



## Writing Action Thriller ‘Brutal’

### Recovering Alcoholic Matt Betley '94 Encourages Others

**Writing and marketing *Overwatch*, his first novel, due out this spring, was a “brutal exercise in perseverance and determination” for Matt Betley '94. “There were so many times when I wanted to go, Yeah, I don’t want to do this. This is ridiculous. I can’t believe how long this is taking. Am I ever going to get an agent? Am I ever going to get a deal? It’s just an emotional, emotional roller coaster.”**

**Matt Betley '94 never expected** such a nail biter. And he’s not talking about the plot of his debut action thriller, *Overwatch*, although he does think following a former Marine Force Recon commander as he hunts down shadowy operatives is edge-of-your-seat exciting.

He just never dared hope a top publisher and Hollywood agent would think so too. But they do. Simon & Schuster has taken him on, and his Hollywood agent sold *The Martian* to Ridley Scott.

*Overwatch* owes its inception to a 2009 vacation when Betley, “bored to tears” with a best-seller, kept thinking, I can write a better book than this.

His first draft took 18 months eight days. He then spent six months editing, 12 looking for an agent, and 14 more negotiating a book deal.

Co-captain of the mock trial team while at Miami, Betley majored in psychology and minored in political science and sociology. He planned to go to law school.

Those plans changed during a night at the movies when he stopped a young guy from beating up an

elderly gentleman. “I wanted to go where I would have a more direct impact.”

He became a Marine officer with deployments to Djibouti and Fallujah, Iraq, a prominent location in his book. Like his main character, Betley has a problem with alcohol. Unlike his character, Betley has been sober for seven years.

“A lot of people consider being a recovering alcoholic something that’s a private matter. However, I figure if somebody hears my story and says, hey, if this guy could get his act together, then someone might see the same thing for him or herself.”

Currently working for the federal government, he wants to become a full-time novelist. He has the requisite thick skin, he says. He advises new authors to learn to deal with rejection. He also recommends creating a business plan. Simon & Schuster is using his.

“I thought about all this stuff ahead of time because, as awesome as it is to write, you can’t write other stories if your books don’t sell.”