

With an English degree and a fondness for British literature, Elle Powers entered the publishing world as a maker of books in 2001. Since then, she's been a steadfast bibliophile (a trait she attributes to genetics, being kin to Edgar Allan Poe). She writes from a turn-of-the-century farmhouse (which is six years older than *Peter Pan*), encircled by the Blue Ridge Mountains.

When she's not scribbling, you may find Elle wandering the Virginia hills with a novel in hand and a dog by her side. She is currently writing a fictional memoir featuring Cousin Edgar; *I Am Mister Poe* is due out in 2019.

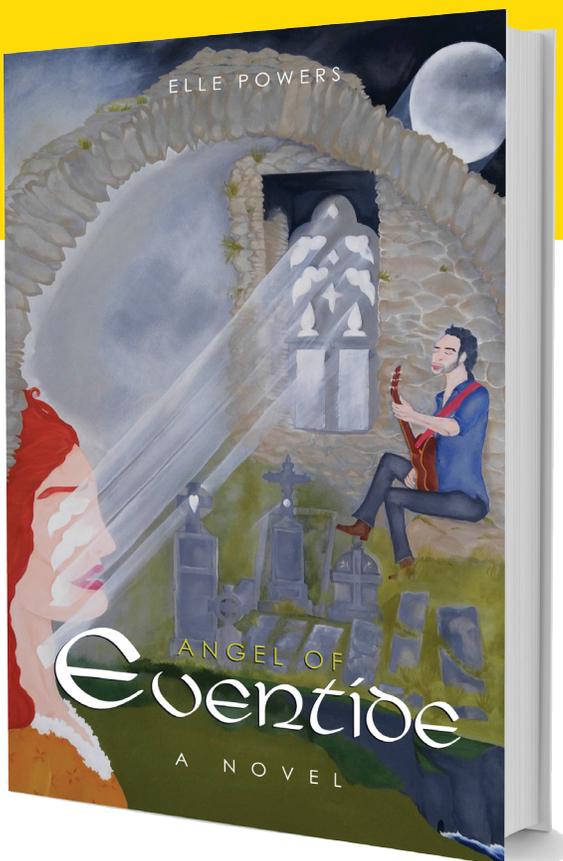


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Angel of Eventide: A Novel
by Elle Powers

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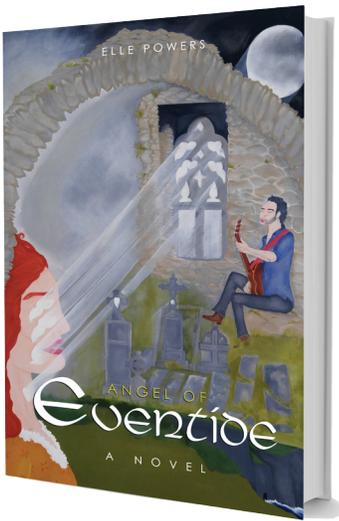
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Visit **AngelOfEventide.com**
to view the book trailer.

330 pages
Fantasy | Paranormal | Romance

Local Author Celebrates Book Release at Wayne Theatre

Elle Powers, an author from Afton, debuts a novel of supernatural romance and Celtic mysticism.



To kick off the publication of her new book, *Angel of Eventide*, Elle is hosting a party at the Historic Wayne Theatre on Thursday, September 21, 6–8 p.m. Admission is free with light refreshments and a cash bar. Books will be available for purchase and signing.

Angel of Eventide is about a wayward but endearing Angel of Death. When Seamus unintentionally saves a life he was meant to take, he finds himself unable to stomach his former craft. Deliberately disregarding his calling, Sea assumes a role he was not made for—that of guardian angel—fighting for the life of a young girl, who, now on borrowed time, courts death at every turn.

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{A portion of the proceeds from books sales will be donated to Samaritans in Ireland, which offers emotional support to anyone in distress, struggling to cope, or at risk of suicide.}

If you'd like more information about *Angel of Eventide*, or to schedule an interview with Elle, please contact her at (434) 409-6033 or email, elle@to-elle-and-back.com.



“Angel of Eventide is more than a story of the supernatural, it is a deeply penetrating tale of human frailty and the divine romance that continually pursues us. Elle Powers is a gifted storyteller with a bright future.”

