

The Sons of God

Greg Banks

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In so many ways, *The Sons of God* is the equivalent of a 1960s B-movie. With its human sacrifice, pagan rites, plots to breed a master race, conspiracy theories, and helpless damsels in distress, Greg Banks' religiously spiced, modern-day science fiction novel is an outrageous, outlandish, oddly guilty pleasure.

While having mad scientists, cultist priests, or other evil geniuses tinker with genetic engineering to create a race of supermen is a well-established theme, Banks gives what could have been a tired tale a unique biblical twist. Having a self-admitted "female Indiana Jones" discover an intact Noah's Ark would be enough of a stretch for most writers, but Banks takes it many steps further by letting her find a vial that contains an ancient serum used by antediluvian priests to enhance a race of giants known as the Nephilim. This "tribe of the perfect man, the Sons of God, purified and set apart," as Banks puts it, is not entirely of his own creation. They appear in the Bible, where they are referred to as the offspring of "the daughters of man" and "fallen angels."

Banks takes those threads from Genesis and the Book of Enoch and weaves them into a story about DNA sequencing, cloning, and genetic experimentation gone mad. He adds a bit of fun and flair by tossing in orgies and fertility rituals celebrating Mesopotamian sex goddesses. No master-race theme would be complete without at least a few references to Nazi breeding programs and other plots to take over the world, and Banks delivers those and more, adding an Iranian scheme to clone Jesus using DNA taken from the Shroud of Turin.

The book is not without technical flaws. There are some spelling, punctuation, grammatical, and capitalization errors (Navy SEALs not "navy seals," and Michelangelo not "Michel Angelo," for example). In some sections dealing with DNA and cloning, the characters drone on endlessly and needlessly, relating dry data that slows the action with lengthy soliloquies. None of which, no matter how scientifically accurate, are going to add much credence (nor do they need to) to a story about resurrecting the spawn of a race of antediluvian giants and their fertility goddesses.

Locating the secret compound where all of this takes place in the Bible Belt towns of rural Wilford Creek and New Babel adds to the drive-in movie feel of the novel. The setting supports Banks' standard-issue plot about a young man who returns home and reconnects with an old girlfriend only to find that her new boyfriend is evil, which just makes reading this book that much more fun. It is impossible to take this book seriously, and therein lies its beauty and its value.

Laugh-out-loud silly at times, *The Sons of God* is pure escapist entertainment.

MARK MCLAUGHLIN (November 1, 2012)

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