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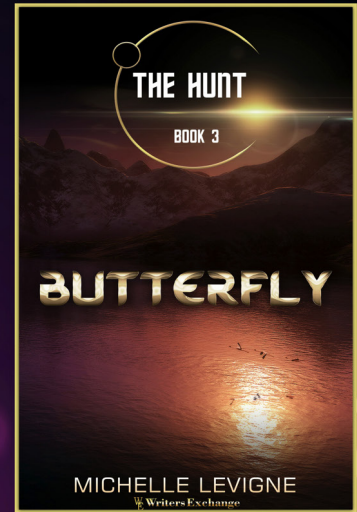
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Captain's Log

When stories have tempting moments, let's be charitable to their authors.

Should storytellers be more careful to keep readers from stumbling into sin?

These days it seems Christians and others are asking this question about secular comedians, filmmakers, and, of course, fantasy novelists.

This question calls for wisdom. You need to know your Bible and how the Bible explains sin. You also need to know the person, or type of person, who is tempted.

You also need to know something about the story's creator.

For example, let's say we're talking about a biblical Christian author, who wants to glorify God per God's word, writes from a gospel worldview, and strives to live like Jesus. Can we expect this author to avoid any content that makes fans stumble?

I suggest our answer is no, for two reasons.

First, this expectation can be unbi-

blical. When the apostle Paul warns against making others stumble, he does not blame "strong" believers for doing a non-sinful action. He only refers to spiritually "weak" people who can't help but associate that action with evil, and thus fall into their own sin (see Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 8-10).

Second, this expectation is unwor- kable. You yourself can't act in a way that keeps everyone from associating you with sin. For example, if you enjoy discussing biblical doctrine, even kindly, others may associate you with sins like arrogance.

But in fact, this kind of discussion is a great solution to temptation conflicts.

Paul did not urge believers to find possible temptation hot-zones and avoid them in advance. Nor did he hush up the temptation risk or blame anyone. Instead, he aired this is-

sue publicly in his open letters. Paul urged more discussion, not less.

Whenever we have questions about stories, we can do the same.

For example, if you're concerned that a Christian-made story has tempting themes, you can discuss it with other fans. Or contact the author! You may need to hear the author's view, and the author may need your reminder about fans' sin-struggles.

If we do this, however, let's ensure we're not acting like big-cheese leaders, ready to protect an imaginary crowd of temptation victims. Such posturing can easily lead us into the wrong kind of hero complex. Let's instead remember that it's Jesus, not us, who leads us away from temptation and delivers us from evil.



E. Stephen Burnett serves as *Lorehaven* publisher/editor in chief, and creates fantastical fiction. He is coauthor *The Pop Culture Parent: Helping Kids Engage Their World for Christ*, which releases spring 2020 from New Growth Press.

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Navigation

3 The Bridge

5 Sponsored Reviews

Beatitudes and Woes, editor: Travis Perry
The Flame of Telbyrin, Br. Benedict Dyar, O.S.B.
Oath of the Outcast, C. M. Bansbach

7 Book Reviews

The Lorehaven review team reviews eight Christian-made fantastical novels.

10 'Out-of-This-World Stories'

Enclave Publishing grounds creative fantasy in coherent theology.

16 Sponsored Review

The Deceit of Darkness, C. S. Wachter

17 How Geeks Can Get Excited About God

Paeter Frandsen

18 Sex in the Story: How Far is Too Far?

Marian Jacobs

Masthead

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Lorehaven serves Christian fans by finding biblical truth in fantastic stories. Book clubs, free webzines, and a web-based community offer flash reviews, articles, and news about Christian fantasy, science fiction, and other fantastical genres. Magazine print copies are available by request and at special events.

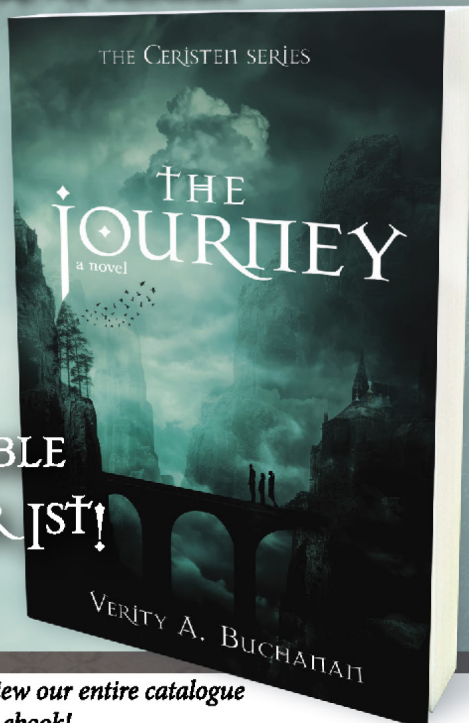
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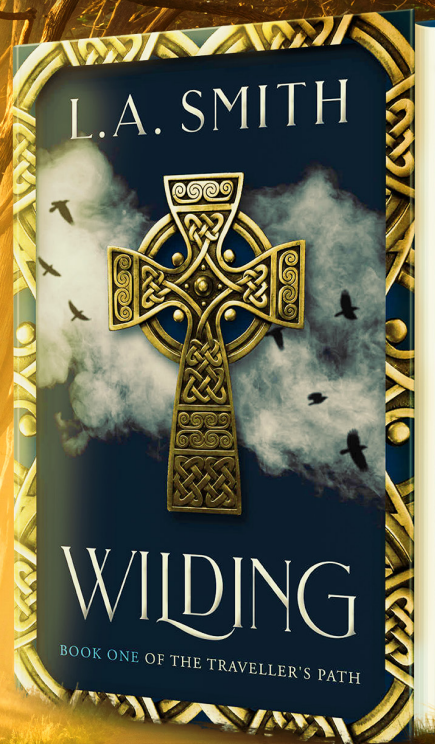


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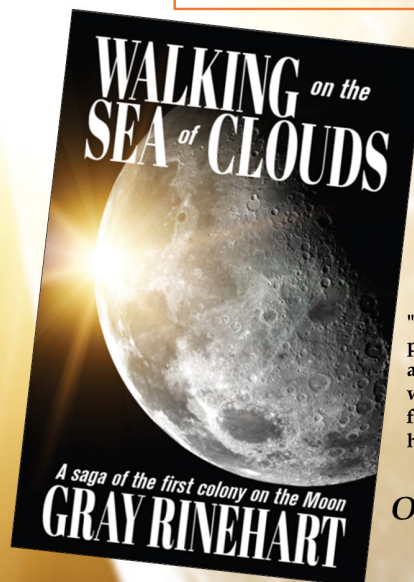
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Beatitudes & Woes

