

Interview for *Interviewing Authors*

By Crystal Adkins

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Q: What genre(s) do you write? Why do you write the stories that you write?

I write fantasy. No, not the erotic kind. The kind with dragons and demons, swords and magic, battles and intrigues... all very much in the continuing vein of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Why fantasy? Well, because anything I imagine can come into play—provided I adhere to whatever world rules are set forth in the beginning. In any other genre (e.g. thriller, horror, mystery, romance, et cetera), I feel restricted by what we know to be true about *our* world. Granted, whatever I write about in my make-believe setting should still *reflect* real-world issues, but it doesn't necessarily have to do so in any obvious way. As long as the questions, themes, and other story elements are relatable, as long as it all feels believable, then the only boundaries in my stories are those I make for myself.

Besides, I see enough real-world drama every day in the newspaper. When reading/writing for fun, I prefer a bit of escapism. Fantasy, with its larger-than-life heroes, monsters, and talismans, has always been my first choice when it comes to leaving this life as we know it behind.

Q: When did you first realize you wanted to be a writer?

My memory doesn't even go back that far. I remember wanting to write before I even knew how to read, because I couldn't get enough of the stories my parents read to me. I remember watching movies like *Star Wars* and *Superman* and spending countless hours with my brothers playacting our own stories in those worlds. In fact, we were so young that we didn't even know *Star Wars* was called "Star Wars." We thought it was called "Darth Vader," and we all argued over who got to play the villain in the mask. Hmm, looking back, I wonder if that says anything about us psychologically...

Sad as it may seem, I can't remember a time in which I *didn't* want to be a writer.

I don't think that is sad at all, you have always had a goal *smiles*

Q: Who or what was your inspiration for writing?

Other stories and storytellers. Too many to list, really, but I most often gravitated toward action, adventure, and mystery. One of the earliest inspirations was actually the Bible. My parents had my brothers and I listen to audio tapes that accompanied read-along, children's picture books of various Bible stories. At that age, I don't think I had any comprehension of the moral lessons therein. But boy was I amazed by all of the battles, betrayals, and characters in those tales. From there, it was a fairly natural segue over the years to Lloyd Alexander's Prydain, Tolkien's

Middle-earth, and Terry Brooks's Four Lands of Shannara, which, to this day, are some of the most obvious influences on my own work.

Q: What is your work schedule like when you're writing?

I write first thing in the morning, take a break in the early afternoon to go to the gym, then write again until the evening—whether early or late depends on how much I've written that day. I set a minimum word count for myself and do my best to meet or exceed that. Some days are easier than others, but to do this professionally, you can't wait around for the muse to take you. You have to sit your butt in the chair and do the work, whether you feel like it or not. Sometimes, you look back and end up throwing that day's work in the trash, but even that can be considered progress in that you know now how *not* to write that particular scene.

I repeat this process six, sometimes seven days a week. My family allows this because, well, because I don't really have one. My closest friends all have lives of their own and/or live far enough away that we don't get together than often. So I try to make it up to them—and myself—during various vacations throughout the year.

I would gladly be part of your family, you're such a sweetheart and a wonderful person! Remember what I told you to do if you're having a bad day *smiles*

Q: Your book is about to be sent into the reader world, what is one word that describes how you feel?

I guess the word would have to be NERVOUS. An author is seldom the best judge of his or her own work. You might *think* you've created an entertaining and soulful story, but it's up to the individual readers out there to decide. Fortunately, by the time one book is hitting shelves, I'm neck deep in writing the next, so I really don't have a lot of time to sit there and worry about how the previous one is being received.

Q: What do you like to do when you're not writing?

Think about what I'm *going* to write. Really, it's true that we writers are *always* writing, even if it is just thinking about a character, puzzling through a plot point, or looking for source material in the sights and sounds around us. It's a bit of a curse, really, going through life distracted and never allowing your mind to truly rest. At this point, however, I seldom try to fight it.

As far as hobbies, I enjoy weightlifting, football, books, movies, and playing card games / board games / video games with my brothers and friends.

Q: How many books have you written? Which is your favorite?

Written, or published? I've written probably a dozen, starting way back in the second grade. Two have been published: *The Crimson Sword* (2005) and *The Obsidian Key* (2006). The third book in the trilogy, *The Divine Talisman*, is slated for an August 2008 release.

Of these three, I'd say that the second is my favorite. That's not to say I'm ashamed of the first. While *Crimson Sword* may feel derivative in many ways, that was quite intentional, so as to establish certain reader expectations for the rest of the series. With *Obsidian Key*, all bets are off. The story is less derivative, the characters less formulaic, and the ending less predictable. And yet, the clues are all there. I've been told that the story is even better the second time through, when many of the hidden/double meanings become clear. That, to me, is a great compliment, because it's not always easy to say two completely different things at the same time, and have either make sense.

That's not to say I expect everyone to like it. It is, after all, the second act of an Aristotelian trilogy, meaning that the tone is somewhat darker, and that some of the major threads are told only halfway through. But for those, say, who feel that *The Empire Strikes Back* was the best of the *Star Wars* films, I don't think you'll be disappointed.

Q: Do you tend to base your characters on real people or are they totally from your imagination?

I find it does help in the creation of characters to have a real-life physical description to go by, so sometimes I'll take someone I know (or some random stranger I see in the gym or grocery store) and use him/her in the back of my mind as a template. I've also borrowed the names of some friends, and maybe a quirk of personality here or there. But I try never to put the three together, if that makes sense. Like building Frankenstein's monster, I'll take bits and pieces from different people, and assemble them in a completely new way. I don't think anyone I know could point to a specific character and say: "Hey, that's me!" Although, if someone were to do so, and take additional enjoyment out of the story as a result, far be it from me to suggest they're wrong.

Q: How can a reader contact you or purchase your books?

I can be reached via email through my website: www.eldonthompson.com. I also have a fairly comprehensive Q&A section on the site, for those who are curious. Although, it seems to me that such browsing time could be better spent checking sports scores or playing poker online.

My books should be available everywhere. Though it's sometimes tough for newer authors to win shelf space, you're bound to see a copy or two at any major bookstore. Just look for the section devoted to "Tolkien," and you're liable to find a "Thompson" shoved in there somewhere. If not, they can easily order my titles upon request. If all else fails, my webmaster has set it up so that autographed copies can be ordered directly from my website. Hooray for technology.

Eldon, thank you so much for visiting with me this week! It is always a pleasure chatting with you and I did review your book *The Obsidian Key*, and loved it! I do look forward to the next book in the series but now I need to back track and read the first one *grins*

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