—Billy Coffey, author of *Some Small Magic*

“A supernatural being shadows the last flickers of human lives. He is Seamus: a guide, a gifter of peace, an angel of death—welcome by some, dreaded by others. After millennia of faithful, unquestioning service, he is tempted by love. Should he rebel against his heavenly calling? Is love all it’s cracked up to be? Intelligent and lyrical, Powers’s characters are humorous, feisty, and divinely human. Seamus, as our bridge, demystifies death and encourages us mortals to live for now and for ever.”

—Patricia J. Esposito, author of *Beside the Darker Shore*

“Elle Powers has created a world both charming and sinister in her latest novel, *Angel of Eventide*. A romance, a theological meditation, and an action-adventure are all rolled into a plot that readers will think they have figured out—until the final surprising, and satisfying, scenes. This is a tale of supernatural love and very mortal struggle, and anyone who has wondered about the angels will be entranced by this story of Seamus and Maren, the most star-crossed pair of lovers imaginable.”

—Sarah Kennedy, author of *The Cross and the Crown* series and *Self-Portrait, with Ghost*

“Two small words: *what if?* These are your invitation to explore Elle’s ‘brave new world.’ This is not your ordinary romance—it comes with a twist and a generous dollop of mystery. Like a dessert you have never had before, but with the first taste you want nothing else. By the end of this tale, you are left with one simple request: Please, more!”

—Martyn Wood, author of the upcoming *Realm World* series

“*Angel of God, my guardian dear, in whom God’s love commits me here, ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.* Have you ever wanted to talk back to your Guardian Angel? Have you ever wondered where he was leading you? Have you felt rebellious and just wanted to be stubborn? If you have felt these ways at times, you’ll really like this story of Meren and her own personal guardian angel! A wonderful story with a dash of Irish mysticism.”

—The Reverend Charles C. Carman
Wintergreen, Virginia

How did you come to write *Angel of Eventide*?

I was driving home one night and a question came to me: “What if the angel of death fell in love?” As I explored that question, I started to weave into it elements from *The Thorn Birds*, by Colleen McCullough, which features a priest whose romance gets the better of his ambitions and spiritual responsibilities. After visiting Ireland, I knew I wanted my angel to be Irish, and I learned some about Celtic mysticism. All these enhanced the original idea/question, and the story started to take form.

What’s it about?

My angel of death, Seamus—aka “Sea” (pronounced Shay)—meets a little girl with a startling mystical awareness. When he’s supposed to kill her, he saves her. Then, faced with the obligation to fix his mistake, he rebels, leaving his heavenly digs to follow the girl. Sea is kind of a Prodigal Son figure in that sense. He’s also part Peter Pan—cocky, ageless, and a bit distracted.

The little girl, Maren, grows up to love Sea. Yet she can’t have him for many reasons, such as her humanity, her mortality, her immaturity. Not to mention that the universe seems bent on killing her one way or another. Try as they may, Sea and Maren must struggle against heaven and earth to be together.

What is your experience as an author?

My first novel, published in 2012 under a different name, is a young-adult fantasy, akin to my favorite childhood storybooks by C. S. Lewis. That book led me to speak at schools, churches, libraries, conferences, and even a camp.

The campers of Jacob’s Ladder (a summer enrichment program for at-risk students) read my book and created projects depicting their favorite scene in the novel. That was my first “book chat” with young readers, and it was surreal! I remember thinking, *Is this what it’s like to be an author? If so, this is what I want to do for the rest of my life.*

For the past three years, I’ve maintained a special relationship with the ESL students at St. Margaret’s School in Tappahannock. This spring I hosted the advanced class at my home in Nelson County, Virginia, for an overnight writing retreat.

Where and what did you study?

I graduated Magna cum Laude from Mary Baldwin University (née College) in 2002 with a bachelor of arts in English (with departmental honors). I focused on British literature within my major, and I minored in communication. I wrote for the campus newspaper and served as copy editor. While in college, I was awarded a

scholarship for fiction writing, and I studied under Pulitzer-Prize-winning poet Maxine Kumin.

What did you do before you started writing books?

I interned for a publishing company in Charlottesville while I was still in college. By the time I graduated, the editorial and production manager position was open to me. Working at a small publisher taught me a lot about the book industry, which was headed for a drastic change about that time. This experience did a lot to prepare me to be an author.

When my first child was born, I left the office to freelance—editing, ghost-writing, and designing books. I also taught 7th–10th-grade English in a local private school for a couple years. Until recently, I wrote for a non-profit organization that benefits wounded veterans and the children of fallen service members, and I was a regular contributor and staff writer for *Celebrating Everyday Life Magazine*.

