

# FamilyFiction

January 2020



## Historical Romance Author **PATTI CALLAHAN**

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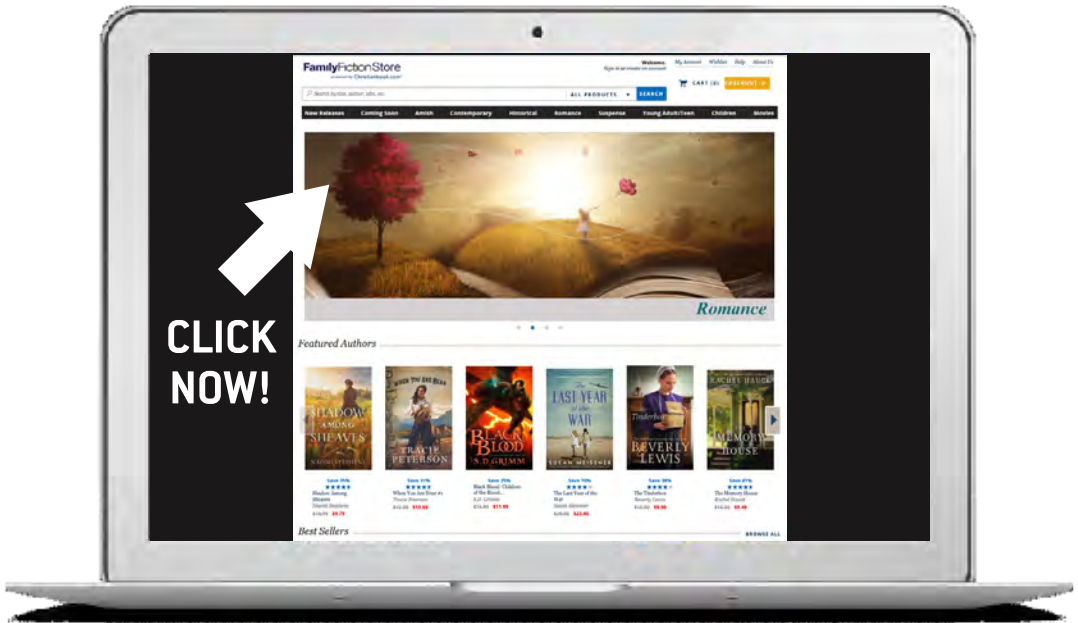
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# HISTORICAL ROMANCE: PATTI CALLAHAN SURPRISED BY JOY

The author takes us behind the scenes of her romance based on the true-life story of C.S. Lewis and Joy Davidman.

**Patti Callahan** (who also writes as Patti Callahan Henry) is a *New York Times* bestselling author. Patti was a finalist in the Townsend Prize for Fiction, has been an Indie Next Pick, twice an OKRA pick, and a multiple nominee for the Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance (SIBA) Novel of the Year. Her work has also been included in short story collections, anthologies, magazines, and blogs.

Her novel ***Becoming Mrs. Lewis*** (Thomas Nelson), inspired by the true-life love story between Joy Davidman and C. S. Lewis, won the Christy Award for Book of the Year.

In this exclusive interview, Patti talks about the impact her book has had on readers, explains what inspired her to explore this true-life love story, and reveals details about the companion podcast series.

**Congratulations on *Becoming Mrs. Lewis* winning Book of the Year! When you wrote the book, did you expect it to impact readers so deeply?**

When I was writing the book, I knew that Joy had impacted me in ways I hadn't expected and so yes, I hoped for the same for others. AND YET—I had no idea of how. I am consistently astounded at the ways Joy speaks to readers, how her journey resonates with theirs!

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### **What impact does winning awards have on how you approach your fiction?**

Oh, I hope it doesn't affect my writing at all. It's an honor and a thrill (I still am stunned and grateful), but it has nothing to do with the day to day habit of writing or of doing the "work." In fact, if I think about it too much I would worry about the judge's opinions and freeze!

### **What inspired you to explore this true-life story in narrative form?**

I was initially drawn to the story because of my fascination with what an improbable love story it was. But then I discovered that it was much more than a love story—or it was a different kind of love story—one with God and then self and then another.

Joy's story is a transformational journey of courage that not only changed her life, heart, family and work, but the life, heart, family and work of one of our most beloved authors of the twentieth century—C. S. Lewis.



## **What were the challenges of building a story out of real events?**

The challenges were actually the enjoyable part for me. I adore research and lists and timelines, so mapping out their lives was thrilling.

Re-reading their work and finding the connections and threads made writing this book all the more interesting. The biggest challenge was making sure I honored their truth even if I didn't have the facts.

## **Were there points where you had to choose between historical accuracy and making the reading experience work? (Which gets precedence?)**

I stuck so very close to the historical accuracy that there wasn't really a point where I had to choose. I kept to the timeline and I kept to the facts. The places where "imagination" filled the gap were places where I didn't have solid proof of conversation or emotion. Those were the spots where historical accuracy didn't so much suffer as inspiration filled the empty places.

## **You created a podcast series to accompany the book, *Behind the Scenes of Becoming Mrs. Lewis*. How did that come about?**

When we (Harper Collins/Thomas Nelson publishing) realized that so very much of my research was on the cutting floor but it was so interesting! How could we share it with our readers?

We considered a non-fiction book, but I am a podcast junkie and so that is where our minds first went. It has been an absolute thrill. I have loved sharing the deep and wide research and interesting facts of Joy and Jack's life.

### **What's the podcast like?**

It is an eight-part series where I interview experts on everything from Joy's poetry to why Jack might have fallen in love with her. I interview her son, Douglas Gresham, about what it was like in those days as he grew up under their wings.

### **What surprised you the most writing *Becoming Mrs. Lewis*?**

That her legacy as a powerful and award-winning writer had been buried, and that her influence on Lewis's writing had been diminished.

### **What do you hope readers take away after reading the book?**

Oh, I never want to tell my reader what to take with them, but I hope that they find something that helps them in this journey we call life.

### **What are your favorite ways for reader to support authors?**

Spreading the word! If you love a book, talk about it, tell others, and review it where reading communities linger. **FF**

### **Visit Patti Callahan's author page here:**

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## ***Becoming Mrs. Lewis***

Patti Callahan  
Thomas Nelson

Buy Now 

**In a most improbable friendship, she found love. In a world where women were silenced, she found her voice.**

Patti Callahan offers an exquisite novel on the woman **C. S. Lewis** called “my whole world.” When **Joy Davidman** began writing

letters to Lewis, she was looking for spiritual answers, not love. Love, after all, wasn’t holding together her crumbling marriage. Everything about this New Yorker seemed ill-matched for the beloved writer of Narnia. Embarking on the adventure of her life, Joy traveled from America to England and back again, facing heartbreak and poverty, discovering friendship and faith, and against all odds, finding a love that even the threat of death couldn’t destroy.

In this masterful exploration of one of the greatest love stories of modern times, we meet a brilliant writer, a fiercely independent mother, and a passionate woman who changed the life of this respected author and inspired books that still enchant us and change us. Joy lived at a time when women weren’t meant to have a voice—and yet her love for Jack gave them both voices they didn’t know they had. At once a fascinating historical novel and a glimpse into a writer’s life, *Becoming Mrs. Lewis* is above all a love story.



