



Each Angel Burns: A Novel

Kathleen Valentine

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(Novel, 123k words) - In the latter part of the 19th century the Monastery of St. Gabriel the Archangel was built on a cliff overlooking the ocean on a peninsula in Maine. From its earliest days there were rumors of strange activity there --- tunnels through the cliff were reported to give access for smugglers, a miracle-working nun was said to live there, and a group of drunken lumberjacks who stormed the convent to kidnap wives claimed to have been vanquished by a giant angel with a flaming spear. One hundred years later, when the last of the old cloistered nuns was removed to a retirement home, the decision was made to close and sell the convent. That's when it was discovered that the convent's treasure, a marble statue of the Archangel Gabriel by Italian sculptor Giovanni Dupré, was missing.

In Ripley Mills, Massachusetts the self-titled "wild bunch", who played football together back in high school, gather every Thursday for dinner and beer. More than thirty years have passed and the group isn't what it used to be. Charlie's new female boss is young, pretty, and intimidating. Whitey's wife has cancer, Bull's wife just found out about his affair with an exotic dancer, and Vinnie can't get women to go out with him. Gabe's three daughters have grown up and his wife is making life miserable. Peter doesn't have those problems, he's a Jesuit priest. But they still get together every week to drink, eat, and listen to one another's problems. Then Father Peter makes a startling revelation, he had once been in love with a girl he met in Paris. He planned to leave the seminary to marry her but she rejected him to marry an older, wealthy man. Pete is happy as a priest teaching at Boston College but now Maggie has returned. She is leaving her husband and has purchased an old, abandoned convent in Maine that she plans to convert to a sculpture studio.

On Pete's recommendation Gabe takes the job of helping Maggie to restore the convent. But, as winter closes in, the mysteries begin again. Stories are circulating about bodies of young women washing up on the shore. Maggie's husband refuses to answer her calls. Gabe's cantankerous father, Mick, tells him the truth about his mother who had once longed to be a nun in that convent. Ethan Darling, the local sheriff, is snooping around. Zeke, Gabe's dog, discovers a secret passage in the crypt under the chapel. And Father Peter realizes that Maggie is falling in love with his oldest friend.

Each Angel Burns is the story of three people at crossroads in their lives. It is a story of enduring friendship, of faith, of great evil and greater love --- and of how they culminate in a miracle.

Each Angel Burns: A Novel Details

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From Reader Review Each Angel Burns: A Novel for online ebook

Ruth says

Beautiful story with interesting well-developed characters, a strong plot line and vivid descriptions that made me want to visit the places the author describes. I disagree with the people who bought this because they thought it was just a mystery novel. It is, as the description says, a story of three friends facing a turning point in their lives. I especially loved Fr. Black who kept me wondering almost to the end - was a good guy or a very,very clever bad guy. I fell a little bit in love with both Gabe and his dog Zeke. Personally, I thought Zeke was as well-developed a character as any in the book. I also loved Gabe's crusty old father, Mick, who surprised the heck out of me toward the end.

The story develops carefully shifting from three perspectives. Maggie, the artist, was an abused wife who is struggling to break free from her horrible husband when she re-encounters the only man she ever loved but who she left thirty years earlier. Gabe's daughters have left home and he is now coming face to face with a wife he married for the wrong reasons. Fr. Black has lived an honorable life but right from the beginning we know he has a secret - just not one I ever would have guessed.

I also loved a lot of the secondary characters, especially the guys from the bar. Charlie was my favorite and the Amish man, Josef, was a nice touch.

I thought this was a very satisfying read that challenges you to think about a lot of issues. It's not for someone looking for fluff or a formula-mystery but I recommend it for thinking readers who enjoy entering a whole new world.

I bought her second novel and have just started it.

Maureen Gill says

Each Angel Burns is a masterpiece!