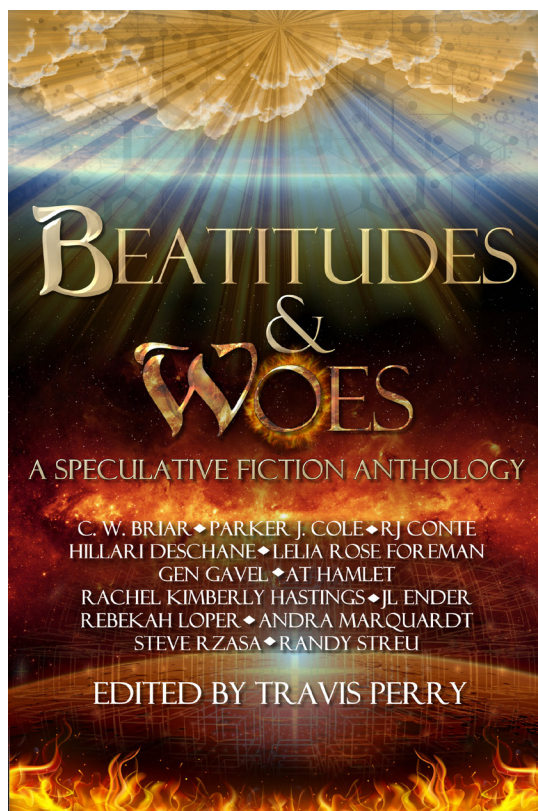
Blessed is this short story anthology, creatively based on the words of Jesus.

Are the poor in spirit still blessed when they've been hijacked by space pirates? Do mourners still receive divine favor if they lament the devastation wrought by their own tears? And what if the people subjected to persecution for righteousness' sake face the eradication of their nation? Can they possibly treat their tormentors with love?

Christ's parables are often cited as justification or even inspiration for Christian fiction, but how often does one encounter a systematically fantastical treatment of one of our Lord's sermons? *Beatitudes & Woes*, a Christian speculative fiction anthology edited by Travis Perry, is a bold experiment. This collection takes as its framework the blessings and curses pronounced by Jesus in Matthew 5:3-11 (and Luke 6:24-26). Then this work explores each beatitude and woe, respectively, through a short story in a separate subgenre—from classic fantasy and sci-fi to superhero, dystopian, and even horror.

The result, much like Christian fiction itself, is a mixed bag. While some of these tales enthrall the reader from the very first word, others fall prey to sentimentality, pontification, or clichéd narrative templates. Fortunately, the show-stopper entries by themselves are enough to justify the price of admission. Some of the best include:

- “*The Meek Shall Inherit*” by J. L. Ender is an uproarious romp through superhero stereotypes seasoned with savviness and off-the-beaten-path powers. Thomas—aka Switch Master, aka Flipper—is a wannabe hero stuck on the mercenary circuit. He can cause objects to instantly trade places, but can he exchange his flippancy for courage? Genuine belly laughs soften the reader for a gut-punch as Ender deftly swaps hilarity for pathos.
- “*Blessed Are the Merciful*” by Lelia Rose Foreman is a tale from the Talifar universe, which plunges the reader into an immersive milieu of alien husbandry. When young Sunrise's family suffers a devastating loss, he yearns to call down vengeance on the guilty. His father's wisdom urges restraint—but to what end? Foreman's spare lyricism evokes wistfully pastoral vistas and surprisingly strong emotions.
- “*Wondermind and the Almost King*” by Gen Gavel is an intricate and luminous fable worthy of *Arabian Nights*. Greedy Cadmus has conquered the land of Siwa, but it withers under his hand. Young Khaled has died and seen the eternal Wonder, but now must live again in longing. Can his unseasonal insight save the king from djinn who would enslave him?

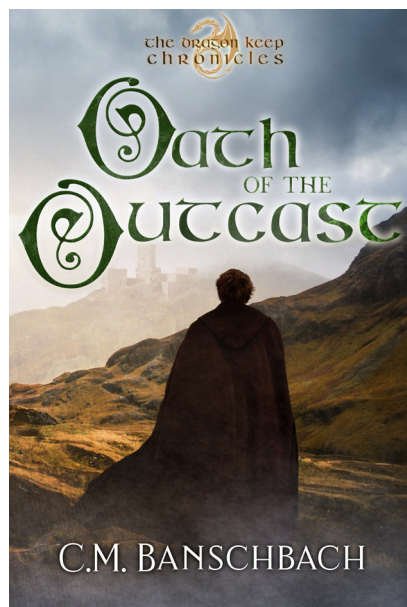


- “*Something in the Water*” by Randy Streu is a sci-fi horror of disturbingly clinical detachment. When an expedition to the rings of Saturn discovers microscopic life in space, celebratory wine flows freely. But station personnel soon regret not sticking with the bottle. The ensuing carnage, narrated in retrospect by the mission's biologist, uncorks the consequences of hubris.
- “*As the Prophecy Foretold*” by C. W. Briar is a slow-burning dark fairytale that pits the heir of a legendary dragon-slayer against the slain beast's offspring. Robert may be a lowly pig farmer, but when the wizard Harabor arrives with a quest just for him, Robert's humble dreams grow grand. But nothing is as it seems, and the dead hand of the past may yet reach out to aid or strangle the ignorant adventurer.

Ultimately *Beatitudes & Woes* succeeds not only as thought-provoking entertainment but as a proof-of-concept. Christian speculative fiction is capable of walking the line between scriptural sobriety and fantastical imagination. More like this, please.

Best for: Older teens and adults seeking intentionally thematic Christian speculative fiction.

Discern: Widely varied content between individual stories, that is, some are squeaky clean, while others spray gore or touch on sexually suggestive imagery.



Oath of the Outcast

The past few years have not been kind to Rhys MacDuffy, the outcast known among his former kin as the Mountain Baron. And when the people who turned him out now seek him out, asking him for help? Well, you can be sure the future ain't promising to make his life any better anytime soon.

Oath of the Outcast is an intricate story, following a man who is essentially an outlaw as he is called back into a society that had rejected him and faces people for whom he has no reason to feel any fondness. And even worse, Rhys finds himself facing something stranger and more dangerous than he could have imagined: the power behind the druid priests who kidnapped one of the few people he still cares about.

Although C. M. Banschbach's novel is set in a fictional universe, it has a very real-world feel. Personal conflicts whirl be-

tween multiple levels of political ambition, while above all looms the threat of great armies going to war against each other. Yet the narrative remains focused on the small scale, with various characters going to great lengths to protect and rescue those they love.

Along with his rejection of those who rejected him, Rhys in his anger and bitterness has also rejected God—called Ilan in this story-world—and Rhys sees all religions as little better than superstitions. His encounters with the druids' power may change his views, although that's something for the series to reveal in future installments.

Oath of the Outcast bursts with brawn and brains, providing plenty of action while leaving the reader with questions to ponder. It's a fantastic opening to the Dragon Keep Chronicles series.

Best for: Young adults and older.

Discern: One character's prophetic gift-like ability, which manifests as fragmented visions and out-of-body experiences, could confuse anyone who is curious about biblical prophets and how they received messages from God.

