

### "Books show us what we can achieve" - Interview with author Nicholas Eames, February 2021

What actually happens after the great adventure? After the great hero's journey? What happens when heroes grow old and lazy? And what happens when fame and glory reveal their dark dark side?

Canadian author Nicholas Eames asked himself all these questions. Answers can be found in his debut, *Kings of the Wylde*, and its sequel, *Bloody Rose*. Inspired by 1970s rock legends, he sends his troupe of former heroes through a fantastical world of danger and humor in *Kings of the Wylde*. The plan seems simple enough: to perform one last heroic deed. But along with it comes the attempt to regain former greatness. Not so easy when you've been out of the business for a few years and have actually settled down (not to say that you even became lazy).

What inspired him to create the unusual but so impressively written themes and characters, which character he would like to see in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, and what he can reveal book 3 of his series, "Outlaw Empire" - Nicholas Eames told me in an interview.



**First of all: How are you? How have you been doing with Corona and all?**

*I'm good, thanks! Since I work from home, and most of my hobbies involve staying indoors, I've been very fortunate thus far, as my day-to-day routine hasn't changed all that much. I do miss coffee shops, however. And I don't get to eat fancy restaurant dinners nearly as often as I'd like to.*

**Staying on the topic of Corona for one more question: Writing certainly is a very reclusive activity, but did the pandemic have an impact on your writing routine anyway?**

*Not the routine, no, but I think for me (and others, from what I've heard) it has undoubtedly cast a cloud over things. It's hard to stay focused, I think, when the world around you is so chaotic—like trying to work when your house is burning down around you. I know some authors who've been very productive this last year. I wish I was one of them!*

**Your first novel, *Kings of the Wyld*, was published in 2017. How has your life changed since then?**

*I get a lot more email! Aside from that, however, not too much. I am extremely fortunate in that my book's success has (temporarily, at least) granted me the freedom to write full-time, but I worked in the restaurant industry for two years after being published, so I was still serving tables when *Bloody Rose* hit bookshelves. I've got a bit more stress than I had before being published, but I'm more fulfilled now than I've ever been.*

**What is your first memory related to *Kings of the Wyld* and was it Clay Cooper handing you a cassette of his favourite classic rock songs?**

*I wish! My first memory is quite clear, actually. I was sitting on a tiny porch behind my apartment in Vancouver, surrounded by vibrant green plants and accompanied by a small but lovely red maple tree, listening to Led Zeppelin and writing the opening paragraph of the book and somehow already feeling attached to Clay Cooper in a way I hadn't been to any character before that.*

***The Band* series is known for its very well blended mix of humor, action and emotion: What's your personal favourite to write of the three (or any other that comes to mind)? Which one is the hardest?**

*I think I enjoy writing poignant scenes the best, though they can take a while to find just the right words. Humour comes easiest, no doubt, and the action scenes are hardest of all. I don't know why—something about making sure that the chaos of what's happening is as clear as can be.*

***Bloody Rose* has one particular chapter, chapter forty-three, readers tend to have a very emotional reaction to (rightfully so). How do you approach such emotional milestones in your book? Can you keep a distance to these moments or do they tend to get you, too?**

*Oh, they definitely get to me, too. Re-reading chapter forty-three of *Bloody Rose* always brings a tear to my eye. My brother does the final proof-read with me right before each book gets published. I'm about twenty pages ahead of him usually, so shortly after I finished drying my eyes he started crying as well. We're an emotional family, what can I say!*

**How much do you look forward to the reactions of your readers concerning scenes or chapters like these?**

*Well, with chapter 43 in *Bloody Rose*, it was the first really, really sad scene. But I'm not confident*

*enough to know for sure that they'll affect someone in the same way they affected me or my brother. However, we also teared up in the beginning of the second book, when Tam says goodbye to her father. So he is a very good parameter to see how people will react, or at least the most emotional people, because we're a pretty emotional family. But yeah, you just hope that people will react to it the way they did. And it's been really rewarding that they reacted to the chapter the way they did.*

**Speaking of your brother – how many people are involved in the process of you releasing a book?**

*Mostly my brother, my best friend Eugene, who proof-reads for me. And then it just depends, if I'm dating someone at the time, they have to hear a lot about it, probably. I try to not bother them too much. I think my girlfriend is probably sick and tired of it. With the first book, though, there were a few more people involved. I had a friend I basically read it out loud to. She would just come over, we'd drink wine and I would read it out loud to her. Obviously, as you read it out loud, you catch some discrepancies or what a person laughs at or doesn't. But, boy, talk about being incredibly patient to listen to an aspiring writer reading his book to you. So yeah, the first one was a bit more of a group effort. For the second one, my editor had a bit of a bigger say in it. But yeah, it's mostly my brother and my best friend Eugene.*

