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# *Fantasy Worth Thinking About.*

## **James D. Mills**

*Fantasy Author. Small Press Publisher.*

**Bloomington, Indiana**

(209) 479-8988 - james@jamesdmills.com

jamesdmills.com - thearcanist.net

**Writes:** Dark Fantasy, Sword & Sorcery, Literary Fantasy, Poetry, Literary Fiction.

### **Audience:**

- 2.5k YouTube subscribers
- 400+ Newsletter subscribers.

**Debut Novel:** Ashen Rider (2025)

### **Current Projects:**

- *SOIL* (Serialized Novel, 2026)
- *Editor-in-Chief*, The Arcanist: Fantasy Publishing, LLC

### **Education:**

- Southern New Hampshire University. BA in Creative Writing and Psychology, cum laude.
- Southern New Hampshire University. Currently pursuing MBA.

**Active since 2019**

### **Core Creative Philosophy**

- Writes against cynicism in modern Fantasy
- Focus on sincerity, conviction, and moral consequence
- Treats family as a central narrative force

### **Why He's a Strong Interview Subject**

- Founder of small press, actively building an indie publishing ecosystem
- Managed two Crowdfunding campaigns that funded on day one
- Experimenting with serializing his own fiction and fiction from other authors
- Combines training in craft, business (MBA), and editorial experience
- Articulates clear ideological stance on modern Fantasy
- Balances family life + creative production + publishing + full-time day job

# Biography

## One-liner:

James D. Mills is a Dark Fantasy and Sword & Sorcery author, independent publisher, and family man writing stories about sincerity, redemption, and the enduring power of true heroism.

## Short Bio (~150 words):

James D. Mills writes Dark Fantasy and Sword & Sorcery fiction for readers who still believe heroes matter. His work is defined by sincerity, virtue, and triumph over darkness; a deliberate answer to a genre landscape crowded with cynicism and irony.

His debut novel, *Ashen Rider*, leads its heroes through an Alighieri-esque hellscape of deep regret and unforgivable sin, and brings them out the other side redeemed.

Family is not a backdrop to his work. It is a central argument. Mills lives in Bloomington, Indiana with his wife Eden, where together they have built a slow, intentional life; growing food, raising their family, and debating matters of faith and spirit around the table. Those bonds run through everything he writes.

He is Editor-in-Chief of *The Arcanist: Fantasy Publishing* and holds a BA in Creative Writing cum laude. He is determined to deliver fantasy worth reading, directly to the reader.

## Full Bio (~300 words):

James D. Mills writes Dark Fantasy and Sword & Sorcery fiction for readers who still believe heroes matter. His work is defined by sincerity, virtue, and triumph over darkness, even as darkness threatens to swallow the world; a deliberate answer to a genre landscape crowded with cynicism and irony.

His debut novel, *Ashen Rider*, takes its heroes through an Alighieri-esque hellscape of deep regret and unforgivable sin, yet they emerge from the shadows redeemed and rebirthed.

Family is not a backdrop to his work. It is a central argument. Mills lives in Bloomington, Indiana with his wife Eden, where together they have built a slow, intentional life in the middle of a chaotic world; growing their own food, exploring nature, raising their family, and debating matters of faith and spirit around the table. The bonds, sacrifices, and quiet heroism of family life run through everything he writes.

That same conviction extends to his work as a publisher. Mills is Editor-in-Chief of *The Arcanist: Fantasy Publishing*, where he edits three periodicals: *The Literary Fantasy Magazine*, *Mordschlag Sword and Sorcery*, and *Arcanist Online*. He has helped dozens of authors worldwide find their voices in fantasy fiction. He came to publishing not as a side venture but as a mission: convinced that the industry had lost its way, he is completing an MBA with the specific goal of building a publishing practice that can genuinely sustain and elevate authors and their stories.

