

AUTHOR SJ LEM

Q & A

What brought you to this genre?

I've always enjoyed YA and Fantasy novels that feature fast-paced, adventurous plots. So naturally, when the story idea came to me, that's the shape it took. I initially started writing *The Waterfall Traveler* for fun, but after joining a writing group I began to take it more seriously. The authors in that group had the biggest impact on my writing career since they encouraged me to finish the novel even when I experienced moments of self-doubt and uncertainty. Of course, as a full-time working mom, it was a challenge to find the time to write, but I loved storytelling so much that I wrote during my train commute to work each day. The finished book is the result of a team effort, and I'm tremendously grateful for all the help I've received.

When writing a book, what is your favorite part of the creative process?

Daydreaming about the story, closely followed by writing dialogue.

What gave you the inspiration to write *The Waterfall Traveler*?

I had always wanted to write a book (and dabbled a bit in my childhood years). Unfortunately, school, work, and family commitments made it difficult to squeeze in the time to write. It wasn't until I reached my thirties that I finally achieved a work/life balance where I could explore writing once again. The idea for *The Waterfall Traveler* came to me during my train commute to work one morning. It was a very rough concept, but after outlining and gaining an understanding of my characters' needs and motives, it took shape.

Are there hidden themes in *The Waterfall Traveler*?

When I wrote the book, the primary themes were finding courage to deal with conflict, and discovery of new places, inner meaning, and strength. Some readers have interpreted other themes as well, which I find fascinating.

Who has influenced you most as a writer?

Other authors in my critique group have influenced me the most. Not only have they provided me with such valuable feedback during the process of writing my novel, but they also gave me the encouragement to continue when I experienced moments of self-doubt. I'm tremendously grateful that I had the opportunity to work with such talented and supportive people on this journey.