

THE
CHRISTMAS ISSUE
JOY TO THE WORLD

LOREHAVEN

WINTER 2019

**FIND
THE
SECRET**

SOURCE (AND CURE)
OF STRANGE MAGIC



**FOLLOW GOD'S
FANTASTICAL**
STORY INTO THE NEW YEAR

NOVELIST

**PATRICK
W. CARR**

+12

The award-winning author takes you on a
Christmas quest like you've never imagined

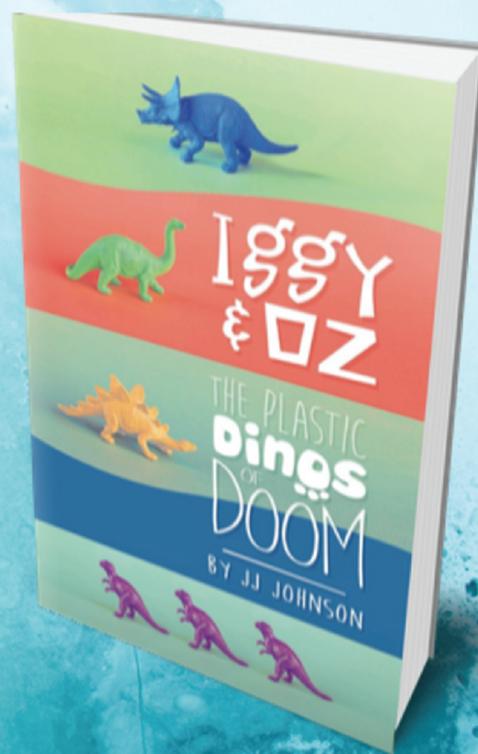
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ALLEN BROKEN

*Their parents
have been lost
in utter
darkness and
only their
faith can shine
the way home.*



*"This little
light of mine"
never seemed
so bright and
keeping it
shining never
felt so
imperative.*

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Captain's Log

This year I'm resolving to rest better, even among all this fantastic work.

It takes one talented crew to keep a small magazine running.

And it takes just one terrible flu to stop the production cold.

Target: the editor. Timeline: just a week before this issue's original press date.

No magic memories, radioactive-nosed reindeer, or any other Christmas corniness would serve up a Holiday Miracle to get me out of this mess.

In Christ, however, it wasn't a mess. Not really.

Too often I try to guess the Author's goals for me. But I'm likely right to discern that God knew only a flu would force me to stop and rest at this time of year.

But God! You're being unfair. The magazine! the gift guide! the podcast! the book! the—

"Hush, son," he may have been saying, "or it's a sinus infection next."

(I got that, too.)

In such moments, I face the same lesson: that I don't "deserve" some life without delay and with endless creative productivity. All I have is what God has given me.

And all those creative ideas?

They're to our Creator's credit, and thus will also arrive only in his timing.

Thank God, these exciting additions are still happening for Lorehaven:

First, the gift guide. It released at Lorehaven.com earlier in December 2019. We included several exclusive t-shirts and other exclusive fantastic merch.

Second, the podcast! My friend Zackary Russell and I have begun recording episodes. Watch our website for more information. For now I can say that we're focusing on the fantastical truth we love to explore as well as the books we review.

Third, new issues will feature some changes. We've already made improvements to covers and layout. In 2020, the cover stories themselves may change a little ...

Fourth, next year, my first book arrives. It's not a novel. It's a non-fiction work, with my friends and co-authors Ted Turnau and Jared Moore. On May 4, 2020, you will finally get to read *The Pop Culture Parent: Helping Kids Engage Their World for Christ*.

That's exciting. And challenging.

But whether through Lorehaven magazine, this new book, or my fiction projects, my mission remains this: to help all Christ's people glorify him through fantastic stories.

And to do more resting this year. After all, that's what stories do—help us rest.



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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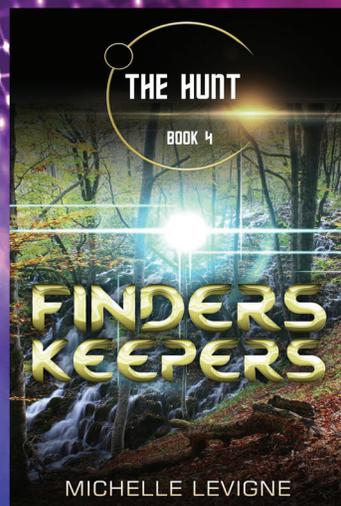
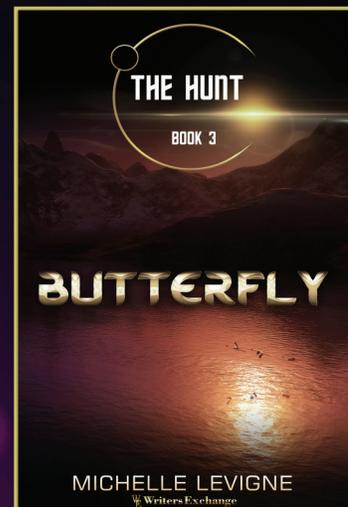
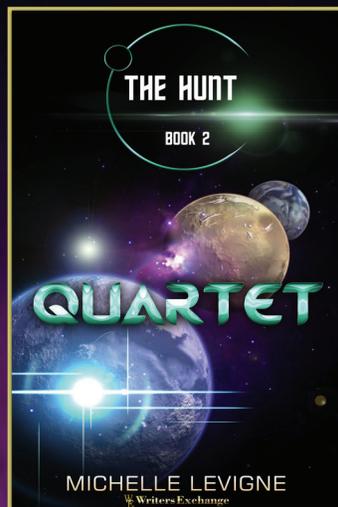
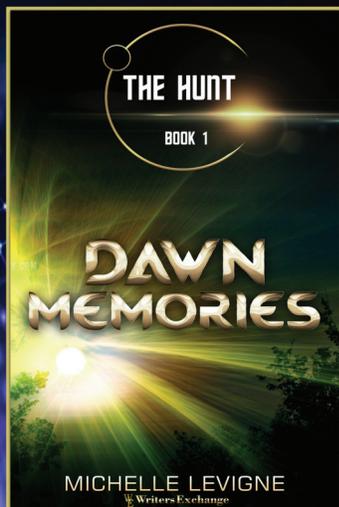
COVER PHOTO
Courtesy Patrick W. Carr

