

FROM THE CHRISTY AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR OF *VANISH*

TOM PAWLIK BECKON

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PRAISE FOR NOVELS BY TOM PAWLIK

VANISH

“Fans of Dean Koontz or Ted Dekker will appreciate . . . this debut psychological thriller.”

LIBRARY JOURNAL

“[This] exciting page-turner is as unique and creative as it is suspenseful.”

FAITHFULREADER.COM

“Pawlik’s book is engrossing. . . . The novel’s eerie events are thoroughly detailed, and the payoff is worth the time it takes to read this unique tale.”

ROMANTIC TIMES

“*Vanish* captured my interest from the beginning. . . . I would highly recommend [it] to readers across the age spectrum.”

ASSOCIATED CONTENT

“The creativity of debut author Tom Pawlik knows no bounds! *Vanish* suspends reality over a solidly scriptural base for a story that will topple readers into a dazzling truth. It might be best to read this book with the lights on, because there is a thrilling element of suspense in these pages.”

IN THE LIBRARY REVIEWS

“A chilling thriller in the vein of Stephen King, Dean Koontz, and Ted Dekker. The complex plot, story line, well-developed characters, and shocking ending make *Vanish* a debut thriller not to miss.”

EXAMINER.COM

VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

“Pawlik’s sequel to *Vanish* is just as thrilling as the first. The fast-paced, intriguing plot and detailed characters make the novel difficult to put down. The profound spiritual encounters will cause readers to think about their lives and faith in a unique way.”

ROMANTIC TIMES

“Extremely well-crafted, highly suspenseful, and anything but expected. The complex plot, thought-provoking premise, and creepy scenes . . . definitely draw the reader in quickly.”

READERVIEWS.COM

“The suspense was excellent. Two worlds intertwine with the heart-racing plots that end in a startling conclusion.”

CHRISTIANBOOKPREVIEWS.COM

“Filled with twists—including a great finishing one—this is an emotional, uplifting thriller.”

MIDWEST BOOK REVIEW



BECKON
TOM PAWLIK

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Beckon

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This novel is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons living or dead is entirely coincidental and beyond the intent of either the author or the publisher.

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For Andrew, my firstborn.

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And last but not least, to Jerry Jenkins and your excellent staff at the Christian Writers Guild: May God continue to bless your service for Him.

*And the Lord God formed man of
the dust of the ground, and breathed
into his nostrils the breath of life;
and man became a living soul.*

GENESIS 2:7



PART I
JACK

///

*Of all the animals,
man is the only one that is cruel.*

MARK TWAIN,
LETTERS FROM THE EARTH

CHAPTER 01

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

The last time he saw his father alive, Jackson David Kendrick was only nine years old.

The gray light of dawn was seeping in between his bedroom curtains when Jack woke to find him standing in the doorway. Dr. David Kendrick was a willowy, spectacled anthropologist at the University of Chicago. His black skin and wide brown eyes gave him a youthful appearance, but the flecks of silver frosting the edges of his hair made him look more distinguished and professorial. So people who didn't know him could never tell if he was twenty-nine or forty. But this morning, his normally thoughtful eyes looked weary as he sat on the edge of Jack's bed.

"Sorry to wake you so early, but my flight leaves at seven thirty."

“Where are you going this time?” Jack sat up and asked through a husky yawn.

“Out west,” his father said. “Some field research on an old Indian legend.”

His father had often explained the kind of work anthropologists did, but all Jack really knew was that he was gone more often than not. Always traveling around the world to study some obscure ancient culture. He said he was trying to learn more about them—who they were, where they had come from, and why they had disappeared. But Jack had always felt there was something in particular he was searching for. Something that continued to elude him. Most of the time he would come home from his trips looking tired and disappointed.

“What kind of legend?” Jack persisted, figuring that if he kept peppering his father with questions, he could keep him from leaving as long as possible.

His dad stared out the window for a moment. In the shadows, Jack thought he saw hesitation in his eyes, as if he was pondering exactly what to say. “One about a very *old* civilization that I believe actually existed out there. A long time ago, before most of the other tribes had even migrated to this continent.”

“Who were they?”

“Well, that’s just it—nobody knows for sure. One legend says they built a whole subterranean city under a mountain somewhere. And that they may have been very advanced . . . maybe even more advanced than the Egyptians.”

“That’s cool.”

“Very cool.” His dad grinned. “Anyway, it’s kind of a mystery I’ve been working on for a few years now. So if I can

find some proof that they actually *did* exist . . . well, it could change most of what we know about human history.”

“Change it how?”

His father laughed and rubbed Jack’s hair. “I’m on to you, kiddo. I’m running late, so we can talk more about it when I get home.”

“Fine,” Jack huffed. “Are you gonna be back for my soccer game on Saturday?”

“I’ll try, but Aunt Doreen’s bringing her video camera just in case.”

Jack’s shoulders drooped. His father’s sister had moved in with them after Jack’s mother died in a car wreck six years earlier. It wasn’t that he disliked his aunt—indeed, she was the closest thing to a mother Jack could remember. It was just that his father had missed five of his last seven games, and watching Aunt Doreen’s shaky video footage wasn’t the same.

His father stood to leave, but Jack clutched his wrist. “When can I start going with you?”

His father looked down and sighed. “Maybe when you’re a little older.”

Jack groaned and lay back on his pillow. “You always say that. But you never say how much older.”

His father gave a soft chuckle. “Just a little more than you are now.”

He kissed Jack on the forehead and slipped out of the room. Jack listened as he collected his bags from the hallway and carried them out to the car. A minute later the engine chugged to life, and Jack ran to the living room window as the car backed out of the garage. He watched his father drive off down the street, turn the corner, and disappear.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jump in. Hang on.

Tom Pawlik is the highly imaginative, Christy Award-winning author of *Vanish*, *Valley of the Shadow*, and *Beckon*. His thought-provoking, edge-of-your-seat thrillers are infused with nonstop suspense that grabs you on the first page and won't let go until the last.

Tom's fascination with the weird, the creepy, and the unknown began at a very early age when he was introduced to a nineteenth-century storybook called *Der Struwwelpeter*—a collection of nightmarish morality tales by a German physician who obviously had too much time on his hands. The Mother Goose-meets-Stephen King nursery rhymes included “Daumenlutscher” (“Thumbsucker”), a disturbing yarn about a young boy who was warned that if he continued to suck his thumbs, the local tailor would chop them off with his sewing shears. Other macabre tales warned against playing with matches and being overly messy. Needless to say, Tom never played with matches, generally kept his room clean, and to this day retains the use of both his thumbs.

But the psychological damage was already done, and

Tom's warped imagination turned him to writing his own creepy stories at a rather young age. Alas, no publishers were brave enough to bring them to print, so Tom would not realize his lifelong dream of becoming a published author until the ripe old age of forty-two. Today, Tom lives in Ohio and is happily married with five children of his own . . . who, oddly enough, never sucked their thumbs.

Visit Tom's website at www.tompawlik.com.