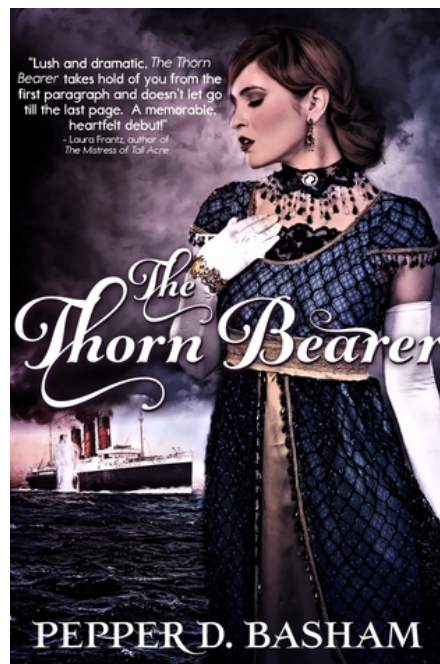




# The Thorn Bearer

*Pepper D. Basham*

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## **The Thorn Bearer** Pepper D. Basham

From the decks of the ill-fated Lusitania to the smoke-filled trenches of WW1, Ashleigh must choose between the forgiveness of her past, life in the present, and a Savior who can rescue her from them all.

When her fiancé leaves her eight months before their wedding, the unexpected blow ignites a battalion of insecurities stemming from her father's intimate betrayal. Her worst fears are confirmed - who could ever love a soiled woman? In an attempt to escape the shame and disappointment of her past, Ashleigh boards the ill-fated Lusitania to cross the war-torn waters of Europe. Much to her dismay, she isn't traveling alone.

Sam Miller is always making up for his best friend's mistakes. Determined to help Ashleigh, he offers his compassion and protection as she ventures across a perilous sea. With the faint hope of renewing his lost love for Ashleigh's sister, Sam never expects to find the woman of his dreams in his best friend's former fiancé and his own childhood companion. As they travel across the Atlantic, neither is prepared for the life-altering and heart-breaking journey of their friendship. When the truth of Ashleigh's past explodes in the middle of war and Sam rejects her, Ashleigh must decide if God is enough - or if the double weight of her betrayal and past will crush her life forever.

## **The Thorn Bearer Details**

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## From Reader Review The Thorn Bearer for online ebook

### (Jen) The Artist Librarian says

Pepper D. Basham's debut novel has arrived at the perfect time. Thanks to the television series, *Downton Abbey*, there's been so much more interest in World War I and the early 20th century. Published exactly 100 years after the sinking of *The Lusitania*, *The Thorn Bearer* blends real-life events with unique characters, plot twists, and drama that would make Julie Lessman proud!

Believe me, I'm not exaggerating! The tension between Ashleigh and her sister Catherine reminded me of Lessman's O'Connor sisters. If you can get me to feel very ... strongly ... about your characters (and then get me to like a character I hated), then in my book, you've got great characterization skills. The only criticism I have is that the climax conflict between the two romantic leads could have easily been solved if they'd bothered to clarify and not assume (so many assumptions!) but that type of conflict is normal in the genre, so while it did annoy me, it's also proof that by then I was invested: I cared about these characters!

Though seeing names like "Ashleigh" or "Jessica" seemed a bit too modern for the age of the characters (who would have been born before the turn of the 20th century), other historical details of daily life helped me immerse myself in the novel. And the metamorphosis and growth of other side characters ... I'll certainly be following Pepper D. Basham's future work

If you like to read stories with strong interpersonal conflict (drama!) and tension that leads to satisfying endings (or are just suffering from *Downton Abbey* withdrawal), Basham's novels might be a good choice!

[Disclosure: I received a copy of this book as a participant of Singing Librarian Books' blog tour for review purposes.]

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### Carrie Schmidt (Reading is My SuperPower) says

Woven together with rich characters, poetic language, riveting history, wry humor, and heart-wrenching secrets, *The Thorn Bearer* is a book that will draw you in and refuse to let go. It isn't often that I finish a fictional book and pause to reflect on it in silence for several minutes, but I did in this case. Even after I finished the last word, this story resonated throughout my spirit for a good long while.

I just can't say enough good things about this book. The main theme of *The Thorn Bearer* is this: we are all broken, and we all need a Savior's rescue. Even those who seem to be without obvious sin. Sometimes, it's as simple (or as impossible) as holding on to unforgiveness and bitterness for the wrongs done to you by the people who were supposed to love and protect you. Sometimes it's as pervasive as letting desperation take you down roads you never dreamed you'd travel. Either way, brokenness leads us all overboard and our Savior waits patiently for us to accept the rescue He offers.

