



Photo by CARL RUSSO

Author C.J. Daniels from Windham has a passion for writing futuristic tales of the other worlds.

Marketer by day, author by night

C.J. Daniels pursues his passion for writing every spare minute. It's paid off with dozens of books and hundreds of fans.

Author C.J. Daniels looks at everyday occurrences and thinks to himself, "I could write that better."

So he does, but with a science-fiction flare.

The 56-year-old cultivated a passion for writing futuristic tales during his childhood, when he watched his father work in the book publishing industry and realized early on that he was a sci-fi fan.

"I've always gravitated towards the genre," Daniels said. "I've always had a wild imagination with stories floating around, and I eventually found that they

were easy to put down on paper."

He grew up writing in Brooklyn, New York, but when he moved to Windham in 2003 he became more serious about it. His wife encouraged him to balance his full-time marketing job with enhancing his writing craft.

Soon after, he found himself with a renowned publisher and fans who annually flock to see him at the largest comic book and pop culture convention in New England.

To date, he's published four novels, which are categorized as science fiction, but blend horror, history and the

supernatural with what is typically expected of the genre.

Joining the New Hampshire Writers Project and the New England Horror Writer's Association at the end of this summer have already helped him to widen his readership and make more public appearances.

"The fun thing is, I'm expecting a lot more," he said. "I've been re-inventing myself over the last six months."

While he anticipates the release of a new book in 2016, he's making a statement: C.J. Daniels is just getting started.

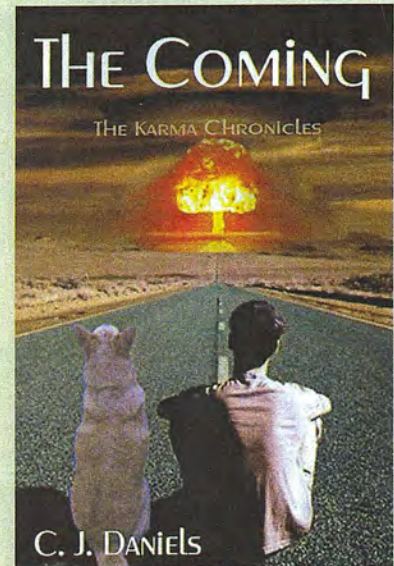
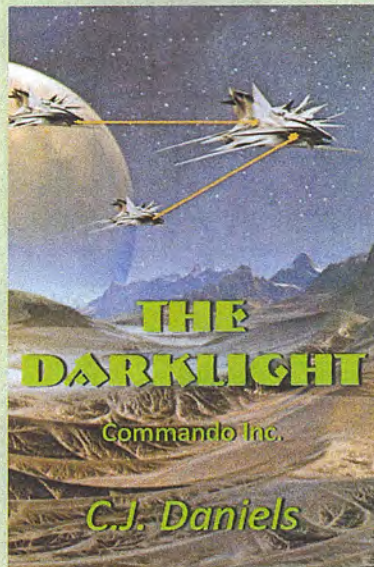
C.J. DANIELS' BOOKS

- ▶ "The Dark Light, Commando Inc."
- ▶ "The Coming"
- ▶ "The Second Coming"
- ▶ "Lost Planets"

For more information, visit thecjdaniels.com

MEET THE AUTHOR

- ▶ **Where:** Nesmith Library, 8 Fellows Road
- ▶ **When:** Dec. 12, 1 p.m.
- ▶ **What:** Book signing, meet-and-greet, seminar for writing and publishing hopefuls



Chapter 1

For Daniels, writing is a balancing act of creating characters that readers will relate to and letting them develop on their own.

"Readers like characters that feel real," he said. "Like they could step right off the page. And no one is perfect. Sometimes, characters get more real than you want, you lose control and it's like your story is hijacked by them."

Because he believes that all writers pull from the deepest parts of their emotions and experiences, it makes sense that inspiration comes from lessons he's learned, challenges he's overcome and happiness that he's celebrated.

He lives his life by the concept of karma.

"I'm a strong believer in it," he said. "It's the idea of 'What goes around comes around.'"

In his second published novel, "The Coming," the first in the Karma Chronicles series, he spent several months contemplating the idea and creating the fate-driven novel.

He introduces readers to Sam Rossi, a character who bears the responsibility of saving the world. Though his missions usually lead to an untimely death, Rossi is reborn to do it all over again in his next life. All the while, he retains memories of his unique past.

Eventually, Rossi discovers that the end of all life on Earth might just be the beginning. Readers are on edge as Rossi searches for the true meaning of the Coming and tries to stop it before his good karma runs dry, Daniels said.

Though Rossi is the hero, there's a sense of tragedy that comes with the reincarnation and responsibility that he endures.

"A sense of tragedy in a character is important because that's where conflict comes from," Daniels said.

As an independent author who spent years trying to establish his own place in the industry, he can relate to feelings of conflict.

Chapter 2

For nearly 25 years, Daniels has been writing tales that often include over-the-top alien encounters, apocalyptic situations and heroes who save humanity. But until last year, most of the big stories remained tucked away in the small hard drive of his laptop.

"There was no traction in getting them published at first, so I would bury them," he said.

Before his wife motivated him to take the next step in sharing his stories with the masses, he started by exploring self-publishing, a method that has gained popularity over the last several years. However, he quickly realized that he would prefer working with someone willing to stand behind his work.

That person turned out to be Shirrel Rhoades. Daniels heard of veteran publisher Rhoades from several colleagues.

Rhoades had an extensive career in the northeast before retiring in Key West, Florida. Two years ago, Rhoades started his own online publishing company, Absolutely Amazing eBooks. So far, he has published 300 titles representing

about 100 different authors. Now, Daniels is one of those authors.

