

Three very different, very good books

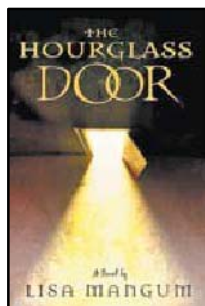
"The Hourglass Door"
by Lisa Mangum (Shadow Mountain, 2009, \$18.95)

THIS BOOK HAS been available since May 13, so it is just now hitting the shelves of your favorite bookstore. Fans of Stephanie Meyers' "Twilight" series will love this first-time author. An English major who obviously knows her classics, she draws on Dante's "Inferno," Shakespeare and others to weave a wonderful story of mystery and romance. Mangum knows how to write a romantic encounter that makes even my 60-plus-year-old heart flutter and her mastery of metaphor and simile are without parallel. Written for the younger set, they may have to fight Grandma for first crack at this book.

Sweet, smart, girl-next-door American girl Abby seems to have it all. She has a great (although thoroughly predictable) boyfriend she's known since childhood, a plethora of friends and a bright future ahead of her as she waits to receive her acceptance letter for college. Then enters Dante, an unpredictable, charming, Italian exchange student who soon captures her heart.

As soon as he enters the story in Chapter 2, the "Twilight" reader cannot help comparing this marvelous creature to Edward. However, as much as he is like Edward, he is not. I repeat, not a vampire. But Italian, 17 years old, dreamboat — I knew at once this charming guy was going to bring not only romance but also danger and mystery to our young heroine.

Among Leonardo Da Vinci's many inventions was a time machine, capable of transporting forward in time. Dante is one of those timeless beings who has been portaled more than 500 years into the future, but he is not alone and, unfortunately, those who have come with him are dangerous, and as weird unexplainable events start to happen to her friends and herself, she and Dante join forces to try to save the sanity and safety of her friends. Although all of the visitors would like to return home, the Hourglass Door will only open



one way. They are stuck in time. Abby accidentally discovers that she has powers she never dreamed of. Perhaps even the power to open the portal, which puts her in even more danger of Dante's treacherous companions.

Of course, the author leaves us with a cliff-hanger, which will make waiting for the sequel in summer 2010 agony for the reader, but will give us something to look forward to in the meantime.

"How to Build a Dinosaur" by Jack Horner and James Gorman (Dutton, 2009, \$24.95)

This book soon convinced me that science really can be stranger than fiction.

Montana paleontologist Jack Horner is convinced that the chicken and a lot of DNA magic can re-create a dinosaur and before you shake your head and scoff, you better read his book. The subtitle is "Extinction Doesn't Have to Be Forever." Hmmm, that's a scary thought.

However, as Horner walks us through the evidence it becomes more and more plausible based on research and a relatively new field of paleontology called molecular paleobiology. "So how do we build a dinosaur? One way is to start with a simple chicken egg and biochemically nudge the embryo this way and that until what hatches has a tail, teeth and forearms instead of wings. Behold: Chickenosaurus."

At one time, paleontology consisted of digging up bones and trying to reconstruct them into their proper order to see what dinosaurs looked like; we've all seen the pictures and probably even visited a museum or two

Regional Reads

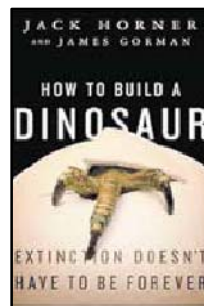
By Charlene Hirschi



that had such a skeleton on display. However, with the discovery of soft tissue dating back 68 million years, several windows of possibility have opened up. The object of study, which has been affectionately dubbed B. Rex, was found by one of Horner's colleagues in the Hell Creek Formation east of Bozeman, Mont.

Horner reminds us that science is not about answers, but about questions. The more we know or think we know, the more questions become apparent that need answered. He is absolutely convinced it is possible to manipulate DNA in the lab and create (not clone) a small dinosaur. If you are like me, you probably thought dinosaurs came in one size: huge. But this book not only opens the mind to the possibilities of this research, but to the history of this earth and the animals that walked it millions of years ago.

No matter what your stand may be on evolution, this book is a totally captivating read. The fossil evidence is intriguing, the writing is superb and the topic is spellbinding. With the help of science writer James Gorman, the topic, which could be heavy and boring, ignites the imagination with the possibilities. He also assures the reader they will never create a "Jurassic Park" disaster as recounted in Michael Crichton's book and Spielberg's movies. That was pure science fiction,



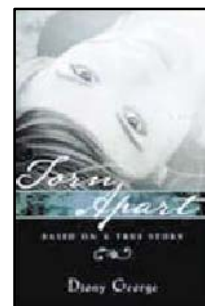
but to add credibility to Homer's stature in the world of science and paleontology, he was the expert consultant for the movies. I started as a skeptic and came away a believer in at least the possibility.

"Torn Apart" by Diony George (Bonneville Books, 2009, \$17.99)

Based on the true-life story of the author, we are reminded once again of the pernicious nature of pornography. A forward by Richard Paul Evans reads: "Pornography is a trap that is distorting truth, clouding minds and damaging whomever it touches." While the book deals with a dark secret, it is not a dark read. As a reader I came away educated and sympathetic to the characters in the book, even the husband who was caught up in the web of deceit and lies.

Alyson is a few weeks shy of 17 when she meets the handsome Jared. A returned missionary with dark secrets, Alyson has some doubts about Jared from the beginning. The age difference and his sometimes compulsive, unexplained behavior make her wonder if this is really the right person for her. But eventually he wins her over, and they are married in the Salt Lake temple.

The trouble begins on their honeymoon night, when Alyson presents Jared with a letter she had written years before at a youth conference. "At the end of the (class on dating), the teacher challenged each youth to write a letter to their future spouse, to make the person more real. The premise was that over the dating years, the letter could help guide their choices. When they found the person they would marry,



nothing in their past would cast a shadow over the relationship. He told them to keep the letter somewhere safe and on their wedding night, present it to their spouse before going to bed."

Alyson is shocked and hurt when Jared reads the innermost feelings of her heart and withdraws from her, emotionally and physically. Instead of bringing them closer together, she has unwittingly triggered the guilt that will follow them for the next several years of their marriage. Her total innocence and love for Jared become a constant reminder of his own unworthiness.

It is not unusual for someone with a serious sin or pornography habit to marry someone like Alyson, pure and chaste, thinking marriage to this person will help him/her overcome his/her habit. (Yes, women also succumb to this addiction, although to a somewhat lesser degree.) It is also not unusual for that person to keep the secrets and return to the habits they have so desperately wanted to overcome. This book is well written and not seamy or vulgar in any way. I recommend it for parents and young men and women who need to be warned of the dangers and the tell-tale signs of pornography addiction.

Diony George is very brave to tell this story, as she writes: "Sharing this personal story was difficult and painful at times, but if it can save even one other person's life, marriage or family from the pain, heartache and destructive effects pornography addiction causes, then sharing it will be worth it."

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