# ROMANTIC SUSPENSE: SUSAN MAY WARREN TO THE RESCUE

The author talks about her new action-packed **Global Search and Rescue Series**.

FamilyFiction fan favorite **Susan May Warren** ramps up the action and romance in her brand-new **Global Search and Rescue Series**! In 2016, her **Montana Rescue Series** took readers into the heart of Glacier National Park, where a daring group of men and women battled odds and elements as part of the PEAK rescue team.

Now, Susan presents a new lineup of highly trained heroes made up of ex-military, former SEALs, and pararescue jumpers. The Jones, Inc. team will cross borders, fly under the radar, and break rules to bring you and your loved ones home. She kicks off the series with ***The Way of the Brave*** (Revell).

In this interview, she takes us behind the scenes for the new series, talks about the real-life struggle that fed into the novel, and reveals her favorite thing about writing romances.

***The Way of the Brave* is the first book in your Global Search and Rescue series. Can you please provide a brief description of your new book?**

*The Way of the Brave* is an epic adventure on the high slopes of Denali. When a trio of female climbers gets blown off the peak of the highest mountain in North America, a group of nearby climbers volunteer to rescue them.

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But finding them and bringing them all home safe will take the courage and skill of all the climbers—both men and women. But what will courage cost them? It's also a story of second chances, survival, and the true source of bravery.

### **How is your new series different from the Montana Rescue Series?**

Higher stakes, global settings, and a group of ex-military heroes who put their lives on the line, regardless of the cost. These stories are faster paced, with more dire situations, and a global threat threaded through the trilogy.

### **The setting for your book is Denali National Park in Alaska. Why did you choose this location?**

I've always been fascinated with mountain climbing and the courage it takes to tackle the cold, heights, and brutal weather. I've read many books on Everest, K2, and Denali and asked, *What if you were in an accident, and survived—how would you*

*rescue yourself and the others who depended on you?* I wanted to put the story in the backyard of most of my readers, also, so they could imagine themselves tackling such an epic feat.

**One of the main characters in your book struggles with PTSD. Why did you decided to write about this topic?**

I struggled with PTSD after our home invasion in Russia, and so I do know, in a very small way, the feelings of panic, frustration, and helplessness. I wanted to tackle those very real feelings that linger long after the event or life situation that caused the PTSD, and explore just one of the ways God helped me, personally, to deal with it. Everyone is different, but I loved the journey that Orion and Jenny trek, emotionally, as they grapple with their regrets and fears and hold on to courage.

**In your new series, your characters are comprised of ex-military, former SEALs, and pararescue jumpers who are bonded together to save and rescue the lost. What type of research was required to accurately portray your characters' former careers?**

LOTS! And I'm still researching. My husband served in the Army, and my son is in the Navy, so they've been great sources of information, as well as a plethora of books, memoirs, first accounts, and friends who have served. I am so grateful for the heroes and heroines who give their lives to protect our country.

**What do you hope readers gain from reading this series?**

Edifying entertainment that offers hope, encouragement, and time well spent. I am keenly aware of the entertainment choices out there, and my goal is to write stories that readers are glad they read, that give them truth and enrich their lives, even if only to let them fall in love with characters who inspire them.

**What is the title for your second book in this series and when will it release?**

*The Heart of a Hero!* It hits the shelves in June!

**What is it like to write such fast-paced and adrenaline-inducing scenes?**

I love it! It makes the writing go fast-fast-fast. I leave the scenes a little worn out but dying to know what happens next. It does sort of consume me, however. I am constantly thinking about the next scene and what could happen—and yes, worried!

**What's the best thing about writing romances as a Christian fiction author?**

I love a Christian romance because it's so much more than just about two people falling in love—it's about how God loves us enough to show himself and his love through the people in our lives. He longs to delight our hearts and often he does it by putting the "one" into our lives to remind us how much he loves us. A Christian romance is one that touches the soul as well as the heart!

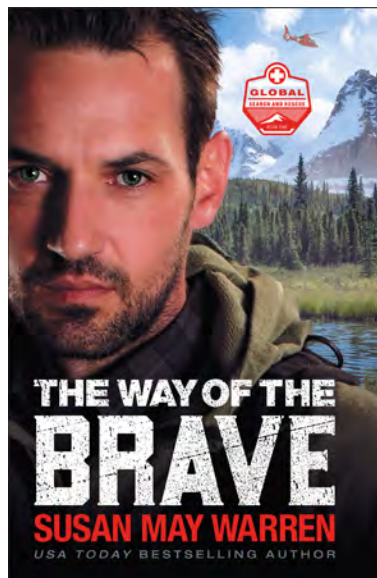
**What do you feel your calling is as a writer?**

I believe I am called to be authentic and honest in my storytelling. As a Christian woman, I am not interested in cardboard characters with unrealistic struggles who receive pat answers. Life can be overwhelming and at sometimes messy and confusing.

Relevant, faith-filled fiction deals with that and yet offers hope. I don't presume to know all the answers. I just try and write stories about people learning to walk in faith, every day trusting God just a little bit more. **FF**

**Visit Susan May Warren's author page here:**

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/susan-may-warren>



## ***The Way of the Brave***

*Global Search and Rescue #1*

Susan May Warren

Revell



**A high-octane, breakneck new series from bestselling author Susan May Warren.**

Former pararescue jumper Orion Starr is haunted by the memory of a rescue gone wrong. He may be living alone in Alaska now, but the

pain of his failure—and his injuries—has followed him there from Afghanistan. He has no desire to join Hamilton Jones's elite rescue team, but he also can't shirk his duty when the call comes in to rescue three lost climbers on Denali.

Former CIA profiler Jenny Calhoun's yearly "extreme challenge" is her only escape from the guilt she feels over a top-secret mission to root out the Taliban, when she green-lighted an operation that ended in ambush and lives lost. When her climb on Denali turns deadly, she'll be forced to trust her life and the lives of her friends to the most dangerous of heroes—the man she nearly killed. Her skills and his experience are exactly what's needed to prevent another tragedy—but in order to truly set Orion free from his painful past, Jenny will have to reveal hers.







# SPECULATIVE YA: LAURA GALLIER

## DRIVING FAITH

The author talks about the real-life spiritual warfare behind her **Delusion Series**.

In a youth culture intrigued by the paranormal yet often skeptical of biblical claims, **Laura Gallier** seeks to bring awareness and understanding to issues surrounding the supernatural. Having battled her own enemies of the soul throughout her teen and young adult years, she is on a mission to expose deception with the light of truth, bringing hope and healing to a generation in need.

Her latest novel is ***The Deception*** (Tyndale House), the second book in her **Delusion Series**. Less than a year after the horrific Masonville High shooting, Owen Edmonds is determined to uncover why the Creepers have converged on his land and the school—a necessary step in his mission to drive evil forces out of his town.

In this interview, she reveals the origins of the **Delusion Series**, explains the role faith plays in the story, and how the speculative elements reflect the real-life spiritual warfare taking place around us.

### **What inspired you to write the Delusion Series?**

I wanted to help readers understand the reality of the spiritual world and how our choices can either invoke evil or unleash God's power to operate in our lives. We can't be afraid of the topic of demons and spiritual warfare; that in and of itself is the work of the enemy.