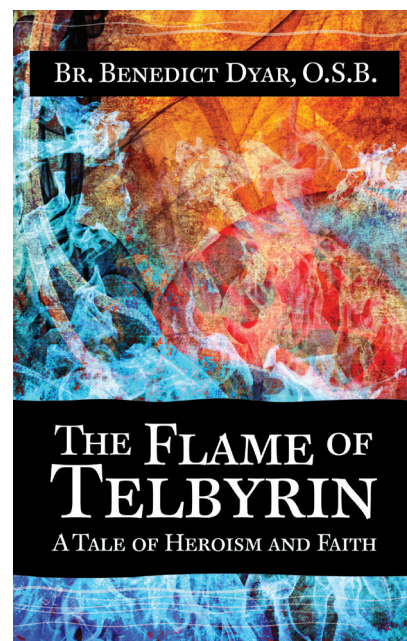
The Flame of Telbyrin

What could have snuffed the flames of Telbyrin? When the Creator made the world, he gave the Eternal Flame first to the elves. Then they gave some portion of the Flame to the other peoples. But not all people welcomed the Flame. Some rejected it, and over the years have waged war with those who kept the Flame.

Now, something disturbing is happening. In many villages across the kingdom, portions of the Flame have stopped burning. It falls to Orilin and his wife Larilyn, a "young" elven couple with 300 years each, to discover what's happened to the flames, even as they prepare to fight off armed invaders. But the corruption they are really fighting runs deeper

than they have understood, and not all those who smile upon their efforts are really allies.

Benedict Dyar's *The Flame of Telbyrin* packs a lot of plot into one novel. On a large scale, armies battle each other. On a smaller scale, our heroes must overcome difficulties to reach the king and queen in the city of Gallinthrar, and that's only the beginning of their struggle. The story roars with action: kidnappings, betrayals, and even encounters with the undead—which the story portrays with informality and pleasantness, rather than grim determination or respectful reverence. Nonetheless, our elven heroes prove charming, and the narrative burns hot and quick.



Best for: Young-adult fans of lighter fantasy fare.

Discern: Some violence and combat.



The Alien's Daughter

Teens often feel alienated from their parents. But what if your parent was an alien? *The Alien's Daughter* by JC Morrows explores that question, opening with a single significant event: blue-haired Zoe's discovery that her dad is an extraterrestrial. This not only explains her strange and recently developed powers, but also helps her understand why her dad wavers between friendliness and hostility. Although

this development may not match some readers' normal experience, *The Alien's Daughter* presents an intriguing take on how an alien could blend in with earthlings. This novel-length tale is more of an extended short story about discovery, and values emotion over action. Subsequent installments in the series are sure to uncover more half-alien predicaments for Zoe to confront.

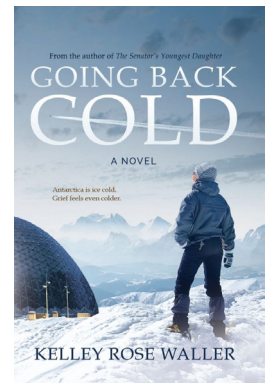
Best for: Teens looking for an emotional ride.

Discern: A Christian worldview is neither clearly seen nor ruled out.

Going Back Cold

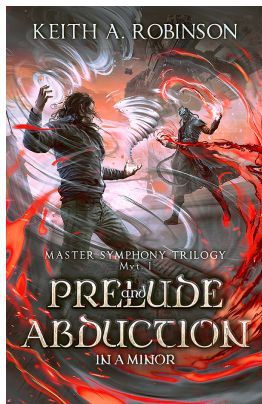
Coldness can numb every hurt except heartache, as seen in Kelley Rose Waller's *Going Back Cold*, which sets a mother's bitter struggle with stillbirth against the backdrop of cutting-edge scientific research in Antarctica. When Dr. Jane Whyse's experimentation with faster-than-light technology discloses the possibility of time travel, her grief forces her to grapple with the implications of altering the past. If she

can go back, should she? Though this novel's prose plods at times, its story is driven by both inner and interpersonal conflict. Jane's cramped and isolated environment forces her to confront opposing opinions, deal with antagonistic personalities, and contrast her loss with a fellow crew member's prior abortion. But is her real adversary the God who allowed death to freeze her soul?



Best for: Adults; fans of hard science fiction.

Discern: Traumatic depictions of miscarriage and postpartum depression; some vulgarity; frequent sexual innuendo.



Prelude and Abduction: in A Minor

Music may have the power to move us metaphorically, but in *Prelude and Abduction: in A Minor* music also has the power to move people literally, as well as to do other magical things. Keith A. Robinson's sci-fi/fantasy gives Maestros, from various races across the galaxy, the musical ability to create portals from one place to another, change the form of matter, and control wind and other elements.

The story uniquely features no human characters and depicts unfallen races interacting with people from fallen races. The main character, Khaleen, is believably imperfect: he struggles to control his temper and deals poorly with his own past. *Prelude and Abduction* strikes up a distinctive melody in the key of Star Wars by providing music-based powers to alien races in conflict.

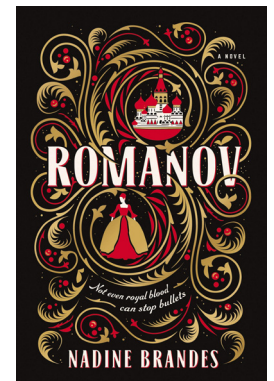
Best for: Young adults and adults, sci-fi fans.

Discern: Some fantasy concepts, such as an enormous flow of continuous musical energy connecting every solar system, and musical skills allowing someone to manipulate that energy.

Romanov

Like a Russian nesting doll, Nadine Brandes's *Romanov* contains layers of unexpected meaning. Cased in history, *Romanov* tells the story of Anastasia Romanov, or Nastya, exiled with her family after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. With her spell master gone and magic outlawed under the Bolsheviks, Nastya can do little to ease her brother Alexei's secret hemophilia. Complicating matters further, Nastya begins to develop an attachment

for one of the soldiers imprisoning her family. When the ultimate betrayal falls upon them, Nastya must put her wits, her faith, and her heart to the test. Can she follow her father's admonition to forgive her enemies? Or will her heart become as hard and empty as a Matryoshka doll? Wrapping history in layers of humanity and magic, *Romanov* brings the captivating story of Anastasia to life in a new and vivid way.



Best for: Fans of Nadine Brandes and historical fiction as well as slow-burning, character-driven stories.

Discern: Some romantic tension and rumors of adultery; multiple scenes of violence and references to assassination, execution, and murder; one character is shown drinking heavily in most of his appearances; references to Jesus, the Bible, and prayer throughout.



Shard & Shield

A shield is good to have, especially if it prevents an alien race from infiltrating your world and wreaking death and destruction. It is also highly inconvenient to lose. But when people are forced to wield new weapons, sometimes they surprise themselves. Laura VanArendonk Baugh's *Shard & Shield* pursues classic fantasy visions of magic, alien creatures, and troublesome royalty. Its alien Ryuvien are well-crafted, and similar enough to humans for empathy

and dissimilar enough to be interesting. The story explores a variety of relationships. Romance has its place, but so do friendship and familial bonds. Due to such loves, two heroes commit a crime that irrevocably harms innocents, but the story never reckons with this severe offense and engineers a deception to help them escape punishment. Still, *Shard & Shield* will intrigue readers with its world-building and complex relationships.