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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THE HUNT

Michelle L Levigne



Children sent from an endangered world to
protect them from a galaxy-destroying despot!
<http://www.mlevigne.com/the-hunt.html>



Explore the best new fantastical novels from Christian authors. Browse each title and learn more at lorehaven.com/library.



Blood Traitors

They're back from the dunes, but their fate keeps shifting like sand. Stella Dorthwany's *Blood Traitors* continues from *Legendary Magic* series book 1, *Sand and Storm*, and brings cousins Cora and Faryn back home to the capital, where nonstop action and intrigue swiftly ensue. Estoria City is founded—literally—in magic, and old currents pull the girls and their friends into an approaching maelstrom involving the

royal family. Cora's not sure she could save her new kiss-less political marriage even if she wanted to. And after Faryn's heart is broken, she's conscripted into spycraft where her empathy and honesty are both her weaknesses and greatest strengths. Old friends, new friends—can anyone be trusted when the power of the empire hangs in the balance?

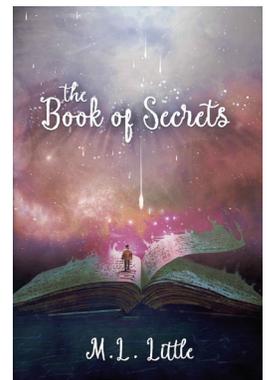
Best for: Fans of fast-paced action, fun new twists on stock fantasy elements, and sizzling-yet-clean romances.

Discern: Very magic-infused plot, characters, and even houses, with some dark overtones, and blood-related scenes.

The Book of Secrets

When your curiosity overpowers all good sense, you will need courage to face the trouble you create for yourself. Gabriel doesn't have that courage, but maybe he will learn it. He will certainly have opportunity. M. L. Little's *The Book of Secrets* imagines fantasy that hovers in a sci-fi setting, playing with magic in industrialized societies and alternate dimensions. Through the eyes of its young heroes, the novel attains a clear view of how love can tangle

with pain, and how a family's support can entwine with its dysfunction. The strokes of world-building are simple, colorful, and bold, although the climax feels unfocused—abruptly bringing back minor characters while remaining disconnected from crisis resolution. Despite this, *The Book of Secrets* is vibrant fantasy, with an imagination as powerful as its heart.



Best for: Fans of science fantasy and the Wingfeather Saga.

Discern: Several people die violent deaths and one major battle; danger and injuries to children; one character is said to have had a mental breakdown and engaged in acts of self-harm; family tensions hint at a troubling, though unexplained, relationship between a mother and her young daughter.



The Darkened Land

Much like *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Darkened Land* begins with a conversion journey, but then takes a *The Lord of the Rings*-style turn as an army of evil creatures lay siege to a city of good people. Larry Paris's novel is an ambitious work, filled with heroes battling various grotesque monsters. But these heroes, rather than being paragons of perfection, exhibit struggles typical of real people.

The story seems to falter upon a few cumbersome devices, such as a trans-dimensional "closet" that characters must enter when they pray, and the titular gloom, which seems to cause darkness or blindness that keeps heroes from seeing. Despite these potential fumbles in the dark, however, the story possesses a good heart.

Best for: Older teens and adults.

Discern: Some allegorical parallels to evangelical practices, such as "prayer closets," and at least one scene with a character promised a kind of spiritual elitism.

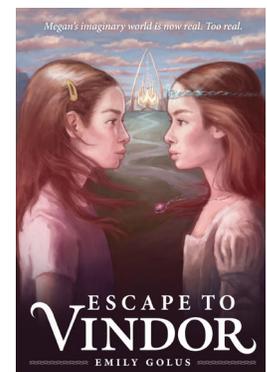
Escape to Vindor

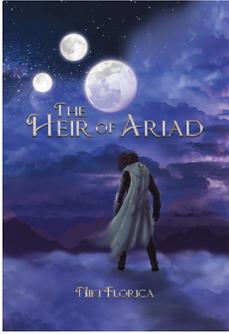
What happens when your imagination gets away from you—literally? In Emily Golus's *Escape to Vindor*, Megan Bradshaw, ordinary middle-school girl, finds herself on an extraordinary adventure to the fantasy land of Vindor she created in her daydreams. But this Vindor isn't quite the same as the place she'd thought up. Colors are richer, people are a bit different, and details abound that she'd never imagined

at all. Soon she realizes she's no longer author of events or outcomes. Which is unfortunate, because there's a nightmare shadow destroying Vindor, and everyone agrees Megan is the one to conquer it. But how? She's just an ordinary, anxious kid. This uplifting story rumbles along at a good pace and avoids preachiness in its God-talk, remaining accessible to believers and nonbelievers alike.

Best for: Middle-school readers.

Discern: Nothing objectionable.





