



Playing with Fire

Melody Carlson

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If your vision led you straight into the fire,
would you follow it anyway?

Samantha's brother, Zach, is finally home after a ninety-day rehab for his meth addiction, and life seems to be getting back to normal. That is, until Sam starts having dreams about dangerous situations involving drugs. But her visions are so vague that she doesn't know who needs help. Of course she's worried about Zach staying clean, especially since he's hanging with the wrong crowd. But the whole school seems to be buzzing about drugs, and Sam doesn't know who's using and who's not. What is wrong with these people anyway?

Then Sam has a vision of a burning cabin, and this time someone has been shot. Convinced that Zach is involved somehow, Sam chooses to leave Detective Ebony Hamilton out of the loop. If Zach really *is* involved, this will land him in jail for sure! But her own investigation is getting too hot to handle, and Sam must decide whether to risk getting Zach in trouble with the law— or ultimately risk his life.

Playing with Fire Details

Date : Published August 21st 2007 by Multnomah

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Author : Melody Carlson

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From Reader Review Playing with Fire for online ebook

The Third Place A Teen Library says

F CAR slosm bk.3

Margaret says

This book (and genre - Christian fiction YA) was not my cup of tea. I just felt like the plot was unfocused and the main character's life was unrealistic (when did she ever do any homework?). I almost stopped around pg 64 but decided to give it a chance - it just didn't deliver, for me. Meh.

Perky Texan says

Loved that it tackles tough issues that face teens regardless of their faith. Liked the story arc. I felt like sometimes it got a little preachy but not too bad. I'm going to have my 14 yr old daughter read it and see what she thinks. Overall, I would definitely recommend it.

Laura says

This was another just okay book, same as the others. The drug stuff kind of bogged me down and seemed to be over exaggerated, but then again, I'm not too familiar with meth. It's probably true. Glad I didn't know so much about my high school's drug problem.

Ronalyn says

Such a great book. I was really touched with samantha's kind of amazing faith in god. This book is worth reading ;) Hope to have a series of all books of Carlson=D

Felicia says

The third book in this series and while not as good as the other two (in my opinion), I can't give it a bad rating. I think the topic of drugs is important, especially for teenagers but I only really noticed one 'twist' in this book. Other than that, it was pretty cut and dry.

One issue I am starting to have with this series (and I noticed it the most with this book) is with the character of Samantha specifically. She just is not relatable. Yes, she is a teenage girl and I am an adult BUT she is naive and "perfect" even though she proclaims multiple times that she is not. It's almost like she has no

emotions, other than towards her brother. We see scenarios where her mom treats her like garbage and says that she is a horrible mother and yet Sam just sits by and says, "No, you aren't". YES SHE IS! Get mad about something. Argue. I don't know, just be an actual teenager. I found it equally naive that drugs are a huge issue in her school and yet she seemingly knows nothing about them (take for instance the vision of the syringe and spoon that she has to google). Yet somehow she is still recruited as a 'narc' for the police station. A little hard to believe if you ask me.

Here's hoping the final book in the series is better!

Georgann says

If she said "crud" one more time...Otherwise this was another in a fairly good series.

Stacy says

I won this book at an online giveaway and was so glad to get it. I've enjoyed all of the Melody Carlson books I've read - really good, heartfelt Christian fiction. This was no different.

Although this was in the middle of the series, I had no trouble in catching up with the characters. The main character, Samantha, is a high school student who sometimes receives visions from God. She tries to help others, but often gets mocked for her gift. Her older brother Zack is home from a rehab stint for his meth addiction, but is he going to be able to stay straight?

I really enjoyed this book and will probably end up reading more of this series. That is, after I read some of the other books I have purchased and not read yet!

Melissa says

Third in series, Very good use of first person in a young adult novel.

Jerry says

As promised, here is a review of the entire series:

<http://rwlreviews.blogspot.com/2013/0...>

Jessie Weaver says

Melody Carlson touches on topics relevant to teens easily: her popular Diary of a Teenage Girl series is known for not backing down from tough topics. This author of more than ninety books continues to face

difficult issues in the Secret Life of Samantha McGregor.

The third installment, Playing with Fire, begins with Sam arranging a coming-home-from-rehab party for her older brother Zach. When she invites Zach's old friend Tate, he seems like a clean-cut addition to Zach's new, recovered life. Zach's resistance to seeing a counselor and participating in group therapy, however, may cast doubt on Sam's assumption that her brother has fully recovered from his meth addiction - and his friendship with Tate doesn't seem to be helping at all.

Meanwhile, drugs seems to be the it word at Sam's high school. At a party where her best friend Olivia is singing, Sam, Olivia, and their friend Garrett are busted for having drugs in the backseat of the car - to their complete surprise. One of Olivia's bandmates is kicked out of the group for using weed at a party. And Sam doesn't know what to make of the new girl in their class, Felicity, about whom she has a scary vision.

Sam's gift of visions from God haunts her throughout this novel. What should she do when she can't make sense of these dreams and visions? Should she tell Olivia or her mom about her fears for Zach? As she becomes more entrenched in the work for the police force and less able to communicate with her friends, Sam's world is whipped into confusion, and it all seems to do with the rampant drug use in Brighton.

Melody Carlson does not disappoint in her quick-paced storytelling. Playing with Fire is another great teen read from the prolific Christian author.

Lola says

love this series.

