

Full Interview with New York Times Bestselling Author Mark Cheverton

Theft of the Giants' Soul



Book 1
Giants of
StoneHold

New York Times Bestselling Author

Mark Cheverton

Coleshill, Birmingham Oct 11, 2023 (IssueWire.com) - Internationally published **New York Times Bestselling Author** Mark Cheverton of the Minecraft-inspired Gameknight999 series with over 2 million copies in print. This high-quality fantasy book is for kids, teens, and grown-ups who love to read epic stories about adventure! Perfect for fans of the Hunger Games, Divergent, and The Maze Runner series. **"Theft of the Giant's Soul"** is a suspenseful tale of danger, bravery, and sacrifice. This is Mark's 28th action/adventure novel.

BT: Mark great sparing a moment for this interview with us, can you tell us what inspired you to write your (debut) Giant Series?

MC: After writing 24 novels about Minecraft, I wanted to work on something different. So, I went to my local bookstore and applied my engineering skills to assess my competition. I saw lots of books on vampires, werewolves, zombies, wizards, and wizarding schools, schools for witches and vampires . . . I saw a lot of the same thing across the bookshelves. But, for good or bad, I wanted to do something different, and the word "GIANTS" popped into my head. As a result, I headed down the creative path toward the Giant's of StoneHold.

BT: What came first, the characters or the world?

MC: Because of my engineering background, or maybe because I'm just a science geek, I always feel the need for things to make sense and have a logical construct to support the environment. So when I started The Giant's Giant, I first wrote the history of that world, which was Earth in the distant future after the nuclear apocalypse. I then developed creatures for that world and developed an ecosystem with certain animals at the top of the food chain and others who were tasty meals for the big guys. I then put the giants into the picture and developed their society; what do they think is important; what is their lore and laws; what kind of giant do they look up to? Then I developed other races, like the humans and their history, the Dryads and their history, and of course the evil Scavengers and their terrible history. Once it felt like I had all the gears in place and they worked with each other in a logical way, then I started on the characters. I created a limited backstory for each character which was included in TGG. I need a really good villain that the readers will love to hate, but make sure the villain, Klystron, fits that bill nicely.

BT: How did you hear about Birch Tree Publishing?

MC: Someone from Birch Tree Publishing reached out to me through my website, www.markcheverton.com. They'd seen my Giants books, Theft of the Giant's Soul and The Giant's Giant, and wanted to know if I was interested in having them traditionally published. Of course, I said I was interested in discussing it and gave them my phone number. The next day, the President of Birch Tree Publishing called me . . . that's right, the President himself, Marlon Birch. Wow . . . I knew they were serious. I was super excited, and after some negotiations, it was a done deal. Birch Tree Publishing will be the official publisher of my Giant series!

BT: How long does it take you to write a novel?

MC: Typically, it takes me anywhere from 6 to 9 months to finish a novel in a state that's good enough to send to an editor. If I were only writing, of course, it would be shorter, but I work part-time as a scientist, doing research in the fields of laser welding, process monitoring, and machine vision.

BT: Have you been writing long? And how did you start?

MC: I officially started writing 15 years ago when my son was four years old. I decided I wanted to write something epic that would teach my son about character, the value of taking risks, and not being afraid of failure. So I started working on my first book called The Crystal Tear. It was a science fiction novel. I don't really know what age group it was for; at the time I knew nothing about the craft of writing, but I didn't care; I just wrote. It took me four years to finish it. The book was 1200 pages long and had

250,000 words. When printed out, I had trouble putting it in my book bag. I really knew nothing about writing; obviously, 1200 pages was too long, but I was proud of it. I tried to get it published and was rejected by 253 literary agents and publishers, for good reason . . . it sucked! But I learned a lot from writing *The Crystal Tear* and it helped me become the writer I am today.

BT: What kind of reactions have you had to your book?

MC: I've had a lot of positive feedback on *The Giant's Giant*. When it was first finished, I had a teacher read it to her 4th-grade class in the US, that's kids about 11 years old. They loved it so much that they wanted to write their own short stories based on the Giants of StoneHold and the world I created. When they were done, I formatted their work, made a cover for them, and the school paid to have a book printed with the kids' stories. They were all given a copy at the end of the year. The kids were so excited to see their names in print; it was a powerful moment for these young writers. I've continued working with this school and each year, I put together their stories into a book and make a cover, and the school pays to get them printed so each kid will have a copy.