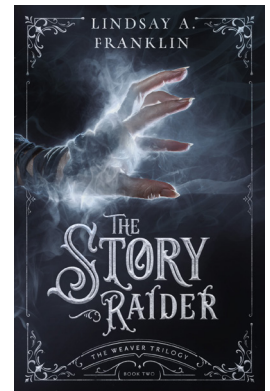
Best for: Fans of fantasy and character-driven fiction.

Discern: Several fights, all on a limited scale; abuse and cruel punishment is inflicted on slaves, prisoners, and an adolescent boy; one scene depicts a character deliberately arousing another; someone attempts to pressure an unwilling subordinate into sexual relations; some language, mostly mild.

The Story Raider

In this brilliant sequel to *The Story Peddler*, Lindsay Franklin spins the tale of Tanwen and the Corsyth Weavers as they travel the world in search of a cure to the curse that's slowly killing a member of their company. But Tanwen has a secret—the curse has begun to afflict her as well. Meanwhile, Queen Braith attempts to restore order to Tir, but the puppet master

who helped Braith's father rise to power has a plan to regain control that includes hunting Tanwen and the Weavers and inciting riots amongst the Tirian peasants, putting everyone Tanwen loves at risk. More adventure, higher stakes, and betrayal at every turn make *The Story Raider* a sequel that exceeds expectations and will leave readers begging for the final story.



Best for: Anyone who enjoys adventure and intrigue in a compelling fantasy.

Discern: Violence and some references to sexual assault.



The Treasure of Capric

When a sacred treasure goes missing from its vault on Capric Hill, the monks sworn to protect it mount a recovery mission. But as they venture farther from home, they're faced with the fact that their brotherhood shares culpability for the land's barrenness. With *The Treasure of Capric*, first installment in the King of the Caves series, Brandon M. Wilborn blends Brother Cadfael with *Prince Caspian* to conjure a complex, lived-in world pop-

ulated by fully realized characters. Novices Kurian, Rhys, and Tobin must fight, sneak, and negotiate their way across a derelict and usurped kingdom. But is the outlaw they pursue a dire threat or their only hope of restoration? Biblical allusions flourish without intruding, and, though the plot may grow too convenient toward the end, the story manages to capture a precious treasure indeed: a fantastical feeling of genuine awe.

Best for: Older teens and adults seeking traditional fantasy with vivid worlds and thematic depth.

Discern: Strong bloody violence, mild profanity, some sexual situations involving witches and sirens.

To Ashes We Run

Dieon wanted two things: a home and peace. It proved difficult to build a home, and harder yet to stay there. Peace was even more elusive, especially after the Twisted Idzihar—the traitorous lord of spirits—broke into time and then into Dieon's body. With *To Ashes We Run*, Just B. Jordan spins a vibrant and complex story. Commerce, culture, and climate add shades of realism to this fantasy

world, while ancient lore and otherworldly creatures strike mystic notes. A deep sense of the goodness, follies, and suffering of the characters pulses through the narrative. The timespan of the novel is measured in years, and the needless repetition of known facts occasionally slows the pace. Still, *To Ashes We Run* is a rich and heartfelt fantasy, crafted with imagination and care.

Best for: Adult readers and fantasy fans.

Discern: Violence, including murder and one gladiator fight; several characters die gruesomely; two incidents of mass slaughter, mostly non-explicit; two instances of self-mutilation; a small child dies from animal venom.





Hidden Current

Sharon Hinck's fantasy dances to the rhythm of our Creator's heart.

Release January 14, 2020

Author Sharon Hinck

Publisher Enclave Publishing

Price \$24.99 (Hardcover), \$5.99 (Kindle)

When your every foot movement and gesture literally controls your world, people will expect you to avoid any false move. But for dancer Calara Blue, her trained pursuit of perfection has come at a terrible cost.

At the center of Calara's world, the all-powerful Order has called the best dancers to use their natural abilities to stabilize their island. Without dancers who command the storms and the island's very position, the island and its ecosystem will drift out of control. So dancers like Calara have pledged their lives to fulfill this high calling.

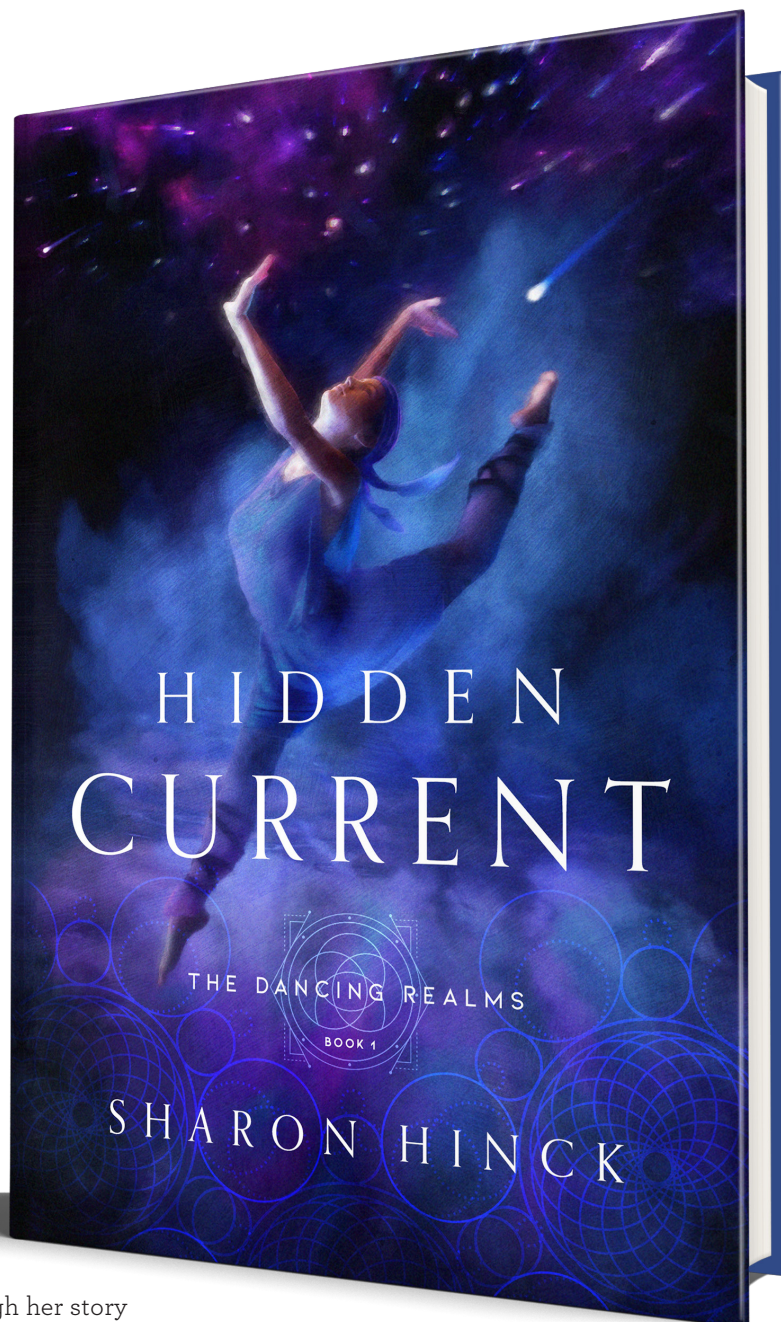
Then, just as Calara reaches her goal, she discovers that, just maybe, the island does not want to be controlled. Instead, she is forced into fleeing her rigid lifestyle with its every rule and religious belief that she has spent years helping to enforce. Accompanied by a mysterious fisherman, Calara hunts for her own past and for the truth about her beautiful yet dehumanized profession—and its original purpose.

