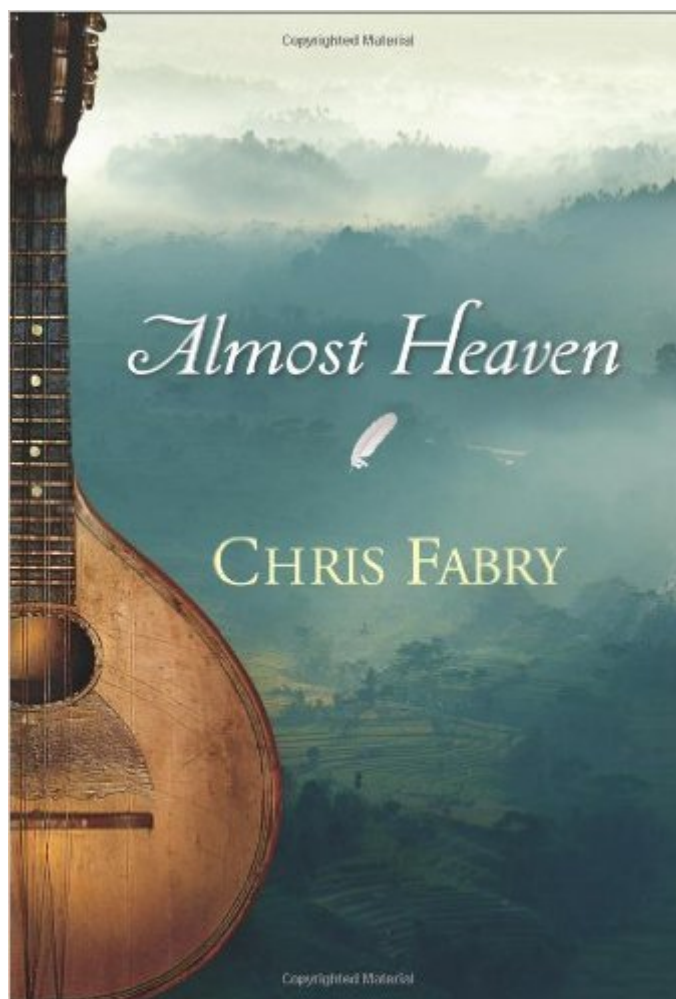


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Almost Heaven



Synopsis

From the bestselling author of War Room comes a gripping novel that was awarded both an ECPA Christian Book Award for fiction and a 2011 Christy Award! Billy Allman is a hillbilly genius. People in Dogwood, West Virginia, say he was born with a second helping of brains and a gift for playing the mandolin but was cut short on social skills. Though he'd gladly give you the shirt off his back, they were right. Billy longs to use his life as an ode to God, a lyrical, beautiful bluegrass song played with a finely tuned heart. So with spare parts from a lifetime of collecting, he builds a radio station in his own home. People in town laugh. But Billy carries a brutal secret that keeps him from significance and purpose. Things always seem to go wrong for him. However small his life seems, from a different perspective Billy's song reaches far beyond the hills and hollers he calls home. Malachi is an angel sent to observe Billy. Though it is not his dream assignment, Malachi follows the man and begins to see the bigger picture of how each painful step Billy takes is a note added to a beautiful symphony that will forever change the lives of those who hear it.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Every good story has a clear purpose. Thousands of writers crank out worthless junk, and many times their purpose in writing is less than worthy. Sometimes it is just because they couldn't effectively put their vision in words. But any writer who has nothing of importance to him to convey is not worth reading. Chris Fabry is not such a writer. I've read all three of his Dogwood novels (Dogwood, June Bug, Almost Heaven). Almost Heaven is a fresh story, yet classic Fabry. As he did in his previous works, he delves straight into the darkness that many of us struggle with, sometimes

alone. My mind went back to reading *Dogwood*, where I had a bad taste in my mouth through much of it just because of the darkness in many of the characters and their deeds. He wrestles with the question of why. In *Almost Heaven*, we are introduced to an angel. But even the angel wrestles for a time with the shadow of doubt. The angel is only watching and performing his duty. He doesn't grasp the full picture from the start. All Fabry's characters are flawed and struggling people, sometimes almost excessively so. This has kind of gotten me down as I have plodded through Fabry's books. But I am seeing now what it is that Fabry is trying to convey. In *Star Wars*, audiences were touched by the redemption of Darth Vader in 'Return of the Jedi', but it wasn't until 'Revenge of the Sith' that people could see the pain and the darkness behind the man in the black mask. And the redemption is more powerful now. Fabry takes us into the darkness of the failings of humanity because it is the only way to really bring the reader to the point of the story he is driven to tell. In any heartfelt effort by a writer, there are things with which we will disagree.

Chris Fabry writes sweet, character-driven stories. In *Almost Heaven*, Fabry tells the fictional story of Billy Allman, a West Virginia backwoods native and master mandolin player. It's Billy's dream to run his own radio station, and he pours his heart and soul into making that longing come true. But things always seem to go wrong. Billy's life is fraught with tragedy, from a devastating flood to the tragic loss of his parents to the evil behavior of a father figure. Behind the scenes, the reader catches glimpses of an angel named Malachi who is active in Billy's life, watching over him and protecting him. Over the past few years, Fabry has been through his own tragedies, and this book captures a message that comes straight from his heart and personal experiences. We don't always know why things happen, but we can always trust in the One who creates beauty from ashes. I found it interesting that the idea for the character Billy Allman and his radio station is based off the life of a real man. A reader wrote Fabry a letter, telling him about a man who poured his life into serving God and had recently died. I just would like to say, a lot of people didn't know Billy... [But] I know when he walked into heaven yesterday, heaven knew Billy. He was an important person to them. Chris Fabry's book *Dogwood* had one of the best twists I've ever read. His book *June Bug* captured my heart and is one of my all-time favorite books. *Almost Heaven*, although good, didn't capture my heart like his other books. I didn't connect with the characters this time and the plot felt slow. But Fabry is still one of my favorite authors and he writes great stories, and I look forward to his next endeavor.

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