Interview topics

Why I write about what happens afterwards

Violence, trauma and intimacy are often used as dramatic events. Johan's fiction is more interested in what happens after the event has passed: the next morning, the decisions still waiting to be made, and the ways people continue ordinary lives around extraordinary experiences.

Writing people rather than plots

Johan describes his fiction as beginning with people rather than plots. Characters make choices, circumstances change, and the story follows the consequences rather than forcing them towards a predetermined destination.

What does a writer ask of the reader?

Stories can ask readers to experience grief, fear, violence, longing and loss. When has a writer earned the right to impose that emotional cost — and when does it become manipulation?

Starting again later in life

After three decades working in and around large organisations, Johan published his first novel in his fifties and subsequently built a writing and publishing life alongside his work in leadership and organisational change.

What organisations teach us about people

Thirty years around leadership, transformation and large organisations gave Johan another laboratory for watching human behaviour: power, fear, loyalty, status, uncertainty, institutional pressure and what people do when circumstances change around them.

When life doesn't follow the plan

Across Johan's fiction and non-fiction sits a recurring question: what do people do when life takes them somewhere they never planned to be?

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