



The Violence of Reason

The tale of an accidental novel

Okay, yes. I said it. I'm guilty.

Guilty of what, exactly?

Of writing a novel that I had no intention of creating when I first started working on this project.

Oh, is that all?

Well, they say confession is good for the soul so I guess it's time for me to come clean and tell you all a little bit of the story behind the story. So, settle in and learn my secrets ...

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As a writer, I'm often asked where my ideas come from so that seems like a great place to start. I've always been fascinated by the sprawling subject of World War II. In fact, one of my earliest attempts at writing in longer format storytelling was a story I began back when I was in high school. It had a totally different focus and who knows, maybe one day I'll go back and do more with it, but it represents my first attempt at crafting a tale set in a time of war and in the historical fiction genre.

I've since learned to enjoy playing in different genres and even blending them in my writing. My *Frankenstein: The Resurrection Trinity* series has been invaluable in teaching me how to do this. For what would become *The Violence of Reason* I started with a very simple tale. The setting would place it in the historical fiction genre but with my love of layers and complex conflicts in my stories I wanted more than a "by the book" tale. It needed to be personal, bring in other genres, and have rich and intricate characters. And above all else, it needed to be set in Norway – an oft overlooked but critical battlefield

of the second world war. Thus, in July of 2017, with little more than that, I began outlining a four-part short story series titled “Web of Wyrd.”

The title tied the story into the notion of fate vs. freewill as *wyrd* is another word for fate. This thematic concept became the linchpin against which all the story’s events revolve around. For adding complexity to the characters and conflicts, I elected to have the main character be a Norwegian spy, one who is already behind on recognizing the severity and scope of the dangers encircling them before the story even begins. In this manner, the reader gets the gratification of discovery as the character races to understand what is happening before the trap closes around them. And so *Norill* was born.

One of the aspects of World War II that I’ve always found interesting is how life’s circumstances and personal choices led so many into roles or duties they likely would have never sought out or suffered through before the war. Transitioning from a civilian life to being a spy against the Third Reich sounds potentially romantic or thrilling, but I’m sure it would also be terrifying. Spies who were caught faced torture, internment, or execution. It would take a special kind of bravery and patriotism to step forward and assume such a role when so many others would not. I wanted to bring that delicate balance of duty and danger into the life of this unassuming woman to make the reader both root for her and fear for her.

I sailed through the first two parts of the story, which were, and still are, fairly short entries. Then there was a sizeable lag of time before I was able to get to writing the third part. I was releasing each as I went but only had vague ideas how all this was going to wrap up. Basically, the first three parts each doubled in length from the previous, but at this point, I still labored believing I was writing a short story. Once the third section of the story was published, I had every intention of wrapping it up but life had other plans.

I won’t get too personal but 2018 brought a great loss to my life and I struggled. In the midst of this period, I was unexpectedly contacted by a travel writer who was living in China at the time who wished to meet to discuss a project she was looking to begin. We met in August in person and spent a few enjoyable hours sharing stories and our thoughts on writing. I give all credit to her for getting me moving again on this project. It was a simple question she posed that did the trick.

“What are you working on right now?”

I hesitated.

Aside from some very heartfelt poetry, I hadn’t wanted to work on anything. I couldn’t. Since her passing my focus was not about writing. I awkwardly mentioned that I’d started a short story series that was over halfway completed but wasn’t sure how I wanted to finish it so I hadn’t touched it in some time. She pressed me for more details so I outlined the story so far and where I thought it could go. I could see her interest grow as I spoke.

“Oh, I’d totally read that.”

She’ll never know how much that simple sentence impacted me. They were the supportive, enthusiastic words I needed to hear, the sincere interest on her face what I needed to see. I resolved to finish it. I needed to finish it.

I went back to my notes from several years previous and began to tinker. It was slow going at first. At times my grief helped me to focus, at others it kept any real creative thoughts at bay. But I knew this was important to me and bit by bit I began to find my way. I stole spare moments to work on it, on weekends when I needed to be alone, I reconnected to this world and these characters and found a renewed purpose. Over several months the momentum build as did my confidence. Writing and playing in this world slowly began to make my feel more like myself, more at peace. Writing was something concrete I could understand. I took the opportunity to step outside myself and all of the sudden it was done. The final section was completed without fanfare and quietly released.

Initially, I thought that was all.

I'd made a promise to myself and kept it. The work had offered me a respite and I was proud, after so many years of development, that I'd crafted something unique and discovered a new writing style I enjoyed. The final section had been published and I was happy with it. Still, my thoughts kept nagging me that there was more. Could I turn this tale into a book? Take what had only been intended to be a short story series and build it into something grander in scope?

There was only one way to find out.

I kept writing and the characters began to take on new depth and richness as I explored them more. Some required much more development while others remained little changed from their short story counterparts. The dangers grew, the dynamics between the characters did likewise, and so my "accidental novel" has come to be.

Writing is the best kind of journey for no matter how much or how little planning you have done for a project, they are always full of surprises and discovery. The style of this work is far different from my previous work, which much as I have enjoyed working in the Frankenstein universe, was the breath of creative fresh air I needed. In a very real sense this story was as much a mystery to me as I wrote it as I hope it is for readers as they engage with it.

Recently, new ideas for a follow up have begun to wander about my mind's eye so who knows. Perhaps, Norill's story is not done and I'll have another, as the wonderful Bob Ross liked to say, "happy little accident," of a novel.