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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Brooklyn is the perfect setting for this dark, gritty thriller...Readers can rest assured that while these young women may be saints, they are definitely not angels." (*Kirkus on Precious Blood*)

"Intriguing premise, fiery dialogue, and digs about celebrity-obsessed culture that moves at the speed of Twitter..." (*Publishers Weekly on Precious Blood*)

"...Hurley brings her deadpan wit and blackest humor to the first tale in this trilogy about spirituality, sacrifice and supernatural romance." (*MTV Hollywood Crush on Precious Blood*)

#### About the Author

Tonya Hurley is the author of the *New York Times* bestselling series ghostgirl and the Blessed trilogy. She has worked in nearly every aspect of teen entertainment: creating, writing, and producing two hit TV series; writing and directing several acclaimed independent films; and developing a groundbreaking collection of video games. Tonya lives with her husband and daughter in Brooklyn, New York.

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Hallowed



13 "Don't touch me!" Cecilia's voice bounced off the white walls and tiled floors of the Perpetual Help psych ward, rattling the grimy windows. Her plea echoed down the hall reaching Agnes, who was grabbing frantically at her locked door and banging on her window shouting Cecilia's name. Completely in vain.

"I said, hands off," Cecilia demanded once again.

"You're insane," the burly male recovery nurse said, laughing off her request and shackling her right wrist to the dirty hospital bed.

"Wow. You should've been a goddam detective," CeCe said. "If you haven't noticed, we're all mad here." She struggled, ripping her hospital gown. With one arm strapped to the bed, she swung blindly at the nurse.

"Calm down, bitch," he shouted, grabbing for her sinewy arm. His hands were large and calloused. More like a construction worker's paw, or a hit man's.

"Not much of a bedside manner you have there," she snapped, gathering all the saliva in her mouth that she could before spitting it in his face. She thrust her free elbow swiftly into the soft part of his throat and brought him to his knees. He gasped for breath, and his dignity, and eventually for his consciousness. "I hit like a bitch too, don't I?"

He pulled at the alarm on the wall next to him, signaling for help as he collapsed at her feet. The sight of the beefy health aide struggling like that satisfied her immensely. She looked down at him and laughed.

"Help," Cecilia mocked. "I've fallen and I can't get up." She paused. "They should have gotten a chick nurse to do this job. Oh, that's right. They did."

An orderly came running down the corridor, his rubber soles squeaking on the newly waxed floor, arriving within seconds of the distress call.

“Grab her,” the nurse demanded hoarsely, rubbing at his sore and reddened neck. The orderly was stunned at the sight of her—one arm fastened to the bed, with her legs and free arm swinging wildly. No one would have guessed she was semi-dazed from the cocktail of meds she was forced to take that morning. Cecilia stared him down and could tell he was shell-shocked at the sight of her—whether it was because of her reputation, which she was used to now, or her current state. The orderly stood there, watching her flail like a live butterfly with its wings pinned to a mounting board. He looked like a scared little boy drafted to do a man’s job.

“Come on, Billy. Do it . . . now,” the nurse urged.

“Bill . . .” Cecilia muttered, her mind suddenly drifting a million miles away to her murdered mentor.

“You want to get out of here, don’t you?” Billy asked her, trying to stabilize her.

“Don’t you worry. I’ll get out, one way or another, even if it’s in a box,” she said. “Come with?”

The nurse made it to his feet, still a little wobbly, and leaned on the bed to steady himself. He reached for a leather strap affixed to the bottom of the bed and tied one of her legs down.

“Aren’t we going to administer the anesthesia now?” Billy asked out of breath, finding the sight of her so helpless unsettling.

“She’s not getting anesthesia. Orders from upstairs. This bitch is going old school.” The nurse pulled a decades-old rubber mouth bit out of the stainless-steel drawer. It was deformed from overuse and reeked of bad breath and disinfectant. Her eyes widened. Half of her body out of commission. Her fate now laid out on a rusty tray in front of her.

“It’s a relic,” the nurse taunted. “You know what those are, right?”

“I’m surprised you do, dipshit,” Cecilia snarked. “That’s an SAT word.”

“Look at you, all tied up and still talking smack,” the nurse said. “Who the hell do you think you are?”

“I’m the worst kind of a bitch,” she whispered. “I’m a bitch with nothing to lose.”

“Based on my experience in this room, you do have something to lose,” he said, getting supplies from the rusty cabinet. “Your mind.”

He fastened a bib around her long neck and took the rubber bit off the tray. Cecilia focused her gaze on the young orderly, looking for some piece of a soul that she could connect with, that she could reach.

“You don’t want to do this Billy,” she said.

