a new book goes out. You hope it finds readers who will embrace it. So far I have been very fortunate to have the positive response that I have especially considering the Wicked books' content. Having the main character be a teenage serial killer is not everyone's cup of tea.

Q2) Your themes are dark! Your author image is almost the opposite. Along with the picture, your professed love of chocolate seems contrary to the teenage serial killer motif. I understand your love of True Crime television, and wanting to understand how people can turn out so different, even from a young age, but how do you, as the

author, make that leap into a dark world that many people would hesitate to even think about?

Great question and the only response I've been able to come up with is that my childhood and life so far have been very calm and happy. I think the security and complete uneventfulness of my life allows me to play with very dark characters and themes since it's so far removed from my experience. True, my fascination with human motivation and psychology has always been at the forefront—including why I went to school for social work—so it was a natural extension for it to show up in my writing. I think most people are intrigued with villains, regardless if they are real or fiction. WE have a natural desire to try and understand. I suppose I write these characters to try and understand what makes someone so different from most people tick.



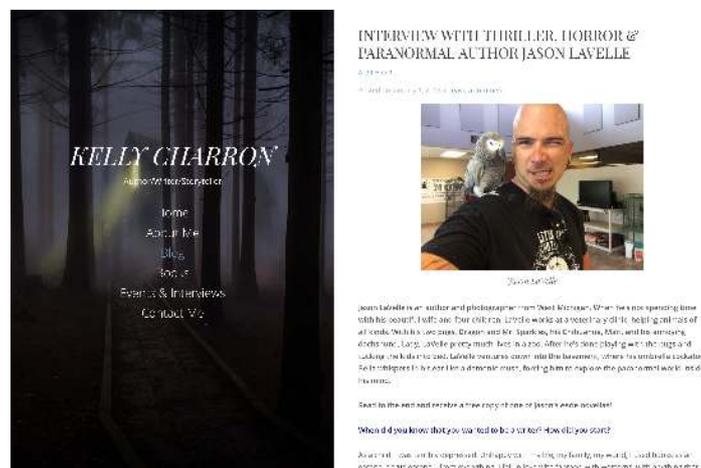
Q3) You also write from the villain's point of view. That requires some solid psychology to understand and interpret into a novel. Is this a serious exercise or are you enjoying the experience of being able to step out of yourself (rubbing hands, laughing wickedly..."oh this is so good!)?

I do rub my hands together and laugh wickedly. I joke, but I do take my characters very seriously. I want them to come off the page as authentically as possible so the reader has no room to be pulled out of the story. I did a lot of research into the psyches, childhoods, and overall lives of psychopaths and sociopaths, as well as many other personalities disorders and mental illness. All my psych and social work

classes helped a lot too. I interviewed a Colorado based criminal prosecutor and a woman who worked with children and teens who committed serious crimes such as murder.

Q4) What percentage of your writing is research versus the actual writing process?

I can get lost down the research rabbit hole quite easily. It's a great procrastination tool that tricks me into believing I'm being productive. Research is crucial because it adds those details that bring authenticity to the story, but you need to realize when you've got enough info, pull yourself away and get back to the writing. I'd say my level of research depends on the book. Right now I'm working on a YA urban fantasy, so the research about witches and magic is extra fun. I have to keep my eye on the prize and turn away from Google. Researching tends to go in spurts for me. A few days research and a few days to weeks of writing, until I need to look something else up.

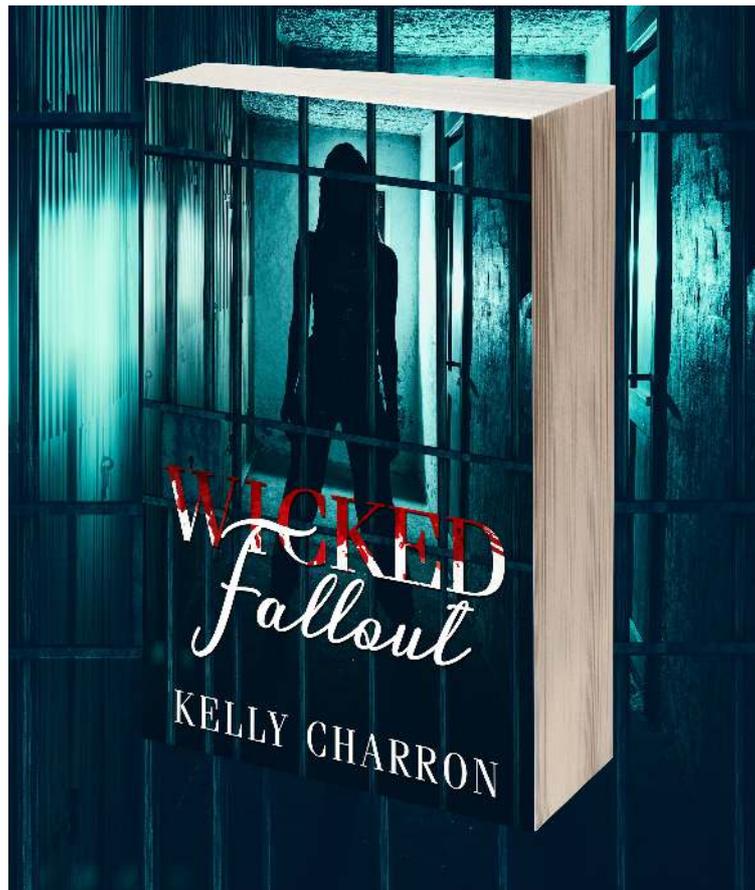


Q5) On your Website blog you very generously showcase many other writers in interview formats like this. What made you decide to do that instead of just focusing on your own characters and writing?

Writers are fascinating to me. I love to read about their processes, struggles, stories and lives. They are also usually very interesting and generous people. It's partially selfish because I want to pick their brains and see if any of their creative brilliance will wipe off on me. LOL.

Q6) Describe your writing process. Are you rigid, flexible, lock yourself away, or less restrained, different writing times?

