

*“Light and darkness, life and death, right and left, are brothers of one another. They are inseparable. Because of this neither are the good good, nor the evil evil, nor is life life, nor death death.”*

*THE GOSPEL OF PHILIP*

# chapter one

*"Everybody, sooner or later, sits down to a banquet of consequences."*

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

What do you do the moment your father discovers your dead mother is still alive, looking not a day older than the day she died—over seventeen years ago?

It was a decision I never had the chance to make.

"We need to talk," Evelyn said, helping me lift my unconscious father to the sofa.

"You didn't need to hit him!"

"He was going into shock," Evelyn said without the slightest hint of remorse.

This woman was unbelievable, thinking she could just show up at our apartment and take over our lives. "I don't want to talk to you."

She put her hands on her hips, looking down at me like...like...like a mother. My mind scrambled.

I harrumphed. "What? Did you hit your head tumbling down from your cloud or something?"

Evelyn blinked, stunned for a moment, before she turned away from me and placed a pillow under Dad's head. She wiped the hair back from his face.

Her hand lingered. Mine fisted.

"Why don't you just go?" I spat out, furious that she continued to make herself comfortable in my home and so easily ignore me. "Leaving seems to be your thing."

She felt for Dad's pulse and studied his face. "He'll come around soon."

*Oh my God. How can this be happening?*

It was all too much. After losing to Phoenix in Greece, I'd just wanted to see Dad, tell him the truth about who and what I am, and see if we could mend our relationship. Instead, my returned--from--the--dead mother had oh--so--calmly shoved a fist in his face with supernatural strength.

"You could've broken his jaw," I said, at a loss to know how to deal with this situation. My mother was a stranger to me. All I knew about her was that she'd traded me in the moment I was born, given my destiny to angels, and committed Dad and me to a lifetime of unanswered questions. Now she was back and I had zero concept of how to handle her.

I strode into the kitchen, wet a towel, and scooped in a handful of crushed ice before coming back to Dad's side to dab at his forehead.

"Before either one of us says anything to James, we should talk," Evelyn said, sitting on the coffee table opposite, her fire--blue eyes darting between Dad and me. I could just imagine what was going through her mind.

*Bet you never thought you'd be faced with us again—and never wanted to.*

"You *mean* you need time to think fast so you can bail on him again." Every word tasted sour. I needed to get a grip. I was damned if this woman was going to push me over the edge. "Look..." I blew out a

breath. "Don't bother with the balcony. It's a nightmare to jump down—just use the front door and hide your face from the security guys on your way. When Dad wakes up, I'll tell him there was an intruder and that he was attacked. He'll think he was seeing things and let it go."

She looked at me, eyes wide. "Do you really think I would just run out the door?"

I almost laughed at her offended tone. "Do *you* really think you *won't*?"

She sighed and glanced at Dad again. "You inherited his stubbornness." She looked like she wanted to say more but shook her head, frustrated. The movement gave me a small amount of satisfaction. "I'm not going anywhere."

*Come. On.*

I stared at her, wondering if I had time to literally throw her out before he woke up.

*Christ. I can just picture Dad waking up to see his daughter and dead wife ripping each other apart.*

"Please, just go," I said. "You don't belong here."

She crossed her arms. But I could tell she was tensed and ready, waiting to see if things were going to get physical.

My eyes narrowed and the temptation to force her hand rose to the surface. But we both knew I couldn't risk it.

"Does he know what you are?" she asked, her shoulders relaxing.

I slumped back onto my heels. "No. But he knows something. He's read your letter and seen my markings. I was planning to tell him today."

She nodded, taking it all in. "Well, then, I arrived at the right time. We'll tell him together. Everything."

"You're so thoughtful," I sniped.

Dad started to stir.

"Fine," I said. "But when you start flinging lies in the air, don't expect me to go along with them. Unlike you, my version of 'everything' will actually contain the truth."

Before she could respond, Dad's eyes fluttered open.

"Violet?" he said, his voice crackly and uncertain.

"Dad, it's okay," I responded, putting a hand on his shoulder. "You're home and safe." I gave Evelyn a warning look then turned my attention back to my father. "No one will hurt you again."

His eyes came into focus and, despite his confusion, he smiled at me. I smiled back. Then he saw Evelyn. He gasped and I had to grab hold of him to keep him steady as he scrambled to sit up.

