

*Red Cape Publishing*

## INDIE WRITERS REVIEW

# AUTHOR INTERVIEW

With Nils Visser



### **1. PLEASE PROVIDE A BRIEF INTRODUCTION, INCLUDING YOUR NAME, THE GENRE(S) YOU WRITE IN, PREVIOUS WORK AND WHERE YOU ARE BASED.**

*My name is Nils Visser, sometimes I write as Nils Nisse Visser or Nisse Visser. I live in Brighton in Sussex, and most of my stories are set in Sussex. I've currently got nine novels and novellas to my name (one of those as co-author). I write contemporary fantasy (the Wyrde Woods books), historical (the Will's War series), and Steampunk (Sussex Steampunk Tales). I've also co-authored a contemporary fiction book with Cair Going, on behalf of Invisible Voices of Brighton & Hove. On Brighton Streets examines contemporary homelessness from a child's perspective. Other than that, I've got short stories in four anthologies, with four more pending for 2019 (fingers crossed).*

*World-building wise, I've got two main worlds: The fictional Wyrde Woods in the Sussex Weald, and the Sussex Steampunk Tales which mostly take place along the Sussex coast.*

### **2. A LOT OF SUSSEX!**

*Yes! Sussex is a fascinating county with unique aspects to it and a rich history to delve in. I first used Sussex as the setting for the Wyrde Woods, in a hopeful attempt to emulate Thomas Hardy's Wessex: A strong regional identity with real and fictional parts intermixed. The Wyrde Woods (in England but not quite in England), have been interwoven into my semi-fictional Sussex. It's worked out very well as a world-building experiment, so I emulated it in my second attempt at world-building in the Steampunk books, but then mostly set along the Sussex Coast.*

### **3. SPEAKING OF THAT WORLD-BUILDING: DO YOU WANT EACH BOOK TO STAND ON ITS OWN, OR ARE YOU TRYING TO BUILD A BODY OF WORK WITH CONNECTIONS BETWEEN EACH BOOK?**

*Good question. The Wyrde Woods books are presented in series format. Dance into the Wyrde and Escape from Neverland form a completed series. Forgotten Road is the first book in a new Wyrde Woods series. The series can be read separately, but within a series the first book needs to be read for the second to make sense, etc. The first novella, Draka Raid, however, can be read as a standalone.*

*The second and final installation of the Will's War books, Exile from Brighton, can be read as a standalone story, and also ties in to the Wyrde Woods narrative.*

*The Sussex Steampunk Tales are standalone novellas, which can be read separately or as a loosely bound series, leading up to the Time Flight Chronicles which is intended to be a longer series.*

*I have referenced the Wyrde Woods in some Sussex Steampunk Tales, and am planning to use the Wyrde Woods as a brief setting in a future Steampunk stories, to tie it all together.*

### **3. WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS / PIECES OF WRITING ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF, AND WHY?**

*I am still insanely proud of my first books, Escape from Neverland & Dance into the Wyrde. I reread them from time to time, always dreading that I'll conclude they're rubbish but then get drawn into the story and relish it. Writing fiction has always been a vague ambition since I was a kid, and I have various horrible unfinished starts (which should never see daylight) hidden here and there. To actually complete the progress, the first time you hold a book in your hands with your name on it...wow, just wow.*

*I am also proud of my first anthology submissions for the Writerpunk Press steampunk anthologies Merely This and Nothing More and What We've Unlearned. I'm an Indie author, so publication of my books represents a certain self-arrogance in deciding something is good enough to appear in print. Writerpunk Press inclusion was the first time that my peers had a close look at my work and judged it worthy.*

*Last-but-not-least, there is the more recent Steampunk work. My first Steampunk novel, Amster Damned, was well received by established critics. One wrote that out of the thousand Steampunk/Victoriana books he'd read, Amster Damned was in the top ten as far as he was concerned. That comment had me glowing with pride.*

