

Sevan Minaskanian

Author Q&A

Q: What inspired you to write *Winter Time*?

A: This novel, *Winter Time*, is inspired by my personal experiences as a young adult. These stories stuck with me. It wasn't until I saw my kids going through similar experiences and situations that I realized that some of these experiences are universal. Every young adult has similar experiences, and it is a difficult time. My goal and inspiration were to share my story and those similar ones, and to guide and inspire anyone who's going through these life altering times. Life is more than the difficult times, it is joyous. There are meaningful places that stick with you and inspire stories, friendships, meaningful conversations. My inspiration came from a deep desire to express something that feels important or impossible to ignore.

Q: You've described yourself as a lifelong daydreamer—how did that shape this story?

A: Daydreaming allows you to escape, it allows me to find a safe space where I can let my imagination go wild. No matter who you're surrounded with, there is somewhere you can always go where you feel comfortable and good. Allowing Victoria to also be a daydreamer, she was able to find herself in rooms filled with people. Daydreaming and imagination allowed me to keep these stories safe until I was ready to share them with everyone. It is an important skill to foster until these imaginations can be transcribed into different forms of art.

Q: *Winter Time* explores themes of first love and growing up. Why were those important for you to write about?

A: First love is intense, confusing, and unforgettable. It shapes the way we understand ourselves and others. When we make mistakes, we learn from them, we adapt, we grow, we mature. As a young adult, emotions are heightened even more, feelings feel even more intense, mistakes seem unforgivable and unforgettable, when in the grand scheme of things, it is not as bad. Writing about

these emotions and situations is a privilege. Trying to capture these emotions in words, and these stories in detail is an aspiration. Sharing these stories is how we learn, how we love, and how we grow.

Q: The book also touches on anti-bullying. Why was that message important to include?

A: Bullying can deeply affect someone's confidence, identity, and sense of belonging, especially while growing up. By weaving it into the story, I wanted to show the pain it can cause, and the strength it takes to rise above it. It also gave me a way to highlight empathy, kindness, and the impact that even small acts of support can have on someone's life. Including anti-bullying in my story was important to me because it reflects a real issue that many people face but don't always talk about. Bullying is not okay and being bullied is not something to be ashamed of it should be discussed openly, and support should be given immediately.

Q: What do you hope readers—especially young readers—take away from this story?

A: Readers, especially young readers, can take away the importance of staying true to who they are; even when life feels confusing and difficult. Through moments of first love, growing up, and overcoming challenges like bullying, the story shows that it's okay to feel deeply, and to struggle while finding your place. It encourages empathy, resilience, and the courage to keep going. A reminder that they are not alone in what they feel, and their experiences can shape them into stronger, more understanding individuals.

Q: What was it like finally turning a long-held dream into your debut novel?

A: Turning my long-held dream into my debut novel felt both surreal and deeply personal. What once lived only in my imagination slowly became something real through patience, doubt, and determination. There were moments of uncertainty, but also those of excitement where the story truly felt and came alive. Seeing my ideas, emotions, and experiences take shape on the page, made

every challenge worth it. It reminded me that dreams, no matter how distant they seem, can become real with persistence, consistence, and belief.

Q: How did your life experiences and family influence your writing?

A: My writing is deeply shaped by my life experiences and the influences of my family and my culture. The moments I've lived through, both joyful and difficult, ground my stories in authenticity. Being an Armenian American has shaped the way my family sees the world. It shaped me too, teaching me resilience, showing me how to love, how to see the world, and to be passionate. Familial values, conversations, and support, have quietly guided my voice, inspiring the themes I explore and the characters I create. Through my writing, pieces of those experiences and influences come together to form something meaningful and real.

Q: Can you tell us a bit about your main characters and what makes them special to you?

A: This novel is a love story about a young couple named Victoria and William. Victoria is a naïve teenager who lives in a bubble surrounded by love and affection from her family. She has a difficult time separating the two worlds she is a part of. William is more grounded, he is worldly. He has experienced more of what life has to offer both personally and the fact that he is an avid reader. He takes a liking to Victoria and becomes protective over her soon after. Instead of taking over her life, he encourages her to understand, stand up for herself, and make her own decisions. My main characters are special to me because they carry pieces of who I am and what I have felt. Through them, I was able to express emotions, struggles, and dreams that are deeply personal. They grew along my side as I was writing, becoming more than just figures in a story. Oddly enough, it is a raw and genuine connection. They became symbols of hope, growth, and resilience. In many ways, they are real to me. They are my companions in helping me share a story that matters to me in a way that I see as universal and relatable.

Q: What was the most rewarding part of writing *Winter Time*?

A: The most rewarding part of writing *Winter Time* was watching the story slowly come to life in a way that felt real and meaningful. Like pieces of a puzzle fitting together, like a river flowing smoothly without obstacles in its path. Seeing the characters grow, face challenges, and find their voices made the entire process feel personal and fulfilling. I faced challenges learning how to share the stories in my head, when to introduce new challenges, how to describe the characters' thinking process. I grew with my characters like how they grow in the novel. It was especially powerful to take emotions and ideas that once felt intangible and express them in ways that others could read and connect with. In the end, knowing that the story could resonate with someone else, and encourage them to grow, made all the effort truly worth it.

Q: What can readers expect next from you after *Winter Time*?

A: *Winter Time* is a trilogy and I would like the readers to know that they can expect more stories that explore heartfelt emotions, personal growth, and the challenges of growing up. There are a few perspectives left to explore in this love story other than the main couple, and I would love to share them. I want to dive deeper into characters who face tough choices, discover themselves, and navigate relationships with honesty and vulnerability. My next work will carry the same emotional depth and sense of connection, offering readers both relatable moments and a little escape into worlds that feel real and meaningful.