"Dad, breathe. You're going to have another panic attack," I said as soothingly as possible.

His eyes were so wide, they were mostly white. "Oh God. I *didn't* imagine it. Who are you? You...You look..." he stammered.

Evelyn took a deep breath and locked her eyes on his. "You took me on a carriage ride through Central Park on our first date. You only had enough money for half the trip, so we were dumped in the middle of the park and had to walk back. You picked flowers for me along the way. When you said good--bye that night, you kissed me and said, 'This is only the beginning.' We met for breakfast the following day and

every day after that, for the next six months. The first morning we didn't have breakfast together was our wedding day."

Dad was frozen. I think I was frozen too. From one small speech, I now knew more about their relationship than Dad had ever told me. And it only made me more livid.

*How could she have done this to him?*

Time seemed to stand still. Evelyn looking at Dad, imploring him to accept this impossibility; Dad staring back at her with disbelief. My eyes shot between the two of them...my *parents*.

"Evelyn?" He breathed the word.

She nodded.

"Are you..." He swallowed. "Are you a ghost?"

"No," Evelyn said calmly. "I'm human. Mostly." Her brow furrowed. "I think."

"Oh," Dad said.

I rolled my eyes at her.

*Great clarification.*

"James, Violet and I have a lot to explain. We would like to be able to tell you everything if you're willing to listen, but we must warn you—once you know, you will become a part of this world..." She glanced down, a sadness creeping into her voice. "And you can never go back."

I ground my jaw. I hated that she was right. I also hated the way she united us. There was no "we." She'd kept her secrets from Dad since the moment they had met. Everything had been a lie. Then, when I was born, she'd accepted an angel's bargain—probably for a penthouse suite in Heaven—and committed me to a life as a Grigori. Sure, I'd had to choose whether to accept it, but I was learning fast; angels are determined beings and what they want, they usually get.

She would have known that too.

Worse, not only had she handed over my fate the moment I was born, she'd given me to an angel of the Sole, making me the one and only human Grigori to have ever been empowered by the highest--ranking and most mysterious order.

*Yeah, I'm high up in the freak department.*

"Violet?" Dad said, interrupting my thoughts, his face still a picture of shock.

I sighed, drawing my eyes away from Evelyn. "It's her, Dad. I...found her when I was in Greece. Are you sure you're up to hearing the whole story?"

He shifted position and began rolling up his sleeves, the way he did when he'd set his mind on something. He took my hand, gripping it tight, and cast a wary glance in Evelyn's direction.

"I know my daughter. I knew my wife. You look incredibly like her, but she died seventeen years ago and you...you look the way she did the day she died." He glanced at her wayward hair. "Almost."

I smiled, proud of Dad for not just falling into her arms.

"I *will* hear the entire story, nothing spared." He gestured to Evelyn. "You know things other people wouldn't, but that doesn't prove anything as far as I'm concerned." He let go of my hand, stretched his

arm across the back of the sofa, and raised his eyebrows. "Start talking."

It must have taken every ounce of courage not to break down right there, not to grab Evelyn and hold her tight—whether he believed it was really her or not. Dad loved her like he loved no other person in this world and I knew nothing had changed that over the past seventeen years.

Evelyn was staring at him, a thoughtful look on her face. "You've changed," she said finally.

"Apparently you haven't. Talk!" Dad demanded.

*Go, Dad!*

Evelyn saw the amusement in my eyes and rolled hers in response.

"I'm human, like you," she began, "born to two human parents, but when my mother was in late pregnancy, she had a placenta rupture. The doctors were able to deliver me, but it was a different time then—they didn't have the resources they do now. My mother did not survive."

My heart sank. I had always thought there was nothing worse than knowing my mother had only held me for a few short minutes. But there was; I could see it in her eyes when she told the story. Her mother had never held her at all.

Dad shifted in his seat. "Evelyn never told me that," he said cautiously.

She smiled sadly. "I was scared to give away too much information. I was always careful—it was the way I was trained."

Dad maintained a stoic expression. I think it was the only way he could go on.

"Continue," he said.

Evelyn nodded. "When a human life is brought into the world, the moments following his or her first breath are vital. Newborns are bathed in the aura of new life. If a child suffers the loss of like--blood, most commonly a parent, within the first twelve days of life, he or she is also overwhelmed by the aura of new death. When the two opposing forces are so strong, a doorway can be created."

