

Released: November 2, 2016 with the launch of the book *The Probable Cause*

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS with Case Lane

Here are answers to frequently asked questions about the Life Online book series, *The Probable Cause* book and Case Lane

About The Life Online Series

How did you come up with the idea for The Life Online series?

For more than a decade prior to going to law school, I worked on the transition from physical to digital media in the entertainment industry. We were on the operational side of the business, the digital production and distribution activities, not consumer uses. Part of my work included training. Everyone had to learn to use new technologies, the terminology, the functions, and most importantly the capabilities. The process was an incredible learning experience around how to seamlessly make a major transition like that work for a large and varied group of people. But my impetus for going to law school was working with lawyers who were trying to understand how the new media would be protected under the old laws. The lawyers had to comprehend what the digital media files represented, all those bits and bytes, so that they could determine if the legal safeguards still applied, or new rules had to be created. I imagined this conflict was playing out in every industry and profession. For example, in the book series, I completely do away with traditional schools, and everyone learns online. We no longer need teachers who can stand up in front of a mixed class of children, but educator-programmers who can develop immersive, interactive lessons that automatically adapt to each child's understanding and learning pace. The thought process is completely different, but the base content is the same. That's the core of the changes now taking place, which become the world we live in for The Life Online Series.

What about the psychological side of our future Life Online? In the books people no longer think or operate without Network instructions, what are you getting at there?

The issue here is that as people become dependent on technology to direct them through their lives, they lose the ability to continue evolving. Take a look at the world we live in now, besides technology we have had continuous social progress that is one hundred percent dependent on the way people think. All the laws negatively affecting women, blacks, Natives, gays and others, had to be repealed and replaced, because society changed the way it thought about people and how they were treated. But if computers do all the thinking in the future, what happens to our progress as human beings? Unfortunately, the civil rights movement has not taken us all the way to utopia. Now I'm concerned about the entrenchment of sexism and racism, due to the computers literally being programmed to maintain the status quo or respond based on stereotypes. The majority of people working in the technology industry fall into two demographics (white and Asian males), there is very little diversity, which means it's possible that the technology will not be forward-thinking. If civil society outside of the tech industry do not keep thinking and improving human brainpower, we will not only lose technological innovation, but also social progress. There is a lot more work to be done, we do not want to be frozen.

The book takes place all over the world, did you choose the locations for a specific reason?

Travel mode is my favorite personal setting, and I'm interested in the hundreds of places where I've been, and the thousands more I want to see. As an adult I have lived and worked for more than a year in Canada, the United States, the Philippines, Colombia, and Chile. And I have lived, studied or interned for more than a month in Mexico, Singapore and Tanzania. In between, I've travelled all over every region of the world. When I'm writing, I typically do not have a specific setting for an incident in mind, the locations come out as the writing unfolds.

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If I had a particular type of place in mind, like a big tech city, I used today's trends to determine where a location could be in a hundred years. It's part of my process, and I hope readers are just as surprised by the destinations the book travels as I am. All of the geographic locations are real, but described as they could be in the future. For example, *The Motion Clue* begins in the Canadian province of Manitoba where I grew up. The first time I saw the town of Grand Rapids, I was surprised it was a hydro town. In the book, the dam is significantly larger than the construction there today, and part of a continent wide electrical grid infrastructure supporting tens of millions of people. But I'm guessing that a hundred years from now, northern Manitoba will still be covered in ice and snow in January.

Tell us about your characters, you feature strong women in positions of power or authority?

Kadie Laltanca is the head of UN Special Command, which is an organization established by the United Nations Security Council to maintain peace in Cyberspace. At some point, the world will get together to cooperate in the prevention and recovery from cyber attacks, Kadie's group aids that process. She is at heart a diplomat, trying to implement solutions that move people forward but she is also well aware of The Network's negative impact, and the need to be an individual thinker and only use the computers as a separate tool. On the other hand in *The Motion Clue*, Lyra Ellis, the Captain of The Omaha, which is a civilian subvee, a sort-of submarine cruise ship for industrial works, is a leader who always uses The Network. She has to rise up and figure out how to think around the system, and convince the people around her to also take this risk. Kadie recognizes Lyra is battling this limitation, but at the same time is a natural thinker who just needs confidence to take action. Janna Marric, in *The Unbroken Line*, also faces Lyra's challenge of trying to learn to work around The Network. Many people recognize they could be thinking on their own but do not have the courage or support to disentangle from The Network. Janna is forced to do it in an emergency when other people's inertia may allow the world to proceed to war rather than act against Network instructions. Those conflicts are at the heart of the protagonists' struggles in The Life Online series.

The *Origin Point* novella is a little different because the characters are based in today's world and they are setting up the foundation for the creation of The Network. So we have Julia Davenport who is the U.S. Secretary of State and set in her mission, which she believes, is national security. And Apex, our clandestine rogue technologist who absolutely believes Davenport is wrong and we are being set up to lose our basic human rights. And the woman in the middle is Dallas Winter, a throwback journalist who is trying to find a way to tell the story and let the public decide.

What is the order for reading the books?

