



## Veil of Fire

*Marlo Schalesky*

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In 1894, the worst firestorm in Minnesota history descended on the town of Hinckley, consuming 400 square miles and killing 418 people in just four hours.

Heat, flame, and darkness swept through the town, devouring lives, and consuming all hope. In the aftermath of the fire, the town of Hinckley rises from the ashes, its people determined to rebuild their lives.

But in the shadows, someone is watching, someone is waiting, someone who knows the secrets the fire lay bare. A rumor spreads of a mysterious figure that haunts the hills; monster, a ghost, or a memory?

## Veil of Fire Details

Date : Published January 1st 2010 by David C. Cook (first published 2007)

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Author : Marlo Schalesky

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## From Reader Review Veil of Fire for online ebook

### **Kelly says**

I thought it was an interesting story about karma and the lessons that can be learned from tribulations. Sometimes it was difficult to follow which character was speaking but the plot held together and played out perfectly.

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### **Kate Joekel says**

#### **Deeply moving**

This book tells many stories on many levels. The story of a fire that destroys a town in a western settlement; a story of loss and one of fear, another of deceit.

But most of all it is a story of people and how they come to know God when bad things happen. A story of how truth will come out and how it does set us free.

I recommend this thoughtful, exciting and emotional book to anyone who has endured 'the fire's in their own lives and asked God 'Why'?

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### **Linda says**

Set against the historical background of an actual fire in Hinckley, Minnesota, in 1894, this is a story of destruction, loss, rebuilding, and rebirth. It is also a tale with a moral: It is a person's ACTIONS, not one's APPEARANCE, that makes a person a "monster."

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### **Joy says**

I love to read stories based on actual historical events & this is one I will never forget. Excellent retelling of the events of the 1894 fire.

Suspense that kept me turning pages.

Part allegory. Part parable.

A subtle message of hope and redemption.

Spoiler: I docked one star because I had to suspend disbelief that a journal would survive a fire that was so hot people poured water over each other so their clothes wouldn't catch on fire.

And a locked room with a window that can be easily opened is not much of a prison.

Schalesky is a great story teller and one I would read again.

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### **Beverly Anne says**

I loved this book, I couldn't put it down! Keep the kleenex box near, you will need it. Based on a real disaster, a fictional story of profound loss, a heart-wrenching mystery, a hateful villain, a love story, a test of faith...this book has it all.

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### **Sharon says**

A freebie book from Bookshout; ended up being something that would have definitely been worth purchasing and was a great introduction to this author. Based on a true historic event, The Great Hinckley Fire of 1894, this work of fiction takes the reader through the horror of that experience from the perspective of characters who might have lived it, all the while building a back-story that is filled with mystery, love, and spiritual awakening. I loved that the identity of the "monster" was not something that could be fully guessed until the very end.

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### **Elaine says**

#### KINDLE EDITION

This book is replete with suspense. Very difficult to put down. I tell myself I will stop reading after "this" chapter and get to the end of it and continue onto the next.

In chapters one and two, a wild fire is burning out of control, bringing destruction. Claiming lives. A daughter loses her mother. A man witnesses a burning wagon as it runs over his wife as she urges him to leave - to save their 6-month old daughter. Further chapters deal with the aftermath and rebuilding after such devastation.

Why did Arla not believe her daughter Rakel and tell her she lied? What really happened between Rakel and Lars? How did this devastating fire start and where? The townfolk say that the one stealing and prowling around is a ghost or a monster but the reader knows it's someone that was severely burned in the fire who thinks he/she will always have to hide. Just who is this "ghost?" Is it Ellie's mom? Arla's daughter? Perhaps Joseph's wife?

There's a gang of troublemakers, a shooting, and a coverup. Lots of action. An altogether different kind of story. Unexpected.

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### **Celia says**

On September 1, 1894, one of the worst fires in history ravaged east-central Minnesota. It was the first firestorm in Minnesota history, destroying six towns, including Hinckley. Descending on the towns like a red demon, the fire consumed 400 square miles, killing 418 people in four hours.

After the fire, the townspeople rebuilt their town, but in the midst of rebuilding, a rumor began of a hermit in the hills—a person severely burned, disfigured beyond recognition. The identity of this person was never determined, and the “ghost” remains to this day a mystery, a myth, a shadowed figure whispered about in

tales passed from grandparents to grandchildren. So the question remains: Who was this “monster in the hills”?

(Above copied from the Author's notes at book end).

## Review

The monster is a central figure in this book. Much of this book's allure is 'will the question be answered: who exactly is the monster?'

In the meantime we learn that another monster lurks in the town; one who committed sins against women of the town. Will his sins be revealed?

Veil of Fire is advertised as a Christian novel, but it's story does not follow a formula. It does do what a Christian novel typically does: address dilemmas through faith in Jesus.

The revelation of the monster did drag on a little bit, but I still enjoyed the book, its message and the backdrop of the lethal firestorm.