"What kind of doorway?" Dad asked, now cautiously glancing in my direction. He was already connecting the dots.

"When new life combines with new death, it creates a kind of tunnel." She took a deep breath. I found myself doing the same. "A tunnel that...an angel can use to transfer a piece of its essence to the body. At seventeen, the child is given the choice of whether or not to embrace the gifts and responsibilities that come with having that essence." She looked at me.

I'd practically stopped breathing.

"An...angel?" Dad repeated slowly.

"Yes, James. Angels are very real. They aren't what you probably think they are—they aren't always kind and they aren't always cruel, but they are definitely always active and a controlling force over our world. If a person who carries an angel essence chooses to embrace, he or she is given—among other things—increased strength, speed, weapons both internal and external, the ability to sense otherworldly beings, a healing capacity, a partner in arms, and...while still susceptible to mortality by harm, a much--extended lifespan, aging increasingly slower the older we get." She looked down. "We can live for many

hundreds of years.”

I was impressed Dad was still in the room—and upright. He cleared his throat. “How old are you?”

Evelyn didn’t even blink. “I was 187 years old when I died. Now I’m back, I guess you could say I’ve passed my bicentennial.”

Dad looked at me, wide-eyed. “Violet, have you been *listening* to this? Surely this isn’t what has been going on with you for the past months? This can’t be real.”

“I wish it wasn’t, Dad.” I took his hand. It was hot and clammy. “But she is who she says and what she says. And just as an angel gave his essence to Evelyn...I’m what they call a Grigori. Part human but also part angel. I have abilities—but you’ve already seen my wrists.” I bit my lip nervously, remembering his severe reaction at seeing the swirling silver markings before I’d taken off to Santorini.

As he looked at them, they started to move with a magic none of us could comprehend, churning like a river of mercury around my wrists. Delicate feathered tips began to emerge in the patterns, matching the design on Evelyn’s wristbands. Dad glanced between us and I noticed Evelyn staring, mesmerized too.

“She said you had to choose to do this. Did you want this, Violet?”

“Not at the beginning. I wanted to finish school, become an artist, be...normal. After everything that happened...” My voice caught at the memory of the attack.

Dad nodded, not making me say it aloud. Evelyn watched on silently. There was no way I was about to explain it to her—the way that teacher had attacked me at my old school. Dad and I had done everything we could to try and get life back on track after the court case and all the awful questions.

“What happened?”

I glared at her and continued speaking to Dad.

“Grigori all have a partner. A person whose power complements ours the most. Grigori can help to start the healing process in their partners when they are injured. The only problem is, apart from me, Grigori can only heal their own partner. Lincoln’s mine.”

“What do you mean, ‘*apart* from’ you?” Evelyn butted in.

“I’m not here to answer your questions!” I snapped. Again, I turned back to Dad. “I have some extra...abilities. Nothing major,” I said with a shrug. Dad looked at me like I’d just turned green.

“Lincoln was hurt,” Evelyn said, putting it together.

I nodded, remembering what it had been like to know he would die without my help. The overwhelming fear of a world that didn’t include him was all I needed to know I’d made the right choice.

“He was dying,” I said.

“You became...” He couldn’t find the words. “This!” He pointed to my wrists. “*This* was for Lincoln?”

His disappointment stung, but I stayed calm to give him time to process. “He would’ve died. I don’t regret my choice, Dad. And now I’m Grigori and that means I’m a warrior.”

“A warrior against what?” he barked, incredulous.

I took a deep breath. “Angels who exile themselves from their rightful place and take on human form.”

“Fallen angels?” he clarified. “You fight fallen angels?”

“Yes. They’re strong and powerful and...evil. They can do things that others can’t and they are intent on taking this world for their own.”

“Sweetheart, there are no fallen angels walking around in this world.” He shook his head, as if trying to bring himself back to reality.

“Yes there are. You even know one.” I braced myself and bit down on the inside of my cheek. “Phoenix is an exiled angel.”

“Phoenix? That guy that you were hanging out with a while back?”

I nodded. Dad had never liked him.

“You brought Phoenix into your home?” Evelyn asked, her tone carrying both disbelief and accusation.

I flashed her a quick smile. I didn’t owe her an explanation.

