

October 2022

LADIES LITERAREY ENTERTAINMENT

Magazin

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FOUNDERS' NOTE



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EDITOR'S NOTE



Dear Reader,

Change is good for us all. It kicks us out of our comfort zones, leads us into a time of reflection, and prepares us for a season of growth that leads to an abundant harvest of good things.

The And I Thought Literary Magazine is undergoing changes as well, branching out from our initial roots of literature, poetry, and art to embrace the performing arts as well. Hence the name change.

We hope you enjoy the fresh winds of change these represent.

Abundant Blessings,
Brandy M. Miller

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LOOKS GOOD ON PAPER

Book Review by Midnight Ace Book Bar

A fresh, hilarious take on the classic *Cyrano de Bergerac* from USA Today bestselling author Kilby Blades...

In today's world filled with terrible dating apps and split-second hot takes, all Zuri Robinson wants is something real. Between her crap job, her family drama, and feeling like she completely missed out on her twenties, she's pretty much done. Her only bright spot is exchanging letters with a ridiculously charming guy in Italy. Only Alessandro Fabricare has a teeeeeny little secret...

Nico Fabricare simply wanted to help his brother, Alessandro—who isn't as eloquent with the English language—write a few letters.

But with every letter that crosses the Atlantic, Nico is discovering that Zuri might just be the most incredible woman he's ever met...except she thinks she's falling in love with his brother.



Now Zuri is on her way to Italy—to meet Alessandro. And Nico is running out of time to win over the girl of his paper dreams before she finds out the truth.

About the Author

Kilby Blades is a USA Today bestselling author of contemporary romance. Her debut novel, "Snapdragon", was a HOLT Medallion finalist and a Publisher's Weekly BookLife Prize Semi-Finalist and she won an RSJ Emma Award for Best Debut Author in 2018. She's been lauded by critics for "easing feminism and equality into her novels" (IndieReader) and "writing characters who complement each other like a fine wine does a good meal" (Publisher's Weekly). She's an oenophile, a cinephile and, most of all, a glutton for a good story.



Connect with Kilby

Website: <http://www.kilbyblades.com>

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Kilby-Blades/e/B01N4770Mo>

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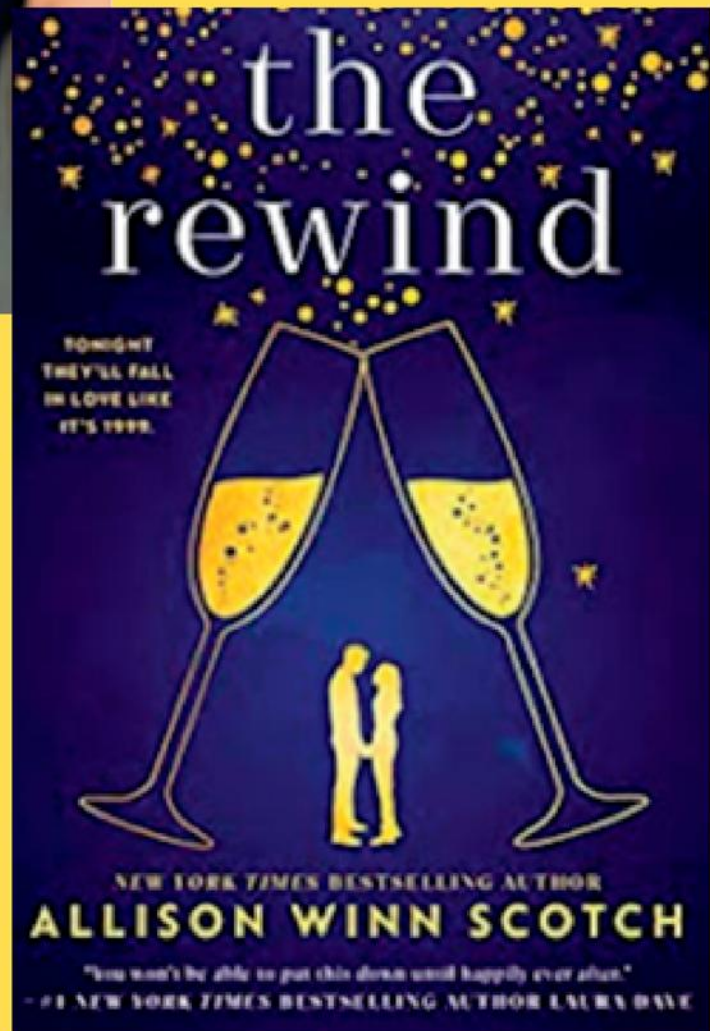
MEET ALISON SCOTCH

by *Melissa Amster*

We're so glad to have Allison Winn Scotch back at CLC today to celebrate the publication of her latest novel, *The Rewind*. This rom-com is like *The Hangover* but for an estranged couple, and it takes place at the turn of the century, before social media was even a thing. I read it earlier this year and can tell you that you're in for a treat. I have a funny story to go along with my review, as well. A few years ago, Allison was here to talk about romance while featuring *Between Me and You*. I had asked her which TV show characters she was shipping and she said Betty and Jughead from *Riverdale*. If you haven't read my review yet, go there and look for the reference I had made without even remembering what she said a while back. Are we in tune, or what!?!?

Visit Allison

online: Website * Facebook * Twitter * Instagram





CILLA'S BOOK MANIACS

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Synopsis::

When college sweethearts Frankie and Ezra broke up before graduation, they vowed to never speak to each other again. Ten years later, on the eve of the new millennium, they find themselves back on their snowy, picturesque New England campus together for the first time for the wedding of mutual friends. Frankie's on the rise as a music manager for the hottest bands of the late '90s, and Ezra's ready to propose to his girlfriend after the wedding. Everything is going to plan—they just have to avoid the chasm of emotions brought up when they inevitably come face to face.

But when they wake up in bed next to each other the following morning with Ezra's grandmother's diamond on Frankie's finger, they have zero memory of how they got there—or about any of the events that transpired the night before. Now Frankie and Ezra have to put aside old grievances in order to figure out what happened, what didn't happen...and to ask themselves the most troubling question of all: what if they both got it wrong the first time around?

Dear Literary World Lets do something
Fun!

