

Artist, author finds inspiration in travels

Box Factory hosts book signing today for writer's debut novel

By **BRIAN ABBOTT**
HP Copy Editor

A mischievous grin on a sculpture stuck with author Tess Story when she viewed an ancient monk's sarcophagus seven years ago, and it proved to be the catalyst for her debut novel, "A Wanderer's Soul." She's introducing the book during a reception from 1-4 p.m. today at the Box Factory for the Arts in St. Joseph.

Set in the middle of the 14th century, the novel tells the story of two young plague survivors seeking information about a mysterious relic they have discovered, a wooden box with cuneiform text.

Story, an adjunct art professor at Lake Michigan College in Benton Harbor, said



TESS STORY

much of the novel is based on her travels through Europe and Turkey. She encountered the monk's inspiring grin while touring the crypts of a working monastery just outside of Florence, Italy.

"I was so taken with the sculpture," she said. "It just stuck in my mind, and I started taking notes. It truly was a motivating experience."

After a trip to Turkey two years later, she said she started writing, and "it just all started coming together."

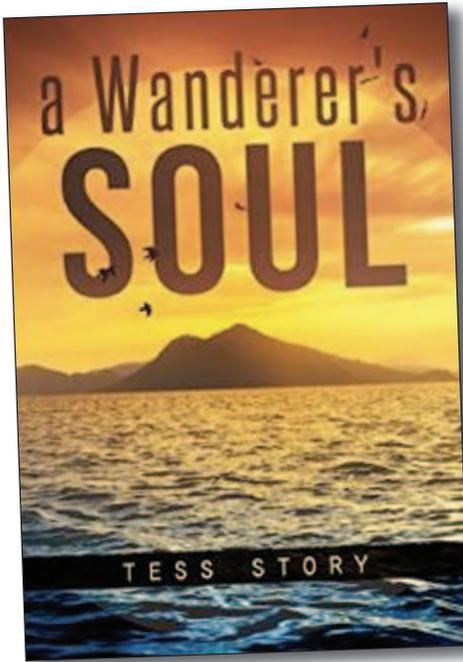
One of the classes Story teaches at LMC is art appreciation, covering ancient Greece and Rome right up to Medieval times. Wanting to study it firsthand is what led her through her travels.

"I needed to see it," she said. "I wanted to go through a monastery. I wanted to see the most important points of antiquity. It truly has helped me bring to life these places that I introduce to my students from firsthand experience."

"I wanted a way to get (students) excited about architecture and artifacts, and there's quite a bit of that in the book."

Story, 54, is from Southwest Michigan, where she has spent

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Photos provided

Tess Story will sign copies of and discuss her book, "A Wanderer's Soul," during an event today at the Box Factory for the Arts in St. Joseph.

BOOK

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all but a few years of her life when she lived in Miami and New Hampshire. She has been teaching at LMC for seven years.

In addition to her work at LMC, she also participates in the Krasl Art Center's Art Angels program. Partnering with Lakeland HealthCare, she helps oncology and pediatrics patients and families work on art projects to assist with the healing process.

Story will lead a discussion of her novel at 2 p.m. at today's event, after which she will sign copies

IF YOU GO

What: Book signing for Tess Story's "A Wanderer's Soul"

Where: Box Factory for the Arts, 1101 Broad St., St. Joseph

When: Sunday, 1-4 p.m., with a book discussion at 2 p.m., followed by a book signing

Cost: Free; copies of the book available for purchase retail for \$25.99

of the book. Copies will be available to purchase at the event, starting at 1 p.m., and punch and cook-

ies will be served, according to Cindy Kinney, project manager at the Box Factory.

Story's book signing coincides with, "Celebrating Creative Kids," an exhibit featuring the works of elementary art students on display at the Box Factory through Wednesday, and that's no coincidence, Story said.

"Part of my teaching is for art education," she said. "I wanted to get people to come in and see amazing works of art by children. Children's art and literature – it's what I'm all about."

The novel is published by Tate Publishing & En-

terprises, which describes itself as a "Christian-based, family-owned mainline publishing organization," according to its website.

Story said she does not consider herself to be a Christian author, but the novel contains themes consistent with Christianity.

"No one is beyond redemption," she said. "There is an underlying theme of acceptance and redemption. One of the characters is a monk who accompanies the boys. He really embodies Christianity, which is about acceptance and forgiveness."

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