



Everafter (Kissed by an Angel)

By Elizabeth Chandler

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The sweeping saga of Ivy and Tristan comes to a breathtaking conclusion in this final book of the all-new arc in the *New York Times* bestselling Kissed by an Angel series.

It seems the odds are forever against Ivy and her fallen angel. Tristan is still trapped in the body of an accused murderer, and as the two star-crossed lovers try to clear his name, they must battle the dark forces that would keep them apart and destroy them both. The danger is especially great for Tristan since, as a fallen angel, death would mean losing his soul. It's up to Ivy to save the one she loves and, hopefully, find a way for the two of them to be together...for all eternity.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Elizabeth Chandler is a pseudonym for Mary Claire Helldorfer. She is the author of the Kissed by an Angel and Dark Secrets series. She lives in Baltimore, Maryland.

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One

WAS HE STILL ALIVE? IVY WONDERED AS SHE STARED down at the wilting bouquets of funeral flowers. If Tristan had died, would her heart know it?

“Ivy, are you okay?” Dhanya called to her, then opened the gate between the old Harwich church and its cemetery.

Earlier, they had attended the funeral for Michael Steadman and served at the reception that followed. It had been hard for Ivy to look at the faces of the lifeguard’s family and friends, most of them still in shock. The minister had preached on a biblical quote about seeing through a glass darkly, telling them to trust in God’s inscrutable will. But Ivy feared that the deadly lightning bolt had been an act of Gregory, not God.

Six weeks ago, not long after Ivy, Dhanya, Beth, and Beth’s cousin Kelsey had arrived at the Seabright Inn, the girls had held a séance. They were just fooling around, but looking back now, Ivy knew that was when Gregory’s spirit had reentered the world. Beth, who was psychic and the gentlest, most open person Ivy had ever known, had been the most vulnerable; Gregory had possessed her, forcing her to attack Ivy. It had taken the combined strength of Ivy, Beth, and Will to expel Gregory.

Beth had gone home to Connecticut to recover. In the last four days, Will and Ivy had seen no sign of Gregory on the Cape, but the demon knew how to hide himself. Ivy’s great fear in searching for Tristan was that she would not only reveal to Gregory that Tristan had returned, she would lead the police—and worse, the treacherous Bryan—to “Luke McKenna,” the body which Tristan now occupied.

Yesterday, the Cape Cod police had contacted Ivy, hot on the trail of their suspected murderer. From that, Ivy drew hope that Tristan was still alive. The authorities hadn’t found his—“Luke’s”—body.

Dhanya joined Ivy at the grave of Gregory’s latest victim. “Aunt Cindy said the Steadmans are leaving the Cape.” The Seabright’s owner, Beth and Kelsey’s aunt, was close friends with Mrs. Steadman. “How will they ever go to the beach again?” Dhanya said sadly. “How will they ever enjoy summer again?”

She and Ivy began to walk. The mid-July sun warmed the silent churchyard, reflecting off the newest and shiniest gravestones. Here and there, a tall tree allowed dappled light to fall on the older memorials, stones splattered with lichen and leaning at odd angles. Ivy paused to run her finger across the top of one of these, marveling that such gentle, slow-growing things as tree roots had the strength to topple granite.

“Cemeteries are lovely places,” Dhanya remarked, watching two butterflies alight on purple phlox, “as long as you don’t know anyone buried there.”

That made Ivy laugh out loud.

“Dhanya! Ivy! Over here,” Kelsey called to them.

They turned, surprised. Their roommate, who was supposed to be working at the inn with Will, was stretched out on a sunny spot near the center of the cemetery. “I’ve got big news. You’re not going to believe it!”

“What I can’t believe is that you’re taking a sunbath on somebody’s grave,” Dhanya replied.

Kelsey laughed and rested her back against the stone, her athletic legs extended straight out in front of her and glistened with tanning oil. She combed her fingers through a mass of wavy auburn hair, then gestured to the markers on either side. “Have a seat. Rest in peace. You guys have earned it.”

Instead, Dhanya chose a stone bench and sat down gracefully. She had a dancer’s body and a long dark curtain of hair. If she had rested her chin on her hand, Ivy thought, she would have resembled a classic monument to grief.

Ivy sat on a marble curb that marked the border of a family plot.

“Did you hear from Bryan?” Ivy asked.