Kathleen Valentine is a gifted author in possession of a variety of talents. She knits gorgeous shawls by the seashore, shawls that are soft and sensual; she also loves to cook old fashioned comfort foods that nurture and heal. Valentine writes non-fiction books about knitting and cooking, and uses her talent for fiction to effortlessly cook up and then knit together remarkable stories about the passions of the flesh as well as the spirit. Each Angel Burns is Valentine's second full length work of fiction and it is even more sophisticated and cleverly woven than her first, *An Old Mermaid's Tale*, which was a story I thought would be impossible to beat. I was wrong. Each Angel Burns is a masterpiece.

Each Angel Burns begins with a wonderfully written introduction to a small group of middle-aged men struggling with the disappointing realities of their ordinary lives. These guys have been meeting at the local watering hole for thirty years since their graduation from high school and Valentine is adroit at writing dialogue that's true to their blue-collar roots, masculinity, and New England mill town locality; so true, in fact, that it's easy to imagine yourself sitting on a bar stool nearby, munching Beer Nuts and drinking a brew. Such is the sense of familiarity and comfort that Valentine quickly establishes; these guys are real and it would be a rare reader who wouldn't know them.

Two of the men in this close knit group of friends quickly develop as central characters in the book: Gabe is

a talented craftsman with an artist's eye and heart, and Pete, the most handsome and gifted man the old mill town ever produced is a Jesuit priest teaching at nearby Boston College. Gabe is the settled-down guy who never wandered far from home; long married with three adult daughters who've flown the nest, Gabe struggles to understand how his marriage turned into a meat locker. Valentine's ability to sketch out a marriage turned as cold as dry ice and just as caustic is astonishing. Gabe's wife is a woman seething with slowly fermented husband-hate, a hate whose seeds were planted long ago when she married Gabe, knowing full well she didn't love him. Gabe is excruciatingly unaware that the defect in his marriage is not anything he can correct.

Father Pete is married too but his spouse, Holy Mother Church, is a more demanding lover than any earthly wife. Pete has been a good priest – a faithful and loving spouse – but when the only woman he ever loved, Maggie, reappears in his life he, like Gabe, is suddenly faced with his own middle-aged marital crisis.

Maggie, named after The Magdalene, is married to a man of great wealth and even greater malevolence and after years of abuse Maggie has finally found a way to break free. Her husband, Sinclair, has given her the strange gift of a deconsecrated convent built on a cliff overlooking the ocean. Maggie is determined to return the Monastery of St. Gabriel the Archangel to its old glory and as she works to regenerate the mysterious convent it begins to regenerate her. Maggie's hunt for the famous and long-lost statue of Gabriel the Archangel that was said to miraculously guard the convent door leads her to an expert on the subject at Boston College... and back into the life of Fr. Peter Black, the man she loved but walked out on many years before.

The Monastery of St. Gabriel the Archangel becomes ground zero in a Manichean battle for the hearts and souls – and lives – of all three of heaven's namesakes: Gabe, named after St. Gabriel, the patron saint of priests; Peter, the rock upon whom Christ built His church; and the Magdalene, one of the most misunderstood and maligned women in Scripture, the woman of sin with the purest of hearts. Maggie's malevolent husband is the Devil's own handiwork; he is a creature of unimaginable evil able to destroy all three as surely as he has destroyed many others. Gabriel the Archangel, however, is determined to deny the Devil his victory.

Each Angel Burns washes over the reader, first slowly like gentle waves on a quiet day at the shore and then as fiercely as a killer squall. Valentine is a writer who is as talented with narrative as she is with prose. Her dialogue is earthy, clever and utterly believable while her narrative is breathtakingly beautiful, at times sumptuous. Valentine blends literary fiction with its opposite in a remarkable story that satisfies all of the senses. Gabe, Pete and Maggie are indisputably the story's central characters but Valentine presents a compelling cast of actors who support her main cast brilliantly. Julie, Gabe's brittle angry wife, sucks the air out of every scene she enters and Gabe's father Mick is a crusty old guy smarting from the pain inflicted on him by his dead wife, a woman whom he robbed of her dreams by his all-too-human love. Gabe's brother Mike and his wife Daisy are people who have refused to let personal tragedy destroy them and their strength and love for one another plays out like a beautiful but sad symphony. Zeke, Gabe's dog, is an animal without shame; a brazen whore for affection, Zeke is willing to give as good as he gets and returns love with the generosity of a free spirit as only a dog can do.