**COME AND JOIN US
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Join Wilnona & Jade Authors
of The And I Thought... Series
As We Interview Our Wonderful
Guest

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INSPIRATIONAL WOMEN

IN LITERATURE, MEDIA, AND JOURNALISM AWARDS

By Wilnona Marie

Clouds dared not tarnish the 14th of October as happy faces filed into the first live Inspirational Women in Literature Awards since 2019.. The historic Swan Coach House was elegant in design and a perfect venue to hold the awards for such accomplished women. Awarding these women was the conclusion of an event-packed weekend.

Friday the 14th the two-day festivities began with a gifting suite. Honorees and guest could select gifts to fill their goody bags. Gifts included Kindles, author-signed books, jewelry facial creams and so much more. The guest and authors along with the media discussed the art of writing and percussion of business.

Bags filled with gifts and minds brimming with business advice everyone headed to the next event at 44t and 3rd bookshop. At this black-owned book store, authors had a book reading. Dr. Mike Nelson, Tamika Newhouse, Wilnona Marie, Aliza Mann, Deborah Franklin, and Echo Garrett read excerpts from their books. The group did shopping to support the bookstore as well. Shelves were stocked well with literary treasures.

Saturday morning started with breakfast downtown Atlanta and a workshop by local Atlanta Writing Association. Thank you for your presentation . Workshop discussions took place in the auditorium at the Atlanta Metropolitan State University.



Workshops:

1. Valerie Winrow, workshop title: "You Have a Story, Share It: Let's Talk about Writing Your Memoir"
2. Quaye Chapman, workshop title: "How to Discover and Write a Story: Following the Main Idea"
3. Kelly Johnson workshop title: "Judging a Book by Its Cover"
4. Cleopatra Sorina Iliescu, workshop title: "Writing with a Purpose"
5. Maryam Shakir, workshop title: "Overcoming Writer's Block"
6. Tenesha Curtis, workshop title: "The difference between the three major types of editing"

The Awards at the Swan Coach House on October 15th, 2022:

The 2023's Honorees for Inspirational Women & Inspirational Supporter Awards are

Gigi E Bryant-Gigi Edwards Bryant is best described as being driven by her faith. She is a community volunteer, public speaker, business owner, and elected official. She was born in Austin. She is a 7th-generation Texan and a 5th generation Austinite.

Her dedication to issues that address the family such as: education, youth in the foster

,care system, and alcohol and drug rehabilitation is a common thread to her life-long passion. She is a fierce advocate for access and equity. As a keynote speaker, she addresses issues of community engagement and involvement and the power in believing "#URFreeToDREAMByr".

She is a witness to the knowledge that education breeds dreams and opens opportunities that strengthen communities and therefore our nation's ability to prosper, thrive and lead, if necessary, by one until the team arrives. She heard a girl scout sum up her life in five words: "No, is not a barrier! "

Award Presented by Thomas Carter Rochester- American actor, Director, and voice actor

Aliza Mann- In 2010, she began honing her skills and joined Romance Writers of America, in addition to the Greater Detroit Romance Writers, a local chapter near her home. She has discovered that while her muse dictates what stories are written and when she does get to at least pick which genres she writes in... sometimes. Her favorite romance sub-genres are contemporary and paranormal.

Award Presented by Nola Nash- Her Crescent City series is a paranormal historical mystery set in the 1830s French Quarter and includes Crescent City Moon and Crescent City Sin with at least one more book to follow.

Awards (cont.)

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Her next series begins with Traveler., which launched in March, 2022. Her most recent novel, set in her town of Franklin, TN, releases on September 6th, 2022. When she is not writing or working with teachers, she hosts BYOB – Bring Your Own Book and Dead Folks’ Tales podcasts

Rita rich- Art-Time Producer at Westwood One/Cumulus, Washington, DC · Co-Owner · Owner · Former News Director/Anchor and News Producer WNAV, Annapolis.

Presenter- Tonya Todd-Tonya Todd is an author, actress, and Sin City cinephile whose sundry background ranges from content writer to software programmer

Idris V.- Idris Velu, is a well-known up-and-coming Hollywood actor who recently landed the starring role in a major horror film titled “The Dead Place”

Cynthia James- is a transformation coach, Inquiry, Introspection, and Integration. She supports individuals in finding their authentic voices, healing habits and patterns that no longer support them, claiming their freedom and creating the life of their dreams.

Presenter Jade Dee- is a talented writer from the United States, Jade Dee has co-written 17 books that cover a wide variety of genres, including poetry, cooking, pop culture & more or in their words, "Literary life-guides with pop poetry!"





SAVIORS

IN THEIR OWN RIGHT

We had so many difficulties with throwing the awards this year. Six weeks away from the actual execution of the awards plans we were thrown a curve ball that should have ended our entire awards ceremony. Instead of stopping we went ahead with the plans and to our surprise new heroes emerged. We want to take this time to thank every last one of them for stepping up and helping us. It is true the hardest thing to do is say I need help and accept the help given.

Thank all of you so much . There wouldn't have been an awards ceremony without you.



Pam Croghan
Arbonne Consultant



Cindy O'Neil
Charity Consultant



DC Gomez
Author/Podcaster



Craig Martelle
Author/Literary
Event Organizer



Deborah Franklin
CEO of Church
Girl



Aliza Mann
Author

Gina from
Scott Brick Audio
Productions

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music videos and Cousin Glendora!**

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It's always happy hour at the Velveteen Lounge Kitsch-en!



D. C. GOMEZ

D. C. Gomez is an award winner, USA Today Best-selling Author, public speaker, mentor and podcaster. She writes in multiple genres from Urban Fantasy, Contemporary Lit, YA, Children's Books, and even Devotionals. She has a quirky and at times dark sense of humor that can be seen across her different books.

When she is not creating new stories, D. C. is working on her podcast, Inside the Minds of Authors. The podcast features upcoming and popular authors with new episodes each Friday.

These fun and inspiring conversations provide the listeners with an inside look at the creation process of books as well as the charisma of the authors.

D.C. has an undergraduate degree in Film and Television from NYU. After college, she joined the US Army, where she proudly served for four years. Born in the Dominican Republic and raised in New England, she now calls Texas her new adoptive home.

DEBORAH FRANKLIN

Deborah A. Franklin is the Founder/CEO of Conversations Entertainment Group that is the corporate headquarters for Deborah Franklin Publishing and Church Girl CEO. With over 20 years in the entertainment and education industry she has the knowledge and expertise to assist you to catapult your career to the next level.

Deborah Franklin also has a heart for women to expand their mindsets past what they can see and not to be afraid to tell their stories to the world. As a survivor of verbal abuse, she has learned to rise above what has been said to her and about her to be the authentic representative of who she was created to be.



