



Halfway to Forever (Forever Faithful)

By Karen Kingsbury

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You wept with them as they were Waiting for Morning

You shared their Moment of Weakness

Now they face the greatest struggles of their lives.

Matt and Hannah Bronzan have found a new life in the face of devastating loss. Together with Hannah's daughter, Jenny, they are finally moving forward—toward the adoption of a little girl. A younger sister for Jenny, a daughter for them to love and raise together. But just when the dream seems to be coming true, disaster strikes. Can Hannah survive the loss of another daughter?

Jade and Tanner Eastman love the Bronzans. Matt and Tanner are partners in a successful religious freedom law firm, and the two couples share a great deal. Not the least of which has been Jade and Tanner's struggle to have children. When they discover Jade is pregnant, their joy is boundless. Until the joyous event becomes a threat to Jade's very life. Will Tanner come through decades of loneliness only to face losing Jade one final time?

Caught in a desperate battle against all that threatens to derail their faith and sideline their futures, these four struggle together to depend daily on God, regardless of what comes against them, as they journey halfway to forever.

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Halfway to Forever (Forever Faithful) By Karen Kingsbury Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #693105 in Books
- Brand: WaterBrook Press
- Published on: 2015-10-27
- Released on: 2015-10-27
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.90" h x 1.00" w x 4.10" l, .45 pounds
- Binding: Mass Market Paperback
- 416 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Kingsbury brings back characters from her inspirational novels *Waiting for Morning* and *A Moment of Weakness* in this rushed sob story rife with clichés. It opens as Hannah Bronzan sits beside the gravestones of her former husband, Tom, and daughter Alicia, telling her dead loved ones of her decision with new husband Matt to adopt a little girl, four-year-old Grace Landers. "One more thing, honey. When we bring her home and... people ask me how many girls I have..." Hannah wiped at her tears again. 'I'll always tell them three. Two who live here with me... and one who lives in heaven.' She's not the only one who grieves. Her friend, Jade Eastman, has learned she's finally pregnant, but a cancerous brain tumor forces her to make a decision about carrying her pregnancy to term. Their "good-looking, powerful husbands" (yes, this is an actual quote) run the nation's most prominent religious freedom law firm and take on a groundbreaking case. Troubles for the two couples snowball right through the final pages. The novel is permeated with contrived situations, gushy hospital bedside scenes and sweeping stereotypes. For example, people who are "liberal, artsy... in entertainment or academia" are presented as opponents of God. Characters sob, cry or are teary-eyed on almost every other page, but the reader's eyes remain resolutely dry. As Jade's husband reflects at one point, "The whole scene felt like a poorly scripted TV drama." Enough said.

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About the Author

KAREN KINGSBURY is a *USA Today* and *New York Times* best-selling author, with nearly twenty million books in print. Dubbed the "Queen of Christian Fiction" by *Time* magazine, Karen has written more than forty Life-Changing Drama, which encompasses the Redemption, Firstborn, and Sunrise series, as well as stand-alone novels such as *Like Dandelion Dust*, *When Joy Came to Stay*, and *This Side of Heaven*. Karen and her husband, Don, live in the Pacific Northwest and are parents to six children, including three adopted from Haiti. Visit her Web site at www.KarenKingsbury.com

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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One

Hannah Bronzan rarely visited the cemetery.

The grassy knolls and quiet, sad whispers were not necessary for her to remember Tom and Alicia, because they did not live in the confines of a garden of stone, but in Hannah's heart.

Where they would always live.

But on this day, Hannah climbed out of the car, slipped on her sunglasses, and gazed across a sea of cold, gray tombstones. Her heart ached as she drew a slow, shaky breath.

Much as she didn't want to be here, it was time. Despite the emotions warring within her, Hannah knew she

had no choice. She needed to come now, just as she'd needed to come two years ago when Matt Bronzan asked her to be his wife.

By then she had grieved the loss of her first husband, and with a strength that was not her own, she'd survived. Enough to tell Matt yes, to believe there was indeed a new life for her and young Jenny on the other side of a darkness and pain that had nearly destroyed them both.

Coming here had been difficult back then too, but it had given her a chance to say good-bye to Tom, to thank him for all they'd shared, and to release him. To let die a flame she thought would burn forever. Hannah set her gaze in the direction of their tombstones and pulled her sweater tighter.

Her eyes welled up. Now it was time to let go of Alicia.

This was a private moment—one she needed to share with Tom and Alicia alone. Regardless of shaded grounds, the glasses would stay. She walked amidst the markers, her fingers brushing against an occasional cold stone as she made her way across the cemetery to the place where their markers lay, side by side.

Her eyes drifted from one to the other. *Dr. Thomas J. Ryan...Alicia Marie Ryan.* The birth dates were different, but the date of death was the same: *August 28, 1998.*

A lump formed in Hannah's throat, and she swallowed hard as she knelt down, sitting back on her heels. She wiped an errant tear from her cheek... Alicia would have been nineteen, finished with high school and making her way through college. In love, perhaps, or dreaming of a career.

