Where in the World is Nicolas Hornyak?

Not quite dead, not quite alive.



NICOLAS HORNYAK

MAR 23, 2026

Short answer: still in New Jersey.

The long answer: I was on the verge of a trap that seizes a lot of people by the shoulders and doesn't let go.

The relevancy trap.

See, in the modern age, so ill-defined by late-stage capitalism and social media algorithms, all of marketing in the B2C space is *"CONTENT. YOU NEED CONTENT. POST ON FACEBOOK. EVERY DAY. POST ON TIKTOK. EVERY HOUR."*

Meanwhile, the dominant sales motion for authors is *"QUANTITY, QUANTITY, QUANTITY. YOU NEED TO PUBLISH A BOOK EVERY MONTH. YOU NEED TO WRITE TO YOUR GENRE AND IT'S MARKET."*

And the worst part is that this is beginning to be co-opted and corrupted by A.I. Soon, it will be *"YOU NEED TO WRITE YOUR BOOKS WITH A.I."* and then it will be *"A.I. WRITES BETTER, SO IT'S OKAY IF A.I. DOES ALL YOUR WRITING."*

All to convince writers that writing...isn't writing.

And listen, I know what a slippery slope fallacy is.

But I’m also really tired of people citing this fallacy, and then slipping down the slope anyway.

Back to my point: there was a rat race in my head, for a brief moment, to stay visible. To share, then perhaps overshare. To present expertise.

Until expertise looked like desperation.

(Which is the exact reason I left Facebook, funny enough.)

So back in 2025, you probably saw a couple of TikToks from me. And I was blogging monthly because I *had* to have something to say. And using Instagram all the time, to share crash lists (which is a great topic for a blog post, and I promise I’ll write about that in the future).

But I learned the lesson on my own, that I didn’t need to have something to say every day on TikTok, every other day on Instagram, every week on Facebook, and every month on Substack.

So I peaced out for a little while. Watched *Whiskey Dogs* get more reviews than my other books combined. I wrote. I thought about my characters.

Mostly, I thought about work. And the way the world is going.

That’s not to say what I share or have shared isn’t important, because I relearned that lesson recently, too.

It’ll just be important on my terms, and on my schedule.

So here’s what I’m thinking.

Yes, I’ll be a little more present. But I’d like to build something.

Not just books. Not just songs.

Phenomena.

Communities.

The sense of accomplishment I felt proximity to when I was writing games, that I could admire people, and be admired back, without rampant or runaway celebrity, without overwhelming work, without struggling for support.

Some time ago, I took my standard “writer” title and became an “author.”

Then I added “Interdisciplinary Artist.”

Because some very interesting things have been happening in my world.

And I’ve kept quiet on these fronts.

Quiet like Dodge City.

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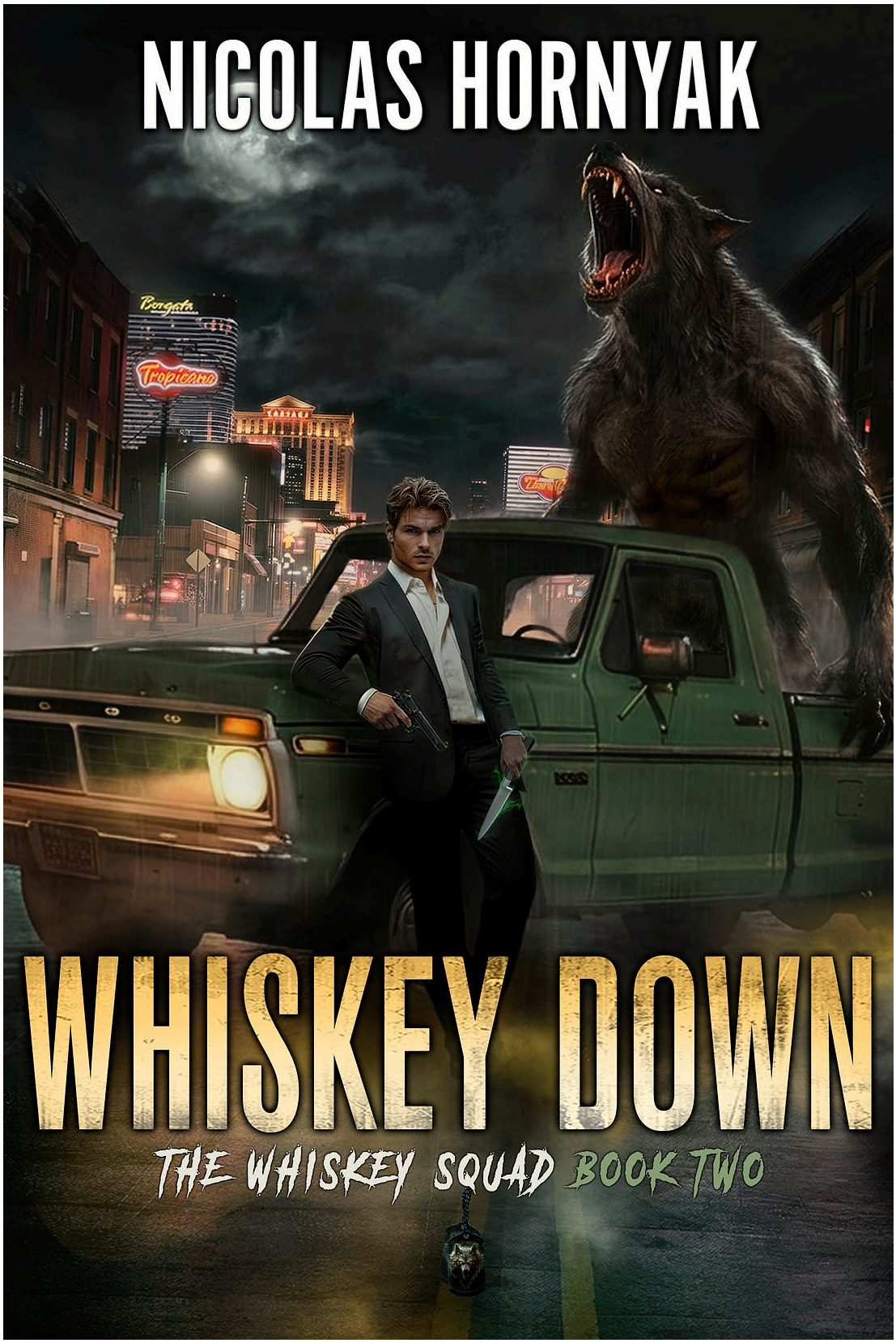
No more.

