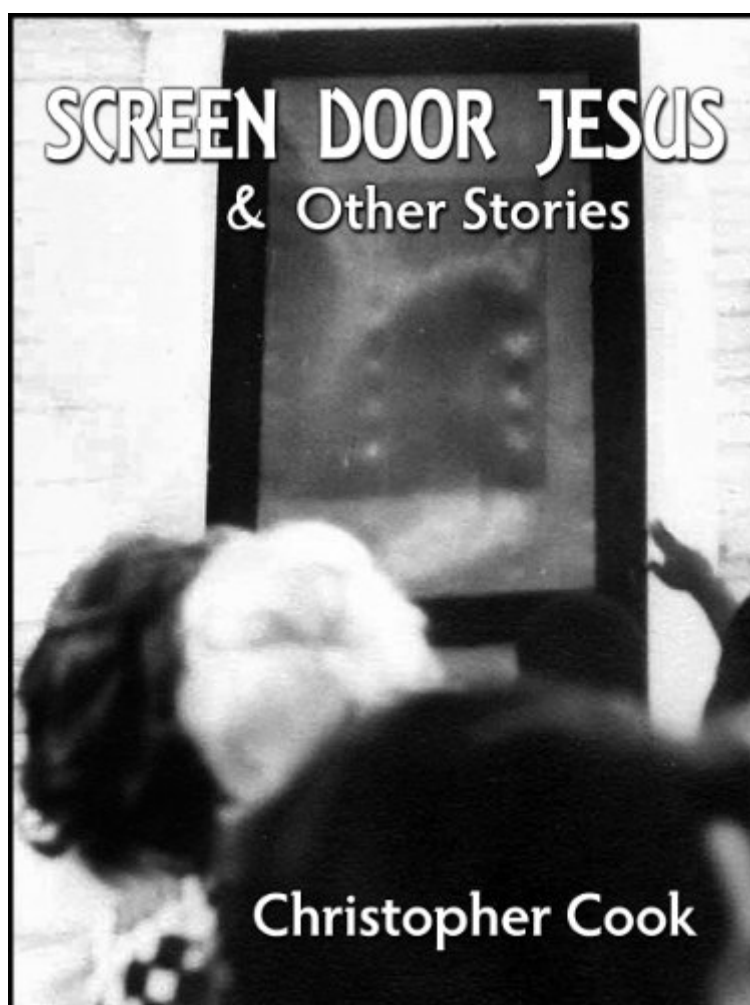


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Screen Door Jesus & Other Stories



Synopsis

“a lyric voice that sings itself raw.” The New York Times “a master of setting, characterization, dialogue and narrative.” The Dallas Morning News Blaise Pascal said, “Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.” And the Apostle Paul wrote, “We are fools for Christ’s sake.” So what happens when people apply their religion to life’s hard choices in the small East Texas town of Bethlehem, where churches of various denominations are located on almost every block? First comes a mysterious apparition of Jesus. Or is it? And is it a blessing or a curse? Then a woman turns into a snake. A wealthy banker confuses prudence with greed, with dire consequences. A woman has her grandchildren secretly baptized at a Holiness Tabernacle. A man is torn between his “sinful” TV watching and his fundamentalist wife. And an ethical young woman boldly confronts her rich father’s ambition. These are among the characters who appear in this entertaining and superbly written collection of 10 stories exploring small town religion and the human quest for dignity and meaning. Sometimes funny, often tragic, the resulting conflicts are deeply personal yet have social repercussions. In the end, one wonders if organized religion truly helps anyone on a spiritual journey. But one thing is certain. Award-winning author Christopher Cook profoundly understands the aspirations we all hold and the pitfalls endured as we try to live by our ideals while reconciling ourselves with the competing beliefs of others. And though the setting is richly specific “the culture of the Deep South” the stories engage us in universal truths as well as universal deceptions.

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Customer Reviews

This wonderful collection of stories goes on my "Must Read" list, and I'm recommending it to everyone I know. And I'm giving it away to friends as gifts. The stories are extraordinary. And the writing itself is terrific---clear and direct but also like music. Very few authors manage to write honest fiction/literature in which religious belief is the backdrop. And I don't mean what's called "Christian fiction" as a genre. I mean fiction that explores what it means to try to live spiritually when conventional religion seems to get in the way. I mean fiction that challenges us and makes us think even as it wildly entertains us! In these stories, critically acclaimed writer Christopher Cook manages not only to entertain, but also takes me inside characters who are ordinary people struggling to make sense of their religious beliefs in the context of everyday decisions, relationships, and conflicts with other people. And that's hard to do! You can't help but identify with them. I'm really happy to see this collection is now an e-book. Christopher Cook takes on very difficult emotional material head-on, and manages to do so in a life-affirming manner. I saw on his web site that he has a new e-book novella called "Storm" out and I'm excited to read it. I cannot recommend this writer more highly!

Christopher Cook is a superb storyteller. I first became acquainted, and inspired, by Cook's marvelous ability to yarn tales from his novella, 'Storm.' I quickly moved to another of his works, 'Screen Door Jesus,' and was equally impressed. 'Screen Door Jesus' is a collection of 10 short stories whose settings are in and around the small mythical Texas town of Bethlehem. Great stories include great names for their characters, and Cook introduces us to the likes of Mother Harper, Hank Jeters, Abner Huckaby and Mayor Boatwright, Jasper Beaudry, Uncle Booster, Luther, Doss, and Little Red, and a host of others. Cook uses his imagination to take us deep into the simple lives of small town people. I found the stories to be rather numinous in the sense that they allow the reader to encounter the sacredness of small town life and the joys and struggles of relationships. Like powerful music or an intricate dance, Cook's style of writing has beautiful timing and rhythm. His timely use of wit and humor softens any sharp edge that may have appeared in the

story. He shares vivid word pictures that stimulate the reader's senses. His marvelous and detailed description of the characters and settings help the reader empathize with the character's feelings. It is as though you are not reading about a story. Rather, you become part of the story. At its very core, great storytelling is a way of connecting people with similar experiences. Cook pulls this off magnificently. Each of Cook's stories amuses, entertains, inspires, and touches the soul. At the very least, they make you feel good.

A collection of ten, richly written and incredibly well-crafted, interweaving stories, set in the small town of Bethlehem, East Texas. Tales of ordinary folk struggling with the mundane, the marvellous, the comedy, the tragedy and the poetry of everyday life. A book to savour and return to.

Christopher Cook's stories resonate with authenticity. Although his characters often are steeped in rural communities, they ask questions and raise issues common to everyone who is alive and all who ponder why are we here and what are we supposed to do with our lives. His characters ask questions many of us are afraid to ask out loud, but their inquiries I suspect often leave readers comforted, knowing they are not alone in their own search for meaning. They have lots of company. And therein hangs Cook's wonderful tales. Cook has an ear for the rhythm of speech. By the end of this book, I found myself speaking with an accent and at a pace not normally mine. In short, Cook is a wonderful writer who can make you gasp as he introduces you to people who are new and yet so familiar. I was sad when I finished the book. I wanted more. I wasn't yet ready to leave the world Cook has expertly crafted in fine style.

Screen Door Jesus is the title story and wonderful it is, but my personal favorite is Arc of Flesh, Ascending and that's the beauty of these stories. You will enjoy them all, but two or three will stay with you throughout your life. That's truly memorable writing, to have that power over memory. They are Southern stories and Cook is a child of the South, born and raised in East Texas and now an International man, but never far from those Southern roots. Integrity as an author comes from deep down and it's never a reach for Christopher Cook. Read, enjoy and be transported. By Jlm Freeman, author of Letters from Ceilia

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