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### **How do you expect *The Deception* to resonate with your audience?**

I pray *The Deception* exposes the deceptive nature of sin and evil and how wickedness often masquerades as helpful and harmless. I hope readers develop a greater appreciation for God's boundaries, clearly stated in the Bible, regarding explorations into the paranormal world and experimenting with witchcraft, which has become a trendy form of entertainment in our society.

### **What role does faith play in this story?**

Faith is a driving theme. That said, *The Deception* draws attention to counterfeit forms of faith and how our belief in the supernatural can actually open the door to demonic entities if we don't know and follow biblical boundaries and standards.

### **What lessons or truths do you hope people take away from *The Deception*?**

The enemy knows how to "play nice," but he never plays fair. We never ignore God's biblical standards and get away with it. Even

more specifically, communicating with deceased loved ones and supposed “enlightened departed spirits” is a huge open door to invite demonic activity and oppression into our lives.

Don’t buy into the reality shows and seance party trends that encourage us to contact departed relatives. Our loved ones are in their eternal home away from earth; it is demons who play the part of deceased spirits.

**As an author, what did you particularly enjoy about writing this story? What did you find challenging?**

I enjoyed developing and writing descriptions of spirit-world beings and environments. The biggest challenge was the spiritual warfare I had to face while writing the book.

**Can you tell us about your inspiration for the main character in this book, Owen Edmonds?**

Our society tends to be open to the paranormal, yet highly skeptical of biblical truth. The same is true of Owen. I wanted my protagonist to ask hard questions, challenge the status quo, and provoke us all to go beyond trite answers to our faith-related questions and get to the concrete truth of life’s most important matters. This is Owen’s journey.

**This story is about the very real spiritual battle that takes place in and around teenagers. How do you hope understanding this battle will help teenagers?**

You can’t fight an enemy you don’t know you have, especially one who disguises himself as our own thoughts and inner voice. When young people begin to recognize they have an enemy and understand the strategies he uses against them, they can then become empowered to overcome in the name of Christ.

This paves the way for victory over demonic traps such as suicide, depression, anxiety, and self-loathing.

**The topics in this series and this book have the potential to be dark and unsettling. How does this story offer hope to readers?**

Evil is not going to go away just because we steer clear of the subject matter and insist on only happy-go-lucky topics. In fact, such denial empowers evil! Christ has overcome all power of the enemy and given us authority to walk in victory, so we need not be afraid. The story certainly testifies to this.

**What encouragement can you offer for teenagers who are living with the daily realities of depression, shame, and hidden pain?**

Those thoughts and painful emotions want to lead you to believe there is no hope for you and no future worth pursuing, but those are lies—the result of inner wounds and demonic torment. You exist because God willed that you have life, and He has a meaningful, abundant life for you—one where you know Him and experience His vast love, acceptance, and empowerment every single day! Learn to discern truth from lies and fight back against the evil one, who wants nothing more than to stop you from living out your God-appointed destiny.

**What are some practical ways a teenager can be a light in the darkness among their peers?**

Accept that you're not going to fit in—you're going to stand out and stand up for Christ! Don't focus on criticizing your peers for their sinful choices and lifestyles, as if condemnation is going to inspire them to change. Instead, use uplifting words and acts of kindness to show them Christ's love.

Then you'll earn the right to say things at the right time, such as, "That dark music is only going to bring you down, and God wants you to have joy," or "Pornography is a counterfeit high; God wants you to know His peace and love." Always leave it up to God to save them. You just share His love and truth.

**How can parents help a teen who is struggling with some of the topics mentioned in this book, or has friends who are?**

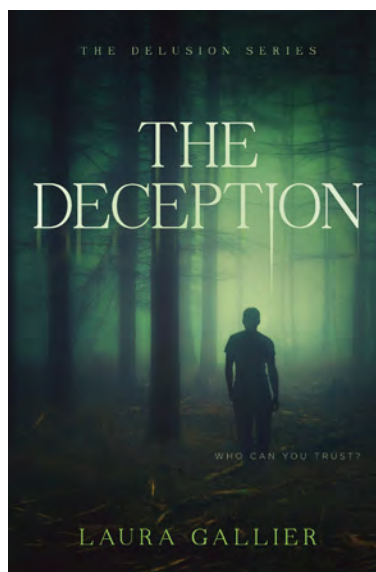
As parents, we must help our kids develop a biblical worldview, the foundation of which is that there's a God who loves them and a devil who hates them and both are constantly at work in their lives. When our kids understand how to discern the activity of Satan and defy him while recognizing and embracing God's activity, they are well equipped for life.

As parents, one of the greatest gifts we can give our kids is to teach them how to listen for and hear God's voice. When our kids know God and hear His voice, they not only have what it takes to fight for their own peace of mind but to inspire and equip their peers as well! **FF**

