

## **Stories for Children Magazine**

### **Meet Kevin Gerard, Author of Conor and the Crossworlds Series**

Kevin Gerard lives in San Diego, California with his wife and four boys. He teaches sociology and statistics for the California State University. Mr. Gerard finished the fifth Conor and the Crossworlds book in May, 2006. Perhaps after completing his current project, a political espionage thriller, Mr. Gerard will return to his first love, young adult fantasy, and write about Janine's adventures in the Conor and the Crossworlds series.

#### **When did you start writing?**

I didn't start writing seriously until about seven years ago, although my teen series has been brewing in my head since I was nine years old. Back then, I would imagine a gigantic winged cougar soaring through the sky and landing by my bedroom window. After climbing onto his shoulders, I would become a powerful warrior, traveling with him to distant worlds.

#### **Can you tell us a little about your most recent published book, *Conor and the Crossworlds: Peril in the Corridors*? This is book 2 in the *Conor and the Crossworld* series, correct?**

Yes, that's right. The corridors, organic doorways between worlds in the Crossworlds system, have been thrown into disarray by the Circle of Evil. Conor, now twelve and two years removed from his amazing adventure with Purugama, travels with Maya, the Lord of the great cats, to meet the massive Champions of the Crossworlds. After a heartfelt but frightening introduction, Conor and Maya travel to several different worlds to repair the corridors.

The Circle of Evil sends a small legion of ruthless destroyers to try and stop Conor and Maya from completing their journey. Conor must do battle against insurmountable odds at every turn, confronting powerful monsters while Maya struggles to repair the corridors. Conor has been granted the powers of the Crossworlds Champions, a small fact unknown to the destroyers facing him at each juncture. With these powers, he can run as fast as a cheetah, melt into walls like a chameleon, morph his hands into giant tiger claws, and use magical spells he never dreamed existed. Check the Book Two tab on the website to see the formidable foes Conor faces in this adventure.

#### **How did you create your characters for the *Conor and the Crossworlds* series?**

I've known Purugama the winged cougar for over forty years. I think he served as some sort of dream warrior for me when I was a young boy about Conor's age. The other Champions emerged as brothers to Purugama, other great cats of the wild; lion, tiger, jaguar, and cheetah. All of these cats are quite large; Therion the lion weighs five thousand pounds. They can all speak, cast magical spells, and represent the furry line between order and chaos in the Crossworlds.

Maya, the Lord of the Champions, is a unique story, and one of the reasons I believe this series will be very popular. You see, Maya was a real cat. In fact, he was my first real friend when I moved to San Diego after marrying my wife. He was very large for a domestic cat, and he had quite a unique and regal personality. Well, one day Maya's mother called our home in tears saying that he had been ripped to pieces by three pit bulls. We cried together and I told her that I was going to make Maya immortal. That's how he became the Lord of the Crossworlds Champions.

The Lady of the Light, one of the creators and custodian to the Crossworlds Champions, could be looked upon as the daughter of a character in a series I read some time ago. She is extremely powerful, yet very delicate and refined. She loves her Champions as any woman would love a brace of kittens in her home. She also loves Conor deeply, for she alone knows his true identity.



The destroyers, Gandron, Fumemos, Seefra and a host of other unruly characters are nothing more than products of a fifty-year-old child's imagination. I've always been fascinated with mutated creatures, even way back to the days of Ray Harryhausen, the true father of special effects.

I've served on panels at Science Fiction conventions where we've discussed evil creatures. I always tell attendees how much I enjoy writing about them. Gandron is a fifteen foot tall, fifteen hundred pound human/dragon mutant. Fumemos, (my personal favorite in this book) has no form of his own. He uses the natural elements of other phenomena to attack his opponents. The battle between Conor and Fumemos at the dead ocean is extraordinary. Seefra is a powerful destroyer and shape-shifter. He becomes Conor's main nemesis in this and future books.

### **Can you tell us a little about the first book *Conor and the Crossworlds: Breaking the Barrier*?**

Breaking the Barrier started out as a therapy project for me. I wanted to write a book about a boy receiving the gift of knowledge at a young age. Of course, I had to do this in a way that young readers would find entertaining.

Conor, ten years old at the time, loses his uncle to a heart attack. This is a man he loved with all his heart, and the loss shook him deeply. The creators of the Crossworlds, urged by the Champion Purugama, take pity on Conor and transport him to the Crossworlds.

There he meets Purugama, a three thousand pound flying cougar who takes Conor on an amazing adventure. By placing him directly into perilous situations, Purugama gives Conor the gift of knowledge, something no other human boy has ever received.

Of course, after the journey is completed, Purugama is confronted by his arch enemy, Drazian, a destroyer sent by the Circle of Evil to do battle with the great Champion. Conor's life hangs in the balance as these two titans use their astounding magical powers in a fight to the death. Of course, part of the knowledge given to Conor during his journeys gives him the courage to assist Purugama in the battle. That's where the fun really begins.