The Heir of Ariad

It is bad enough to be the son of a traitor, and worse to be the half-breed son of a traitor. Kyrian will find it worse yet to be a fugitive, and strangest of all to be the heir of Ariad. In *The Heir of Ariad*, Niki Florica crafts an archetypal fantasy with chosen heroes, strange creatures, and quests that carry the fate of the world. The plot is modeled loosely after the story of Moses, with verses from Exodus frequently

heading chapters, and the mystical Woodsman parallels Christ. The book's world-building is vivid and comprehensive. Races of starkly different natures inhabit the same world uneasily, and the stone-like stworfes and half-sentient river offer both fascination and menace. Although the story moves slowly at times, with backward glances, *The Heir of Ariad* is a richly imaginative fantasy.

Best for: Young-adult audiences, fantasy fans.

Discern: One brutal brawl; a child is nearly killed by his bullying classmates; one character experiences periods of insanity in which he turns violent; a soldier repeatedly strikes an old man who seems to be suffering from dementia.

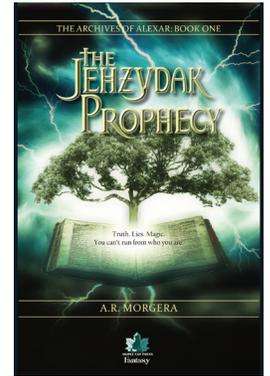
The Jehzydak Prophecy

What happens when you find out you're a wizard in a land that denies the existence of magic? *The Jehzydak Prophecy*, A. R. Morgera's series opener, tells of brothers who really, really don't get along. Young Zaiden grew up in the shadow of his abusive stepbrother Rayder. But when Zaiden's anger results in an accidental death, Zaiden learns he is a Jehzydak, a warrior wizard like his late father. Two

ere feel helpless, but cling to a prophecy about a Jehzydak savior. Could this be untrained Zaiden? He must decide what to do—and whom to ask for help. Although this tale may be difficult to dig into at first, readers who persevere will discover an identifiably Christian page-turner.

Best for: Readers who like complex psychology mixed with high action.

Discern: Plenty of gore, but it's not dwelt on.



Jordan's World

You know, if space aliens plan to go around abducting people, they should at least have the decency to return those people to wherever they found them. But in *Jordan's World*, the aliens just take people from earth and dump them on another planet without a by-your-leave or any explanation. Allen Steadham's story focuses on a young human woman named Jordan as she lives on another planet and goes on a journey to try to

find answers and even a way home. Parts of the story may suspend disbelief to the breaking point (such as a planet whose overall technology is so primitive that electricity hasn't been harnessed, but still, generations ago, one tribe somehow built machines that allowed them to create portals to other planets). But overall, *Jordan's World* provides engaging escapism with a cast of likable characters.

Best for: Young adults and older.

Discern: Subtle mentions of God.

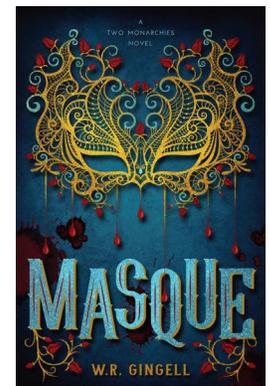
Masque

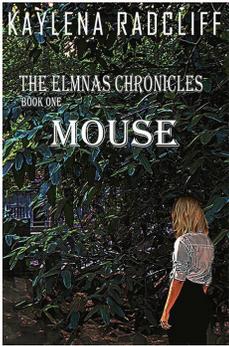
Lady Isabella Farrah has everything she needs to enjoy her life alone—except an answer for why one of her oldest friends suddenly exploded. This murder is linked to others, and soon Isabella is also linked to them, with a thread of darkness that will draw her closer to the mad killer. W. R. Gingell's *Masque* is a fairytale retelling for the top shelf. In this dazzling romp through high society tea rooms

and ambassadorial balls, a fashion-conscious heroine with no magical gifts must use her wits to outmaneuver not only those who want her dead, but also the Beast Lord trying to keep her safe—that is, safely out of the investigation. Utterly delightful with every page, this installment in The Two Monarchies Sequence is so light on its feet that readers won't want the dance to end.

Best for: Lovers of fairytales, Victorian-era settings, high-society intrigue, shenanigans of impertinent nobility, and clean romance.

Discern: Pervasive depictions of magic and magic-users, some violent demises.





Mouse

A girl named Mouse wakes up in a compound named Misty Summit, with no memory of her past. But if there's anything worse than ignorance, it's deception. When she manages to escape, she learns that Misty Summit was not a healing community, but a prison. In *Mouse*, book 1 of the Elmnas Chronicles, Kaylena Radcliff unveils a post-apocalyptic science-fiction world with fantasy elements. On the

run from the ruling government and aided by a farm boy and a mysterious warrior, Mouse embarks on a journey to Elmnas in search of answers. Who is she, and what's really going on in the world? Mouse is an intriguing adventure whose characters draw in readers, with a complex world that promises to become even more rich and vibrant as the series continues.

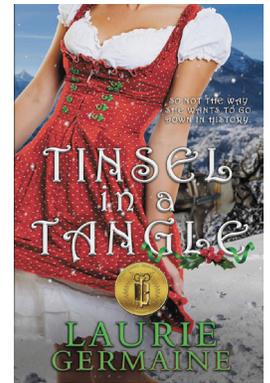
Best for: Young adults who enjoy adventure and intrigue.

Discern: Violence and some references to sexual assault.

