

Interview with J. A. Leary, author of *The Angel Hunter*

Today, Tyler R. Tichelaar of Reader Views is pleased to be joined by J.A. Leary, who is here to talk about his new novel, "The Angel Hunter."

J. A. Leary was educated as a mathematician and computer scientist. He holds degrees from the University of Central Florida (BS) and Boston College (MS).

His love of fiction writing developed after a long career as a software engineer, a profession that has allowed him the privilege of working on America's Space Program at NASA's Kennedy Space Center.

He openly admits a timeless infatuation with his wife, Annette, whom he married in 1987. She was his first motivation to write and the inspiration for Victoria Hunter. J.A. and Annette live in Orlando, Florida, and have four children.

Tyler: Welcome, J.A. I'm excited to talk you about your new novel and the historical and biblical threads you've woven into it. To begin, will you tell us briefly about the main character, Victoria Hunter, and what her situation is when the novel begins?

J.A.: Thank you for having me. And yes, let's get right into it. Victoria Hunter is rare, very rare. She has ascended the corporate ranks and become a CEO at the tender age of twenty-eight. With a brilliant mind and sensitivity for people, her world seems perfect, for a few paragraphs anyway. Then we learn her husband is dead and she is raising her twin sons alone.

Tyler: What is Victoria's mental state once her children are abducted?

J.A.: Now the circumstances under which her children vanish are strange and terrifying for her. She suffers from posttraumatic stress, severe enough to erase the memory of her children.

Tyler: Will you tell us about that abduction? How does it happen?

J.A.: Imagine this striking young woman, beautiful, bright and whose twin sons are now the center of her world after losing her soul mate tragically. Then, two men show up in her home speaking about the destiny of her boys and with thick German accents. But before they can convince her of her role as the mother of the new Reich, the house trembles and the winds of forever sweep through the nursery. The intruders run in a panic. Victoria is left standing at the bottom of the grand stairway in her home and hears the cries of babies from the upstairs room. She runs up the stairs, calling their names in anguish.

Tyler: What does Victoria do to find out what happened to her children?

J.A.: She follows the trail. This leads her to discard the rational, question the probable, and consider the incredible.

Tyler: Why does only her psychiatrist believe she is telling the truth?

J.A.: Well, that's a judgment call on his part. He has practiced psychiatry for over twenty five years and Victoria simply does not fit the psychological profile of a woman suffering from post-partum psychosis, and she has no history of mental illness. Plus there are a few curve balls Victoria throws at him that have him rethinking a standard psychiatric diagnosis.

Tyler: I mentioned in your introduction that your wife, Annette, was the inspiration for Victoria Hunter. How did she feel about you using her to portray your heroine?

J.A.: She loved it. And she loves the book.

Tyler: Why is the book called "The Angel Hunter"? What is the significance of angels to the plot?

J.A.: It's a play on words. Victoria's last name is Hunter. It raises a question in the reader's mind when they open the book and read her last name. As far as angels go, there are a few dire circumstances where Victoria needs a little help.

Tyler: Are you able to tell us about the destiny of Victoria's sons, or will that give away the plot?

J.A.: Let's just say their destiny is well beyond the stereo-typical hero's to someday save the world.

Tyler: What was your reason for creating twin sons for Victoria? Why not just one child who is a hero?

J.A.: That will be explained in a future book. I currently see the Angel Hunter series as four books. Her sons will be integral.

Tyler: Tell me more about the Holy Lance. What is its legend and history, and why is it important in "The Angel Hunter"?

J.A.: Ah, a great question. The spear of destiny has been the obsession of very powerful men of conquest for two millennia. From Charlemagne to Adolf Hitler. Legend says it is the spear of the Longinus. He is the centurion who pierced the side of Jesus after he was dead.

Anyone who possesses the spear wields its power, provided they know how: now does Victoria? Read the book and you'll find out.

Tyler: What is the power of the spear? What did Charlemagne and Hitler hope to accomplish by having the spear, and did they ever find it, or is it completely mythical?

J.A.: Oh yes. Hitler and Charlemagne did at one time possess the holy lance. Now is it the actual spear that pierced Jesus? We have no way of knowing.

Tyler: On your website you have a link to another site about "The Book of Enoch." For our readers who are not so familiar with the Bible, who was Enoch, and why is he important to the novel?