I'm all over the place. I write in my office, on the couch, in bed, at cafes and at friend's houses. I just need a coffee or tea and I'm good. I try and fit it in a few nights a week after my day job and then at least either Saturday or Sunday morning for a few hours. I do not do well listening to music with lyrics. I can usually block it out at a café, but if I'm home I'll either have quiet or I play rain and thunderstorms on YouTube in the background. Plot and character bits will randomly pop up and I'll jot them down on scrap papers or type/dictate them into my phone.



Q7) Writing a novel is difficult. You have achieved what only a small percentage of authors achieve in terms of readership, reviews, etc. What do you do to reach your audience?

I love interacting with people and try to remain social via Facebook and Twitter. I also have a great writing community here in the Vancouver area. I go to writing conferences and try to make connections with other writers. As I stated before, authors are usually very generous and we will often promote for one another. I also have a publicist who helps tremendously, booking me various interviews, signings and events. Publicity and marketing are extremely difficult and I definitely haven't

figured it out yet, but I'm slowly building a readership that I hope comes with me into future books and maybe tells a friend or two. Nothing beats word of mouth.

Q8) Any advice for writers on what NOT to do?

Don't quit. It's tempting on a regular basis because writing is hard and the publishing industry is harder, but if you love it, you will find fulfillment in the work. This is not the career for fame and fortune. There are not many JK Rowling's and Stephen King's out there. Write because it fulfills you in some way. Also, don't be precious with your work. Show people and get feedback. It's the only way to grow.

Pretty Wicked: <http://amzn.to/2BaqSnx>

Wicked Fallout: <http://amzn.to/2rd3nuc>

[Editor note: My thanks to Kelly for taking the time to answer my questions. Below you will find a list of links to her social media sites.]

Website: <http://kellycharron.com>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/KellyMCharron>

Facebook: <https://goo.gl/UNkH3g>

Goodreads: <https://goo.gl/rf4NIM>

Short Story

The Cat That Lived

by Alexander Greene

The cat died on a Saturday morning amidst a blaze of activity designed to save its life. Hooked up to tubes, bandaged and shaved in crucial areas, the cat awaited execution atop the sterile metal table in one of the examination rooms. Howling dogs could be heard in the background.

It was Jane who called it “execution”. The veterinarian had softened such harsh realities to “putting the poor thing out of its misery” or “putting him to sleep.” But then the vet had also joked about putting her own husband to sleep and had not intended that to come across as a peaceful transition.

“There could be some spasms after the injection. It may not look pretty. Are you sure you wouldn’t rather wait in the outer office while we do this?” she asked.

Jane shook her head. Her husband, Jason, watched from behind. Despite the sadness of the moment, he found himself intrigued by the unfolding event, semi-detached as though he were watching a National Geographic television special or one of those made-for-T.V. movies that were so popular a few years earlier.

He noticed the calmness of the vet, the way her face would contort into a grieved expression without the substance of grief, as though she wanted you to believe that she was killing her own pet rather than yours. He did not feel convinced.

The vet-tech attached another tube, one into which fast-acting poison would later be injected. The first shot is only a sedative to calm the animal, he was told. The second one paralyses the heart. Ka-boom!

Robert could envision a future world in which the elderly were dispatched with the same precision and the consoling pre-eulogy of the attending physician “putting the poor thing out of his/her misery”.

“It’s better this way,” the vet said, her eyes offering another rendition of sadness and sympathy as she discharged the contents of the syringe through the tube leading into the cat.

The cat's head, which until this point had been free-moving, slowly dropped to the table, its eyes flickering then glazing over as the lids closed one last time. And that was it.

"Would you like us to take care of his remains?" the vet asked.

"Please," Jason said, clearing his throat and answering before Jane could argue a case for burying it in the backyard where she would undoubtedly place a headstone and flowers and grieve, periodically, in an almost human way.

Now, in front of him, she began to cry and he considered that he should, perhaps, hold her, console her for the pain he knew she felt. He could not bring himself to do so and instead passively watched her.

"It's not always so peaceful," the vet said, checking for a heartbeat. There was none. "I'll let you say your goodbyes," she added, leaving the room.

Jane gently stroked the cat's fur then suddenly pulled back as the body was already stiffening and now gave the appearance of a stuffed toy rather than something that, moments before, had lived.

"We did the right thing," he told her. "He'd only have lived another week and been in pain. His liver was gone. You spared him some pain."

"But not myself," she blurted, turning away from the cat and shielding her face in her hands. "He was my cat. I had him before we were married. I feel like part of my life has died as well."

"He had a damned good life. He ate better than we did. He slept on the bed between us, and he peed wherever he felt like. He was a fat cat who got damned lucky."

"You don't understand," she said, walking out and leaving him alone with the corpse.

"But I do," he said to the cat. "She killed you with all that fatty food she fed you. But what did she do to me?"

In the car on the way home she was silent, staring at the fields slipping passed. Ahead a stray cat sat curbside watching the car as it approached. She looked, but paid it no attention.

"Do you think he felt any pain?" she finally said.

"No pain. He was purring right up until his heart stopped. Not a bad way to go really."

"I miss him already," she said. "It won't be the same without him."

“Nothing will be the same,” he said, knowing it to be the truth; the cat’s illness merely brought to the surface the years of resentment which had followed the incident. And in a selfish way he found himself glad of the cat’s death for the pain he knew it caused her.

“You just don’t understand what I’m feeling.”

“I understand more than I’m given credit for.”

“He was my child, my baby. We never had any children so he was it.”

“Your choice, not mine.”

“We didn’t need children,” she said.

“You didn’t need children.”

He pulled the car into the driveway and got out. He was standing in front of the house that he always considered hers – she had picked it.

It was a small brick house surrounded by pine trees. She had decorated it, selected the shrubbery and the flowers and the cobblestones and, on the inside, the furniture and the color of the paint on the walls, in the same way that she had selected the pattern of their dishes and the design of the bed sheets, all of which, at this moment, he hated more than he knew he could ever express.

And he had allowed her those pleasures because it made her happy and, at the time, he just wanted her to be happy; just as the fat cat sleeping between them made her happy.

It was not his house. It held none of his persona. And standing by the front door he knew he would become to it, the stranger he already felt he was.

Inside, she wandered through the rooms noticing the emptiness before settling on the couch. She told him so and he shrugged and replied, “Only now?” and with a nod apologized for the cruelty of the statement.

