

The background of the cover is a night scene. A large, intense fire is burning on a ship, with bright orange and yellow flames and a thick plume of smoke. Several fireworks are exploding in the dark sky above the ship, with bursts of blue, white, and red light. The ship is on the water, and its lights are visible. The overall atmosphere is dramatic and intense.

DAWN OF THEOPHILUS

A SHORT PREQUEL

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Dawn of Theophilus

Prequel to *Canaan Sleeps*

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“Hail! Arch Prophet Phinehas, Light of the West.” The Eastern ambassador said with ceremonial pomp. The gold embellishments on his bronze-colored overcoat jangled as he bowed low, the sound dissipating through the cavernous palace chamber.

Arch Prophet Phinehas inclined his graying head forward in reception from behind his long desk. His two advisors stood motionless on either side of him, eyeing the Eastern official quizzically. The ambassador resumed his upright stance with a keen smile as he continued, “It is an honor to be standing here in your most holy city on this momentous day of days! One hundred years of peace—surely the hand of God is upon your prosperous nation.”

“Your words are most kind, sir. May God’s blessing be upon you and your family.” The Arch Prophet recited, lifting his hand half-heartedly, “Now tell me, why is it you have come?”

The ambassador’s white teeth flashed as he replied,

“Surely, Your Grace received the telegram announcing my arrival. I come with good news for you and your kingdom.”

“There is but one kingdom!” Phineas rebutted swiftly and sharply, jabbing his finger toward the ceiling. He heaved a breath and relaxed back in his seat again as he went on, “And yes, we received your telegram, but it made more mud than clarity of your purpose here. The west has always had a shipping arrangement with the east. What need do we have for further discussion on this matter?”

“Oh! Pray, do not imagine I have come to augment our arrangement.” The ambassador hastened to say, “Rather, I have come to allay your concerns about piracy in the shipping lanes. Surely your advisors have been keeping you informed on this troubling subject?”

Phinehas angled his gaze toward the advisor on his right, clad in western military regalia.

“Kaynen, do you know what he’s talking about?”

“Er...yes, Your Grace. There have been troubling reports of shipments going missing beyond the East-West divide in the sea, but we have begun to see improvement.” Kaynen replied with an awkward bow toward Phinehas.

“That’s just it, you see.” The ambassador interjected, stepping closer toward the Arch Prophet’s desk, “As you guard your coastlands in the south, pirates from the north are taking advantage of your exposed shipping lanes. As you know, the Eastern Empire boasts the grandest navy in the Post-Cataclysmic world. I have come to offer their services in defense of your merchant fleet, for the good of both our kingdoms... er, nations that is.” He chuckled obsequiously.

Phinehas furrowed his brows, sinking further back into his seat and tempting his fingers in thought. There was a long pause as no one dared interrupt the Arch Prophet’s thoughts. Phinehas glanced to the advisor on his left, saying in a candid tone,

“What should I do, Father Brande?”

The black-suited reverend bowed toward the Arch Prophet as he replied,

“With respect, I don’t know very much about naval strategy, but making such a gesture to the Eastern Empire could secure greater goodwill between us.”

“Your Grace...” Kaynen hissed, coming close to Phinehas’ side and speaking at a volume that the ambassador could not hear, “Need I remind you of the bloody history between our peoples? The East cannot be trusted. Such a gesture may show weakness that could lead to...”

“That’s enough, Kaynen!” Phinehas snapped, turning fully to face his military advisor. “I will not hear any more of what you were going to say. Much good has come of our partnership with the East and I will not have that jeopardized by your fear mongering!” Phinehas’ voice reverberated in the tall, vaulted ceilings, dissolving into a tense silence. Kaynen ground his teeth and clenched his fists, but said nothing. He stood upright and resumed his stance beside the Arch Prophet without another word. Phinehas glanced back at the Eastern Ambassador, who was eyeing the floor awkwardly, though with a visible grin.

“Your offer is very kind. I accept it. You will speak to the admiral and he will draw up maps and a treaty for this agreement.”

“You display God’s wisdom. If you find need for me, my frigate, ‘Theophilus’, leaves at dawn. Good night, Your Excellency.” The ambassador said with a very pleased smile, bowing low again. There was silence in the room until the ambassador had safely left, the closing doors filling the room with a dull boom.

“If I may voice my concerns to you, Phinehas...” Kaynen began with an effort at courtesy, though he spoke through his teeth.

