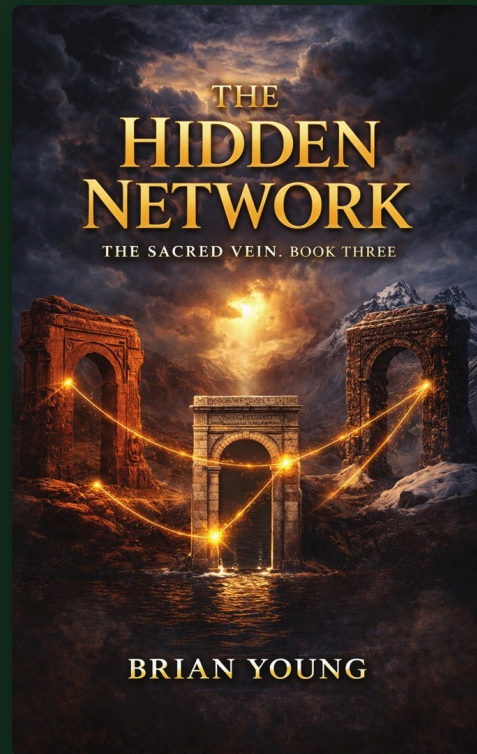


BOOK CLUB KIT

The Hidden Network

A reading plan, a who's who, discussion questions for the whole book and the whole trilogy, themes, a map of the story, what the novel draws on, and a letter from the author



A NOVEL BY BRIAN YOUNG

AUTHOR

Brian Young

SERIES

Book Three of the Sacred Vein series

SETTING

Present day: the Uintah and Ouray Reservation and the Uintas, Athens and the Aegean, Chilean Patagonia, Rome, the Turkish coast, and Geneva

FORMAT

Novel, 36 chapters, epilogue

GOOD FOR

Adult book clubs, library reading groups, readers finishing the trilogy

Free to print and share with your club.

BRIANYOUNGAUTHOR.COM · HELLO@BRIANYOUNGAUTHOR.COM

Hello One Last Time, Book Club

Hi. I'm Brian. If your club is reading this, you have followed Ammon, Aspen, and Jonas from a funeral in Heber City to a cave at the bottom of the world. Thank you. I did not expect anyone to come this far with me.

This is the last book of the trilogy. It sends two expeditions out at once, one to an island monastery in the Aegean and one to the mountains of Patagonia, and it keeps Ammon at home with a toddler and a wall of screens, which may be the hardest job in the book.

Book One asked who owns the past. This one asks what happens when everyone guarding it finds each other and has to agree.

The book is for Nat. Its dedication ends with a line I keep coming back to: "Knowledge is fire. We do not hoard it; we carry it carefully forward. Love is the same."

Writing is how I make sense of questions I can't answer any other way. Tell me where your group landed: hello@brianyoungauthor.com. I read everything.

Brian

The book in a minute (no spoilers)

More than two years after the First Temple came down, Ammon and Aspen are raising an eighteen-month-old named Anna, the Guardian-Academic Alliance has a rebuilt home on the reservation, and Dr. Yuki Tanaka has learned from the salvaged tablets that the temple was one node in a network of twelve. Some of what those tablets describe is wondrous. Some of it is a weapon. On the night Tanaka names two new sites, the Temple of Eastern Waters in the Aegean and the Temple of Southern Stars in Patagonia, Jonas notices that someone else is searching for the same coordinates.

That someone is Aleksandr Petrov, a Russian oligarch who quietly bought what was left of the Consortium. The guardians send two teams at once: Jonas, Tanaka, Silas, and Jeremiah to Greece, and Aspen, Thomas's nephew Gabriel, Clara, and a Paiute anthropologist to Chile. Ammon stays home with Anna. Thomas Wopsock is failing, a cardinal in Rome has plans of his own, and Konstantin, the man who brought down the First Temple, has never been found.

For discussion leaders: the whole story

Spoilers, including the ending. For whoever is leading the discussion.