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DEBORAH FRANKLIN (CONT.)

Deborah Franklin is the author of

'Adjectives,' '21 Days 21 Minutes of Prayer & Meditation,'

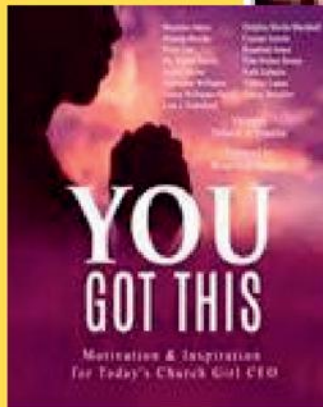
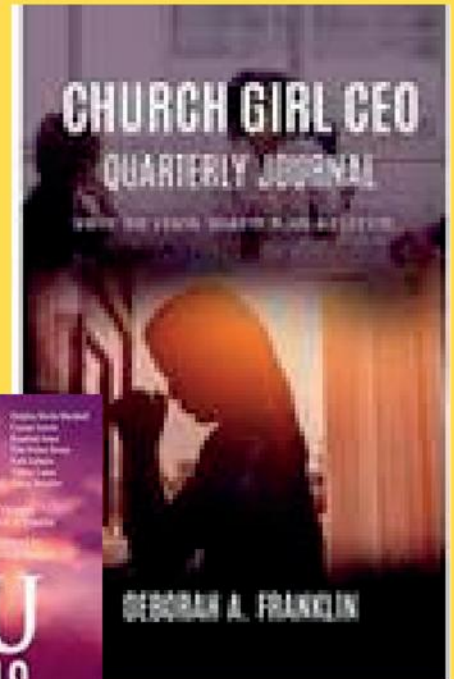
'#5 30 Days of Motivation & Inspiration'

and 'The Prayer of Jabez in the Marketplace';

host of Conversations w/Deborah Franklin

and a media coach.

Deborah has been working as a media coach for several years with clients who are authors, speakers, and entertainers. Deborah also uses her platform to give other aspiring artists an outlet to let their talents shine. Her ultimate goal in life is to help others to ignite the power within to propel them to their destiny while walking in their purpose.



ALIZA MANN



Having developed a preoccupation with reading as a small child, her mother would literally have to bribe her to go outside and play with her friends. After finding her first romance novel abandoned at a Detroit bus stop when she was fourteen (probably a little too young, but nevertheless), Aliza read it and was instantly hooked. It was not until the age of sixteen that her interest in writing was piqued. A kind English teacher gave a journaling assignment that would last the duration of the semester and that was when she fell in love for the first time.

The Paige Roberts Show



A Podcast Based Out Of Athens, Georgia



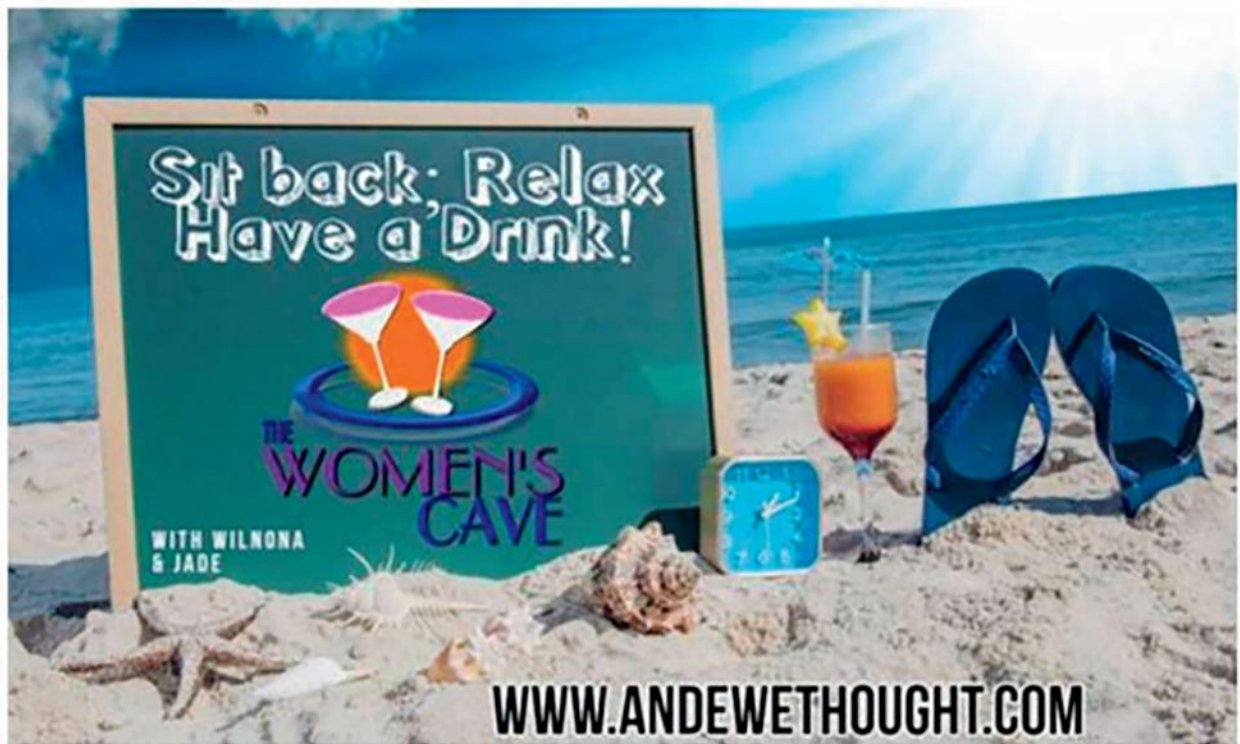
ALL 20
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ALIZA MANN (CONT.)