### **3. SO YOU READ YOUR BOOK REVIEWS? HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH BAD OR GOOD ONES?**

*I don't just read them but treasure most of them. I've got a 'review photo album' on my facebook author page ([www.facebook.com/NilsNisseVisser](http://www.facebook.com/NilsNisseVisser)) which features my favourite extracts from reviews stuck on relevant background images. I've had a hundred reviews in total so far, of which two were bad, and four disappointing. The bad ones were one-star reviews in which it was clear that the reviewers in question had a personal axe to grind. The four disappointing ones were three-star reviews, where it's tempting to differ with some of the reasons given, but best to see if anything can be learned from it. On the whole, a score of 94% in the four and five-star range is something to be well chuffed with. I'm definitely a bit obsessed with reviews. I think most Indie authors are, simply because we don't have large marketing backing, and as such are far more dependent on word-of-mouth and positive feedback.*

### **6. WHAT KIND OF RESEARCH DO YOU DO, AND HOW LONG DO YOU SPEND RESEARCHING BEFORE BEGINNING A BOOK?**

*Different kinds of research. There's the basic looking up of facts to begin with, especially for the historical novels, or stories with a historical basis like the Sussex Steampunk Tales. Ironically, I can spend hours researching a subject and getting it right, to then conclude I'm going to ditch or dilute some accuracy as a sacrifice to the plot.*

*Then there is immersion stuff which can be enjoyable. For Will's War in Brighton, for example, I spent an evening sampling the different kind of sweets Will would have had access to in 1940, whilst watching 1930s sci-fi. I also took a catapult to Banjo Groyne on the Kemptown seafront to shoot shingles at an imaginary German invasion, wearing a 1940s Tommy helmet, just like Will in the book.*

*One of the things I love about Brighton is that nobody batted so much as an eyelid! I've also walked through town for a photo shoot in my Sussex Steampunk Smuggler outfit, replete with top hat, spyglass and tub of brandy. The locals didn't look at me twice, though I did get a lot of tourists taking pictures by the Palace Pier.*

*The immersion can also be less fun. For On Brighton Streets I slept rough in a city park on my own, just to find out what it was really like, and that was a sobering (and cold) experience.*

*My favourite research are 'field trips', exploring a potential setting, visiting the museums and library, poking me nose about, getting a feel for a place and potential. It's also when the 'magic' can take place.*

### **7. MAGIC?**

*Magic, or synchronicity, it's kind of hard to explain.*

*It can be something simple, like discovering that the model who portrays Alice on the cover of Rottingdean Rhyme, is in actual fact called Alice. That's the Gods winking at you.*

*The Gods can also give you unexpected gifts. For example, when I visited Rye for the Sussex Steampunk Tales, I was at the lookout point by the Old Bell and got to talking to an old-timer. He explained what the levels around the town were like when the mist drifts in from the sea and simultaneously rises from the ground. He then added, in the old Sussex drawl: "And folks in Rye would say 'Tis fine weather for foul folk.'"*

*For an author, that's pure gold. I've nicked that and am using it everywhere I can in the Sussex Steampunk Tales. Then there are times when the Gods blow your mind away. Many of my Wyrde Woods locations are real, but spread out between Kent and Cornwall, with bits of the Isle of Skye and even the Dutch National Veluwe Park thrown in, as well as a lot of Sussex locations obviously. However, some settings I believed to be figments of my imagination...until I visited places in Sussex only to be overwhelmed by a surreal sense of recognition. Places which I thought to be imaginary turned out to actually exist. Goosebumps all over, and delicious shivers running up and down my spine on those occasions.*

### **8. WHAT WAS YOUR HARDEST SCENE TO WRITE?**

*There's two that come to mind. The first one about a (historical) event during World War Two when a bomb fell through the roof of a packed Brighton cinema during an afternoon children's matinee. Killing off fictional characters isn't ever pleasant, but those scenes of mass carnage really hit home – all the more so because all of it had really happened. I was also very much aware that I was writing about the brothers, sisters, cousins, parents, or friends of people who are still alive, so I wanted to treat it with due respect. I was literally physically ill for about four days after I wrote those scenes. With hindsight, the second example is something I can laugh about now, but struggled with back then, namely the first sex scene I ever wrote for one of the Wyrde Woods books. It was far more difficult than I anticipated, and I ended up scrapping all of it, and replacing it with the old Sussex saying: And 'there was something of everything, and everything of something'. In other words, I took the coward's way out and left the details up to the reader's own imagination.*

