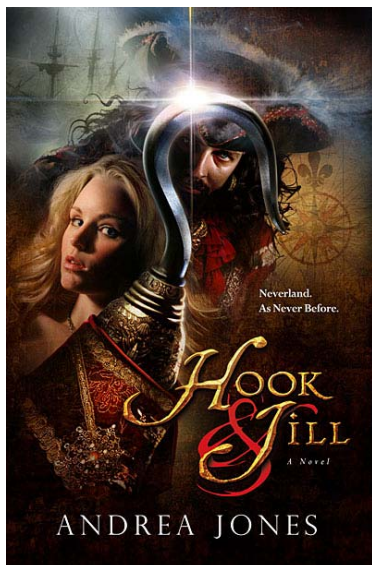


Book Review



Hook and Jill [Hardcover]
Andrea Jones
Price 24.95

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Neverland. As Never Before: A Review of Hook & Jill

I first came across Andrea Jones' debut novel, *Hook & Jill*, when I was working at a bookstore. For those of you not blessed to have ever worked retail in a shopping mall during the holiday season, perhaps I can shed some light on the situation. Remember the film *Twister*? Of course you do. Rag-tag storm-chasers saving the day with science and gumption amid a flurry of flying cows? That's the one. Now replace all that flying debris, cows and all, with books, and you'll have a hint of what a typical day at the Bookstore was like for me. So when I say that *Hook & Jill* called to me from out of the multitude of titles filling the shelves, you can understand a little better why this novel is so remarkable.

In *Hook & Jill*, Andrea Jones takes us back to Neverland, as she so rightly states, as never before. Think of the novel as a might-have-been, a retelling of *Peter Pan* by grown-up standards, and as such deserves grown-up attention. The novel received the Mom's Choice Award for excellence in Adult Literature in February of 2010, a decisive indicator that *Hook & Jill* is not only imaginative, but also beautifully and skillfully written.

True, *Hook & Jill* retells J.M. Barrie's classic *Peter Pan*, but if you pick up this book expecting a story for kids, think again. This remix brings new life to Neverland, finally addressing the adult issues of adolescent longing, violence, sexuality, and betrayal buried beneath the cheery surface of the land where Pan reigns. This novel is not for the weak of stomach or the

weak of heart. Blood flows, sexual heat flares, and everyone from the Indians to the Lost Boys face new challenges that would make J. M. Barrie blush. While Jones endows both Peter and Hook in particular with fathoms of new character depth, it is Wendy who takes center stage in this retelling.

In the spirit of full disclosure, I believe I should include this: in the seventh grade, I played Wendy in my middle school's production of *Peter Pan*. Our Pan was portrayed by a boy for whom I harbored the most ridiculously intense crush. It was the kind of sigh-inducing adoration that only thirteen year old girls can maintain. So I approached the role with an understanding of the kind of passionate and hopeless love that Wendy felt for Peter. Jones deftly addresses what happens when Wendy's sweet infatuation begins to grow and Peter remains the same. It's painful and harsh and oh-so-real when Jones' Wendy struggles with growing up in Neverland. Wendy finds herself longing for something that Peter could never provide.

Enter Hook.

The pirate captain's shadow looms large over Neverland in Jones' novel, but through delicate characterization, manages to avoid the obvious pirate cliches. Hook is, first and foremost, a gentleman. Even at his most savage, Jones imbues him with a sense of timing and elegance. His dialogue with Wendy is the highlight of the novel, the growing tension between them both a mystery and totally familiar to the reader. Hook is Peter's perfect opposite, demanding nothing less from Wendy, Tinkerbell (in a delightful twist on the character), and his crew than complete loyalty of their own free will. If Peter is thoughtless innocence, than Hook is self-aware independence. And self-awareness never looked so good.

There are any number of things I could say about *Hook & Jill*. I could reference the Jungian psychology behind the characters. I could mention the lyrical descriptions of the fantastical Neverland. I could laude the overriding message of growth, tolerance, and self-acceptance threaded into every page of the narrative. At the end of the day, however, the best compliment I can give *Hook & Jill* is this: it kept me up all night reading. And when I had finished, I flipped it over and started again. *Hook & Jill* is a work of literature to be sure, but it's also a damn good read, and really, what reader could ask for more than that?

"*Hook & Jill*" by Andrea Jones was awarded as the Mom's Choice Awards® Gold Recipient for Adult Fiction & Literature, February 3, 2010.

Hook & Jill is available online at the author's homepage (recommended for links to her personal appearances), through Powell's and Amazon, and at fine bookstores in your area.