Tinsel in a Tangle

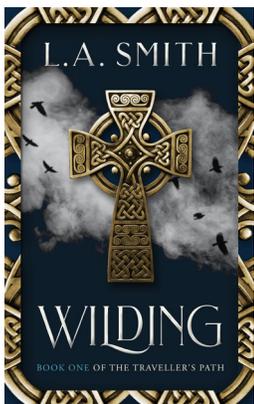
A mudblood elven woman, famous companion of Chaos and Destruction, sparks events that may bring misery upon the entire planet. Or, to phrase it another way, Tinsel, a young woman known for being over-tall for a Christmas elf (because her recent heritage is not entirely elven) and for being destructively klutzy, struggles to find her place in Christmas elven society. She especially struggles with her strong, changeable, and even forbidden feelings for

a very human man with the family name of Kringle—only to end up putting Christmas itself in jeopardy. Laurie Germaine's *Tinsel in a Tangle* is a young-adult holiday romance following the highs and lows of Tinsel's attempts to fit in and even make right her all-too-frequent snafus. This isn't swords and sorcery fantasy, but a nice and enjoyable story set in a fanciful version of Santa's town.



Best for: Young adults and older.

Discern: The romance is mostly clean, though it does push boundaries on occasion. God-talk is sparse and vague.



Wilding

Thomas, reeling from his mother's death and feeling so alone, had little reason to be fond of the world. But when he stumbled out of his world and into ancient Europe on Halloween night, all he could think of was returning home. But that's not easy, even for the Fey. In *Wilding*, L. A. Smith combines fantasy, historical fiction, and just a touch of biblical fiction. Seventh-century England is convincingly realized though largely unexam-

ined in this novel. Its historical milieu is infused with rich veins of magic and legend, shaded slightly by the Bible's oldest stories. Unfortunately, the hero is rarely proactive in his desires, and the plot meanders between loosely connected events. All the same, *Wilding* offers a lively journey through the foreign world of ancient Europe and the wild world of the Fey.

Best for: Young-adult audiences; fans of fantasy and historical fiction.

Discern: A serial killer murders an entire family off-screen, and his handiwork is briefly seen; a number of small-scale fights; a husband strikes his wife and a master beats a slave; animals are gruesomely butchered and the corpses left as threats; some language, mostly mild.

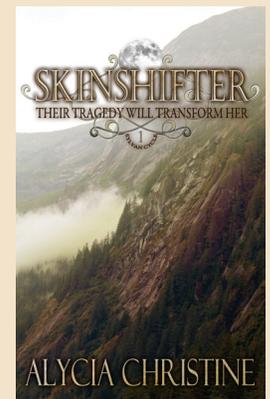
Sponsored Review: Skinshifter

When an ancient evil reemerges, only an orphan werecat stands between the Sylvan races and a fate worse than death. But can Katja Escari overcome her biases and her thirst for revenge in time to assemble a functioning resistance? Alycia Christine's *Skinshifter*, first book in the Sylvan Cycle, sinks its fangs into a meaty plot pumping with action. A massive cast representing the full menagerie of fantasy creatures from basilisk to werewolf

allows for complex politicking and a critical examination of racial prejudice. Although the story dips a claw into paranormal romance, it really finds its stride in its refreshingly realistic depictions of platonic friendship. Deft description crafted with an obvious love of language makes it pleasurable to watch as a scrappy band of companions morph what might have been a standard quest story into something fresh and distinctive.

Best for: Older teens and adults.

Discern: Strong bloody violence, some disturbing vampirism, a couple scenes of sensuality and anatomical description, and a nongraphic allusion to sexual assault as well as various forms of magic permeating the story; God is present as the "Creator," but souls are subject to lesser good and evil forces.



Following the Star

*Patrick W. Carr sets his sights
on Bethlehem and beyond.*

Three years ago, fantasy worlds nearly ruined Patrick W. Carr's health. It was 2016, and in his words, he had stretched himself to the breaking point. At the time, Patrick was not only crafting an epic novel series. He was also going to grad school and working full-time as a mathematics teacher—three jobs all at once. “The last straw was when I was on my way to the Realm Makers conference, and I flipped off a curb and broke my leg,” Patrick said. “My body just said: I’m done.” Doctor after doctor couldn’t figure out what was happening to him. “I couldn’t sleep,” Patrick said. Every night, Patrick read fantasy tales to his kids. He and his wife, Mary, have four sons. He read them [The Chronicles of Narnia](#), [The Hobbit](#), and vintage science fiction, such as short stories from the 1930s and 1940s. Then Patrick wondered: could he create stories in which his sons were characters? “So I did that,” Patrick said. “I actually wrote three novels that were modeled after them and their personalities.”