**How many books are planned for the Conor and the Crossworlds series?**

I've written five, each longer and more exciting than the last. Something quite astonishing happens to Conor at the end of the fifth book, and of course it leaves a huge opening to continue the series. Any further books would mostly feature Conor's girlfriend, Janine, but at some point he would emerge again. I get excited just thinking about it. Book Six is already titled – Janine's Quest.

**What inspired you to write the Conor and the Crossworlds series?**

First and foremost, I believe that we are all put on this earth to do something spectacular. Whatever that happens to be for any one person is up to them, but for me, at a particular moment in my life, I made the decision to quit working a forty hour week and instead sit down and do something I always intuitively knew I'd do well. Purugama inspired me to write Conor and the Crossworlds: Breaking the Barrier, and when Maya was killed, Peril in the Corridors materialized. The series just kept growing after that; I wrote the third, fourth and fifth books rather quickly, and I'll tell you something, they are all exceptional.

**Can you tell us a funny story about writing your books?**

Oh yes, funny and rather scary. In the fifth book, Conor and the Crossworlds: The Author of All Worlds, the Circle of Evil has only two weapons left to throw at the Council of Seven, the creators emeritus who hold dominion over the Crossworlds. One is a

doomsday weapon; the other is the most horrible destroyer ever, an assassin so sadistic even the Circle of Evil held it prisoner for thousands of years.

They decide to release the destroyer—Nemelissi—with orders to find and kill the Author of All Worlds. Well, if you haven't guessed by now, I am the author Nemelissi seeks. If it kills me, the author of the series, the Crossworlds will be erased from existence.



The day I was writing the scene where Nemelissi comes through the corridor right outside my study window, where I do most of my writing, I kept getting these bizarre chills down my spine. I turned and looked out the study window every few minutes to make sure it wasn't there, stalking me. At one point while focusing on my keyboard, I heard a loud crash outside the window and at the same instant, one of our cats jumped up on my desk. I nearly had a heart attack wondering if Nemelissi had actually come through a corridor to dispatch me.

**If you could live in any book, which one would you choose?**

That's a tough one, because I'd really love to spend some time with the Champions of the Crossworlds. If I really had to pick, though, I think I'd like to live in a book called Weaveworld, by Clive Barker. Sometimes I read books and I'm just floored by the unbelievable creativity and vivid imagination of some writers. A world encased inside a magic rug, and when the knife piercing the precise point in the rug unleashes this world called the Fugue? What a magical place to live.

**What are some of your favorite books to read?**

I've really been into science fiction and fantasy for quite a few years. I teach quantitative analysis for Cal State, and at the end of every day I need the escape. I come home, write for a while, have dinner, play with the kitties and then settle down with a good read. I like Hickman and Weis, Greg Bear, and George Martin's latest series, although I was furious with him for the Red Wedding. At times I read non-fiction; right now I'm sharing my reading time with a book called The Tipping Point, by Malcolm Gladwell.

**If you had to pick a character in your books that is most like you in personality, which would you choose?**

That's an interesting question, because it would be so easy for me to say Conor, or Purugama, with whom I share many personality traits. Actually, there's a bit of me in all the characters.



If I had to be completely honest, though, I'd say Seefra, Conor's main nemesis throughout the series. It's an interesting choice, because Seefra is a destroyer, and he aligns himself with the Circle of Evil. There's a reason for that, though, and you'll have to read Book 2 to find out why. He's very intelligent, somewhat compassionate toward opponents he respects, and he's quite ambitious. What I find most similar about the two of us is that we've both been through a lot, and the combination of those experiences shaped us into who we are presently.

**What do you do when you're not writing?**

Teach college courses, play Halo (on-line, my player name is Drazian, the destroyer in Book One), love my wife, make sure my cats are well taken care of and happy, go to the beach every day in the summer, and play golf with my Dad once a month.

**If my class/students write you letters, will you respond?**

I would be happy to respond to any questions or comments they might have. I've received e-mails from different parts of the country already, and I enjoy reading all of them. Early next year, I'll be traveling to Mississippi, Nevada, and the Eastern Seaboard on book promotion tours. I expect to answer quite a bit of mail after those trips.

**Where can I purchase your books?**

You can purchase Conor and the Crossworlds through any dot.com location, like Amazon.com. You may also order them from any bookstore. They are not stocked in any bookstores yet, but that's only a matter of time. This story is too fantastic to stay a secret for much longer.

**What advice would you give to new writers?**

The best piece of advice I can give is to write freely. What I mean by that is every time you sit down to write, tell yourself that anything goes; you can write anything that comes to your mind, and it doesn't matter at all what comes out on any particular day. The best parts of the Conor and the Crossworlds series occurred when I allowed the story to write itself. I stood aside metaphorically and let the characters tell me what they wanted to have happen. That's what I mean by writing freely. Remember, you will always come back and edit what you write later, so when you're in the present, as I like to say, let her rip!

**Conor's website –**

<http://www.conorandthecrossworlds.com>

BarnesandNoble.com and Amazon.com links are on the home page of Conor's website.

You can purchase books at any local, on-line, or SFC bookstore.

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