



Hello,

August was a whirlwind for me. The highlight was attending the American Christian Fiction Writer (ACFW) conference in the shadow of the Gateway Arch in St. Louis.

I was honored as a semi-finalist in the Genesis contest for unpublished novelists, but didn't win. I made some great friends and attended several workshops.

One workshop explained how to make a better newsletter. You are reading my first effort to improve it. Did you notice the new header and tag line? I hope to bring you historical fiction short stories and books that are friendly to the Christian faith. Here are other changes I will be making in the weeks ahead:

- Book reviews and recommendations for books by other historical and biblical fiction authors. (Biblical fiction is simply historical fiction connected to the Bible. It is a separate category on Amazon.)
- Promotions from other authors that can save you money on their books.
- Providing you a monthly newsletter instead of a quarterly newsletter.
- Free short stories from other authors. I am exploring this idea and hope to introduce you to some of the other new authors I met at ACFW.

Of course, I will still include a short story in every edition, but it will be [moved to the end of the newsletter](#).

Some of these changes will take some time to implement.

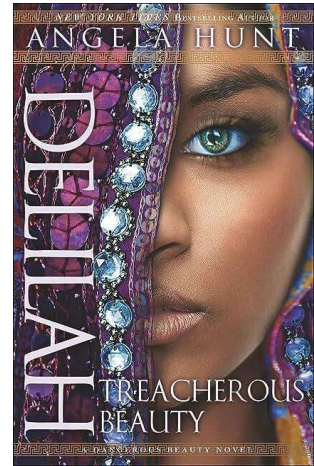
Writing Updates

The greatest advantage to being a semi-finalist in the Genesis contest is the score sheets and comments from the judges. Six different people – either a published author, editor or agent – judged my submission. In addition to improving the newsletter, I plan to eagerly review their comments. I'm sure edits are in my future!

Recommended for You!

Delilah, Treacherous Beauty is a fictional account of the Samson and Delilah story in the Old Testament. Angela Hunt provides a back story for Delilah, as she goes from riches to rags in ancient Philistia. The point of view switches between Delilah and Samson throughout the story.

One of the intriguing points is Delilah's awareness of Samson long before he is aware of her. Hunt also creates a story that provides Delilah's motivation for surrendering Samson, whom she loves. (How's that for a twist?) The book includes a section at the end with historical notes and a bibliography.



Hunt has published well over 100 books, both nonfiction and fiction (in different genres.) If you haven't tried one of her books, give *Delilah* a try!

Promos

OK, I don't have any promos in this letter. I left this section in as my promise to you. I will need to gather information from other authors on their promotional pricing.

Thanks for your interest in my writing!

So, what do you think of the changes I'm planning for the newsletter? What can make it a better value to you?

Short Story by Elmer Fuller

Climbing the Tree

Ann stared up the gnarled tree trunk at the branches waving to the summer clouds flying over the lone oak on the edge of the Missouri prairie. She swayed and pressed both hands against the bark and her stomach knotted. The wind fluttered the hem of her dress against her shins and she wiped sweaty palms down the front.

“You gotta climb it.” Her brother George wiped his rolled shirt sleeve across his brow and planted his hands on the hips of his homespun pants.

“I’m too little,” Ann said. “I’m only eight.”

“Don’t matter. You gotta climb it.”

“I don’t wanna climb it. You climb it.”

“I climbed it yesterday and the day before that. You gotta do it today.”

“But I’m too little. I can’t reach it.”

“That’s what the ladder leaning against the first limb is for. Climb the ladder. Get on the limb and then you can climb the tree.”

The rough, wooden ladder leaned against the lowest limb jutting toward the cabin a short distance away. George had cobbled it together the night before. Told Momma the ladder would let her climb the tree so he could milk the cow and chop wood.

She shook her head. George was so unfair. He climbed the tree all the time, even when he didn’t have to. He could jump, catch the limb and pull himself up. Why didn’t Pa cut it down when he built the cabin? It would have been easier to use it than haul all the other logs from the creek with the horses.

The ends of the branches stirred and creaked in the wind. She’d never climbed the oak, never wanted to. It was too high. She crossed her arms. “I’m not gonna do it.”

George shook his head, rolled his eyes and raised his voice. “Do you want Momma to spank you? She said you had to climb the tree today.”

Her face twisted into a frown. “I wish Pa was here.”