Pepper Basham treated the topic of Ashleigh's childhood sexual abuse with such grace and dignity and purity. She writes the reality of Ashleigh's emotional scars - the anger, the bitterness, the fear, the shame, the self-recrimination - but she also masterfully weaves all of this into a beautiful tapestry of grace and forgiveness. Ashleigh's earthly father stole many things from her, but her Heavenly Father pursues her relentlessly to clothe her with beautiful dignity, shower her with gracious love, and gift her with a sweet romance that surprises her. (Honestly, there are so many wonderful poetic quotes that I could share, but there are TOO many! I would end up quoting the entire book. You just need to go buy it for yourself.)

Lest you think that the book is too heavy to endure, let me be the first to assure you that this is completely not the case! There is such delightful flirting (oh the winking! and the kissing!) and moments of pure fun and humor. I fell in love with countless characters from *The Thorn Bearer* - Ashleigh, Sam (I have a thing for winking apparently... and a new craving for LifeSavers candy), Jessica, David, Kara, Fanny, and even some of the more villainous characters won a place in my heart in the end. But my absolute favorite character is Fiona. She is a hoot and a half, if I may go Southern on you here for a moment. In fact, if I could choose one character from *The Thorn Bearer* with whom to spend a day, I believe I would have to choose Fiona simply for the laughter that would ensue! What a spitfire of a young lady! Climbing trees, snapping her fingers, telling it like it is. Can't wait for you all to meet her too.

I loved all of the history that Ms. Basham was able to seamlessly incorporate into the story, the events playing out on the world stage coinciding with what happens to the characters without feeling at all like a history lesson. (You know what I'm talking about! You've read books where you turned to the back cover just to make sure your former history teacher didn't sneak in a textbook and call it fiction. I assure you - *The Thorn Bearer* remains always a novel, never in any danger of entering textbook territory :) )

(Thank you to Pepper Basham for providing me with a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.)  
Read my full review here: <https://readingismysuperpower.wordpress...>

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## **Kara says**

Having heard nothing but rave reviews of this book, I had been looking forward to reading it for myself. And it did not disappoint me in the least! Ms. Basham's skill with the pen became quickly apparent as I got swept up into the life of Ashleigh and all her heartbreak. I wanted to put my arms around her and tell her it would be okay so very many times. The girl has been through a lot! And Ms. Basham had no qualms about putting her through a bit more. Ah, my poor heart.

As I was drawn into Ashleigh's story, I loved that it felt like I was getting a first hand look at history. Ms. Basham clearly did her research and it shows. I didn't remember much at all about the *Lusitania* and its fateful crossing, but consider me intrigued by the story now! My one small complaint is how quick events happen. There were a few times where I felt that more detail would have better served certain moments because we move so quickly past them that I couldn't seem to get as invested in the seriousness of the tragedy as I wanted. I felt more like a neutral observer (which, yes, I know that I am as a reader, but it kind of pulled me out of the emotional moments too fast). And the transitions between points of view weren't as smooth in some places. But don't let that deter you! Because those are things easily overlooked when you have characters who you're rooting for.

Ashleigh, in particular, made me admire her strength and hurt for all the pain she's been through. I was so glad she had friends to look out for her, especially as her family wasn't there for her as they should've been. Speaking of her sister and their relationship, it's a difficult one. Catherine was a character I didn't like right away because she's perfectly awful to her sister! But there was just something about her that made me sit up and take notice. Watching as the two of them work through their individual circumstances and slowly, maybe strive for understanding broke my heart, then mended it.

And Sam. Dear, befuddled, swoony Sam! I loved his friendship with Ashleigh, he was so, so good to her. I admit that he frustrated me a bit in the beginning, what with his inability to realize what was staring him right in the face. But he won me over and he and Ashleigh.....ah, I have no words for just how perfectly they worked together! They fit and that's all there is to it.

Romance on the high seas! Kind of. Secrets to be searched out! Yep. Historical events and drama mixed delightfully! Most definitely. A story worth reading and swooning over! Without question. Read this one, my friends!