3.75 stars rounded up to 4 .

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## Ramona Voight says

Incredible story makes history come alive. A page-turner that required me to read it all in one day, this book kept me guessing, and the ending was not at all what I expected. When I was finished I had to go research the history of the Hinckley fire. Though I have visited the museum and live close by, I will now go back and see it with new eyes. A well-written story from a fantastic author.

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## Michelle says

Veil of Fire is a fascinating story based on an actual historical event--the worst fire in Minnesota's history--a fire that burned 400 square miles and killed 418 people in just four hours. The story begins with non-stop action as a hellish blaze consumes everything in sight. The reader is placed in the middle of the maelstrom as the events unfold, and it's an awesome and terrifying experience.

The potential for evil in the hearts of men really comes out in this story, as does a theme of regret. But God takes the painful things and if we let Him, He will shape us into beautiful vessels. I loved the analogy of the gingerbread cookie. Something bitter, something sweet, and a whole lot of heat. That about sums up life in this world. Why do bad things happen? They just do. Is God there? Yes. Whether we see Him or not is based on our choice. These are just a few of the meaty lessons I gleaned from this wonderful story.

Of course, some of the bad guys never change, but that's real life. But many people who were either lukewarm or living behind of false mask, or a "church face" learned about unconditional love and the power of opening your heart and taking risks. Wonderful, wonderful stuff.

Plus, the poor "monster" in the hills really tore at my heart. I loved how the "monster's" thoughts were in first person and the others were in third person point of view. That style had greater impact for the reader. Oh,

and the best part of all is that who I thought the "monster" was through the whole story turned out to be someone else. I just love twists like that. I might even read this story twice. Highly recommended!

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### **Todd Greene says**

In 1894 a fire broke out in the town of Hinckley, Minnesota. Four hours later 400 square miles were torched. Four hundred eighteen lives were lost. Out of the ashes the townspeople rebuilt and rose again like the Phoenix of mythology. And a myth began to grow among the survivors. There was one in the hills watching, observing. Friend or foe? No one knew. To this day no one knows who the hermit in the hills around Hinckley was. Speculations abound still.

I met Marlo Schalesky through Shoutlife. Intrigued by the blurb for Veil of Fire, I went to her website and discovered I could read chapter one. I did. And I rushed right out to find the book so I could finish the story.

I must say I'm not a fan of historical fiction. I find it difficult to relate to stories that delve into settings, customs and such that I'm unfamiliar with. However, this story caught my attention because it seemed to have a little mystery and suspense to it. This story, though set in a historical time period and speculating on what might have been so and what was, reads more like a suspense novel than anything else. I went into it expecting chapter one to be about the fire and the remaining pages to be about the aftermath. I got more than I bargained for. The first four chapters cover the fire and the townsfolk attempting to escape. Some succeed, others fail. This section was some of the most intense reading I've done in a long time. I could smell the smoke and hear the flames. The fear of the characters was palpable. I experienced it all with them. This is the mark of a great writer.

The remaining story takes you on several paths. That of a little girl orphaned by the fire. A woman grief-stricken over the loss of her own daughter. A businessman who essentially owns the town. His no account son. A farmer whose only tangible of his lost wife is his infant daughter.

And the hermit in the hills. We see inside the mind and heart of this character. Learn their struggles, meditate on their questions, consider possible answers along with them. All the while having no idea who this person is until the last possible moment. Marlo tosses out so many possibilities to reader as to the identity of this person. I personally was so torn by the possibilities that I could not make up my mind. And yet, it stared me in the face the whole time. Like any good story should.

This was my first historical read. If there are others like it out there, I can assure you I'll be reading more.

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### **Tina S. says**

kept me guessing till the end, didnt want to put it down

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### **Leola says**

#### **Gripping!**

Powerful human emotions were displayed throughout this book. I finished it in a day because I just had to

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know what happened next. The "ghost" was my favorite character; who tugged at my heart throughout the book. Excellently written.

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### **The Gatekeeper says**

I decided to read this book, partly because my mom recommended it, and partly because it's about the Hinckley fire, which happened in Minnesota. I grew up in Minnesota and I've been to the Hinckley Fire Museum near the place where my church used to camp out every summer. So that made it especially interesting for me. It's also a good story, though, with interesting characters and an intriguing mystery. Since fire is one of my biggest fears, the first few chapters were a little disturbing to me, but it got much better as it went on. The ending revealed a good message about God's sovereignty and the importance of truth. Veil of Fire is proof that you don't have to be famous to write a good book!

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### **Leanne says**

I really enjoyed the story. Partly because I live in Minnesota and drive through Hinckley, where the story takes place, every time we go to Duluth or the North Shore. I had heard about the fire but never really knew the impact it made on the community. This is a fictional account but based on stories handed down from the author's husband's family. I had a trouble getting into it at the beginning with all the short sentences, but the story-line was good.

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