I’m Still Here

So what’s been happening?

Well, I’ve been editing the sequel to *Whiskey Dogs.* And it’s approaching the final draft.

We even have cover art for it already. Check it out: *Whiskey Down* drops in 2026!


NICOLAS HORNYAK
Tropicana
WHISKEY DOWN
THE WHISKEY SQUAD BOOK TWO

Aside from that, I'm indulging my design urges more and more. I sell a couple of pieces of merch at brothernico.printful.me now, and on March 28-29, I'll be roaming Montclair Zine Fest. A couple of items (pins, stickers, and an exclusive-so-far zine) will be for sale at the Back Alley Gators table.







Something that started back in February finally came to fruition this past weekend. A few months ago, my dad approached me about helping him shoot a music video for his band's first original song.

It was a scrappy, but very fun afternoon. He's added a bunch of clips about ICE brutality in America today, and I'm both proud of him for this achievement and proud of myself for the lighting, the shots, the framing—all this good stuff I haven't had the chance to touch since wrapping up my screenwriting minor in 2015.



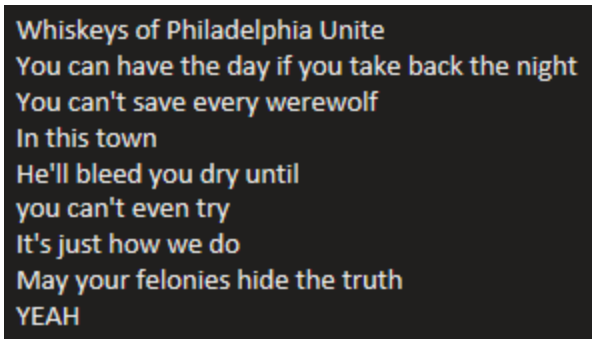
I know I haven't released music in a couple of years. I've sat on some songs that I'd love to assemble into an album.

But something else has happened: *Whiskey Dogs* has a theme song.

And I guess so does *Whiskey Down*. A smaller song, something that compliments the upbeat, Elton John style of the first.

Um...and I've definitely written out a third song.

I have a lot of fun writing songs about books or lore—so I think I might actually give more of those a shot. Until then though, be on the lookout for "Whiskeys of Philadelphia." (Yes, I will blog about it. No, I don't have a date yet—but it's basically done, so I'm committing to it and calling it the release date "soon.")



One of the choruses of this song. The piano drives the sound.

Lastly, and yes, I understand how ironic and bizarre it is to list this last. But I'm getting *married* in October. This doesn't exactly affect you, but it's a big reason why I'll be ducking in and out this year. Still making art, of course, but also planning a wedding, and one of those has a deadline.

