FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

General

Nightmare
Robin Parrish
Bethany House
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Genre is mostly the creation of publishing houses and book distributors; it makes easier the job of marketing and selling books that are similar in content. It's also useful to book reviewers as a way to identify books that readers may like. That's good for publishers, distributors and book reviewers, but not so good for readers and librarians. Confining a book to a specific genre can lead to its being ghettoized, and often not reaching the larger audience it deserves.

Science fiction had this problem for a long time, until George Lucas and "Star Wars" came along and accelerated the process of saturating Western culture with science fictional ideas. We now live in an era where those ideas are commonplace, to the point where many of them no longer need explanation to a general audience. Science fiction has escaped its ghetto. The same is happening with romance fiction.

Perhaps now is the time for part of so-named Christian fiction to make its escape from a too-narrow label. Author Robin Parrish might just be the key to open the door.

Parrish began his novel-publishing career in 2006 with the release of the first book of his apocalyptic-superhero Dominion trilogy, *Relentless*. In his latest novel, *Nightmare*, he moves into the world of the supernatural with heroine Maia Peters, whose parents have a popular TV show which chronicles their investigations—and debunkings—of paranormal phenomena. The paranormal world is all too familiar to her.

Focused on her upcoming senior year in college and looking forward to a career in law enforcement, Maia nevertheless lets her friends drag her to Ghost Town, the newest and most popular amusement park attraction. Ghost Town claims a real ghost can be encountered in its haunted mansion ride. For Maia, this is yawn-inducing propaganda—until she sees the ethereal face of her friend Jordin Cole, who's been missing for over a year, and hears a familiar voice whisper, "The nightmare is coming."

Feeling partly responsible for her friend's disappearance (due to a series of visits they made to paranormally-active locations), Maia joins forces with her friend's fiancé to find Jordin

and discovers a threat to humanity that overturns her ideas of what happens after we die.

Besides a riveting story and highly likeable characters, Parrish accomplishes what one might call the Bono effect: he brings Christian theology into a fictional setting and it doesn't overwhelm the reader. Bono, lead singer of the popular Irish rock band U2, has never tried to apologize for his faith—it's a natural part of his life, and that's how he treats it. Parrish does the same in *Nightmare*, and the result is a novel that is rooted in Christian beliefs but never overpowered by them.

Nightmare will appeal to a general readership as well as fans of thriller and horror fiction. It's a highly readable, entertaining novel with thought-provoking explorations about the nature of life and death that never steal the spotlight from the main story. Parrish is a novelist to watch.

J. G. Stinson