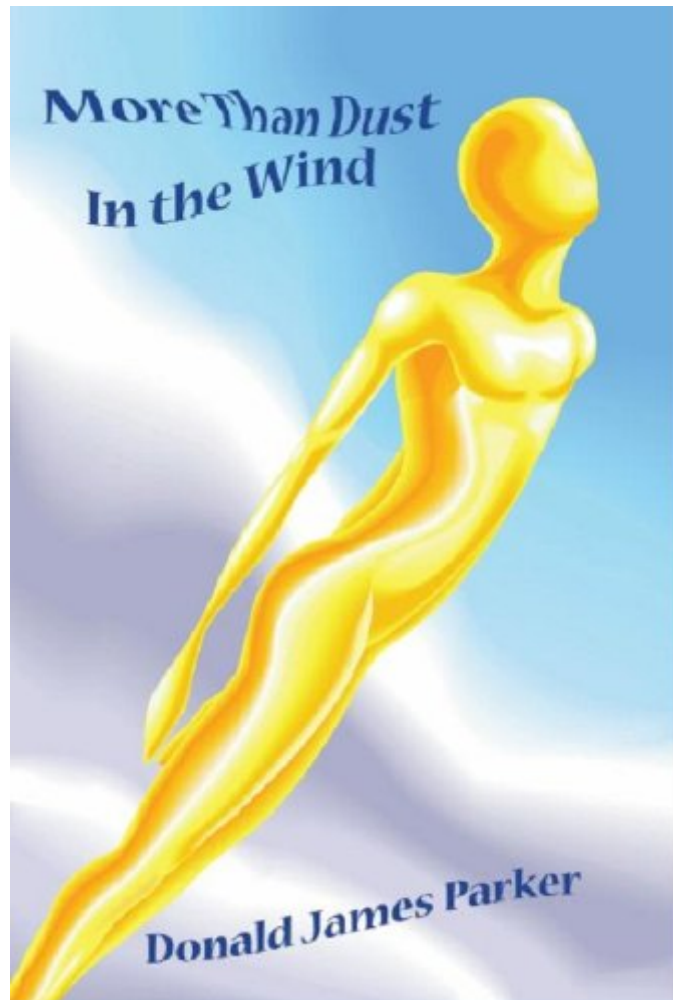




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More Than Dust In The Wind (The Masterson Family Series Book 2)



Synopsis

The saga of Bambi continues as the young basketball player steps up to the college level. Later, the end of his scholastic days brings new changes and challenges as he enters the playing court of adult life. He discovers his enthusiasm, energy, and talent aren't always enough to win this game. A new friend introduces him to the Evolution debate, and Bambi begins a new chapter in his life as he becomes a truth seeker. Many novels have been written about boys sports, but girls track and cross country have been mostly ignored. These sports are featured in this book through the exploits of a delightful new character named Maria, whom readers watch growing up in this story.

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Customer Reviews

The main character in Donald James Parker's second book from a fivebook series about the Masterson family is a young man by the name of Bambi. He is a basketball player who steps up to college level, realizing as he grew older that energy, and talent was not enough to win the

game. Bambi makes it to the National Tournament with support from Lisa, but then his life makes a complete turn, and he's forced to set priorities. He begins to realize with age that we make decisions, and regardless of whether those choices were the right moves to make, we must live with them. I recommend this novel to teens, and adults who enjoy a fascinating story of life, with a blend of spiritual guidance. For many years, Bambi was on his own mission trying to learn how to make good decisions, realizing that we must have an open mind while searching for answers. While on his mission, he leads his family to walk on a different road, and their lives change forever. The author created an uplifting story that fills the pages with inspiration. "More Than Dust In The Wind" is as heartwarming as "For Love Of The Game" with Kevin Costner. This novel is full of soul and spirit with a remarkable, and affecting story that the reader will never forget! Geraldine Ahearn, A.I.O.M. Author of 6 books Founding Member ABI Women's Review Board

"More Than Dust In the Wind" speaks to us of relationships and commitment, covenants and trusts. Since time beyond recall, mankind has been embroiled in the morass of relationships: with family, peers, culture, country, religion, and with diverse groups within those bodies. Above all, our personal relationship with the Lord presents the greatest challenge. In Genesis 4:19, God announces his judgement to Adam (for violating the sole commandment issued in the Garden of Eden): In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return. How, then, might mankind be more than dust in the wind? How do individuals go about securing an eternal home in heaven when the Lord, in no uncertain terms, assigned humanity to the dust from which we emerged? Author Donald James Parker, in "More than Dust In the Wind," the second of his five book series on the Masterson family, examines relationships, commitment, mortality, and meaning within the context of faith. Lance "Bambi" Masterson, the Christian teen-aged protagonist in Mr. Parker's "The Bulldog Compact," races into adulthood in this fast-paced, family oriented sequel. Confronted in early adulthood with the possibility of losing his fiancée over matters of Christian doctrine, Bambi chooses a path that ultimately engages him the enigma of endings and beginnings. Blessed with a loving wife and healthy daughter, he sacrifices a passion for sports to better support his family. That passion is re-ignited when his daughter, Marie, chooses to exercise her God-given talent on the track. As Marie matures, Bambi faces his mortality with another struggle: that of origins and salvation. Unable to pursue his quest, Bambi passes the torch to Marie who joins the fray in "All the Stillness of the Wind," Mr. Parker's third book in the Masterson family series. The First Covenant, promising a death of ash, gave way to the possibility of heavenly reward with the New Covenant.

