

## Reviews of *The Alley of Wishes* by Laurel Johnson

If you think this is simply a romance, guess again.

Beck Sanow is a young American struggling to live with memories of what he saw and did along the Front in World War One. Beck went into the war an educated, idealistic, optimistic young man, and deserted three and a half years later shattered and empty. Strong French cigarettes and whiskey are the only comforts he allows himself. Cerise L'oiseau is a bistro singer, not all that pretty or appealing. But her sorrowful voice penetrates Beck's mind and tears at his heart. Cerise has been systematically battered by a cruel, demented fiancé. She feels this dysfunctional relationship must surely be due to shortcomings on her part. She lives on an obscure Parisian side street - *The Alley of Wishes*.

Beck is inexperienced where women are concerned. He struggles with desire and sexual obsession for this woman he secretly names "the songbird". She sees a core of purity in Beck and soon becomes his angel of hope in a hauntingly dark life.

The beauty of this story is how they complement each other, fight each other's demons and persevere no matter what befalls them. Quiet courage and devotion is their hallmark, unconditional love is the key that frees them from dishonor and near death. It's a hopeful, love filled story, more than a romance.

*Midwest Book Review – Amazon review*

Johnson has delivered a modern day masterpiece of romance and passion. It is an unforgettable tribute to the strength of the human spirit and is a must read for anyone who believes that love can really conquer all.

Review by Nancy Mehl for *The Wichita Eagle*

I have read and reviewed many a novel, but never have the characters stayed within my heart as Cerise and Beck have. A love affair that will draw you into its very essence awaits you in this outstanding read. War, lust, murder, love, hate, and forgiveness all play a part in ***The Alley of Wishes***. This is a story you will not soon forget.

Shirley Johnson – Senior Reviewer *Midwest Book Review*

***The Alley of Wishes*** is a lovely and painfully dramatic book that - for those of us who love the classic works of literature - will be here when many commercial works of fiction have faded. If you believe in the ultimate triumph of love, faith and friendship, this is a book that you should both read and cherish.

Jeanette Lundgren – Literary Agent

Beck Sanow is a delicious character!! From the first stirrings of sexual desire he's ever known, to his passionate adoration of Cerise L'Oiseau and his selfless devotion after tragedy, I LOVED THIS MAN as if he were real. He is a haunted warrior, so deeply troubled, and yet his capacity for genuine love is bottomless. I liked this book because the characters are alive, the story so real I lived it. I'm hoping for a sequel soon.

VanI337 – Nebraska reader – Amazon review

For whatever quirk of fate that brought this book to my attention, I'm grateful. The time - World War One era - the appealing characters - Beck, Cerise and Rance in particular - and the wonderful writing style of this author make this story a stand out. I believed in, lived and loved with the characters, cheered them on through thick and thin from first page to last. This story of two lovers nearly destroyed by war is sweetly erotic, but it is much more than simply a romance novel. Well done!

A Reader from Kentucky – Amazon review

Laurel Johnson's fiction shows a depth of human understanding, social awareness, passion, and a sensuous delight in language. We care about the characters, are swept up in their fates, experience their lives and the society around them, and throughout it all we enjoy the graceful flow of prose with which the author weaves her spell. ***The Alley of Wishes*** is a traditional novel in the best sense of the term. It blows all the postmodern twerps off the playing field.

William Hathaway - Germany

Laurel Johnson has recreated 1918 Paris during the German bombardment and brings to life the fear, terror, and danger of living in Paris during the First World War. But more than that she has taken four lost and aimless lives and created two beautiful pairings and a four-way friendship that will endure all hardships and overcome all obstacles that may arise in their futures.

C.H. Foertmeyer - Cincinnati author

The darkness of the emotional drama is what separates this story from being a pure love story. It becomes much more than a love story. The characters are very real, not at all predictable. I was completely enveloped in the time period and the place. This would be one hell of a movie!

Karen Wiemers – Kansas reader

***The Alley of Wishes*** is a superb novel, whose author dares to explore such ambitious themes as love and war and the unbreakable bonds of friendship during one of the most unstable periods in recent history. Mrs. Johnson's prose is rich and deep and thick – a throwback to the best of the sumptuous prose before Hemingway came along and put literature on a starvation diet.

