ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

CHRISTIAN

Broken Wings
Terri Ciccarini
Xlibris
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Three Stars (out of Five)

Terri Ciccarini's first novel, *Broken Wings*, pivots on a deal with the devil. This cautionary *be careful what you choose* tale opens with a seemingly benign account of a random meeting of two families. It then follows the paths they take after leaving the hospital with their newborn children, DJ and Samantha, who were born at exactly the same moment.

Amy, the mother of Samantha, is a single mother who was alone at the hospital. DJ, the son of Drew and Jill, on the other hand, was born into an idyllic, loving family. His birth was a celebration. Surrounded by love in a beautiful home and a financially secure environment, DJ grows into a charming toddler. Then tragedy strikes. DJ's father is killed in a random two-car accident. Next, DJ is stricken with an inoperable brain tumor. A paranormal twist enters the storyline, and DJ's mother is given a chance to choose another child to take her dying son's place. The book unfolds with the story that results from her choice. The author neatly bookends the life stories of these two families with similar hospital encounters, a generation apart. It is a rather eerie way to end this tale of love and loss, good and evil.

The writing wavers between dry reportage and melodrama, but it does include some vivid descriptive passages. For example, Ciccarini writes:

> *The child, dizzy from being in such an unnatural position and totally scared by what had just happened, pitifully cried out for his daddy. The little thing looked like a small human marionette, his bruised arms and legs jerking around in every direction possible.*

With more scene building, better use of dialogue, and trust in the reader to understand the actions and body language described, the story would gain strength and depth. The novel would also benefit from tighter writing and a thorough edit. More attention to character development, use of setting, and the little details that add realism would certainly take this story

to a higher level.

Overall, the text suffers from several basic fiction writing weaknesses. Most importantly, a heavy dependence on narrative description distances the reader from the story. For example, in her description of a wedding, the author merely explains the family's pride instead of showing it through dialogue, action, and other details that would bring the episode to life:

> *The Kingston family, Amy quickly realized, was far richer in love than in money. They wished that they could give their son and new bride a far more fitting wedding but were very limited as to how much they could afford…What they lacked in the form of a lavish party, however, they more than made up in their happiness and pride for the young couple.*

This cautionary tale may appeal to readers of Christian fiction. The inherent romance and love the couples share will draw in romance readers. Yet many fiction lovers will be put off by the lack of story and character development and the uneven writing.

Dawn Goldsmith