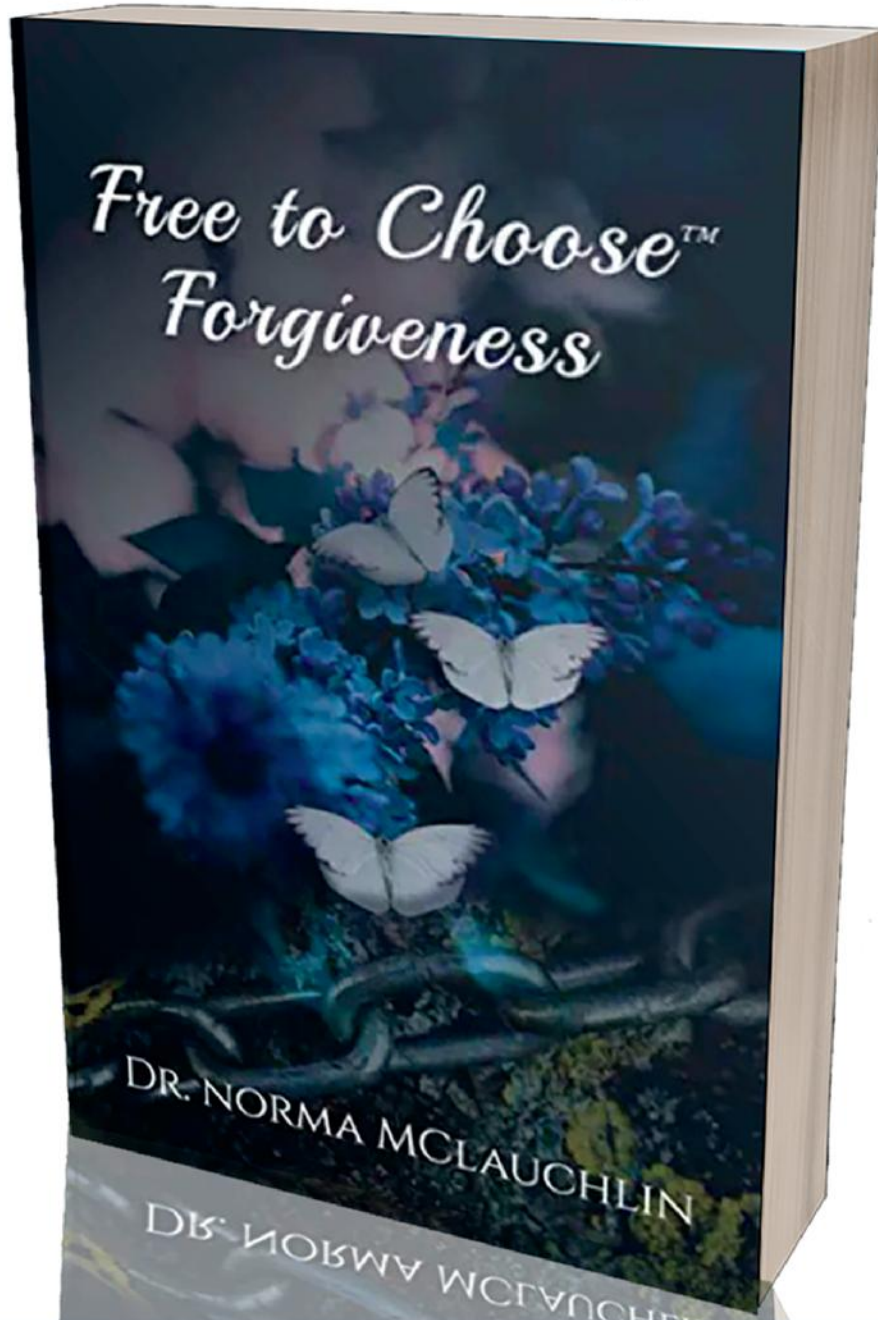
After obtaining an MBA and working in the Healthcare industry for 15 years years, she decided to give her writing the attention that it deserved. In 2010, she began honing her skills and joined Romance Writers of America, in addition to the Greater Detroit Romance Writers, a local chapter near her home. She has discovered that while her muse dictates what stories are written and when, she does get to at least pick which genres she writes in... sometimes. Her favorite romance sub-genres are contemporary and paranormal.

Aliza lives in Michigan with the man of her dreams. Her youngest son is living in Ohio on a college campus, where he had obviously lost his mother's phone number. Her smart and kind daughter is an entrepreneur and runs several businesses alongside her husband, a wonderful man who loves Harry Potter.

When she is not writing, she can usually be found on Twitter or taking hikes through her neighborhood. She loves trucks, movies that bring her to tears, baking, and Scrabble. Aliza is represented by Sara Megibow of KT Literary.



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Richard Wisker

INTERVIEW BY JANICE F. BOOTH



Photo Credit: EJ Photography

The first thing this writer noticed about British actor Richard Wisker was his infectious smile. We met via Zoom, and Richard's warmth and enthusiasm radiated across the Atlantic and into my office. He's handsome, with a square jaw, brown hair, and hazel eyes.

It's easy to see why he's a teen heartthrob. At 25 years old, Richard is a handsome, charismatic actor with the qualities we, the audience, look for in a leading man. You can see him currently on the BBC iplay series *Flatmates*, in which he plays the "nice guy," Declan. The show's in Season Two, so you can get a good look at Richard's acting skills.

This poised, easy-going, cheerful fellow began his acting career at age 9. He and a friend attended an open audition. "We got to sing, dance, and act. It was great. They called me back for a second audition." He won the part of a child murderer in popular police drama, *The Bill*, in the episode, "Hold me tight." I asked Richard what it felt like to tackle such

a role. He chuckled, "It was strange and fun. I really didn't know what I was in for. Everything about acting was new to me."

New things seem to be right up his alley, as the old adage goes. While Richard's family is quite traditional - his mom is a nurse and his dad and older brother are in the construction business, Richard travels his own path.

From early childhood he admired multi-talented Michael Jackson. "Without him [Michael Jackson] I wouldn't be who I am." With that inspiration, Richard taught himself how to sing and dance, and perform some of Jackson's moves and songs.

And, teaching himself was something Richard had to master early on. He is dyslexic and left-handed too, he points out, and his struggles with reading and writing were not diagnosed when he was young. As too many children have for Richard.

But, he's not one to give up. Richard discovered he has a photographic memory along with his photogenic face. He can remember anything - texts, song lyrics, scripts; he just needs a chance to see and hear them. (Richard offers a hint to readers who may have similar challenges: He has his scripts printed on blue paper.

Print reads more easily for him on a blue background, and he can learn his lines quickly from there. It's worth a try, if you or someone you love is struggling with dyslexia too.) As we talk about his early education, Richard chuckles and wonders if any of his teachers or classmates have seen him on television, speaking his lines and creating new, believable characters on the screen.

After that first break playing a child-killer, Richard Wisker joined the popular TV music program *Friday Download*, for which he was a presenter, introducing songs and artists to

RICHARD WISKER (CONT.)

the viewers. Richard took advantage of those 4 years to learn what is needed to create a hit song and how to sell that song with dance routines and music videos. He began working on his own tunes and lyrics. But that element of his career was still in the future.