“He came over before heading to the ice rink.”

Dhanya looked disgusted. “Kelsey, you swore you wouldn’t even glance at Bryan after he stood you up and ignored your texts all weekend.”

“But it turned out he had a good reason,” Kelsey answered, her voice rising with excitement. “Saturday night, he jumped off the train bridge—the one over the Cape Cod Canal.”

“What?!” Ivy exclaimed, sounding shocked, though she had witnessed the incident.

“That’s his excuse?” Dhanya said, unimpressed.

“Dhanya, the bridge was going up,” Kelsey explained. “He leaped fifty feet down to the canal. Think about it—he could have broken his back and drowned if he’d landed the wrong way in the water.”

It was what Ivy feared for Tristan. Standing on the canal bank, she had lost sight of him.

“You’ll never guess why Bryan was up there,” Kelsey went on. “He was chasing Luke.”

“Luke!” Dhanya moved over to sit on the marble curb with Ivy. “Did you know he was still on the Cape?”

“I haven’t seen or heard from Luke since June,” Ivy lied.

“So Luke’s now in jail?” Dhanya asked Kelsey.

“No. Missing in action. Bryan’s been looking for him.”

And if he finds him, he’ll kill him, Ivy thought. What kind of story had Bryan concocted for the police and Kelsey?

“Why did Bryan chase Luke?” Ivy asked aloud. “I thought they were good friends.”

“Not anymore,” Kelsey replied. “Bryan believes that Luke murdered that girl, the one police said jumped from the bridge a week ago—Alice something or other.”

Alicia Crowley, Ivy thought. Bryan had already framed Luke for Corinne’s death. Now he was adding Alicia to the list.

“She was close to Luke,” Kelsey added. “Luke sure likes to knock off his girlfriends.”

Dhanya shivered. “That could have been *you*, Ivy.”

Ivy simply shook her head. Her roommates condemned and feared the wrong person. But Bryan had already proven his willingness to kill anyone who learned the dark truth about him. To warn Kelsey and Dhanya—and Beth and Will—would only put them in greater danger.

The way to keep everyone safe from Bryan was for her to find the evidence that would place him behind bars, the evidence that would clear Luke’s name. Then she and Tristan could be together, and Tristan could find a way to redeem himself. If he was still alive.

Tristan, where are you? Ivy cried silently, though she knew, alive or not, her fallen angel could no longer hear her heart calling to him.

TRISTAN AWOKE IN DARKNESS. FOR A MOMENT HE had no idea where he was. His clothes were wet; the tarp he was lying on was damp and gritty. The place reeked.

Unable to see a thing, he sat up and stretched out his hands. To his right and left, his fingers brushed against something moist and hard, surfaces that felt like rough plastic, walls that slanted away from him. He realized then that he was rocking slightly, and heard a quiet *lap-lap*. He was entombed in the hull of a boat, at anchor on calm water. He suddenly remembered the old lobster boat he had swum to, recognizing at least three ingredients of the stench: rotted fish, machine oil, and mildew.

He had walked more than forty miles the last two nights, working his way from the Cape Cod Canal to Nauset Harbor, close to where Ivy was staying. There were no private docks or marinas here; the boats were moored in a bay protected from the Atlantic’s fury by a long finger of dunes and small islands at the northern end of Nauset Beach. Before sunrise Tuesday morning, Tristan had spotted this dilapidated boat among the commercial fishing craft and pleasure boats anchored here. Hidden among the trees, he had watched it all day, as the other boats departed then returned through Nauset Inlet, but no one had claimed it.

After nightfall, overwhelmed by a need to sleep undisturbed, he had swum out to the boat. Its curved, low-slung sides made it easy to board. The lobster traps piled in the stern were tagged with plastic rings that bore expiration dates from the previous December. Checking the vessel from stern to bow, Tristan had figured it was more likely that the boat would sink than its owner suddenly show up.

He’d retreated to the wheelhouse, a three-sided shelter with large square windows. When a party had begun on a boat a hundred yards off, he descended to the snug but smelly quarters below. He figured he had slept for several hours and was glad to emerge now into the fresh air of the open deck.