All the books can be read independently. But if you want to read in order, start with *The Origin Point*, which is the first prequel to the whole series. I have a few different prequels in mind so I'm calling this one number 01 (zero one). Follow with *Book One - The Motion Clue*, *Book Two - The Unbroken Line*, and *Book Three - The Probable Cause* which will be released in November 2016. I have the idea for *Book Four* but no title yet so I'll update that one when it's ready.

About The Probable Cause

The Probable Cause is your most action-oriented book in the series so far, why did you decide to go with this type of story?

The Life Online series has focused on a world where gifted rogue technologists with advanced skill are able to use the technology for future tech crimes. This time I wanted to demonstrate that crimes that are

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familiar to us today like kidnapping and murder may also be the outcome of Network manipulation. In *The Probable Cause*, a criminal, Rafer Acton, has the resources to use technology to execute on an ancient revenge plan. Rafer's ideas are medieval but he recognizes he can make his point by turning the technology against people who thought it was used to support them. This book is demonstrating that the future tech advances will fall into all hands not just benign rogue techs or governments, but every level of criminal will have access to the same tools.

You released the Prologue for this book as a podcast, why did you decide on that approach?

When I see a disaster movie, I often jokingly wonder how the media would cover the story that takes place in the film. My first career was as a reporter so the thinking is instinctive. Hovering in the background of the events in *The Probable Cause* is the Natchez massacre, the crime that gets Rafer Acton thrown in jail. I did not want to focus on the killings in the novel, but I thought it would be interesting for readers to know about the incident and to have a sense of who Rafer is before the book begins.

Listening to the podcast is not critical to understanding the book, it's extra, but I hope readers enjoy it.

For the first time you have an antagonist who is not a technologist but has ordered and bought the programs he needs for his plans, who is Rafer Acton and how is he able to use technology so effectively?

Rafer is a very resourceful young man. He had been having an idle life before he decided to embark on his revenge plan. To enact a 22nd century revenge against a Bronze Age (26th century BC) crime, he knew he would need to creatively use technology. He could design the program but his challenge was to find someone who could complete the coding for him. This means techs-for-hire are writing code but may not necessarily know the actual intentions of the person who hires them. But, regardless of their knowledge the work will go to the highest bidder.

Is 'the probable cause' a technology question about what went wrong in *The Network* or a psychological question about what went wrong with Rafer Acton?

Readers could ask whether human error or a machine reaction was responsible for the Network problems that set off the action in the book. At the same time, you can ask whether Rafer is a created or natural criminal based on his background history and behavior. I would be interested to hear comments going either way.

About Case

Tell us about yourself?

I am living the best life that I can possibly have, maximizing every second. I love to learn, by reading, listening, watching, I'm curious about everything. I was born in England, to Nigerian and Jamaican parents, grew up in Canada, joined the Foreign Service and lived in The Philippines, Colombia and Chile. Then I went to graduate school in the US where I completed an MBA and settled in California. All that to say, I'm a global citizen. After working in consulting and business operations in the entertainment industry, I decided to pursue a law degree and a Masters in economics, and to launch my fiction-writing career (yes all at the same time). In summary, I am a writer with a self-publishing and information business who also happens to be a lawyer, trained economist, experienced digital media executive, management consultant and diplomat who speaks three languages and still loves to learn.

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What is your writing and revision process? How do you manage your time?

For me, time is like money, you have to manage it, account for every minute, and use it to your advantage. I wrote *The Motion Clue* during the spring semester of my second year in law school. I would get up at 5 am and write until 8 am, and in the first half of the semester I also wrote from 8 pm to around 11 pm but that tapered off as I got closer to exams. Once I have a story idea I just sit down and write. The story usually appears like scenes from a movie running through my mind. I typically start out hand writing for about 20 to 50 pages on a yellow legal notepad. Hand-writing allows me to rapidly put down story bullet-points all the way to the end. Then I get the laptop and write the novel out completely. I revise a lot because once I've got the story, I literally type really fast and end up leaving details out because the main story just has to be told. I have to come back and fix the details later. I'll write "someone walked into the room and Kadie stopped talking." The main point was that she stopped talking, but I still have to go back and figure out who "someone" was. I'm always worried that I missed a continuity step, like in a movie when there's a bottle on the table in one scene and in the next shot it's missing. I try to check for that, but readers can let me know if I missed anything.

Who are your favorite writers? What are your favorite books?

I'm a fan of so many but the British writer Susan Howatch is my favorite, and her book *Penmarric* is always on my top ten list. I also love the big sweeping international sagas of a James Clavell or George R.R. Martin, the multidimensional epics of Isabelle Allende, the stunning voice of Kazuo Ishiguro, and re-reading Jane Austen again and again. There are many more but I think for these writers, I've tried to read everything they have published.

What...no science fiction writers?

I know, I know my books are considered speculative science fiction because of the use of technology in future world settings. And I am a fan of science fiction. But I really wanted to focus on the human side of our rising dependency on technology. I'm interested in how our adaptation to machines will affect our ability to function as people. So the human conflicts around trying to manage the machine are the core of my novels.

How long is *The Life Online Series*? What will be in the future books?

For book four, we are going to be operating from a supersonic international airport. Not sure what is going to happen yet or who will be involved, but you can guess it will involve a Network issue that no one saw coming.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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