BT: What's the favorite reaction you've had to your Giant series so far?

MC: I guess this is the same as above, having the book inspire kids to write their own stories.

BT: What can you tell us about your next book?

MC: I have the next book in the Giants of StoneHold series finished but needs some rewriting. It will take the reader into a different part of the post-apocalyptic world I created. They'll meet a new race of people with their own society, rules, and history. This book is called *The Giant's Sacrifice*, and it will call upon one of the characters to make the ultimate sacrifice to save their friends. I'm super excited about this one.

BT: Would you ever consider writing outside your current genre?

MC: I might consider writing science fiction for adults. It might be fun to put my physics experience into a novel, but I really enjoy writing for kids and delivering a message that I think might help them. I'll probably stick with the middle-grade genre until I run out of ideas.

BT: What did you do before (or still do) before you became a writer?

MC: I graduated from college with a degree in physics and went into teaching high school math and physics. I did that for 15 years, then left teaching and went into industry, working as an optical engineer for General Electric. While working for GE, I was bitten by the writing bug and never stopped. I've been writing now for about 16 years.

BT: Which author(s) inspire you?

MC: I love Frank Herbert, his ability to create complex worlds and societies is remarkable. I love David Balducci, a great suspense author, for his ability to craft action scenes that make you feel like you're in a speeding car heading for a cliff. I also enjoy Max Brallier and his *Last Kids on Earth* series. It's super fun and exciting and is a great ride. And of course, the science fiction greats: Arthur C Clark, Isaac Asimov, HG Wells, and Ray Bradbury.

BT: Which genres do you read yourself?

MC: I like to read science fiction and fantasy. Sometimes I choose books for adults, but other times, I choose a fantasy novel for middle-grade kids.

BT: What is your biggest motivator?

MC: For me writing is Oxygen! I'm always working on a book because I have things I want to say to kids, like when you fail at something it doesn't make you a failure - it just means you haven't found the right path to success, so don't give up, or maybe: if you give in to your fears, you'll never know what kind of person you can truly be. I want to share these ideas with kids through my stories in hopes that I can help that one child out there who needs a hand or an understanding friend. I hope my characters can be those friends they need on those tough days.

BT: What will always distract you?

MC: I'm easily distracted with new ideas for books. I've found that it's really easy to start a book, but it's extremely difficult to finish a book. Starting is exciting: I get to create the environment, monsters, characters, backstory, and lore . . . But when it's time to outline each chapter and make sure I'm hitting

all the themes at the right time, and I'm making sure I don't violate any of the rules like Chekhov's Gun or any of Pixar's 22 rules of Storytelling. All of that is the craft of storytelling and sometimes it's difficult. When I'm on a difficult chapter, I might think of a new idea for a book to distract me. I've learned to write it down, then set it aside and get back to work.

BT: How much (if any) say do you have in your book covers?

MC: For all of my books so far, I've had a lot of input in my book covers and the artist who makes them. With my Minecraft novels, I found the artist for the publisher because they didn't have anyone in-house to do that work. I'd go over what might be important on the cover, and maybe I make a pencil sketch to show the ideas. I've found that if I make the cover on my own . . . it's terrible. But sometimes, I come up with an interesting idea for the cover, and sometimes my ideas are terrible. I never take it personally if the editor says my idea is no good, in fact, I want to hear that. We need to make the best cover possible so that it can make a promise to the reader of what to expect . . . and hopefully it looks cool too!

BT: Were you a big reader as a child?

MC: I read all the time as a kid. The best day was when my mom would take me to the public library. I'd grab a bunch of books, and then devour them, but we only went to the library on Saturdays. I remember it being the worst if I finished the books on Monday or Tuesday and had to wait until Saturday to go back and get more. All through school, I always had a book with me, either stuffed in my back pocket or in my book bag. Stephen King, a truly spooky author whose books freak me out, said "Books are uniquely portable magic." That's how it was for me as a kid. I could pull out my book on the bus and read while the bullies are choosing their next victim and go on an adventure. I truly believe reading is nourishment for the soul.

BT: What were your favorite childhood books?

MC: I really became obsessed with reading when I started reading the Jules Verne books. His first book was published in 1863 and he didn't stop writing until 1905. I read 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea and was hooked on SciFi. I read more of Verne's book then moved to HG Wells and devoured all of his books as well. The books from those two authors infected me with the reading bug.

