

# Mark Walden

Mark Walden spent ten years working as a video games designer and producer. He recently left the industry to embark on a far more challenging/frightening career...full-time dad. He has a baby daughter and splits his time between writing and looking after her.

Whilst working in the games industry Mark helped to create all sorts of different games from football games to dancing games and everything in between. The games required more and more people to create, sometimes Mark headed teams that included over one hundred people working on one game for two years, and Mark became interested in exploring other creative outlets. Writing had always been a hobby for him but it was only when the idea for H.I.V.E. came to Mark that he really dedicated himself to completing a full novel.

The inspiration for H.I.V.E. came from a very unusual source. Mark says: *'I was sitting at a friend's house and we were discussing how his cat Otto looked just like the cat that Blofeld owned in the James Bond movies. That led to me thinking about those kinds of villains in films and literature and how they never really have their origins explained and so I came up with the concept of HIVE to answer the question of how these mysterious characters learn how to take over the world. Obviously my friend's cat supplied a little help with my central character's name too...'*

When it comes to writing, anything can trigger an idea that drives Mark to the keyboard. He has a very active imagination but the real trick is being able to sort the good ideas from the rubbish ones. His wife Sarah often acts as a sounding board for a new idea and her reaction usually tells him whether it's worth bothering with.

His debut novel is a comedy-thriller set in an elite school where children are trained to be supervillains. Describing the book in his own words, Mark states:

*'H.I.V.E. seeks to answer the question of how the super villains that we're all familiar with from movies, books and video-games receive their training. The Higher Institute of Villainous Education is the facility that offers that training and the book details the adventures of one of the school's newest students - Otto Malpense - as he fights to survive his first term.'*

*H.I.V.E. takes some of the traditions of the school-based novel and subverts them. Here is a school where the students are actively encouraged to be as badly behaved as possible, indeed they're taught how to be bad on a scale that most of them had never previously dreamt possible. H.I.V.E. is not the typical benign, nurturing environment that readers may be used to from other examples of this genre - this is a school whose central ethos is survival of the fittest and where failure can have fatal consequences.'*

Before any of this happened Mark was a student at Newcastle University where he studied for a BA in English Literature and an MA in Twentieth Century Literature, Film and Television. More importantly, it was where he met his wife of nearly ten years, Sarah.