Story E. Stephen Burnett
Photos Courtesy Emilie Hendryx
Layout JT Wynn

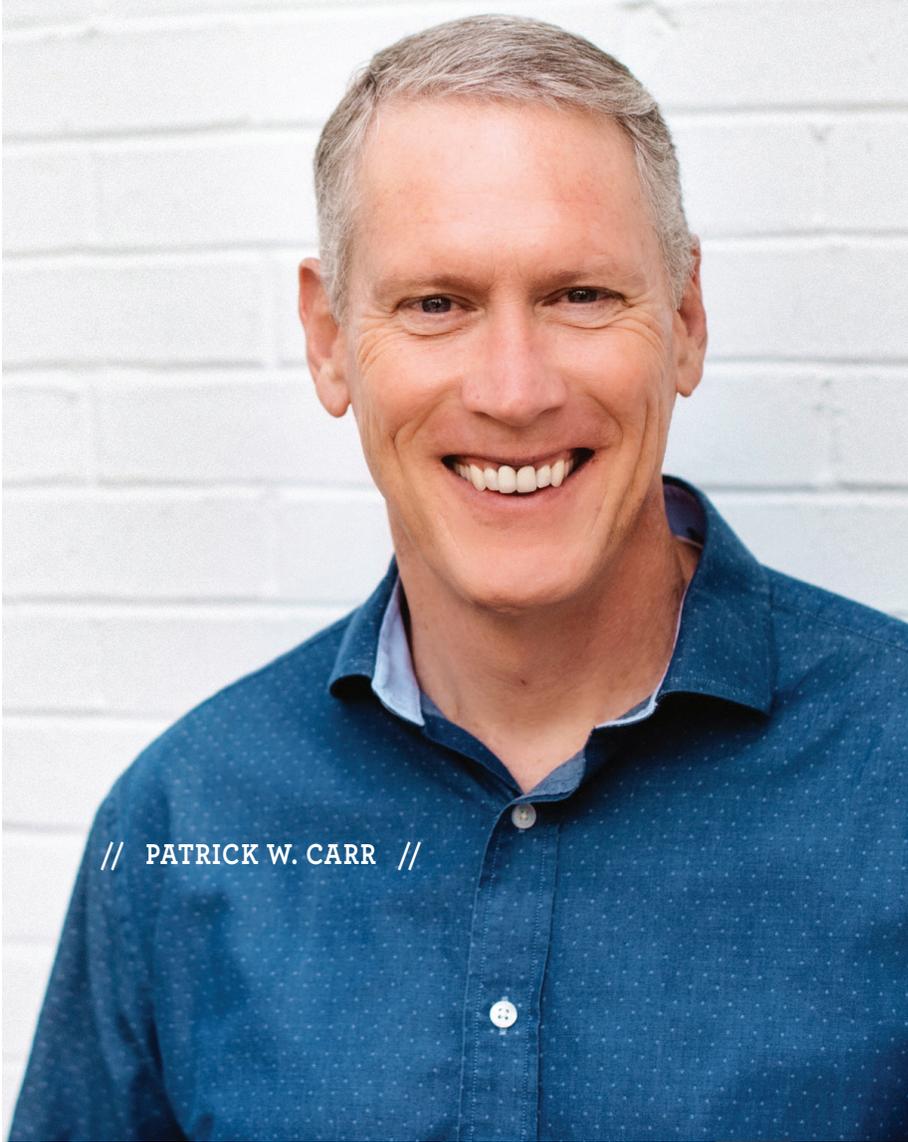


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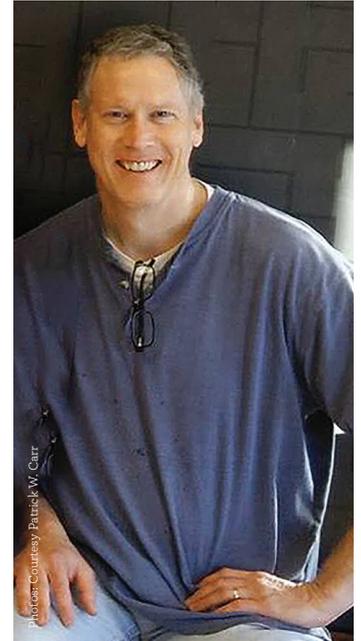
Photo: Courtesy Emilie Hendryx

Empires, revolutions, and a miraculous star



// PATRICK W. CARR //

“I was getting to write about fantastical events that actually happened.”



P

atrick got the writers’ bug. He joined groups and attended conferences. Years later, when he wrote a fantasy novel called *A Cast of Stones*, Bethany House bought that story. It released in 2013, becoming the first installment of his first series, *The Staff and the Sword*.

Patrick later forged a whole other fantasy world for *The Darkwater Saga* (2015–2018). It had a novella and novels with lengths over 160,000 words each. That’s a lot for a writer with a family, three jobs, and books that released just one year apart.

Gloomy clouds of night

Even before Patrick’s 2016 health crash, he’d had trouble sleeping. After his crash, doctors couldn’t even use medication to induce him to rest more than three hours.

Finally they found the problem, Patrick said: stage three adrenal fatigue. He had quested so hard with jobs and writing that his adrenal glands didn’t know which way was up. “They would fire off in the middle of the night,” Patrick said.

Doctors treated him, and finally Patrick finished his fantasy saga. “I came out of that with a product that I loved,” he said. “But I was so tired.”

Awards & Accolades:

- 2014** Christy Award Finalist, *A Cast of Stones*
Carol Award Winner, *A Cast of Stones*
Clive Staples Award Winner, *Cast of Stones*
Carol Award Finalist, *The Hero’s Lot*
Inspy Award Winner, *The Hero’s Lot*
- 2016** Inspy Award Winner, *The Shock of Night*
Real Makers Award Winner, *The Shattered Vigil*
- 2017** Inspy Award Winner, *The Shattered Vigil*



Gift of the magi

Recovery gave Patrick time to return to an old interest: the field of Bible prophecy.

In the 1990s, he had found cassettes from Bible teacher Chuck Missler (1934–2018), exploring Scripture books such as Genesis, Revelation, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

“This guy had a way of really delving into the Bible and really unpacking it, kind of like from an engineer’s perspective,” he said.

Missler believed Daniel may have never returned to Israel, after he had prophesied that “seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity . . .” (Daniel 9:24, ESV).

Instead, Missler suggested Daniel could have stayed in the Babylon area.

“Missler theorized that the Magi would have come from that area, and that they may have actually had access to Daniel’s prophecies and actually counted down the days,” Patrick said. “I thought that was one of the coolest things ever.”

To Patrick that idea now shone bright. He found he wanted to make it into his next story, one that would take him in simpler yet challenging directions.

Star of wonder

Patrick didn’t have to create a new world. Rather, he needed to ground the setting of this new project in the very real world of biblical truth and history, while also showing the mythic grandeur of desert empires, revolutions, and a miraculous star.

“I was getting to write about fantastical events that actually happened,” he said.