**Visit nLaura Gallier's author page here:**

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## ***The Deception***

*Delusion Series #2*

Laura Gallier

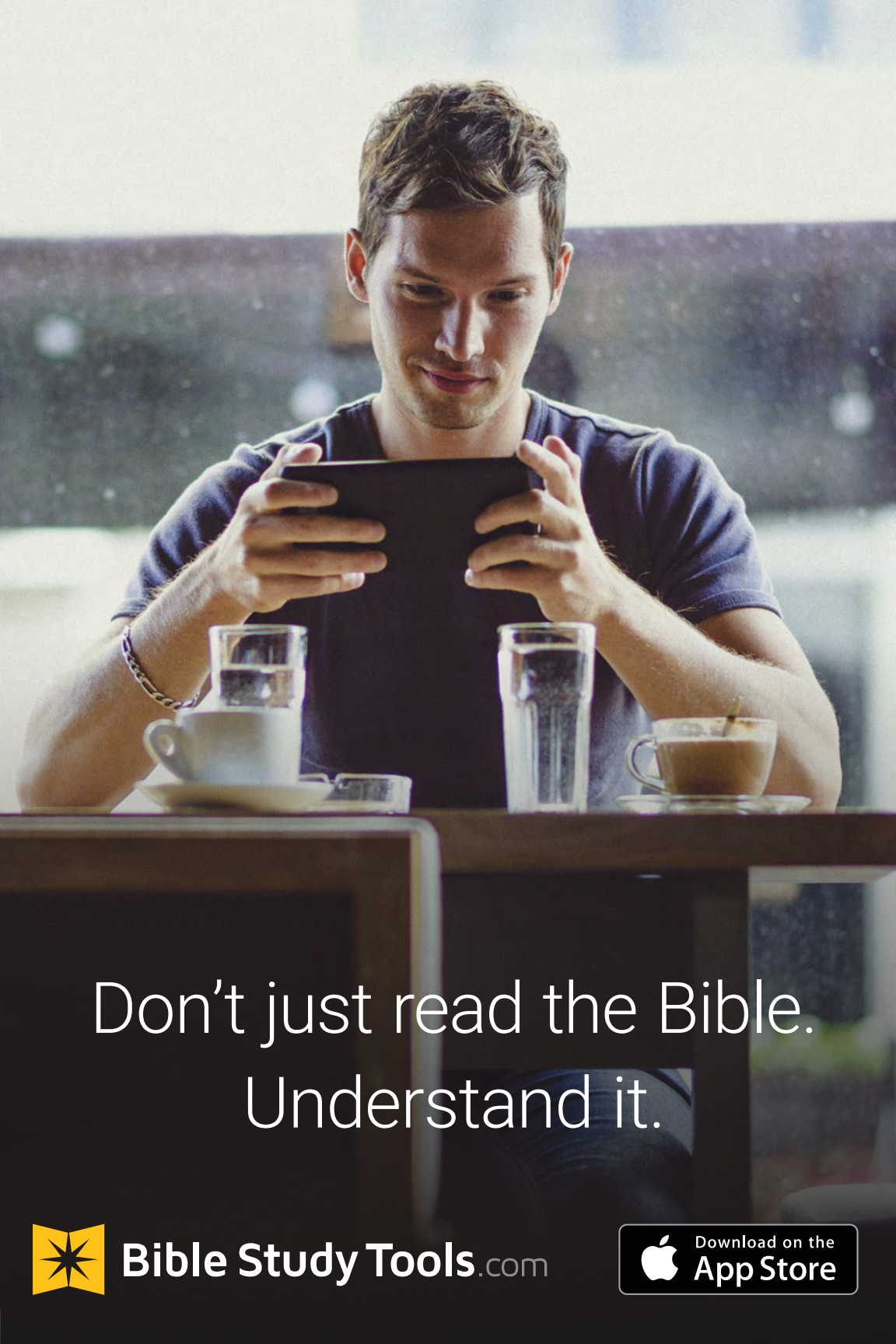
Tyndale House



Less than a year after the horrific Masonville High shooting, Owen is determined to uncover why the Creepers have converged on his land and the school—a necessary step in his mission to drive evil forces out of his town.

A supernatural visitor tests Owen's ability to discern between truth and lies as the community is rocked by abductions and disappearances. While the town comes together to find those who are missing, Owen must fight to discover what is real and what is part of a strategy to distract him from his true purpose.

Will Owen's courage and conviction waver or hold firm as he fights to free Masonville from the demonic forces threatening to tear the town apart?



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**Jan Drexler**'s ancestors were among the first Amish, Mennonite, and Brethren immigrants to Pennsylvania in the 1700s, and their experiences are the inspiration for her stories. Now she invites readers to travel back to Holmes County, Ohio, for another engaging story about the Weaver family in ***The Roll of the Drums*** (Revell), book two in The Amish of Weaver's Creek series.



In this interview, Jan shares a bit about the book, talks about her characters' struggles with being single, and explains why it was so necessary for widowers to remarry.

### **Can you please provide a brief description of *The Roll of the Drums*?**

Gideon Fischer's goal is to provide for his family far away from the effects of the Civil War, but when his wife passes away, he is at a loss. How can he provide for his young children and keep them safe at the same time?

Before Lovinia, Gideon's wife, dies, she asks Ruby to take her place in the family as wife to Gideon and mother to her four little ones. Ruby can't refuse Lovinia's request, but she also can't consider marrying a man who is practically a stranger.

So Ruby and Gideon work out a compromise. Ruby becomes the family's housekeeper and nanny and becomes the loving substitute mother Gideon's children need. Soon, though, Gideon begins to think that perhaps Ruby could also be the loving wife he needs.

When Gideon's worst nightmare comes true and the war touches the small Weaver's Creek community, he relies on his friends and his growing love for Ruby to face his fears. The community unites to bring the conflict to a peaceful conclusion.

**You have a unique understanding of the Amish traditions and beliefs since your ancestors were some of the first Amish, Mennonite, and Brethren immigrants to come to Pennsylvania. Do you know if they struggled to remain peaceful during the Civil War?**

By the time of the Civil War, my direct ancestors had already left the Amish church to join either the Amish Mennonites or the German Baptist Brethren. But since those churches both had the same nonresistant stance as the Amish, I'm sure they were affected by the same pressures as my characters.

**Is Ruby Weaver's experience of being single a typical occurrence in the Amish community?**

It isn't typical now, and I'm sure it wasn't in the 1860s either. The goal, and responsibility, of Amish young people is to get married and have a family. Ruby's singleness was a burden to her, but by the end of the story, I think she would agree that it was a blessing, because it allowed her to marry Gideon.

**How common is it for widowers, like Gideon, to remarry in the Amish community after the death of their spouse? Are there instances of single parents raising children on their own?**

It is more common now for widows and widowers to remain single for a time. But in the 1800s, remarrying as soon as possible was necessary for everyone, not just the Amish.



A man left alone with young children needed someone to care for them so he could work to provide for them. A woman left alone didn't have many options, either. The society at that time was largely rural, and that kind of life required a team—a husband and a wife—to do all that was needed for the survival of the family.

### **What do you hope readers gain from reading *The Roll of the Drums*?**

I hope readers see a glimpse of God's sovereignty. Gideon's and Ruby's experiences weren't random but served to bring them closer to each other and closer to God. **FF**

**Visit Jan Drexler's author page here:**

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Jan Drexler



***The Roll of the Drums***  
*Amish of Weaver's Creek #2*  
Jan Drexler  
Revell



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# Historical Kate Breslin

Bookseller-turned-author **Kate Breslin** is a Carol Award winner and a RITA and Christy Award finalist. She blends history, romance, and suspense for ***Far Side of the Sea*** (Bethany House), a spy novel set in 1918. Lieutenant Colin Mabry is a British soldier working with MI8 after suffering injuries on the front. Johanna Reyer works at a dovecote for French Army Intelligence. Together they must follow the clues to rescue her half-sister—who might be alive and in the custody of a German agent. When their pursuit leads them straight into the midst of a treacherous plot, danger and deception turn their search for answers into a battle for their lives.



In this interview, Kate reveals the inspiration behind the novel, reveals what surprised her during her historical research, and share the hardest part of the story to write.

## What inspired your story?

I was researching espionage details from the war for my second novel, *Not by Sight*, when I came across some fascinating facts about the world of secret communications—and how carrier pigeons were used for espionage during WWI. Incorporating the pigeons was the spark that helped me to create Colin Mabry's story as a sequel to the Mabry family saga in my newest release, *Far Side of the Sea*.



**What message do you hope readers take away from this book?**

While I hope that my stories entertain and give readers a history lesson without it seeming like a history lesson, it's always on my heart to share some facet of God's love. In this story, it's the idea that our heavenly Father isn't one to be feared but to be friended. He is always with us, and we are each unique and equally important in His eyes and in His unconditional love.

**What surprised you the most during the research or writing of *Far Side of the Sea*?**

I had no idea the Americans secretly organized an army intelligence network in Europe once the U.S. joined the war in 1917. I was intrigued to read about several secret assignments in France, one of which I've threaded into my novel.

Another surprise: Shortly after finishing the manuscript for my novel, I searched for information about my great-uncle George

Saucier, who fought and was wounded in WWI in 1917-1918 and received a Purple Heart after they were issued in 1932.

In my quest, I stumbled upon his genealogy online, which took me all the way back to the year 1634, when my maternal ancestors lived in Saint-Eustache, Paris, France—just blocks away from where *Far Side of the Sea* takes place!

