June 2026

You know you got a good thing going when you start to scribble on a whiteboard about it.

Except I don't own a whiteboard big enough. Wheels are also a requirement. Guess you can't have it all.

But what I do have are foam panels, coating my office wall, protecting my fiancé from the sound of my music, my 3D printing, the Gregorian chanting, combination demonic poly-possession/self-exorcism workflows, and I guess the occasional video game. So up go the pins, indexing the stuff I'll forget if I just write book three all willy-nilly.

See, after years of learning story structure in college, years of building worlds for games, and years of languishing in a pandemic-induced haze, I realized something.

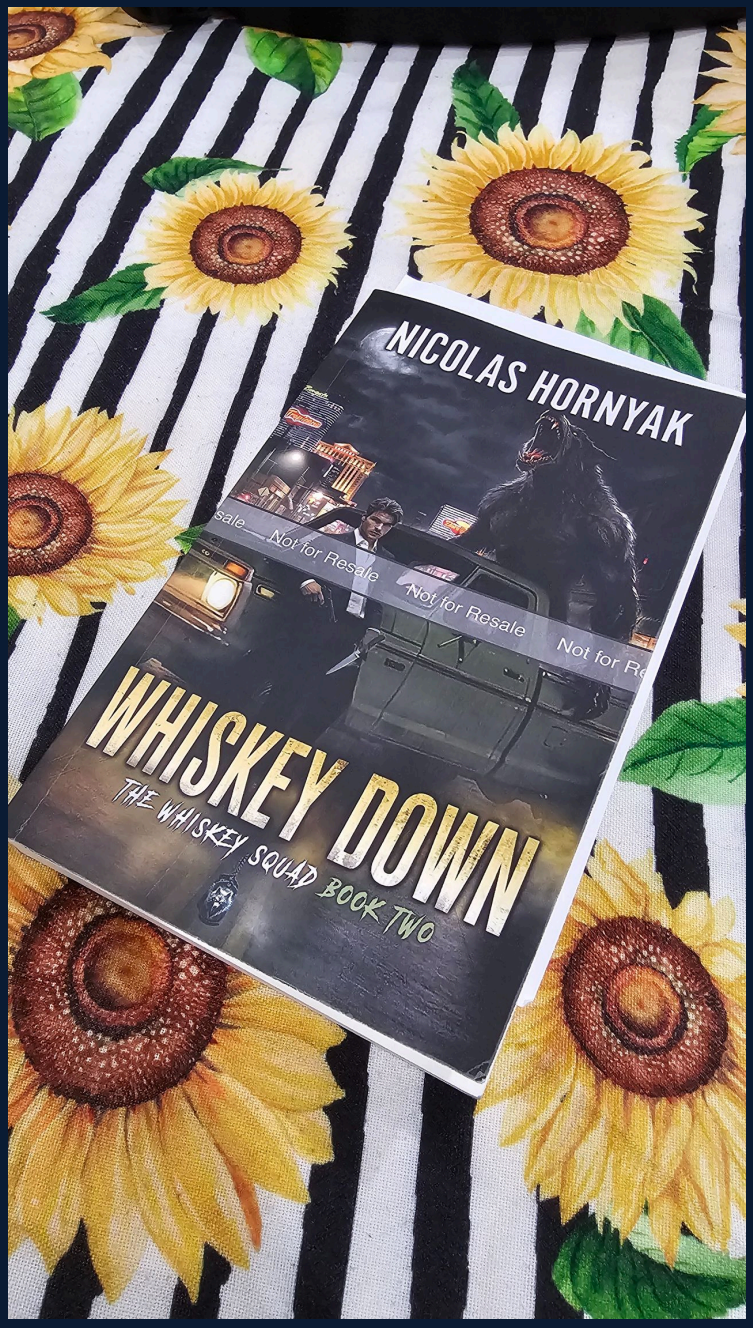
I am NOT a plotter.

I am a beautiful and talented pantser all the way. I know where I'm going. How we get there is another matter.

To think I have much control over Winston is absolute BS. He's gonna do what he wants, when he wants, and all I'm here to do is throw tomatoes at him and his friends.

He's kind of like that guy at the Renn Faire who insults you from the center of the bullseye every time you miss. Yeah, that guy's great.

But I'm going to publish a sequel, and so I better remember stuff like "Where in the world is Will's geomantic compass now?" and "What happens to the business cards?" for the third book.



Behold, a book!

Updates

Life is strange. I've finally hit this beautiful place where the little things don't feel like baseball bats, and the big things are all right.