“Why even apologize when you don’t mean it?”

“Let’s not start,” he said, pouring himself a scotch and her a large glass of sherry, knowing she would be starting on something more volatile, such as the half-empty Southern Comfort she kept hidden in the garage behind the laundry supplies.

He handed her the glass and raised his in a toast. “To the cat,” he said, “who was lucky enough to have an easy life and a quick way out.” He took a large sip.

She sat silent for a moment, sipped at her drink before speaking. “I had hoped that things had changed with us,” she said.

"Things never change."

"More's the pity. You can't just forgive me, can you?"

"Forgive? That's easy. Forgetting is the part I can't seem to do. Knowing that it was so incredibly stupid..." He took another sip, shook his head. "Rehashing again, I suppose..."

"To hell with you," she hissed, and then finished her drink with a gulp.

"Do you remember the plant you got when we were first together?"

She nodded. "I bought it right after we made love the first time."

"And the antique, Oriental, glass painting?"

"It broke. The frame wasn't strong enough to hold it."

"Not after you threw the salt shaker at it. And even though you said that the plant would grow with our love, it knew something you didn't. It died."

"And you're glad that the cat died, even though you'd never admit it."

"I don't begrudge the cat. But you, you could have told him 'no', that your marriage meant something more than getting drunk and giving in."

"Damn you," she shouted, charging from the room and slamming the door behind her.

"No, damn you," he found himself screaming after her. He poured himself another drink. The cat got lucky, he thought.

In the next room he could hear her crying. He wanted to pack his bags, to walk out, relish the revenge he wished so desperately he could obtain.

How could I ever trust you again, he thought? How could I leave you alone and not wonder? All his life he had expected that he would have a marriage of trust and love and in his mind he knew that he could never have betrayed her in the way that she had betrayed him.

It had felt as though his life had ended, as though someone had sliced a section from him, a lump of flesh seething with all the lost hope and idealism.

Their wedding picture in a tarnished silver frame stared back at him. There were two happy people he could not remember. They looked happy, almost certain of the choice they

had just made, moments before the flash went off. Like thoughts of the cat, those moments seemed muted now.

He went back outside and stared in through the window. It was quiet outside, the cool air pressed comfortably against him. Safety in silence, he considered.

He watched as she came from the bedroom, a wrinkled tissue in her hand, and she sat down on the couch.

The motions felt right. He looked away then back again.

He watched as she came from the bedroom and sat down on the couch, next to the fat cat.

He would go inside in a moment and tell her he was leaving. He looked at the cat. The cat's liver was infected, swollen, and he was on a medication that would flush out the toxins. The cat had a fifty-fifty chance. They would know tomorrow, although he felt the cat was gone.

The motions felt right. They felt comfortable and well they should for he had practiced this scenario for a week now.

What if the cat had to be put to sleep? He considered how cruel it would be to leave her on a Friday night and have to have the cat put to sleep on Saturday morning. And yet he knew he could not stay. Each day he remained was like living life as an endless pattern forever renewing and becoming ever harder to change.

He watched her on the couch, petting the cat. This is not my house, he told himself expecting the cameras to pull back and the final credits of this God-awful movie to roll up the screen. This is not my life.

He would walk in and she would look at him. And she would see the expression of detachment in his eyes and know that what was to follow would hurt her for she knew nothing other than the fact that she needed him in her life, even if she had hurt him repeatedly.

"I can't stay here," he would say, and she would frown and not make it easy for him.

"What do you mean you can't stay here? Don't be ridiculous. What are you talking about?"

"Us," he would mutter. "I can't live like this anymore."

And her eyes would glaze over and the beginnings of a tear would form. "What are you telling me? Do you want a divorce?"

And his heart would skip a beat because hearing that word come forth from her mouth meant both pain and freedom, the former from the destruction of union, if even only in formality, and the latter from the relief of the burdens he had been carrying with him. "Divorce" was a word of power to be served up like a good cocktail.

"Yes," he would say. He had trained himself to say that word, not allowing the guilt or the thoughts of intense pain that he would be causing her to stop him this time; she had caused the same pain upon him to such a degree that he could no longer live with it. "I want a divorce," he would say slowly, clearly, savoring the fact that finally he would get the last word.

"Oh God!" he imagined that she would mutter, believing however that a more accurate response would be a belligerent acceptance of the proposal.

In his pocket he fingered the house keys, feeling the jagged edges, biding his time. He could feel the pressure in the coolness outside guiding him on.

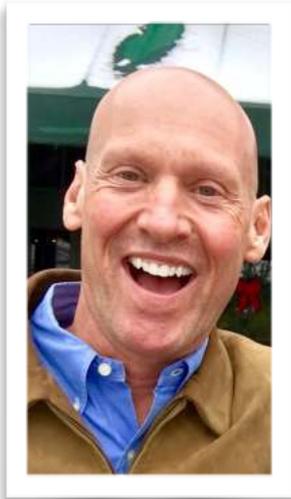
Perhaps the cat would live, he thought, sliding the key into the lock and turning the handle. As the door opened he could see the cat on the couch next to her. It looked up at him for the briefest of moments before closing its eyes, its head falling gracefully. Peacefully.

Alexander Greene is a writer, book reviewer and researcher living in Seattle, WA. He's working on a collection of short stories titled: "A Time for the Killing." which will be released later 2018

