



Under a Cloudless Sky

Chris Fabry

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A charming and engrossing novel for fans of Southern fiction and the recent hit memoir *Hillbilly Elegy* about a lush and storied coal-mining town—and the good people who live there—in danger of being destroyed for the sake of profit. Will the truth about the town's past be its final undoing or its saving grace?

1933. In the mining town of Beulah Mountain, West Virginia, two young girls form an unbreakable bond against the lush Appalachian landscape, coal dust and old hymns filling their lungs and hearts. Despite the polarizing forces of their fathers—one a mine owner, one a disgruntled miner —Ruby and Bean thrive under the tender care of Bean's mama, blissfully unaware of the rising conflict in town and the coming tragedy that will tear them apart forever.

2004. Hollis Beasley is taking his last stand. Neighbors up and down the hollow have sold their land to Coleman Coal and Energy, but Hollis is determined to hold on to his family legacy on Beulah Mountain. Standing in his way is Buddy Coleman, an upstart mining executive who hopes to revitalize the dying town by increasing coal production and opening the Company Store Museum. He'll pay homage to the past—even the massacre of 1933—while positioning the company for growth at all costs.

What surprises them all is how their stories will intersect with a feisty octogenarian living hundreds of miles away. When Ruby Handley Freeman's grown children threaten her independence, she takes a stand of her own and disappears, propelling her on a journey to face a decades-old secret that will change everything for her and those she meets.

Under a Cloudless Sky Details

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Author : Chris Fabry

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From Reader Review Under a Cloudless Sky for online ebook

Helen says

Under a Cloudless Sky, by Chris Fabry, is a very well written story of a coal mining town in West Virginia. The story focuses on Ruby, an 80 year old lady who left the town the day after the massacre, as a young girl, and has never been back. The story is told through the happenings of Ruby and her childhood friend Bean during 1933. As well as during 2004. Ruby is the daughter of an owner of the mine and Bean is the daughter of a miner.

When Ruby's children decide it is time to take her car keys away from her, she makes the decision to go back to attend the dedication of the Company Store being turned into a museum. When she gets back to Beulah Mountain, she goes through the Company Store as well as the apartment she and her father lived in and the third floor of the building. One of the guides tells her the story they will tell others of what happened with the massacre on the third floor in 1933. They do not listen to her when she tells them it is not what happened. What she has to say will affect so many people. But the truth comes out.

This is an exceptional story. It pulls you right into it and is very hard to put down. The friendship Ruby and Bean had was unusual, Ruby was a wealthy girl, while Bean's family struggled for everything they had. While Ruby's father wanted to run a mine that help the miners, his partner was only concerned about himself and money. I just really enjoyed this story! It is a story of friendship, faith, family and forgiveness. With this being a Christian Fiction, it is not preachy. I think anyone who enjoys reading stories set in the Appalachians will greatly enjoy this story.

I received a copy of this book from Tyndale Publishing, this is my honest review.

Elizabeth Dennison says

The present and the past meet in this book about a Southern Coal mining town fighting to survive in a time where the big companies rule. We meet several very interesting characters in this storyline. Two of them are Hollis Beasley, a landowner who is fighting to keep the land that his family had owned for years. Also feisty Ruby Handley Freeman whose children think that she is need of some fresh direction her life. Two very different people both taking a stand for something in their lives, paths that have crossed in the past.

The storyline goes back and forth from 1933 to 2004, telling a story from the childhood of dear 83 yr old Ruby. A story that has been hidden for years and is now begging to be told to her loved ones. The truth that has been kept quiet of what happened the day of the Massacre of 1933. Hollis's granddaughter has a interest in writing a article for the memorial that is being set up for the victims of the massacre. When she reaches out with an invitation to Ruby to come to the grand opening of the Company Store Museum. She is turned down with a flat "no", but this has Ruby thinking about her past and going back to where she came from to visit. After some issues with her children, Ruby decides to go back to the mining town of Beulah Mountain. Ruby's journey is a hard one, with some bumps and bruises on the way. Along the way her children realize they are taking their mother for granted and have forgotten to think of her as a person.

Hollis is having to make a decision does he hold onto the land or provide a more comfortable life for his precious wife who was struggling to live thru each day. As he watches all his neighbors sell out to the big

company that has come to rejuvenate his beloved Beulah mountain. His stance is interrupted by a proclaimed savior for the town, who is looking to make profit off of the coal in the area.

Unbeknownst to both of these characters their lives are going to intersect with each other. The childhood friends Ruby and Bean's story will reveal the truth of that fatal day in 1933.

Chris Fabry has taken a story and presented it in a very amazing way that grabs the readers attention and takes them to the end with a very surprising twist.