“I know what you will say already and I will not hear it.” Phinehas said, standing up from his desk and facing the much taller Kaynen.

“They are bloodthirsty dogs, Phinehas. Their war in the northern tribes proves it. Once they’ve conquered the northern lands above the sea, where do you think they’ll go next? We have to make a stand now!”

“Your concern for the northern tribes does you credit, my brother, but these are blinding you to another course of action.” Phinehas said, poking his finger at the war metals arrayed on Kaynen’s chest. “You make violence inevitable the more you position yourself for war.”

Kaynen threw up his hands with exasperation, saying with no effort at pleasantries now,

“It’s like you want us to assimilate our kingdom with those Eastern devils!”

“There is one kingdom, Kaynen. You know this.” Phinehas repeated, “And besides, there are worse ends than a peace that dissolves borders.”

Kaynen shook his head with bottled anger as he hissed,

“And that from our nation’s leader.” He turned and stormed out of the room, the slamming door exploding like thunder in the quiet chamber. Phinehas and Father Brand stood facing the door for a long, heavy moment before Father Brand spoke in a low, respectful tone,

“I must confess, assimilation with the Eastern Empire does not seem wise, Your Grace. You know as well as I the diabolical ways they twist Scripture to suit their totalitarian ends.”

Phinehas said nothing in reply at first. Instead, he sauntered toward a row of glass-paned doors facing an open-air balcony at the rear of the chamber. Father Brande followed the Arch Prophet out onto the balcony, which was bathed in the warm, amber glow of a spring sunset. Phinehas leaned on the concrete railing, facing the sprawl of his holy city of Shiloh below. The vast reaches of rooftops, twinkling lights, and bustling avenues sloped down toward the eastern sea that dominated the entire horizon.

“Do you recall the character of Cyrus in the Bible, Father?” Phinehas breathed, eyeing the vast city with a troubled expression.

“Yes...” Father Brande said, a little confusion apparent in his tone, “The pagan king of Persia, called the ‘shepherd of God’. He set the captive people of God free from Babylonian exile. It’s an ancient story... buried under more centuries than anyone can count.”

“And yet, its principle remains alive. Brande... I’ve always put great confidence in you.” Phinehas said, pivoting to face the reverend with a warm though sorrowful smile.

Father Brande nodded politely, though with hesitation on his face.

“What troubles you, Phinehas?”

“Shiloh troubles me.” Phinehas replied with gravity, turning again to face the urban expanse below his palace, “The chief jewel in God’s crown, so they say. It is a prosperous kingdom I have inherited... a Christian kingdom, I’m told... but it is not God’s kingdom. I fear the same things you have to say about the Eastern Empire are just as true of us. We’ve traded the living water of Christ for broken cisterns, and there’s not an ear that will listen... not even to their Prophet.”

“Your Grace...” Father Brande said, coming near to Phinehas’ side, “You put so little trust in your divine calling. You mustn’t despair... you can’t. The people need to hear the word of God. Your prophecies are what keep us from our own exile.”

“No Father. They have had the word of God and done nothing with it but twist it for their own gain. There is but one kingdom... God’s kingdom... and I fear Shiloh has declared war on it.” Phinehas turned to face Father Brande with grave seriousness as he continued, “We are

already in exile. I've seen it in my prayers... the dream of Shiloh is a curse, and if we do not return, our place in history will be removed."

Father Brande took a step back, eyeing the Arch Prophet apprehensively as he said,

"What are you saying?"

"I'm saying the overthrow of the western way of life may not be the worst possible end."

"But at the hands of the Eastern tyrant Emperor?" Father Brande balked incredulously.

"Yes. And don't look at me like that. Aren't you a teacher of Scripture?" Phinehas chided, "When the people of God pervert his ways and sell themselves to other gods, judgment falls. What I want to do is to save us from a worse judgment, to make peace with our enemies where I can. War with the East would annihilate us. Assimilation would preserve a faithful remnant... even with persecutions."

"And what of yourself? Will you surrender your divine office?" Father Brande added, trying to remain calm.

"Yes. I've thought much about this. These people want a king, not a prophet of the true King. You will see what will happen when I announce this new prophecy to Shiloh. If I am not killed, I will be removed and one like Kaynen installed. You wait and see." Phinehas said, wryly.

