

Full Author's Notes

From

Subversion, Book 10

The Ascension Myth

Author Notes - Ell Leigh Clarke

May 2nd, 2018

Thank Yous

As always big thanks must go to MA for his continued support, and encouragement. The truth is, I hate writing in isolation, and even though we don't agree on a lot of things (like whether he wrote Nicky or Nickie in the original short story about Nicky Grimes) it still means a lot to have someone there to sound board with and read the stories when I get to the 75% done mark and losing the will to put fingers to keyboard. Somehow that always seems to help.

<Mike Edit: I feel like SUCH a louse! I've had to ask Ellie to push through for the last week mostly alone as I work on Payback Is a Bitch. In fact, they had two issues I needed to look at and both fell asleep before I woke up from my nap. >

Make no mistake, as much as I ADORE telling stories and weaving intricate plots... writing all the words, all the time, is exhausting. Some days I feel like I've run a marathon.

And MA is always there at the other end of slack to... well, laugh at me, and tell me everyone is in the same boat. ;) (I was gonna say hand me water and give me a pep talk. I guess he does that sometimes too.)

<Mike Edit: Here is a glass of the bestest H2O Ever. GO ELLIE, GO!>

Massive thanks must also go to our awesome JIT team and Zen-Steve. I'm immensely grateful to them all for their hard work in turning this around and making it happen in time for our deadline. I also truly appreciate how much our JIT team cares. I mean, here we are, ten books in, and they still want this to be the best, most consistent version of itself that we can possibly put out. It's touching to know how hard you guys work on something that is a passion and not a job. I deeply appreciate you.

So now I have a confession:

I'm just hoping that Steve doesn't have time to notice that one of the baddies has the same name as him. When I checked with MA I was keen that Steve didn't think that I was naming this sneaky psychopath after him – because they are truly nothing alike. It's just I needed a name beginning with S, and Steve is what came to mind.

<Steve Edit: I did notice, and I've lost sleep wondering what it was I'd done to upset you>
I hope we're still cool, Zen-Steve!

<Mike Edit: I totally did tell her that Steve wouldn't mind. He goes by Stephen on Facebook. It's really not the same guy.>

<Steve Edit: I totally don't mind, but wanted to at least inflict some minor sneaky psychopath level emotional pain ;)>

I also owe an immense debt of gratitude to you the reader who reads the stories (sometimes more than once!), writes the five star reviews, and provide an endless source of encouragement over on the facebook page. The 5* reviews also mean that the Amazon algorithms show the book to more readers. I've seen some statistics recently from someone who works at Amazon. Your reviews mean everything in terms of us being picked up by more readers, and you have no idea what it means to me that you take the time to do it. Thank you!

I'd also like to say a huge thank you to everyone on my fb page.

Even when I drop off the radar for a few weeks, you're still there when I come back. That is huge. Your support and friendship means the world to me, and when fun shit happens I wanna get photos. Why? So that I can show you what else is going on behind the scenes of the Sanguine Squadron!

I've said it before, but I'll say it again: You keep me writing.

Without you, these stories would not be told. <3

E x

MA vs Nickie. And Nicky

Sometimes there is reason for MA to get involved in the manuscript for these books. Mostly when it bumps up against Federation stuff. As you probably know, Nicky Grimes comes firmly in the camp of "Federation Stuff", so when MA had a read of it, there were things that needed... tweaking.

So over a day or so MA goes through the various references to Nicky and about 11.30 last night I got a call.

MA: I don't understand why you've made Nicky into such a pussy!

Ellie: I didn't. What do you mean by pussy?

MA: Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. <Mike Edit: Please insert VERY intelligent

arguments here. Cogent, hard to counter-argue... You know, bullshit!>

Ellie: well, compared to Molly she's very laid back, but I wouldn't say she was a pussy. Change the bits you want to.

The call goes on for about twenty minutes, then we agree he's going to make some more tweaks. We hang up.

Ten seconds later, he's calling again.

Ellie: Did you just pocket dial me?

MA: No. I was just calling to say that I changed five words and we're all ok now. <Mike Edit: It was 7 words...That's like 40% more...>

Ellie: (pisses herself laughing and hangs up.)

* * *

Oh! But that's not even the point of this section. There's more.

As you may be aware MA and I have been talking about doing a cross series with Nicky and Tabitha. Kinda a Ranger Two thing that crosses time. Anyway, we both have waaaaay too much writing to do already, so it's on the back burner for now, but probably still happening at some point.

