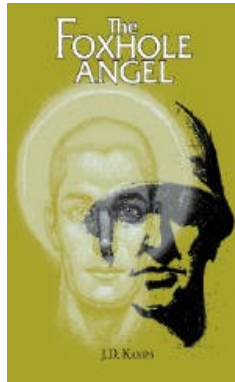


BOOK REVIEW



The Foxhole Angel

By J.D. Kamps
(ISBN 0977112209)

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This publication is a combination of two books, *"Always a Soldier"* and *"The Foxhole Angel."* Each chapter's theme is introduced by citing a famous quote. These quotes are on both books. On the first book, the author takes us back to Rome, the governing of Pontius Pilate, and Jesus' ministry. This book is divided in five chapters. On the first chapter, we meet Antonius, a Roman soldier assigned to oversee a wedding in the city of Cana. Antonius is vigilant on his duty and self-aware of the negative feelings the Jews have toward him and Rome. There he witnesses Jesus' miracle of converting water into an exquisite wine and the cure of a cripple boy. On the other four chapters, Antonius shares with us his impressions of Jesus' ministry until His crucifixion. Antonius will later on become a character on the second book, *"The Foxhole Angel."*

On the second book, *"The Foxhole Angel,"* the author takes us to Germany and Japan during World War II. This book has twenty-nine chapters. On the first four chapters, the author introduces the three main characters; Jimmy Donovan, Will Jackson, and Pete Calvert. All of them come from three different upbringings and ethnic backgrounds. On chapters five and six the author introduces the topic of prejudicisms in a very eloquent manner as it's described to us as seen by Will Jackson. When this young and naive black Parisian travels from France to Central Montana, USA, to report to work at an all-white mining company, he gets a bitter taste of the segregation practices of the time. He is in shock and in a state of disbelief. After this and other discrimination experiences and many failed attempts to make a decent living, he is drafted into the US Army into an all black-battalion. On chapter seven, Jimmy Donovan and Pete Calvert meet on "Boot Camp" and start developing a strong friendship. On chapter nine, the author introduces the first guardian angel who will be with the reader for most of the story. Chapters 10 through 21 take us to the thick of the war in Nazi Germany. During those chapters more soldiers are introduced, which will accompany Jimmy and Pete on their Germany tour and to the end of the war. On chapters 22 and 23, Jimmy,

Pete, and other soldiers are transferred from Germany to Pearl Harbor, Japan, where they meet Will Jackson. Pete's dislikes of Will escalate to a violent fight, which caused both soldiers to be scolded by their superior. The chapter ends with a war scene. On chapters 24 through 26, the author takes us to the world of the afterlife where he shares with us Jimmy, Will, and Pete's experiences with us. On chapters 27 and 28, the author gives us some historical background of the whereabouts of those soldiers fallen on Pearl Harbor and the return home of their remains; but with more emphasis on the Donovan family. On chapter 29, the author once again reunites Jimmy, Will, and Pete on their newly appointed duties. The author finishes the book with an Epilogue.

The book's cover is olive green and shows a picture of a man with a soldier hair cut with a hallow and a soldier silhouette with his helmet on the background. This is indicative of the guardian angel protecting the soldier. The olive green color of the cover is similar to one of the green colors used on the US military soldiers camouflage uniform. The book title hinted the military and divine nature of this book. A foxhole is a hole in the ground used by troops as shelter against enemy fire or as a firing point. The hole usually is to be occupied by no more than two soldiers due to its small size; however, it has the capacity of accomodating a maximum of four soldiers. The military Basic Training, which the author refers to as "Boot Camp," and the war scenes are fully detailed and colorful. The scenes of the German war coincide with many of the war stories I have heard from the locals in the German city where I live.

This book could have greatly benefited from an editor to help the author stay focused on the storyline, characters, and to keep the situations accurate and smoothly connected; in addition to prevent misspelling of German words, format and layout inconsistencies.

