

Spotlight on Alumni

UIS graduate is author of upcoming horror novel



Joshua Doetsch

Joshua Doetsch, who graduated from the University of Illinois at Springfield in May 2006 with a master's degree in English, is the author of two soon-to-be-published pieces: a novel, *Strangeness in the Proportion*, and a short story, "Snow, Blood, and Sparrows."

Strangeness will be published by horror/science fiction/fantasy house White Wolf Publishing. "Sparrows" will appear in the anthology *Book of Dead Things*, coming soon from Chicago-based Twilight Tales Press.

Strangeness in the Proportion, which Doetsch describes as "a modern horror/noir story set in Chicago and featuring a very strange and macabre protagonist," was chosen from an original pool of more than 1,000 submissions to win a contest sponsored by White Wolf and based on the premise of creating a novel using one of the company's signature characters somewhere in the story.

The contest unfolded over two years in three phases. In the first, more than 1,000 hopefuls each submitted a 250-word synopsis; 100 of those authors were then asked to write a first chapter. From that pool, five people (including Doetsch) were awarded \$1,000 each and the chance to complete their novels. As the final winner, Doetsch received a contract to publish his book and another \$10,000 against future royalties.

In announcing the contest results, White Wolf officials noted, "In the end, so much of the decision came down not just to quality but to our personal reactions to the stories. [*Strangeness in the Proportion*] grabbed [us] with its raw, frank voice. This is a good old-fashioned nasty tale of the Weird."

Doetsch claims to have fallen back on writing after his high school guidance counselor informed him that "Spiderman" was not a job option. Some of his other current projects include polishing and expanding the manuscript for another novel, *Souls Unsure* – a "dark, modern epic in prose and poetry about a Voodoo priestess, a fallen angel, and a mischievous muse who may not be telling the story truthfully" – that initially served as Doetsch's creative writing closure exercise at UIS and received the Outstanding Master's Thesis award for the 2005-06 academic year. One vignette from the larger story – "Teddy Bear Rex" – was published separately as a short story and was nominated for a Pushcart Award.

Information about the Twilight Tales anthology can be found at www.twilighttales.com. More information about White Wolf Publishing is available at www.white-wolf.com. Contact Doetsch at www.myspace.com/nevermore_66. ■

Two UIS graduates among winners of Golden Apple Awards



Scott Reed

UIS graduates **Melinda Wilson** and **Scott Reed** are among the recipients of the 2007 Golden Apple Awards, honoring teachers in Chicago-area schools, grades 9 through 12. The awards are presented by The Golden Apple Foundation, an organization dedicated to recognizing and developing excellence in teaching.

Wilson, one of 10 winners of the Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching, graduated from UIS in 1984 with a master's degree in public affairs reporting (*no photo available*). She is currently a teacher of dance at Curie Metropolitan High School in Chicago.

Reed is one of 10 Golden Apple Teachers of Distinction. He graduated from UIS in 2006 with a master's degree in Teacher Leadership and teaches physics at Niles North High School in Skokie.

Some 800 teachers from Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake and Will counties were nominated for Golden Apple Awards; 32 finalists were named in January. Winners were selected by a committee of distinguished Chicago-area educators who observed each finalist in his or her classroom and interviewed principals, colleagues, students and parents. The designation "Teacher of Distinction" recognizes finalists whom the selection committee found to be superior teachers worthy of note.

Each Golden Apple Award winner will receive a tuition-free, fall-term sabbatical at Northwestern University, a personal computer from Apple, \$3,000, and membership in the Golden Apple Academy. Teachers of Distinction will be recognized for their distinguished contribution to teaching and asked to participate in Golden Apple programs. All award winners were honored at an award ceremony in May in Chicago.

The Golden Apple Foundation is a community of expert teachers and teachers-to-be who are working together to ensure that all Illinois schoolchildren have the excellent teachers they deserve. Drawing on shared experience and inspiration, Golden Apple recruits, prepares and mentors new teachers; creates model programs and partnerships; and encourages all teachers to attain high levels of professional excellence and commitment. More information is available from the organization's Web site at www.goldenapple.org/. ■