Anyway, we've worked on this, and I've thrown together a bunch of beats for my part. But in order for this to work, I needed to do a shit tonne of research on Nicky – which meant reading her short story in Pew Pew.

Which I did.

Despite my inability to read fast.

In it, I made a bunch of notes. Like how to spell Grimm'Zee and which spelling he used for Nicky.

Then, I get a message from him on slack, saying I've spelled Nickie wrong!

I make my case, but when I get the manuscript back, he's changed about half of them back to Nickie.

All I can say is thank goodness for the "find and replace" function.

MA vs Tony Robbins

The other week MA and I were discussing things that needed to be done in the business. I think I'd suggested something, and I asked if he'd remember to do it. (Not that he often forgets,

but well.. er.. anyway...)

<Mike Edit: Yes...yes I do and Ellie is very patient with me right now... Probably way more than I deserve.>

He confidently waved a dark covered a4 book in front of the camera. “I’ve got myself a calendar,” he declared with the vigor of someone who might well have just acquired the Ring of Mardoor.

Oh, great! I said, encouragingly.

“It’s a Tony Robbins one,” he told me. “I’m going to be more motivated and on top of things than Mr. Motivation himself.”

I tried to hide my smile. He was about to tell me the story about how he’d been recommended it, but I guess my teasing had already begun.

“Great! so this means you’re never going to forget anything ever again?”

He blushed and nodded, quietly writing in it now.

“And this means you’re ready to conquer the world?” I asked.

He said something to the affirmative.

I assumed that this would mean that he won’t forget important things going forward. That he’s all over projects faster than a rash of poison ivy. That he’s like a steel trap ready to spring into action at a moment’s notice, with all the information at his finger tips.

Well...

The following week I asked him about something we’d agreed to put into play, and he hadn’t done it.

“But it was in your Tony Robbins calendar!” I protested.

“Yeah, yeah. You’re fully at liberty to say I told you so!”

“I would never be that obvious,” I told him, secretly knowing he’d just given me more fodder for the trials and tribulations that I could share in our Author Notes for your amusement.

<Mike Edit: Dammit!>

Seals vs Lobsters

As you know, I’m completely baffled by human kind. I guess that’s one reason why I write science fiction – a commentary on how we operate as societies as we tweak the playing field with technology. There are very few things that make sense to me... particularly around how humans can do awful things to each other.

Competition I kinda get – in a more intellectual sense. But not to the extremes that I've seen guys screw themselves over to make a point.

<Mike Edit: Ellie admits right here that she just doesn't get guys. But, that's true of a lot of women...Ellie is just more scientifically curious as to WHY she didn't get guys. So, she reads about lobsters.>

Anyway, recently I've been reading the popular book by one of the greatest intellectuals of the modern era. He's recently become a youtube sensation, but don't let that put you off. He's one of the few folks who can articulate ideas that if we only stopped to think about, we might stand a better chance of interacting more productively. I know he's also controversial, but I think that is a function of trying to have a real and honest conversation in an ecosystem that operates in polarized sound bites.

Quite how he's managing to overcome this, is fascinating.

So I've been reading his book – which he touts as a self-help book. Mostly for young males. But I've found it incredibly instructive already. In talking about the lobster in the context of evolutionary theory of behavior I finally understand much better why people operate the way they do: why guys get cross when they lose at poker, why they'll go to extraordinary lengths to screw each other over in business. Why what people think about them is more important than anything else... including survival, and so on.

Anyway, one day I was talking with MA and happened to mention this. Apparently I went on about the details for a while. What can I say – it was a revelation for me.

<Mike Edit: And by while, I think an hour...>

A few days later he wanted to refer back to some of the points I'd made in this discussion, but he couldn't quite remember the word 'lobster'.

MA: You know, that stuff that's delicious.

Ellie: frowns.

MA: Seals... or something?

Ellie: Seals are delicious?

MA: No... lobsters. I mean lobsters.

Ellie: Hang on, let's go back to the bit where you think seals are delicious....

Another intellectual discussion derailed at it's inception.

<Mike Edit: OMG! That is TOO FUCKING FUNNY. Well, shit. I will have to admit it's

true though.>

It's all coming up sea food

At the tail end of a conversation where MA was talking about going to get food or something. In his defense it was probably a bad line and he may have been walking.

