



Wayne's Angel: Book One of the Wayne's Angel Trilogy

Ron W. Mumford

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In the Christian fantasy novel Wayne's Angel, a headstrong woman is driven to pull an aimless musician to the side of good.

In Ron W. Mumford's fantasy novel *Wayne's Angel*, a smooth-talking musician faces an existential crisis and embarks on a quest to discover the meaning of life.

Wayne, a singer travelling the Texas bar scene, has mastered the art of swagger and has an incredible onstage presence. At a new club, he falls for the down to earth co-owner, Abby, and the two ignite a fiery romance. But Abby's sister plants an earring in Abby's bed in a fit of jealousy, prompting an explosive fight. Abby and Wayne break up, and Wayne storms off and blacks out.

When he wakes up in another realm, Wayne is given a choice by Gordon, a mysterious figure. He can endure a series of demonic battles, return to Earth, or invoke the name of God. Gordon reveals that Wayne attempted suicide and is currently drowning, so returning to Earth means dying. Wayne agrees to the battles with reluctance; he sets off to fight demons in the realm between life and death. In the process, he develops an understanding of what his life's purpose is, but also contends with demonic forces who hope to claim his soul and imprison it in hell.

In the first third of the book, the focus is on Abby's childhood, and her father's attempts to recover from his time in the Vietnam War. In the span of a few hundred pages, Abby's painful story of love and loss develops. She endures trauma, searches for her biological father, and turns her life around on her terms. It's a fascinating and powerful story line—the highlight of the novel.

But the novel's abrupt switch from Abby to Wayne is jarring, resulting in a book that reads like two separate stories that have been thrust together. Wayne is less endearing than Abby. But his time in the between realm functions as a religious parable about staying true to one's faith in the face of adversity, and while he's there, Abby attempts to guide him back, resulting in a heartwarming angle. Throughout, Abby struggles with her love for Wayne—and her desire to adhere to the life plan that she drafted up in college.

But the characters all sound alike in conversation: many use the same colloquialisms, or have the same verbal tics. Further, the book's pacing is too erratic. There are random thrusts forward in time as Wayne moves from battle to battle, and as he is carried forward through divine intervention. The narrative sections focused on Abby are more consistent, with a clear sense of her progression from a scared child to an empowered woman. Still, the epilogue is heavy-handed—over explaining the book's hopeful climax, laying the groundwork for the sequel, and effectually wiping out the satisfying elements of the conclusion by switching focus to Abby's sister, who is under developed in this volume.

Foreshadowing later series developments, *Wayne's Angel*, a fantasy novel that's rooted in Christian theology, follows an aimless musician and the headstrong woman who's driven to pull him to the side of good.

JOHN M. MURRAY (June 21, 2022)

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