**Both *Kings of the Wyld* and *Bloody Rose* focus on the topic of glory, but we also see a lot of the downsides that come with it, for example Rose's way of coping with fear. What inspired you to make it such a prominent theme in the books?**

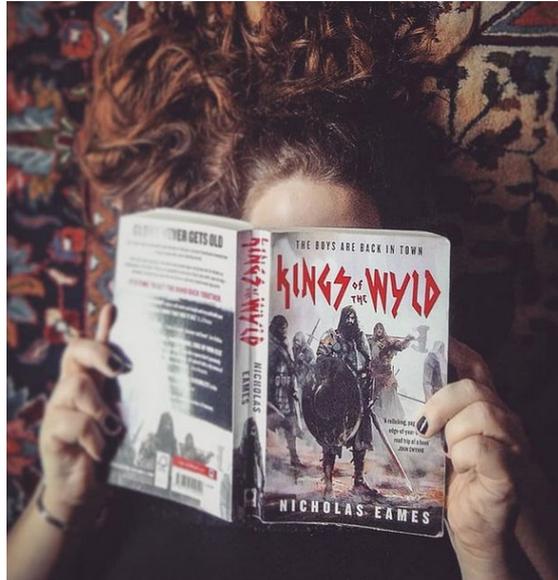
*Another great question, thank you! Rose's character was inspired by the flamboyant rock-stars of the 80s, who lived fantastically self-destructive lives. They coped with success, fame, and creative exhaustion in the worst way possible, which makes for a great story but was probably a nightmare for their friends and family. As such, Rose's defining characteristic (an all-consuming hunger for glory) and her biggest flaw (addiction) were only natural considering the over-the-top personas she is meant to represent.*

*As for glory itself... Well, even legends can be forgotten. Ask a teenager today who Robert Plant or Rod Stewart is and you'll likely get a blank stare in return. I thought it would be interesting, especially in *Kings of the Wyld*, to explore a time when a band's glory had faded and how funny that could be. That said, these rock stars were legends for a reason, and when you introduce a new generation to the old it's like stirring the embers of yesterday's fire—sometimes the fire comes roaring back to life.*

**There are a few theories out there about *Outlaw Empire*, book three in the series. They're ranging from its possible cast to what song is on repeat the most while you're writing it. Can you give us a hint on one of those two and will Britney Spears, as a 90s icon, play any role?**

*Shockingly, Britney may or may not make the cut! I'm drawing more from the early 90s, and music that evokes a more visceral sense of the world at that time. While it's not the easiest music to write to, it is hugely inspiring. I was a teenager in the 90s, but I wasn't paying much attention to music at the time. I consumed what the radio and television fed me, but dug no deeper than that. Now, I'm discovering some truly incredible albums, most notably from hip-hop artists like Nas, Mob Deep, and the Wu-Tang Clan. *Illmatic* (Nas' debut album) is considered by many to be the best album of all time, and having deep-dived it this past year I couldn't necessarily disagree. Also, grunge bands like Nirvana and Pearl Jam, as well as politically charged music like Rage Against the Machine will factor in as well.*

*If you want a three song head start on the book's "soundtrack", I'd suggest Janet Jackson's Rhythm Nation, Rage Against the Machine's Killing in the Name, and Nas' Take it in Blood.*



**You are deconstructing different genres of music in your books, which is a great idea. Have you thought about doing that with other cultural areas, too, e.g. films?**

*Well, there are a lot of movie and video game references in the books as well. I take a lot of inspiration from games such as Final Fantasy. Bloody Rose, especially – it has a character named Grudge the Turtle, that is basically ripped right out of Final Fantasy; things like the airships, too. In general, I think that Bloody Rose has a bit more movie references, a Dumb and Dumber quote for example. Obviously, the music is what defines the world, but just to make it more fun, while I put in references, I might as well put in movie ones, too. But I try to make them subtle enough, so if someone is not listening or does not know anything about 70s music and is reading Kings of the Wyld, it doesn't matter. My editor was, I think, 25 at the time, she didn't get any of the references. First and foremost it should work as a regular story, but if it inspires you to listen to 70s music, that's great!*

**Does the focus on specific music also finds its way into the soundtrack you write to? Or do you prefer something different, for example game or film soundtracks?**

*It's all over the place. Back in the day, I used to write to video game soundtracks or movie soundtracks, one of those epic music playlists on YouTube, where you get the like 8 or 10 hour ones. With 70s music it was very easy to write to. They are very long and sometimes they don't say a single word in minutes. The 80s music was made for radio, so it's a lot more like "I'm only four minutes long, you have to listen to me, while I'm on" and the same goes for 90s music. It's almost impossible to listen to it and write. With Bloody Rose, I switched to synthwave music. It's got that 80s feel to it and there are even a few songs on the Spotify playlist for the book. With the third one, lofi works pretty good for writing, just because it got that same kind of like a hip hop beat to it, but it's not intrusive.*