First third: Two Expeditions (Chapters 1 to 12)

At the Alliance's anniversary, Thomas returns Anna Hathenbruck's locket to Ammon, telling him he is a guardian "By choice, not blood," and Tanaka reveals the twelve temples. Jonas traces a rival search to Petrov, whose men stage a probing raid that Jeremiah recognizes as the Consortium's own playbook. The council sends two teams, and Aspen leaves eighteen-month-old Anna, who manages her first sentence: "No. Apa stay." In Rome, Cardinal Morel orders Father Tomás to Greece to secure the tablets

for the Church; Tomás secretly warns the team. In prison, Margaux decodes her father’s letter, sends his intelligence on Petrov to Ammon, and gives Elias nothing. Thomas passes his sacred bundle to Gabriel and his grandfather’s bundle to Ammon. In Athens, Dr. Nico Stavros reveals that his family descends from the keepers of the Eleusinian Mysteries and points the team to Kyrios, an island monastery. In Punta Arenas, Aspen messages a machi’s granddaughter on Instagram over Gabriel’s objection. Tomás arrives in Athens with Monsignor Santoro.

Second third: Two Temples (Chapters 13 to 24)

Rafaela Ibarra recognizes the chant Aspen’s grandmother taught them, but her geotagged posts are already leading Petrov south. Her grandmother, the machi Rayén Maripán, tests the visitors: Aspen, Gabriel, and Rayén each speak one part of a single ancient phrase, and Clara reveals that Hathenbruck failed the same test. In the Cave of Stars, a genealogy wall traces Aspen’s line to a Portuguese woman called Maria do Mar. On Kyrios, Sister Katerina opens a door her order kept sealed, and diver Sophia Kouris brings three of seven bronze tablets up from a flooded sanctum as Petrov’s men storm the monastery. Santoro wires explosives, Tomás overhears him taking orders from Konstantin, Jeremiah stays behind to hold a passage, and Silas is captured. Petrov offers Silas for the coordinate tablet. A battered Jeremiah returns with an ancient scribe’s kit, Tanaka forges the tablet, and Jonas trades it for Silas on a Turkish pier, along with a recording of Konstantin’s real plans. Then word comes that Thomas is dying.

Final third: The Alliance (Chapters 25 to 36 and Epilogue)

As Petrov’s helicopters close in, Rayén tells Rafaela that “error is how wisdom grows,” Gabriel holds the entrance, and the mountain seals the temple; everyone gets out. In Rome, Cardinal Ricci arrives with Santoro under guard, and Tomás keeps his priesthood but loses his post. At his deathbed, Thomas warns that the ancient network broke apart over whether to share, control, or destroy what it knew, forgives Jeremiah, and dies as Gabriel speaks the sending. The coalition raids Petrov’s island: Simons, one of Gabriel’s men, is killed, Jeremiah kills Volkov, and Petrov lets Konstantin fall from a balcony before he is taken. After a hard fight between Nico and Kanosh over who controls knowledge, the guardians sign a charter in Geneva, and Jonas proposes to Tanaka. After the Alliance’s first year, Ammon climbs alone to Carre-Shinob and finds Thomas’s carved message. Five years on he tells seven-year-old Anna the locket’s story; twenty years after that, Anna reads her father’s message in the same chamber and says, “I accept.”

Who’s Who

In order of appearance. Aspen uses they/them pronouns, as the novel does.

NAME	WHO THEY ARE, AND WHAT THEY DO IN THE STORY
Ammon Lundquist (returning)	Historian, Hathenbruck’s great-great-grandson, and now Anna’s father. Stays home to coordinate both expeditions and becomes what Thomas calls “the translator.”
Aspen Rhoades-Lundquist (returning)	Former ranger, Ammon’s spouse, and Anna’s “Apa.” Leads the Patagonia expedition and finds their own family carved into a cave wall.