Father Brande said nothing, looking stunned and thoughtful at the ground. Phinehas smiled warmly at the old reverend, and folded his hands behind his back as he said,

"You are wrestling with the fear that God will not be good to His people?"

"That is exactly what I'm trying not to fear." Father Brande chuckled, "But I've only ever known peace and liberty. There have been so few fires in which to test my faith and kill my fear."

"Yes, but I believe that will change... and sooner than we may like it." Phinehas said, glancing back over the opulent city as sunset faded to dusk. Below in the harbor at the edge of the sea, he could see the boats all aglow with festive lights as they eased out into the dark waters.

Father Brande came alongside Phinehas, saying consolingly,

“Come, Phinehas. I do not think all is as bleak as you say. Put these worries behind you, if only for tonight. Tonight we celebrate a hundred years of peace! I’m sure the people are eager to hear your speech this evening.”

Phinehas did not reply for a moment. Then, with a solemn nod and a melancholy smile, he said with resolution,

“Yes, the people need to hear the word of God.”

Phinehas scanned the waterfront of the city from the railing of the Arch Prophet’s cruiser floating out in the harbor. The fish markets and wharves were abuzz with festive color and life. Over the hundred-yard distance, the mingled festal music from the city’s waterfront sounded chaotic and tuneless to Phinehas’ ears. It was the centennial day of peace, a national high note in the history of the west, but Phinehas’ heart hummed a discordant tune.

Phinehas glanced toward the rear of the cruiser, where a dark peninsula jutted away from the more lively inland, equipped with a decrepit-looking lighthouse at its foremost end. Phinehas could see the dark shapes of the ships moored there, among them the Eastern Ambassador’s frigate, flying the vibrant orange colors of the Eastern Empire.

Phinehas heaved a thoughtful sigh as he returned his gaze to the festive lights of the city’s waterfront. The bobbing movement of hundreds of heads in the crowds filled Phinehas with a familiar feeling of futility and dread. Dancing lights played in the streets while huge neon Christian crosses of every color glowed over the celebrating masses.

Phinehas glanced down at the onyx-embedded Arch Prophet’s ring on his finger, emblazoned as well with a decorative cross. Phinehas wondered, as he often did, what passed through most people’s minds in the city when they looked at the cross. Was it a good-luck charm, a cultural artifact, or simply a receipt of divine bills paid? Or was it a doorway into a new life? When Phinehas accepted the calling to be the nation’s prophet all those years ago, he thought he

knew the good news of Jesus. Now he knew what he had believed—and what all of Shiloh continued to confess—was a velvet-lined lie.

Phinehas thanked God for those countless late-night vigils, oracles, and prayers for the wealth and prosperity of the nation, not because they resulted in more security and power for Shiloh, but because they exposed Phinehas' own hypocrisy. He had not wanted God or anything God stood for. He wanted what was 'best' for the prosperity of Shiloh. His job as Arch Prophet was to convince God to give the people what they wanted. The moment any true word of the whole gospel of Jesus escaped Phinehas' lips was the moment he was disregarded. What did Jesus the suffering servant have to do with the national treasury and maintaining the high living standards of the city's elite? Phinehas wondered, with a heavy heart, how much he might be to blame for Shiloh's dire spiritual condition.

"It's almost time, Your Grace." The voice of his chief bodyguard roused Phinehas from his troubled musings. Phinehas turned and regarded the stalwart-looking woman with a nod. She smiled as she added, "The loud-speaker has been prepared for your address. My men have secured the ship. There will be no interruptions."

"Thank you, Captain Harow." Phinehas said, absentmindedly. He let his eyes waft listlessly over the polished, white deck of the ship. Alongside the crates of fireworks lay strewn all the complicated wiring and equipment needed to supply the enormous electric speakers suspended by ropes high over the deck. Phinehas' contingent of seven ceremonially clad bodyguards stood at attention with Captain Harow, their eyes all on him. Father Brande stood nearby as well watching him, and Phinehas knew soon the entire city would be watching him give his address from over the water. Phinehas felt the cold sweat collect on his forehead.

"Your Grace, are you alright?" Father Brande said, taking a concerned step toward the Arch Prophet. Phinehas moved to the reverend, turning his back to the guards as he said in a confidential tone,

"Do you believe there is forgiveness for sins committed in ignorance?"

The reverend seemed taken aback by the question, then paused to think before he replied,

“It would all depend on the heart of the one who repents, whether there is a sincere intention to give up the sin.”

