



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH PATRICK W. CARR

1. Your e-novella, *By Divine Right*, is FREE and it kicks off your new series. Is this e-novella a prequel?

It is a prequel. I believe it came about after Bethany House noted how offering the first book of *THE STAFF AND THE SWORD* for free download jumpstarted sales of the series. Dave Long, my editor at Bethany, emailed me and said something to the effect of “We need a novella prequel.” In my head I was thinking *I don’t know how to write a novella. I’ve never written a novella. What’s a novella?* But my mouth said “Sure. I can do that.” And then I thought *Patrick, you knothead, you don’t even have an idea for a novella.* So long story (but not as long as a full-length novel) short, I had to manufacture a plot for a prequel that would land somewhere between twenty and thirty thousand words. Nerve-wracking, but probably a great exercise for me as a writer.

2. Without spoilers, what can you tell us about the setting of *THE DARKWATER SAGA*?

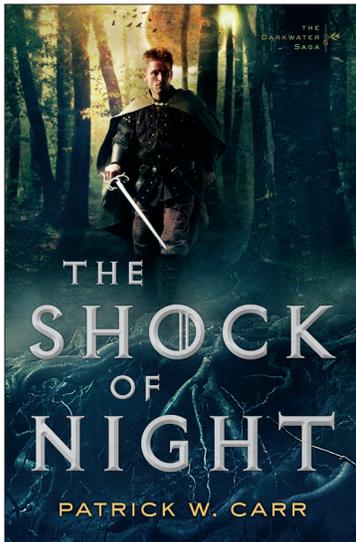
It’s set in a mythical world composed of three continents, only two of which are inhabited. My story takes place on the northern, or second, continent, where people are categorized in their society according to their gifts, talents, and temperaments. To be strongly gifted means instant nobility, and this engenders a bit of resentment. Within this society exists a very small group of people with the rarest gift of all, a gift they try desperately to keep hidden, and their job is to keep watch over the Darkwater Forest. The series revolves around this group of people and what happens when they fail in their task.

3. Willet Dura is your main character, and he has a special ability. What is it exactly and how did he get it?

Willet suffers from night walks, a malady that afflicts quite a few of the veterans of the last war, where they walk in their sleep. What makes Willet’s case both different and terrifying is that he only night-walks whenever there has been a murder. Because of the circumstances of these occurrences he is, rightly, afraid of what’s in his mind that he doesn’t understand. There’s something terrifying in Willet’s past, and he’s trying as hard as he can to keep from connecting all the dots that link that incident to his current state of mind. He’s very human that way, and I think it’s what makes him sympathetic.

4. What is your world-crafting process like?

I usually begin with our world and make a significant change that appeals to me for some reason that I sometimes don’t understand myself. Then I spend quite a bit of time daydreaming about how this particular change would ripple through their society and history. In the case of establishing a different set of rules (which some people refer to as magic, but I like to think of as alternative physics) I try to set the limitations and costs quickly. Power without limitation makes for a boring story and power without cost seems morally dishonest to me. After that, I try to merge this alternative universe with characters that most of us recognize and empathize with.



The Shock of Night

THE DARKWATER SAGA #1

by Patrick W. Carr

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5. How long had this story been incubating with you? And how long was the actual writing process?

About the time I was halfway through *THE STAFF AND THE SWORD* series I began to toy with the idea of writing a series that would be a blend of epic fantasy and suspense. That was about three years ago. It didn't really start to unfold until about two years ago after I'd mostly wrapped up *A Draw of Kings* and Bethany House asked me for a new series idea. The writing process on the first novel and novella of *Darkwater* took about a year. There were a few wrinkles I had to sort out, and it was difficult to clear my mind of everything that had tied me to the world of *THE STAFF AND THE SWORD*. Then I had to struggle to get my head wrapped around a narrative that was told mostly in first person. In all honesty, it's quite difficult for me to project a first-person character that's not just a simple reflection of me. It really wouldn't do for people to discover how frightfully ordinary and boring I am. Ha.

6. How is this series different from your previous projects?

In my previous series, my protagonist has a very obvious and visual flaw: He's a drunk. The process by which he manages to come out of that is, similarly obvious and visual as well. My new series takes quite a bit of inspiration from my father, who suffered from PTSD for years after Vietnam. I wanted to capture the essence of that ongoing struggle, but it's mostly internal. There were times when I could see how having to go to war and fight and losing his best friend wounded my father. It got me to thinking about the spiritual cost of war, even justified war, exacted from the men who wage it. Through that, Willet Dura, my main character, was born. Other differences will be obvious in how the political, historical, and religious structures of the world are different, but readers will pick up on those things right away.

7. This is a speculative book but it's also heavy on suspense. Did you do this on purpose or is that where the story led you?

The blend between speculative and suspense was absolutely by design. I seem to have this character flaw as a writer that makes me want to torture myself as much as my characters. It's the only way I can explain the fact that every time I write a story, I go looking for unnecessary challenges. In this case the challenge was to see if I could meld the epic fantasy genre with suspense. I have to admit, it's proven to be quite challenging, but I'm hopeful that this will help me grow as a writer.