

BENEVOLENT

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To every reader out there who is struggling just to make it through the day; you are beautiful and you were put on this earth for a reason. Don't dim your light because others are too blind to see that.

To Chris for supporting this venture and believing in me from the beginning.

And to Misha Collins for inspiring this story with your portrayal of Castiel and your benevolent heart.

PREFACE

I don't normally do this. None of my other books include a preface, but *Benevolent* isn't like my other books. This story took shape in my mind of its own accord and refused to wait its turn to be written. (Hopefully the readers who've been waiting for the next book in my Dream Waters series will find it in their hearts to forgive me.) When I first began writing stories, one of my main goals was to use my gift to help make this world a better place in some way; and that's what I hope to accomplish with *Benevolent*. I knew almost from the get-go of this project that I would be donating one-hundred percent of the proceeds from this book to Random Acts. Because this story holds such a special place in my heart, I'd like to share a bit about how it came to be before diving into the narrative.

While writing the fourth book in my urban fantasy series, I was spending my downtime watching *Supernatural* on Netflix with my son and husband. After watching an episode of the show one evening, I sat down to write; but for some inexplicable reason I couldn't get the show's utterly endearing trench-coat-wearing angel out of my head. As easily distracted and prone to procrastination as the next writer, I decided Castiel might be the inspiration for a future story; and I abandoned my work in progress

to surf the internet and find out if Castiel was the name of an actual angel in the Bible. In a roundabout way, that search led me to The Book of Enoch. Intrigued by the story of the Watchers, I started reading about the lost books of the Bible, thinking maybe my next writing project would stem from the story of those fallen angels.

Still determined to turn distraction into inspiration, I watched some clips of Castiel's scenes in *Supernatural* on YouTube. One clip led to another, and the clips of Castiel led me to clips of Misha Collin's appearances at *Supernatural* conventions, until I stumbled upon one that really spoke to me. While telling the story of a young girl at a past convention, who confided that *Supernatural* was the only thing that'd kept her going during a difficult time, the actor was moved to tears. This resonated deeply with me because television was my means of escape during a painful portion of my young life. Immersing your mind in the fictional world of strong, fiercely protective, kind-hearted characters makes it easy to fantasize about living in their world under their protection. Not only do Misha Collins and his co-stars understand that, but they also embrace it. The SPNFamily Crisis Support Network—formed by Random Acts (the charitable organization Misha co-founded) in partnership with IMAlive, TWLOHA and Pop Culture Hero Coalition—is proof of just how committed these actors are to helping their fans in times of need.

Moved by what I'd learned about the actor who plays my favorite angel, but still searching for that Castiel-inspired spark that would fuel my next story (aka procrastinating online), I eventually found myself on Misha Collin's Twitter feed. As I scrolled through an endless string of comments on one of his tweets, I discovered that most of the commenters' profile pictures were either pictures of Misha, or pictures of themselves with him. One picture in particular caught my eye. It was a picture of a girl in her teens, standing beside Misha with his arm around her shoulders, and the look on her face spoke volumes to me. She was smiling, but there was so much sorrow in her eyes. It was obvious that this moment meant the world to her. Then I looked at Misha's expression. His kind eyes and benevolent smile suggested that he knew exactly how much that moment meant to her; and for that split second, he was every bit the angel she needed him to be. The picture moved me to tears and became the inspiration for this story.

Soon after I started writing this book, I read about an upcoming *Supernatural* convention in Cleveland that was part of the Giving Back Tour. Misha Collins was going to be headlining the event; and Random Acts representatives would be overseeing the convention's Charitable Quest to raise money for Family Promise of Greater Cleveland, a local non-profit agency that aids homeless families. The Cleveland convention was also going to include a Creative Quest, a competition where fans could submit an original

creative work with a *Supernatural*/rock-and-roll theme to be displayed and judged during the convention. The spirit of Cleveland's charity-centric convention was so in line with the theme of my story and my goal for the book that it almost felt like a sign. I decided to go to the convention, enter *Benevolent* in the Creative Quest, and speak to the Random Acts representatives on site about setting my book up as a fundraiser. To incorporate the competition's rock-and-roll theme into my story, I reworked the chapters I had already written to include a playlist that Abigail's best friend made for her before he passed away. Each chapter title is a song from the playlist, and I listened to that song on repeat while I wrote the chapter.

The Cleveland convention turned out to be an incredible experience. *Benevolent* was the winning entry in the prose category of the Creative Quest. The Random Acts representatives at the convention were a tremendous help with setting this book up as a fundraiser. Most importantly, the convention allowed me to experience firsthand what it truly means to be a part of the *Supernatural* family. It was moving to witness such a unique and diverse group of individuals all coming together to celebrate this show with the miraculous ability to turn strangers into family.

The fans I met at the convention and online cheered me on as I worked toward getting this book published, they provided feedback on cover designs, and they welcomed me into their family with open arms. I cannot

thank each and every one of you enough for all your support and encouragement. The profits from this book will go to Random Acts, but the story itself is for my *Supernatural* family. You all are amazing, and your words and actions have inspired me in so many ways. I hope you never stop being your uniquely beautiful selves!

If you'd like to read my story the same way I wrote it—with the songs playing as background music—you can find a link to Abigail's playlist on my website:

erinajensen.com