"I voluntarily reviewed a copy of this book provided by Tyndale Blog Network. A favorable review was not required. All views expressed are my own."

Jessica Higgins says

A remarkable story bringing past and present events that collide that can only be reconciled with forgiveness.

In 1933, the mining town of Beulah Mountain, West Virginia has its shares of ups and downs. The mine owners have the ups and the workers have the downs. But not all owners are unfair. Jacob Handley agreed to be a financial backer of the mine if he could put measures in place that would make it more fair for the workers, including housing, food and supplies from a company store, etc. However, other members felt that increasing the bottom line was the primary goal by whatever means necessary. Even so, a friendship between Handley's daughter, Ruby, and one of the mine workers daughters named Bean struck up and became inseparable. Through Bean's mama and their church, Ruby became saved and was baptized. They were inseparable, until an unfortunate series of events set a massacre in place that would change their lives forever.

Several decades later in 2004, Hollis Beasley is trying to prevent the land in Beulah Mountain from being bought out by Coalman Coal and Energy. Unfortunately, the company has deep pockets with roots in the tax appraisal office that is making it impossible for the land owners to pay taxes on their land, forcing many to sell. Ruby Handley Freedman now lives in Kentucky and is fighting her children to keep her independence. Having not been back to Beulah Mountain since the massacre, the town has changed and the historical society has refurbished her old childhood home above the company store as a museum. Feeling the need to return for forgiveness as well as to prove to her children that she can still take care of herself, Ruby takes off with no notice to head to Beulah Mountain. This decision starts a series of events that will change everyone's lives in Beulah Mountain just as the day she left.

I have never been disappointed in a book by Chris Fabry, so it comes as no surprise that I quickly devoured this one as well. With a resounding theme of forgiveness throughout the book, Fabry weaves a tragic story planted with a seed of hope. I was so caught up in both stories that I couldn't pick which one I wanted to follow more. Fabry also did a great job taking me back to 2004 with the reference to Switchfoot as well as a few other tidbits such as internet browsers of the past. You don't realize how much you forget until you're confronted with it again. And yes, Meant to Live is still playing in my head now much like it did then.

Ruby's story was humorous, suspenseful, and downright terrifying at times. To hear about the poor treatment

of people at any time in history (or present) is never an enjoyable experience. However, we must learn what happened or we are doomed to repeat it. I also liked that he showed how people prefer to sugarcoat the bad and focus on the good. By understanding this, we can look past the surface and see the hurt that people are facing.

I always enjoy books that allow me to have a bit of a prediction and this one was no exception. I'm happy to say that my prediction of the story came true. However, there was a twist that also happened as part of the prediction, which made it even better. Be sure to pick up a copy of this great new book for 2018. You'll be glad you did.

I received a complimentary copy of this book from the publisher. The views and opinions expressed within are my own.

Fizzy says

Oh for the love of gravy, I have no idea how I want to review this book. I really really liked it for so many reasons I really can't tell you. I mean, let's face it, there are things I question and some concerns I have but there are so many other things that I just take with the wind and don't even second guess. I mean, truly that's the way it is most of the time right? The problem is I don't have the words, any words much less all the words, to guide you through my time spent bonding with this book.

Here's the deal. Let's start simple shall we. I love how the author set the book up with himself as the narrator and each chapter having a date and time and a snippet of what is happening. For example:

Hollis takes the long way home
Beluah Mountain, West Virginia
Friday, October 1, 2004

That's important because some of the things take place in other areas. It's also important because it helps to create a seamless transition between then (1933) and now (2004). Let's talk about those transitions shall we. They were seamless, each part of the story blended to the next, regardless of the date, in such a way that it was almost magical. It drew you like a moth to the flame but saved you from getting burnt. Each time period had scenes that were liveable, I could picture myself in their moments, bells even in their shoes as the characters were very well developed too boot.

Storyline, I have to go there. I was about halfway through the book and on the phone with Kristin (you know this is a thing!) and I had already figured out one of the twists. Oh, yeah there are more twists and turns, hills and valleys than a county road through the Ozark Mountains (if you have never driven around Branson, MO you have no idea the crazy that is possible in road creation) but they are way easier on the tummy. Now back to Kristin, she's already read the book. In my infinite wisdom I tell her that I am going to tell her the outcome of 'Thing 1' (I'm not giving you spoilers!) and she has to tell me if I'm right just yes or no. Well the big Thing, Thing 1, totally nailed it before I was half done with the book. I think I impressed her with my mad skills and all. Probably not. Anyway, I had an inkling of a smaller but just as vital 'Thing 2'. So I ask her and she says no. And she LIED to me! Lied I tell ya. She swears that she misunderstood my question and said her headache made her do it (ya right) but I was seriously doubting my deductive reasoning skills.