Hebrews 10:27 And it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this judgement. After reading Don Parker's "More Than Dust In the Wind," I was inspired to consider the Biblical portents of "dust." The New Covenant grants us the possibility of everlasting life in the eternal view, and the extension of temporal thought through those with whom we have shared the good news: The New Covenant promises judgement after death, assuring us that humanity is more than dust in the wind.

As a band member in high school every year I would attend band camp. While there are several memories that stand out in my mind from that time, the one thing that I could count on, aside from the inter-school rivalries that flourished, was that at least one night during the week long camp an argument would erupt over which religious denomination was better, Catholic or Protestant. Of course, at band camp the discussion usually included a third denomination of Mormonism thrown in just to keep the discussion lively. When I started reading *More Than Dust in the Wind*, these discussions came flooding back to me in full force, to the point where I could almost smell the camp fire as it slowly burned down to embers. These heated discussions would invariably take place at night and were usually ended abruptly by the playing of taps, which signaled it was time to go to our cabins.

Lance (Bambi) Masterson is the captain of his college basketball team, Dakota State University, and the story opens in the last few seconds of the game that could send his team back to the locker room for the season, or on to the national championships for Division III colleges in Kansas City, MO. Bambi is able to execute a risky play as the ball leaves his hands just prior to the buzzer and the shot is good. In the aftermath of such an emotional win, Bambi's first action is to rush to his cheerleader girlfriend, Lisa and propose marriage. Since the cheerleaders are traveling with the team and they have a four hour bus ride home after the game, Bambi and Lisa start to discuss their future together. Things between them begin to disintegrate when Bambi brings up the question of whether he will leave his Catholic church or whether Lisa will leave her Protestant church once they are married. By the end of the bus ride, the two are no longer talking to each other and Lisa gets a ride with one of her friends, refusing to even say good-bye to Bambi or let him know of the change in plans.

During the week as they are getting ready to play in the national championships, Lisa continues to freeze out Bambi and makes herself completely unavailable to him. He figures that he will be able to make her talk to him once they are at the national championships because there won't be anywhere else for her to go. The cheerleaders will have to stay with the team. What Bambi doesn't count on is a woman's capacity for shopping at malls, especially malls that they have never been to before. Of course, that would be some and not all women, as I am a confirmed point and click shopper and can actually break out in a rash if you keep

me at a mall for an extended period of time. Bambi's friend Donnie invites Bambi to attend a Protestant church service since they won their game against the number one team and will be in Kansas City on Sunday. Bambi starts off by negatively comparing the church to his home church and is critical of the way the service is being handled. As the service continues, he experiences a change of heart and feels that the minister is speaking directly to him. By the end of the service, Bambi views the differences between the religions in a very different light as he realizes that the important issue is to put God first and everything else will fall into line. In his next game, playing some close town rivals for the opportunity to play in the finals, Bambi is injured and the team loses. This is something that earlier would have been a bitter pill for Bambi to swallow and he would have been severely depressed and angry about the outcome. He is oddly calm and can only think about getting the opportunity to talk to Lisa so he can straighten out the argument that has led to this estrangement. Lisa is trying to get to him through the throng of people so that she can help shore him up because of the loss as she has done so many times in the past. She is delighted to learn that he has determined that the Catholic doctrine is not important enough to keep them apart and that he will willingly attend her church with her. The second book in a series of five, *More Than Dust in the Wind* takes the reader through 30 years of life with Bambi & Lisa Masterson, through the good times, as well as the bad. Donald James Parker includes those milestones in life that many people go through. The agony of searching for a job and hoping that you find the right one, the loss of a child, the birth of another, career changes, dealing with cancer, and through it all keeping your faith strong. In fact, on many levels, I find parallels in my own life. My husband is in the midst of a career change after having served 20 years in the US Coast Guard, and is currently searching for a job, we lost a child during pregnancy, I lost my father to cancer, and yes, have faced all of these trials daily working to keep my faith strong. Perhaps it is because of these parallels that I felt that Mr. Parker tried to put too much into one book for the length. Thirty years is a lot of time to cover within 208 pages, and because of that there is a feeling of skimming the surface rather than getting into the depth of the characters and situations. There are a few weaknesses in *More Than Dust in the Wind* that are challenging to read through. Mr. Parker, in his passion for trying to get his message across, at times becomes a little didactic with his writing in a way that I feel harms the flow of the story. For example, when Lisa and Bambi are debating the Catholicism vs. Protestantism question, there is a five page section of almost pure unadulterated dialog. At this point in the story, the two of them are on a bus filled with exuberant basketball players who just won a very tight game at the last second to put them through to the round of national championship games, and yet there is no discussion of noise, running up and down the aisles, no creaking of the bus, and having been on