NAME	WHO THEY ARE, AND WHAT THEY DO IN THE STORY
Clara and Silas Lundquist (returning)	Ammon's great-aunt, eighty-five, who goes south to finish her grandfather's search, and his uncle, who goes to Greece and ends up Petrov's hostage.
Jeremiah Stone (returning)	The man who shot Thomas, now on the security team. Recognizes his own tactics in Petrov's attacks and spends the book trying to give something back.
Thomas Wopsock (returning)	Guardian elder, slowed by Jeremiah's old bullet and a stroke. Passes on everything he carries before he dies.
Dr. Yuki Tanaka (returning)	Stanford cryptolinguist who finds the twelve temples in the tablets. Forges an ancient tablet to save Silas.
Jonas West (returning)	Reformed hacker and the Alliance's security chief. Spots Petrov's network, leads the Mediterranean team, and runs the exchange.
Konstantin (returning)	The Church's fixer, who brought down the First Temple and escaped. Still missing as the book opens, and still sure some knowledge should burn.
Aleksandr Petrov (new)	Former FSB officer turned oligarch who bought up the Consortium's research. Plays a long game from a yacht in the Aegean, with Yuri Volkov as his enforcer.
Gabriel Chipeta (new)	Thomas's nephew, a former Special Forces soldier, and his chosen successor. Learns that a guardian's hardest discipline is waiting.
Father Tomás Adão (returning)	Jesuit archivist playing a double game against Cardinal Morel. Pays for it in Rome.
Margaux Vance (returning)	Serving five years for her part in Book Two. Refuses her father and sends his intelligence to Ammon instead.
Dr. Nico Stavros (new)	Athens archaeologist and the last keeper of a family tradition reaching back to Eleusis. His own children call it superstition.
Dr. James Kanosh (new)	Paiute anthropologist who spent thirty years trying to prove his grandmother's stories. Becomes the charter's sharpest critic.
Rayén Maripán and Rafaela Ibarra (new)	A Mapuche machi who guards the Patagonian cave, and her granddaughter, a university-trained activist whose posts give them away.
Sophia Kouris (new)	Technical diver whose grandmother was born on Kyrios. Brings up the tablets, then swims into Petrov's servers.

Pick Your Plan

Most clubs meet once. For two meetings, the natural break is the end of Chapter 20, a little past the halfway point, when the monastery is burning, Silas is a prisoner, and nobody knows whether Jeremiah is alive.

PLAN	READ	WHERE YOU STOP
One meeting	The whole book	Allow 90 minutes. Pick six to ten questions, then finish with “After the last page.” Clubs that read all three books can close with the Series wrap-up.
Two meetings, first	Chapters 1 to 20	The boat is pulling away from Kyrios. Use the first-third questions and second-third questions 1 to 4.
Two meetings, second	Chapter 21 through the Epilogue	The end. Start with the price of one life.

Discussion Questions

First third: Two Expeditions (Chapters 1 to 12)

- 1 Thomas returns the locket and tells Ammon, “You are a guardian now, Ammon. By choice, not blood.” Six chapters later he hands him his grandfather’s medicine bundle: “Rights are not given by blood.” What has Ammon done to earn this? Would you have accepted it?
- 2 Aspen volunteers for Patagonia and leaves Anna, whose first full sentence is “No. Apa stay.” Their mother Ruth once made the same choice. Thomas tells Aspen “you are protecting your daughter’s future, not sacrificing her.” Do you believe him? Would you have gone?
- 3 Jonas sums up the new enemy in two sentences: “Vance had wanted to find the chambers. Petrov wanted to weaponize what they contained.” How did learning that the tablets describe earthquakes, plagues, and mass manipulation change your sense of what the guardians are protecting, and from whom?
- 4 Cardinal Morel tells Tomás, “We did not burn heretics because we were cruel,” and argues that some ideas cause incalculable harm. What is the strongest part of his case? Where does it fall apart?
- 5 Margaux sends her father’s intelligence to Ammon and gives Elias nothing: “She was simply choosing not to play his game.” After Book Two, did you trust her? Is a quiet refusal a kind of redemption?
- 6 Aspen wants to reach the machi through her granddaughter’s Instagram; Gabriel says that goes around the elder they claim to respect. Clara: “Who is correct doesn’t matter. What matters is what serves the mission, and what we can live with afterward.” Who was right?
- 7 At two in the morning, Ammon is alone with a baby monitor and a screen full of dots. Thomas tells him leadership “sometimes it means being the one who stays,” and Ammon decides, “Some battles are won by staying.” Is staying home a kind of courage, or a story Ammon tells himself?

Patience is not weakness. Stillness is not surrender.

THOMAS WOPSOCK, CHAPTER 7

Second third: Two Temples (Chapters 13 to 24)