Now that you seriously doubt my sanity and words putting together skills I'm going to leave you with some

closing thoughts. Never assume anything. Never leave a partially finished story on the table. When you do someone else might come through and rewrite the world you thought you knew. Never get so into who you think you are that you forget who you really are. This book embraced everything that I respect in fiction, real yet flawed characters with heart and soul and spunk and intelligence. There was that one thing that happened in the middle that enhanced the story not one wit but did create the endgame so to speak, it was a necessary distraction from the bigger picture (that could have been handled a number of different ways but still probably just a distraction). This book has a glimmer of coming of age that tangos with mystery and a slice of intrigue but cozies up as just an amazing weekend read.

I was provided a complimentary copy of this book by Tyndale House Publishers. I was not compensated for this review and all thoughts and opinions expressed are my own. I was not required to write a positive review.

Originally published at <https://fizzypopcollection.com/under-....>

Christine says

The story of a dying coal mining town is both haunting and hopeful. Ruby as a character is great -I wish her daughter had been developed a little more.
Thoroughly enjoyed this one.

Mary Jackson _TheMaryReader says

You're in for a treat with this book. Fabulous, fantastic, you won't put it down.
You have to read Bean and Ruby's story. Their stories intersect very well.
Some of you will not see the end coming. You will be blown away with the ending!
Not only does this need to be a movie, so much of it rings true to the coal mining area I lived in for many years. This has to be one of the very best researched books. The details are so vivid and it reads like no fiction book I have read in the past.
If you read Hillbilly Elegy and enjoyed it, you are going to LOVE Under a Cloudless Sky it's so much better. This is a 5 star two times book. I HIGHLY recommend this book!
The Mary Reader received this book from the publisher for review. A favorable review was not required and all views expressed are our own.

Sarah says

The first book I read by Chris Fabry was June Bug. It was an excellent story, which turned me into a fan. That's why I chose to review his latest book, and I just finished it last night.

It's a gentle mystery, set in the Appalachian Mountains. I attended college near there, and the slow pace, scenery, and draws match what I have in my memory. The story swings back and forth like a pendulum between 1933 and 2004, and does so with ease. It weaves friendship, tragedy, and faith together in a beautiful tapestry.

In 1933, Ruby and Bean are two kindred sisters from different worlds. Ruby's father owns the general store in a coal mining town. She's a well-to-do town girl. Bean is from a poor family, living hand-to-mouth due to her father's drinking and carousing. The two girls love one another and dream together.

The coal mining company controls the people in 1933 and in 2004. Hollis is fighting for the right to keep his land. His parents had deep roots here, and his son died in a mining accident. He can't let go, even though moving away may be better for his ailing wife's health.

In 2004, Ruby is an 84-year-old woman who is strong in her faith. Though her two adult children have just taken her keys away, she sets out on a mission to return to Beulah Mountain, where the massacre happened decades ago. Her story takes intriguing twists and turns, which lead to the truth about the mining company in both 1933 and 2004.

What I Enjoyed Most about Under a Cloudless Sky

This story deftly weaves the past and present together. It talks about friendship, dedication, and conviction. I was drawn in, chapter by chapter, by the slowly unfolding mystery. It kept me up later than normal last night, but it was definitely worth it.

He writes tenderly about Ruby, and I appreciate his insight into an elderly person's challenges. The mountain-style metaphors and interesting side story lines gave this book extra interest. I also enjoyed pondering what life was like for these hard-pressed people in American history.

This author's note wraps up the story nicely:

I host a radio program called Chris Fabry Live. I've noticed, through the years, that many callers who are up in years will confide, with the right prompting, some difficult thing that happened years ago that they've never revealed to anyone...As callers reveal themselves, I hear it in their voices. There is something taken from them in the telling, a load they have carried for decades...I often wonder why it took so long to put it there and if someone they know and love will help them move forward.

If you're looking for a new fiction read that's clean, historically based, and thought-provoking, Under a Cloudless Sky is a great choice.

Thanks goes out to Tyndale Fiction for a free review copy of this wonderful book.

Joyce says

Chris Fabry has written many books, is a best-selling author and hosts his own show on Moody Radio. This is my first read of his, hopefully the first of many.

This is the story of two girls, best friends, in a coal-mining town in West Virginia, and what became of them. It is a fictitious story from the author's imaginings based on the lives of real people.

To be perfectly honest I did not enjoy reading this book. But this is one of those books that stays with you and the characters grow in the reader's mind revealing the depth of the writing, which means it is very good.