Jay Squires – California author – Amazon review

I was genuinely moved by the character portrait of Ms Johnson's Beck Sanow, the seemingly dispirited, despairing frontline deserter from the American forces stationed in WWI France. I am convinced that the author is absolutely classic in her poetic lyricism here. It is no coincidence that together Beck and Cerise create a magnetized intensity: one offering the other vital dosages of hope and uplift. Their difficult love affair becomes the centerpiece of Ms Johnson's beautifully written story. The title itself is thoughtfully crafted to fit neatly into the overall flow of events; the result = a wonderful read. Highly Recommended !!!

Alan Cambeira – Georgia author – Amazon review

A friend gave me this book as a gift, and a gift it is in the finest sense of the word. A young Kansas farmer's innocence and idealism die in muddy, bloody trenches at the Front in World War One. He deserts the Front and finds his way to Paris, where he tries to drink himself free of guilt and sorrow. He finds a kindred spirit in the person of a shy chanteuse. Her one experience with sex and "love" has been a nightmare. She lives on the Alley of Wishes, an appropriate name because she wishes for a tender lover, a kindly man. The ruined farm boy eventually becomes that man. They struggle together to create a life of love and peace out of tragedy and despair. I'm an avid reader and a tough sell. This book is choice, and beyond my ability to describe.

gismos10 – Nebraska reader - Amazon review

One of my three favorite writers today!! I am such a Laurel Johnson fan. I love her books! Ms. Johnson is a wonderful writer whose every

word she writes the reader feels. An emotional writer that puts her heart and soul into each book she writes. I can see why ***The Alley of Wishes*** has become such an INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER! Do yourself a huge favor and order her books today.

It's Just Me - Amazon review

I found this story truly captivating, in all aspects--characters, plot, dialogue. There really wasn't any part of this book I didn't enjoy. The story kept me entertained and enthralled as I followed the lives of Beck and Cerise (and eventually, Rance and Colette), and their undying love for one another through many trials and tribulations. This book truly should be considered one of the finest examples of fine literature in the modern day. To the author, I say "Bravo!"

Todd M. Hunter – Kansas author – Amazon review

***The Alley Of Wishes*** is a must read for those who love a romantic and exciting story. I cried and laughed. The characters are so real that I felt I knew them. Their love is something that we all must hunger for in our lifetime!

Jane Burkhead – Kansas reader – Amazon review

Unconditional love in the middle of unending war. This beautifully written story with its fluid style is set in the Paris of WWI... It brings together Cerise, a singer brutalized by a lover, and Beck, a Kansas youth and Francophile with a talent for painting, who has fought in the war, deserted, and is damaged, emotionally and spiritually, by the conflict's horrific realities.

F.E. Mazur – Kentucky author – Amazon review

***The Alley of Wishes***, by Laurel Johnson is a delightful, well-written, poetic narrative about romance, as-it-should-be. Johnson's characters are three-dimensional and her poetic words seem to breathe life into each of them. Her portrait of war carries you into the trenches, makes you feel and understand the horrors suffered by the men and boys of either side. Beck Sanow, numb from the horror of war, is dead inside until he meets and falls in love with French songbird, Cerise L 'Oiseau. Their relationship is fraught with obstacles. Johnson's narrative is fresh and refreshing, her words are poetic and readers will fall in love with her characters. A marvelous second novel from the author of ***The Grass Dance***.

Beverly J. Scott – Iowa author – Amazon review

***The Alley of Wishes*** develops into a tour de force, rich with emotion and very real characters. This novel pulls at the heartstrings and has the potential to be a modern masterpiece.

Sophie Simonet – USA – Amazon review

I expected a quick read and refused to allow myself to do that. Instead I was mesmerized by Johnson's rich vocabulary and poetic sentences. Her character development is exemplary. I think I will remember Beck and Cerise almost as long as Rhett and Scarlett. This book will enrich your life.

Dixie Talbot – Kansas library media specialist – Amazon review

It is a rare author who can write sensitively and effectively about the psychological processes lying behind what their characters do and say. Ms. Johnson's characters come alive.... It is not possible to read her books without being emotionally and psychologically moved by the stories she tells. She understands, and helps readers understand and feel, the impact of those vital psychological processes in giving meaning to life.