Looking south, he could barely discern the rise of dark land against the starlit sky, the bluffs on which the

Seabright perched. He longed to be with Ivy, but he couldn't chance it, not yet. It had been three weeks since his picture had made page one of the *Cape Cod Times*, but the stare of a Walmart security guard had been enough to deter him from buying a new cell phone. His old one and the watch Ivy had given him lay at the bottom of the canal. All he had in his pockets now was a soggy bankroll—from Bryan when he was pretending to be Luke's friend—and a gold coin with an angel stamped on each side, a gift from Philip.

"Catch anything?"

Tristan swung around, startled. Lacey sat on an upside-down work bucket, fully materialized.

"A lobster? A murderer?" she asked.

"An angel," he replied, though her angelic purple shimmer was apparent only in the tint of her long dark hair. Dressed in a tank top and ripped leggings, she didn't look like a local, but at least she wasn't wearing one of her theatrical getups. Both as an angel and a B-movie teen star, Lacey had always enjoyed grabbing the attention of an audience.

"You weren't fishing for me," she said. "I haven't heard a syllable from you, and you know that I can't locate people unless they call to me."

"You found me anyway," he pointed out.

"I narrowed it down to two places, hell or here. You landed here, flying like a moth to Ivy's flame."

"Have you seen her?" he asked quickly, hoping Lacey had been sticking close to Ivy despite the scorn she usually heaped on their relationship. "How is she?"

"For you, as dangerous as ever."

"No," Tristan said firmly. This was why he hadn't called out to Lacey.

"Tristan, I was there on the bridge with you and Bryan. I heard the voices. They were as loud as the night Gregory fell to his death. Time may be running out. You need to redeem yourself."

Tristan gazed at the stars, as if he could read the time off the bright face of heaven's clock. "Could you tell what the voices were saying?" he asked. For him, they always began the same way, a low murmuring, overlapping waves of menacing voices, their emotions clearer than their words.

"Their words were meant for you."

"Meaning you couldn't decipher them," he guessed.

"And you can?"

He nodded. The words were becoming increasingly clear to him.

"That's not a good sign! First you're stripped of your angelic powers; now you're hearing the words of demons!" But Lacey's curiosity got the better of her. "What did they say?"

“*Now. Ever. Ours.* And when I was up on the bridge, *Which way?* They kept asking me, *Which way?*”

“Their way,” Lacey said. “Gregory’s way.”

“I have to stop him. He’ll kill Ivy.”

Lacey grabbed Tristan by the shoulders. As solid as the angel looked and felt, her grip lacked strength, and he easily pulled away from her.

“Listen to me, Tristan. It’s you who needs protecting. Go to the police. Turn yourself in as Luke. Let them arrest you and keep you locked up safe. If Bryan kills you before you’ve redeemed yourself, you’re damned. You’ll be in hell forever.”

“The way to redeem myself is to expel Gregory from this world. I can’t do that from prison.”

“How are you going to get rid of a demon,” she replied sarcastically, “ask him nicely to go home?”

“If Gregory possesses a person’s mind and that person dies, Gregory is banished forever. You told me that yourself.”

“So you’re going to knock somebody off?” She moved her face close to his. “Tristan, you *can’t* kill! You can’t take away life, and you can’t give it back—that’s how you got yourself into this mess. Life, its entrances and exits, is scripted by Number One Director, and he doesn’t take kindly to us lowly actors messing with his stage directions.”

“There’s a way to send Gregory back to hell and keep Ivy safe. There must be. That’s how I’m supposed to redeem myself.”

“No, that’s how you *want* to.”

“I need you to carry a message to Ivy,” he said.

“I won’t.”

Tristan hurried on. “Warn her about Bryan. He boasted of murdering both Alicia and Corinne, as well as leaving that woman to die in the hit-and-run.”

Lacey folded her arms. “The chick’s not dumb. I’m sure she’s figured that out.”

“Okay then, just tell her where I am.”

“No! Your love for Ivy is too great a temptation for you. You’ve proven you can’t handle it. If I’m going to help you—”

“Lacey, I don’t need or want you to save me.”

The angel turned away.

Tristan sighed and reached for her arm. “I’m sorry. It’s just that—”

“You’ve been warned,” she said, then faded to a purple haze, blending with the sea mist, and disappeared.

Tristan was on his own. He had to figure out how to reach Ivy. Harder yet, he had to destroy Gregory. That was the only way to keep her safe.

His eyes moved along the shore. In another hour, it would be washed in morning light. “Which way, which way?” he murmured to himself.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bernice Fugate:

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