The story is dark in places, and deep, real life; with a hint of hope, faith and love. I love the use of the hymn

Beulah Land in the book.

It was difficult to keep track of the characters and understand the connections until the end (no spoilers). That is also a sign of good writing. By the end of the book I understood, and continue to understand as I mull it over.

The parallel time periods might have been clearer if the chapter headings were larger, more bold. I'm tempted to re-read the book just to get the flow now that it makes sense. I think it was necessary to write this way to convey the message of the book, which is tightly woven into the story and characters, which are vivid, and the action moves right along.

I identified most with the character of Frances. What character did you like best?

I recommend this book for all readers of historical and Christian fiction, young and old. There's something in this book for every reader. I received this book from Tyndale House Publishers in exchange for my honest review. My opinions are my own.

Janice Dick says

When I pick up a book written by Chris Fabry, I expect a good read, and *Under a Cloudless Sky* was no exception. An intriguing plot full of completely unexpected turns, layered characters, well-described settings, all combine to create an excellent experience.

Rick says

New book by Chris Fabry? Yes, I think I will pick it up and spend the weekend reading this one. Thank you very much!

I'll admit that I'm not a big fan of books that flip back and forth from one time period to another. Heck, I don't even like watching shows on TV that go back and forth like that. For this book, though, it really worked and I was able to stay with the story line without getting lost (that's saying a lot of me). There's always something about a new Chris Fabry book that envelopes me when I sit down and crack it open. The story flows, the plot is flawless and the characters are flawed but redeemed in the end. Throw in a great twist at the end of this book and you have something that will make you GO BUY THIS BOOK!!!

Is this a "guy's book"? I won't say that this is a must read for any guy, but I will tell you that you will have missed out on a terrific story if you don't pick this one up.

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free from the publisher in exchange for my honest opinion, as part of their Book Review Blogger Program. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255: "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."

Pamela says

"Blood was the price paid and coal was the prize. Miners' families were collateral damage in a war against the earth itself . . ."

There are a few things preventing me from giving this addictively readable book a solid four star rating. Mostly minor niggles: choppy (but not sloppy) chapter-transitions; cut-and-splice fractured timeline - a pet peeve of mine; minor line-editing hiccups; Nothing tragic.

"Some things in life are good and some are bad and they all get thrown into the stew and you try to eat around the gristle. God doesn't give us the option of a Sunday Potluck where you pick what you want and leave the rest."

I've teetered back and forth between a three and four star rating. Three seems kinda harsh, considering the high, Goodreads average rating for this particular novel. Yet four would be a bit too generous - comparing apples to apples. Because there is a BIG DOOZY glitch I cannot overlook: an unresolved major plot point/twist WOWZER that was left lamely hanging.

Now, in all fairness, the WOWZER gas station "event" was a good one. It ramped up suspense and kept me turning pages lickity-split to find out what would happen to Ruby on the road to Beulah. It was well placed and primarily written aptly. But then..... the WOWZER suddenly (and conveniently) resolved - serendipitously and heroically, I might add - then simply faded into the background to nothing. Which made it seem like the whole thing was simply written in by suggestion of the editor to give some oomph to the plot and ramp up suspense. A gimmicky ploy, in my opinion.

HOWEVER . . . I'm in the minority. Everyone has their own bait and hook, tolerance levels. Mine leaves little room for manipulative shortcuts. Of course, it could be that I'm being overly persnickety. After all, I enjoyed the book - primarily.

I was fully invested in the story, and thought the narrative and relationship tangles rang true. It was entertaining and addictively readable. I kept wanting to know more and more about Ruby and Bean, Esau Script, the Shoes upstairs, and how it was all going to play out between the past and the present, the mine owners and miners, Ruby and her daughter Frances.

So in essence, even with the BIG DOOZY, I still found this a good read.

THREE **** Addictively Readable with a Charming, Curmudgeonly Main Character, and a Fascinating, Unique Story . . . But with a few Dents and Dings ****STARS

Amy says

Under a Cloudless Sky is an incredible read. I could not put it down. Ruby's story is one a reader would never forget. It has quite a twist and turn I did not see coming nor expect. Ruby endured so much when she was young and her story goes back and forth from 1933 to 2004.

Under a Cloudless Sky will definitely be among my favorite books for 2018. I definitely highly highly recommend it. I would give it 100 stars if I could.

I received this book from the publisher. This review was 100 percent my own honest opinion.