*Regarding the cast, it takes place about twenty years after the first book, so you'll likely see the offspring of those characters play a big role. Also, one of its main characters is actually in Kings of the Wyld as a child. You can find him in the chapter called All That Glitters.*

**What is your favourite thing about readers coming in contact with your books?**

*I love hearing stories of how my books have impacted someone's life in a positive way. That was exactly why I started writing in the first place, hoping to affect someone the way my favourite author (Guy Gavriel Kay) had affected me, so when I get letters telling me that my book inspired someone to read again, write, or helped them navigate an especially difficult time in their life, it is immensely fulfilling.*

**Did you write before having a set intention of having an impact on someone?**

*When I was in high school, I'd written three chapters of something and then I got busted by a teacher. They happened to know this guy Ed Greenwood, who created Forgotten Realms and he actually lives near me here in Ontario. They sent it to him and he ended up writing back to me: He had edited these three chapters and also said something kind. I still went to school for theatre after that and didn't plan on being a writer, but it wasn't until I'd just finished college and started reading more books by Guy Gavriel Kay that I seriously thought about it. So yeah, I dabbled before that, but not as much.*

**So after having put out two books and being in the midst of the third, do you think that being a full time author is something you want to pursue further?**

*Definitely! However, I have to improve on meeting deadlines, but as long as I get the chance to write, I will do so. It's pretty rewarding and the lifestyle – wearing sweats all day – suits me, I think. But I would really love to write for video games, actually. I did a tiny little bit of it, but it's something I'd love to do more of, because I love video games so much. Obviously, it's a bit more collaborative, but I think it would be a lot of fun. Comics as well!*

**What studios would you be interested in writing for?**

*Mostly anything that's anything like an RPG. Obviously, back in the day BioWare was king of the hill, but they are kind of all over the place now. We'll see how they will recover with Dragon Age 4 and things like that. Maybe Naughty Dog or Santa Monica Studios, who made God of War. There are some great studios out there and even the ones that did smaller games, I wouldn't mind that.*

*If I could go back in time, I'd definitely get an education in it and pursue it earlier in life and keep writing as a hobby. Because putting all of your writing eggs in the same basket was risky.*

**If you could put one of your characters in another fantasy world (film or book), who would you pick and where would he or she go? (And why would it be Moog as Radagast's neighbour?)**

*Ha! I think Moog and Radagast would get along famously! Honestly, I think Moog in any world would be fun. That said, I'm gonna go with Ganelon. I'd like to throw him onto something totally incongruous like Pride and Prejudice or Star Trek and see how he handles it.*

**Staying on the topic of characters and your love for video games – if you had to associate one of your characters with a game, who would you associate with which game?**

*Hm, I probably wanna put Ganelon in a game, just because he'd probably wreck stuff and be pretty funny, because he's a very stoic character and doesn't say much, but absolutely brutalises things.*

**He would work pretty well in Dragon Age: Inquisition. He and Bull would be great friends!**

*(laughs) Exactly!*

**On a more general note: Apart from being funny and action packed, your books also aim at featuring a diverse cast. Where do you think fantasy – as a genre – stands concerning this topic in general? What would you, personally, love to see more of in the genre?**

*I think we're moving in the right direction, albeit slowly. We're seeing more and more books from diverse authors that feature characters, cultures, and settings that feel wholly new when compared to the Eurocentric take on traditional fantasy. I love it all, and I can't wait to read more of it in years to come. I think our genre will be so much richer for it. Personally, I'd love to see fantasy or sci-fi written by Indigenous Canadian authors.*

**Looking at your Twitter and Instagram feed, you also love to share, recommend and read books by your fellow author colleagues. How do you keep your own creative well flowing, while also keeping your distance from the books you read in your own writing?**

*I definitely heard from people that they don't read Fantasy when they are writing it, but I wouldn't do that to myself. I could just not write if I didn't read as well, you know? And I think it's kind of important – for me at least – to read modern books, because they let you know not what you are up against, but what you can do. For example Gideon the Ninth – the story, for me, was kind of all over the place, but the writing is so phenomenal in that book and it kinda reminds me, because it's so funny, so witty, so full of pop cultural references that she is out there doing those things and it works so well! So, yeah, I think it's so important that you keep reading modern stuff, at least for me. And as far as sharing other author's work, it's a lot like: a) they'd do that for me, too and b) I had no clue until I got published, or even six months prior, I thought that every writer, who got a book on the shelf, was just a writer and that's what they were. And now I realise that like 5% of them are and the rest is just a technician or a lawyer and so few people are able to make a living off their books. Especially these days, with the pandemic, so many books are overlooked – these books come out and they just fall into nowhere. So I try to do my best to promote anyone I can. There are also a lot of people who won't read series now, because they have been burned a few times. They won't read it until it's done. That can really harm authors. I know a few people, whose series got cancelled half way through because of that. So I like to promote as much as I can, because a rising tide raises all ships, as they say.*

