

# RJ: The Pretend Interview

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**A pretend interview? Bit pretentious, no?** Meh. No more so than social media, and that ain't my thing. I'm more social than media. This is just a way to get know me, and they say that's important in today's digital world. This way, you know I have a soul and thinning hair.

**Why ghost stories and horror?** Just writing about all the terrible things in the world would be boring (what Ursula K. Le Guin refers to as the *banality of evil*), but when you add a supernatural or fantasy element to your story, you force the reader to believe in something beyond this world. I'm pretty sure that's a fundamental requirement for escaping reality, isn't it? It's kind of like faith, I suppose, but a bit more twisted.

**Why so dark? What gives?** Everyone has demons. Some of us are just willing to put it out there for everyone else to poke and prod. I still remember how the shadows on the wall of my bedroom came alive after I saw the movie *Poltergeist* as a kid. Such a rush! That's my goal. I want to get in your head and kick around for a bit.

**What are your favorite genres?** If it has a ghost, something dead that is somehow still alive, or involves unlocking the mysteries of the universe, I'm there. For the record, I'm afraid of pretty much every monster ever created. Except witches. Witches are my people.

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**Least favorite?** I'm not a big fan of zombies or the myriad romantic spins of witches, vampires and werewolves. I've also outgrown stories that blame the person with mental illness for everything. As in, 'Oh, the serial killer killed everyone with a chainsaw because he's *crazy* – that explains *everything!*' Yawn. Pretty dumb.

**What kind of reader were you as a child?** The kind that read for five minutes and then went outside to play. I'm pretty sure I have some reading medals in a box somewhere. In my case, they're just shiny plastic reminders of my web of lies. I'm not alone. You know who you are.



*That's me. Of course, in real life, I'm in color... and I'm not wearing a shirt and I'm ripped like David Beckham.*

(Photo by Shawna Johnson Haid)

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**Robert James**

Everyone has demons  
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**What do you do for fun?** My free time is precious, but I love to play guitar and I'm always listening to music - anything from bluegrass and Irish folk to death metal. Music heals and inspires me. I love weaving music into my stories. I'm also a gamer and a huge fan of open-world RPGs. They're a great way to gain 20 pounds and escape reality for a couple...months.

**I've always been an easy-going guy who was quick with a joke, willing to make fun of myself to get other people to laugh.**

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**So, you have a mental illness?** Yep. Depression.

My therapist told me that sad things make people sad, and well, life really kicked my ass for a while. I tell ignorant people who don't understand mental illness that I 'lived a lot of life.' Even though the trauma is long gone, depression will always be part of who I am. I'm not going to outgrow it, or magically snap my fingers and make it disappear.

**And, you're okay being open about it?** Sure, I mean – don't get me wrong – I know that stigma is real (if you need a crash course, check out this [blog](#)), but having a mental illness is kind of chic right now. I think it's great that rich and famous people are coming out about their mental illness after securing the financial future of 4 generations of their descendants. Giddy up. I'll ride that wave for a spell.

**Has your depression influenced your writing?** My dance with depression opened my eyes to the darkness, but I've always been an easy-going guy who was quick with a joke, willing to make fun of myself to get other people to laugh. So, that's a big part of who I am as well.

**So, you have a mascot?** Yeah, his name is Edgar, and he's a small homage to one of my literary heroes (yes, I know Poe's was an orangutan). I've got some ideas for stories that might feature him someday, but mostly, he's just for fun. Edgar, put down the knife and say hi to my new friends.



*Hiya, I'm Edgar.*

*Start running, 'afore I cut you up...*

**Everyone has a playlist for those times when they need a little extra motivation. What's in yours?** *Relentless* (Walls Of Jericho), *Fighter* (Sumo Cyco), *Sweet Things* (The Pretty Reckless), *Nightmare* (Avenged Sevenfold), *Red Cold River* (Breaking Benjamin), *Desire* (Meg Myers), *Bullets* (Creed), *Hang 'em High* (Dropkick Murphys), *Control* (Puddle Of Mudd), and *The Drug In Me Is You* (Falling in Reverse).

That said, I have pretty eclectic musical palate, and I love jumping down rabbit holes with artists who aren't household names. My recent trysts have included *Visions of Atlantis*, *Lunatica*, *Skarlett Riot*, *Highly Suspect*, *Runfell*, *Christine Slagman*, and *Evil Ducky Production*.

**What's the most played song in your Spotify right now?** *Annie's Song* by John Denver. Wait, what?

**Finally, who would you want to write your biography?** Neil Gaiman and Will Ferrell.

**Robert James**

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