He holds a BA in Creative Writing and Psychology, graduating cum laude from Southern New Hampshire University, where he was trained in literary formalism and developed a deep admiration for writers who took their craft, and their readers, seriously. He continues that study daily, drawing on mythology, history, and psychology to shape his approach to prose, poetry, and storytelling.

He is determined to deliver fantasy worth reading, directly to the reader.

## Recent Appearances

- **22 April 2026.** Guest Lecture at University of the Pacific: “A Calling, not a Hobby: What Separates the Amateur Writer from the Pros.”
- **14 Sept. 2025.** [Publishing Fantasy Literature: A Discussion With James Mills, Editor-In-Chief of The Arcanist](#), Courtney Jensen (16.3k subscribers)

## Suggested Interview Questions

1. You’ve said modern fantasy leans too heavily into cynicism. What do you think it’s lost, and why does that matter?
2. Your work emphasizes sincerity and redemption. Why do those themes feel almost controversial in today’s genre landscape?
3. Ashen Rider uses a hellscape as both setting and psychological mirror; what draws you to that kind of symbolic storytelling?
4. You’re not just writing; you’re building a publishing company. What problem are you trying to solve that traditional publishing isn’t?
5. You’re releasing SOIL as a serialized work. Why experiment with serialization now?
6. What does “fantasy worth reading” actually mean to you in practice?
7. You balance writing, publishing, and family life. How does that reality influence the kinds of stories you tell?
8. You’ve studied both psychology and writing. How do those disciplines intersect in your work?
9. Many writers struggle with consistency. What’s your actual process for producing work regularly?
10. What do most aspiring fantasy writers misunderstand about the genre?

## Story Angles and Episode Hooks

### 1. *“The Case Against Cynical Fantasy”*

An indie author argues that modern fantasy has lost its moral center and is building an alternative rooted in sincerity and redemption.

### 2. *“Building an Indie Fantasy Publishing House from Scratch”*

Inside the strategy, risks, and philosophy behind launching The Arcanist to challenge traditional publishing models.

### 3. *“Serialized Fiction Is Back and Indie Authors Are Leading It”*

Why serialization is resurging, how it changes reader relationships, and what Mills is testing in real time with SOIL.

### 4. *“Writing Hell: Using Fantasy Worlds to Externalize Psychology”*

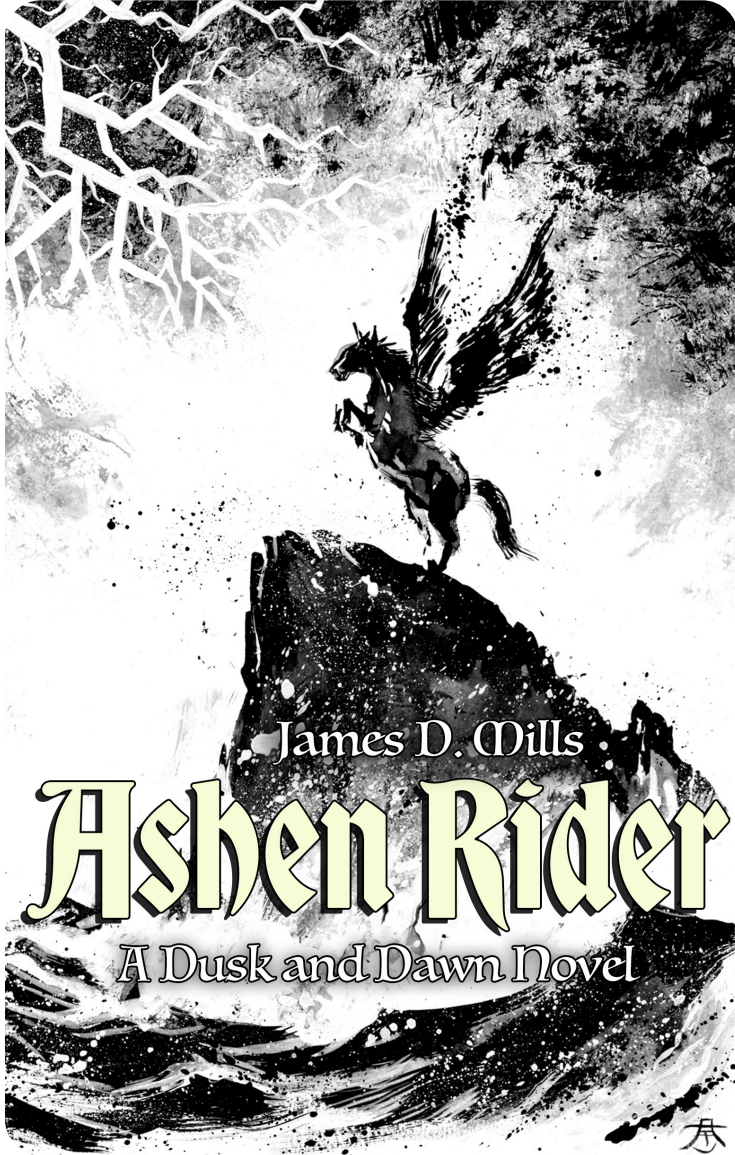
How symbolic landscapes, like the underworld in Ashen Rider, turn internal conflict into mythic narrative structure.