What are you currently writing?

I'm writing a fictional memoir about Edgar Allan Poe. I am a first cousin, six times removed. My grandmother's grandmother was a Poe. It's a distant connection, but I'll take it!

When I was young, the Poe relation was frowned upon. *Wasn't he an alcoholic and a drug addict? Didn't he marry his 13-year-old cousin?* Folks seemed either fascinated or disgusted by him.

However, I've found Edgar most misunderstood; much of what we hear about him is myth. In my next novel I want to re-introduce Edgar Poe: the sensitive orphan, the melodramatic student, the witty young poet, the romantic companion, and the tragic widower. By setting him in intimate, domestic scenes, I want my readers to see inside his head and to love him as I do.

What do you do when you're not writing?

I read and walk *a lot*. Walking with my dog while reading a novel is my favorite activity when I need a break from my stories. (Although, the stories and characters often do walk with me.)

My husband owns a busy landscape company, and I help out when I can. We have three sons, and so there is always some practice, game, or performance to go to. Our family attends all the Hokie home football games in Blacksburg. We like to go hiking in the Shenandoah National Park and boating on the Rappahannock River.

What is the most important thing you've learned about writing?

I find that I don't fully understand something until I write about it. The writing is like an act of magic, which can change my perspective or show me something I didn't see before. My American lit professor used to scrawl across the chalkboard, "WRITING IS UNDERSTANDING." Sometimes I still write that across the top of a blank piece of paper before I begin to write. It's like an incantation, and it works every time.

“Wiggins? That you?” she asked the tall shadow that had parted the curtain. The body flickered and blurred before its shape found focus, but that happened when specters came to visit.

The stranger, now distinct and close enough to share a smile, reminded himself that the old woman was not as lost as she looked. With distinguished familiarity, he posed himself on the edge of her deathbed and, like a priest consecrating the Host, laid a hand on her blanketed leg.

She goggled at him, bewildered but not very bothered.

Confusion was a kindness in these conditions, the visitor thought; it was the awful moments of clarity that upset their dear constructed realities. When the aged remembered that their husbands had departed more than a decade prior and they could no longer retain coherent thoughts, much less express them—well, that caused unfortunate damage to the delicate psyche. To make a go from here would require some tact.

“I regret to say I’m not your husband, Ruth. I wouldn’t be that lucky.” As he leaned in, his face glowed in a way that the late Mr. Wiggins’s did not.

Her pale eyes tightened and traveled the blue folds of his borrowed scrubs. Not a ghost then. But something. Doctor, she seemed to finally decide. Young and cocky and impertinent. He guessed that she didn’t appreciate a fledgling such as himself establishing a first-name basis with a respectable woman of her age. Ah, well, she would get used to it.

Seamus assessed her restraint and thought it best to introduce himself, knowing by instinct to speak up so she could hear him.

“Hello. My name is James.”

Ruth’s eyes and mouth gaped, and she unconsciously spoke her thoughts aloud. “Must be a nurse. No doctor gives his first name without the last . . . or without his title. There’s Dr.—oh, what’s his name? *Mc-something-or-other*. But he’s short . . . and bald . . .”

Her mumbling dwindled. The young man on her bed was the express opposite of Dr. *Mc-something-or-other*. The room may have been dim, but even an old girl knew a handsome chap when she saw one.

“He looks like the bloke who models the Burberry suits in the papers. Didn’t know his name before. James, is it? And he’s Irish!”

Ruth nearly giggled, but the sound was sniffy and cracked. “Hello,” she offered, embarrassed by her noises. “I remember you from the adverts.”

Sea covered her hand with his. The feel of unsecured skin over flimsy bones was a favorite sensation he could afford at these quiet bedside soirees. As long as he remembered why he was here and didn’t dawdle. . . .

“Charmed to meet you, Ruth. Your son and daughter-in-law are down in the café. I expect now would be a good time—”

“You going to change the bedclothes?” she asked, struggling to sit up.

“I’m not—”

“Oh, *blast!*” Ruth scowled at the dangling catheter bag and gripped the sheet to her chin as if it were her last dignity.

“Ah-ah. Relax, love.” He coaxed her back into the pillows. “No more poking and prodding. I thought we might chat for a bit.” No need to rush through, he thought. There was still time.