The more Patrick read Scripture about the star and wise men (Matthew 2), the more he believed his fictional adaptation of the star’s mechanics made sense.

“Missler theorized that the Magi would have come from that [Medo-Persian] area, and that they may have actually had access to Daniel’s prophecies and actually counted down the days.”

For example, Scripture says the wise men saw the star in the East (verse 2).

“If they’re in Parthia, and the star is to the west of them, for the star to remain over Bethlehem, that means that star had to remain motionless through the night while all the other stars were moving,” Patrick explained. “Which means that technically speaking, that was the star that was moving, constantly.”

Thus, *The End of the Magi* presents a mobile and truly miraculous source of light.

Later, when the magi visit Herod, no one mentions seeing the star. Thus, Patrick’s story makes the star visible only to certain magi who had faith.

“I wrote it like a fantasy adventure,” Patrick said. “It couldn’t be anything else, because there were fantastical events going on.”

The book is intended to follow biblical records about the magi’s journey.

It may, however, surprise readers who believe extra-biblical concepts of the story.

“The more we try to drill down to the Scriptures to get an exact idea of exactly what happened, the more elusive it becomes,” Patrick said. “Obviously it doesn’t tell us how many magi there were. And we also don’t know if the writer was including *magi* proper, or whether he was including magi and guards.

“You can interpret and you can have some fun with it,” he said.

After *The End of the Magi*, Patrick isn’t sure what stories come next for him. But he does know that anything he creates must be based in Scripture and excellence.

“I don’t know that I could write a story without a faith element,” he said. “If you’re talking about something that is central to who we are and what we believe, faith is going to have to be in there somewhere.

“People who write Christian fiction should aspire to write fiction that is better than anything else that’s out there,” Patrick added. “It should be crafted better. It should be deeper. It should be more meaningful. . . . Every story that I’m putting out, I am crafting that story as well as I can.”



The End of the Magi

For these wise but motley men, it's no easy feat to follow the star.

Release November 5, 2019

Author Patrick W. Carr

Publisher Bethany House

Price \$9 digital, \$16 paperback, \$30 hardcover

Life should be simple if you're a member of the biblical Magi. You come out of the box once every Christmas, and you get to wear a cool turban and ride a cool camel. You get a simple quest to seek the Christ-child with only some minor Herod-related villainy to make things interesting. Then you return home by a different route.

So it should seem, if you only read Matthew 2 and/or install a Nativity scene. But for young Myrad, who actually lives in the Parthian Empire, reality is far more brutal.

Myrad is a Gentile but the adopted son of a Jewish magus. As magi, they're bonded to tell the truth, seek the stars, and track the calendar left by the prophet Daniel plotting the number of years until the Messiah finally arrives to establish his kingdom. They also counsel earthly kings, such as the Parthian ruler, Phraates.

Unfortunately, Phraates has been influenced by the neighborhood's latest upstart empire, Rome. Which results in the king, enraged at certain magi's opposition to his foolish alliance, declaring treason and slaughtering nearly every magus he can find.

Our hero Myrad ends up fatherless, homeless, and on the run. Restricted by his clubfoot, he soon joins the caravan of wise tradesman Walagash and

his steadfast daughter, Roshan. They'll face deserts, revolutions, and the friendships and threats of other magi as they work their way toward Jerusalem and that mysterious star.

Patrick W. Carr's *The End of the Magi* offers only a few slow turns on this journey to Judea. That is, portions can resemble a historical travelogue. Otherwise, the entire tale is an absolute rush. Fighting magi, tense trades, ambush attacks, chases, escapes, true love, and many real pending miracles (not just the inevitable arrival in Bethlehem) make *The End of the Magi* a potential classic for Christmas and beyond.

Like Carr's other heroes, Myrad feels relatable, courageously flawed, uncertain yet ambitious. His world also comes across as utterly fantastical even while grounded in research. (Carr says



the novel works with real names, places, and events.)

By the end, readers will find any of their oversimplified magi mockups challenged, especially when some of these magi have different expectations of the newborn king—and, later, even different beliefs in how they ought to continue worshiping Christ. Ultimately, however, fans will emerge challenged to base all biblical fiction in Scripture and to compare all traditions with the reality of Jesus's messianic mission.

BEST FOR: Teen readers and older, biblical fiction fans, Christmas gift recipients.

DISCERN: Ruler commits magi-cide and the story shows some violent results, hero faces trauma and peril from attackers and disasters, chaste and mild romance, scenes of basically described (biblical) torture; also, some characters' demands for a conquering-king Messiah are portrayed but clearly shown as unbiblical.



You're A Character in God's Ultimate Story

Let's recap how the Author becomes the Hero to save his enemies.

At Lorehaven, we're all about stories. But have you ever considered that God is much like an author himself and is telling his own story?

His story spans all ages past and reaches forward into eternity.

Every day it's being written to serve one amazing purpose.

The Author populates his world with characters who possess life and freedom. Then he enters the story himself. In fact, the story is all about him. And rightly so. For there is no one more interesting, amazing, surprising, powerful, or good than the Author.

Because this is true, he lovingly writes his story so that others can freely choose to embrace and enjoy who he is. That way they can experience adventure, discovery, wonder and complete fulfillment forever.

Chapter 1: God's creation.

From nothing, the Creator made everything seen and unseen. He finished by creating free creatures in his own image. Freedom is a mysterious, powerful and wonderful gift. It makes both love and evil into possibilities.

Chapter 2: The fall.

Here, the Author's characters decided to try writing their own story, but failed to see it would never fulfill them. People designed to be reflections of the Author tried to make the Author a reflection of themselves.

Irony entered the plot, as the characters' endless search for pleasure apart from the Author now brought pain and empty discontentment.