Storyline, characters, and situations deficiency: On chapter two of the first book, *"Always a Soldier,"* we read Antonius is given 20 lashes and starves in chain for two weeks, receiving only one cup of water daily and when released, he stands and only rubs his wrists. This scene is hard to believe if we consider the imprisonment conditions and torture practices of the Romans. We can find another example of a similar problem on chapter 17 of the second book, *"The Foxhole Angel,"* in which we read how Corporal Sid Cantor's hands are sent in all directions after a grenade explodes near the woodpile where he takes refuge. However, later on, the author describes him as a "handless" man who on chapter 19 has blisters on his hands as a result of chooping wood all night! There seems to be an inconsistency on the condition of Sid's hands and on his rank, too. First, Sid is introduced on the story as "Corporal Cantor" and later on the author refers to him as "Private Cantor." A "Corporal" and a "Private" are two different lower ranks in the military. The "Corporal" is a higher rank than the "Private." That same inconsistency shows in the name of the German woman who attended Sid's injuries. First she is addressed by her German title, "Frau Geisens" and then by the English counterpart, "Mrs. Geisens."

Misspelled and incorrect use of German words: Since a great part of the story events occurred in Gemany, the author also mentions some German words and phrases. It would have been beneficial for the reader if the author would have double checked the proper spelling of the words, in addition to adding its meanings as a footnote. On chapter 17, page 279, Sid greats a German girl in English and she returns the greeting in German by saying, "Hallo, wie gent's?" The proper spelling of the word "gent" is "geht" from the verb "gehen," which means "going;" however, on this phrase translates as "How are you?" On chapter 18, page 296, the German word for water is "wasser" not "vasser," as misspelled by the author. The proper spelling in German of the entire phrase "More water?" would be "Mehr wasser?," otherwise is considered Germish, a term used to describe expressions resulting from the combination of German and English words and/or phrases. On chapter 19, in the last paragraph on page 302, the author wrote "...any good Deutsch mother..." It should be "any good German mother.." or the following alternatives "...any good Deutsche Mutter..." or "...any good Deutsche mother..."

Format and Layout Inconsistencies: The quotes used at the beginning of each chapter to introduce a theme have different font sizes and format discrepancies. This problem is found on both books on chapter one, where there is no space between the chapter title and the cited quote underneath it. However, on the other chapters, there were three spaces separating them. The quotes source format and font size are also not kept consistently throughout the book. Most of the quotes' originator is listed on the right side underneath the quote; however, some of them were centered following the format of the quote. An editor would have suggested a more friendly font size for the quotes and the overall formatting of the book.

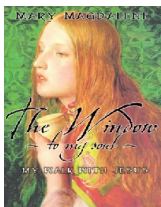
Main Storyline Lost: I felt the first book, "*Always a Soldier*" was completely irrelevant to the main storyline as stated on the book back cover. It appears that story was written to stand alone and somehow tossed into the story as a last minute decision. Equally irrelevant to the overall story was chapter 25 on the second book, "*The Foxhole Angel*," where we read about the encounter and theological exchange between Jimmy Donovan and Martin Luther. An editor would have suggested to the author the deletion of these two stories without affecting the overall outcome of the book.

Identity Crisis- It would have been beneficial to the reader and honoring to those soldiers who lost their lives fighting in World War II if the author had identified properly the "9th" mentioned on chapters 27 and 28. Were they the 19th Brigade?; the 19th Battalion?, ?????

The book is full of themes such as faith, beliefs, prejudicim, redemption, rebirth, spiritual awakening, guardian angels, spiritual battles and human conditions. These themes and the situations surrounding them are not always properly introduced to the reader. More than once I found myself going back to a previous chapter or chapters to verify some facts before fully understanding the situation on the chapter I was reading. At times, the elements of fantasy took away the value of a good scene.

The storyline has potential but it was not properly conveyed to the reader. All the weakness in this book could have been avoided if the author had taken more time in his revision, editing, layout, and formating of the book; in addition of choosing a reputable editor and publisher. This book has all the flaws of a self-published vanity press publication.

This book is written for adults, since some of the scenes are not suitable for younger readers.



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