“Why, that would be delightful!” Unforeseen energy flared at the suggestion of social company that wasn’t there especially to depress her. “If you just step into the kitchen and fetch my teapot. And don’t forget the biscuits, dear.”

Sea was inclined to indulge these distracting domestic fantasies. After all, this wasn’t about him. This was Ruth’s climactic scene; he was only there to offer direction and pull the final curtain at the end.

CHAPTER ONE | ANGEL OF EVENTIDE

Promising to return in a hurry, he exited through the privacy screen and sidestepped the station of another insensible sufferer. He found leftover cups of beef broth on the supper tray by a chilly window that overlooked the shadowy countryside. The outside world glowed orange by the haze of the city's streetlights and the setting sun in the valley.

From its elevated whereabouts on Headington Hill, the John Radcliffe stood heedful of the steeples and towers of the famous Oxford skyline. Sea was a regular at this hospital, and he knew without looking that the colleges in the west were emptying streams of vehicles and bicycles out into the streets, pedestrians headed home or to the pub for the evening.

Clutching the cool plastic mugs with both hands, he hoped this would make do for the part of "tea."

"Nothing better than a hot cuppa," Ruth chanted. Her head shook from side to side as though she disagreed with herself.

He toasted up the mugs and set them on the bedside tray table. "That is so . . . except for maybe a pint of ale."

"That's what Wiggins would say too," she said, trying to muffle her strange cackle with the back of her hand. "He sometimes spikes his with a jigger of whiskey."

"Clever fella."

Sea always reminded the widows of their husbands somehow. *What was the lad's forename anyway? Oh, right. Arthur it was.*

In the midst of these musings, an unfamiliar opposition struck him: he didn't want to do it. What he was sent to do, that is.

Ah, but it wasn't up to him to make that call. He answered to a Higher Power. No matter how much free rein he was given as regarded craft and aesthetic, failing to follow through was unallowable.

How bewildering. He'd not felt any reluctance before; it was not in his nature to resent death. This was Ruth Wiggins's time. This was how her story was written.

Slightly troubled, Sea ignored the inclination and carried on. "How are you feeling?" he asked, settling himself on the cot beside her undersized form.

"All right," she said, chin quivering. "I feel . . . heavy-like." She bit down on her lip with the admission.

Sea knew the ache of lingering. He saw her shame and released it in his way. Ruth seemed to sense this empathy, which she might have ascribed to his professional calling. But no nurse ever spent so much time with her unless they were sticking or scrubbing or shifting. No nurse ever sat down either.

"I must be making him up," she whispered. "Another ghost."

"You're not. I'm as real as you. Only . . ." he smiled and switched gears, ". . . you are a bold woman, Ruth."

Although the poor dear suffered from shallow breath and a faulty heart rhythm, her spirit was still hale. And yet she hadn't eaten in days. She was ready.

Ruth opened her mouth to reply to the compliment, but her disadvantaged mind changed the subject.

"Are you going to try to sell me a suit?" she said, brightening with the challenge. "Because I'm a hard sell. Wiggins has already got three."

"I'm not," Sea said with a wink. "That's not why I'm here." He leaned in closer and his expression turned grave. "I think it's time you leave hospital, Ruth."

Trembling and warped, her fingers picked at the pilling of the blanket, and her eyes cast wildly about, not landing and not seeing. "Oh," she said.

Sea understood. Change was profound and upsetting, and (apart from being born) leaving here would be the greatest transition of all. Sea didn't change—not ever—and so he appreciated, even if he couldn't share, her resistance. (Although an uncertainty of his own was taking hold, and he was compelled to press on notwithstanding.)

"Mister Wiggins—Arthur, I mean—he's been asking for you."

CHAPTER ONE | ANGEL OF EVENTIDE

Tears gathered at the brim of her lower lids, and she clutched the nightgown at her chest, knowing that her memory kept her husband alive while she survived—alone.

“Wiggins is a good man.”

“Ruthie?” Sea used her late husband’s term of endearment. “Would you like to hear a story?”

She gazed up at him and smiled full, looking almost girlish. “I kept all my own teeth, you know. Well, nearly all.” A short frown knitted her face. “A story, you said?”

“You like stories, don’t you?”

“Oh, yes, I like stories.” Ruth’s lips pasted together, making speech awkward and exhausting. “What sort of story is it?”

This was Sea’s favorite bit. “It’s a love story. But I must show you. Will you come?”