Hidden Current introduces The Dancing Realms three-book series, and author Sharon Hinck draws readers into this unique and colorful world, whose quaking and wandering island itself matches the tumult of Calara's doubts and challenges.

Although her story hits a few familiar steps, its footwork-based natural-law magic is both fantastically original and well-grounded in our reality. In fact, Hinck crafts this ability and its realistic effects based on her own years of teaching dance. This experience shows in every scene, giving tribute to the passion and hard

work of dancers.

Even more joyously, the story moves well to the rhythm of an organic and necessary theme: the ultimate purpose of creative gifts, in a world that's guided not by human movers in a disordered Order, but by a divine and prime Mover.



BEST FOR: Teenage readers and older; anyone, male or female, interested in the God-given magic of culture and the arts.

DISCERN: Some violence described in general terms, including several people who are painfully maimed; chaste romance between man and woman.

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@sharonhinck



Enclave Publishing has released over ninety novels since it began in 2008. But next year, the company will add a feature not often seen in Christian book worlds.

Ronie Kendig's space opera *Brand of Light*, releasing in December, will be the first Enclave title released exclusively as a hardcover book. Each of several months following that release will bring new books, such as Sharon Hinck's fantasy *Hidden Current* and Chawna Schroeder's young-adult fantasy *The Vault Between Spaces*.

Digital editions will release at the same time, and paperback versions will release later, said Enclave owner and president Steve Laube.

"Doing hardcovers is a signal that we are serious about what we publish," he said.

Hardcovers of truth

Each book Enclave publishes is based firmly in a biblical worldview, Laube said.

"We publish out-of-this-world stories informed by a coherent theology," Laube said. "There are two key words here. First, informed. Not expressed but informed. This means our stories can be subtle or overt in their faith elements.

"Second, coherent," he added. "I see some really wild proposals for stories so far away from biblical theology as to range into near—if not blatant—heresy. Coherent theology can mean different things to different people, but I'd like to think that an orthodox evangelical biblical theology is a careful enough definition."

Before Laube bought Enclave (formerly known as

Marcher Lord Press) in January 2014, he had spent decades working in the Christian retail and book industries. He also continues to oversee The Steve Laube Agency of several literary agents.

Laube said he believes more readers are hungry for Christian speculative stories.

"Many general market titles in the speculative category are anti-Christian in tone, even atheistic," he said. "I saw there was little written from a Christian worldview. So in the 1990s, while an editor for Bethany House, I began searching for the right authors with the brilliant craft to tell stories that were highly imaginative."

Investing in imagination

Sharon Hinck said she began working with Laube as her agent in the mid-2000s.

"The two things that make Enclave amazing are Steve's curation, both artistically and theologically, and all his experience and passion that he brings to the table," Hinck said. "Enclave invests in their books like a huge publisher would."

Sci-fi and fantasy author Steve Rzasa (who is also *Lorehaven* magazine's book clubs coordinator) joined Marcher Lord Press in 2009 and still works with Enclave today.

"Steve Laube has a knack for assembling a crew that has

Enclave Publishing grounds creative fantasy in coherent theology.

'OUT *of* THIS WORLD

Story: **E. Stephen Burnett**
Layout: **JT Wynn**

S D STORIES'

Courtesy Ronie Kendig



'THIS BOOK MEANS SO MUCH TO ME'



Ronie Kendig, author of *Brand of Light*, on why this wasn't just another book

This spring, novelist Ronie Kendig will mark ten years of published books. But only this year will she see the release of one story that's especially dear to her: *Brand of Light*, which launches her space opera trilogy, The Droseran Saga.

"This book means so much to me," Ronie said. "Yes, I am absolutely passionate about suspense. There's a lot more emotional work for me, getting the paramilitary and military elements correct.... But I do feel much more connected to God and his creativity when I write *Brand of Light* and my other speculative books."

In the last decade, Ronie has created more than twenty novels and novellas. She started in March 2010 with her debut suspense thriller *Dead Reckoning*. Since then, she's focused many of her novels on military heroes and even combat service dogs.

Then, starting in 2015, she jumped fantasy with her Abiassa's Fire series of three books, which are published by Enclave Publishing.

That's over two books a year—quite the pace for a creator who once rarely wrote.

"I've always been telling stories in my head, though I don't recall writing so much as a child," Ronie said. "As a little girl, my medium was Barbie dolls!"

Then as an adult, writing bigger stories

became a form of therapy for her.

"When I first started, I didn't have much confidence in myself," Ronie said.

In the 2000s, Ronie found support from many authors, especially from sci-fi and paranormal author John B. Olson. Olson saw promise in Ronie's early version of *Brand of Light*, and also helped her brainstorm other story ideas based on Ronie's experience growing up in a military family. Later, Ronie met literary agent Steve Laube, who sold her military-themed novels to publishers.

And although fantasy can reflect challenging situations, Ronie said she believes more fantasy fans—especially Christian parents—want stories that will not push young readers into situations or ideas they're not ready to consider or discern.

"So many of the parents that I talked to at one homeschool convention—they were so excited to find out that there's that type of speculative fiction that is clean," Ronie said. "Being able to hand a book to a child and not have to worry about the content, because you know it's going to be clean in general—parents are desperate for that book for their kids. Teens and even adults are looking for that."

very particular skills," Rzasas said. "He knows how to find people who are good at particular things so that he doesn't have to do everything. Which is a hard thing to do when you're running a small, independent publisher."

Crafting with excellence

In 2020, Enclave will also start a new imprint for young-adult books, called Enclave Escape. That label will begin with February's release of the historical fantasy *The Vault Between Spaces*, from novelist Chawna Schroeder.

"Enclave has cultivated a line of novels that are creatively outside-of-the-box, theologically grounded, and crafted with excellence," Schroeder said. "There are many other publishers that do one or two of these qualities well, but Enclave has managed to bring together all three."

In this way, Enclave attracts creators of fantasy who aim for biblical truthfulness, on or under the surface, and practice creative excellence. That's according to novelist W. A. Fulkerson, whose debut *For Whom the Sun Sings* arrives from Enclave in March.

**CHRISTIAN
IMAGINATION
AT ITS FINEST**

—EnclavePublishing.com

"Christian purveyors of art have a certain reputation...for low quality, and often it's a well-deserved slight," he said. "I follow Christ, and that means that I'm saved, that he wants to use me. But he doesn't owe me a brilliant fantasy novel. So I ought to work tirelessly and joyfully in pursuit of the craft to the glory of God."

