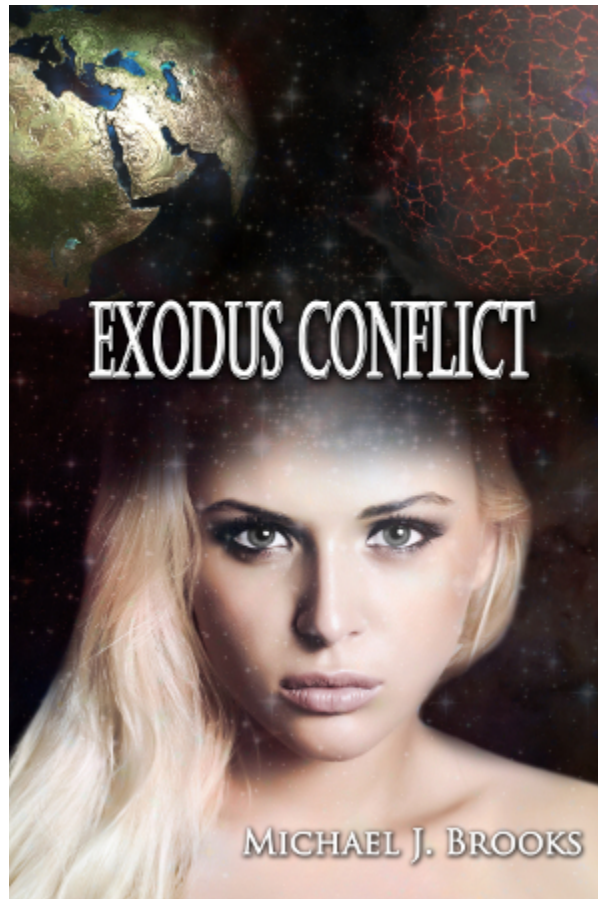

IndieView with Michael J. Brooks, author of Exodus Conflict

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Michael J. Brooks – 23 July 2015

The Back Flap

Due to war, environmental mistreatment, and the overuse of natural resources, Earth was brought to the brink of catastrophe. In order to preserve human civilization, nations put aside their animosity and worked together to find a new home world within the Milky Way Galaxy. It appeared to be the perfect

planet to call Second Earth, and humanity thought this new world would be all for their taking; however, a race of people known as the Zull also needed this planet for their salvation.

Because of fear, hate, and distrust, the races were unable to comprise. Earth then united their militaries to form the Earth United Front (EUF) and a war for total supremacy erupted.

Now, a lone journalist named Alex Mercer travels to the planet humanity and the Zull are warring over, seeking to understand why the war has been drawn out for three years, even though the simple solution of “coexistence” could end it tomorrow.

While on his adventure, Alex becomes acquainted with an EUF soldier named Andrea Blair, whose cold gray eyes tell a tale of death, sorrow, and hate. And though Andrea seems to be nothing more than a heartless Zull killer, Alex sees something more behind her cruel demeanor. Alex sees someone who wants to simply laugh, love, and enjoy life; and it becomes his personal mission to prevent Andrea from remaining the cold shell of a person she has become, as well as prevent humankind and Zull from wiping each other out.

Of all the wars Alex has covered, he has never experienced one quite like this, and he has certainly never met a woman like Andrea Blair.

About the book

What is the book about?

Exodus Conflict is about two races, the human race and the Zull, fighting over a planet both need to survive and a pacifistic journalist named Alex Mercer trying to figure out why both races can't simply share the planet. And while trying to figure out this conundrum, he starts to fall for a pro-war soldier named Andrea Blair, his exact opposite. So in short, **Exodus Conflict** is a sci-fi novel about love, war, animosity, and coexistence.

When did you start writing the book?

I was in my senior year of college in 2008. That's actually when I started writing my first draft, with whatever spare time I had.

How long did it take you to write it?

I released *Exodus Conflict* in 2012. So I guess you could say four years. But I was occupied with graduate school and was busy trying to get my life together between 2008 and 2012. So I wasn't necessarily writing every day for four years straight. I wrote on *Exodus Conflict* with whatever free time I had. And I recently updated the novel.

Where did you get the idea from?

I'm a sci-fi film and TV buff, so some of my ideas for *Exodus Conflict* were influenced by the sci-fi television shows and movies I'd seen. History and current international affairs also influenced my ideas.

Were there any parts of the book where you struggled?

Yes, I struggled with how to begin my novel. The beginning pages are what piques the readers' interest. After the prologue in *Exodus Conflict*, chapter one begins. And I knew I had to start that chapter with something exciting. So I began it with the main protagonist, Alex Mercer, in the midst of a city-wide war-zone. But this was a difficult thing to write because, within that war-zone, Alex witnesses a woman be assaulted. And I was a little nervous about writing the assault because I didn't want readers to take it the wrong way. I especially didn't want to alienate any female readers.

I struggled with the decision whether to pacify the graphic nature of the assault or leave it as is. I chose to leave it as originally written, since *Exodus Conflict* was meant to portray and bring attention to the harsh cruelties of war. But writing those beginning pages was definitely my main struggle.