Interview

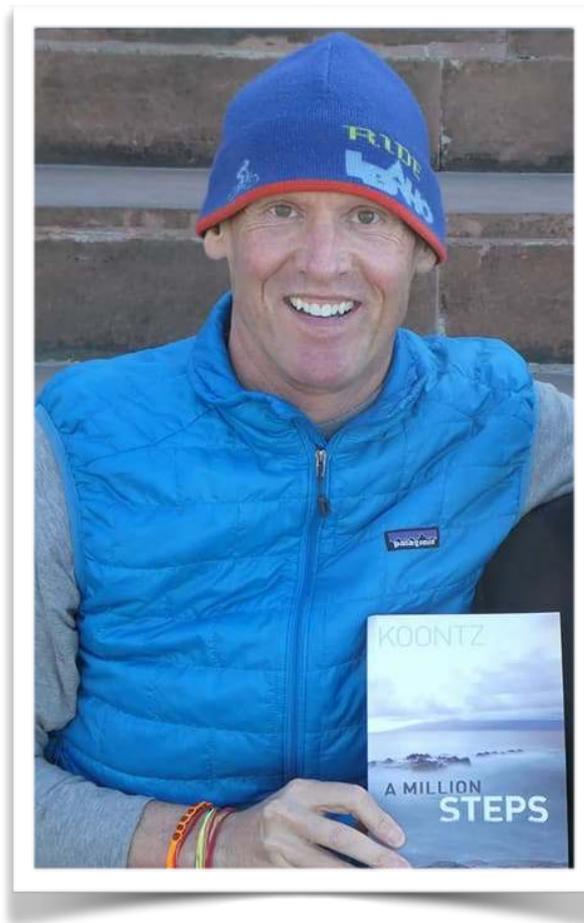
Kurt Koontz

PART ONE: Traveling Man, Writer, Explorer:



A Million Steps was written in 2013 after Kurt Koontz had completed the well-known Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route in Spain, a walk that equates to the title of the book, and a pilgrimage that draws many thousands of travelers each year.

The impression left on Kurt was so indelible that he had to articulate it, drawing on his notes and photographs to flesh out the trip. It wasn't so much that Kurt wanted to be a writer, as much as a student of life, using the book to share the experience in a way others could draw upon. His life is spent traveling to a variety of places, seeking out life experiences, rather than just a travelogue. He views these trips as living books, visual impressions from memory, as well as the thousands of photographs he takes, to make sense of the world, help him stay grounded, as well as sharing stories with groups of people. In a way, Kurt is like writers of long-past times, storytellers around a



campfire passing on living history. Should you be fortunate to meet him, you'll find he is both personable and extremely easy to talk with.

Our interview is presented in two parts, the conclusion in the next issue. The first part offers some background and viewpoints from his successful book *A Million Steps*, and how that impacted his life. The second part will extensively cover his India trip and why there is a new book coming as a result.

Q:When I interviewed Robert Sawyer (see the last issue), he stated that he spends about a year researching his material, and then starts the writing process. When I think about you, you spend about a year traveling and then think about the writing part. Is that right?

A: *Yes, the opposite. I have taken some pretty big trips and so I got the whole idea of journeys from them. I think that every time you take a journey you get a little bit out of your comfort zone, and the larger you make that, the less fear you have in life. I felt*

a by-product of the trip was, wow, I can't believe I was able to do that. What can I not do now?

When I ended up in Spain on the Camino [see "A Million Steps"] and then on that particular trip, halfway through, I looked at this young man from Alaska, and we're sitting on top of a hillside and he made a comment that we were all changing. There was not one person who was the same person that started the walk two weeks earlier. How do you go home and explain that to your friends and family.

Q: Changing, how?

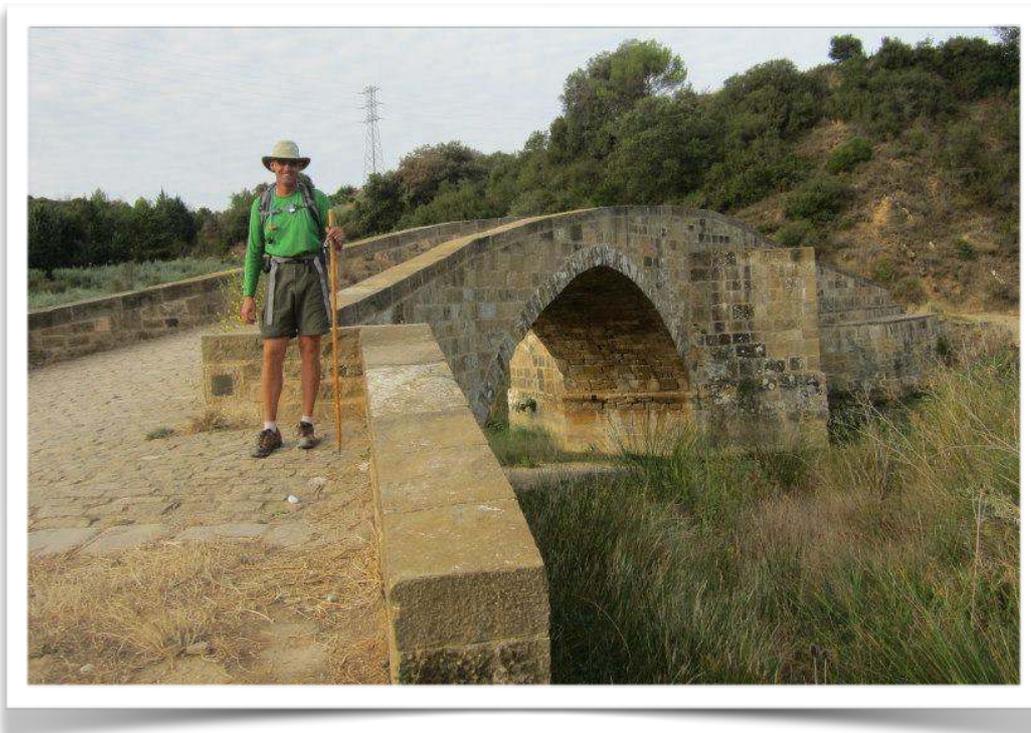
A: Everything. Your body is changing physically, your mind is changed, your ability to be kind to other people, your ability to accept the situation in the current moment as is. I think people become more unaffiliated with where they came from, to suddenly you are in a community of people helping each other get to the end of this road in Santiago.



IF EVERYDAY I WRITE, EVENTUALLY I HAVE A BOOK. IF EVERY DAY I THINK ABOUT IT, I WILL NEVER HAVE A BOOK.

Q: What is actually generating that?

A: I think there is something magical about that particular walk, and that's why people have been doing it for eleven hundred years, and that's why almost a quarter-million people do it every year. I think it is magic dirt. And it's a pilgrimage, that's what a pilgrimage is for. I decided right then and there, on that mountaintop, that I was going to go home and write a book, and I just don't hold myself back. Instead of thinking about it, making an outline, figuring out how to do everything, I said, forget that; I'm just going to write. If everyday I write, eventually I have a book. If every day I think about it, I will never have a book.