Don Ford – Professor and Dean Emeritus

To be able to take such heart wrenching human conditions - such as tragedy, horrific abominations inflicted on another, and soul testing physical conditions endured - into a beautifully rendered story that stays with the reader is a testament to the author's awesome ability as a writer. I will never again take a bath without thinking of the sensual nature of this book. I will never again wonder how much domestic violence affects people. And I will never again take lightly the horrors of war and what serving your country does to those who are trained to do whatever they have to do to win the war. Outstanding!

Lynn Barry – New York author – Amazon review

***The Alley of Wishes***, by talented writer, Laurel Johnson, is a wonderful love story that I enjoyed very much. Beautifully written and quite moving. The characters are likeable and easy to connect with and the plot had me contentedly reading along. ***The Alley of Wishes*** gave me several wonderful hours of reading enjoyment and I was sad when the story ended. Ms. Johnson has become a writer that I am proud to add to my MUST READ list of entertaining writers! Congratulations Laurel on what no-doubt will quickly become a BESTSELLING Novel!

Victoria Taylor Murray – Amazon Top 500 reviewer

***The Alley of Wishes*** by Laurel Johnson reads like a classic of yesteryear. Ms. Johnson writes in a beautifully poetic style and tells the love story between Beck and Cerise in such a way that the reader feels part of this moving story. Never have I read a book so wrought with emotion, feeling as if I had stepped into that time and place to experience the sadness and despair, the pain and anguish, the love and joy. If I could rate this book higher than the 5 stars, I would. It's beyond perfection and is a book you will not want to put down, one that will stay with you long after you've finished it.

Christy Tillery French – Tennessee Author – Amazon review

***The Alley of Wishes*** is one of the finest pieces of literature I have had the pleasure of reading in a long time. This is an outstanding book and I give it my highest recommendation. I am sure that I will read this one again. It has all of the qualities of a classic novel that should be handed down from generation to generation and read over and over again.

Kathy Bosworth – Reviewer for *Denise's Pieces*

Sometimes a book comes along and just totally blindsides you. You think it is going to be one type of story and before you know it, it takes you places you've never been before and manages in the process to elicit emotions that are unexpected and real. ***The Alley of Wishes*** is one of those books.

This is not just a romance book; to pigeonhole it into that narrow a definition is unfair to what a joyous work this is. This is a book about love, the kind that is pure and real. This is about people, how they really feel and what their hopes and aspirations are. This is about dreams, and wishes, with white knights that appear out of nowhere to carry you away from the nightmare that has become your life. Until now, I thought that the most romantic thing I had ever read was ***The Bridges of Madison County***, but in my opinion, this puts that "thin in more ways than one" story to shame. ***The Alley of Wishes*** is a much richer, fuller, more robust read, with characters that are as real and true to life as any I have ever read in any other book – ever. My heart sang with the good times, and sank with the sad right along with Beck and Cerise's.

This is a story that Ms. Johnson should be proud of crafting. Her writing is clear, crisp, and filled with imagery that will make the story unfold with an exuberance that embraces life and love, that will leave you wanting more. I know there is a massive audience for this type of work, and I sincerely hope that they find this book. If only they would

put down those books with the half naked man holding a scantily clad woman on the cover and read a true love story expertly written, I don't think they would go back to those ever again.

Richard Mohr – Mohr Reviews, *Dream Forge WebZine*

The author used her words like dots of paint, and I didn't get it until it was done that it was a fine piece of work. Especially after you stepped back and saw the whole thing. I liked the way you were brought into the picture, not really a real place, but a window to a paradise.

From *Cooter Reads a book* – Harvey Tate – Ohio author

The Alley of Wishes is a masterpiece, set in Paris during the First World War, relating the tragic story of a seemingly hopeless affair between a young American army deserter and a luckless but lovely Parisian bistro singer.

This is an intense, powerful book that plumbs the depths of human emotion, taking the reader on a wild ride from total despair to blinding love. The author reveals the dark side of the human psyche as her characters descend into an underworld of tortured souls fighting evil, hatred and tragedy armed with love alone.

Laurel Johnson is a skilled wordsmith who constructs her scenes like an artist working with oils. Her characters are memorable and will stay with you long after the book is finished. The author brings the reader right into the souls of her characters, who come alive as real people, struggling for survival in a hostile world.

This book surprised me. I was expecting a harmless romance but found myself in uncharted waters at night in the grip of a typhoon. It's a wonderful book but be prepared to be haunted by it later.

Review by Marshall Thomas, author of the Soldier of the Legion science fiction series.