Each Angel Burns is sexy and sophisticated and Valentine delivers a few shockaroos that are completely unpredictable. The ending is suspenseful, original, and satisfying and a testament to the many miracles that happen among us – those few that loom large and dramatic and the many that heal and sustain our broken spirits.

Kathleen Valentine has secured for herself a respected place in contemporary American literature and I eagerly await her third novel, *Depraved Heart*.

Maureen Gill, author of January Moon
May 2011

Frana Schulte says

Loved this book! I especially liked the setting in Maine. It made me want to visit there. The mystery and love story held my interest until the surprise ending. Loved the dog in this book!

Vicki says

Overall, I thought this book had some you really good things going for it and a few things that detracted from it. I thought the premise was interesting, it was written quite well with great description and the characters were well developed. I maintained an interest throughout the whole story.

There were many instances in which flashbacks were unclear, the murder mystery was a bit under-developed and when it was solved, I almost forgot it was part of the story. I also felt that the very strong religious overtones and the very strong sexual overtones did not quite fit so well in the same novel.

It was a solid 3 star read for me.

Erin says

I won this book in a Goodreads First Reads giveaway. I had a hard time getting interested in the book; the first few chapters were rough reading, but after that the story became more interesting. However, this wasn't a book that I was rushing to pick up and read every night.

I liked the character development of Father Pete, Maggie and Gabe, but I was disappointed that the murder-mystery component of the book was so slim and underdeveloped. It almost seemed like that part of the story was added in as an after thought.

I think I would've enjoyed this book a lot more had there been more details around the missing girls and more suspense.

Naomi says

This book was excellent. It was able to draw me in from page one, yet kept me enthralled and interested in the story throughout the book for multiple reasons. It was weird because I would call the book a noir/romance/mystery...very unusual book..it isn't your normal type of book to be "cookie cuttered" into a genre.

Final GR rating **4.5/5 Stars**

Evi says

I really enjoyed this book. Great mystery with a tender love story, long-lasting friendships and true faith.

Kelly says

I won this book in a Goodreads First Reads giveaway contest. Overall I thought the book was ok. The author really develops the main characters. She is also VERY descriptive, which is generally something that I can't stand, but in this case it didn't really bother me.

One of the reasons I was originally interested in the book was mystery/suspense plot. Although the book jacket makes it seem like a big part of the book, it seemed to hardly play a role at all. It really seemed to come out only in the last 50 pages or so. I would have liked to see that plot be more than just an afterthought.

Jen says

I won this through Goodreads First Reads. I didn't know what to expect when I started reading and was pleasantly surprised. The story is told through a few main characters, and I found each one sympathetic. Their histories are revealed through various flashbacks. The flashbacks are numerous but executed rather well, so that they add a dream-like quality to the atmosphere. The descriptions are rich - I could smell the cookies in the oven or hear the waves crashing near the abbey. There's an element of mystery that is hinted at in the beginning and middle, suddenly taking over near the end. Overall, it was an enjoyable read.

Linda says

Somewhat reminiscent of Sue Monk Kidd's *The Mermaid Chair*, *Each Angel Burns* is a story of relationships and turning points among a group of friends who have reached their fiftieth birthdays. The narrative revolves primarily around Maggie, a sculptor in a loveless marriage to a wealthy playboy, and the de-consecrated Maine monastery which she is converting as an art center. Just before her marriage, Maggie fell hard for Pete while they were studying in Paris, but she could not bring herself to lure him from the seminary where he was training for the priesthood. Pete's best friend, Gabe, also unhappily married, is recruited by Pete to carry out Maggie's building plans. The monastery served as a convent to a community of nuns, and has had a reputation for mystery and miracles. Now, a series of young women have been brutally murdered, and the sheriff suspects that the convent's crypts and tunnels are connected to these crimes.

