

FORWARD

“Where the hell did these ideas come from?”

Growing up in Santa Clara/San Jose, California in the 1960's gave me a very unique opportunity to be exposed to other types of cultures without me even realizing it.

My mother's parents, with whom I was very close to lived on a block in older San Jose where resided a secret fellowship of learned individuals called the “Rosecrusians.” As a child of ten, I had no idea why these secretive people were buying up these 1920's style single homes on this particular block, destroying them one after another in order to build more of their Egyptian-style buildings they created. But no one else seemed alarmed, so I thought as a child that this was somehow normal.

The main building on the other side of my grandparent's home had a sweeping garden, complete with a long canal in the middle of it. It was filled with papyrus plants- seven feet tall- and held a number of goldfish and koi that would catch my attention. This led up to a grand temple entrance, no signs to say what it was, but two large doors leading into the center of the building, always and forever closed. Imagine, as a child having these things just around the corner from your second home, a world away from anything I had ever known. Ornate and secret. My young imagination soared. Next to all of this, on the far corner of the block was a small garden with a large statue of a strange man in the center. In time I found out that this was a statue of Octavian Augustus, the very first Emperor of Rome, after Julius Caesar. But he was so young, so strong-looking in his armor, his breastplate and long cape in solid bronze. I of course had no idea what all these things had in common, or how they could possibly be connected. His out-stretched right arm seemed to be pointing the way. As if to say, “Oh heaven, look down at how grand I am.”

When my grandparents died, their simple but wonderful home was sold, demolished and replaced with another storage building for the Rosecrusians. It pained me deeply to see the home I loved, for the people I loved be exchanged for a non-personal, bland and unimportant stucco building of no consequence. Even now, to this day I have dreams of that empty house beaming with sunshine, once filled with love and life- left for the bulldozer to flatten.

What were these Egyptologists doing in San Jose? Why did those buildings seem so strange to me? And why did it both appeal to me and at the same time, anger me so? What was behind this strange idea of newly constructed buildings representing something from three thousands years ago? And from a land on the other side of the world as well? And still no one said anything, or even questioned their presence.

Years went by, and during the 70's as a young teen I would come home everyday from school around 4pm and watch a terrible soap called “Dark Shadows,” dealing with vampires and a whole menagerie of ghouls and such filmed in Toronto. Such bad acting, but the concept intrigued me- actual monsters “living” every day (and night) in a mansion on the coast of Maine. It was an escape for me as I tried to find my place in this world. The TV was also a source of enlightenment on the subject of ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean- specifically Egypt, Greece and Rome. History channel and public television from San Francisco, teaching so much that I had never known before. This always fascinated me and made my mind whirl. Not to mention all of the epic historical films I was exposed to from the '50's and 60's. “Panorama! Technicolor! Wide-wide screen!” Movie theaters the size of football fields!

I was learning so much at a young age, never thinking that it would all be formed one day into a distinct and original novel. And never imagining as well that in time, I would see all of these places and more- in person as I traveled the entire world, bringing music to all of the globe on the blessed course of World Cruises during most of the 1990's.

Now, there was one author that seriously caught my attention during the 80's and that was Anne Rice. A prolific writer, who created an entire world of the supernatural. The wicked and the profane, all leading to New Orleans, Louisiana. She created a totally unique world, a tortured world that took no prisoners, but was filled with passion and blood. So much blood. I became inspired by Anne Rice, but as the years of my writing began I never once wanted to copy her, or tread on her characters, or even mimic her style of writing. Mine would be totally unique, totally my own creation. Yet it was Rice's novels that dealt with Lestat that intrigued me the most. The rest seemed to pale in comparison. I decided my story would go beyond anything I had ever read before. New ideas, historic characters. And I made it a point not to use the word "vampire" in any of my writing. I did not want the reader to assume that my creatures would have to follow any itinerary or have the same limitations as those other previous incarnations of blood-drinkers. This would be "Historic Fiction" beyond what I had ever seen before.

Mine would not be the Bela Lugosi vampires, dressed in a faded tuxedo. Mine would be "The Watchers of the World." To observe, to teach and to pass on their knowledge to those who had proved their worth, able to gladly accept such a barrage of information. Also, the original creatures I had created would not be made from the womb of mankind, but created solely by the cosmos. Any further "creations" that might occur would be through trial and error of blood-letting between beasts and the weak and frail humans. For the toxic blood of my creatures could easily drive the fledgling human creations to destruction- to insanity on their very first night of being "reborn." Many would never see another night of blood-lust, as the quicksilver coursing through their veins would devour their senses. The madness of consuming one victim after another would lead these poor creatures to the inevitable point of daylight. They would be obliterated in a single, ultimate moment by the scourge of morning sunrise. Shattered, broken- sadly becoming a mass of ashes or tattered remains left by the wayside. But those creatures of ancient age and intelligence, of desire and cunning could eventually last the ages, still to be tortured by the touch of sunlight. Not to die, but fade- yet never to be completely obliterated.

The chance to travel the world came after many theatrical successes in Los Angeles. Then came five call-backs for the LA company of "The Phantom of the Opera" at the Ahmenson Theater. When that did not happen, I fell into a deep depression. Shortly after came a call from my concert management that a friend of his in Florida was looking for a replacement for a 6 month tour of Asia on the QE2. I jumped at the chance, and my partner at the time was very understanding. This started a eight year journey around the world, singing on some of the finest ships and seeing almost the entire navigable world. Italy, the Cote D'Azur, Russia and the Baltic. From Spain to Israel- from Greece and Ukraine to Egypt and back again. It was more than I could have ever wished for- more sights and memories than could fill volumes of travel books. South America, Scandinavia. Europe. Africa. The Indian Ocean. Australia and Indonesia. Bali three times! A true blessing to have my "retirement" while in my 30's when I could appreciate every moment. Unbelievable. It was no job; it was an adventure beyond my wildest dreams!

When New York finally called I was ready to leave LA. My marriage of 16 years had ended- ever so badly, but what does not kill you makes you stronger. At least that's what I told myself. By June of 2002, I was out of work and summer was here in the city. I had my lap top and a printer. I thought, "Why not sit down and write either a farcical musical or... a novel that deals with the gay Caesar?" I had no idea how to begin, what research I would need, or even if what I had in mind had any merit, any substance at all. "Get real! Who said you could sit down and write a novel anyway?"

But I did sit down in front of my lap top, looked at the screen and somehow- the words began to come to me. Almost as if they were being fed to my thoughts through images and words, as if they were spoken softly to me. *“Just one good storm. Snow on the Colosseum, white purity on the Forum. Washing away the common blood.”*

I started this journey- creating amazing characters, being true to historical facts and I never, never looked back. I gave voice to the past, to these living people and took a journey through my imagination. These characters I developed became real to me; they breathed, they lived. I felt their pain and happiness. I became knowledgeable regarding Roman History and a student of the English language for life.

Eighteen years later- two lap tops later, two printers later, two dogs later and many jobs to support myself later I finished this work. A work of love and passion. A ride like I have never known before in my entire life. And so very glad- so proud of what I could finally accomplish (after three years and seven re-writes and edits later.)

The journey is the reward itself. Now, I can share this journey with you, and the rest of the world.

Cheers!

Lance Phillips

“I believe that since my life began, the most I've had is just- a talent to amuse.”

(Noel Coward)