**It's a very positive attitude to say that you read other author's books to see what you can do instead of looking at it in envy or even jealousy. Do you think that the world of literature – in general – needs more of this lifting each other up?**

*Well, from what I've seen it's got an absolute ton of it. The author community is so, so supportive and I've met so many dear friends. I'm in a chat group with people and whatever goes on in life, you*

*can talk to them. Some people you haven't even heard of before and I've met them in this group and they're all authors. They're hugely supportive of each other. And even random people, who live near me, for example Kevin Hearne (author of the Iron Druid Chronicles), and he would be like "I'm driving through your town, do you wanna grab a beer?" and I'm like "Yeah!" and now we text back and forth about hockey games! So yeah, they've all been hugely uplifting, helpful, not afraid to lend a hand or retweet something. It's been absolutely incredible. And I think writers, especially fantasy authors, are very empathetic people. We share a love for video games and books or things like that, so it helps.*

**If you had to assign three of your characters a brand of whiskey each, who and which would you pick? Why?**

*Let's give Clay Cooper a good Canadian whiskey like Lot 40, which isn't wildly popular but is so, so good. Jack Daniel's for Ganelon, no doubt. He's a southern man, after all. And for Matrick...one of those brands like Wild Turkey infused with something spicy and hot. His palate isn't what you'd call refined.*

**The foreshadowing in your books is exquisite! Every time you go back and reread it, you discover something else that was pointed out quite a bit ahead. How do you plan ahead? Did you have full fledged plans for the books prior to writing them? And do you know what might come after *Outlaw Empire*?**

*In terms of the series, I'm not sure anything will come after Outlaw Empire, just timeline wise. As far as decades, defined by their music, it only goes that far. Once the internet came around, music just exploded. Everyone could find their own niche and we didn't rely on the same source any more. Even up until the 90s, we all shared a musical experience where like, once the internet came along, everyone just went their own separate ways. So it would be pretty hard to write something that encapsulates the 2000s. Also, the world just changes so drastically: In the third book, it's nothing like it is in the second book or even in the first book. There would definitely be one or two ideas I could pursue, but it would be hard to base them around music. But there is also the possibility of going back and maybe telling Saga's story from when they were younger, how Fable got together.*

*Concerning whether or not I planned ahead: I definitely didn't. I wrote Kings of the Wyld as a stand-alone story, with no intention of writing anything after that. When my agent wanted me to come up with a trilogy, I said "I will, but it can't involve the same characters", because the whole point of Kings of the Wyld is that it's their last kick at the can. It would undermine the first book to just do it over and over after that. It wasn't, however, until I did the final rewrites on Kings of the Wyld, where I added 50,000 words: I added Lastleaf as a character into the book and his story is what gives rise to the entire second and third book. I definitely didn't have the ideas beforehand and even when I first started Bloody Rose, it turned out a lot differently than it ended. But the third book is pretty much set in stone.*



**What is something that people can look forward to in *Outlaw Empire*?**

*Hm, I'd say – just because I get so many emails about him – Ganelon. He will be returning in the third book. But apart from that just seeing the characters from the first book for one final time, if they make an appearance. Basically saying goodbye to everybody. Because if I write another book, it probably won't involve any of these people.*

**Last but not least: Describe the current state of the *Outlaw Empire* manuscript in two or three adjectives.**

*Well, I hope by the time this interview is published I have better words, but right now I'm afraid "small" and "short" describe it all too well! What's an adjective that conveys "brimming with potential"? Because that would work as well!*

**About the Author:** Nicholas Eames is a Canadian author who published his debut, *Kings of the Wyld*, in 2017. His books are characterized by a unique blend of fantastic elements, humor and emotion. He is a self-confessed whiskey lover and a fan of various video games. *Outlaw Empire* will be the third and final book in his The Band series. You can learn more about Nicholas Eames on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and his [website](#).

**Interviewer:** Tabi studied English Literature and Culture in Mainz for her Master's degree, looking for fresh new meaning in old English books. In her spare time, she cranks up her 3665 run of *Dragon Age* and slogs through *Summoner's Rift* with four strangers. In addition to her work at a German PR agency, she regularly interviews authors for the blog [buecherblog.org](#). You can also find her on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).