Ellie: also, we need to sort out covers for Molly.

MA: ugh I hate that stuff.

Ellie: huh? What stuff?

MA: that sea food.

Ellie: (completely baffled and intrigued by what he thought she'd said): what has seafood got to do with book covers?

MA: wait. What do you say before?

Ellie: I said we needed to sort out covers for Molly.

MA: oh, shit. I thought you'd said calamari.

Ellie: (facepalm) It's ok. It was my fault for trying to talk to you when you were hungry.

<Mike Edit: HAHAHAHAHAAAA...>

Exploding Kittens

The other week I had a friend from LA staying with me while he was attending a conference nearby. One evening we ended up at one of his other friend's places in another part of town. So there we were, drinking wine, sitting in the living room, when someone (maybe Ellie) notices a box of cards under the tv that said something like Exploding Kittens on it.

I had no idea what they were, so Pelin got them out to show me and explained to me that it's a game. As we'd had a few drinks already someone suggested we played it.

Now, I'm not normally one for games, but since my attempts to assimilate with people have led me to playing poker and Cards Against Humanity,... and because everyone else wanted to play, I figured, what did I have to lose.

Now my friend from LA is a business strategist, amongst other things. He's kinda hard core and a serious entrepreneur. These personality traits seem to be transposed over to games too because the next thing I realize is that he's pulling up a video about the rules so that he doesn't have to bother remembering them correctly and what ensues is a game more strategic than chess!

And taken waaay more seriously than anyone should take a game with exploding kitties on the cards.

Well, it turned out that actually it is quite strategic and for a kid's game takes quite a bit of cognitive processing.

I was so impressed with it I ended up mentioning it at the next poker game and I managed to generate enough interest to warrant buying a pack and bringing them to the game the following week.

I was a bit nervous, because these guys are hard core poker players. Some of them wear glasses so you can't see their eyes. Some shuffle like they've done this professionally. Many have won tournaments in Vegas with big prize money.

On the surface they can be a little intimidating.

Last week I managed to grab a few players who had been knocked out, and in the hiatus between being knocked out and starting the cash game I suggested we play.

Now whether they were humoring me, or they'd had too much beer to be able to say no...we'll never know.

But we started.

We got as far as watching the video and setting up the cards, but then it was time for the cash game, so they had to go away again.

I'm planning to keep them in my bag for next time, but I think it's already generated enough interest and amusement to get a game going another time.

It also reminded me of the scene from Buffy the Vampire Slayer, where Spike took Buffy to his underground poker game where the demons were playing for kittens!

Alcohol poisoning

Turns out alcohol poisoning is a thing, not just reserved for underage drinkers at prom.

I went out the other night and had four margaritas over the course of five hours. I was home by midnight, and not even slurring my words. And yet, what followed for the following 24 hours was horrendous.

I'll spare you the details, but I survived.

I wondered if my drink had been spiked by something. It's possible, but then, what would have been the point, because I was up all night and didn't pass out. Not even close.

The only other thing that happened was that my friend complained about the drinks not being the same as the first lot, so the bar tender added some tequila. We ended up going back to

the same bar tender each time, and then taking our drinks back into where the band was. I wonder if they were just over-'egging' the drinks, maybe.

When I told one of my friends (who is an experienced partier) he said that dehydration can be a big problem. "You're in Austin now, honey!" he reminded me.

So that's it. Either I never drink again, which was my first inclination... Or I just have to be super careful to not over do it, and make sure I drink water.

Basically all the things we're told as teenagers.

Go figure.

Poker vs the Late Night Booty Call

So for the first time ever, I needed to cash out of the cash game in poker this week. (We play a tournament first and then while that finishes those of us who have been knocked out play a cash game.)

Normally I just play until I have no more chips left – in both cash and torney.

But this time was different.

I didn't know the protocol.

So I asked.

Big mistake.

Jason: Why are you cashing out Ellie?

John: Why are you leaving now Ellie?

Nick: Ellie's got a booty call! I saw her on her phone a minute ago!

(OMG. Could these guys be any more embarrassing?)

Ellie: No. no I haven't. I'm just going to meet a friend.

(Nick, Jason, et al... All jeering and teasing.)

Ryan (the wise one): What I don't understand is why you're not giving them shit back, Ellie. Nick said that like he was surprised. Why would he be surprised that you've hooked up? Eh Nick?