Phinehas’ expression grew heavy. He bowed his head and said in a quiet voice,

“I repent of the wrong I have done to this city. I only pray to God it can be undone.”

Without waiting for a reply, Phinehas walked across the deck and up the steps leading to the large microphone pulpit, facing the shore. Taking his place in front of the huge microphone, the Arch Prophet lifted his hands. A long blast from many rams-horns sounded from the shore, quieting the music and the chatter of the crowds. As silence permeated the night air, Phinehas lowered his arms and spoke to the city,

“Tonight is unlike any other in the long history of our fair and holy city...” Phinehas began, then paused. He felt as though he might choke on his own words if he continued to speak that customary rhetorical gibberish. He winced, trying to shake off his anxious nerves. Phinehas knew what he was about to do was likely the bravest act of his life. After a troublingly long silence, he continued,

“I have done you two great wrongs, my beloved Shiloh. I have taught you to turn your back on God and live your lives for your own gain.” The murmur from the crowds was audible over the waters as Phinehas continued, his voice breaking with strained emotion, “Through my negligence, I have invented a people so hardened by their own achievements that they cannot love God or their neighbor. This peace was always a tool to do the work of God, but we have used it like a toy for ourselves—I myself being most guilty of all of you. I repent. For the sake of God’s kingdom, repent with me if this peace is to last. God forgive us for our...”

There was a snap and the microphone suddenly went dead. At the same moment, a single firework sparked into the sky from one of the nearby boats, followed by another and another, exploding with a thunderous crack and a flash of colors.

Phinehas turned back toward the deck in time to see the flash from Captain Harow’s revolver and feel the blast of a gunshot ripple through the air. Phinehas dropped as the resounding crack of four more gunshots pulsed in his ears, mingling with the rapid explosions of

the fireworks. Laying in the pulpit with a racing heart, Phinehas quickly took inventory of himself and found he had gratefully not been shot.

Peering back down at the deck in a confused daze, Phinehas saw the bodies of five of his personal guard laying in growing pools of blood that glimmered in the flashing light of the fireworks display.

“Bring him down here!” Captain Harow shouted to one of the remaining two guards.

“And what about the reverend?” One guard asked with a shaky voice.

“Him too! Now!” Harow barked.

Before Phinehas could rally his senses, he found himself being roughly hauled down the steps to the deck where the guard pushed him to his knees. At the same moment, Father Brande was dragged up alongside Phinehas and forced to kneel, his face pale and quivering with terror.

Standing over them both loomed the unshaken figure of Captain Harow, silhouetted by the coruscating fireworks. She was coolly reloading her revolver one bullet at a time.

“What are you doing, Harow!” Phinehas cried, finding his voice at last as his eyes traced over the dead bodies on the deck, “This isn’t you! These men were loyal to you!”

“And I was once loyal to you.” Harow said sharply, “But you betrayed me when you turned your back on this city. What you’re witnessing is the heinous assassination of our nation’s beloved leader and trusted spiritual advisor by a highly skilled team of Eastern insurgents.”

Phinehas scanned the deck, but the only people he saw were members of his bodyguards whom he had known his entire career. Phinehas blinked as Harow closed the cylinder of her revolver with a click.

“This is Kaynen’s doing, isn’t it?” Phinehas said.

“You catch on slow for a prophet.” Harow chuckled, “Shiloh deserves a leader with its best interest in mind. I’m afraid you’ve proven yourself to be out-of-touch with the needs of this city, and it’s time you exit the picture.”

“I have only now begun to know what this city needs... And you would now plunge it into godless tyranny!” Phinehas growled.

“Into a golden age of prosperity, you mean.” Harow grinned as she holstered her deadly weapon. The older of the two guards brought her a square, metal case trailing wires. He opened it and presented her with the contents, which Phinehas could see were electrical. She went on, “Kaynen is the voice of God now. After we detonate the boat, we’ll report the tragedy to the city as the lucky survivors.”

“S-so you’re going to just shoot us? You can’t possibly think you’d escape retribution from the city courts.” Father Brande said, evidently trying to appear brave but sounding to Phinehas very frightened.

“Nothing so crude as that.” Captain Harow said, tinkering with the instrumentation inside the electrical box, “The Eastern assassins planted bombs on board after a deadly shootout with the Arch Prophet’s brave guardians. Thankfully, three escaped, but were tragically unable to rescue His Grace from the explosion.” She flicked one last switch, and the box began to tick like a clock.