J.A.: OK. Now this is a fascinating subject. First, "The Book of Enoch" is not a canonized book of the Old Testament, although it was at one time. Enoch was an Old Testament prophet who "walked with God." His writings told of the fallen race of angels whom he referred to as the watchers. This race of beings took great interest in the beauty and femininity of mortal women. And with these "daughters of men," they had passionate relations. Their offspring became known as the nephilim. It was the nephilim—that many theologians believe—introduced corruption to the human race: not eating an apple in the Garden of Eden. Now in terms of the novel, Victoria's husband has been dead for a year when the book opens. Yet, she has three-month-old twin sons. Timing is everything.

Tyler: Interesting, J.A. Is Victoria aware of what happened to her to get her pregnant or is she just as surprised by the birth of her children?

J.A.: She thinks the boys are her husband's departing gift to her.

Tyler: J.A. you were supposed to have a reading at a bookstore at the University of Notre Dame, but I understand it was cancelled. Will you tell us what happened there? Does your book have a connection to the University of Notre Dame?

J.A.: Yes, I was disappointed. Notre Dame is a truly unique and mystical place that I have nothing but the highest regard for. Victoria is a graduate of Notre Dame and a good chunk of novel unfolds on the Notre Dame campus. However, I did explain to the curator that without intrigue, tension, and drama, I have no story. Well, the intrigue, the drama, and the tension were too much for the administration. Plus I have references in the back of the book, one specifically thanking Deepak Chopra and Eckhart Tolle for their work: this didn't sit well.

Tyler: The book has scenes at the grotto at Notre Dame. Is that what they primarily objected to? Can you tell us a little bit about that scene?

J.A.: There are several scenes involving the grotto. The objection from what I understand is the demonstrative human drama that unfolds in the Basilica and the grotto.

Tyler: What kind of responses have you received so far from people who have read your book?

J.A.: I am overwhelmed by the response. People love Victoria, they love the story. Some readers are even saying Victoria has helped them take a look inside themselves, at their belief systems, and how they perceive the world around them. In other words, they are becoming more awakened through this fictional journey. Consciousness doesn't care *what* gets you there, so long as you get there.

Tyler: "The Angel Hunter" has a list of recommended reading at the end, which is unusual for a fiction work. Why did you decide to include this list?

J.A.: I wanted the readers to know certain things. One, I didn't make all this stuff up about Enoch, Moses, and The Ark of the Covenant. There are credible historians doing really fantastic research into our modern and ancient history and they are producing conclusions that are contradictory to accepted religions and beliefs in the Judeo-Christian society. That is not a bad thing. And two, the rise of the Third Reich happened in the midst of modern civilized humankind. It was not a coup or a revolution. The people wanted Hitler in and Hindenburg out. We need never to forget this. When people are destitute, frightened, and hungry, when a leader, no matter how mad his ideas, says jobs and food for all of us, people listen.

Tyler: What do you think separates "The Angel Hunter" from other books that offer alternate religious histories such as "The Da Vinci Code"?

J.A.: Well let me say something first about Dan Brown. The man is brilliant. In "The Da Vinci Code" his character states that as a child he fell into a well. He confesses it was Jesus who gave him the strength to tread water all night until he was found. His faith saved him. People who are critics of Dan Brown miss the entire point. All the other stuff is fluff. Does your faith empower you when dire circumstances strike? It did for Robert in "The Da Vinci Code." What else matters?

Now "The Angel Hunter" does not really offer an alternate version of religion per say. But Victoria is presented with certain facts and circumstances that push her to shed old dogmas and theocracies. Otherwise her children have no chance. And she is a mother before anything else.

Tyler: What is the message you hope people will take with them when they have finished reading "The Angel Hunter"?

J.A.: My hope is this. Number one, they enjoy the story for what it is: a fast moving, intense book that derives much of its fuel from science, theology, history, and socio-economic conditions. And secondly, I hope—through Victoria Hunter—for a spark of wakefulness. A sense that true consciousness is within reach of all of us. It is a gift from the creator to exist in this wakeful state and it is just that easy.

Tyler: J.A., I understand you are planning a sequel to "The Angel Hunter"? Would you tell us about that book and when we can expect its publication?

J.A.: The title is “The Tantalus Key” and in this book we will see Victoria begin to unravel the hidden truths about the origins of humanity and why certain events in history must happen: in one case, why Michelangelo, a sculptor by trade, had to paint the Sistine Chapel. Why would Pope Julius II, with likes of Raphael and Da Vinci at his disposal, choose a sculptor who had little or no experience as his fresco painter? We are going to find that out and a lot more.

Tyler: J.A., before we go, will you tell our readers about your website and what additional information they can find there about “The Angel Hunter”?

J.A.: Yes, thank you. www.jaleary.com. You can email me at jaleary@jaleary.com



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