team buses myself, no description of the smells that can be present. No one's sock or jock strap went sailing through the air to interrupt the conversation. The dialog was taking place in a vacuum, which causes it to come across as preachy or sermonizing, and the entire conversation felt forced. As a reader, I want to see the confusion on Bambi's face as he is trying to sort through what Lisa is telling him. I want to feel the cracked vinyl of the bus seat as an uncomfortable silence is forming as neither will back down from their position. I believe that the message that Mr. Parker is trying to convey would come across much better by slowing down the pace and using more description interspersed with action. I also feel that those times throughout the course of the story where the characters were experiencing grief were a little glossed over. My impression was that Mr. Parker did not want to allow his characters to show too much grief as it might come across as lacking in faith. Unfortunately, that caused the situations to come across as not realistic and painted the characters as being lacking in feeling, which I am sure was not the author's intent. An illustration of this is that when Lisa was hospitalized from being in a car accident, and had just learned that she lost the baby she was carrying, as soon as their tears were dried, Bambi is returning to work so that he can work with his team to get them ready for the game, and is doing so because Lisa insists that she doesn't need a babysitter. Being the second book in the series, there are some references to situations which occurred in the first book, which is always the case when dealing with books in a series. There is a need to provide some back story with the subsequent books in the series so that readers who pick up the series in the middle are not out to sea. While Mr. Parker does provide some back story details that give insight to the character of Bambi and some of the situations that have caused him to be the man he is at the start of book 2, some items remain in question. Why does Lance go by the name of Bambi? I understand that it is a nickname, but it is sufficiently outside the normal realm for nicknames, that there should be some explanation as to why the character chooses to be called such an unusual name for a man. Several times during the course of the story, Bambi refers to the Bulldogs of Victory and the Dogs of Victory compact. It is obvious that this is something that is fully explained in the first book of the series, but with the number of references to the compact, there should be a modicum of explanation in the second book as well. There is even a scene where Bambi determines that it is time to explain the compact to his daughter Maria, but does so outside the presence of the reader. Other than those two exceptions, Mr. Parker does a nice job of dropping bits of information into the story which provide the back story information from the first book rather than giving it to us in summary style. Despite some of the issues with *More Than Dust in the Wind*, Donald James Parker is a good solid writer. The relating of the basketball games pulls the reader straight into story and the writing flows easily. I especially enjoy his characterization of the

relationship between Bambi and his daughter Maria. Their interactions with one another, even down to the corny phrases that can irritate a young teen-age daughter, rings true. One of the things that Mr. Parker does the best is painting the picture of Bambi as a man facing his own mortality, unwilling to give up, but fighting to the bitter end. My own father carried that same attitude toward life and death, and it took cancer 33 years and five iterations to finally bring him down. Even then, he played tennis the week before he died as he simply refused to let the illness get the better of him. Parker builds a nemesis, Angela Hawkins, for Maria to give the counterpoint to her father's fight against illness. Maria and Angela are considered the best two runners in the state, but Maria loses to Angela year after year, which just strengthens Maria's resolve to beat her the next time out. The culmination of this rivalry comes at a time when Bambi is so ill, he is no longer able to walk, but continues to support his daughter at the track meets in a wheel chair. The following passage brings tears to my eyes. The voice over the loudspeaker said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I now direct your attention to the head of the track where Maria Masterson, winner of the 3200-meter and the 1600-meter race in a state record of four minutes and fifty-nine seconds is taking her victory lap. Due to the number of events that we have to run through here in the state meet, we normally do not permit victory laps, but this is a special case. Maria's father, Lance Masterson, a former all-stater in basketball, an NAIA all-region team selection at Dakota State, and a former high school coach is engaged in a struggle with pancreatic cancer." A hush fell over the crowd. "Maria has the privilege of sharing this victory lap with her father, the man who taught her to run and taught her how to live life to its fullest. Would you please stand and give it up for this dynamic duo?" The crowd stood and roared its approval as Maria pushed her father across the finish line, breaking the tape that the officials had ordered stretched across it. Bambi looked up and saw Angela Hawkins looking on with a scowl on her face. He winked at her. When Maria got past the finish line, she veered off to the right and pushed Bambi off the track and back onto the sidewalk.

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