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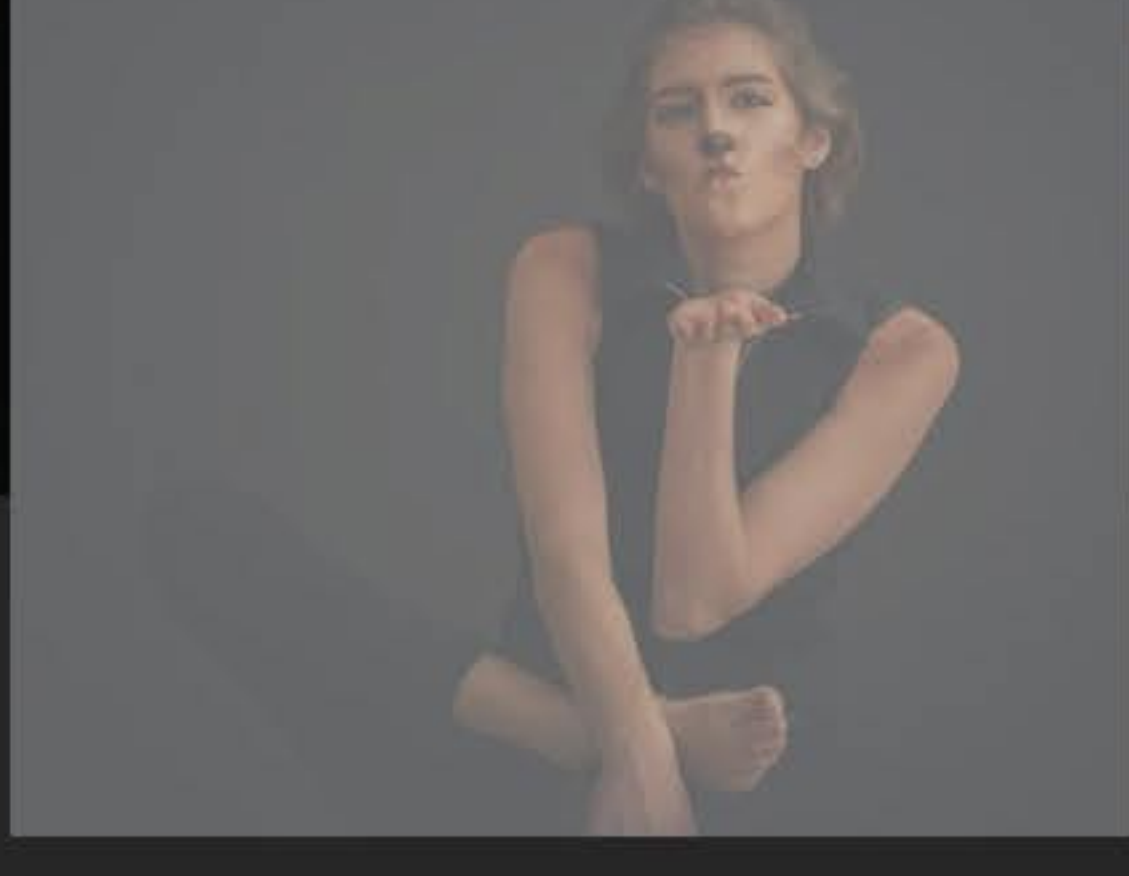
Conversations on the Craft of Writing with E.G. Radcliff

The Always-Busy, Fueled-by-a-Love-of-Productivity *Imagination Behind the Coming of Aed Series*

I'm always looking to learn from other writers about their approach to the craft! I want to know what motivates them, what they find challenging, and — most of all — what they love about writing.

I recently got to the chance to hear from E.G. Radcliff, whose drive is matched only by her imagination. She has a self-described chaotic work process, but her understanding of what makes a good story runs deep, and she has a fervent love of fantasy.

Here's what she had to say...



When did you first realize you wanted to be a writer? What studying or training have you undertaken that's brought you to where you are now?