“But you just said they were all evil,” Dad continued.

I nodded again, this time with regret. “Phoenix has human blood in him too, and that means he can seem more human than other exiles. He fooled me.” I dropped my head, feeling the shame of my choices. “Lots of people have paid the price with their lives.”

“Violet, what are you talking about?” Dad asked.

I thought of the Grigori who had died fighting Phoenix’s exiles on Santorini. “People are dead, Dad. I just got back from trying to stop Phoenix from opening the gates to Hell. He could’ve killed thousands of people, but Grigori came in force from all around the world. We fought, we saved Santorini, but...we failed anyway. He used me to bring something out of Hell that makes nightmares seem like cotton candy. He’s determined to be all--powerful and...he’s the way he is because of me.”

I could see Dad struggling to process my words but there was little point in stopping now, so I plowed on.

“Phoenix has gone for now but I don’t think forever, and even if it is, there are still more exiles. They’ll keep coming and we’ll keep fighting them. This is the truth that you deserve, Dad. The truth that she”—I jabbed a finger toward Evelyn—“should’ve told you a long time ago—like, before she married you or before she had a child with you. Definitely before she chose to die and leave us.” My plan to remain calm had come unstuck.

Dad seemed frozen with shock, but somehow he managed to reach over and pull a tissue from the coffee table to pass to me. I dabbed at my eyes but otherwise ignored the fact I’d started to leak.

“Did you really do that?” Dad asked, now looking at Evelyn. His voice was even and low.

Evelyn closed her eyes briefly. When she opened them, they were resolute. “A few weeks before Violet was born, I started to have dreams. As Grigori, we all have strengths. I’m what they call a dreamwalker—I can communicate with others in the dreamscape. That always made it easier for angels to contact me. One angel started to visit me before Violet’s birth. He was very powerful. He told me that wars were coming. I was given a choice: exist in a world, knowing my family would ultimately suffer in a reality ruled by exiled angels, or give up my life and yes”—she glanced at me—“commit my daughter to a fate where she would become what I am.” She paused. “From what I’ve seen, she is a respected warrior.”

I rolled my eyes. “Compliments don’t mend bridges. And you forgot the part where in return, you got to live happily ever after—until I plucked you out of Heaven, that is!”

“Violet!” Dad said, abruptly.

I closed my mouth.

“Wait, what do you mean you ‘plucked her out of Heaven’?”

I pressed my lips together. There was so much to explain, it was hard to know where to start. “My angel maker told me she made a deal to give me up to them. It doesn’t take a genius to figure out where she went after she died.” I forced myself to remain indifferent. “Phoenix executed a sacrificial ceremony from an ancient scripture in Santorini and part of my blood ended up in the mix. He got his mother and somehow...I got mine.”

We all sat in silence for a moment, digesting.

“This is...” Dad shook his head, but then blurted out, “What color was my underwear on our wedding night?”

Evelyn’s lips curled. “You weren’t wearing any.”

*I think I’m going to be sick.*

“When we drove out to our honeymoon cottage, what happened halfway there?” he shot back.

“You ran out of gas and made me wait in the car for three hours while you walked to the gas station.”

Her smile widened.

“What was the last thing you ever said to me?”

Her smile faded. “I asked you to name our daughter Violet.”

“The *very* last thing,” Dad pushed.

Evelyn bit her lip, looking for the first time vulnerable. “I love you...both.”

Dad dropped from the couch onto his knees in front of her.

“Was it all lies?” Dad pleaded, not moving any closer.

“No.”

“You died...” he said, a tear sliding down his face.

“Yes.”

“And now you’re back.”

“Yes.”

He swallowed and stood up, still trying to appear indifferent. “For how long?”

“I don’t know.” And then Evelyn’s eyes seemed to lose their focus and she slumped to the ground, unconscious.



## chapter two

*"I am not bound to please thee with my answers."*

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Things weren't going in my direction.

After Evelyn first came to, she'd continued to pass out intermittently as we tried to answer Dad's many questions.

After the fourth time she blacked out, Dad had taken her into his room and ordered her to rest.

That was three weeks ago.

She was still there.

I'd tried to explain everything to Dad, sat up with him night after night, giving him various demonstrations of my power, but logic is a strong counteragent to acceptance. Eventually I called in Griffin and Spence to help. Griffin had the ability to instill truth in a person as long as what he was saying was in fact true. After a few choice words, it became difficult for Dad to question him.