BT: Do you have a favorite bookshop? If so, which?

MC: My favorite bookshop near me is Northshire Books in Saratoga Springs NY. It has that great book smell and is crowded with filled bookshelves. The people are great. The selection of books is great. And they carry my books too . . . hurray!

BT: What books can you not resist buying?

MC: I have a hard time resisting Military Science Fiction books, especially if they're hard sci-fi. Hard science fiction means the author paid attention to the science and made sure everything was possible. No magic swords or warp drives that take you across the galaxy in an instant. Everything in hard sci-fi is possible, though out of reach right now. I'm a sucker for these books

BT: Do you have any rituals when writing?

MC: I usually write at my local coffee shop; a chain of shops called Panera in the US; I don't know if they exist in the UK. I have my table where I sit. I have my writing fleece coat (It's always cold in Panera for some reason). I ordered my iced tea and blueberry muffin. When I have all that in place, then I can start writing.

BT: How many books are in your own physical pile?

MC: I actually don't keep a lot of books. Some I might read again, like the Dune series, or the Wheel of Time series, but usually I give them away. There is a place at work where people put their novels for others to read. When I finish a book, I usually put it there. I typically don't use an e-reader. I like the feel of the book and the smell of the ink and paper. I'd rather have the physical book instead of an eBook.

BT: What is your current or latest read?

MC: Currently, I'm reading a science fiction series called the Mote Series by the greats Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle. I'm just about to finish book 2 called The Gripping Hand, then I'll dive into book 3 called Outies.

BT: Any books that you're looking forward to in the next 12 months?

MC: After the Mote Series, I really don't know what I'll read. I usually go through the list of Hugo Award winners list (award for outstanding science fiction) when I'm looking for a new book, or maybe I'll go to the bookshelf in the basement where I have unread books, I bought but haven't started.

BT: Any plans or projects in the near future you can tell us about?

MC: Of course, I'm looking forward to finishing the Giants of StoneHold series. I haven't done any work on the 3rd book in the series, called The Giant's Nightmare, but have some rough ideas as to what the book will be about. I might dive back into a series I wrote with my famous character, Gameknight999, getting sucked into Roblox, and he has to fight his way to freedom . . . that might be fun.

BT: Any events in the near future?

MC: I'm attending the American Librarian's Association of New York conference in November. I'll be showing my books to librarians in hopes they'll buy them for their libraries. Maybe The Giant's Giant will spark some interest there.

BT: And finally, what inspired you to write the genre you do?

MC: I kind of fell into writing for middle-grade kids, ages 7-13, by accident. My son was obsessed with Minecraft, so much so that we bought him his own server along with his friends to use. Unfortunately, some kids came onto the server for nefarious purposes. They were super nice to my son, the server owner, and taught him a lot of things about Minecraft (he was new to the game at the time.) My son decided to make these two boys admins on the server, so he stopped them as it's called. They had power and control over everything, and they could do anything. Well, they came back that night and destroyed everything my son had built over the months. They made a video of it and said terrible, vile things about him. Then, they sent him the video that had been posted to YouTube. My son was pretty upset. He was maybe 7 years old at the time. We rebuilt and those two boys kept coming back and destroyed what my son built and made another video and another until we finally shut down the server. We didn't know enough about servers to keep those two boys out at that time.

My son thought he did something to deserve this treatment. I told him that wasn't true, but I couldn't get him to understand. So, I used what he was obsessed with, Minecraft, to deliver the lesson he needed to learn. I wrote my first Minecraft novel, Invasion of the Overworld, focusing on bullying. When I was done, I read it to him at bedtime, and he got it. He realized that those two kids were jerks. Maybe they were bullied by big brothers, and this was how they lashed out so they could feel some sense of control. Who knows why they behaved like that, but my son realized it wasn't about him. I thought I was a super-dad! Just for fun, I self-published it on Amazon. I didn't expect it to go anywhere, after all, I wrote The Crystal Tear and was rejected by everyone. To my surprise, Invasion of the Overworld sold 50,000 copies that first year and reached #29 on Amazon's top 100 for all books! That was when a publisher and literary agent contacted me. Now, I have 24 Minecraft novels under my belt. They've been published in 31 countries around the world and there are approximately 2,000,000 copies in print. Now Birch Tree is doing my Giant Series.

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