### 5. *“The Family as a Narrative Engine”*

Why Mills treats family not as background, but as the central moral and emotional force in his fiction.

# ASHEN RIDER

*A Mythological Dark Fantasy Novel*  
**HE SAVED THE WORLD. SHE WAS DAMNED.**



Available now from [The Arcanist: Fantasy Publishing](#), [Amazon](#), [Barnes and Noble](#), and serialized on [Substack](#).

200 pages / 45,000 words

ISBN (Paperback): 979-8-9923135-8-1

ISBN (Hardcover): 979-8-9923135-9-8

When her father's blind devotion to a fallen goddess kills her mother for the second time, Kateryna Cain abandons the stability of her tortured afterlife and descends into Pandemonium—a fractured, hellish underworld where the dead are not allowed to rest.

To reclaim her mother's soul, she must join forces with the last person she trusts: her estranged, fanatical father. Together they soar across turgid seas and haunted fields, driving deep into the heart of a city ruled by the Demon King—all while evading the ever-present gaze of Morgana, the Goddess Corrupted, who no longer cares for the balance of life and death.

But Pandemonium is not like the mortal world. It reflects the pain they carry and the sins they've buried—the consequences of every choice they made in life. As Kateryna's journey spirals deeper into shadow, she must confront not only the horrors of hell, but the truth of her own past.

For fans of Steven Erikson's Malazan Book of the Fallen and N.K. Jemisin's The Broken Earth Trilogy and in the tradition of Dante's Inferno and Milton's Paradise Lost. ASHEN RIDER is a dark, mythical meditation on perseverance, fractured family, and the cost of redemption in a world where death is only the beginning.