- 1 Ignacio says Rafaela argues “that the world cannot destroy what the world loves.” Her geotagged posts lead Petrov straight to the trail. Is the novel fair to her generation’s instinct to share? Is she wrong, or only careless?
- 2 The machi asks for “The one who bridges two worlds” and “the one who carries full guardian blood,” and the test is passed by words that rise unbidden, not words studied. Clara says Hattenbruck tried and “nothing came.” Why do you think he failed? After “By choice, not blood,” how did you read this scene?
- 3 Kanosh tells Rayén, “I’m not here as a scholar anymore. I’m here as a grandson,” and later weeps under a ceiling of southern stars. What does the novel suggest scholarship can and cannot find? Is Kanosh more persuasive as a scholar or as a grandson?
- 4 Jeremiah stays behind in the monastery so the others can reach the boat: “Let me give something back.” He tells them “redemption isn’t words. It’s action.” If he had died in that corridor, would his story have been complete?
- 5 Petrov’s price for Silas is the coordinate tablet. Tanaka: “There are things more important than any one life, including mine.” Sophia: “Easy to say when you’re not the one being held.” Who is right? Would you trade the map for Silas?
- 6 When Rafaela’s second post brings the helicopters, Gabriel rages, and Rayén tells the story of her own mother’s mistake before asking him, “Did he teach you that anger is easy, and wisdom is hard?” How should a community treat someone whose mistake endangers everyone? Was Gabriel wrong to be angry?
- 7 The guardians fake an ancient tablet, hide a tracker in it, and hand Petrov a recording meant to turn him against his partner. Jonas calls it “manipulation in service of survival.” Does deception fit the book’s idea of protection? Where is the line?

Error is how wisdom grows.

RAYÉN MARIPÁN, CHAPTER 16

Final third: The Alliance (Chapters 25 to 36 and Epilogue)

- 1 Gabriel holds the cave mouth remembering Thomas’s words, “A guardian fights to preserve.” Then the mountain seals itself, saving everyone and burying the temple. In Book Two a man’s explosives brought a temple down. Is there a difference between a sacred place a fanatic destroys and one the earth closes?

- 2 Tomás asks Morel, “Protected or controlled?” and refuses to recant: “Now I serve the faith that institution was meant to protect.” Then Cardinal Ricci walks in and saves him. Did Tomás’s stand need rescuing to matter? Earned, or convenient?
- 3 At his deathbed Thomas tells Jeremiah, “Forgiveness was never about deserving.” Some council members watch with “eyes that held no forgiveness.” Whose response feels truer to you? Can one person forgive on behalf of a community?
- 4 Thomas says the first network tore itself apart, and Robert names the sides: “Share everything, control everything, or destroy everything.” Where would you place Petrov, Konstantin, Morel, Nico, Kanosh, and the guardians themselves? Where would you place yourself?
- 5 Before the raid, Robert asks “whether this is who we want to become.” Jeremiah answers, “We’ve always been warriors.” Simons dies in a corridor. Was the assault on Petrov’s island the right call? Did the guardians change by making it?
- 6 In Book One, Ammon pulled the man who shot Thomas up from a ledge. Here Petrov lets his partner fall and says, “I let him fall. There’s a difference.” Why do you think the trilogy lets its last fanatic die at his partner’s hands instead of the guardians? Did it satisfy you?
- 7 At the charter meeting, Kanosh calls forced sharing “another form of extraction,” and Rayén stops him from leaving: “walking away does not address them.” Gabriel then asks the charter to “build forgiveness into the structure.” Does the charter solve the old problem, or just give it rules?

After the last page

- 1 Who owns the past? Book One said “The gold of the mountains belongs to the First.” Here Thomas says knowledge “Belongs to its keepers,” then carves that it “belongs to all humanity, held in trust until the moment of readiness.” Can both be true? Where does the trilogy finally land, and where do you?
- 2 Does the ending earn its answer? The trilogy closes with a signed charter, an engagement, a summit, and Anna at twenty-seven telling the mountain “I accept,” while her father’s carving promises “a gift, not a burden.” Did the book earn that peace? What would a less tidy ending have looked like?
- 3 Ammon is “A guardian made, not born,” yet the genealogy wall, the HATHENBRUCKS’ listing as “keepers of the memory symbol,” and Anna’s inheritance all run through families. Across three books, is this a story about what we choose or what we inherit?
- 4 Follow Jeremiah through the trilogy: the treasure hunter who shot Thomas, the prisoner who traded what he knew, the man in the corridor. Thomas’s last words to him are “Carry something else instead. Something worth the weight.” Is his redemption finished? Who gets to decide?
- 5 Ammon, Aspen, and Gabriel all end up staying home while others fight, and even Margaux tells Ammon, “The most valuable person isn’t always the one on the ground.” For a thriller, that is a gamble. Did it work for you?