“Me too, but he has to hide the horses. Now climb the ladder.” He pointed with his arm straight, just like Pa did when he told her to pull weeds in the garden.

She stomped to the ladder and grabbed the roughcut board. “Ow!” A splinter stuck from the base of her thumb. She cradled the hand to her chest and her eyes watered.

“Here, let me see.” George peered at her hand, gripped the splinter with his fingernails and plucked it out. She sniffled and he rummaged for his handkerchief and daubed the blood away.

“George, don’t make me climb the tree.” Her voice wavered and a tear ran down her cheek.

He sighed and patted her back. “It’s gotta be. You know that. You’ll do fine. Want me to help you up?”

She nodded slowly, wiped her eyes and turned to the ladder.

“Put your foot up.” He stepped behind her and lifted her under the arms.

“Thanks, George.” She climbed up the ladder to the limb.

“Now, hold the limb above and stand on the lower limb.”

She stepped out onto the jutting limb and swayed. She clutched the upper limb to her chin and her heart beat like a galloping horse.

“See that other limb just around the tree behind you?”

“Yes.”

“Put your foot there and climb onto it.

“But I’ll have to let go.”

“You can do it. Wrap your arms around the trunk.”

“I . . . I don’t think I can.”

“Yes, you can. You can leave one hand on the limb you’re holding, steady yourself against the trunk with the other. When you step up on it, you can grab that higher branch.”

She inched closer to the trunk, lifted her foot and stretched it behind her. “I can’t reach it.”

“Yes, you can. You need to let go of the limb with your left hand and turn.”

“Do I have to?”

“You know you do. It’s the only way.”

It was so unfair. Momma and Pa both said she had to climb the tree. Why couldn’t George keep doing it? She pursed her lips. The limb was too far behind her unless she did what George said. The fingers of her left hand lifted off the limb. She reached back, hugged the trunk and her foot settled into place.

“Now step over and grab that other limb.”

George made it sound so easy. She shoved herself away from the first limb, stepped up and slapped her hand onto the higher branch. She sucked a breath through her teeth.

“See, you’re doing fine. That’s the worst part.”

Her next step used a notch between branches. It was easier. George called out directions and she pulled, pushed and clawed herself up the tree.

“You did it. Sit down on that limb. What do you see?”

Near the cabin a corn field waved in the wind. In the distance a line of trees marked the creek. “I see Momma walking toward the field.” The wind swept the hair out of her face and she giggled. Had she really climbed so high? Was this why George loved to climb the tree? A tingle ran across her shoulders.

“And in the other direction?” George’s mouth hung open in his upturned face.

Shallow hills stretched to the horizon with wind-driven waves crawling through the grass covering them. “Nothing.”

“You remember what to look for right?”

“Yeah. Any group of people on horses or in wagons.”

“That’s right. Don’t matter if they wear dark blue or gray or look like normal folk. And where do you look?”

“All around.”

“That right. Don’t just look at the normal track we take to Morristown. They could come from any direction. What do you do if you see someone?”

“I yell as loud as I can.”

“That’s right. I’ll be back a little later to check on you.”

“George?”

“Yeah?”

“Will the Kansans really hurt us?”

“That’s what Pa says. Their brigade shot Mr. Johnson, stole his horses and a bunch stuff from their house. Then they burned it down. The Johnsons didn’t even own a slave. They were Union people just like us, but it didn’t matter. The Kansans are out for blood and thieving.” He walked to the wood pile beside the cabin and started splitting stove wood.

The limb she sat on swayed gently in the breeze. Pa had warned that ruffians and bushwhackers would cause a war. She didn’t know what a ruffian or a bushwhacker

was, but they must have started it. And what was a war? George said it was men killing each other and Pa could be forced to fight. She drew a deep breath, “God, keep us safe from war.”

Historical Note: This story is set in Cass County, Missouri at the beginning of the Civil War. Lane's Kansas Brigade marched through thirteen Missouri counties. They freed slaves, but also stole horses and wagon loads of supplies and home goods in an indiscriminate campaign according to *Cinders and Silence, A Chronicle of Missouri's Burnt District*, Tom A Rafiner, Burnt District Press, Harrisonville, MO. During the war, many families posted children in trees and rooftops to watch for armed forces.

Did you like this story? What questions do you have? Please reply, I'd love to hear from you!

Follow me on social media or visit my web site.



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