

Sometimes a story drives the research involved in presenting it, instead of the usual situation, when research is done first for a predetermined storyline. The former is the case with *Constant Keel*. I did intend to center *Keel's* next case around a missing person who was involved with the SETI project, a group of scientists who persist in discovering intelligent life from outer space. But when I investigated their work, I found more progress has been made in exoplanetary research, finding planets around other stars than our sun. So I shifted the focus of my story to this endeavor. Granted, the planets found so far are discovered by indirect evidence only, since by definition, planets have no light of their own and can't be "seen" directly. And this evidence to date provides no sign of life as we know it or even an atmosphere with sufficient oxygen for living organisms. Still, a work of fiction allows me to claim that the missing person in my story has made a great breakthrough, solving one of the enduring mysteries of modern astronomy. I was shocked to discover other mysteries in this field of science, which should be more accurately labeled as hypotheses, which the public has been deceived into believing are true. Concepts like dark matter, wormholes and the multiverse are nothing more than conjectures advanced to explain the observable facts of astronomy. The public thinks they are real, when at best they are suppositions that men come up with to explain the unexplainable. I yielded to the temptation to include some of them in this story although as the story progressed, they had little to do with the detective's case. On reflection, I did this to show Christians that the fantastic claims of astronomy which appear in headlines almost every day have some very shaky assumptions behind them.

As believers in the creation described by the Bible, we have only one assumption, that the Biblical account is true. And if we interpret the astronomical evidence from that perspective, many of these enduring mysteries become irrelevant questions, that is, undeserving of our attention. If God created everything from nothing as the Bible says, what is the point of learning the mechanism He used? Even if we could understand it, we could never duplicate it because we don't have His resources, all power and all knowledge, the two things every inventor must have to a limited degree for limited success.

My story also delved into the arena of prosthetic devices replacing lost body parts. Here again, advances have been made and are being made in interfacing organic signals with mechanical receptors. However, the public has been led to believe we are generations ahead of where we actually are. But my story is fiction, so I can leap ahead alongside the most fantastic headlines!

But putting the science aside, *Constant Keel* is fundamentally a romance. I can't seem to escape exploring the relationships young people have in discovering their life partners. I am not from a generation with gender identity problems so my stories aren't complicated by men who love other men sexually, women who lust for other women, or poor souls who don't know who or what they want. I am, after all, a Christian author who sees a history of messed up people who ignore the moral standards the Bible suggests, or rather, demands. If you want success stories about these people, they are much more abundant in the General Romance category but like the sciences, they too, must be taken with a healthy skepticism.



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