My great-uncle also fought with the American 32nd Infantry in France, who were commended for their bravery and awarded the French Croix de Guerre, the same medal my story hero, Colin Mabry, receives! It was a thrill for me to discover my own ancestor had walked the same path as my fictional characters!

### **What was the most difficult part of the story to write?**

Aside from the challenge of creating the plot twists and turns, my main character, Colin Mabry, is an amputee due to a tunnel explosion in *Not by Sight*. While writing, I had to mimic many of his same actions from the story, to see how long each might take to complete or if they were even possible.

Things like getting dressed, knotting a tie, buttoning a shirt, etc. YouTube was a tremendous help to me too, as there are amputees who post basic how-to videos for others who have lost limbs.

### **Do you have a favorite character in the new novel? If so, why?**

Oh, that's not an easy choice. I love all of my characters, but I will say that I hold a special affection for Lieutenant Colin Mabry. It may sound strange coming from the author, but there is a genuineness and honor about his character that immediately drew me to him as I wrote the story.

Kate Breslin

To me, he is a hero in every respect. I hope readers will love him just as much! **FF**

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## ***Far Side of the Sea***

Kate Breslin

Bethany House

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The latest romance from **Allie Pleiter** is ***Their Wander Canyon Wish*** (Love Inspired): Back in her hometown with her twin daughters, widow Marilyn Sofitel is set on never falling in love again. She's sure her heart is safe spending time with Wyatt Walker as he works to fix the carousel her girls love. Everyone knows he's handsome, charming...and trouble. But as they grow closer, might their unlikely friendship develop into something deeper?



In this exclusive interview, Allie shares some background on the novel, reveals the spiritual themes in the book, and explains what she hopes readers come away with after reading it.

## **No spoilers, but what can you tell us about *Their Wander Canyon Wish*?**

*Wander Canyon Wish* is the story of the Walker brothers we met in *Their Wander Canyon Courtship*. It's a romance between someone no one looks up to—Wyatt Walker—and a young widow everyone admires but who wrestles with a secret she believes could ruin her and her young twin girls.

## **Tell us about Marilyn Sofitel and Wyatt Walker—what about these two made you want to tell their story?**

Wyatt, being the rebellious upstart that he is, simply would not be content with his role as a secondary character in *Their Wander Canyon Courtship*. He demanded his own story, one that showed the world there was more to him than the local bad boy everyone thought he was.



Turns out, the love of a good woman brings out his heart of gold. Marilyn and her darling twins became the perfect trio to uncover Wyatt's true nature, and, as he put it, "his good guy side."

### **What spiritual themes run through the book?**

I love a good redemption story, and this book certainly tells how God brings people into our lives who show us how to be more than we thought ourselves capable of being. Marilyn learns she can be strong and not hide despite what she believes is a terrible secret. It's a romance that reminds us God always has more in store than we ever dream if we'll just trust and keep our hearts open.

### **How does this fit into the larger picture of the Wander Canyon series?**

The last book in the Matrimony Valley Series—*Their Wander Canyon Courtship*—introduced us to the small Colorado town of Wander Canyon. We met Chaz Walker, his stepfather Hank, Hank's new bride Pauline, and Chaz's half brother Wyatt.

Wyatt doesn't come off looking too good at the end of that book, so it wasn't a surprise that he insisted on getting his own happily ever after. There are two more books in the Wander Canyon series, so readers will get to spend a little more time with the charming and quirky cast of characters who live there.

### **What do you hope readers will take away after reading *Their Wander Canyon Wish*?**

I hope they come away from the book with a renewed sense of God's provision. I'd like to think they will see new possibilities for the places that seem like dead ends in their own life, and a strengthened faith in God's ability to craft a joyful ending even when we can't see how it would ever happen. I love the saying



Can two little girls  
find their mom  
a match?

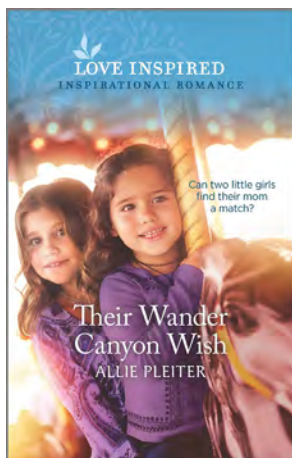
that “God can see around corners,” and I hope this is one of the messages this book brings. **FF**

**Visit Allie Pleiter’s author page here:**

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Allie Pleiter

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## ***Their Wander Canyon Wish***

Allie Pleiter

Love inspired



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When **John MacLeod** and his wife were delivered from a cult, he became devoted to studying and memorizing portions of the Bible to defend himself from false teachers. His fantasy series **The Saga of the Singing Sword Brigade** is the outcome of their spiritual journey, including their escape from deception. The second book in the series is ***Into the Gloom*** (Ambassador International).



In this exclusive interview, John shares the inspiration behind the plot, reveals which characters surprised him, and gives us the big picture view of the series.

## **What inspired the plot in *Into the Gloom*?**

*Into the Gloom* follows *Inception of a Brigade*, the story of Artka Kway, son of a power mogul in an evil empire who after being arrested as a highwayman is coerced into joining the empire's armies. Artka is disowned by his father for the disgrace he brought upon the family. Jeda, Artka's fraternal, twin sister, is also disowned "because she doesn't fit in" like the other set of twins who mirrored their parents' character of greed and pride.

Since I related how Artka was rescued from the empire during a battle and invited to join the king's forces and the ensuing struggles he faced to maintain his freedom from the evil empire in *Inception*, it only seemed fair to follow Jeda into King Elyon's realm as she too meets Logon Xychirion, the king's son and heir.

Thus, *Gloom* is about Jeda being wrenched out of a life of luxury and sent to a life of abject servitude in the emperor's palace. There

she befriends a girl who is secretly an Ecclessite on the palace staff, but sneaks out to attend clandestine, underground kingsmen meetings in the heart of Cosmopolis. She invites Jeda along.

As Artka fought against Logon then realized Logon was the true lord of the world and yielded to him, so too, Jeda meets Logon just as so many believers in oppressive nations must go underground to find truth and be “rescued” by Jesus. Jeda’s story is that of underground believers. Jeda, like them, must live a cautious existence, yet be daring and bold enough to heed her liege’s prompts when he wants her to evangelize.

### **Which character(s) in the book surprised you as you were writing *Into the Gloom*?**

I needed a villain to treat Jeda harshly both before she meets Logon, and especially afterward to jeopardize Jeda’s relationship to her new liege. Enter Hod-ya Kar Psa, mistress and overseer of the emperor’s palace as well as major policy-broker working day and night to capture, torture, interrogate and eliminate Ecclessite kingsmen found anywhere in the empire.

She has cultivated personal contacts with certain of the ten dreads that enforce the emperor’s dictates, “Live for the Moment; Die for the Empire,” thinking that she is in charge of them when actually, the spirit warlords are playing her along, using her to eventually betray her.

Hod-ya exudes malice and wields power over Carnalia as if she were its regent. She has specially conditioned “dronnets,” not unlike a gestapo corps, that do her bidding.



## **What can you tell us about the Singing Sword Brigade Series? What ideas or characters connects the books together?**

I started writing *The Singing Sword* to be a sort of fusion between *Lord of the Rings* meets *Pilgrim's Progress*, but renamed it Inception of a Brigade because several other writers named their creations *The Singing Sword*.