Relationships made for love and enjoyment instead brought conflict and injury. Work, once meant to be invigorating and productive, was now draining and seemingly fruitless. The Author's vision of perfect unity was replaced by a broken, dysfunctional collection of self-centered agendas.

So the story took a dark turn. It seemed the Author couldn't possibly write his way to a happy ending, and

that evil would remain unleashed and unaccountable.

But little did anyone know that the Author would introduce a twist to his tale. One that would change everything.

Chapter 3: Redemption.

Justice is an unusual idea, one that we like when applied to others, but subtly avoid when applied to ourselves. It's somewhat relative, depending on the value of the one wronged. Killing a flower, a pet, or a child understandably call for increasing degrees of punishment. Imagine then the punishment due for those who have wronged a Being of limitless value.

The Author couldn't simply ignore evil and still be good himself. Justice had to be preserved. One of infinite worth had been wronged and was owed a payment of infinite value, which humans couldn't scrounge together no matter their efforts. The Author was the only existing Being of infinite worth.

From therein came the answer.

The Author, like one of his own characters, entered the story as he never had before, experiencing its pains and harsh realities firsthand. He offered his perfection, goodness, and infinite worth in exchange for the lives of his characters. He subjected himself to the full punishment his characters were due. And in that unparalleled transaction, he made possible true freedom.

From the Author a call rang out, inviting his characters to be reunited with him. They could be free of any punishment and free of their debt, with the promise that one day they would even be free of the very presence of evil. Forever.

This future chapter is foreshadowed in the lives of characters who accept his invitation. The Author goes to work in crafting them a new story within the larger one. Tragic subplots are slowly rewritten into romances.

And as each smaller story is united to the larger one, the epic tale becomes beautiful beyond comprehension.

Chapter 4: Restoration.

Some stories are so suspenseful and exciting that it's hard not to turn to the last page early to find out how they end. But the Author invites us every day to do just that. We can look ahead and see how the Author, the hero of this story, puts an end to all evil around us and within us.

There is nothing so broken that the Author can't perfectly and permanently restore it. A time will come when all of creation is renewed and remade, without the flaws and fractures it once had. The end of the story will be so beautiful and moving that we will see in new light the pain of early chapters, and recognize the brilliance of the Author.

This end of this story gives us hope for today. When our stories aren't written like we think they should be. When the stresses of work and relationships threaten to break us. When pain seems to define our lives.

The Author knows and feels our suffering, because he has entered the story as well. He has come to carry us through it. Then we can see the ending he has written, that serves as this story's epilogue and the prologue as he begins a new story. That new story will be far better than the first story, with a happy ending that never ends.



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How Do We Discern Good and Bad ‘Magic’?

Scripture shows us the true source of magic’s corruption, and the cure.

Magic. We often throw around this elusive and ambiguous word. But what is magic? Doesn’t the Bible speak ill of magic?

Christians often are divided and confused about this topic. Theologically grounded parents puzzle over their children’s books, wondering if they’re making the wrong choice by allowing them to read fantasy.

C.S. Lewis’s Christlike hero, Aslan, can help us challenge our suspicion of fictional magic. When Lewis writes of Aslan’s magic, Lewis means this as a literary device. He reveals something about reality through unreality. In the Chronicles of Narnia stories, both good and evil are represented with magic. This is a broad umbrella term for both evil magic and the miracles performed by Christ and his disciples.

Of course, the Bible doesn’t use the word *magic* in this way. But literature has defined *magic* differently. In fairy tales, anything supernatural—including miracles—is considered magic. That may cause you to cringe, but Lewis is simply using the word in the same way it’s used in such stories.

So if the good miracles performed in Scripture fall into a “magical” category, according to literary standards, how do we explore modern fantasy novels without being drawn toward the occult? After all, there exists fictional magic (which is not real, but sheds light on reality), and also God’s “magic” known to us as miracles, and also real and evil magic that is used to deceive and wrongly empower humans. How can we tell the differences when they all have the same label of *magic*?

We will find the answer not so much in the magic system, but a heart system.

Take a closer look at a few mentions of magic in the Bible. We will find a common motivation in the hearts of those involved.

For example, Acts 8:9 reads, “But there was a man named Simon, who had

previously practiced magic . . . saying that he himself was somebody great.”

1 Samuel 28 tells how Saul sought a medium to help him speak to Samuel’s spirit. When Samuel asked why he was disturbed, Saul said “God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams. Therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do” (1 Samuel 28:15).

In the book of Exodus, Pharaoh’s magicians (under Pharaoh’s authority) copied Moses and Aaron (under God’s authority) as they brought the plagues into Egypt. During the third plague, the magicians could not imitate them. “Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, ‘This is the finger of God.’ But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened . . .” (Exodus 8:19).

The common motivation for these magic-users is pride.

Pharaoh’s magicians used this kind of magic to copy God. They wanted to be like God on their own strength and merit, assuming they were as skilled as God at performing supernatural deeds. In Acts 8, Simon practiced magic saying that he was “somebody great.” In 1 Samuel, Saul took matters into his own hands when calling up Samuel’s spirit. He was not satisfied with God’s answer to his petition.

This is the same sin Adam and Eve committed in the garden. The serpent said, “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). They desired God-like authority over their lives, not God-like character.

If pride has infected these magicians, what is the cure?

The cure is biblical humility. This means you know who you are and who God is. You know that everything good you produce comes *from* God and is also *for* God.

For example, how do Christ’s disciples perform miracles? John 15:5 says, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever

abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” They, the branches, draw strength and nourishment from the vine. Without the vine, they can do *nothing*.

