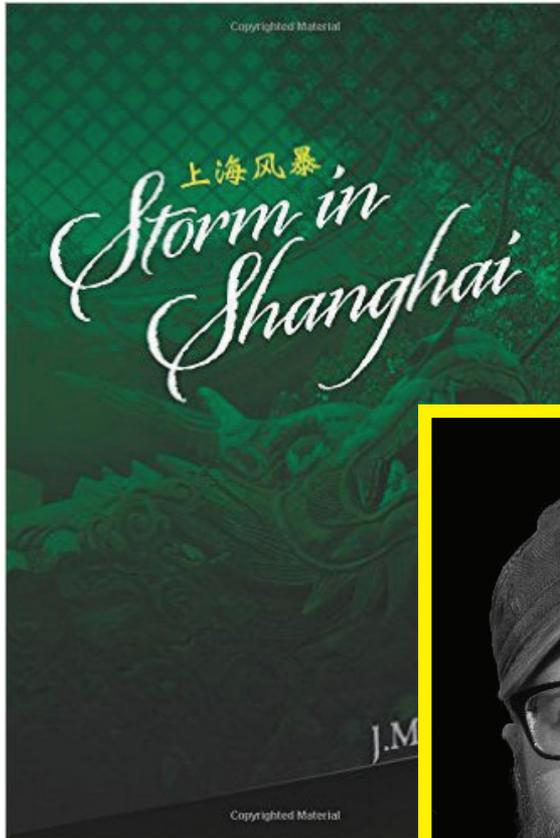


"Storm in Shanghai"

LOCAL AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT: J.M. BUSH



James Michael Bush, a Dothan native, is the author of the recently released urban fantasy novel, *Storm in Shanghai*. J.M. was born in Albany, Georgia before moving to Dothan, Alabama where he was raised from four years old. I was glad to be able to communicate with J.M. and pick his brain about his story, both of his novel and life. I was curious as to what event triggered his love for writing, and he told me his mom used to write poems. He said, "...In particular, I remember one she wrote about dragons and had framed in the house." J.M. explained how he thought it was just the coolest thing, and he inevitably began reading fantasy novels.

As a school-aged kid, J.M. was a "nerd" and had very few friends. J.M. collected comic books, participated in the school marching band and continued to read about elves and dwarves. He was an outcast, saying, "It always bothered me that I didn't fit in until I got into punk music...Oddly enough, after that is when I made the most real and lasting friendships of my life through the bond of punk rock music." I was also curious to know about J.M.'s support system: his family.



J.M. has two brothers, one older, Jay, and one younger, Josh. Jay was the one who sucked J.M. into the love for reading sci-fi and fantasy. "When he [Jay] heard I had written a book," J.M. told me, "he immediately wanted to read it. Now he wants to be a part of the editing process for the next one!" Josh isn't much of a fantasy fiction reader, but was equally ecstatic when J.M. released *Storm in Shanghai* on April 1, 2016. However, J.M.'s father, John, is perhaps the most avid reader of the three brothers; he always recommends and gives J.M. books of all different genres. "That is a good thing though because there is no better way to diversify your writing than to read something different than what you write," J.M. explained. His mother, Janie Hinson, was incredibly supportive, both financially and emotionally. However, J.M.'s wife might just be the biggest reason J.M. is where he is today. He justified, "My wife has been the greatest and most amazing support anyone could ever ask for. She has encouraged me to write and to do what makes me happy. All the while she works hard to support our family. Merissa is an incredible partner and I am damn lucky to be with her."

The main character in *Storm in Shanghai* is Jaret King, who speaks as J.M.'s voice most of the time. The idea for King came from J.M.'s life. King is "an American expat living in Shanghai as a stay-at-home dad, dealing with the isolation that comes with being alone with a baby all day and living in a country as a minority," J.M. added. "Then the added complexity of a double life... being that he is a mage and a magic law enforcement officer in a hidden magical society." This "double life" idea came from J.M.'s own split life: touring with a punk band in China.

I asked J.M., "What advice can you give to a writer wishing to follow a career as an author in the same genre as you?" Here was his response: "Ira Glass said it best when he described the path of a successful artistic creator; he says the first few years of doing it you will not be good. You will be almost good, and the vision and the voice will be awesome, but you just have to work and work at it. Write, write, write. Create, create, create. Only through this can you hone your craft, but don't listen to people who say that first book isn't good enough to publish. You wrote it. If you like it, put it out there and let others have a chance to like it as well, but don't rest after that. Keep writing. Do challenges or competitions that will force you to produce."

J.M. had a unique answer when I asked him his favorite part of writing: "My favorite part of writing is being surprised at what happens." J.M. elaborated by telling me you would think he should know what will happen as he is the writer, but more often than not, the story changes as he types. "I feel as though I have zero control

sometimes," he said. I was sure J.M. has read hundreds of books, so I felt it would be unfair to ask him his favorite. Instead, I asked what his last read was, and he responded, "*Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline, and it was amazing!"

I have yet to pick up a copy of J.M.'s novel, but if it's anything like I've heard, I should be in for a treat. This prompted my last and final question for J.M.: "Where do you see yourself in 5 years? Will you be publishing another book?" J.M. replied with a warm answer, "In five years I see myself as happy. The location does not matter. The money and job do not matter. As long as I have my kids and my wife, then I will be happy, but I will continue to write. I have two other novels already completed and will have at least one of them published by the end of 2016. I will never stop writing again."

If you want to pick up J.M.'s first great novel, it can be purchased on Amazon.

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You can also keep up with J.M. through his website and social media:

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Facebook: www.facebook.com/jmbushauthor

Twitter: @M_to_the_Bush