The sword is central to the series as Logon Xychirion crafted these weapons that do not injure or kill; but rather, it wounds the conscience when it pierces a person's heart and reveals how corrupt the wounded person has been all their life, but was unaware. The sword also presents Logon's life as the only acceptable standard King Elyon will allow into his kingdom of Splendor.

But to attain that degree of worthiness, one must meet Logon at the rock where the crown prince was impaled and died. Each kingsman must willingly choose to touch the rock, thereby acknowledging their part in killing him, even though Logon's death happened ages ago.

Logon died to give all who would trust him, and give up their corrupt Carnalian life to take on Logon's resurrected life, and live henceforth for the king. Thus, Logon arms his warriors with weapons that cause no physical harm, but rather make each person aware of how they've offended the King of Ecclessa and Splendor.

As kingsmen toll (hone) their swords with a special file (toller) Logon gives them, runes light up on the blade, giving instruction on how to live kingdom life as well as issuing timely orders when

in battle or in difficult situations. The more one “tolls” his sword, the more glow comes along the edge of his sword, helping the warrior know and love Logon better.

Logon’s desire for them is to light up the entire sword, though most brigades only care to sharpen parts of the blade, and thus their brigades are known by how they sharpen their swords becoming designated as “Sharpointers,” “Tipsters,” “One-Edgers,” “Runers—because they only sharpen by familiar runes” and “Full-Bladers,” who intend to light up their entire sword.

The more light a kingsman has on his sword the more successful he is in rescuing Carnalians in battle, as well as being victorious over various invisible, spirit entities that whisper discouragement or outright threaten as they assume visible forms and attack.

The Ecclessite brigades are summoned by Logon to gather for a final push into Carnalia and attack the emperor’s impregnable castle, but too many kingsmen brigades are ill-prepared with unlit swords, or else at odds with other kingsmen for not sharpening the swords the same way they do.

Jeda and Artka, individually have come into the kingdom for just such a time. Their lessons from Logon prepare them for subsequent encounters with Carnalians and those who claim to be kingsmen but are false, as well as skirmishes with the evil spirit agents such as cusps, tophets, firedrakes, dreads, etc.

### **How does *Into the Gloom* fit into the series?**

Jeda is selected by Hod-ya to represent Carnalia against Craniantium’s warrioress in the deadly gladiatrix contest held once a year in Pitland. If Jeda succumbs to Hod-ya’s

reconditioning and training for the match, she will lose all that Logon has done for her, but if she succeeds and follows what Logon has taught her... she'll be discovered as an Ecclessite and summarily executed.

What happens in Pitland, as *Into the Gloom* and its soon coming sequel *The Trumpets of Doom* depicts, will have a major impact on whether the Emperor of Carnalia or the King of Splendor and Ecclessa will tilt the balance of power and win the centuries-old war, as recorded in books four, *The Seige Of Logon's Bridge*; book five, *Turit's Rise*; and book six, *Tremendum*.

### **What do you hope readers come away with after reading *Into the Gloom*?**

My intent in writing this series is to encourage Christians of all ages to recognize the signs of spiritual warfare that abound in our world. I want to inspire believers, young and old, to know their Bibles, not just casually read them, but to understand and apply the principles that our Lord Jesus and the prophets and apostles taught as non-negotiables in our new lives.

I've had many readers contact me, saying how much they recognized their need to refresh their relationship to the Lord and get more involved in Bible study, prayer, evangelism and spiritual counseling with those who are struggling in their Christian walk. Some have told me they are ordering several books for book club discussions and others are making disciples by comparing the Bible to events in these books.

J.M. MacLeod

My hope is that believers will take the Gospel seriously and actively seek to win souls and defeat Satan and his nefarious hosts by loving, forgiving and gently piercing non-believer's hearts with the Word of God. **FF**

**Visit J.M. MacLeod's author page here:**

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### ***Into the Gloom***

*Saga of the Singing Sword Brigade #2*

J.M. MacLeod

Ambassador International



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**Tanya Stowe** is an author of Christian fiction with an unexpected edge. Her new romantic suspense title is ***Fatal Memories*** (Love Inspired Suspense): Border patrol agent Jocelyn Walker has no memory of how she turned up unconscious with a cache of drugs—or why a gang is dead set on killing her. With evidence stacking up against her, Joss takes refuge with driven DEA agent Dylan Murphy, who guards—and suspects—her. But will finally trusting each other lead them into a trap they'll never escape?



In this exclusive interview, Tanya shares the inspiration for the story, the challenges of balancing all the elements of Christian romance suspense fiction, and how her faith impacts her fiction.

### **Tanya, what inspired the story in *Fatal Memories*?**

A few years ago, my husband and I sold our home, bought a motorhome and hit the road full time. We found a place in southern Arizona to spend our winters. I was amazed by the drenching monsoons falling on a thirsty desert, the rich history, the blends of Hispanic, Native American and cowboy cultures, and the ongoing challenges of the area. I just knew I needed to write about this new, fascinating place.



**Your leading characters are border patrol agent Jocelyn Walker and DEA agent Dylan Murphy. What about them compelled you to tell their story?**

I live in Arizona near the border. I see the danger these agents and officers face daily. Also, faith and family are the two most important things in my life. I can't imagine losing my memories of the people I love or memories of my relationship with my God. I wanted to explore all of those emotions, the sense of duty, the fear, the guilt and desolation. It was quite a journey.

**When writing Christian romance suspense fiction—what are the challenges to finding the right balance? Which of these elements comes easiest for you to write?**

It's easiest for me to write the action and the mystery. I can do that all day! I do write the slower, romantic scenes but blending them, making them flow into each other seamlessly without losing the tension is the struggle! Fortunately, my fabulous editor, Shana Asaro, keeps me on track.

**How does your faith impact how you approach storytelling?**

I have a Christian worldview. It comes through in my writing. It's that simple. I did write secular stories, but I had comments from people saying they didn't understand why a character was willing to sacrifice their life for another. Or how they were willing to forgive. I realized I was trying to relate Christian values and morals in my stories without ever talking about God. I decided it was time to start talking about Him.



**What do you hope readers take away after reading *Fatal Memories*?**

I hope God's boundless love for us comes through in the story of Dylan and Joss. Even if we have no knowledge of Him, not even memories, He is still there, seeking us out, wanting to love us. That's the truth of my life. I didn't accept the Lord until I was in my twenties. But when I did, I realized He had always been there, guiding me along...waiting for me to see Him. We are never alone. **FF**

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## ***Fatal Memories***

Tanya Stowe

Love inspired Suspense



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With his Christian rock band, **Skillet**, **John Cooper** has been rocking listeners since 1996. Now, he's teamed up with Christian comics publisher **Z2 Comics** for ***Eden: A Skillet Graphic Novel***. John co-created the idea and co-wrote the comic, which features the members of Skillet in a fantastical tale of redemption and finding light in the darkness.



In this exclusive interview, John shares what inspired the story, explains the collaborative process that went into the book, and reveals the spiritual heart behind the project.

### **John, tell us about *Eden: A Skillet Graphic Novel*. What inspired this story?**

I love science fiction books and supernatural books as well as comics of course. It's a look at a deconstructed future where the world is dying. There are factions of people fighting with one another in a struggle to survive. I wanted to pull on spiritual and philosophical themes of our universal desire to get back to where we came from.

