



PHOTO: Lynn with Deuce

Cinematic Aspirations of LYNN-STEVEN JOHANSON

Crafting Compelling Mysteries, Embracing Authenticity, and Dreaming Cinematic Horizons.

In the labyrinth of literary minds, a few stand out for their ability to craft gripping tales that unravel the enigma of human nature. Lynn-Steven Johanson, an acclaimed playwright and novelist, has etched his mark within this realm. His Joe Erickson Mystery novels have ensnared readers' imaginations, leading them through a labyrinth of intrigue and suspense.

Johanson's literary journey, adorned with accolades and critical acclaim, meanders through a landscape marked by his masterful storytelling. His upcoming release, "Sins Revealed," poised on the horizon for March 2024, tantalizes readers with promises of yet another riveting journey into the world of Joe Erickson.

In a recent tête-à-tête, we delved into the mind of this prolific wordsmith, uncovering the intricate layers that shape his narratives. From his childhood television days, where detective mysteries ignited the spark of fascination, to the meticulous research that infuses authenticity into his tales, Johanson shared insights

into his craft.

His fondness for dialogue, a remnant of his playwright days, breathes life into his novels. However, it's his penchant for precision and authenticity that truly sets his work apart. Dive into his books, and you'll find a world meticulously crafted—a result of interviews with law enforcement officers, research jaunts to understand police procedures, and a commitment to accuracy that resonates throughout his narratives.

Not content with merely spinning tales, Johanson aims for the silver screen, envisioning his works translated into visual spectacles. His aspirations extend beyond the written word, yearning for his stories to dance on the screens of theaters or grace the episodic delights of streaming platforms.

As we turn the pages of Lynn-Steven Johanson's literary universe, one thing becomes abundantly clear—his dedication to the craft, his hunger for accuracy, and his flair for crafting compelling mysteries mark him not just as an author but as a maestro orchestrating riveting narratives that

linger in the reader's mind long after the final page is turned.

Join us as we explore the labyrinthine corridors of Lynn-Steven Johanson's imagination, unlocking the secrets that weave through the captivating landscapes of his Joe Erickson Mystery series.

Lynn-Steven Johanson is an award-winning playwright and novelist. His Joe Erickson Mystery novels, *Rose's Thorn*, *Havana Brown*, *Corrupted Souls*, and *One of Ours* have been critically acclaimed by both reviewers and readers. The fifth installment in the series, *Sins Revealed*, will be released on March 13, 2024. Johanson holds a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and is retired from Western Illinois University. He and his wife live in downstate Illinois and have three adult children.

You're organizing a party. Which two authors, dead or alive, do you invite?

They would be Mark Twain and William Shakespeare. Who wouldn't want to meet either one? But the

potentially fascinating part of this pairing would be Twain engaging the Bard about the authorship of the plays attributed to him, something Twain questioned for many years. After they have a few drinks, I might wind up being a referee! In any case, it would be fun.

Which writers — working today do you admire most?

I like the work of David Baldacci. His writing appeals to me because of his interesting characters, and he succeeds in creating plots that keep you involved and coming back for more. He also seems to know when to move on to another series after writing several books featuring the same main character. I am especially fond of his Will Robie series. I also like Jonathan Kellerman's Alex Delaware novels. He does a great job partnering a psychologist with a detective as they work together to investigate crimes. His plots are also cleverly drawn, and you want to keep reading to find out what happens next.

What genres do you especially enjoy reading?

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For the most part, I read crime fiction by various authors. I find such books entertaining and believe reading the works of accomplished novelists will make me a better writer. You can always learn something by reading the works of others. On rare occasions, I will read a biography or some non-fiction work, but mysteries in one form or another are my main interest.

Who is your favorite fictional hero or heroine?

That would be Anne Perry's London detective, Thomas Pitt. I have read over half of Perry's Thomas Pitt novels and continue to read more. I like reading about Pitt's struggle with class distinctions, his interactions with family, and the systematic way he solves crimes. Anne Perry was a master at creating Victorian London, and I find Pitt's investigations within that setting fascinating.

What kind of reader were you as a child?

I did not read many books outside of school when I was a child. There weren't many books in our house, and I preferred to watch television. I was intrigued by the detective mysteries and watched many of them on a regular basis. Those programs whetted my appetite for crime fiction. I suppose it was a natural step for me to write in that genre. I did not start reading to a large degree until I went to college.

What kind of research do you do?

I'm a nut for accuracy and authenticity, so I've done a lot of research for my books. I'm a curious person, so I find research interesting. My first book, *Rose's Thorn*, takes place in a rural county in northwest Iowa, where my Chicago detective has traveled to settle his father's estate. While there, he's pulled into a suspected serial killer case since he had experience tracking down a serial killer in Chicago. *Rose's Thorn* first began as a screenplay, and when I was writing that, I needed to go to Iowa to interview the Buena Vista County Sheriff so I could understand and accurately describe police procedures. I found him gracious in answering my questions and explaining how things worked. Starting with my second book, *Havana Brown*, the settings changed to Chicago, and I had to do considerable research on the Chicago Police Department. After absorbing all of the online information I could, I still had questions. I discovered a retired Chicago PD officer living close by who I interviewed. That was helpful. Later, when I was writing *Corrupted Souls*, I happened to see a Chicago detective on LinkedIn. He

used to work homicide, and he agreed to advise me. So now on, when I have a question, I can email him and within a day or two, he'll respond with a detailed answer. He has been a great resource.

How do you develop the intricate plots in your mystery novels?

When I have a story idea, I begin brainstorming it on paper. I write down any idea about what might happen, who the characters are, and how they fit into the action. What I jot down may or may not end up in the story since it's a free flow of ideas. I never say “no” to an idea, no matter how bizarre it might seem. When I feel I have effectively brainstormed it, I let it percolate in my mind for a few weeks. At some point when I feel the story is sufficiently thought out, I put together an outline based on Sid Field's screenwriting paradigm. His screenwriting paradigm works equally as well for a novel as it does for a screenplay. I write down all the story events in chronological order, and those include all the clues, red herrings, twists, and breakthroughs. Once that is done, I figure out what events comprise the plot points, mid-point, and pinches that give the events a three-act structure. Doing so gives me a story outline I can use as I write. It may sound complicated, but it really isn't. I have done it for all of my books.

You are also a playwright. What does that experience bring to writing mystery novels?

When I began writing *Rose's Thorn*, my first novel, it was easy for me to write dialogue. That is what playwrights do. But I had to learn to write the narrative. My wife, a former English teacher and avid novel reader, helped me with that. My books employ a lot of dialogue as opposed to a lot of narrative description. I guess you could say it is a characteristic of my writing style.

What are your hopes for the future?

The fifth installment in my Joe Erickson Mystery Series, *Sins Revealed*, is set for publication in March 2024, and I have begun writing number six. I am hoping that some actor, director, or producer will discover the Joe Erickson Mystery Series and conclude they would make good films. I've been told by my readers that the books would make exciting movies. I think they would make a topnotch series on Netflix or some other streaming service. One can always hope, right? But as long as my mind and fingers still work, I will continue writing.



PHOTO: PHOTO: Lynn-Steven Johanson, acclaimed author of the Joe Erickson Mystery series, immersed in the world of intrigue and authenticity.