Spence hammered everything home with a showing of his glamour abilities, morphing into a number of different personas and settling on simply putting his hand on my shoulder and cloaking us both with invisibility. I couldn't help but notice during his display that Spence's power had grown significantly in the last few months.

Finally, Dad knew the truth.

His acceptance was closely followed by a demand to see Lincoln.

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They sat across from each other at the dining table, Dad staring at Lincoln in a new—unfriendly—manner.

"I welcomed you into my home," Dad said threateningly. "Let you spend time with my daughter, despite the age difference. I thought we had an understanding."

"Dad," I groaned from my perch on the kitchen counter. But it was useless.

I'd expected Lincoln to be on edge or at least cautious. I was wrong.

He stared right back at Dad with his own steely glare. "With all due respect, Mr. Eden, I've been here many times and seen you very few. For the first two years I knew Violet, we were just friends who worked out together. I never encouraged anything...more than friendship."

*Sadly true.*

"When I first met her, she was trying to put her life back together after the attack, though I only learned about that recently. Her world had been thrown upside down by that bastard." His hands fisted on the table. "It's no wonder she was desperate to find a way to get control of her life. I helped give her some of that." He glanced at me as I paled, half expecting Dad to leap up and throw a punch in his direction. "And she did the rest."

Dad flinched and glanced toward the hallway where Evelyn was eavesdropping. She didn't look happy.

"That is, in part, true," Dad confessed. "But I trusted you with Violet and I now hear you happily sent her, with an evil angel no less, to jump off a cliff in order to save your life!"

I had to give it to Dad; he did have a way of presenting things in an unfavorable light.

Lincoln's composure didn't falter. "I was unconscious and had no idea that she'd gone to embrace. I never wanted her to make the choice for me." His next words were heavy and slow. "I have to live with that for the rest of my life."

Dad shook his head. "And so you should."

I chose that moment to step forward. "Would you rather I was a different person, Dad?"

He broke his eye lock with Lincoln to look at me.

"Would you rather I had let him die? Chose *my* future over *his* life?"

Dad was silent.

I glanced in Evelyn's direction. "That's not something *I* could've lived with." I walked to stand behind Lincoln, the symbolism not lost on anyone. "I've made choices. Some I regret; some will haunt me forever. But leaping off that cliff to become who I was supposed to be, to save him—that's one choice I will never regret."

I couldn't see Lincoln's face, but his body was very still.

Dad eventually cleared his throat and stood up. He was far from ready to forgive and forget.

"I hear what you say, Violet. But I can't help but feel you've been forced into this world for the wrong reasons." He glared at Lincoln.

Lincoln stood. "I understand your feelings, Mr. Eden. I look forward to changing your mind about me one day. But until then, I can only give you my word that I value Violet as both a person and a Grigori. And..." He looked at me briefly. "I'd do anything for her." With that, he made for the door.

I followed him out to the elevator. I'd expected him to be angry, ranting that Dad had lost his mind. But he was silent. Too silent.

I pressed the elevator button. Lincoln didn't look at me.

"He just wants someone to blame. It won't last," I said quietly, wishing I could be there for Lincoln the way I wanted.

He tried to say something but closed his mouth again, as if he couldn't speak, and shook his head.

"Linc?" I reached out, the tips of my fingers grazing his hand. The contact sparked the usual influx of soul-crushing hurt.

Lincoln gripped my hand and suddenly, without warning, pulled me to his chest and wrapped his arms around me so tightly, it was as if he was trying to weld us together.

It was a rare display of raw emotion and an even rarer display of physical need. I held on to him just as tightly, neither one of us saying or doing any more. Just holding on. I breathed him in—sun and melting honey—my soul only craving more.

We stood like that until the elevator doors slid open. Lincoln sighed and pulled away from me, his hand

moving to my jaw as he did, his thumb smudging my cheek in that way I loved, his emerald--green eyes piercing into mine. Wordlessly, he stepped into the elevator.

The moment the doors closed, my knees gave out and I dropped to the ground in agony. I gripped my chest and stomach as, from somewhere within, the magic that bound our souls was torn apart.

I didn't even hear the door open behind me, but suddenly Evelyn was there, crouching beside me. I felt a tentative hand on my back as I tried to hold back the tears of pain.