What unfolds is a love story, a romance, really, in which even the minor characters must take stock of their lives and decide where to go from here. It proceeds at a leisurely pace, with most of the actions taking place within a small town bar called "The Arm Pit", and within the evocative setting of the monastery on the coast of Maine. Resonant with vivid imagery and inner struggles, *Each Angel Burns* shows that the journey of self-discovery does not end in adolescence.

Sandra Nachlinger says

Each Angel Burns is one of the most meaningful, compelling books I've read in a long time. Rather than skim over the inner lives of her middle-aged characters, Kathleen Valentine goes deeper and reveals the worries, fears, doubts, and joys of the realistic people in her story. The three main characters (Maggie the sculptor, Gabe the artist/artisan, and Pete the priest) all have a history of good and bad decisions, all of which are believable and completely logical within the story line. Their flaws make them who they are. The love scenes are poignant, focusing more on the characters' emotions than on who's doing what; and the mystery that threads its way through the tale adds another element. I wasn't quite certain that the person I'd identified as the murderer would be the one after all. That, along with my interest in the fate of the characters, kept me entertained to the end.

I recommend Each Angel Burns as an enjoyable book that will stay with readers long after they've turned the last page.

Amanda says

Each Angel Burns is easily one of the best books I read in 2011. I was in all the way from the very first page. One of the things that impressed me the most about this novel, and Kathleen Valentine's writing in general, is the relatability of her characters. They aren't flawless and one dimensional people who can do no wrong. Her "villains" are not entirely evil by the same token, which is a nice change. Interwoven into the story of the three main characters and their struggles there is the mysterious story of the convent and the missing statue. In my opinion she does a great job bringing both stories to fruition then connecting them. I also think she did awesome writing from the male perspective so much of the time. I've been recommending this one to everyone within earshot.

Julie says

I won this book through the First Reads Giveaway.

I won Each Angel Burns on 07/11/2010 and received the book on 10/09/2010.

Thoughts on Each Angel Burns: I have mixed feelings about this book. I really enjoyed the base of the story - don't mistake what I say next as dislike for this book. But I have to be perfectly honest - I had absolutely no idea what was going on sometimes! The story jumps forwards and backwards so much and sometimes I didn't even know what character was involved in each scene. I frequently had to go back a few pages and re-read to make sure that I didn't miss anything and maybe that was why I was having a hard time keeping up but unfortunately, that wasn't the case. I just want to stress again that the heart of this story is really amazing - great twists and turns, successes, defeats ... the only downfall was that unless you've read the book before and you already know what happens, it's confusing.

Jerome Parisse says

The last few weeks have been crazy but I have now found the time to read Valentine's novel, Each Angel Burns. I usually don't read books in the romance genre, with the exception of Twilight, which I still found

hard to finish, so this was a bit of a novelty for me. I really enjoyed Each Angel Burns and read it very quickly. Valentine's writing is beautiful. Her descriptions are evocative and make you feel you are there. In fact, after reading the book, I bet you will want to see the place for yourself. The story takes place in Massachusetts, where the self-titled "wild bunch", who played football together back in high school, gather every Thursday night for dinner and beer. More than thirty years have passed and the group has changed, but they are still together. The novel takes us through their journey, a journey of friendship, of loss, and of love. There is also a mystery to be solved. It's easy to get into the characters' heads and to like them. They're real. The plot is good, with an interesting twist at the end. The only negative for me was one or two weird jumps in time; these flashbacks themselves are not the problem but it is how they are placed in the story that feels weird. It does not affect the story however, and Each Angel Burns is a beautiful read.

Jan says

I can't believe I let this book languish on my TBR pile for over a year! It's absolutely wonderful, the characters, the dialogue, the setting, the art history, beautifully written, all of it. The only thing that bothered me was having to put it down repeatedly -- those interruptions were killers as you really wanted to see what was going to happen next.