He turned back to acting at 17 with a lead role in another popular and long-running CBBC series for teens, Tracy Beaker Returns. Richard played Liam O'Donovan. His contract was picked up for the sequel series, Dani's Castle.

Both shows gave him a chance to develop his character's personality and idiosyncrasies. "It was fun working with Traci Harmer and the other cast members. I learned a lot."

And who does Richard Wisker look to when he's trying to build a character for a new role? "I'm an admirer of Brit Jason Stratham and American Leonardo DiCaprio's acting and would like to emulate their careers - in my own style, of course."

Those 5 years with the Tracy Beaker Returns and Dani's Castle gave Richard an appreciation for and understanding of working with an ensemble cast. He's putting that knowledge and experience to use now, having completed Series 2 of Flatmates for BBC.

Similar to America's beloved and long-running series, Friends, these 5 flat mates are teens, figuring out how to get along with one another and get by in the adult world.

When on breaks from shooting Flatmates, Richard has resumed work on his music. He has recently recorded and released a rock/pop single, "Wildfire."

Richard is modest but enthusiastic about this new facet of his career. "Having the acting and

the music cross over is such an incredible feeling, and I'm excited for people to hear more of my music." My impression - there's a lot more music to come in Richard's career.

For a young man of 25, Richard Wisker has built a remarkable career for himself. His versatility and strong work-ethic have brought opportunities his way, and he's made the most of each experience in the entertainment business. Look him up on social media at: RIchardard Wisker (@RiChardardwisker) • Instagram photos and videos.

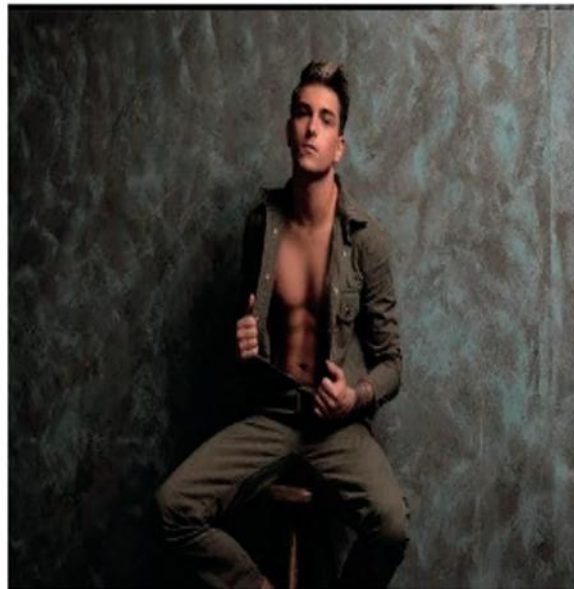
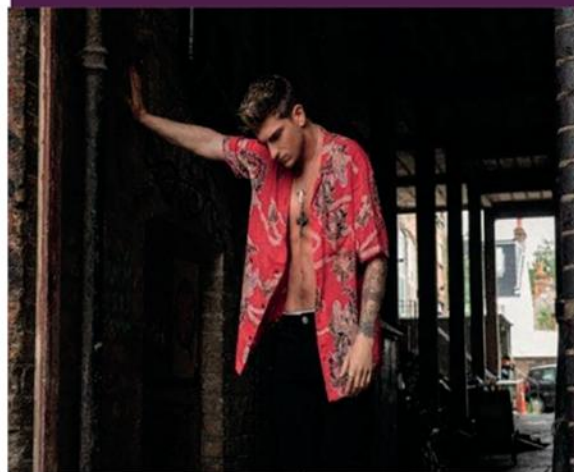


Photo Credit: EJ Photography



SO SHE SLAYS PODCAST

BY: CHAUNCEY & HEATHER



How did you get started podcasting?

It was something we started doing during the pandemic. We were already doing interviews and featured collaborations in written form for the So She Slays site so a podcast just seemed like a natural fit. Plus we love to be able to speak with individuals from all different backgrounds and provide a way to ask all the questions others wished they could ask.

Why did you start your show?

Building a little more off of our other answer

we just think it's a privilege to be able to interview these people. We realize that having access to all different people from all different backgrounds and talking with them can provide a lot of great information to our listeners. Not only are our listeners learning but we are too!

Why is your podcast/show unique?

One of the reasons is that we offer a lot of career, life, and wellness advice from women in many different industries. Our goal is just to provide a place for voices to be heard no matter the topic.

SO SHE SLAYS PODCAST (CONT.)

We think that being able to have all of these different stories told will help our listeners understand they aren't alone in what they are going after or going through.

What is involved in making one show?

The show is the fun part! We work a lot with different publicists from around the nation and they send us clients and sometimes we come across people that we find interesting and think would be a good fit for the podcast.

I've even been known to come across a topic in my life or in others and say, "hey that would be a really good podcast." Then I'm out there searching Instagram for people to talk to about the subject. Sometimes people just email us and if they are a good fit we will have them on the show.

Which aspect of the show is the most fun for you?

The interview part is by far my favorite!

Interviewing people is probably one of my favorite things to do because it's just like having a conversation with someone. We chat, laugh, get to know each other, and I get to learn some great pieces of information along the way.

I always try to interview our guests from the perspective of our audience, asking questions I feel like the audience would be asking if they were sitting in my chair.

What can a viewer expect when they tune into your show?

Probably to get advice, hear stories, and laugh throughout the whole show. We do focus on career, wellness, relationships, and life so quite honestly anything that we think would be a good podcast episode.

Where and when can people listen to the show?

You can listen to us on Apple Podcast and Spotify under So She Slays Podcast





THE PODCAST WITH D.C. GOMEZ

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AMERICA'S NEXT GREAT AUTHOR

BY WILNONA MARIE



Cold wasn't going to stop these dreamers on the last Sunday of October. Their dreams were red hot. Out of thousands of video pitches those in the line were the lucky the few selected to meet the judges. Light wind reminded all it was autumn and the season for change was in full effect here as well. (cont. pg 21)

AMERICA'S NEXT GREAT AUTHOR (CONT.)

Many writers expressed a desire to change their career status, their careers in general, but most were the to take a gamble with the idea of writing. Valencia already had books out but was hoping to pitch a book in a new genre. She was thrilled the new genre idea had taken her this far.



Valencia and Wilnona.