I think realizing I wanted to be a writer was less about making a conscious choice to select this path and more about looking back at all of the things I'd written and just kind of realizing that somewhere along the way, I'd become a writer.

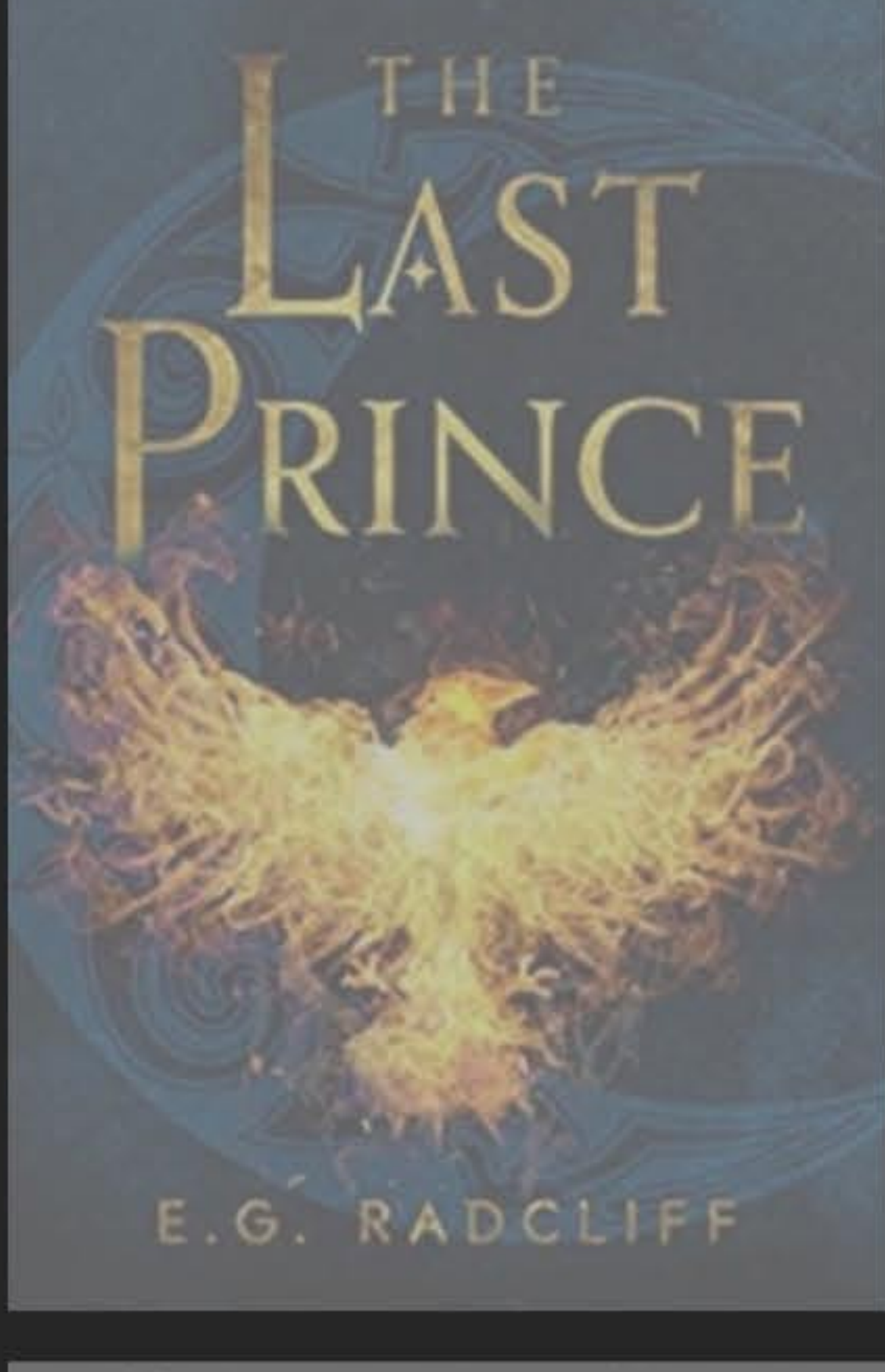
Choosing to publish was, of course, a more active decision, but wanting to be a writer, in and of itself, came as the result of a lifetime of small choices regarding how I liked to spend my time. Most of my training has been time, but other than just majoring in English at university, I've had the opportunity to work with other artists, receive criticism from some brilliant professionals, and study the work of others.