- 6 The novel borrows real places and traditions, from Eleusis and the Mapuche to the Vatican and the Palais des Nations. Where did you want to stop and look something up? Does a novel that invents a secret history of the world owe readers a clear line between fact and invention?
- 7 The dedication reads, “Knowledge is fire. We do not hoard it; we carry it carefully forward. Love is the same.” Which character carries love most carefully? Which carries it least?

Themes

We preserve, we do not possess

“We preserve. We do not possess.” Thomas carves it into stone at Carre-Shinob. Petrov wants to own the tablets, Konstantin to burn them, Morel to lock them in Rome. The guardians answer with custody instead of ownership, and the charter’s first principle: “Protection over suppression.”

The scattered, gathering

“The network was never broken. It was only scattered.” Rayén says it in Geneva, but the image runs through the book: three parts of one chant, a Greek drinking cup that matches a Utah tablet, coyotes “finding each other in the falling dark.”

The one who stays

“That is your post.” Thomas sends Ammon home to Anna and tells him that is not abandoning anything. Ammon at his screens, Gabriel kept out of the raid, Margaux in her cell: the book keeps honoring the people who hold the center instead of charging the front.

Error, and what comes next

“The question is not whether you will fail. The question is what you do next.” Rafaela’s posts, Rayén’s mother, Ammon’s guilt, Jeremiah’s past. Even the charter, at Gabriel’s urging, tries to “build forgiveness into the structure.”

Blood and choice

“By choice, not blood,” Thomas tells Ammon in Chapter 1. Then a cave wall makes Aspen “Living proof that they were never separate.” The book keeps both answers in play and lets readers decide which one wins.

Love as guardianship

“love is the hardest form of guardianship there is,” Thomas tells Ammon. In the cave, Aspen decides “Love was a reason to fight.” Every parent in the book, from Ruth to Ammon to Elias Vance, shows what that guardianship can protect or ruin.

What the Novel Draws On

The Hidden Network is fiction, and its copyright page says so. Its About the Author page says the series grows out of “years of research into the real history of the Lost Rhoades Mine,” and its Author’s Note is a thank-you to readers with no historical claims, so what follows is what the story itself says. Treat the

twelve temples, the tablets and their weapons, the guardian families, Petrov, and the Vatican factions as invention, and check the rest before repeating it.

The Eleusinian Mysteries. Silas describes the initiation rites at Eleusis as “one of the most important religious ceremonies in ancient Greece,” with participants sworn to secrecy on pain of death (Chapter 8). Nico’s family, its hidden shrine, and its claim to the “true mysteries” are invention.

Asklepios. Silas reads a “Healer-God” in Hathenbruck family papers as Asklepios, “God of medicine,” whose cult centers were known as places of healing (Chapter 10). The island of Kyrios, its monastery, and the Temple of Eastern Waters beneath it are story devices.

Patagonia and the Mapuche. The novel calls Rayén a machi, “a spiritual leader,” gives her people’s language as Mapudungun, and has Ignacio recall that her grandmother “was taken during Pinochet’s time” (Chapter 9). The Cave of Stars maps the Southern Cross, Centaurus, Carina, and the Magellanic Clouds (Chapter 19). Rayén’s lineage, the cave, and the chant are fiction.

Whose heritage, kept where. Nico reminds the team that “The British Museum still has the Parthenon marbles” and sets his terms: finds stay in Greece, and Greek scholarship gets the credit (Chapter 8). Kanosh hopes the cave will overturn “the isolation theory” of the pre-Columbian Americas (Chapter 19). The ocean-spanning network is invention.

The Vatican. Petrov’s file places Santoro with the Pontifical Council for Culture, Tomás names “Galileo. Alexandria.” among the Church’s mistakes, and the Swiss Guard leads Santoro away (Chapters 14 and 26). Morel, Ricci, their factions, and Konstantin’s network are invention.

WANT TO DIG DEEPER? FIVE TOPICS TO LOOK UP

The Eleusinian Mysteries · Asklepios and his healing sanctuaries · The Mapuche people and the role of the machi · The Parthenon marbles and the return of cultural heritage · The Southern Cross and the Magellanic Clouds

Map of the Story

The story goes global. Here are its places, in the order the book first takes you there.