Humans have a sense that we were meant for something more, but we cannot quite remember what it is. I wanted to combine that with action and a touch of the supernatural. In the book, there is a common dream that the "chosen" have that shows a door to a better world.



I also personally aimed to make a graphic novel that was family friendly and reclaimed comics as something that kids could read. Star Wars and Star Trek always pulled off exciting stories for all ages.

### **What about this story made it need to be a comic?**

Every story should be a comic! Haha, maybe not, but comics are fun and it's a different form of art to tell a story with pictures. This was interesting to me that even though I have loved comics my entire life, I never really understood the importance of art in the story telling.

Part of the emotion of the story in my opinion is the beautiful art and colors. It has a surreal look to it, which makes sense because we are meant to be dealing with the supernatural.

## **How did you come to work with Z2 Comics and Random Shock Studios for this?**

I received a call from Z2. I believe it was because of my known love for comics and the fact that our fan base is extremely loyal and open minded. Some music fans do not prefer bands to branch out and do other things, but Skillet fans are eternally loyal and positive. I was thrilled to try this and loved the process. Actually, to be honest I was nerdily giddy over it.

## **What was the collaborative process like with them?**

It was thrilling! I loved talking with the writers and they were extremely well read and intelligent. Perhaps that sounds obvious but I'd never talked to a writer before so I was very impressed with the breadth of literature and philosophy they could pull from.

And thankfully they never made me feel stupid! If there is anything I am good at, it's a combination of (1) knowing my own identity and being comfortable with who I am, and (2) being able to communicate that identity. I think that because I could articulate what I was going for and the parameters, the writers took my thoughts and ideas and hit a homerun.

That is why Eden has such a similar feeling as Skillet music. And dealing with Chris Hunt on the art was super fun! Talking through the clothing and the weapons, etc., I said, "Dude, you have to create an axe for me!" He really nailed it.

## **How did collaborative process on the comic compare with collaborating on your music?**

In some ways the comic process was more fun. Probably because there wasn't as much riding on it. If an album goes bad then your career ends, or else takes a hit, and it affects everyone working for you and your label and agents and management.



This was sort of like, we can do anything we want so let's make sure it's something we are extremely proud of. Making records is indeed fun because creating music is wonderful. But the amount of pressure and the amount of input is so vastly greater.

### **What do you hope readers come away with after reading *Eden: A Skillet Graphic Novel*?**

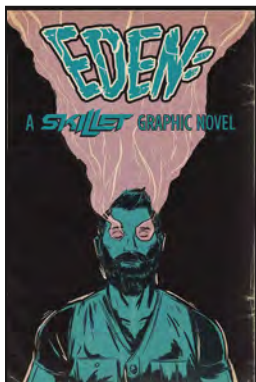
Firstly, I hope they love it and that it's exciting! I hope it causes them to think about the world we live in and our place in it, and how we can make it better.

On a deeper level, this book is my philosophy of life that I believe is a biblical one. Our world is dying, and we have been chosen and called by God—not just for eternal salvation, but to see the rule of the Kingdom of God here on Earth as it is in Heaven. Those biblical threads run through this book and I hope that people will have eyes to see the truth of it. **FF**

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### ***Eden***

*A Skillet Graphic Novel*

Skillet/John Cooper,

Random Shock, Chris Hunt

Z2 Comics

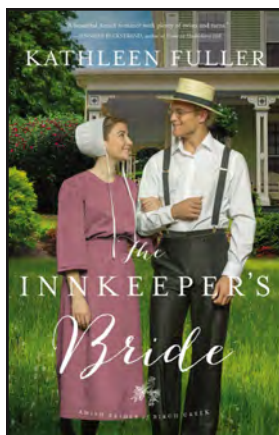


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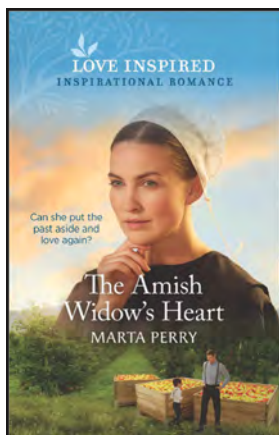
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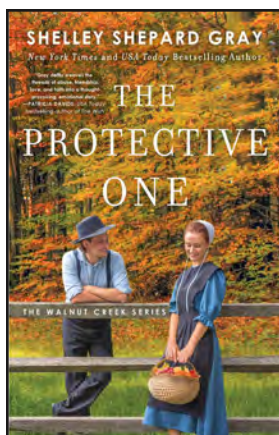
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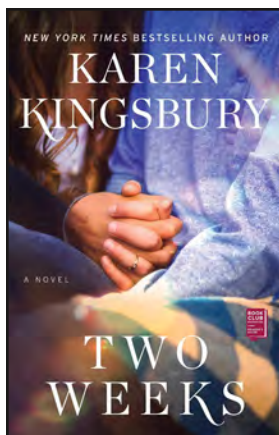
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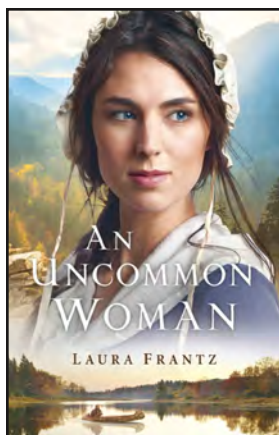
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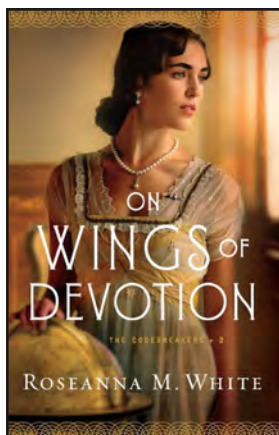
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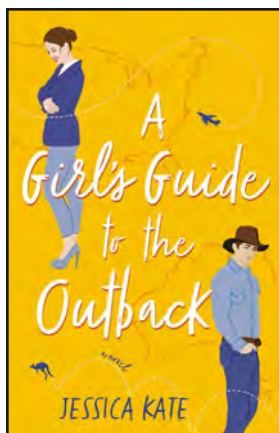
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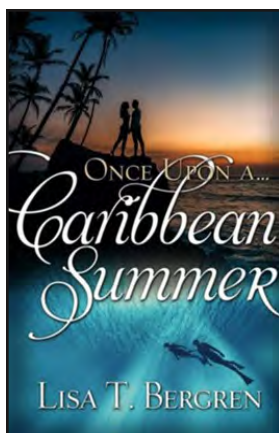
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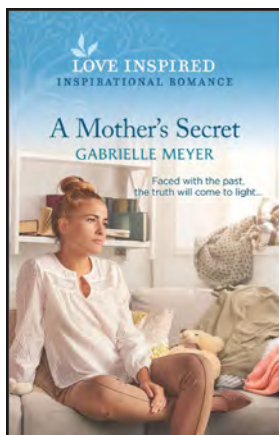
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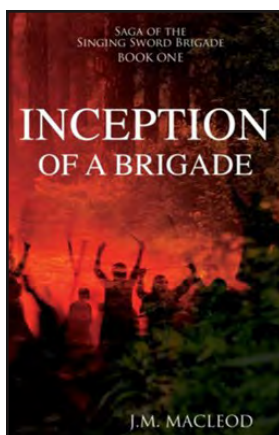
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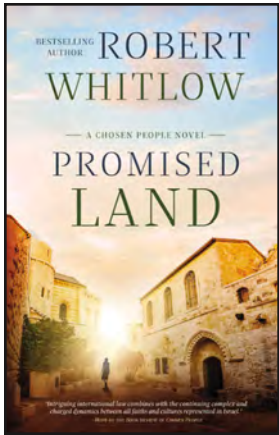
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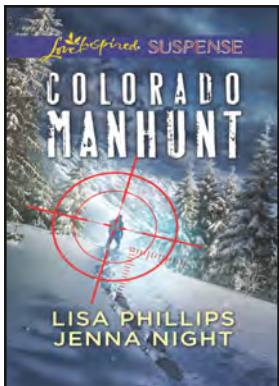
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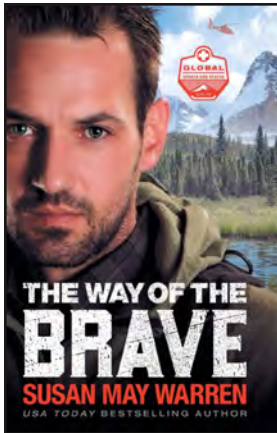
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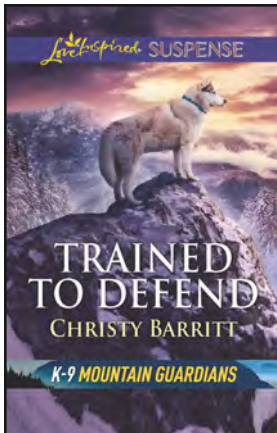
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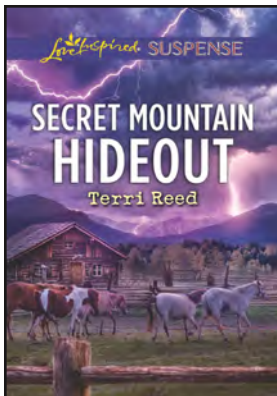
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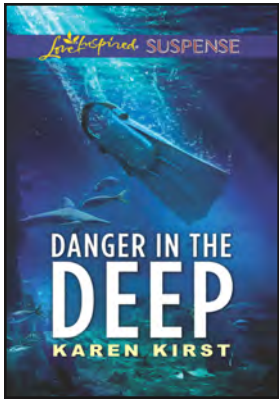
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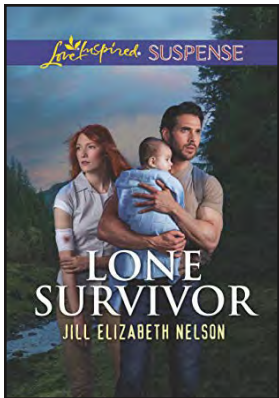