"Are you hurt?" she asked, her voice sharp and fast. I could feel her tension as she looked around for an enemy.

"No," I managed to say.

"Then what?" she continued, looking me over. "I don't under—" She broke off, looking at me then the elevator. "Lincoln? This is—" She stopped again. Then, sternly, she grabbed me by the shoulders, hauling me to my feet.

"Tell me that you two are not involved!" She shook me. "Tell me you are not in love with your partner!"

I tried to swallow back the pain, the punishment for touching him. I started to shiver.

"Answer me now! Are you sleeping with him?" Evelyn said, giving me one more shake, forcing my head up to hers. Her eyes were blazing and boring into me.

"No," I said, tears streaming from my eyes, partly from physical pain, partly from my heart. I knew why she was asking. It was forbidden for Grigori partners to start relationships. It caused some kind of negative response in our angelic components and the results were dangerous—at best, the Grigori's powers are weakened; at worst they are lost. But Lincoln and I were quite the opposite.

We were soul mates.

Our powers would become greater if we were together...But there would be other costly consequences that neither one of us wanted to bring about.

She kept her eyes on me as I tried to gain control. "But there is something, isn't there? Between you two, something you're not telling me."

Her demand gave me what I needed to pull myself together and step out of her hold.

"You know what, *Mother*? If you're so clever, figure it out yourself!" And with that, I stormed past her into the apartment.

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Evelyn had made herself comfortable in our home, with Dad now sleeping in the living room. Despite my efforts, she didn't seem to be going anywhere.

It didn't take a genius to see Dad was falling in love with her all over again. I tried to make him understand how awful she was—and he actually agreed with what I said, part of the time. Evelyn had lied to him for their entire relationship and he hadn't forgotten that. But even so, his eyes tracked her around the apartment constantly.

The day after Lincoln's visit, I spent the morning avoiding home and trying to run off some of the residual soul ache his touch had left behind. I always felt a little better after a good workout.

When I got home, I grabbed a bottle of water from the kitchen and noticed yet another cut-up

newspaper in pieces on the counter. I held it up to Dad and shook it.

“Has she explained why she keeps massacring these yet?” I asked, joining him on the sofa. She had been destroying our newspapers daily and I kept finding international editions stuffed into the trash.

“I don’t think it will go on for much longer,” Dad said with a smile that spelled trouble. “I’ve shown her how to use the Internet.”

*Great, that explains why I can’t find my laptop.*

“We should just send her to a hotel or something. Griffin could arrange it.” I’d offered this solution a number of times to no avail, but I was determined.

Dad just shook his head and gave his usual response. “She’s too weak. Whatever happened to her in the transition back...here, she can’t be on her own.”

I slumped against the pillows. “She’s probably faking the fainting spells. She doesn’t belong here, Dad.”

He sighed and put an arm around my shoulder for one of our traditional awkward hug moments.

“Vi, I know what you’re saying. She’s made choices that we don’t understand or agree with, but I think we need to give her the chance to get well. Once she is, then...we’ll work out what to do.”

*Yeah, right.*

I pulled away from him. “I gotta shower,” I said, standing up.

“I was hoping to see you in your dress tonight before the dance. You know, have a photo together or something.”

I shrugged. “I’m getting ready with Steph,” I said, omitting the part about us meeting up at Hades.

“She could’ve come here. There was a time when she was here more than at her own home.”

I took a final sip of water and recapped it. “It’s a bit crowded here already.”

Dad stood and took my hands in his, looking down at the bracelets that were covering my markings. “Any news?”

I shook my head. “Griffin’s in touch with the Academy daily. They’ve had some sightings but nothing concrete.”

In fact, it was as if Phoenix and Lilith had dropped off the face of the earth. But at the same time, I knew they hadn’t. Something was brewing. I could feel it—and it wasn’t a happy feeling.

“You’re not ‘hunting’ tonight, are you?” Dad asked--slash--insisted.

I smiled. “Not tonight.” I’d been given the night off for our school dance.

He kissed me on the top of my head. He smelled like Dad—shaving cream and aftershave.

“She’s awake, you know, if you wanted to say good--bye before you head off.”

He moved toward the dining table, where he had set up a makeshift office.

I laughed. “I’ll keep that in mind.”