“Harow, wait!” The other of the two guards shouted suddenly, stepping in front of Phinehas. He was a young man from the sound of his wavering voice, “This is wrong... I mean, it’s not for nothing he’s the Arch Prophet. God is with him! If we kill him we will...” the blast of a gunshot cut him short. Phinehas’ heart fell as the boy dropped like a bag of sand onto the deck in front of him. Captain Harow looked at the young man laying at her feet with a contorted expression of mingled rage and sadness, her revolver smoking in her hand.

“There is no room for weakness in this new age!” She said through clenched teeth. She was shaking slightly as her maddened eyes looked back at Phinehas, saying in a low voice, “Behold, God is doing a new thing... He is making rivers in the desert. Shiloh will never die.”

The first guard set the ticking box aside and slipped on a life vest, passing a second to Harow.

“Not yet.” She snarled, “Bind them first, and then we jump ship. We have sixty seconds.”

The man nodded and produced a set of handcuffs as he approached where Phinehas and Father Brande were on their knees. Just as the guard had roughly clamped one cuff on Phinehas' wrist, another shot rang out on the deck, causing him to flinch. Phinehas looked and saw the young man who had just been shot was holding out a pistol, aiming with a quivering, blood-smeared hand toward the huge loud-speakers over the deck.

“Jump, Your Grace!” The young man shouted. Before Harow or the guard could get him under control, the boy let off another shot, this time hitting his mark. A pulley snapped and the slack rope whirred as the heavy bulk of machinery came hurtling toward the deck.

Harow let out a shriek before the full weight of it crashed on top of her, sending sparks and smoke in every direction. Phinehas toppled backward, his ears ringing from the sound of the impact. In a haze he shook himself and found Father Brande was on his feet and trying to get Phinehas up, shouting,

“We have to move! Get up!”

Phinehas glanced back at the ruin of the deck in time to see the second guard staggering to his feet and producing his pistol. Finding his strength suddenly, Phinehas leaped up and bounded with his friend to the side rail of the ship. Without time for a second thought, Phinehas flung himself over the side. The world spun for a moment as his ears filled with wind before suddenly everything was a tumult of blackness and roaring water.

Bursting above the waves, Phinehas gasped and spluttered, looking around for any sign of Father Brande. Another gunshot rang out over the water. Phinehas looked up toward the rail of the menacing, black shape of the cruiser and the remaining guard there, shooting erratically at the water.

Just then, Father Brande burst up out of the water just beside Phinehas, gasping and letting out a stifled cry. The guard turned his aim in the sound's direction, letting off another series of shots.

“Back down!” Phinehas cried, pushing the reverend back under the waves before going under himself. The cold, black water suppressed Phinehas' senses again as he fought to stay under the waves. He could imagine the deadly bullets piercing the sea water all around them as

he held himself and the reverend submerged, hoping and praying the few feet of water over their heads would be an adequate barrier.

Just as Phinehas' lungs began to ache and the need for oxygen became desperate, the blackness around was suddenly ignited in a bright flash. A bone-rattling blast thundered through the water as the planted explosives ripped through the cruiser above them in a fiery column. Unable to hold his breath any longer, Phinehas burst again to the surface, gasping desperately.

Floating debris from the explosion surrounded them as bits of the ship continued to fall from the sky. The towering blaze of the ruined cruiser in front of Phinehas seemed to loom like a mountain of growing red fire in the dark water. Through the furious clamor of Phinehas' panicked mind, a single note of bittersweet relief rang clear.

"Ph... Phinehas!" Father Brande called out frantically from nearby.

"I'm here, Father! Are you alright?" Phinehas replied with a lighthearted tone that surprised even himself.

"Praise God! Wh... what happened up there! We nearly died!" Father Brande blustered as he grabbed hold of a large plank of wood.

"We're not out of it yet." Phinehas replied, taking hold of the same plank, "Swim for the docks there!" He gestured with a jerk of his head toward the dark peninsula lined with moored ships. The dock was not as far as the main waterfront, but the distance was a daunting reminder for Phinehas of his age. By the time they had paddled their plank up between two towering freighters, Phinehas felt as if his legs would not have the strength to stand once he was out of the water.