Time was up on the wait as Kwame Alexander, the show's host, walked across the street to a crowd of 100 cheering for him. Cheers rocked the street in front of the Newark Library, but off to the side Arielle, David and Kristi took in the scene with tears in their eyes. It was really happening. Their idea for a show was taking shape.

Inside contestants settled in to find their seats. Kwame warmed the crowd and the judges settled into their positions. One by one the twenty luckiest contestants were called to the podium.



Encouraging clapping and a buzz excitement followed each potential author as they faced the judges. They had fun with the process. The pitches were well rehearsed and delightful. Each book idea was better than the last one.

As the numbers dwindled down those whose name had not yet been called spent time editing their pitches. One author paced in the back of the library while mumbling his pitch to himself. He never did get to give the pitch, but he was super prepared. (cont. pg. 22)

AMERICA'S NEXT GREAT AUTHOR (CONT.)

The last pitch was given and the judges went to deliberate. What happened next? Read the 25 Hottest authors magazine in March and get all the juicy details.



Visit

<https://americasnextgreaauthor.com/> to find out more about the show or to sign up for the next competition.

The Joy Sutton
SHOW

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to Inspire Your Life*

The Jo Show Podcast



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MARCH 19**

Narrator, voice actor, author, and entrepreneur, Jo Sands is back with another collection of incredible creatives both in front and behind the cameras. Tune in to candid conversations from creatives around the globe.



A RADICAL LIFE

BY WILNONA MARIE



Tickets bring to mind travel. An airplane ticket, train ticket, but few think about what it costs to buy a ticket out of a life you're unhappy with. Tania Joya purchased a ticket out of the racism she faced in the UK. Like any ticket, Tania knew certain truths about the journey she was embarking upon.

Life had decided her station from childhood onward. She was Muslim in a society where not everyone was tolerant. Still, she desired power. The power to change her surroundings, she says with a smile in the trailer from *A Radical Life*. "I wanted to take over the world. don't tell me that's not ambitious." To take over the world, one must start somewhere..

Tania started at 19 by punching her ticket out.

Enter John, an upper middle class Texas Caucasian man, who offered to help her flee the racism. A decade passes under his leadership. Her ticket out with those accompanying dreams are wearing thin. A new passage is bought with that ticket Tania possesses. John and she move to America with big dreams and a large family to match.

Life takes a U-turn, radicalizing John and awakening her desire for power. Another ticket replaces the one of worn dreams as Tania follows her husband toward the fighting in Syria. The fine print of this journey is clear to Tania. Her children will become child soldiers.

A RADICAL LIFE (CONT.)



This is not a journey she wishes for her children, but life’s tickets, once purchased, are non-refundable.

When she looks at where her ticket out has taken her, she wants out, but how does one leave the highest ranking American in Isis? After all, she bought the tickets to a radical life. Now, all she wants is some peace, but can a peaceful way out be enough for a radical in this life?

A Radical Life is available to watch on Discovery Plus.

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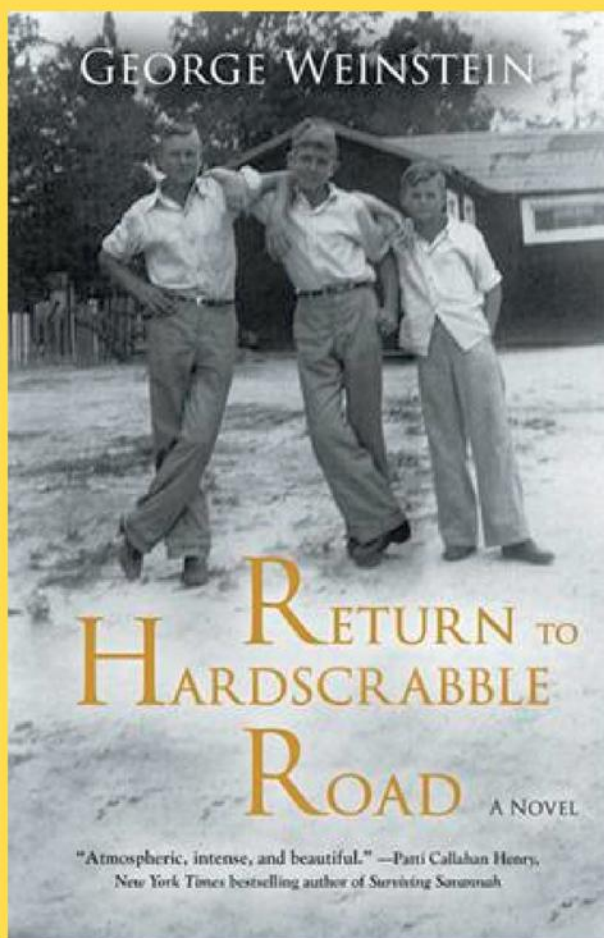
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INCREASING SELF-AWARENESS & SELF CONFIDENCE



 Powerful_Beginnings

RETURN TO HARD SCRABBLE ROAD

BY GEORGE WEINSTEIN



How did you start writing?

As soon as I learned to read, I started to write. As six years old, I was writing plays for my stuffed animals to act out, to entertain my brother and sister.

How did you start writing?

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What makes this book different from your others?

Return to Hardscrabble Road is a sequel to my beloved Southern historical novel titled Hardscrabble Road, which was published a decade ago. While the first book was literary in tone, with metaphors and lyrical writing, the sequel reads more like a thriller, with short chapters and a physical/emotional cliffhanger at the end of nearly every one of them.



 RETURN TO HARDCRABBLE ROAD (CONT.)

What is the most interesting thing to happen during your writing career?

My involvement in the Atlanta Writers Club is the most interesting and satisfying thing to happen in my whole life, not just my writing career because it has influenced every part--from meeting my wife (fellow writer Kim Conrey) and all my best friends to offering me a chance to help thousands of authors on their journey toward publication..

How did you choose the title?

Return to Hardscrabble Road isn't a very creative title, but it needed to have the title of the first book in it (which makes marketing a lot easier). The working title, suggested by my writing friend Dusty Roberts, was much more fun: *Scrabble Harder!*

Can you tell us a little about the book?

Roger "Bud" MacLeod and his two brothers return to the ramshackle home of their youth on emergency leave from the military after the murder of their reviled father.

Instead of having the festive reunion they'd planned with Mama and their sister, the three soldiers are flung into a series of violent confrontations with old and new rivals plus double trouble:

Papa's siblings. In their way, Harvey and

Rutha MacLeod are even more brutal than Papa, hellbent on claiming the legacy they believe he left for them and willing to run over anybody in their way.