Alicia. I miss you, baby...

It was harder to picture them now, harder to see the crisp definition in her mind's scrapbook...how Tom's eyes sparkled when she was in his arms, or the way Alicia's smile lit up a room...

They'd lost so much in one terrible moment. A drunk driver, an awful collision...and the life she and Tom had spent years building was shattered.

Hannah exhaled, and the sound mingled with the breeze. *You can do this.* She squeezed her eyes shut, searching for the strength to move ahead. She and Matt had worked out the plans for more than a year. It was the right thing, she was sure of that much. Even now, with sadness covering her heart like a blanket, she could feel the excitement welling within her, convincing her that somehow, sometime soon, it would happen.

She would be a mother again.

"Hi..." She set her fingertips on Alicia's tombstone and dusted off a layer of dirt. "I have something to tell you."

A crow sounded in the distance. This visit was for peace of mind and nothing more. Hannah's precious oldest daughter would never have questioned her intentions, never have doubted her place in Hannah's heart. Her fingers stopped moving and settled over Alicia's name.

"Matt and I have decided to...to adopt a little girl." Her voice broke, and from behind her sunglasses tears trickled down her face and dripped off her chin.

She waited until she could find her voice. "After...after the accident I couldn't imagine ever loving another man," Hannah wiped the back of her hand across her wet chin. "Or another daughter." A sound that was part laugh, part sob slipped from her lips. "But here I am, happy, married, and...convinced God has another daughter for me somewhere out there."

The traffic hummed from the road behind her. "You understand, right, Alicia? I'm not trying to...to replace you, honey." She sniffed. "The bond you and I shared, the one you and Jenny shared, that's something none of us will ever have again. Not like it was."

Hannah paused and gazed up, willing herself to see beyond the blue to the place where Tom and Alicia now lived and loved and laughed.

Gradually her eyes shifted back to the tombstones. "I saw a documentary last night about kids in America, kids waiting for someone to love them, and...I don't know... something inside me snapped." She shrugged and managed a smile despite the fresh tears on her cheeks. "I can't have more babies. We've known that since Jenny was born. But adoption?" She sniffed. "I wasn't sure I could do it...until last night. Then, all of a sudden, I knew. I could open my heart to another little girl."

The background noise faded. Hannah traced the A in Alicia's name, pushing away the dirt that had gathered there. "We'll adopt a toddler, someone who needs a second chance at life." She blinked, and two more tears slid off the tip of her nose onto Alicia's stone. "I don't know where she is...or who she is. But I know she's out there somewhere. And I wanted you to know bec—"

There was a catch in Hannah's voice, and she held the sobs at bay. "Because she'll be your sister."

Hannah closed her eyes again and waited. The image of her oldest daughter grew clear in her mind once more. "Alicia..."

There she was. The smile, the honey blonde hair, the warmth in her eyes...it was all as close and real as if she were standing there in person.

There were no words, but a distinct sense of approval pierced the darkness. The feeling swelled, and Hannah had no doubts. God wanted her to know Alicia would have supported this decision with her whole being.

Hannah ached to reach out and pull the image of her daughter close, but the lines began to blur. As they did, peace oozed between the cracks in Hannah's heart. It was okay to let her daughter's memory fade for now. The visit had reminded her once more that she no longer needed to feel the pain of Alicia's and Tom's deaths with every excruciating breath, but only as a sad truth that simply was and could not be changed.

Hope wrapped its arms around her as she opened her eyes. It was time to go home, time to let Matt and Jenny know what she'd decided. Of course, Jade and Tanner Eastman would want to know, too. The couple had become their best friends these past years. They'd been there while Matt and Hannah walked through a year of collecting documents and filling out adoption forms, gathering letters and completing a dossier.

The Eastmans understood. They were desperate to have a baby, but so far hadn't been able.

Despite Hannah's tears, a smile tugged at her lips. Yes, Jade and Tanner would be thrilled that Hannah was finally ready to move forward.

She let her eyes settle on Tom's tombstone. "Pray for us, Tom." Two tears landed near his name, and she wiped her cheeks with her fingertips. "Pray for the little girl...whoever she is."

Once more she looked back at the stone, at Alicia's name carved in it. "One more thing, honey. When we bring her home and...and people ask me how many girls I have..." Hannah wiped at her tears again. "I'll always tell them three. Two who live here with me...and one who lives in heaven."

Users Review

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Natalie White:

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Kirk Nutter:

Spent a free time and energy to be fun activity to complete! A lot of people spent their down time with their

family, or their particular friends. Usually they performing activity like watching television, going to beach, or picnic inside the park. They actually doing same thing every week. Do you feel it? Do you want to something different to fill your free time/ holiday? Could possibly be reading a book is usually option to fill your cost-free time/ holiday. The first thing that you will ask may be what kinds of guide that you should read. If you want to try look for book, may be the guide untitled Halfway to Forever (Forever Faithful) can be great book to read. May be it could be best activity to you.

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