Before Phinehas knew it, they both had reached safety and lay gasping on the cold and vacant dock. Phinehas gazed up at the towering shape of the lighthouse above them as an east wind prickled his skin. The resounding crackle of fireworks in the harbor had ceased and was replaced with the sounds of emergency sirens and a bitter noise of panic from the crowds on the waterfront.

“I... I just can’t believe we survived!” Father Brande laughed when he finally had breath enough to speak, “It’s a miracle! Come, we have to get you to safety and tell everyone what happened.” Father Brande stood up and offered his hand. Phinehas heaved a heavy sigh and took his friend’s hand. Rising to his feet, Phinehas followed along silently behind the reverend as he led the way up the vacant wharf.

The enormous bows of cargo freighters loomed darkly over them as they walked, Phinehas scanning them as they passed each one. As they came to walk by the steel hull of a small frigate, Phinehas stopped and gazed up at the vessel. Its name was emblazoned along its side with white letters in the eastern dialect that read:

THEOPHILUS.

“Phinehas, why have you stopped?” Father Brande said, turning to face Phinehas with slight anxiety on his face, “It’s not safe here. That’s an Eastern frigate.”

“I’m not going back.” Phinehas said abruptly, still gazing upward toward the name of the ship. Father Brande paused for a moment, collecting himself before he replied,

“I understand this was a very... unsettling encounter. But, Your Grace, the people need to know that you’re alive. Now come on!”

Phinehas turned his gaze along the ship and out toward the harbor where he could see the aftermath of the devastation as other boats came alongside the blazing hulk of his cruiser, hosing the fiery wreckage fruitlessly. He glanced beyond the wreckage to the lights of the city and the glowing neon crosses spread among the far-reaching rooftops. Phinehas took in a long breath and said,

“I think it... may be better for Arch Prophet Phinehas to remain dead.”

“Now that’s just being morbid!” Father Brande shouted immediately, “You have a duty to this city. Where else will you go?”

“For God’s sake, Brande, look at the facts!” Phinehas shouted, turning to face the reverend, “The office of Arch Prophet is a shell, a pious facade for power-hungry monarchs! I’m just a tool for Shiloh to manipulate the hand of God and I just cannot justify it anymore!” He

abruptly pulled off his ceremonial ring and moved to hurl it into the heaving waves, then stopped. He turned again to Father Brande and held out the ring, saying, “Take it with you. If I go back now, it will only be one attempt on my life after another. I am sorry to leave this burden with you, but you must relay the news that Phinehas is no more.”

Father Brande said nothing for a moment, then stepped forward and took the ring with a troubled and downhearted expression.

“But... Phinehas, where will you go?”

“Where I should have been all this time.” Phinehas replied, looking back at the eastern frigate, “I have seen something stirring in the east that I can no longer ignore. The first sparks of a movement I know I must work to fan into flame. I go to the Eastern Empire...and I do not think I will return.”

Father Brande did not say a word in reply. He looked at the ring sitting in his open hand for a long moment, then closed his fingers over it, saying in a grave voice,

“So the Light of the West has died. There is no hope left for us.”

Phineas regarded the reverend again with a warm smile, laying a hand on his friend’s shoulder,

“Do not despair, Father. I do not believe God is through with this city. There will always be a faithful remnant, the friends of God, though they be the gutter outcasts of Shiloh. As for me...” Phinehas paused and let his eyes trace the name of the eastern ship again, *THEOPHILUS*, “The harvest has only begun.”

About the Author



Hi, I'm Daniel. I'm a Christian writer and artist who believes in the power of fiction to teach theology to the heart and not just the head. I'm fascinated by writing that can harness the imagination to go theologically deeper than classroom lectures could ever go.

Dawn of Theophilus is the prequel to my upcoming Young Adult Dystopia series. You can get the first book, *Canaan Sleeps*, at book retailers starting **February 1, 2023**.

CANAAN SLEEPS: A YA DYSTOPIA NOVEL

The last Christian city has nightmares of a coming doom.

Centuries after the Great Cataclysm restarted civilization, the perfect Christian city of Shiloh emerges as a beacon of power and prosperity to the onlooking world. But, as dreams about Jesus and fears of a coming disaster spread throughout the slums of the city, complacent believers are urged to action. When a letter pried from the dead hands of an enemy spy tells of Shiloh's coming doom, who can be believed? The Arch Prophet or this madman writing from across the sea? Thomas, Ruth, and Adam must decide. The lives of thousands rest in their hands, and time is running out.

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