Picking up where the critically acclaimed *Hardscrabble Road* left off, *Return to Hardscrabble Road* delves even deeper into Roger's growth from a tormented boy to the determined young man at the crossroads of everything he loves and fears. This time, he doesn't merely have to survive--he must save his whole misbegotten family without sacrificing his soul.

The world is in an interesting place right now, how do you feel your book fits into modern society?

Violence as a reaction to real and perceived wrongs is a common reaction by some characters in my book--just as in life. Each of the brothers, and especially Roger, must make choices about how to respond to violence and whether to initiate it, and Roger meditates about our tendency to react by instinct and then justify those reactions. I think many of us, especially when we're young, live our lives this way.

What was the hardest part of writing for this project?

Trying to live up to the expectations of the large audience of *Hardscrabble* fans who want more of the same but different enough

RETURN TO HARDSCRABBLE ROAD (CONT.)

to justify a new book. Hopefully, the sequel isn't too different to alienate that audience. Early readers have told me they enjoyed it as much or more, but we'll see what the market says in the long run.

Where can people buy your book?

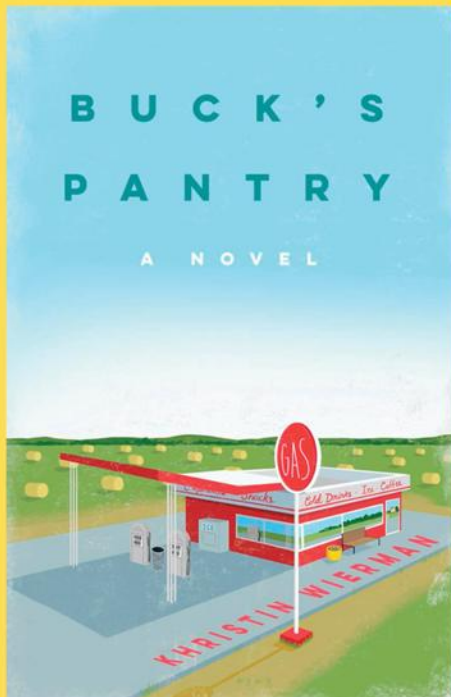
<https://www.amazon.com/Return-Hardscrabble-Road-George-Weinstein/dp/1970137568/>

What will you be up to next?

I've started a sequel to my amateur-sleuth small-town murder mystery *Aftermath* where I bring in the heroine of my kidnapping thriller *Watch What You Say* and send the two gutsy women on a new *Thelma and Louise* kind of road trip adventure together

BUCK'S PANTRY

BY KRISTEN W.



How did you start writing?

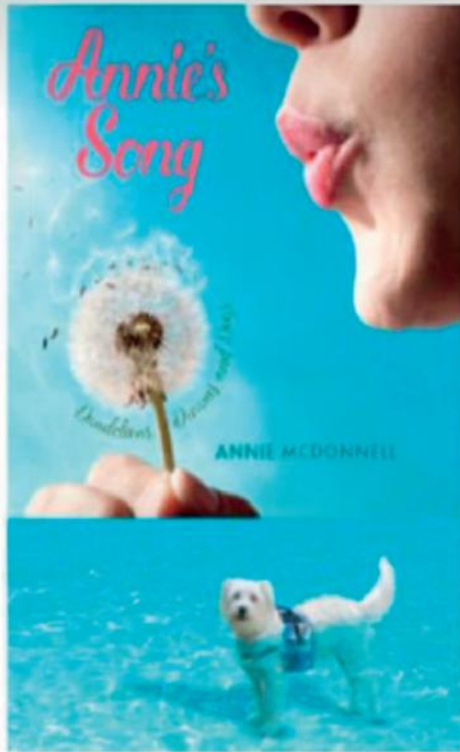
By total accident! I initially thought writing would be a means to a different end. But once I started, I knew I'd found something I really loved.

What Makes this story different from your others?

This is the only story I've written in which Texas features so prominently.

What is the most interesting thing to happen during your writing career?

I feel like it's really just started, so not sure I



Annie's Song: Dandelions, Dreams, and Dogs by Annie McDonnell

Cross Genre Creative Fiction
Memoir – Essays & Poems

“Annie’s Song is an open-hearted memoir about a life spent loving the most vulnerable among us. These are stories full of joy and life that keep loved ones close, even after they’ve passed from this

*world. This poetic writing of untiring advocacy, compassionate witness, and deep love. Annie’s Song is a gift to the enormous community of writers—yes, those who have felt seen and uplifted by Annie McDonnell over the years, but also those who might be hearing her voice saying ‘you matter’ for the first time. This book is our chance to see how a life of empathy is born.” —Diane Zinna, author of *The All-Night Sun**

*“Annie McDonnell is a fresh and welcome voice in literature.” —Camille Pagán, the bestselling author of *Good for You**

*“Annie McDonnell has a true, honest, powerful voice, and she puts it to beautiful use in *Annie’s Song*. And she’s right: The prose sings.” —Darin Strauss, author of *The Queen of Tuesday**

BUCK'S PANTRY (CONT.)

have anything really interesting to share yet!

How did you choose the title?

My publisher chose it, actually. Buck's Pantry is the convenience store where the bulk of the story takes place.

Can you tell us a little about the book?

In a small Texas town, three women—Gillian, a former prom queen and furious juggler of her three children's manic schedules; Lianna, a foul-mouthed East Coast banking super star; and Aimee, a woman capable of far more than her current life will allow—find their lives converging.

Gillian, reeling from the revelations her husband shared at a fundraiser she hosted just days ago, is suddenly grappling with what she has always believed about politics, family, and her own comfortable life—and aghast at some of the choices she's made.

Lianna is en route to close a deal and languishing in the August heat.

Desperate to return to her beloved New York and a first-time visitor to rural Texas, she's certain she has landed in one of the outer rings of hell. Aimee, though withering under the covert dysfunction and mental illness lurking in her family, still manages to shine in her low-level job and allows herself to dream of a life far away.

When Gillian and Lianna stop at the same convenience store, they find themselves in an unthinkable situation. Aimee may be their only hope—if she can put the pieces together.

The world is in an interesting place right now, how do you feel your book fits into modern society?

Two of the women in the book are vastly different in their backgrounds, priorities, and political views. But they find themselves in a situation in which they must work together to survive. In doing so, they're able to find commonalities under the surface and ways to complement each other.