“A love story!” Ruth marveled, her cheeks hollowed. “What did you say your name was?”

“It’s James. And I want you to meet the Hero of this story.”

“Wiggins?”

“Not Arthur . . .”

There it came again. That extraordinary rebellious notion. Why should he be left to do the endings? When would *he* get to be the hero of the story?

Sea told himself to come off it. He must not ask such questions. This role was worthwhile, and he’d spent his life making an art of it. He would not entertain insubordination; he would do as he was told.

He tried to recover and set his sights on the finish, rushing a bit.

“But even if he’s not the hero, Wiggins’s got a part in the story too. Now, we must hurry. The Hero is waiting, because *you*, my dear, are his lady.”

Her smile faded, and her brow wrinkled deeper.

“That sounds lovely. But, young man, do you realize how old I am?” She hissed, scandalized, “I could be your *grandmother!*”

Sea hid a smile in his shoulder before he answered. “Em . . . You know, I don’t see an old grandmother. The truth is, I see a strong, fair lass who is weary of this old myth”—he made a sweeping gesture to include all the infirmity props and pain and darkness—“and she is being called to a new adventure. So? The real story now.”

“How?” Ruth asked, her voice like the scratch of a pencil.

“You’re going to take a wee journey. Just close your eyes . . .”

“Like falling asleep,” she said, obeying.

“More like waking up actually.”

Her eyes fluttered open. “What about Wiggins? Will he know where I am—and my sister? Oh, God! I forgot to give her back her stockings. She’ll skin me alive, she will!”

“Shhh. I’ll let them know just as soon as we get you on your way.”

He stroked her head and she quieted. The white hair was weightless, and he imagined that if he rubbed it between his fingers it would disintegrate like cinders. He could see straight through it to a mottled scalp. Despite its temporary capacity, there was something tremendous about the human body . . . sacred even.

“Wait! I’m sorry, Ruth.” Sea hardly knew what he was saying. “Let’s not do this. Not now. I’m not . . . feeling up to it. But I’ll come back another time.”

She recoiled. “What are you talking about? I want to hear the story, you—whatever your name is! You can’t bloody stop now.”

Sea straightened up, her insistence flinging him back to his senses. “Of course. You’re right. What was I thinking. Go on then?”

“Go on,” she allowed, closing her eyes again. “Sing to me, Wiggins.”

“What would you like me to sing, Ruthie?” This was a popular request: a last lullaby. He knew all the songs too. He had recently performed a John Lennon for an old fellow with pneumonia.

“My favorite, please—‘Abide with Me.’ That would be lovely.”

He began to sing in a mellow baritenor: “. . . fast falls the eventide . . .”

Ruth mouthed the words despite her pressured breathing and, when she was able, sang along, a hushed incantation.

*Swift to its close ebbs out life’s little day;
Earth’s joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see:
O thou who changest not, abide with me!*

When he reached the end of the third verse—“Who like thyself my guide and stay can be?”—she threw open her eyes and peered at him again, unblinking and *recognizing*. Sea leaned away and studied her, impassive, to make sure she didn’t confuse him with the Hero. *That* would be intolerable.

“What took you all these years?” she said finally, managing to wag a buckled finger at him. “Do you know how long I’ve waited for you?”

Sea laughed for the shock of the accusation. She knew who he was! The audacity to scold him was impressive. But neither her question nor her irritation was unexpected. She softened with his laughter and sealed her sight again with a smirk, back on friendly terms.

“Who ever heard of the angel of death modeling Burberry?” She shook her head and chuckled soundlessly.

He held up his arms and looked down at his scrubs. “What? You don’t like my costume?”

“Wear something proper for your next escort.”

“I will. I mean no disrespect. And forgive me, madam, for the delay. Shall we then?” he asked, one hand cradling the back of her neck and the other hovering over her face. At her permission, he prepared to proceed with the slight yet paramount gesture.

He finished the last verse of the hymn:

*Shine thro’ the gloom, and point me to the skies:
Heav’n’s morning breaks and earth’s vain shadows flee:
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me . . .*

“Amen,” they vowed together.

“It’s been a pleasure to serve you, Ruth.” As he uttered the last, Seamus laid his palm and fingers over her nose and mouth, drawing the last rattled breath from her unsubstantial body.

Still holding her head in his hands, his eyes rolled upward. “Sorry about that, Da,” he said to the ceiling. Then he bowed his head and waited for a rebuke that never came.

