

# *Author's Interview*



*1. How did you start writing? What was your first piece of writing like?*

My first writing was a joint effort between myself and a close friend, a novel based on a creative writing assignment he had done in high school. That joint effort, more than two decades later, finally became my first novel, *The Last Guardian*. Please see <http://www.shanejohnsonbooks.com/tlg/origin.htm> for details on how all that came to pass.

*2. Why do you write fiction?*

That's part of the above history, a posthumous promise kept.

*3. Why do people remember a story more easily than a sermon?*

Generally, I think having characters and events to whom one can relate makes it easier to remember a story. Sermons tend to feel more like lectures or lessons, carrying with them an inherent distance.

4. *What do you hope readers will take away from your book?*

The knowledge that, no matter how unpleasant or even tragic some events may seem at the time of their occurrence, all are being made to work together for the glory of the Lord.

5. *Which character in the book is most like you?*

That's hard to say. As I write I become every character, expressing concerns and speaking as he or she would in turn. In many ways I'm most like the main character despite her experiences and losses, which are quite severe and lead to a crisis of faith. She ultimately believes and comes away with a stronger faith than she'd had before.

6. *What actor would you picture playing (your main character) in a movie?*

I wrote the book picturing Jennifer Love Hewett as the main character—she has the same playful quality as Anna yet can be focused and intense. In the prologue of the book Anna would be the age the actress now is, while the bulk of the story takes place many years later. Jack Dyson, the male lead, was Dennis Quaid from the start—his sense of humor, speaking voice, and overall character traits are perfect for the man I envisioned.

7. *Which writers have influenced you most?*

Charles Dickens, George Clayton Johnson, Hal Lindsey, and Charles Ryrie

8. *Describe your writing process.*

As I write line-by-line, I jump from character to character “becoming” each in turn, seeing and feeling the unfolding events through his or her eyes and responding accordingly. In a very real sense my characters write my novels—and I’m sometimes surprised at where they take the story. And, as always, my wife’s input is invaluable—what a blessing she has been to my writing career. Without her, it would never have been possible.

9. *Can you share a particularly memorable encounter with a reader?*

No one face-to-face encounter stands out above any other, but I did once correspond via e-mail with a college student who had promoted *The Last Guardian* on her blog and considered it her favorite novel. I sent her copies of some of my later work, thanked her for her support, and over the following months exchanged several encouraging messages with her.

*10. What is one fact about yourself that readers might find most surprising?*

I was agnostic throughout my teenage years and early twenties, approaching the level of atheism a few times along the way. I was convinced that science had (or would have) an answer for every problem facing us all, and I was very much a humanist. But God saw fit to send a very good friend into my life who was Christian and knew *why*—the first such person I'd ever met. Along the way and as the years passed, others were placed into my path who helped me to better understand just how God had chosen in grace to deal with a mankind who had abandoned him.