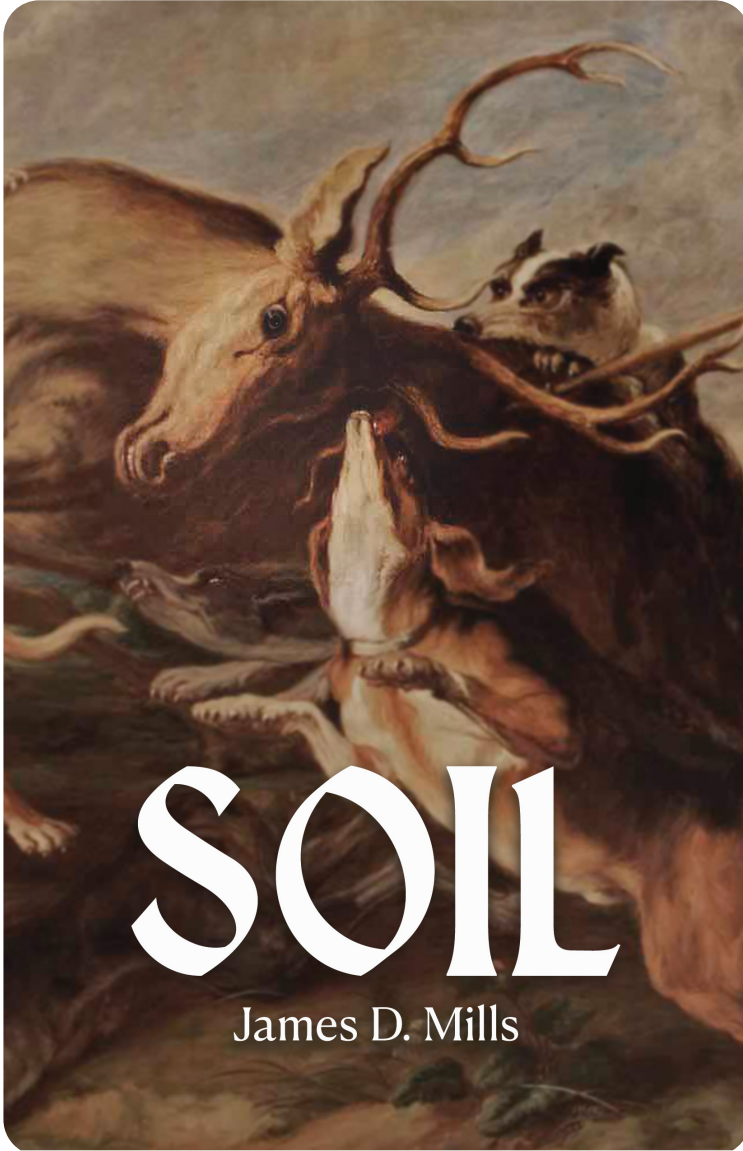
## Reviews

*"A literary fantasy with deep symbolic depths, dark as the abyss, and beautiful as Elysium. James Mills...crafts a mythic tale of fathers and daughters, heaven and hell, corruption and redemption with Ashen Rider...bold, wildly evocative, and at once empyrean and intensely human."*  
 —Erik Goodwyn, author of King of the Forgotten Darkness.

*"A wonderfully immersive ride into high fantasy with tight storytelling, epic sweep, and fantastic characters that will live on in your mind long after you've finished the book. Mills has created a dramatic and propulsive work, full of the kind of drama and suspense you can expect from the best of the genre. Adventurous without ever compromising its intelligence or its drive, Ashen Rider is a vivid and thrilling delight."*  
 —Cameron MacKenzie, author of River Weather.

# SOIL

*A Dark Literary Fantasy Novel*  
*SOME HUNGERS CANNOT BE SATED.*



**Serialized monthly** from January to June 2026  
 on [Arcanist Online](#). Coming to Substack on  
 October 7th, 2026.

~260 pages / ~80,000 words

The Village in the Shins sits at the edge of the known world, overlooked by the tallest Guardians and protected by something older than memory. Its people are sincere, stubborn, and slowly starving... except for Ithica, whose garden blooms through the hardest winters, whose hands coax life from frozen soil. Yet her prayers for a child of her own go unanswered year after year.

When strangers arrive from the south—a pallid scholar and his beautiful apprentice, both bearing a deadly secret—the village opens its doors as it always has. But something watches from the treeline. Children wander into the frigid woods and never return. An ancient power is feeding on the land, and the most unlikely soul in the village, a fierce, lonely girl who hasn't been home in days, may be the only one who sees it clearly.

SOIL is the second entry in the Dusk and Dawn series, a story about what we grow, what we yearn for, and the terrible things we carry into the places we call home.

## Reviews

*"...I found myself immersed in the story and blown away by the prose." —An Early Reader on Discord.*