Nick shuts up.

Ellie says her goodbyes and leaves, now knowing:

1. how the lobster mind responds to winning and losing,
2. how to shut a poker player up in short order. (Although, I suspect this turning

things around on a guy is something that most females have already mastered by the time they're wearing a training bra. I'm sure I'm behind the curve on some of these things, but thank goodness for the good guys who can teach me in a relatively controlled, and safe environment!)

Author Notes - Michael Anderle

Written May 2, 2018

First, THANK YOU for not only reading our story, but now my little Author Notes after the amazing version Ellie just supplied.

I suck.

Actually, I'm behind on writing a book and writing my Author Notes after Ellie gave me DAYS to finish them was just horrible. I have no idea why I didn't remember to do them Sunday night.

Hell, I hope that I didn't do them and forgot; that shit would be tragic. We are talking past Romeo and Juliet-level stuff here if I write these and then find out I forgot that I had done them already.

You know, Ellie is one of the most decent individuals I know, and certainly the smartest. I do give her a bit of trouble sometimes about what I would perceive is a given, but she will keep focusing on why it just isn't "right."

<<Ellie Edit: you make me sound like I have some innate sense of morality or something. Which isn't quite accurate. But I wont interject a long rant/ discourse on my thoughts on that right here... You're clearly gearing up to make a point. >>

Like Lobsters.

If you haven't read her Author Notes, you really must. Otherwise, what I'm going to write here will make absolutely no sense at all.

No, go ahead, I'll wait...

Ok, you back? Good!

So, Ellie has been pro-humanity con-stupidity (read that as leaning toward why-can't-we-all-just-get-along) ever since I have known her.

<<Ellie: ok, I suppose that is accurate. And an amusing way of putting it. Go on...>>

Not that I knew that originally. What I knew originally was that Sean Platt knew her from an Internet Mastermind group he was involved in.

I learned the above PHCS focus during our effort to work the beats on The Ascension

Myth (I just pronounced it correctly in my mind, Ellie...just saying.) and I LIKE to work the feels of my collaborators into our story, or it doesn't resonate.

<< Ellie Edit: hahaha – he normally calls it the AXE-cension myth! >>>

However, I did feel that perhaps Ellie and I would never see eye-to-eye on things about humanity and reality. However, I have always admired her perseverance in her beliefs.

Even when I told her to “Michael Bay the shit out of that scene!” I knew deep down she didn't understand why to do it.

<< Ellie Edit: true. Killy-killy isn't my bag. But I do remember you having that conversation with me having asked a bunch of cops where the best pizza in Austin could be found! >>

Cheese vs. Pepperoni Pizza

One of the best ways to exemplify this is one argument we had about a year ago (can you believe that Ellie has put out ten Molly Books, two Giles books and two Dark Messiah books in twelve months?)

TAKE, THAT GRRM! (George R R Martin—Game of Thrones.)

(Personally, I understand if GRRM is freaking out because of the stress of ‘getting it right’ with his next book. I wouldn't trade my life for his right now for any amount of money. If that isn't his problem? Well, then I've not a clue why it is taking him so long to produce his next book.)

Ok, back to pizza.

Ellie is all about cheese pizza. Part of it is her no-meat diet focus.

I, of course, am about laying down a good layer of pepperoni on the top, letting the meat melt, the oils from the pepperoni fat soak under the cheese, mixing in with the marinara sauce (no chunks of tomatoes! That's apostasy.)

Finally, the pepperoni will curl up, the edges blackened and crispy so that when I bite into them I hear a crunch when the explosion of flavors hits the back of my mouth.

Not the same as biting into a cheese pizza.

Which is a good metaphor for books without explosions.

I'm a guy, I want explosions...

I do like looking at trouble and how to solve issues from multiple directions. I will admit—without the need for torture—that solving problems intellectually IS the better solution.

But...lobster brain.

The lobster brain in me wants EXPLOSIONS! BIG FANTASTIC EXPLOSIONS WITH body parts and spaceship parts and lots of (enemy) gore flying everywhere!

<< Ellie Edit: yeah this is where I go back to taking intellectual notes. I have no concept of why this is a satisfying thing. >>>

Definitely enemy gore, not good-guys gore.

