



HILARY WAGNER

First novelist **HILARY WAGNER** has written a smart tale of derring-do in a richly imagined fantasy world inhabited by a society of remarkable rats.

“Fans of Redwall and the Warriors series will love this heroic tale of good versus evil in a subterranean society of rats. . . . Expect great adventures in Nightshade City.”

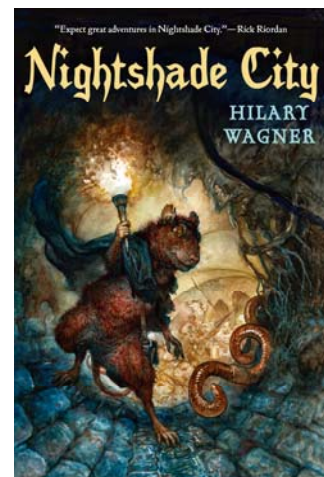
—Rick Riordan, author of the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series

Deep beneath Trillium City, a modern metropolis, lies the Catacombs, a kingdom of rats of extraordinary intelligence and ability. The once peaceful and democratic colony has become a harsh dictatorship ruled by the High Minister Killdeer and his henchman, Billycan, who runs the Kill Army. The two rule with iron fists. With most of the adult rats wiped out in Killdeer's Bloody Coup and the subsequent great flood, orphaned young male rats are forced into the army and the females into servitude—or worse. But change is coming. . . .

NIGHTSHADE CITY is rich with memorable characters: Vincent, who comes of age in this time of change; his worshipful younger brother, Victor; beautiful, intelligent Clover; Mother Gallo, a canny survivor who discovers her lost love only to risk losing him again; the charismatic Juniper, a kind and courageous leader whose vision carries the rebels into great danger; Killdeer, a decadent narcissist with surprising depth; and Billycan, a truly demented former lab rat, brilliant, vicious, and Juniper's sworn enemy.

This enthralling animal fantasy, in the classic tradition of *Redwall* and *Watership Down*, encompasses timeless themes of honor and loyalty, family ties and lost love, alliances and betrayals. Readers will respond enthusiastically to this surefire page-turner, set in a brilliantly imagined world filled with easy-to-root-for heroes and villains they'll love to hate.

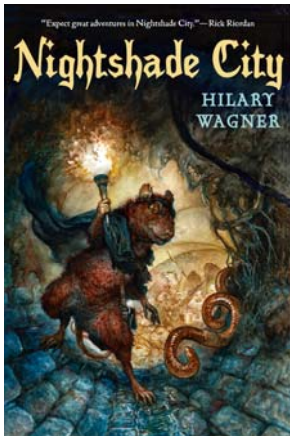
HILARY WAGNER graduated from the University of Kansas with a degree in fine art. Her paintings have appeared in numerous galleries and exhibitions in the Chicago area, where she lives with her husband and their two children. **NIGHTSHADE CITY** is her first novel.



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NIGHTSHADE CITY

BY HILARY WAGNER

THE BACKSTORY

FROM THE EDITOR AND AGENT . . .

Nightshade City by Hilary Wagner is a remarkable first novel. Holiday House received the manuscript from Marietta Zacker at Nancy Gallt Literary Agency. “I was captured by Hilary’s incredible imagination right from the start,” says editor Julie Amper, who bought the rights to the book for Holiday House. Hilary created an extraordinary world that is so real. She had a fully formed backstory that brought the front story alive—it was all there under the streets of Trillium city.

“Hilary knew so much about the characters—she knew them in her soul long before they ever hit the page. And she has created the most wonderful villains. They are so rich and complex—they’re just as compelling as the heroes.”

“Originally, the manuscript landed on Craig Virden’s desk,” says Marietta Zacker. “Craig, veteran publishing-professional-turned-agent, read the manuscript and saw extraordinary talent in Hilary. When I read it, I couldn’t agree with him more, we knew that this was a book worth publishing. It’s so fitting that Hilary named one of her characters after him. Craig and I shared an admiration for Hilary’s writing as well as her depth of knowledge of the world she created and her ability to make her characters so accessible.”

“Craig Virden can only be called a visionary,” adds Mary Cash, vice president and editor-in-chief at Holiday House. “Remember, Craig was the one who plucked Patricia MacLachlan’s first manuscript out of the slush pile at the office of legendary agent Marilyn Marlowe at Curtis Brown.”

“I will always feel that Craig and I are coagents in the world of *Nightshade*,” says Marietta Zacker. “Hilary inspired us both, and I am thrilled that readers will have an opportunity to get to know the Catacombs and all its inhabitants.”

Nightshade City is finding its way into the imaginations of readers everywhere. And to think, this remarkable first novel all started with a rat.

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