PLACE	WHAT HAPPENS THERE
The Alliance cultural center, Uintah and Ouray Reservation	The anniversary and the locket (Ch. 1); the probe (Ch. 4); Ammon’s vigils (Ch. 11, 18, 23); homecoming and councils (Ch. 27, 29, 30, 32); the first summit (Ch. 35)
The Apostolic Palace, Rome	Morel’s summons (Ch. 5); the reckoning (Ch. 26)
FCI Alderson	Margaux’s two letters (Ch. 6)
Thomas’s house in the Uinta foothills	The succession (Ch. 7); the deathbed (Ch. 27, 28)
Athens and Eleusis	Nico’s office (Ch. 8); the family shrine (Ch. 10); the Vatican observers (Ch. 12)

PLACE	WHAT HAPPENS THERE
Punta Arenas and the Patagonian mountains	Ignacio's café (Ch. 9); the overlook (Ch. 13); the machi's test (Ch. 16); the Cave of Stars (Ch. 19, 22, 25)
Petrov's yacht, off the Turkish coast	The watcher and his secret partner (Ch. 14)
Kyrios, an island monastery in the Aegean	Sister Katerina's door, the Temple of Eastern Waters, and the siege (Ch. 15, 17, 20)
A Greek safe house and a Turkish harbor	The map to everything, the forgery, and the exchange (Ch. 21, 24)
Petrov's island compound	The assault and the balcony (Ch. 31)
The Palais des Nations, Geneva	The charter is signed (Ch. 33)
Carre-Shinob, the Uintas	Thomas's carved message (Ch. 36); Anna's ceremony (Epilogue)

The long view, as the novel dates it

WHEN	WHAT HAPPENED, IN THE BOOK
Five to eight thousand years ago	The temples are built (Ch. 1)
Around 2800 BCE	The great breaking: "Guardian against guardian" (Ch. 28)
The seventeenth century	A tablet lists the Hathenbrucks as "keepers of the memory symbol" (Ch. 35)
1923	Clara's grandfather meets the Patagonian guardians and fails their test (Ch. 16)
A little over two years after the First Temple	The anniversary; both expeditions launch (Ch. 1 to 3)
A year after the charter	The first summit; Ammon's climb to Carre-Shinob (Ch. 35, 36)
Five years after the Alliance's founding	Anna, seven, hears the locket's story (Epilogue)
Twenty years after that	Anna, twenty-seven, reads her father's message (Epilogue)

Reading the Series, and Get the Book

Book One: *The Sacred Vein*. Historian Ammon Lundquist inherits his family's five-generation obsession with Carre-Shinob, the Lost Rhoades Mine, a search that claimed his father's life. A coded journal, a ranger named Aspen Rhoades, and a nervous hacker named Jonas take him into the Uintas and into the question the whole trilogy keeps asking: who owns the past?

Book Two: *The Shadow Archive*. The following winter, a hidden message in an ancestor's locket suggests that Hattenbruck kept secrets even from his journals. The trail runs from Denver to Texas, Germany, and a canyon in southern Utah, and the question becomes who gets to decide what the rest of us are ready to know.

SERIES WRAP-UP: FIVE QUESTIONS FOR CLUBS THAT READ ALL THREE

1. Which book did your club like best, and which character changed most between the first page of *The Sacred Vein* and the last page of this one?
2. F.W.C. Hattenbruck is a protector in Book One, a secret copier in Book Two, and in Book Three a man who failed the machi's test. How did your view of him change?
3. The villains want different things from the past: gold, burial, and power. Which threat felt most real to you, and why?
4. Each book ends with a sacred place protected, buried, or sealed. Is the series finally about revealing the past or protecting it?
5. Aspen begins as a ranger with three rules and ends as a parent, a guardian, and one of "those-who-carry." Whose journey across the three books meant the most to your group?



Get the book

Paperback and ebook on Amazon (the ebook is in Kindle Unlimited). The paperback can be ordered from any bookstore with the ISBN.
ISBN 9798348575120



brianyoungauthor.com

The whole series, free kits like this one, and news.
brianyoungauthor.com

Book club visits

Brian offers free short virtual visits to book clubs and library groups as his schedule allows: a little about how the books came to be, then your questions. Write to hello@brianyoungauthor.com.

A small favor

If your club liked the book, a short review on Amazon or Goodreads is the most useful thing you can do for an independent author. Two sentences about what your group argued over is plenty.

THANK YOU

Thank you for staying with an independent author for three books. Tell me where your group landed on who owns the past: hello@brianyoungauthor.com. I read everything. Brian

The Hidden Network, copyright 2026 Brian Young. Free to copy for club and library use. Do not alter the cover art.