**9. HOW MANY UNPUBLISHED AND HALF-FINISHED BOOKS DO YOU HAVE?**

Ha-ha, the polite description is 'works-in-progress'. Far too many. With all the pitfalls thereof. For example, starting on a Steampunk story will invariably lead to sudden inspiration for the Wyrde Woods. If I make that shift, there'll be airships chugging through my mind, demanding a return to the Sussex Steampunk Tales. My usual procedure is to tinker with a scene in one project, then write a few chapters for another, going with the flow as it were. Until now, that has worked, because I eventually get to a point where one of the stories reaches a stage where I drop everything else and then it's full steam ahead.

**10. WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON RIGHT NOW? WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM YOU IN THE NEAR FUTURE?**

Hopefully a lot, because several projects started in 2017 and 2018 are reaching culmination.

I've just published two novelettes, *Draka Raid* (Wyrde Woods) and *Rottingdean Rhyme* (Steampunk). Furthermore, two short stories, both *Sussex Steampunk Tales*, have been submitted to anthologies, and there are two more to complete, so with a bit of luck I'll appear in four anthologies this year.

I am aware that my small but loyal Wyrde Woods following has been waiting far too long for the sequel of *Forgotten Road*, so completion of *Hidden Spring* is a must.

There are several new *Sussex Steampunk Tales* in progress, and I should be able to present a few new novellas this year.

That's ambitious, but the Steampunk stuff is doing well, so it makes sense to pursue that.

On top of that, last year I discovered that a cousin of my great-grandfather was a prolific children's book author. Piet Visser wrote about twenty-one books. One of them, *The Flying Dutchman* (first published in 1901) has really caught my fancy and I'm in the process of rewriting that for a modern audience. Some of it is 100% Piet Visser, some of it 100% Nils Visser, and the most difficult parts are as close as you can get to joint writing when one of the authors has long passed from this life. Most important, however, will be a sequel to *On Brighton Streets*, entitled *Back on Brighton Streets*. That's written for various homeless charities, and right now there's a genuine humanitarian crisis on our streets, I kid you not. Those books are used both as a means of raising funds, as well as trying to inform a wider public about what is really happening out there, because there is a lot of misinformation doing the rounds. A growing concern is the steady rise of violence against homeless people, as if they were somehow lesser and deserving of abuse. Although I don't get paid for this work and it's a completely different genre from the rest of my stuff, so not necessarily appealing to my existing fan base, I feel it's important to do my bit.

**LINK: [WWW.NILSNISSEVISSER.CO.UK](http://WWW.NILSNISSEVISSER.CO.UK)**



WHEN A BROKEN HEART DRIVES CLERK AND POET YARD PILKIN FROM LONDON TO ROTTINGDEAN, IT SEEMS HE HAS TRAVELED HUNDREDS OF YEARS INTO THE PAST. THE VILLAGE SEEMS BACKWARDS COMPARED TO LONDON, AND ITS INHABITANTS DISTRUSTFUL OF STRANGERS. YARD STRIKES UP AN UNLIKELY FRIENDSHIP THOUGH, WITH ONE OF THE LOCALS, WHICH OPENS THE DOOR TO INTEGRATION. THEN HE DISCOVERS THAT EVERY MAN, WOMAN, AND CHILD IN ROTTINGDEAN CONSPIRE TO CONCEAL A COLLECTIVE SECRET.

A SUSSEX STEAMPUNK TALE FEATURING ALICE KITTYHAWK. PLEASE BE ADVISED, THIS IS A SHORT NOVELLA, NOT A NOVEL-LENGTH STORY.

**[HTTPS://WWW.AMAZON.CO.UK/ROTTINGDEAN-RHYME-SUSSEX-STEAMPUNK-TALES-EBOOK/DP/B07N6FXL7G](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Rottingdean-Rhyme-Sussex-Steampunk-Tales-ebook/dp/B07N6FXL7G)**