Q: So how on what do you write?

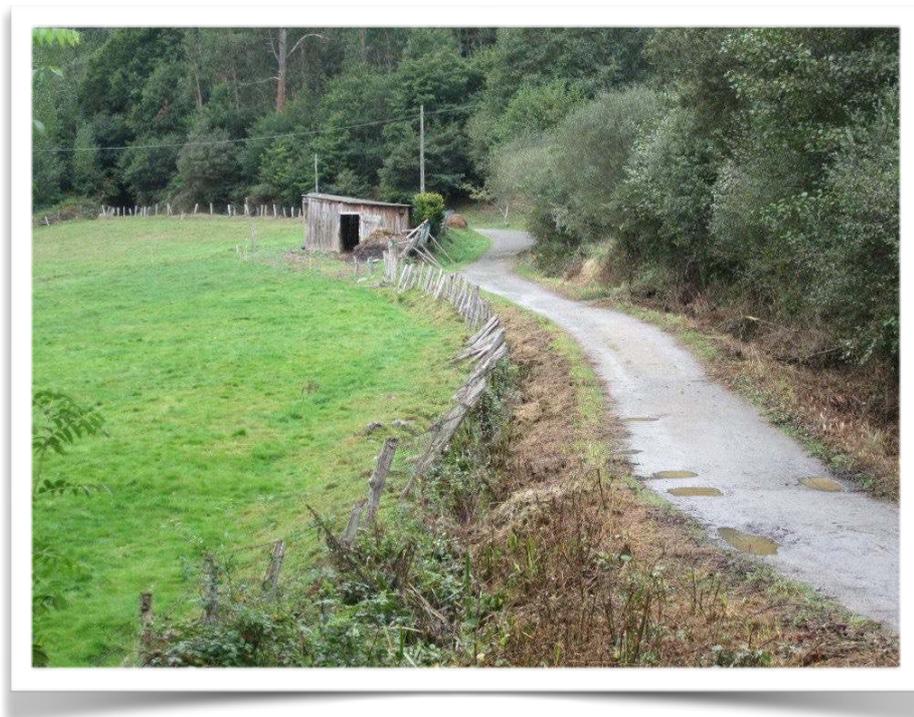
A: Keyboard and computer are number one to write on.

Q: During the trip are you taking notes?

A: Not exactly. I had a very small journal that maybe had two paragraphs per day, and then I have photographs: I really love photographs—that trip was in 2012 and I took 2095 photos on that trip. You can pull any one out right now and I can tell you where I was, who I was walking with and what I was thinking when that photo was taken. I don't know how I can do that, a gift, but I do. So I didn't need notes; I could have written the whole book through my photos. And that's pretty much what I did. I just write it exactly the way it happened. I didn't want to go and make a big BS story about it.

Q: So you are a more visual writer?

A: I think so. I have an ability to see a lot of stuff through photographs that other people never see. You can make a killer photograph from the way you see it.



Q: You also have a good gift of being able to talk to people and getting a good response from people. I would say that is more of your strength than even the imagery recall. Would you agree?

A: I very much do. I'm a good story teller. Everywhere I go I see beauty. While you can see a problem, I can see a piece of art. And when I meet people, I only see the good.

Q: So what irritates you?

A: Not very much. And stuff that does irritate me, I just get away from it and people that irritate me, I try and have compassion for them, I avoid them, especially if they are chronically negative, suck energy, or want to pile some big, crazy agenda on you.

I went on that trip and felt that I really had a need to tell a story, and so I came back and wrote that story. When you start that walk, a lot of people think it ends in Santiago, but it doesn't end at all. A lot of people think that when you write a book that's the end; but it was just the beginning. That book opened up a lot of doors, and even brought us here right now for this interview. That also led to every other trip I've taken since that time. And then the experience is cumulative; you get better about how to get to airports, how to put up with problems, and you get different perspectives.

MAHARISHI MAHESH YOGI IS FROM RISHIKESH...TAUGHT THE BEATLES HOW TO MEDITATE....

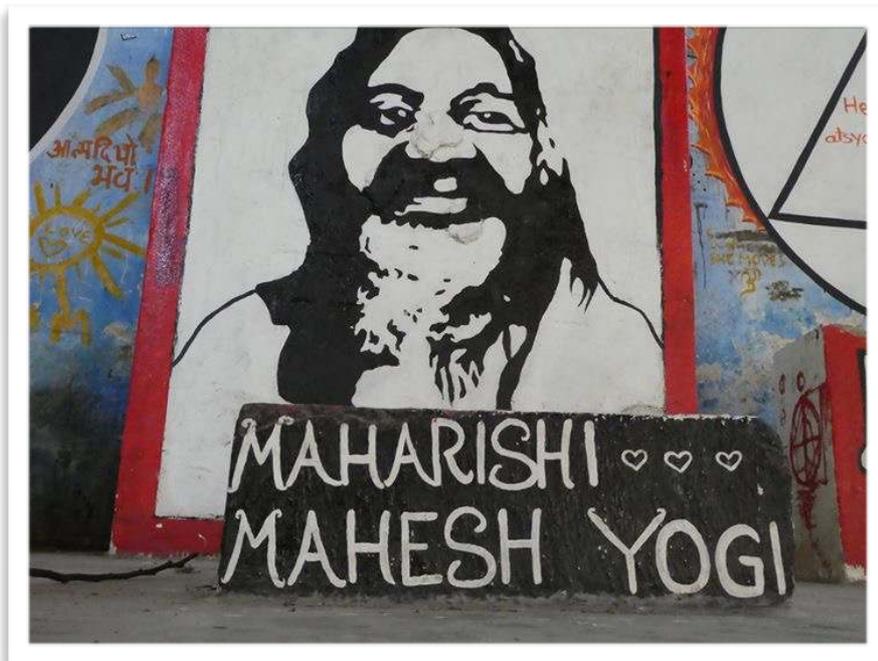
So, the recent trip I took to India (2017), had I taken that trip three years ago, it would have been completely different because I was a different person then. This was my third trip to India, to the same city, for the same amount of time, although this one was quite different. How this came about was there was a woman who read my book and she was doing service work for free, in an ashram, and we were Facebook friends. She told me that I really needed to come to this particular city. Now understand, India was never on my list, I had never thought about going there.