SHARON HINCK

**‘Whenever I read,
I feel that character’**

Courtesy Sharon Hinck

For twenty years, Sharon Hinck served in dance ministry. She performed classical ballet as well as teaching musical theater, tap, jazz, and contemporary forms.

Sharon has also written devotionals, women’s fiction, and fantasy, which includes her four-book *Sword of Lyric* series (now published by Enclave Publishing). That series starts with *The Restorer*, in which readers find not a heroic child or young adult, but a suburban mother, getting transported into a fantasy world that’s still awaiting its messiah.

“As Christian women, we’re often called into a world we don’t expect,” Sharon said. “Like when a child is diagnosed with autism or a friend gets breast cancer.”

But more recently, Sharon has drawn on her love of dance and fantasy for a new story and series. *Hidden Current* arrives this January as the first book of a new Enclave Publishing trilogy called *The Dancing Realms*.

For this series, Sharon created a world in which the magic system is based in dance.

Such a concept grew on her—not just the challenge of balancing a dance-based magic system in a grounded world, but describing dance without using terms like *pirouette* or *pas de deux*.

Also, Sharon needed a story conflict, and found this once she compared what she knew about tough ballet teachers with religious abuse.

“This is a fallen world, and this is a cult, and these people need to be freed,” she said of *Hidden Current*’s world. “They think they can do everything by their own efforts. . . . ‘If you dream it, you can become it.’ I poke at that philosophy in the book because it’s just so deceptive, that humans can control everything if we just use the power of our self-determination and our minds.”

As a child, however, Sharon became well aware of words’ power to shape our imaginations, even if one can’t use them to control one’s destiny. She read eagerly from many genres. On her early bookshelves, fantasy novelist Stephen

Such diverse story pursuits helped Sharon create *Hidden Current*’s world, she said.

Sharon also found inspiration from 2 Kings 22, “where they find the lost book of the Law,” she said. “I feel such sadness when they read that story, and think: How long was it totally lost? . . . King Josiah tore his robes in anguish when they read it to him.

“This whole world has forgotten the Maker,” she said. “And even that idea is very current. Because in our world, even biblical literacy is gone.”

These challenging themes are colored by the beauty of God’s creation, such as a pod of spinner dolphins Sharon once witnessed while kayaking in the ocean. This experience inspired *Hidden Current*’s portrayal of a fantastic sea creature.

“I just LOST MYSELF in the story’s DANCING.”

—Sharon Hinck

Lawhead shared space right next to romance author Janvette Oke, and Grace Livingston Hill’s adventures and romances weren’t far from Sharon’s *Star Trek* novel collection.

“I’m Betazoid,” Sharon said. “I’m kind of an empath. So whenever I read, I feel that character. So I can get lost with characters in just about any genre.”

“Sometimes in fantasy, you just want to consider the stuff that’s cool and fun,” she said. “Cloaks are fun. And swords are fun.” And dancing is fun, she added, even for those who don’t dance, or who can no longer dance because of health challenges.

“I just lost myself in the story’s dancing,” Sharon said, “describing the dancing and living that vicariously.”

Chawna Schroeder:

‘Christian authors have God himself’

How did you, as a reader, first hear about Enclave?

Because of the genre I write, I’ve been tracking the company’s development since its original inception as Marcher Lord Press. So I heard first about Enclave, both as a writer and a reader, through professional channels.

What do you think Enclave does most uniquely?

Enclave has cultivated a line of novels that are creatively outside-of-the-box, theologically grounded, and crafted with excellence. There are many other publishers that do one or two of these qualities well, but Enclave has managed to bring together all three.

What are your favorite Christian-made novels?

There are so many good ones. But if I had to pick, Kathy Tyers’s *Firebird* series has topped the list for many years. And I’ve been in love

with R. J. Anderson’s work, including the *No Ordinary Fairytale* series, for almost as long.

What’s your next novel about?

The Vault Between Spaces is a fantasy, although its setting is more World War II/Cold War than medieval in feel. It is being released as the first in Enclave’s new YA imprint, Enclave Escapes. My main character is a young girl named Oriel who sets out to escape from a prison camp reputed as inescapable.

What do Christian storytellers bring to fantasy-crafting?

There are many things that Christians can bring to fantasy-crafting that other authors cannot. But ultimately I think it comes down the simply obvious: We have God himself. Which is astounding thought when you really think about it. We have the unique opportunity to create with the Creator, the Source of all creativity.



(And he is very creative! Have you seen some of the crazy animals he designed?)

Moreover, this same God is vast beyond comprehension and multifaceted without limit. He is the bedrock of truth, the source of hope, and the ultimate good that conquers evil in the end.

This means authors have the potential to create the most imaginative stories of the greatest variety without having to fall into chaos or resorting to shock value.

Moreover, this means authors should be able to craft stories that ring truer in the minds of readers, no matter how fantastical the story. That’s because we have the most solid foundation for the belief in good’s triumph, for the hope in the midst of the darkest of times, and for the truths that weave through our stories.

Enclave Publishing’s 2020 vision

The Christian fantasy publisher has set five books to release each month from this December through spring 2020. Each title will release first in hardcover and digital editions. Later, copies will be available in paperback.

- ① Dec. 3, 2019: Ronnie Kendig’s fantasy/science fiction *Brand of Light*
- ② Jan. 14, 2020: Sharon Hinck’s fantasy *Hidden Current*
- ③ Feb. 11, 2020: Chawna Schroeder’s YA historical fantasy *The Vault Between Spaces*
- ④ March 17, 2020: W.A. Fulkerson’s *For Whom The Sun Sings*
- ⑤ April 14, 2020: Sandra Fernandez Rhoads’s fantasy *Mortal Sight*



Brand of Light

Sci-fi and fantasy clash in this rapid-fire genre-bender.

Release December 3, 2019

Author Ronie Kendig

Publisher Enclave Publishing

Price \$24.99 (Hardcover), \$5.99 (Kindle)

Kersej Dragoumis was born into a fantasy world. She has the wealthy family and the warrior-princess training montages. To her chagrin, she also later faces the arranged marriage, all to benefit her home-world of Drosero.

That was before the massive explosion that, by all accounts, killed her entire family. And before she was snatched away, just in time, by relatives running a flying machine. For it seems that Drosero is but one world among several in the Tertian Space Coalition—and, in fact the only planet whose people reject technology. Such is the genre-blending ‘verse of Ronie Kendig’s space-opera opener *Brand of Light*.

For Kersej, it’s a rude awakening in a medical pod aboard the TSC Macedon, which has space marines and everything, including Symmachian Commander Tigo Deken.

Meanwhile, Deken and his team have been ordered on a capture mission whose purpose grows all the more suspicious. Then, when Tigo finds Kersej’s ship, adrift in space, he becomes certain he smells something reeking in the stellar bureaucracy.

Meanwhile, amongst quasi-medieval royalty and space soldiers, Marco Dusan, a master hunter of the Kynigos order, can smell plenty more. Since childhood he’s been gifted with the power to detect scents of human emotions, such as the fear of the hunted. But when Marco is summoned to hunt down Kersej, they will both discover the secret of an ancient prophecy symbolized by the brand they

share. Blood and boil! With this much action, readers might struggle to tell the coordinates without a comm screen. Yet for dedicated hunters, warrior princesses, or soldiers, *Brand of Light* beckons with complex worlds of potential, and at least one lurking entity that promises even more space-operatic mystery in The Droseran Saga.

