

# Electric Angel

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Electric Angel  
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She was ready to be alone. She drove her car around to the room on the end and parked. She gathered her purse, pulled the straps over one shoulder, and collected the one overnight bag she'd packed that morning. She then straightened and inhaled deep. The thick musk of pine worked to relax her as did the collective mating drone of male cicadas' that rose and fell with fervor.

A moment later Anna locked her car, took her room key in hand and noticed as she walked that the sun had disappeared behind the thick ridge of pines to the west. The weight of her journey crashed down on her. She was truly tired.

She unlocked the room's door and stepped inside. Two lamps atop matching tables flanked the bed, and came on when she flipped a switch beside her. The light they offered was dim, but enough to make out the modestly decorated room: a king-size bed, a long desk along the wall adjacent to it. She walked over to the dresser's mirror and stared at her reflection, confirmed she indeed looked as tired as she felt.

"Boo," she said to her waiflike image. "Aren't you a sight?"

She pushed back a lock of pale blonde hair, shivered when she saw several individual strands break and fall at her touch. Her hair used to be something she was proud of.

Anna turned away from the mirror, pulled her arms around her tight. According to the thermostat on the wall, it was a comfortable seventy-five degrees yet she felt cold.

She knew her weight had a lot to do with that. She'd dropped five pounds in just the last month. Where once she'd been a fit 120 pounds, the scale this morning barely registered 110. So much about her had changed. It didn't bother her though. How could it? By all accounts, she should be dead. And she would've been, if not for the visitor that night at the hospital, a visit Anna deemed as divine intervention since nothing else made sense.

And divine intervention made perfect sense since she'd prayed that somehow her unborn children be spared the untimely death sentence handed to her. She accepted she was dying, yet she didn't want that for her children. She wanted them to have a chance. Shortly after prayer went out, the visitor—the entity— came to call. Seconds before the heart monitor flat-lined, she heard it—or felt it, she still wasn't sure. It came to her and gave her this message: *I can help you Anna Chadwick. I can save your children if you allow it.*

No matter how hard she tried to get the doctors to tell her otherwise, none could tell her that her children could be saved. The following morning, after conditions took a dramatic turn for the better, those same doctors, now stunned by her miraculous recovery, couldn't keep her from going home with at least another month to live.

Anna placed her purse on the bed and reached inside it for the prenatal vitamins she'd packed earlier. Her doctor only prescribed them at her insistence. He saw no real benefit, and tried to explain that to her. But the doctor didn't know what she knew, and since prescribing the vitamins didn't actually hurt anything, he humored her.

Vitamins in hand, she walked to the sink and picked up a glass, removed the protective shrink-wrap then drew water from the tap. She used the water to down the vitamins. She laughed at the fluttering in her womb, so much like a startled butterfly flitting about, just like she'd heard. "I'll bet you two were thirsty," she said while she walked toward the bed.

After the day's drive, it felt good to just stretch out. She pulled her purse over to her and reached inside for the pamphlets. The images on each one varied, but all of them had some

artist's depiction of her disease. She opened the first one and reread the words partly responsible for her journey today.

*Women diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia who decline both termination and chemotherapy often die with the preivable fetus in utero.*

If only things had happened differently. If only she could've known about the cancer before she and Zachary decided to start a family.

"Zachary," she said, not realizing she was speaking aloud, or whimpering her husband's name. She hadn't told him anything. She hadn't explained about the entity or anything else. Yet how could she explain what she didn't understand herself?

A deep sting of guilt shot through her, recalling the short note she'd left that morning, to say she would return after she worked things out. Zachary deserved better. But if things went as the entity promised, she wouldn't have to explain anything. She could just return home and Zachary would be overjoyed to see her. Even—though it wouldn't be her.

\* \* \*

At the piercing high-pitched beep, Martha flailed about in her recliner, roused from her doze. A lightning flash outside had Mimi up and barking and frantically running in concentric arcs around the recliner. The weather radio sat on the table next to her. She stabbed the button to silence it, then took hold of the television remote beside it.

The show she'd been watching wasn't on the screen. Instead, it was the local weatherman, talking about intense storms moving through the area.

"Come on, Mimi," Martha said while she pushed herself up and out of the chair. "Let's get you one of your pills before it gets worse." As she often did, she wondered if Mimi's terror of storms and lightning had to do with the electrical discharge, thinking that a dog's senses might be affected somehow.

On her way across the room, she stopped to peer out the window that faced the parking lot. Her guest hadn't changed her mind. Martha sighed deeply and moved along to her kitchen. "It just doesn't make sense," she muttered. "A young woman traveling alone should be smarter. And now there's a storm coming."

Another flash of lightning, another flare-up by Mimi, and she moved on to get the medicine.