What came easily?

The characters were the easiest thing that came to me. I already had an idea of who they were and what types of personalities they would have. I knew their histories and backgrounds. So, as I wrote, I was able to easily develop my characters.

Are your characters entirely fictitious or have you borrowed from real world people you know?

There is a little bit of me in Alex Mercer, but the characters are mainly fictitious. To me, it is much more fun to write about people you don't know, including yourself, and people who don't exist in reality. I love using my imagination to create unique personalities and characters.

We all know how important it is for writers to read. Are there any particular authors that have influenced how you write and, if so, how have they influenced you?

An author who has influenced my writing is Joel Shepherd, author of the Cassandra Kresnov novels. In his writing, I noticed that he sometimes writes scenes with what I call a closed-caption style. For example, instead of writing "The woman's high heel boots clacked the pavement" he might write "The woman walked across the pavement with high heel boots (period)" and then, using his closed-caption style, he might simply write something like, "Clacking noises (period)." Check the novel out to see what I really mean. But I now incorporate this style into my own writing.

Do you have a target reader?

I do. My target readers are ages 18-35.

About Writing

Do you have a writing process? If so can you please describe it?

I don't have a process. Once I get an idea, I simply go to my computer and start working.

Do you outline? If so, do you do so extensively or just chapter headings and a couple of sentences?

I was looking at writing video on Youtube by an author named Brandon Sanderson. He said there are two types of writers, outliners and discovery writers. I am a discovery writer, a writer who works best without a lot of structure. I get an idea for my story and characters and I discover more about them as I write and explore.

Do you edit as you go or wait until you've finished?

I do edit as I go. I often edit my pages thoroughly as soon as they're written, trying to perfect my character dialogue and descriptive vocabulary. But I do the majority of my editing after the first draft is completely written, making changes to my story, looking for vocabulary errors, and continuing to improve my writing.

Did you hire a professional editor?

Yes. *Exodus Conflict* was edited by Jodi Lynne Tahsler of A-1 editing services. She taught me much and helped expand my creativity.

Do you listen to music while you write? If yes, what gets the fingers tapping?

I do sometimes listen to music when I write. The music I listen to depends on what scene I'm writing. I might listen to Rock if I'm writing a fast-paced action scene. I might listen to R&B love songs if I'm writing a romantic or love scene. One of my favorite artists I listened to while writing *Exodus Conflict* was Evanescence.

About Publishing

Did you submit your work to Agents?

I actually did not submit *Exodus Conflict* to any agents. I did submit the novel to publishing companies that accepted unsolicited manuscripts.

What made you decide to go Indie, whether self-publishing or with an indie publisher? Was it a particular event or a gradual process?

I decided to be an independent author for three reasons. (1) I got tired of trying to get my work accepted by major publishers and waiting long wait times just to receive a rejection letter. (2) I wanted more of my royalties. (3) For *Exodus Conflict*, I didn't want my novel to be changed too much from its original conception.

Did you get your book cover professionally done or did you do it yourself?

I never do my book covers myself. If there are two things you should spend money on, it's editing and your book cover. The cover is what helps to catch the reader's attention, and your writing talent is what helps sell the book. So the cover is important and worth the investment. My kudos to Laura Gordon for such a great cover for *Exodus Conflict*.

Do you have a marketing plan for the book or are you just winging it?

So far, my plan consists of doing as much online promotion as possible, through blog interviews, Good Reads, Twitter, and a host of other sites. I also enter independent book competitions. So, what I do is simply look for promotional opportunities and seize them.

Any advice that you would like to give to other newbies considering becoming Indie authors?

Yes, I have four bits of advice. (1) Always seek out others to read your work. Use friends, give away free copies for feedback, find beta readers online. And do not get angered by constructive criticism. To get angry at constructive criticism is the mark of an amateur. Constructive criticism is meant to help you. (2) Stay confident in your work, even when you may not be selling as many copies as expected. Sales may eventually pick up. However, don't be against changing your work. It may be that you just need a new beginning to your novel to pique people's interest. I know I did with *Exodus Conflict*. (3) To be a good writer, you have to read your genre. So read and read a lot. (4) Promote as much as you can and enter indie book award competitions.

About You

Where did you grow up?

In the great city of Nashville, Tennessee.

Where do you live now?

Washington, DC.

What would you like readers to know about you?

I would like for readers to know that I'm serious about my craft. I wish to release books that are just as good and intriguing as any traditionally published book. And I put a lot of time and effort into my novels. I also love feedback, good and negative. I also love answering questions, so email or tweet me anytime.

What are you working on now?

Right now I'm working on the sequel to *Exodus Conflict*, called *Exodus Conflict: New Genesis*. I'm also working on an urban fantasy novel titled, for now, *Dark by Design*.

End of Interview:

Get your copy of *Exodus Conflict* from Amazon US ([paper](#) or [ebook](#)), Amazon UK ([paper](#) or [ebook](#)), [Barnes & Noble](#), or [Smashwords](#).

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