He swallowed hard.

“Don’t listen, kid. She won’t have much to say in about fifteen minutes. She’ll be left staring off into space,

trapped inside that hot body. Lights out, nobody home, ya know what I mean? “A perverse smirk washed across his face. “Hot and defenseless, just the way I like ’em.”

Billy reluctantly nodded, trying to fight the sick feeling that was rumbling up from his gut.

“Strap her other leg down!” his superior barked.

Billy grabbed her thrashing leg with one hand and held it down as he scrambled to open the remaining leather strap with the other. She kept her eyes fixed on him the whole time, trying to find the human part of him, the believer, the part that she knew was in there, that he might not have even recognized himself.

“What the hell are you waiting for? Strap this bitch in!” the nurse ordered. “Now!”

The nurse affixed white pads to each side of the metal headpiece he grabbed from the stainless cabinet and placed it over her temples. He squeezed hard on both of her cheeks at the hinge of her jaw, forcing her mouth to open and inserted the rubber bite plate, which now filled her mouth, nearly choking her.

Cecilia retreated into herself. She knew this was it. There was no use delaying the inevitable, she thought. She closed her eyes and began to talk to him. To Sebastian. She desperately recalled his face to her memory. She was completely calm, emptying her mind of fear and terror and replacing it with thoughts of him. Only him.

As the nurse rushed out to get the doctor who would be pulling the switch, Billy took her leg that he’d been holding and began to strap it down. It was all so final.

“I’m sorry,” Billy said, buckling the strap.

His apology fell on deaf ears. Cecilia was with Sebastian deep inside herself. Suddenly her leg got warm. And then hot. Burning hot.

“Shit!” Billy said, trying to keep hold of her at the sound of his own skin sizzling.

“My hands!” Billy tried his best to keep her in his grasp. He couldn’t believe what was happening, thinking it must be faulty equipment.

Cecilia kicked out of his hold and slammed the door shut with her foot; her eyes still closed as if someone or something inside of her had flipped a switch and activated her only free extremity. Billy grabbed for her leg again but she kicked him in the face, knocking him to the floor. Cecilia spit out the mouthpiece, freed her hands, and gasped for air.

“He was right, I do have a hot body,” she whispered.

Her eyes popped open and she scanned the room for a weapon but saw none. There was nothing but grimy windows slightly ajar, machinery that looked like some vintage modular synthesizers she’d fooled around with in a recording studio, a spare set of electrodes, and several half gallons of conductive salt solution.

She thought about running for the window, diving through it, setting herself free. For good. Instead she smashed the windowpane with her hand, grabbed one of the fallen shards, and cut herself out of the ankle strap.

The orderly was dazed but still reached for one of the shards that now littered the floor before him.

“Don’t do it, Billy,” she warned. “I don’t want to hurt you.”

He picked up a jagged piece of glass and pointed it toward her. She kicked it from his hand and pinned his wrist down with her foot.

“Life is choices, Billy. I gave you one. You gave me none.”

Cecilia reached over to a counter next to the table she was perched on and twisted the cap off one of the jugs. She poured it out on the floor. First one half gallon, then another, and another until a barrel full of the electrically conductive liquid pooled around the orderly’s feet, nearly covering them, the cuffs of his pants as well as a large portion of the room. She flipped the door lock to keep him from running out, trapping them both inside.

“That’s the problem with old buildings,” she mumbled. “Floors aren’t level.”

Blood from her stigmata flowed freely down her arms, onto her smock, and to the wet floor, mixing with the solution one drop at a time.

She ripped the metal headpiece off and the pads, exposing the ends of the wires, and turned the voltage dial on the transformer to maximum then hit the switch. She felt the heat rise as the current flowed through the wire. And the mild stench of burning skin filled the room as the temperature rose around the open wounds on her hand.

The rumble of techs grew louder as a scum of attendants arrived at the door, peering through the tiny rectangular reinforced window and banging on it to be let in.

Cecilia smiled at them and held the exposed wires up for them to see, taunting them. The panic in the Billy’s eyes was evident to his colleagues.

“Back off or I turn this dude into a sparkler,” she demanded.

“What do you want?” one shouted to her, as if this were a psychotic hostage situation.

“Get Frey. Get him now.”

Before she could even get the words out, the doctor stepped forward from behind the crowd with the paperwork orders in hand. Next to the nurse.

“I knew it was you who would pull the switch,” she said, his angular face framed perfectly by the window like a profile photo for the hospital Web page.

“I was the only one who volunteered,” he said, reaching in his lab coat for a key.

She watched as the handle turned slowly upward at a ninety-degree angle to the floor, the latch clicked, and the door gradually opened.