Tell us about any work you've published or anything you're working on now. How do you decide which projects you want to pursue?

So far, *The Coming of Aed* is my only published series. It currently consists of two books—*The Hidden King*, and its prequel, *The Last Prince*. The third and final novel in the series is set for an early summer 2021 release. I usually have several projects in the early stages of development at any given time, meaning that I'm usually working on one major one, and a number of smaller ones.

Those smaller ones are usually little more than a few character sketches, some loose worldbuilding in OneNote, and very little actual writing; they're more like potential stories that could happen. Usually, they don't go anywhere. I have to maintain interest in an idea for a long while before I decide to go beyond that first little sketching stage, because I have a bad habit of jumping my attention around.

Only if an idea has the tenacity to stick in my head do I pursue it further. Fortunately, that's rare, so I'm usually only working on a couple big projects at once! Right now, that means I'm invested in the third book in *The Coming of Aed*, a personal story project (it's fanfiction, who am I kidding), and some heavy planning for a series to come after I wrap up *The Coming of Aed*. But I also have a full-time occupation, and sometimes a side gig on top of that, and a few hobbies, so I'm pretty busy! It's for the best—I'm miserable when I'm not productive.



Do you have a preferred genre to write in?

My favorite genre both to read and write is fantasy. Most of what I've written is YA, but I'm constantly evolving, so that might change! I don't see myself straying far from fantasy as a whole—it was my first love, and truest—but there are plenty of subgenres within that category that I'd like to explore. I've always wanted to try my hand at modern urban fantasy, so maybe that'll happen someday. Who knows?

Who is your favorite character or what is your favorite part from any work you've written?

Hard question. Good question, but hard. No matter what I answer, I'm going to feel like I'm betraying my other favorites, but I think I'm going to have to go with Ninian. Especially as I got to flesh out his complexities in *The Last Prince*, I found myself finding more and more things to love about him.

He's perhaps more clearly flawed than Aed is, but he's still someone I found myself really rooting for even as I wrote him making a questionable choice or two. He's also got some pretty rough patches in his past whose effects were interesting—though heartbreaking—for me to explore, and his relationship with Aed does make me all soft. He's a stabby urchin with noble blood and a need for affection. I love him.

What's your writing process? Do you have any routines or habits that help you do your best work?

My writing process is...chaotic. Once upon a time, I had a nice, neat routine, but that routine involved me writing from about two in the morning, when I finished my other obligations, to four or five, only to wake up at eight am for my actual job.

After a year, that got pretty unhealthy, and by the time I finished *The Last Prince* I was appallingly burnt-out. My eyebags? Deep. I've been working hard to school myself into something better for me, but that means I can't rely on those wee hours of uninterrupted quiet to get work done.

I still function best in the evening, so recently, I've found myself curling up on the couch around nine with a heating pad and a blanket, where I'll work until about midnight. But this schedule isn't nearly so reliably available as my previous death-inducing one, so I find myself writing whenever I have time. This means that where I used to have a set word count I would reach every night, my current goal is more like "one thousand at least, but actually as many as I possibly can" because having time the next day to sit down and bang out some words is not as guaranteed.

Besides, I'm not immune to writer's block, but still needing to adhere to deadlines means that I can't afford to lose much time to it. All this is to say...well, I guess it sounds more stressful than it is. I like it. My couch-and-heating-pad time is happy time. And so is my crunched I-have-a-free-hour-let's-roll time.

What's the best writing advice you've ever received? And the worst?