So too should fictional “magic” show a dependency on the power of God. When Lucy Pevensie uses her magic cordial to heal someone, she doesn’t say she’s so wonderfully powerful. She uses this power humbly, under the authority of Aslan and for the good of others, in the same way Moses used his staff in Egypt.

Based on these truths, when parents approach a fantasy novel, our critical thinking should always precede our impulse to censor the story. Start by analyzing the story’s magic system to determine the source of power. Ask: Do the magicians seek to elevate themselves? Or do they wield their power in sacrifice and service to others? More importantly, does the story cause you, the reader, to desire to elevate yourself over others or even over God, the source of all real power?

However, there is no such thing as a perfect magic system. Despite cultural trends, mankind will continue to tell stories of humble, sacrificial love—of people laying down their lives for their friends. That’s the beauty of God’s common grace.

And it’s that kind of humility, considering others greater than oneself, that makes the very best kind of magic.



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 near Houston.

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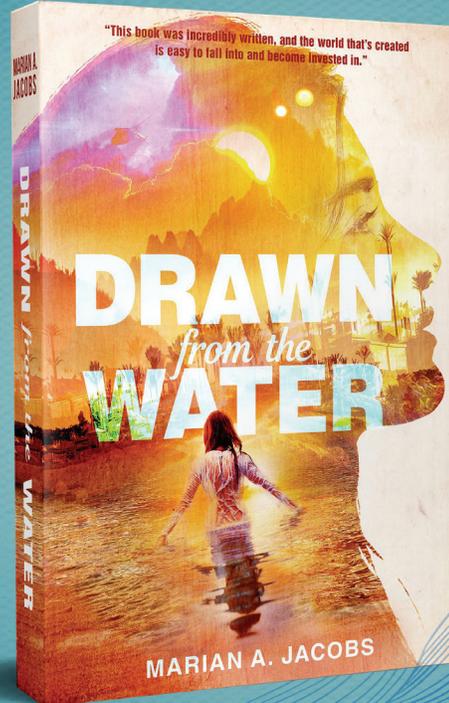
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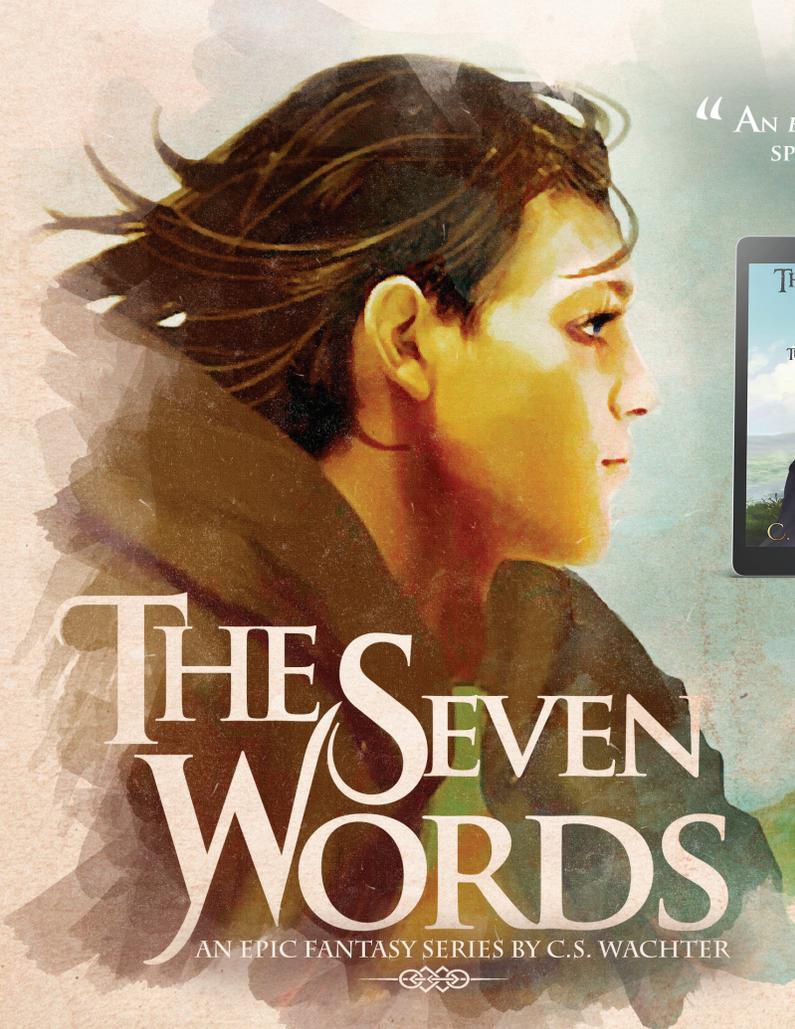
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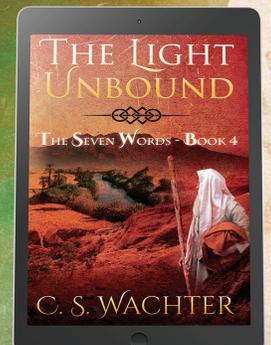
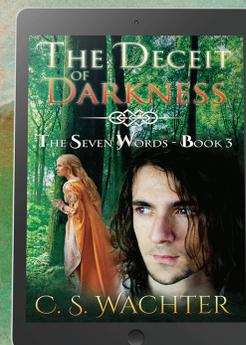
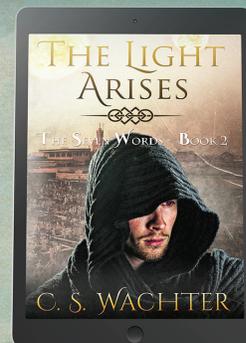
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