"It's nice to be the fairy godfather and grant people this opportunity. It's usually very hard to break into the industry without an agent," Rhoades said.

But he's working to change that. With an impressive resume, including time as executive vice president of Marvel Entertainment, vice president of the book division at Reader's Digest and associate publisher of Harper's Magazine, he understands the ins and outs of the industry.

About 12 years ago, at the beginning of retirement, he found himself getting questions about how to get a book published after locals had learned of his experiences.

Unable to stay away from the industry, he eventually decided to start his own non-traditional publishing company.

"Mainstream publishers don't deal directly with authors because of reliability issues and lack of time," he said. "So you need an agent, and it's just really hard to break in."

Because a lot of the work he was being approached with deserved attention, he set off to think about how to reinvent the industry.

"I thought to myself, if I were to reinvent book publishing, how would I do it," he said. "With tablets taking over, I thought that a virtual publishing company was the way to go."

It worked out and earlier this year, Rhoades acquired a second company, which he's actively working on expanding.

Though the company focuses primarily

on selling affordable eBooks in all genres, priced at \$3.99 each, the company does offer paperback books which are printed per readers' requests for \$14.95.

"If you travel to our site, you can find something you want to read for less than a cup of Starbucks coffee," he said.

Chapter 3

The duo of Rhoades and Daniels have worked closely for two years now, though they've never met face-to-face.

"It's great to have someone who will back my work and believes in it," Daniels said.

Earlier this year, Rhoades had an idea that he thought Daniels would be perfect for: an anthology of lost works, which was released in July.

In the pages of "Lost Planets," Daniels' work appears among some of his genre's most well known authors.

The concept was inspired by an old friend who sent Rhoades a piece of 30- or 40-year-old writing, simply to entertain him.

"I had that story on my computer for two years," he said. "I was trying to think of ways that I could publish it, so I thought I should put together an

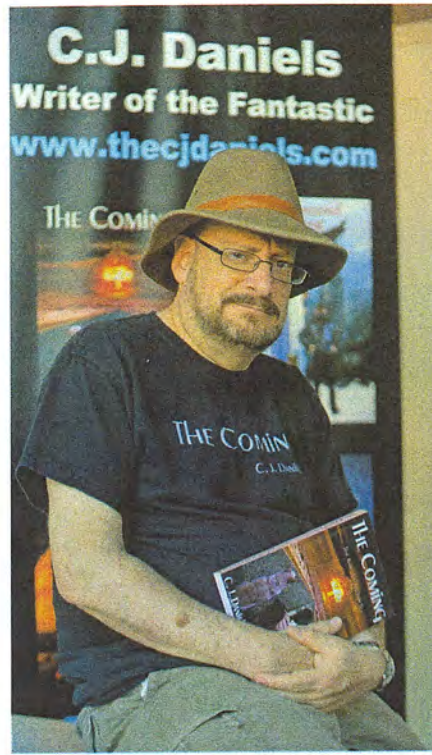


Photo by CARL RUSSO

Author C.J. Daniels has a short story published in an anthology, "Lost Planets," alongside stories by Edgar Allen Poe, Ray Bradbury and other renowned authors.

anthology. Just one story obviously wasn't enough, so I started searching for more."

He thought to visit the daughter of his old friend Ray Bradbury, renowned for his works of science fiction and horror.

"I knew that he had a short story that had been lost, so I tracked that down with the help of his daughter," Rhoades said. "I went on to find Edgar Allan Poe's first story, which he published anonymously at first, but was later identified as his."

Three months later, the anthology was complete, and included stories by James Blish, Fritz Leiber and about 12 others.

"I'm fascinated with the whole idea of thinking, here I am in the same league with these people," Daniels said.

It was Daniels' first short story he ever wrote that ended up in "Lost Planets" 15 years after its completion.

"'God Killer' got moved around from computer to computer and eventually expanded from a short story to a full novel," he said. "Eventually, my publisher saw it and thought it was perfect for the anthology."

Chapter 4

In the wake of the anthology release, Daniels was preparing for Boston

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Comic-Con, a convention for comic book and science fiction fanatics, which he attends every year.

Held at Boston's Seaport World Trade Center from July 31 to Aug. 2, the event usually draws about 4,500 people. Daniels annually sets up a table, hands out books and enjoys talking with as many sci-fi fans as possible.

He attributes much of his success and story ideas to that weekend alone.

"I absolutely love it," he said. "But by the end, you feel like you've gone through a meat grinder."

One of his biggest takeaways over the last few years is that many of his fans are female. Unable to ignore the realization, he decided to write a book with a predominantly female presence.

"Dante's Fire," to be released in early 2016, is Daniels' most prized piece of writing.

"It was the easiest 95,000 words I've ever written," he said. "It took me just about three months to finish, which is much shorter than the six or seven months that it usually takes."

In the mornings, during lunch breaks and into the night, Daniels tapped away at his computer keys and let the ideas flow.

"The writing process usually consists of three steps forward and two back," he said. "But I just write. I never know how the book is going to end because the characters become real and you sometimes lose control of them."

His favorite part is when he realizes that characters are going to work.

"When I like these people and want to have a drink with them," he said. "That's when you know it's going to work. I enjoy writing because I don't know where the story is going, and if it wasn't that way, it would just be like filling in words on a Mad Libs page."

It's that quality that Rhoades most appreciates about his colleague.

"What I'm doing now, with this company, is having fun," Rhoades said. "I'm doing all of the fun stuff I wanted to do before, but couldn't because of being driven by corporate and bottom lines and stockholders. With this, I can just have fun. I can represent who I want and try to make them famous, and I'm determined to do that for C.J."

But it's more than just the hope of fame that drives Daniels' happiness.

"I could sell two books, but if the two people who read it think that it's one of the best things they've read," he said. "That's all that matters to me." **W**

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