Q: So what prompted the decision to go?

A: I pulled it up Online and saw that The Beatles had gone there, the iconic tour. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi is from Rishikesh [Rishikesh is a city in India's northern state of Uttarakhand, in the Himalayan foothills beside the Ganges River.] He taught The Beatles how to meditate, and George Harrison really got into it, brought it to this country.

*So I ended up in India and now India is part of my soul. Ironically, on the writing part of it, after having written *A Million Steps* and done a book tour, I had an audience. SO every trip I have taken since then, I have more stories. What I have, I essentially write a weekly Blog for four years, so I have a lot material that's accumulated.*

I never thought I would want to write again unless, like the Camino, it came right from the heart.



Q: So do you enjoy the writing or is it just a necessary part of the story that needs to be told?

A: *I do enjoy it, but if I could wave a wand and just get the book, I would. The book is the message, not the art of putting it together.*

Q: Have you thought about just recording it into a tape recorder as opposed to writing it down?

A: *No, because you do have to select the words, try to make the most impactful sentence with the smallest number of words. I think if you just talked, you would miss too many details. However, if this goes where I would like it to go, I would rather be speaking to interested groups and sharing stories, sharing what I learned in Spain, India, and what I learn everyday. I'd also like it where I wasn't losing money doing it.*

I FIND THAT THE PEOPLE THAT LIKE YOGA TEND TO BE REALLY KIND PEOPLE.

Q: I was going to ask you about how you financed the trips.

A: *I had to subsidize a lot of these trips and because I have had these experiences and have enough to say, I don't think I need to do that. So I would like to break into that area.*

It is never ending travel. I ended up in Costa Rica in May (2017).

Q: Why Costa Rica? Don't tell me *Jurassic Park*?

A: *[laughs] No...I like to find yoga-centric communities and it's not just because of my interest in yoga; I find that the people that like yoga tend to be really kind people. Whenever I go anywhere, I try to find the yoga hotspot, and Costa Rica has several really good yoga hotspots and they also happen to have beautiful beaches.*

Q: Are these local community people or international people coming for that?

A: Both. The international people are the wood for the fire; the flame are the local instructors, and the infrastructure of the yoga studios. I tried two years ago to find it; but I didn't find it. The first place I went to just wasn't the right place. I got there and spent a month there, get the feel. There was nothing wrong with that, though, as I learned a lot.

Last year I found the right city. Unfortunately on the fifth day, I was surfing and I had a surfing accident and hurt my shoulder. The yoga I do tends to be a lot more active; but because of my injury I had to totally mellow out, that put me in a classroom with a different set of teachers and quite a lot of older people which ended up being a huge blessing. Had I not wound up there I would not have learned from them.



Q: When you came home you needed to get the shoulder fixed?

A: I thought it was something that time would fix; but I required surgery and a major recovery period, so I had to cancel all my travel for that year. As I got better, I asked my doctor if I could resume yoga. He told me to take it slow, take it easier. I took that as a green light to go to India and take a 200-hour yoga teacher training from my all-time favorite yogi, whose name is Surinda Singh. That's what I did. I went to India for my third time, signed up for the training course with a man that I had taken a lot of individual course from. I just really wanted to get into it.

CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE - PART 2:

India, personal growth, training, watching an outdoor cremation, friendships, why India is his favorite place to go to, and how the next book is developing.

[Editor: My thanks to Kurt for the enjoyable luncheon interview. His generosity of time and spirit is unmistakable. Boise, Idaho is his home base; if you find yourself close by, try saying hi on Facebook. See his links below, and watch for the conclusion of our interview in the next issue.]

Facebook: <http://fb.com/kurt.koontz1>

Website: <http://www.kurtkoontz.com>

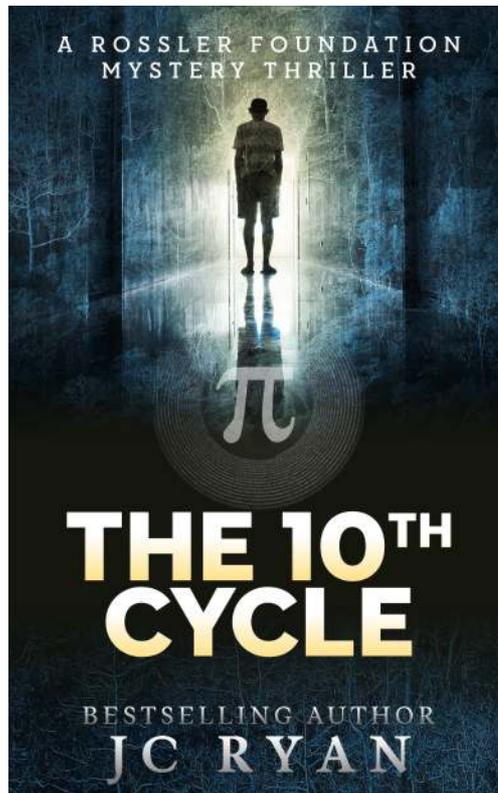
Photo credit: All photos courtesy Kurt Koontz

Book Covers & Book Titles

Two Important Parts to Increase Sales

Let's face it; there are a million books out there and no matter how great your story, or your writing, your work will get lost unless it is visible. Many self-published authors use shortcuts; CreateSpace's cover generator, or some other freebie that will hack a boring cover together.

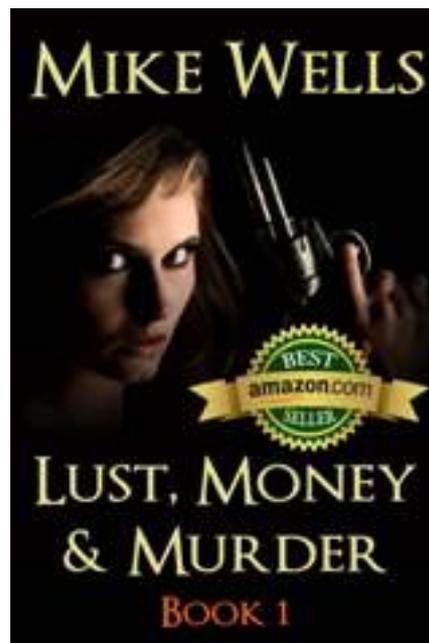
Getting a cover designer can be pricey, ranging from a few hundred dollars from a digital only cover up past \$800 for the whole thing—front, back, spine, blurb, author image, ISBN slot...