<< Ellie Edit: and this was a pattern I spotted and replicated from your books. But honestly, do you have ANY idea how unrealistic this is? If something was going down, bombs or guns, or whatever, the probability that only those on one side, or with a certain set of moral rules, would get hurt is slim. Also – who is to say who are bad and good... Oh yes. The author. But it's still kinda arbitrary in the big scheme of things. I mean, how do the bullets know to just miss the good guys? >>

Until recently, post lobster video, Ellie and I had NO ability to cognitively discuss our pizza issues.

<< Ellie Edit: I think he means pre-lobster reading. It was in a book. But that's a minor point. (Yes, I read something, but to qualify my non-reading thing, I do ok with non-fiction) >>

She was cheese, I was pepperoni.

The two were not going to meet.

Now, after Ellie watching said video and explaining what it meant to her to understand the issue, I am finding it so much easier to discuss our pizza disagreement.

(Our conversation regarding her watching and understanding the video was enlightening in and of itself. I rather wish we HAD captured that first hour as she explained to me what helped her understand the missing link such that both cheese and pepperoni lovers would come out of our 'revelations' video understanding the frame of mind of the other party so much better.)

<< Ellie Edit: hahaha – *first* hour! >>

But, alas, we didn't. We might have been able to bring about World Peace had we put that conversation up on YouTube.

Opportunity lost.

Either way. I am now much more aware that my confusion with Ellie had nothing to do with Ellie not being willing to see reality (meaning, she could see everything but chose not to believe it.) But rather, she was seeking a biological understanding of why guys liked pepperoni

pizza and couldn't find a logical reason.

<< Ellie Edit: no – just any understanding. This evolutionary theory was the first explanation that wasn't circular. >>

'Cause it's fucking delicious, and we are wired that way.

As guys, we don't question the love of our pizza, we just love it. (We can be simple that way.)

Wednesday is Poker Night.

Thursday morning comes around every week, and every week I wonder if my Facebook thread is going to have a comment from Ellie about her previous night.

Why? Because she plays poker on Wednesday nights and she could sell a set of stories just on what goes on with her friends until wee early in the mornings.

Personally, I feel sorry for those who play with her. I'm very aware of two (2) things:

1. She is a genius, and poker IS about learning the rules and the percentages and strategies, not winging the shit out of it.
2. I suck at poker, cause I like winging the shit out of something and the numbers hurt my little brain.

But, the guys at the Wednesday night poker are going to feel sorry for her, her British accent, and teach her the rules of the game.

Because, there is no fucking way she will ever be a challenge to them, right? It takes years to build up a working knowledge of poker...

Those poor fuckers.

<< Ellie Edit: hahaha – One of them thinks he's onto me because he's seen my study materials on the counter in my kitchen. He keeps warning them, but he's like the crazy conspiracy person now that no one takes seriously. >>

They won't know what happened until she is right there, knocking them out time and time again (after the first few weeks of them thinking she just 'got lucky.')

Oh, she got lucky all right. She got lucky they didn't realize how fast she learns shit.

Remember, she went from "I haven't read a fiction book since I was twelve" to BESTSELLING Sci-Fi author in one hundred days with multiple releases.

No one does that because they are lucky, and you don't become good at poker because you are lucky either.

Nope, she is going to be wearing that "#1 Poker Player in Austin" hat when she is on television, sunglasses on, playing with the big kahunas in Atlantic City or in Las Vegas sometime and we will all be cheering her on.

Even the lobsters from her Wednesday night Poker nights.

What am I going to do about it?

WHY JAYNE AUSTIN LOVES POKER...

So, Ellie and I are doing a Jayne Austin set of stories. (Nope, not like Jane Austin the author. Think female James Bond in space with a 60s version of free love.)

Something that is going to Rock and Roll the future—Interplanetary Spy for Hire.

<< Ellie Edit: Wait. Wasn't it interstellar? >>>

One of the things we do when collaborating (and it is so much fun) is discuss our characters and go back and forth on beats and stuff. While working on this series, I'm constantly asking, "how did Wednesday go?" and she tells me the latest on poker.

Then, I'm thinking that we need to put this love of poker into Jayne Austin, cause it's funny as hell and she (Ellie) can add that additional reality to the character that helps the character come alive. I'm stoked about the story and hope we do justice to our vision.

If nothing else, the poker scenes will be accurate.

I wonder if her poker friends want to be in a book?

Thank you SO MUCH for reading and to loving Molly and everyone here. We have two more stories coming at you to finish The Ascension Myth!

All the best,

Michael