It probably won't last, but here at the end of June, there's been more progress.

Whiskey Down got laid out. I've even sorted the paperback cover and have a proof in hand. Even better, the blurb and testimonials are fire!

THERE'S ANOTHER WINSTON IN PHILADELPHIA AND IT'S HUNTING THE PEOPLE HE LOVES

Last winter, Winston survived a kill squad, defeated a dangerous magician, and found a place to belong. But survival comes at a cost.

Now it's summer in Philadelphia, and the weight of his sins is catching up to him. A new werewolf's first shift leads Winston into the path of something impossible: a creature wearing his face, hunting the people he loves. Vampires want to keep his necromancy in check, or else his life is forfeit. And the fragile world he's built with Manolo is hanging by a thread, one wrong word from falling apart.

Winston's still learning how to control his own power. But now he's got to protect his people, keep the vampires at bay, and stop his own doppelgänger before it destroys everything.

Because this time, it's not just his survival on the line. It's everyone he's fought to keep.

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Praise for The Whiskey Squad:

"Outstanding urban fantasy."

"Wild but weirdly believable...If you like your urban fantasy gritty, queer, full of moral gray zones, and a little feral, don't sleep on this one."

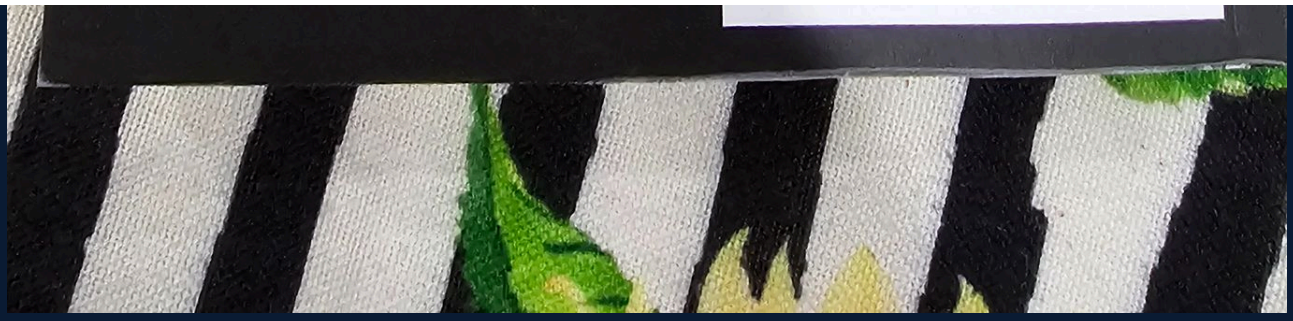
"Nicolas Hornyak writes with a gritty modern voice that immediately thrusts you into the action from page 1."

"Political intrigue, overbearing cops, and queer communities clash in this character-driven adventure with romance at its core."

Cover Design by G&S Cover Design Studio

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I miss the days when you knew it was a proof because they added an extra page that said "PROOF ONLY, DO NOT SALE" like what if something's wrong behind this ribbon???

However, this is also a stage where I notice a lot of issues. It doesn't help that I changed the layout process. But there's a difference between the digital screen and the physical book, where if you leave a typo in, I will catch it so much easier in the book.

I'm a perfectionist at heart, so I'm constantly thinking "why is the spacing like this here" and "do I really need that word again?"

This is probably the kind of stuff that happens when you forsake an editor. Doesn't help that I keep meeting writers online who only want to hawk their editor's services to me.

But I'm good. Don't worry.

I tentatively set up *Whiskey Down* for an August 1 release on KDP. I'm almost certain it will be pushed back a week. If I push it back two weeks, then it falls on Flame Con, which I will probably attend again this year as my own sort of celebration. We'll see if I bring books to hide at the little free library again.

In the meantime, just reading my own book. Always kind of weird.

Recommendations

I finally got around to playing the video game Dispatch, and it's great. Hilarious with a lot of heart, all completely unfiltered and brilliant. The developers really thought about it, and yet they didn't overthink it. I'm very late to this office comedy about supervillains trying to go straight, but seriously, it's an easy thing to play and I'm really recommending it to folks right now.

Funny enough, I also pulled two banger songs from its soundtrack. Give "Kissing Someone Else" by Caroline Kingsbury a listen (she's got this breathy

synthpop/synthwave vibe I will eat up every time), and then put "Radio" by Bershy on for that grab-your-coffee-and-get-on-with-it vibe.

Happy Pride, and Happy Seventh Hot Girl Summer.

Nico

Phoenix Express Publishing LLC

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