There are ways you can get a good cover for less, using stock photos and adding your own type on top from free, or low-cost programs. The trick is not how much you spend on a cover, but how much the cover grabs you.

The second important part of grabbing viewers, is the title of your story. Would you pick up a book titled: *Mary Had A Little Lamb*? Or would you pick up the same book titled: *The Lamb's Betrayal, Book 1 in The Mary Murder Mystery Series*?

Bestselling author, Mike Wells [Twitter: @MikeWellsAuthor] knows how to grab an audience. His titles include *Lust, Money & Murder*, *The Drive-By Wife*, and others that are attention getting. His covers, while simple, usually a face or body, are distinctively bordered in black—you know it is a Mike Wells book before you begin.



Research book titles and covers by searching Amazon for similar genres. See what others have done, especially the books with many positive reviews and higher sales ranks. They are obviously doing something right.

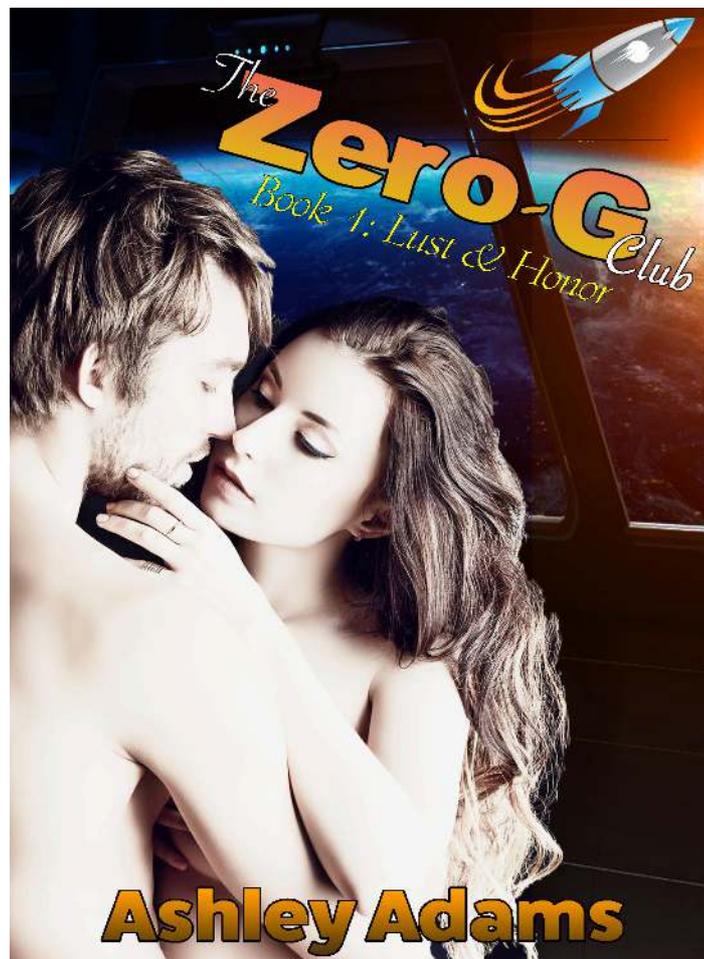
Fantastic covers and striking titles are just two ways to boost your book's visibility, perhaps the first two things a potential buyer will see as they browse. Take a look at some of the covers here. Can you find any that won't get much interest?

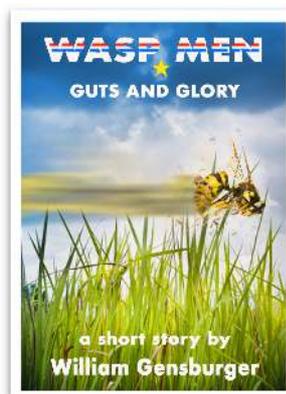
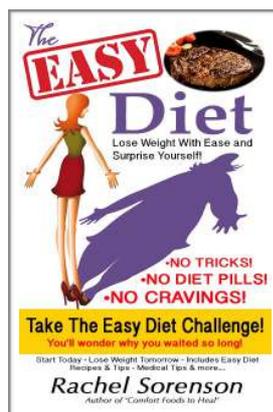
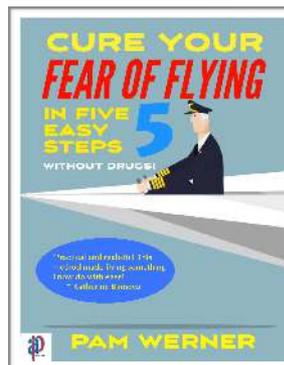
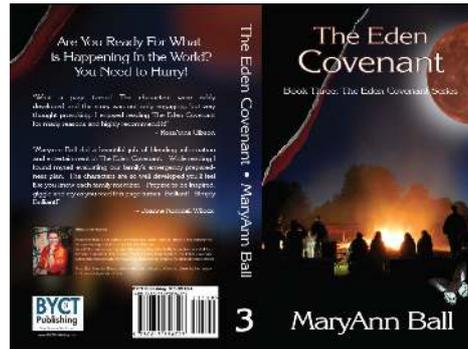
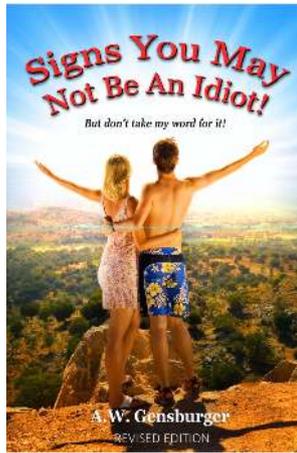
You can also see some book covers I have designed for other authors (below), as well as myself. I like to use a combination of original imagery, stock imagery, and strong colors. Simple designs are often the best. You want the image to work with the title.