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### **Dawn says**

I had the privilege of reading this for endorsement. Fabulous Book. Here's what I said:

"Dealing with the bravery it takes to work past dark secrets and misplaced guilt The Thorn Bearer is more than a historical romance; it's also a story about God's ability to redeem souls and conquer strongholds. Pepper Basham's writing is heartbreakingly raw at times, but always beautiful because of the redemptive scope of the story." -- Dawn Crandall, author of The Hesitant Heiress, The Bound Heart and The Captive Imposter

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### **Krista Phillips says**

WOW! Loved this more than I can say! The Thorn Bearer pulled some awesome punches and delved into subjects I've rarely seen touched on, especially in such a God-honoring way. The writing was stellar and the romance sigh-worthy as required by yours truly! Can't wait for the next book to come out!!!!

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### **Charity Andrews says**

I don't even know where to begin. I have never read a novel that tackles such a difficult subject with as much clarity, truth, and passion. Sexual abuse is something that over 50% of women have suffered with at some point in their lives. Unfortunately, when it happens, it makes the victim feel dirty and like they are the only ones. I would know. It came to me in the form of a "friend" when I was 10 years old.

In this first book of a trilogy, Ashleigh Dougal's childhood was stolen from her by her father. This book is a story of forgiveness. It is a story of the love of our true Father in Heaven. I can't emphasize enough how important this topic is. It is so overlooked in our culture, yet so important. Pepper takes this topic and runs with it. She doesn't hold back. She shows the fear, anger, hurt and bitterness. She also shows the love and peace that is gained from forgiveness. Tucked inside a wonderful romance, you will find more depth here than most books you'll ever read.

Aside from that, there is some very rich history in this story. From the sinking of the Lusitania ship (a passenger ship shot and sunk by the Germans) to the war torn London, Pepper intertwines history, romance, and real life wounds being healed.

I absolutely recommend this book. I think that every woman should read this because chances are very high this book will be dealing with something in your life. It shows real people with real life problems (sexual abuse is only one). Please pick this up for you and one for a friend. Release date is set for May 7th.

Solid 5 Stars. Wish I could give it more!

Thank you so much, Pepper, for giving me a copy of this book to review. As always, this is my honest

review. Here's to many more! AND HURRY UP!!

BTW, if you would like to see my Face-Off with Pepper, just head over to:

<https://atransparentmom.wordpress.com...>

It's one of the most fun yet!!

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### **Julie says**

A stunning debut, *The Thorn Bearer* is a hauntingly beautiful tale of how the heart-wrenching shadows of the past can usher us into the Light.

Pepper Basham masterfully infused a dark and daring subject with such depth and power, that it lingers in your mind long after the last page.

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### **Rachelle Cobb says**

I'm so pleased to review a recent read, *The Thorn Bearer*. Ever since I ran across Pepper Basham online, I've wanted to read her books. When she kindly offered me a copy to read, I leapt at the chance! And I'm so glad I did! Not only do I find Ashleigh relatable and lovable as a main character, I quickly fell for Sam, too. Why? Because they're flawed and broken but striving to love each other...

What a setting Pepper has given this novel! Ashleigh spent several years in Asheville, NC--a place I can picture well since my best friend lives there and I've visited often. However, *The Thorn Bearer* opens on the decks of the *Lusitania*.

\*insert history-buff-squeals here\*

That's not all! Pepper proceeds to carry her characters from the *Lusitania* to England, in the middle of WWI. All the while painting a picture of a love story that by all accounts should not be unfolding...I admit I was a bit disappointed in Sam's reaction when he discovered Ashleigh's secret, but the way Pepper brings it all about is poignant, tactful, and rich in mercy. Pepper's way with words, especially in scenes where a spiritual awakening is occurring, is worth the read.

If you love historical fiction in uncommonly covered eras, rich settings, and tales of mercy, check out *The Thorn Bearer*.

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### **Staci says**

Forgiveness is at the heart of this historical fiction debut novel.

Ashleigh, Sam, Michael, Catherine and more are all broken spirits in need of God's love. It was a delight to

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watch their journey. While the backdrop of the story is the sinking of the Lusitania and World War I, the main story line is about the characters and their journey toward forgiveness.

Formatting and grammatical errors/typos were a bit of a distraction. Once my mind was trained to look beyond those, I found a delightful novel. I look forward to the next novel in this series.

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### **Meghan Gorecki says**

I could not put this book down. The vivid history and setting of 1910's England ala Downton Abbey jumped off the page, but what most left an impression on this reader were the characters. Both Ashleigh and Sam have secrets, struggle to forgive and come to God's grace. Their friendship is tested when feelings surface, a tragedy strikes, and the fragility of life sends them into each other's arms--but there are still secrets. The twists and turns both of the happy, swoon-worthy romance and the heartrending ones left me swiftly turning the pages. I laughed, I cried--a lot--and the impact of the spiritual themes woven expertly, and not preachy, through the book via the characters journeys left me convicted and bolstered in my faith. Basham's debut novel is especially refreshing in its crystal clear message of redemption for the broken, and restorative grace. A sweeping story from start to finish with such a great happy ending.

