

A CONVERSATION WITH MATT COYLE about *NIGHT TREMORS*

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF, HOW AND WHEN YOU STARTED WRITING.

Even as a kid, I loved to read. Well, anything but school books. Like a lot of hard-shelled kids with gooey nougat in the center, I wrote terrible poetry in junior high. In college I took a detective fiction class and loved the idea of a PI being able to travel through different tiers of society just by following a clue.

When I graduated, I started writing a couple different novels that went in and out of a drawer over the next twenty years.

Finally, about ten years ago when yet another one of the golf companies I worked for went under, I told myself I had to either take the time off to write a book or quit talking about it forever.

I wrote the first draft of my first novel, *Yesterday's Echo*, in five months. About six drafts and ten years later, it was ready to be published.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE YOUR NOVEL?

The idea for *Night Tremors* came from watching true crime shows in which seemingly innocent people have been sent to prison for committing murder. It made me wonder what it would take to free a man from prison while battling forces on both sides of the law that want to keep him there.

HOW DID YOU USE YOUR LIFE EXPERIENCE OR PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND TO ENRICH YOUR STORY?

On a very small scale, I know what it feels like to be wrongly accused of something I didn't do. I blew that up in *Night Tremors* as Rick Cahill had been arrested for a murder he didn't commit and he tried to free a man he believes to be unjustly imprisoned.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE OR MOST SYMPATHETIC CHARACTER? AND WHY?

My favorite as well as most sympathetic character is Timothy Buckley, the lawyer trying to free Randall Eddington from prison whom he believes to be innocent. Buckley is a pragmatist, but a true believer who tries to do what's right while battling his own demons. He and Rick have a rocky history but come together to in an effort to free Randall. Buckley appeals to me because he recognizes his own flaws but doesn't let them deter him from ably working the most important case of his life. To me, Buckley is the soul of *Night Tremors*; flawed, battle-scarred but determined to right a wrong no matter the toll.

WHO IS YOUR LEAST SYMPATHIC CHARACTER? AND WHY?

I have one, but I'll let the readers decide for themselves.

WHAT PART OF WRITING YOUR BOOK DID YOU FIND THE MOST CHALLENGING?

I think F. Scott Fitzgerald said that every author only has two stories to tell. I didn't want to make the mistake of telling the same story over and over again. The challenge in *Night Tremors* was to transition Rick from being the center of the hurricane, as he was in *Yesterday's Echo*, to a slightly removed player but still embroiled in events in a believable way. I think I've succeeded and have given readers the angst and action they liked in *Yesterday's Echo*.

Night Tremors also has a complicated plot so I had to make sure everything went where it was supposed to go.

Overall, a very rewarding experience.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE THAT READERS WILL TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR BOOK?

Time well-spent.

WHAT WRITERS HAVE INSPIRED YOU?

Raymond Chandler, Ross MacDonald, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald
Contemporary: Robert Crais, T. Jefferson Parker and Michael Connelly

WHAT IS THE WRITING PROCESS LIKE FOR YOU?

Painful.

I start with a skeletal outline which really just consists of an idea for a beginning and an end which may or may not change in the ensuing months. Once I have the two markers, I spend the next year filling in the 95,000 blanks. This is what I and others call blank-paging. It's an exciting way to write as I experience the story as it hits the page. However, it demands intense rewriting. Along the way I drop anchors of plot or character to further explore in rewrites that often end up going nowhere. The rewarding part is finding an anchor that looked like a dead end three months earlier and turns out to open up a new plot twist, subplot, or insight into a character.

I wouldn't recommend my writing process to anyone sane, but I've learned to trust it and keep dropping anchors.

WHAT IS THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE ABOUT WRITING THAT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

Put your ass in the seat.

If you're not writing, you're not writing.

WHAT IS THE WORST PIECE OF ADVICE ABOUT WRITING THAT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

Probably something I said to myself. Fortunately, I can't remember what it was.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU? ANY NEW BOOKS IN THE PIPELINE?

Starting book # 3 of the Rick Cahill Crime Series.

ANY FINAL WORDS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY ABOUT YOURSELF, YOUR NOVEL, OR LIFE IN GENERAL?

Put your ass in the seat or life will pass you by.