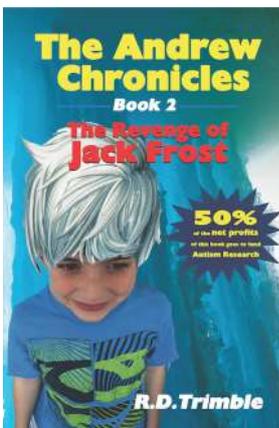
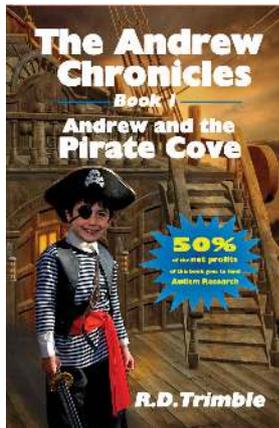
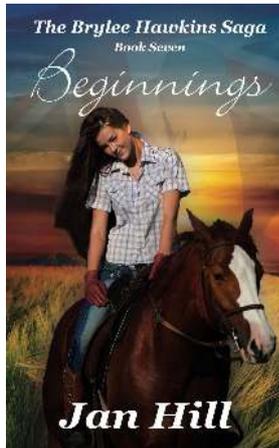
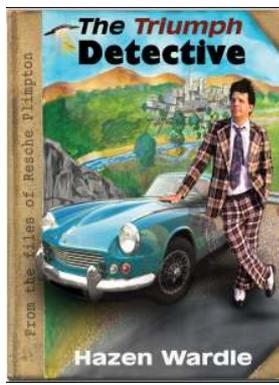
Of course, if you are a bestselling author, this rule is not as true since most authors with great sales rely on a fanbase. Nonetheless, you'll find most still adhere to this rule.

If you have any questions, need some suggestions or help, contact me on the AltPublish tab on the BooksNPieces.com website.

~William







Letters

Dear Editor:

Your December issue with Robert Sawyer was your best issue by far. I enjoy your magazine and look forward to both the interviews and the stories. I'm not a writer, so the tips you offer do not apply to me, but I like that you have a magazine that new writers can use. My nephew would like to write. Keep up the good work. ~Carla K (NM)

Dear Editor:

Congratulations on your Robert J. Sawyer interview. I hope that you can get more big name authors in the future. Your magazine is fun to read, not filled with ads, and free, all wonderful. My only concern is that you obviously don't make money from it. Can readers help? Do you sell subscriptions? I hope to read many more issues. ~Jacob Jackson (TX)

Dear Jacob:

Thank you for your kind words. You are correct that BNP is not a profit publication. We will need to include advertising at some point, hopefully things that are useful. With our growing readership, we hope that BNP would be a good advertising vehicle for authors, publicists, publishing companies to advertise their books. Any national advertising would also work. Spread the word. It's thanks to readers like you that we can grow. Regards, William Gensburger

Dear Editor:

Do you work with new authors still? I know at one point you did, but your website seems more focused on the magazine. Please let me know. Thanks. ~Peter Larkin (CA)

Dear Peter:

Terrific question. Yes, I work with new authors. Since I started AltPublish.com we have had several authors we have worked with, and ultimately published. *All That Remains*, by Robin Melhuish is one such book, an excellent piece of historical fiction. Another book that is about to be released is *The Lost Child* by Danielle Calloway. We had an excerpt in our last issue. We evaluate all work submitted to us, whether for inclusion in BNP Magazine, or for publication assistance. We do not charge for any of our services, including marketing; should we reach publication, we royalty share with the author. You can learn more at the AltPublish tab on the BNP Website (www.BooksNPIeces.com). You can also submit work for evaluation there. We do have a high standard and generally few manuscripts we accept to work with. We will, however, offer a detailed reason why we reject any manuscripts in the hope that it helps the writer decide their future direction. Feel free to email me should you have other questions william@AltPublish.com, and thank you for reading BNP Magazine.

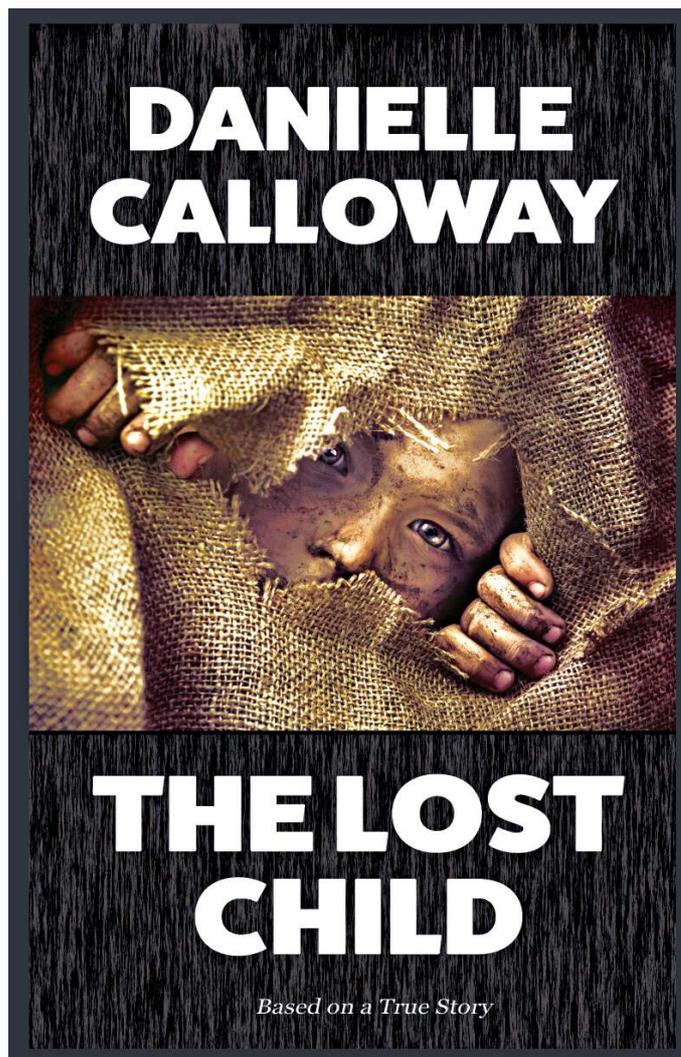
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