I think the best advice I ever got was not to make every plan work. Which is to say that if my characters need to do Thing A to achieve Goal B, they probably should not actually succeed at Thing A, or at least not right away. It's a lot more interesting if they have to regroup and try Thing B, or just change something and try Thing A again, or maybe fail *entirely* and create Catastrophe C, which they then must fix. Imagining the plot this way not only builds tension, it also helps to clarify character objectives—each character or group of characters must have a definable motivation and goal in mind in order for them to act on it and not succeed. It also offers opportunities for character growth. Maybe Thing A failed because the character had some unresolved trauma that they

needed to work through for the plan to succeed on the second attempt. Or maybe it failed because two team members were fundamentally incompatible, and the group dynamic ramifications of that will play out in an interesting way.

Or maybe it failed because the antagonist is actually really good and interesting in a way the characters didn't anticipate, thus providing the opportunity to flesh out both them and the protags.

The worst advice...hmm. I don't catalogue bad advice in my head the way I do good advice. If it wasn't useful to me, I think I mentally chuck it.

Who's an author you really admire?

There are so many. I assume you mean authors whose work I admire; I don't keep track of most people's personal shenanigans, so I can't necessarily name-drop too many people who I actually know much about as people, but I really admire the artistic merit of authors like Sarah J. Maas, George R.R. Martin, and T.H. White.

What's the biggest challenge you've had to face with any given writing project?

Probably my own burnout. I feel that I'm a better writer now than I was when I started, and sometimes when I look back, I'm struck by frustrations over opportunities I passed up, things I would change, flaws I can't unsee.

And the thing is...if I keep learning and improving, which I hope to, that's a problem that's never going to go away. No matter how much I write, I'm always going to look back and go, "Ew, that could have been better." Looking at it from the perspective of having grown enough to see the flaws, meaning that I'm better now, is a perhaps more positive outlook.

When you have a bad case of writer's block and are procrastinating, what would we probably find you doing?

The most likely answer is drawing. Or writing for one of my other projects. I find that productive procrastination really hits the spot—actually, I'm filling out this interview right now instead of later because I'm stuck on a scene in the third book—so I like to break my mind away from writing to work the brain at something else. That's why it's nice to always have several projects going at once; when I get stuck on one, I can just bounce to another!

At this exact moment, I have open on my poor overworked computer my third *Coming of Aed* book, a work-in-progress illustration of my Dungeons and Dragons character, my fanfiction, the OneNote where I've been planning my next series for half a year now, a YouTube video featuring an artist whose style I've been studying, and another YouTube video of a kpop dance I've been learning rather poorly. I also confess a mild addiction to webcomics.

In short, I keep busy! I know that if I procrastinate unproductively, I'll just get sad over the wasted time, and there's no point in bothering with that.

What's the best feedback you've ever received from a reader?

Best as in nicest, or best as in most helpful criticism? I think the nicest feedback might be this review from Bookends and Bagends book blog. My heart was positively warmed. It's validation like this that makes everything so worth it.

What does literary success look like to you?

I suppose... well, there is a small sliver of my greedy soul that craves fame, but I wouldn't say that's how I define success. I want to be able to write what makes me happy, and to reach an audience who also finds joy in it. I want to reach as many people as I possibly can, and I want my art to appeal to a broad audience solely on the basis of its artistic merit.

I know that this success is something that takes a lot of effort, but it's effort that I have been exerting, and which I will continue to exert. I'm fortunate enough to have a team of supportive friends and family who have been helping me over the past few years of my publishing journey, and I hope that I can take the gift of their support and turn out a productive, fulfilling career.

Finally, where can readers follow you — website, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook page, etc.?

Website: <https://www.egradcliff.com/>

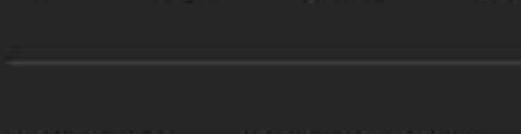
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