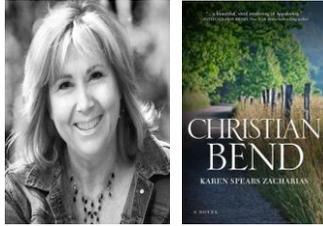


## Karen Spears Zacharias's *Christian Bend*



*Christian Bend* takes place in the time of the “story frame” for *Burdy*—that is, 1987. **Burdy Luttrell** is recovering from an almost fatal gunshot wound, and both Rain and Wheedin are at her side. She has finally told **Rain** about his father Zeb’s letters. Rain has thought for forty years that his father was killed in the **D-day Normandy landings**. Burdy knows that she should have told Rain long ago the truth about his father, but she had accepted the fact that Zeb suffered from **PTSD** and that he thought he would do more harm than good if he returned to his family. Until Burdy told him of Maize’s death, he was unaware. For thirty years, Burdy has kept this secret, as well as her affair with **Clint Dumas**, the Frenchman who assisted her on her journey to find Zeb in 1956 and who has loved the beautiful **Melungeon** for more than thirty years. Now in her seventies and having been almost fatally shot in the Bean Station Pharmacy, Burdy has been recovering while Clint has frantically tried to contact her. Clint determines to fly to the U.S. He asks Zebulon’s help, and Zeb does not see how he can deny the request, finally agreeing to return to Christian Bend to see what has happened to Burdy Luttrell.

Meanwhile, **Chief Conley** has had no leads in discovering who shot Burdy Luttrell and killed three of her neighbors: Hunk and Mary Nelle Kincer and Watson Loxley at the pharmacy. The pressure is mounting for the Chief to find some answers. While in the hospital, Burdy is cared for by ICU Nurse **Thomasina Woodson**, who has moved from Baltimore to Tennessee to work at the hospital. **Why did Thomasina leave her job in Maryland? What is Zacharias’s message about “toxic masculinity”? What is “toxic masculinity”? Kade Mashburn**, who left the music scene in Nashville to return to Christian Bend and become a narcotics detective, is incredulous that abused women would stay with the men who had abused them, but Thomasina tells him this is just **another kind of PTSD; what does she mean? What is Zacharias saying about abuse of women and children, and how does she connect this idea and theme to *Burdy* and *Mother of Rain*? Why did Kade, who also loved Maizee in the first book, decide to leave the Nashville music scene? How is the drug problem in Appalachia connected to Burdy**



**Luttrell’s story?** [Rogersville, Tennessee](#)

Having arranged to take time off from his job as a University Admissions officer while he returns to Christian Bend to see Burdy through this crisis, Rain goes back to the little house where he had lived with his mother on Burdy’s property. He finds the letters from Zeb that Burdy told him to read, but instead of reading them, he gets drunk, something that is not among his usual coping strategies. Rain decides to hike up to Horseshoe Falls, camp there in the quiet of the woods, read Zeb’s letters, and sort out his life. He is angry at Burdy, even Doc and Aunt Leela-Ma, for keeping this secret about his father, and he feels betrayed by his father who never returned after the War, believing Zeb responsible for Maizee’s death. **What happens at the Falls when he starts to work through these issues? Who does Chief Conley find is responsible for the incident at Horseshoe Falls and the murders at the Pharmacy? Why is this discovery so shocking? When Clint and Zeb arrive in Christian Bend, many of these mysteries have been sorted through. What is Wheedin’s attitude about her Mother’s thirty-year affair with Clint? How does Rain react to seeing his father after forty years, and what part does Rain’s own handicap play in this reaction? How are the story’s denouement and ending portrayed, and what themes has Zacharias connected throughout the trilogy? What are the most significant themes you discern in the Christian Bend Trilogy?**