Jill Williamson says

Review by Gigi Hoffman

In Playing with Fire by Melody Carlson, Samantha McGregor, the girl with the spiritual gift of prophecy, has a vision that hits close to home. Her brother, Zach, was into drugs but is home after being in rehab for three months, and everything seems to be going okay. However, Sam starts having dreams and visions about dangerous situations and drugs.

It seems like tons of kids at her school are using drugs, and Samantha has some frightening visions about someone she knows. If that weren't enough, Sam has a vision about a burning cabin and someone who has been shot. She knows Zach is somehow involved, and she tries to figure it out on her own without Detective Ebony Hamilton's help. But will Samantha be able to do it on her own? Will she be able to save her brother and her friends?

Sam is a strong, three-dimensional character and offers hope and light in dark situations. Her faith in God gets her through the difficulties in life and she stands as a good role model, even as a fiction character. This is a must read!

Lindsey (Books for Christian Girls) says

About this book:

"If your vision led you straight into the fire, would you follow it anyway?

Samantha's brother, Zach, is finally home after a ninety-day rehab for his meth addiction, and life seems to be getting back to normal. That is, until Sam starts having dreams about dangerous situations involving drugs. But her visions are so vague that she doesn't know who needs help. Of course she's worried about Zach staying clean, especially since he's hanging with the wrong crowd. But the whole school seems to be buzzing about drugs, and Sam doesn't know who's using and who's not. What is wrong with these people anyway?

Then Sam has a vision of a burning cabin, and this time someone has been shot. Convinced that Zach is involved somehow, Sam chooses to leave Detective Ebony Hamilton out of the loop. If Zach really is involved, this will land him in jail for sure! But her own investigation is getting too hot to handle, and Sam must decide whether to risk getting Zach in trouble with the law— or ultimately risk his life."

Series: Book #3 (of four) in "*The Secret Life of Samantha McGregor*". (Book #1 review, [Here!](#) Book #2 review, [Here!](#))

Spiritual Content- Joel 2:27-29 at the beginning; All about Samantha's gift of visions from God; Many, many prayers; Scriptures are mentioned; Witnessing; Many, many, many talks about God, trusting Him, gifts, judging, & sinners; 'H's are capital when referring to God; Sam's mom is still mad at God; Many, many mentions of prayers; Many mentions of church, youth group & sermons; Mentions of Bible reading; Mentions of those in the Bible; Mentions of Christians & religious people;

*Note: A mention of a demonic sound & evil; A mention of "going through hell"; A mention of going to "hell and back"; A mention of someone wanting someone else to burn in Hell; A few mentions of Hell; Mentions of a witch.

Negative Content- Minor cussing including: an 'idiot', a 'TGIF', two 'duh's, two 'sheesh's, three 'shut up's, three 'sucker's, ten forms of 'crud', thirteen 'stupid's; Sarcasm; A mention of a middle finger salute; Many mentions of curses (said, not written); All about drugs (meth and ecstasy), dealers, highs, overdoses, addictions, rehab, fire, heat & smoke (up to detailed); An overdose death; A party with drunks (Sam nor her friends drink); Many mentions of Book #2's almost suicides & murders; Many mentions of wild parties & fights; Many mentions of alcohol, drinking, drunks, fake IDs, bars & pubs; Mentions of those who have been shot & blood (up to semi-detailed); Mentions of smoking, cigarettes & weed; Mentions of jail, crime & criminals; Mentions of lesions; Mentions of vomiting; Mentions of nightmares; Mentions of cheating & gossips; A few mentions of tattoos & pierces; A few mentions of divorce & parents separating; A mention of a violent movie;

*Note: Mentions of Starbucks, Adidas and Gap.

Sexual Content- a not-detailed kiss; a 'hot', two 'butt out's; Sam is asked if she's lesbian (she's not); Mentions of who-likes-who, dating, dates, jealousy, proms, boys, boyfriends & girlfriends; Mentions that

Garrett is trying to figure out if he's gay or not (his abusive father put the thought in his head, Book #2); A couple mentions of prostitution & a girl sleeping with a guy for meth; A mention of one-night stands; A mention that Sam knows girls her age that have had babies;

*Note: A mention of Jennifer Knapp.

-Samantha McGregor, age 17

1st person P.O.V. of Sam

229 pages

Pre Teens- One Star

New Teens- One Star

Early High School Teens- Two Stars (and a half)

Older High School Teens- Three Stars (and a half)

My personal Rating- Three Stars

{ Add a star for girls in Public School }

“*The Secret Life of Samantha McGregor*” series deals with some hard topics and “*Playing With Fire*” was no exception. Lots of Spiritual Content, which is always nice! The ending leads very well into the next & final book of the series. :)

Link to review:

[https://booksforchristiangirls.blogspot...](https://booksforchristiangirls.blogspot.com)

*BFCG may (Read the review to see) recommend this book by this author. It does not mean I recommend all the books by this author.

Alex says

These books might be aimed for teens, but that didn't even matter when I was reading them. Melody Carlson has to be one of my favorite authors at the moment. She is a Christian author and all of her books have that theme. Either the main character already has a relationship with God and she uses it in her life, or the main character has yet to find God, and realizes by the end how much she needs Him in her life.

In this particular series, Samantha already has a relationship with God, and a gift - she has visions.

While some find Melody Carlson's books too preachy, they always leave me with a peaceful feeling after reading them.