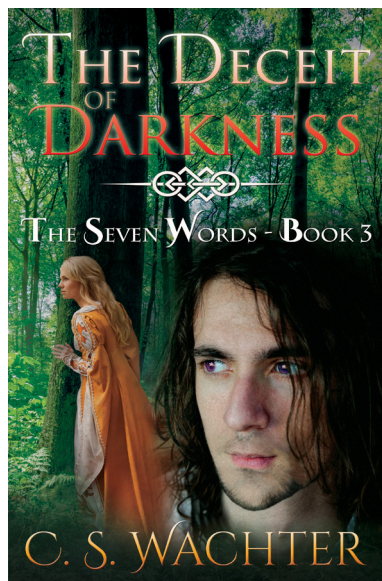


BEST FOR: Young-adult readers and older readers, space opera fans.

DISCERN: Light to moderate sci-fi violence; one person suffers traumatic flashbacks to a terrible event; some sensuality, including kissing, men without shirts, and general physical attraction; one attempted rape that is cautiously described.

Ronie Kendig
roniekendig.com
@RonieKendig





The Deceit of Darkness

It is said that prophecy makes sense only in retrospect. But what if your fate had been foretold, and wasn't looking bright? Would you attempt to escape?

For Rayne Kierkengard, disowned heir of Ochen's royal line, the question isn't academic. As the One's Light Bringer, charged to reconcile all seven worlds to their Creator, Rayne has had to make peace with a decade's worth of brutal abuse inflicted on him by an evil sorcerer. But as Rayne's successes mount and his circle of supporters expands, his future grows uncertain. His once-loving parents, bewitched by his jealous cousin, put a system-wide bounty on his head. Demons once thought dead go shopping for new skin-suits. And prophecies once relied upon for comfort reveal an ominous edge. Rayne has the strength to live with past pain. But what about his forthcoming fate?

The Deceit of Darkness, the third installment in C. S. Wachter's *Seven Words for Seven Worlds* epic fantasy series, crystalizes the series'

Christianity. In this story, the One has a Son who paid sin's deadly wages, yet in a forgotten past when everyone lived together on one world.

The novel begins with a Gideon-esque triumph, gets bogged down in the minutiae of Rayne's life on the lam—during which he bumbles through a divinely orchestrated romance with the plucky Alexiandra—and then picks up speed in its second half before hurling readers over the proverbial cliff. It's tough to imagine anyone finishing this third book without immediately going in search of the fourth.

Ochen continues to be a land of extremes: its light often seems just a little too warm and bright, but then night falls again and leaves the reader longing for even the briefest glimpse of sunshine. Divine interventions feel cheap, but in their absence, fear returns. And isn't that a sign of realism? Christians should know better than anyone that a story's hardships can't be skipped just because the ending is known.

Best for: Older teens and adults.

Discern: Graphic violence, sadistic bullying, drunkenness, references to vampirism.



She's different. An oddity who doesn't fit in.

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"Classic fantasy at its best"

Sharon Hinck
author of the award-winning *Sword of Lyric* series

**"...multifaceted ... subtle ...
a wholesome alternative to
George R.R. Martin and
other dark fantasy writers"**

Kirkus Reviews

**"... intriguing magic system and
exciting conclusion"**

Publisher's Weekly



How Geeks Can Get Excited About God

Let's follow our hearts only if our Creator has first re-shaped us.

The biblical book of Psalms shares a God-approved collection of poetic journal entries from creatively oriented believers in ancient Israel. They put aside pretense and got real about how they were feeling. In fact, the Psalmists may have closely resembled today's "geeks" who also value authenticity in our creative works!

Some Psalms also stand out to me as being especially applicable to geeks, given our strengths, weaknesses, and temperaments.

In our summer 2019 issue, we looked at Psalm 16:1-6. This time I thought I'd walk us through the rest of this Psalm, verses 7-11, and offer some reactions and observations.

Psalm 16:7 reads, "I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me."

For over a decade of my ministry, I've repeatedly heard various forms of geek entertainment offer advice like, "follow your heart." Every time I've expressed caution and frustration with this sentiment. It's a vague bit of direction that seems to tell us "just do what feels good," or "do what you really want to do, deep down inside." This is a horrible motto to live by. After all, the worst human atrocities in history were the result of someone "following their heart."

But there is actually one good reason to follow our hearts. That's when our hearts have been shaped by the counsel of God.

Here, the Psalmist says that even at night, maybe when he is lying awake in deep thought, or perhaps even while he's dreaming, his heart is instructing him. But this reality only comes after the LORD, Yahweh, gives the Psalmist counsel.

In the same way, I want to develop a heart I can trust, because it echoes what I have already heard from God's word.

Verses 8-9 say, "I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure."

As an imaginative introvert, I can easily stew in my own internal worries. My feelings about my life so easily depend on

Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

The Psalmists didn't have the benefit of New Testament teaching on the afterlife. They often spoke of death simply in negative terms of the grave or "Sheol," as the writer does here. But the Psalmist rejoices with his whole being, and he

is confident his flesh is secure, because of his expected ultimate future in the presence of God.

This life holds so much uncertainty. We can fill our moments with imaginative worry in our attempt to prepare for the worst, or to gain control over our circumstances.

But the Psalmist com-

pletely gives up on that endeavor. He recognizes it's futile to hope in some certainty in life. Instead, he fixes his mind on the reality that this life will not go on forever, and when it ends God will not abandon him to some kind of eternal death. Instead, the God who provides instruction that enriches our lives will one day welcome us into his unfiltered presence. There we will experience our greatest capacity for joy through a variety of pleasures in God that do not become dull with familiarity, but retain their excitement and vibrance forever.

"SOME PSALMS ALSO STAND OUT TO ME AS BEING ESPECIALLY APPLICABLE TO GEEKS, GIVEN OUR STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND TEMPERAMENTS."

-Paeter Frandsen

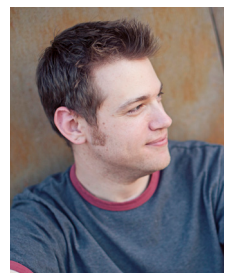
my circumstances, or whatever I fear my circumstances might become.

But here, the Psalmist shares an antidote to this lifestyle of worry. He makes an intentional choice to keep Yahweh in mind at all times. This Psalmist has become unshakable because of his disciplined and constant recognition that God is always with him. Now his hope is not on the temporal, but on Someone who is eternal, all-powerful, and all-loving.

I'm not only challenged by the Psalmist's confidence in God, but in how his "whole being rejoices." Personally, I don't rejoice a lot, much less with "my whole being." This limitation could result from my personality. But I suspect it's also because I have a long way to go in developing the kind of confidence and spiritual self-discipline the Psalmist is modeling for us here. Instead, I jadedly ask myself, "Why is he so excited about God?"