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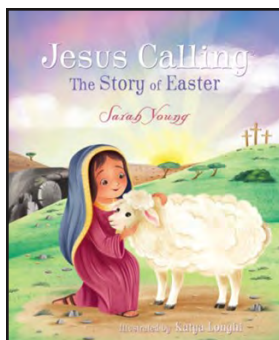
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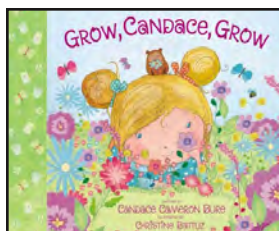
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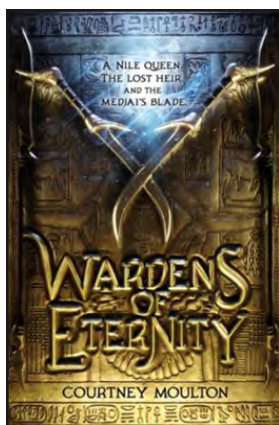
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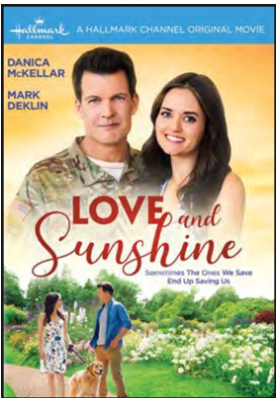
New Releases: January 2020



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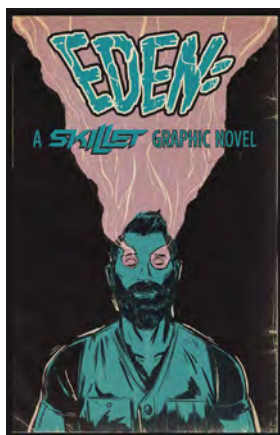
**Paul the Apostle  
Graphic Story Bible**

Adapted by Ben Avery and Mario Matteo  
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### ***The Sword of Eden***

Al Dickerson

Messianic Comics

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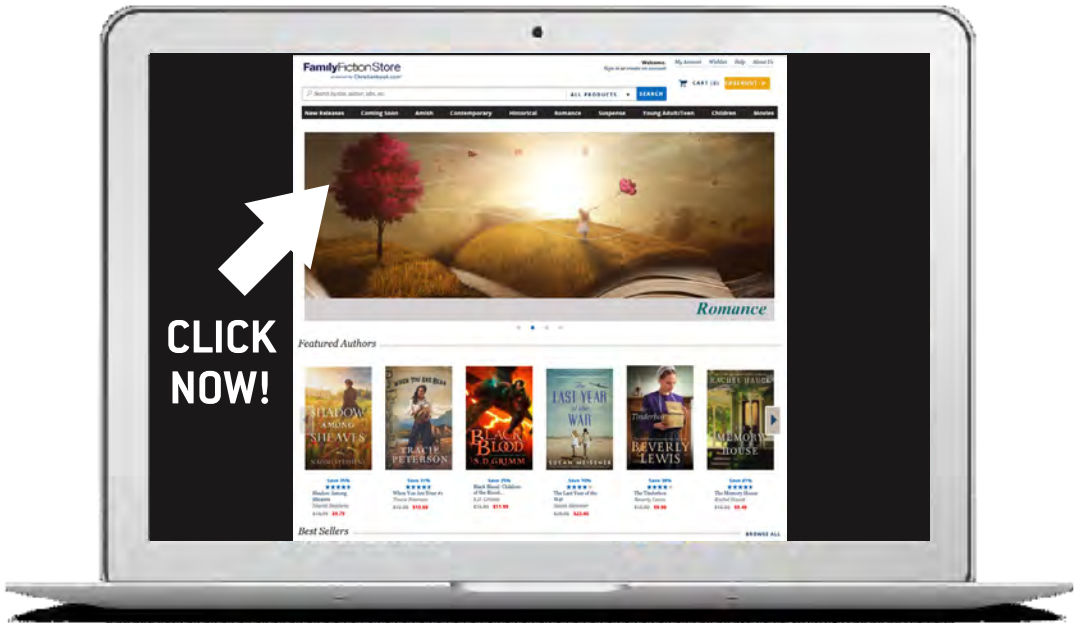
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