Gail Welborn says

a multilayered story of love, loss, forgiveness and the cost of guilt & reconciliation

Chris Fabry, award-winning author of the “War Room” takes “readers back to his Appalachian roots” in “Under a Cloudless Sky,” a compelling mystery of murder, long-held secrets and greed. It’s also the story of sex abuse, a mysterious massacre and the strong bond of friendship between two pre-teen girls from very different backgrounds; Ruby, the daughter of a mine owner and Bean, the daughter of a miner. The focus is on change, the small mining town of Beulah Mountain, West Virginia and the people who live there with a back story that weaves between 1933 and 2004.

The five-part story begins “in the summer of 1933...shortly before the massacre.” Ruby and Bean, distracted by a beautiful deer with spotted fawns, were late for church. They reminded each other if they didn’t hurry they would miss “Beulah,” their favorite hymn.

Bean’s mother sat in her usual spot inside the church and they slipped in beside her, one on either side just in time to hear their favorite hymn. Bean’s mother, late in her pregnancy, would have been more comfortable without them, but she “spread her wings like a mother hen” and held them close as the singing ended. When the congregation quieted, and the pastor began his sermon a commotion was heard through the open windows, “...the audible voices of miners shouting for help.”

Thus, begins a story of faith, guilt, forgiveness and corporate greed as the people of Beulah Mountain are forced to sell family-owned land to Coalman Coal and Energy because of rising property taxes, job loss and hardship they blamed on the government. However, Hollis Beasley is determined to hang on and he refuses mining executive, Buddy Coleman’s terms. Even though Buddy claims he will increase coal production, provide jobs and revitalize the town, which will begin with the Company Store Museum’s grand opening.

An invitation to the opening draws Ruby back to Beulah Mountain, a town she never thought she would return to, her fingers now “bent and gnarled from arthritis,” her world threatened when her son and daughter conspire to take her car keys away. They said it was for her own good, but her independence would go out the door with the keys and she couldn’t allow that because she “had to go back to make things right.”

This feisty octogenarian’s multilayered story of love, loss and forgiveness reveals cherished secrets and the cost of guilt and reconciliation. It’s also a poignant story of innocence, good people in hard circumstances, misunderstood family relationships, deeply buried wounds and the healing of God’s grace. A definite must read!

‘Under a Cloudless Sky,’ by Chris Fabry, Tyndale House Publishers, January 9, 2018, 383 Pages, 978-1414387789, \$9.82

“Gail’s Bookshelf” Midwest Book Reviews: "December 2017"

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Anthony Jackson says

This was an awesome read. I don't think I have read a book by Fabry that I didn't like. The characters and the plot was well thought out. It was also a special read for me because the setting of this book was where my wife is from. I absolutely loved this book.

Kristin says

Note: Kristin reads and reviews both Christian and secular fiction on A Simply Enchanted Life. Out of respect for my readers, I am including a content review. This content review will help you decide whether this book is suitable for you.

Content Review:

Christian or Secular: Christian

Profanity: None

Sex: See below.

Violence: Domestic violence, sexual abuse and murder.

Trigger Warnings: Sexual violence against women is a topic in this book. A woman becomes pregnant and is beaten to death. A young child and her father are shot and killed.

Disclosure: This book deals with hard topics that some may find upsetting. Despite the theme, this book is appropriate for the Christian genre. There's no foul language and the topic is handled as delicately as one can.

Sometimes you read a book and have to write the review right away. Other times, you need to think—to heal, to consider what the book was teaching you. This was such a book for me.

This book has a raw edge that I found unnerving. I was reminded of some of the classics—the ones that were so good at ripping your heart out and stomping on it. These were characters that I could love and a story so intriguing that I couldn't put the book down.

The dual timeline flowed seamlessly between 2004 and 1933. There was no confusion as the author delicately shifted from past to present. I appreciated how easily the story transitioned—not abruptly but with a sense of nostalgia and regret.

The conclusion is one that I did not see coming. I read a lot of fiction and as a voracious reader—it's fairly rare that I am surprised. I was delightfully stunned by the ending.

I really wanted to give this book a five. In fact, I changed my rating on Goodreads several times. I was so

conflicted. Did I really like this story or was it amazing? I still feel uncertain and thus, I'm choosing to give this book a rating of 4.5. The reason for this is that a certain plotline seemed, "too good to be true."
[spoiler]Ruby discovering her brother survived the brutal attack that killed their mother.[/spoiler] Though part of me was thrilled by this moment all the same.

I really did like this book and I would suggest it for others who don't mind gritty, true-to-life Christian Fiction.

A complimentary copy of this book was provided by Tyndale. I was not required to write a positive review, and have not been compensated for this. All opinions are my own.

This review was originally posted on A Simply Enchanted Life.