In verses 10-11 the Psalmist answers:

"For you will not abandon my soul to



Paeter Frandsen created Christian Geek Central and Spirit Blade Productions. He produces entertainment and resources, and volunteers at his Arizona church.

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Sex in the Story: How Far is Too Far?

Fiction's sexual content has unique power to tempt young readers.

Christians must apply wisdom to our entertainment, including stories that have elements such as sexual content, violence, or language.

To be sure, we have some freedom to engage such content. We also have different beliefs about this content. However, we shouldn't have different motives. In all things we should seek to glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31), and to use our God-given freedom to serve God rather than serving ourselves (Galatians 5:13).

But how can we tell the difference? We need a posture of intellectual and artistic humility to examine ourselves. We also need help from Scripture and other believers, to see if our position on such content overcorrects some other evil.

For example, some Christian authors suggest that they put sex, swearing, and violence into their fiction because "it's real" and "because the church needs to address real people." At first glance, this would appear to be a logical and even helpful purpose. But on closer examination, this choice may actually stem from the author's dissatisfaction with other Christian traditions, such as cultural fundamentalism, after which the author overreacts into leniency.

Such reactionary "realism" gives little thought to the question: How far is too far? This question is especially vital when it comes to one element of "PG-13-rated" content that's different from the others: sexual content, including nudity.

Violence and swearing provide struggles for some people. However, temptations from sex, especially lust, affect nearly everyone who has ever walked the planet.

In response, we could conclude this means our fiction should "be real" about sex. After all, we have an entire biblical book dedicated to marriage and sex: the Song of Solomon. So shouldn't we discuss the topic even more openly in our fiction?

Well, yes and no. We must ask not whether but how we discuss these themes.

For example, it's good and necessary to help teenage readers figure out biblical ways of dealing with sexual feelings. But since these readers are already being bombarded by sexual images and ideas, they're at risk of falling into confusion about sex (and possibly worse trouble, such as with porn addictions).

Something as simple as a book using internal and external sensations, in an effort to follow the old creative rule "Show, don't tell," can encourage a reader to flush hot and cold right along with the protagonist.

Sometimes explicit showing does not help readers better understand the character's feelings, but simply exaggerates the temptation in readers themselves.

To see the difference, we can look to the Song of Solomon. Its poetry implies sexual interaction, and is so steeped in metaphors that scholars often debate much of the meaning of some verses. The book does celebrate sex and instructs us about a godly perspective on sex, but without tempting readers to lust.

So why does all this matter? After all, if we aren't supporting an abusive industry (such as the porn or even R-rated film industries) that manipulate and objectify real actors, then isn't it okay to read in a book about sexual feelings or even actions?

We can see two main problems with this conclusion.

First, Jesus taught that our heart's desires, not just our outward actions, can be sinful: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28).

Second, when you read fiction about sex for your own private enjoyment, your inner thought life is creating new habits. In fact, by the simulation of reality through the story, you may literally rewire your brain—this is called neuroplasticity—to use another person for your own pleasure. Even without your knowledge or intention, this will make it easier for you to objectify someone in real life. It may even make it easier for you to make the seemingly large leap from imagined affair to actual affair.

Is this legalism or overthinking? No, because these are real risks to our souls. We cannot afford to be sentimentalist or naïve about how our—or our children's—rewired brains, or distorted expectations, can shape our views of sex as we grow.

We should be deeply concerned about some Christians' flippancy in speaking about these matters. That's why I write this: from a heart of grief and loving concern for my Church family. We should not try to make law with our

own personal standards. But we must also critique the subtext of any flippant responses that overreact against fundamentalism, rather than focusing on God's glory and our need for holiness.

Let's seek humility before the Lord and his word. Sure, we won't all make the same choices. But we must all strive to glorify God in all that we do.



Marian Jacobs writes about Jesus, monsters, and spaceships. Her work is featured at *Desiring God* as well as *Stage and Story*. She and her family live in southern California.

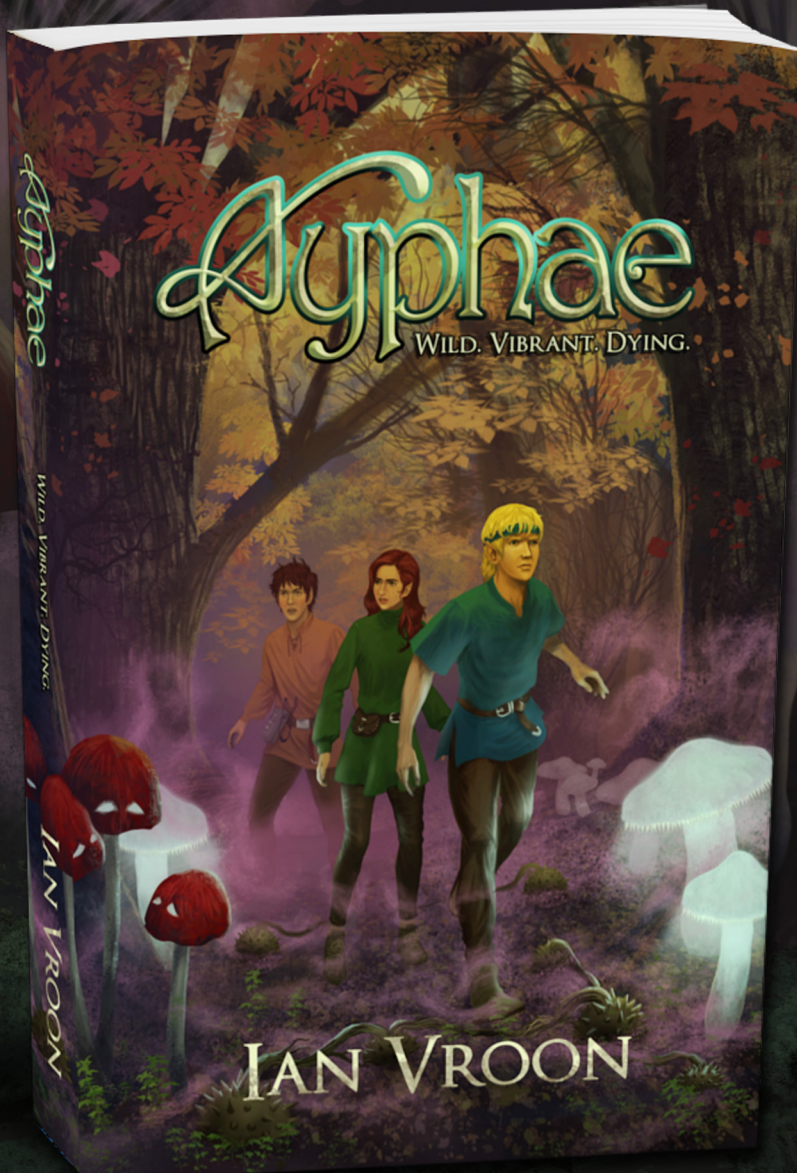
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"...AN EFFORT TO 'SHOW, DON'T TELL,' CAN ENCOURAGE A READER TO FLUSH HOT AND COLD RIGHT ALONG WITH THE PROTAGONIST."

- Marian Jacobs



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