

## **An interview with Stephen R. Clark**

### **Author of the award-winning new religious thriller, *The Hungering Dark: Awakening*.**

#### **Why did you write this novel?**

At first I was just fooling around with an idea that hit me a few years back, trying to write a simple short story. The problem was, the idea just wouldn't fit into a short story.

When I realized this idea was too big for a short story, I wanted to see if I could actually write something as long as a novel. So, I decided to just go for it. It became a challenge.

I'd written a much shorter Christmas-themed novella of around 25,00 words -- *Christmas Believe: A Story* -- but I wanted to go for a "full-length" novel. *The Hungering Dark: Awakening* came in around 65,000 words.

Just as a comparison, this book is longer than *The Lion The Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, *The Great Gatsby*, or *Lord of the Flies*.

I actually completed the book in 2013 as part of that year's National Novel Writing Month (<http://nanowrimo.org/>). Committing to get the book completed within the month was a good incentive.

#### **I understand this is already an award-winning book. Can you tell us about that?**

Sure! Once I'd completed the book, naturally I began looking to get it published. Typically this requires finding an agent who will take you on and then represent you to various publishing companies.

I reached out to one agent I'd met a few years back. While he seemed somewhat interested in the book, the experience was a little frustrating. I could never get a definitive response from him. As this was happening, I learned about the First Look contest [<http://www.westbowpress.com/newlook/winners.aspx>] sponsored by WestBow Press [<http://www.westbowpress.com/>].

WestBow Press is a Christian self-publishing company and a division of Thomas Nelson and Zondervan, which are all owned by HarperCollins Publishers.

I actually submitted to the contest first in 2014 with no luck. I submitted it again to the 2015 contest and that did the trick. On December 17, 2015 I received notice that my book was one of 10 finalists. On January 5, 2016 I learned I was the Grand Prize winner. And by July 1, 2016 it was released.

[More information on the award is posted at [www.HungeringDarkStory.com/hd/award.htm](http://www.HungeringDarkStory.com/hd/award.htm).]

#### **Where did the ultimate story line for the book come from?**

The story line developed, basically, as I was writing it. As I mentioned, I wrote the first chapter a couple of years before I sat down to write the rest. I guess all the mulling I'd done over the previous two years surfaced out of my subconscious onto the page. In a very real sense, the story wrote itself. I think that's why I was able to keep my butt in a chair long enough to write the book, because I wanted to know what was going to happen!

#### **How would you characterize the book?**

I'll be the first to admit this book is not what some would call a "great" piece of literature such as John Updike's *Rabbit Run*, John Cheever's *Wapshot Chronicles*, or similar books.

But it is a very good book. It's well-written, clean, engaging, unique, and exciting. It's been characterized as gripping, thrilling, scary -- but scary in a good way. And readers have said they want more.

It's probably a little more comparable to Ted Dekker, Stephen Lawhead, Frank Peretti, or John Bunyan. Kinda sorta. More or less.

**John Bunyan?**

Yes! In the vein of *Pilgrim's Progress*. In the sense that the story is somewhat of an allegory, of good versus evil.

**Who is the book aimed at?**

Okay, every expert will tell you that no book can be for all audiences, that a writer needs to aim more or less for a niche. But, this book will be attractive to adults -- men and women -- as well as young adults.

Probably not so much to toddlers or infants, so I guess that means it isn't suitable for all audiences after all. And most likely it will appeal more to those who characterize themselves as conservative.

More specifically, it will be far more attractive to Christians than others as there is a strong biblical worldview evident throughout.

Still, for any who like thrillers, perhaps along the lines of a Sue Grafton story, my book would make a great airplane, weekend, or beach read.

**In a nutshell, what's the story line of the book?**

Okay, this may require an extra large nutshell, but I'll give it a try.

A mysterious and deadly threat—housed in a strange puzzle box—has found its way to the humble town of Timbuk, Pennsylvania. The object's origins reach all the way back to Moses, the plagues, and Pharaoh's wicked magicians.

For centuries, secret groups have been hunting the box and its contents. One group allegedly seeks to destroy it. The other—called the Descendants—seeks to use it to visit revenge on the Jewish people.

Now fate has placed the box in the hands of an unassuming Christian family, a small-town sheriff, a female state trooper, and a professor of biblical archaeology. Realizing the power the puzzle box holds, they must do everything they can to keep their community—and the world—safe from the deadly darkness.

How's that?

**In what time and location does the story take place?**

The time is now. The thematic elements are very relevant to what we see in the world today. As for as location, I placed the story in a fictional small town located in southwestern Pennsylvania.

**Why there?**

Honestly, because the story needed caves, tunnels, or abandoned coal mines, and I believe they have a few of those in southwestern Pennsylvania.

**As a writer, what are your hopes and fears for the book?**

A writer's biggest fear is to be answered with silence. By that I mean, you expend blood, sweat, and tears to birth a book, a poem, a blog post, an article, then you put it "out there" for your readers. Whether what you've written is intended as persuasion or entertainment or whatever, your hope is that what you've written has meaning and value. Your hope is that readers will respond in some way.

If it's a blog post, you hope for "Likes" or comments. In the case of a book, you hope for sales and reviews on Amazon or other online outlets. You hope for something, some reaction or response. When these don't come, or are so few as to be nearly inaudible, it's disappointing.

As I've said before, writers write to be read. When it doesn't appear that that's happening, it's discouraging.

Okay, enough of that! Let me address the positive side, I hope that the book is entertaining.

Ultimately, I wanted to offer a fun and entertaining book that Christians could read without being embarrassed or offended, something they could safely recommend to their friends or buy as a gift for the readers in their lives.

And if I let myself dream really big, I think the book would make a great movie. More than one reader has mentioned that it reads like a movie. So, Hollywood, if you're listening, check it out and call me!

**How can people learn more about you and the book?**

They can visit my website at [www.StephenRClark.com](http://www.StephenRClark.com) and my award-winning blog at [www.FaithBraided.com](http://www.FaithBraided.com). I'm posting information specifically about the book at [www.HungeringDarkStory.com](http://www.HungeringDarkStory.com).

I can also be found on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/StephenRClarkWriter](http://www.facebook.com/StephenRClarkWriter) and on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/stephenrclark](http://www.twitter.com/stephenrclark).

**Where can people get a copy of the book?**

The book is available online at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), [BarnesAndNoble.com](http://BarnesAndNoble.com), as well as from [WestBowPress.com](http://WestBowPress.com). Be sure to search for the full title. If it's not available at your favorite bookstore, ask them to special order a copy for you and to stock a few more!

Click [here](#) for an extended list of links to online retailers selling the book.

One favor I'd like to ask of all who read the book is to write a review online at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) or [BarnesAndNoble.com](http://BarnesAndNoble.com). Be honest and let people know what you think! If enough people like the book, perhaps there'll be a sequel.