“Just you!” she barked.

He nodded and waved the others off. Frey's expression was impassive but the deliberateness with which he entered told her he was worried, if not frightened. Like an animal catcher approaching its unpredictable, rabid prey. He noted the hot wires and the solution slicking the floor. Billy ran out of the room as Frey entered.

"For a dropout, you're quite resourceful," the doctor said.

"A lot like Sebastian. At least that's what you once told me."

"Yes. Like Sebastian," Frey mused. "He also put up quite a struggle in this room. Maybe better for you and the others if he hadn't. Ever considered that?"

"Before him I was flat on my back. On a stretcher. Downstairs."

"And now you are upstairs."

The doctor's condescending look—one she'd seen before—was galling.

"At least I'm moving in the right direction. Like him. Like Lucy."

"Sebastian is dust. And Lucy is a statue now. Calcified stone. Cold and lifeless. Encased in glass," Frey noted. "It doesn't have to be the same fate for you and your girlfriend Agnes down the hall."

"Right, just as long as I let you fry my memory and rip my soul from me," Cecilia laughed derisively, holding the wires near her temple. "I'd rather die on my feet than live on my knees."

"What a noble quote to use at such a time," Frey said. "Cecilia, haven't you had enough? Let this nonsense go. Renounce it. You can get out of here. I'll even testify at your trial."

"A deal with the devil? How trite, even for a prick like you."

"Look around, my dear. You haven't got many friends. Is it a good idea to alienate the one person who can help you?"

"I'm amazed at how you manage the balancing act between doctor and demon," she scoffed. "You disgust me, but the fact that you've fooled so many people for so long is quite the accomplishment."

"We're all frauds, Cecilia, in one way or another, aren't we?" he rejoined. "The essence of performance. Pretending. All of us."

"How long are you planning to keep me here?"

"Well, the court said I can keep you here as long as it takes. You're an accused murderer after all."

"I didn't kill that kid and you know it."

"That's not what Captain Murphy thinks. Or the prosecutor."

"That was your letter opener sticking out of his chest."

Frey reminded her. "With your fingerprints on it."

"You're a goddamned liar."

"There were witnesses who saw you barge into the hospital and my office. Murphy himself overheard you threatening him in front of Born Again the night Jesse was, ah, injured."

Cecilia remained silent.

"You're a danger to yourself and others," he said. "You're delusional. Diagnosed."

"By you."

"You're lucky. They placed you with the best psychiatric care in the city."

Frey produced a tight, mocking smile.

"So I'm getting out of here never," she spat.

"That depends on you," Frey said. "Besides, the alternative is a lot less . . . pleasant."

"Depends which alternative you mean," Cecilia replied coldly. "Jail or . . ."

Frey sensed a renewed tension in the girl. He stepped closer, bringing the tips of his shoes in contact with the liquid. She leaned over and lowered her arms and the live wires to within a hair of the floor.

"Are you testing me?"

Frey stood, silent. She let both her legs drape down from the bed, letting her feet hang nearly but not quite skimming the floor, about to step down. She held the wires out in front of her delicately as if about to drop them at any second.

"Suicide?" he said skeptically.

"No, murder. You're coming with me."

Cecilia looked at the doctor, waiting for his next move, and was surprised at what she saw behind him.

It was Jude. He was standing right there in the doorway. Shaking his head no. He pointed straight behind her. At the window. Cecilia sat back up and turned toward it. Suddenly she heard the faintest sounds coming up from the street below. Her name. Chanted. Frey remained still unsure of what she might do next. She leaned over toward the window and saw a small crowd gathered. At the main entrance of the hospital. Just a few people. Holding signs and candles. Singing. Speaking her name. She paused for a second and smiled at Jude. He smiled back. She looked outside again and couldn't believe what she was seeing. There he was. He was in two places at once. A sign. Jude, outside with the others, singing.

Cecilia turned off the transformer and dropped the wires on the table. Surrendering herself. A group of orderlies rushed in sensing their opportunity and grabbed her, pulling her toward the doorway. Frey walked to the window and spied the scene below, momentarily disconcerted.

“It’s inevitable,” he said, as much to himself as to her. “Stop fighting. You can’t stop this, Cecilia.”

“They can,” she said pointing at the window. “They will.”

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

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What do you concentrate on book? It is just for students because they are still students or this for all people in the world, the actual best subject for that? Just simply you can be answered for that problem above. Every person has several personality and hobby per other. Don't to be compelled someone or something that they don't desire do that. You must know how great and important the book Hallowed (The Blessed). All type of book is it possible to see on many options. You can look for the internet methods or other social media.

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