Whatever's Next

There's a bundle of other things in the pipeline besides the above. I'm thinking about poetry again. ('Tis the season.) I'm thinking about how I kind of always thought about *Aimless Sky* as a television series (*Crimson Skies* meets *Firefly* with a dash of *Treasure Planet*) and if it'd be fun to write that script on spec—and then wondering if that deserves some sort of release too?

I think about holograms in fiction. And where the lines start to blur between real and fantasy. These are preliminary thoughts on a science fiction that's been cultivated in my head for some time.

I think about *Human Hawke* and what it would take to write that series alongside *The Whiskey Squad*. Surely something has to give at that point, right?

I think about making more zines after I fell in love with them last year. And how many ideas I have about these smaller creations, and if future

readers of my work would embrace them.

All of this...is for another time. But this is a solid summary of where I'm at right now.

TO DO

I'm putting this section before the end today, because I think I'd like to ask.

Whiskey Down is in editing. It's passed through two beta readers, and once I implement their feedback (which is a lot of praise, plus a couple of typos and a little confusion in a plot point), I'm going to need another couple beta readers.

I plan to ask a couple of people, but if you'd like the chance to read this work before it comes out, feel free to ask. I have contact information further down.

Full disclosure: I'm very selective in who gets to look at a book before release. So don't be upset if you inquire and I decline. Fans are welcome and prioritized.

The other immediate items on my to-do list are: pick a DJ for my wedding, and make it to Montclair Zine Fest this weekend. Let me know if I'll see you there!

Currently Reading

Since I haven't blogged since...holy *shit*, August?! I've read quite a few books since then, and after 2025's Year of Production, I'm calling 2026 the Year of Evolution. This includes a lot more consistent reading, bullet pointed below:

- I'm currently reading *The Artisan Author.* A lot of its ideas are driving me to continue looking at my writing and my art differently. Some of that, you can see here in this article. Some of it, you'll see in the future. I'll have more to say once I finish reading it.
- At long last, I read *Parable of the Sower* by Octavia E. Butler. I absolutely get it now, all the praise and recurring hype with this book. Funny enough, what finally sat me down to read it was my mother saying she had read it and needed to talk about it with someone. Mission accomplished.
- I reread *Counterfeit Kids* by Rod Baird, who was my writing mentor in high school. He's long since passed away, and reading this was also a walk back down my own personal nostalgia lane. I found that a lot hasn't changed about the condition of American schooling, particularly in the A.I. age. So there's that, I guess.
- I dipped into a romance read and powered through *A Merry Irish Christmas* by Clodagh Murphy during the holiday season. It was a very sweet read, and equally a study about the appeal of romance fiction, for my own, ahem, *spicy* work in *Whiskey Squad*, and I greatly enjoyed it as an overall palette cleanser heading into 2026.
- I snagged *The Rescuers* by Margery Sharp on sale. This is one of my favorite Disney movies, so it was really cool to read the source material. It's very different from the film, but I came away with a deeper love for mice.
- Somewhere along the way, I had a brief Discord chat with Z Jeffries, and that led me to read *Pro Wrestling Saves Earth*. An extremely delightful, young adult read for me, but every now and then, I run into a book with a piece of narrative that doesn't compute. It's usually because I've missed something in the prose, or I couldn't keep up with a big shift. Something like that happened here, but it didn't turn me off the book, and I love the closing message that the big heroic acts didn't change the universe, but the work is still to come.

- Another book on my mind: I read this other romance, but this one gay. *Nothing But Cabbage* by Abby West, which felt like looking backwards into my fiancé's past working at a restaurant, and then setting a self-described "age difference" queer romance with found family against that backdrop. Never mind the fact that when the numbers were finally revealed, my fiancé and I had an even larger age difference, so my WTF face was pretty good. But I quite enjoyed this read.
- Oh, oh, OH. I'd be absolutely remiss if I didn't share this one. My absolute guilty pleasure was *The Good Boys Club* by Jemma Croft, which was a best-friends-to-lovers MM romance via fake dating trope. Also, they're werewolves. Or one is. The other is a wolf shifter. And the rest of the world is very much urban fantasy, but not gritty, just very normalized mentions of elves and other paranormal beings in the wider world. Either way, I ate this book up. Very on brand for me. Either way, if you didn't flinch at the sex scene in *Whiskey Dogs*, you'll go nuts for this one.



One Last Thing

I wouldn't consider myself to have a fanbase, so please don't think of this as delusional. But I'm incredibly blessed to have a couple of true fans in my circle of friends.

I want to connect with more people like that, if you happen to be out there.

So here's your chance. I'm opening the floodgates.

You can now email me your personal notes at fanmail@nicolashornyak.com. You can also reach out there if you're interested in beta-reading *Whiskey Down*. I certainly can't guarantee you'll be selected.

Either way, I'll be back to you.

That's a promise.

All yours,
Nico