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### **Savanna Kaiser says**

This story quickly caught my eye and touched my heart in ways I had not expected. Its intriguing cover and the historical pull to learn more about the Lusitania drew me to the book in the beginning, but the real pulse of the story is what I will remember the most. It's a breathtaking story of redemption and healing, a powerful expression of grace and forgiveness. It made me cry and it made me laugh – both more than once.

The characters are very real, very broken, and very relatable. None of them seemed one-dimensional. They each added depth and perspective to the plot as it grew. And I cared for them greatly. I especially enjoyed the relationship between Ashleigh and Sam. From the very start, I loved their friendship, their charming banter, and the way they complimented each other in both their strengths and their weaknesses. It all seemed so natural... and right... and romantic.

The story touches on some painful and difficult issues, but it's handled in a very honest and sensitive way. There is a lot of soul-searching throughout the book for these individuals. And I have a feeling it will encourage the same for many readers too. No matter what YOUR story is, I think Ashleigh's story will move your heart in a big way.

It wasn't just the characters and their journeys that stood out to me, though. I loved how the conversations just flowed and their voices seemed almost audible. Not only was the author's phrasing downright lovely, but there were countless quotes I wanted to write down for memory's sake. They were that good. The truths of the text offer great encouragement for real life.

This just-released debut is a special one. The historical pieces of the puzzle were there and added a great punch – and often surprise – to the story, but the real focus of *The Thorn Bearer* was about the people and their faith in God. Books like this make me so happy to be a reader and reviewer. I hope you'll read it too!

Thank you to the author for providing a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

## Andrea Cox says

by Andrea Renee Cox

My heart ached for the characters in The Thorn Bearer. Each one had their sorrows and burdens to carry. That was clear and written well.

I struggled with this book, though, because there was so much focus on promiscuity and sexual abuse.

The back cover copy gave away too much. I have been told that the back cover copy should never give away things after the first third of the story, but that was not the case with this one. I felt a little robbed of the anticipation that would have naturally built up as I read the story. It was still there, but not in as great a dosage as I would have liked for a story like this one.

There were many typos, misused words (right word, wrong spelling - homonyms), and a few inconsistencies throughout. I dislike mentioning this in reviews, because I know I have a good eye for this type of thing due to my work as a copyeditor, but when it's more than just one or two misspelled words, something must be said. Otherwise, where is the accountability for quality editing?

Overall, this was an intriguing story. I especially enjoyed the Lusitania aspect. I'd never before read a story that brought that ship into the plot, and I found it a well-written and carefully-thought-out piece of the puzzle.

\*Parental discretion advised. This book contains some thematic elements some parents may not wish their teenagers (or younger) to be exposed to.

This is my honest review.

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## Lynn says

I devoured The Thorn Bearer in one day. Pepper Basham had me hooked from the first page and the story didn't let me go until the final paragraph. Each page was filled with beautiful descriptions, excellent world building, and flawed characters that I loved and desperately wanted to see redeemed and healed, all set against the backdrop of the Lusitania and WWI. The Thorn Bearer tackles a most difficult subject and does so in a way that acknowledges the heinousness of the sin, the consequences for all involved, and the beauty and redemption that are available through God's forgiveness and grace. The story is ambitious and so well executed. It's difficult to believe this is a debut novel. A must read. HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!!!

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## Catherine says

A disclaimer - I'm not a huge historical fiction fan. So when I find one that resonates with me, it's a keeper. Pepper Basham's The Thornbearer is definitely one of those books. I was enthralled from the beginning. The historical details are wonderfully woven throughout the story and the setting so real I felt I was actually there. And the characters ... even the one I didn't like had grabbed my heart by the end of the story.

Wonderfully story-telling, a realistic faith journey, memorable prose and a dry wit that I appreciate very much all make this book one I won't soon forget. Highly recommended.

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### **Loraine Nunley says**

This is truly a story of God's redemption and a lesson in how God is enough. It was more of a love story between Ashleigh and God rather than between her and Sam. I enjoyed watching her begin to heal from the bitterness and disappointments that her past left her with. 3 1/2 stars - Full review at my website.

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