The differences still exist, but the differences aren't the only elements that define the relationship. And the women grow to be compassionate and more tolerant toward each other. I feel like that's really important right now - finding ways to be compassionate toward each other, even when we might not agree on things.

What was the hardest part of writing for this project?

One character in the book is very defined by having experienced the trauma of living with a family member who suffers from mental illness.

BUCK'S PANTRY (CONT.)

In writing that character, I drew from my own experiences as my mother struggled with mental illness for most of my life. So writing those scenes, even though it's a fictional story, was painful at times. But it is very much a story I wanted to tell.

Where can people buy your book?
Any bookstore, including Amazon.

What was the hardest part of writing for this project?

One character in the book is very defined by having experienced the trauma of living with a family member who suffers from mental illness.

What will you be up to next?

My second novel is due out next September. It's called This Time Could Be Different.

HOW WE DISAPPEAR

BY TARA LYN MAISH



How did you start writing?

Well, as I think it is with most writers, I was an avid reader first. I loved getting lost in a book when I was growing up. Loved entering different worlds other than my own. From there on I started drawing cartoon stories, then eventually typing incomplete novels on an old typewriter and illustrating them. Down the road, I took courses in creative writing in high school, and that really awakened my desire to write, not just read.

HOW WE DISAPPEAR (CONT.)

What makes this book different from your others?

I like to think I've learned a bit more about writing over the years. My first collection was published 12 years ago. I definitely think *How We Disappear* is a better collection overall than that first one. Social concerns have changed, too, and I think they're reflected in many of the stories.

What is the most interesting thing to happen during your writing career?

I'd say that getting to know Holocaust survivors, while doing research for my novel *My Real Name Is Hanna*, remains the most interesting side benefit of my writing career, for sure. They are incredible people. They have so much resilience, inner wisdom and power, and have so much to teach the rest of us, if only we would listen. Their friendships are more important than the book to me, in the end.

How did you choose the title *How We Disappear*?

Good question. Originally the working title was *Notes to THE WORLD*, after one of the stories in the collection. I thought that was a great title as the stories were sort of my notes to the world. However, as it became more and more obvious that there was this running theme of disappearance, we switched to *How*

We Disappear. We felt it opened up a question for the reader and would make for a more evocative cover. I hope we made the right decision. I think we did!

Can you tell us a little about the book?

Well, it's made up of 12 stories and a novella. They are linked by the theme of disappearance. We disappear, or are made to disappear, in all sorts of ways, emotionally, physically, socially, historically. I experiment with structure a bit so readers will find long short stories and stories of just a page or two (one two-page story explores the life of an African American cowboy).

Some are contemporary, some are historical (there is a fragmented bio of Agatha Christie). They take place all over the world and characters are of different ethnicities. I know many don't like short stories but I hear from a lot of readers that mine feel more novelistic to them, so they appreciate the stories as a whole.

The world is in an interesting place right now, how do you feel your book fits into society right now?

That's a loaded question. All my writing seeks to teach tolerance, why the characters are of many different backgrounds and cultures. I don't go heavily into these themes, but I do highlight

HOW WE DISAPPEAR(CONT.)

climate change, indigenous issues, women's issues, and how people with disabilities are often treated. One historical story also touches on Russian atrocities in Siberia. I think this story is a bit prescient given what's going on in Ukraine today.

What was the hardest part of writing for this project?

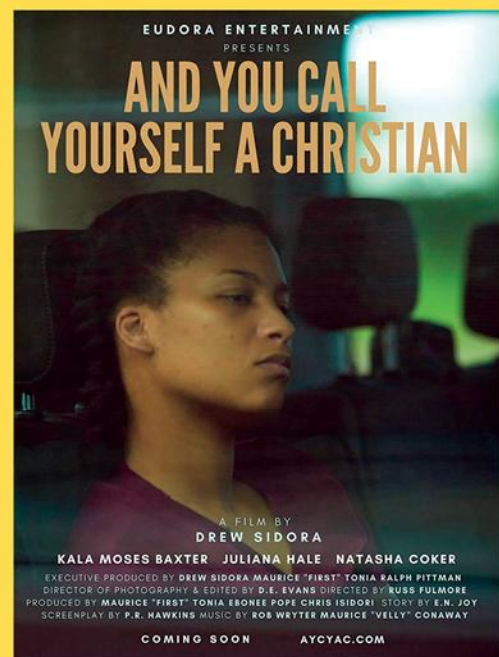
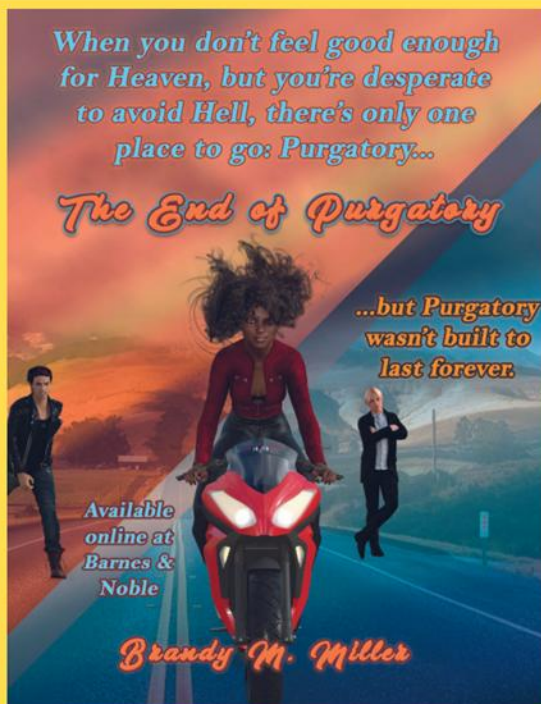
I wrote these stories over many years. Nothing was technically hard about it, but I do wish that I was more prolific and didn't take so long to write enough stories to collect together! That is hard sometimes. I wish I had the ability to write more often, to treat it as a job. I've never been able to do that. Though writing novels is forcing me to the desk more often.

Where can people buy your book?

It's on every major online platform, so folks can order it where they wish (even Target!). If you want to support your local bookstore, they will likely be able to order it. Also, if you can't afford it, ask your library to order the lovely hardcover library edition. It's been recommended to libraries, and they prefer hard cover books.

What will you be up to next?

I'm working on another WWII novel, this time for adults. I can't reveal the plot, but as with all my books, there will be social justice issues woven in. There is a lot we still have to learn about our complex history in the States. I hope to reveal it soon.



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