

Holy Donuts

Pages: 114

Format: pdf, epub

Language: English

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Holy Donuts, Copyright© 2018 Stacey Coverstone Cover Design by Sheri L. McGathy Layout by www.formatting4U.com All Rights Reserved. This is a work of fiction.

The characters, incidents, places, and dialogues are products of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, business establishments, events or locales, is entirely coincidental. No part of this book may be used, reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the publisher and author. **DEDICATION**To Jen and Shane of Joy Donuts for Inspiring this Story, And to Paul, With Love****In Memory of Aunt Karen, My Own Guardian Angel

Chapter 1After two years of planning, testing recipes, renovating a used food truck, and getting the proper licenses and permits, Dani Walker's dream was coming true. Already hovering in the upper 80s at 7:30 a.m., it would be another sunny Saturday in Central Florida—perfect for the grand opening of *Heavenly Donuts*. Hers was the first donut food truck in town, and from the buzz getting back to her after initial promo blasts, locals were anxious to give her a try. There were a couple of brick and mortar bakeries in town, but they sold only breads, cookies, and cupcakes. Wearing her comfy yoga pants, a T-shirt bearing her logo, clogs, and an apron, Dani iced the last of the freshly made batch of delectable donuts. Her strawberry blonde hair was swept into a ponytail, and it bounced while she bopped to Bruno Mars playing from a CD player sitting on a shelf above the fryer. The truck would be open only on weekends to start, and she'd decided to begin with six flavors until she saw how sales went. Written on the blackboard attached to the outside of the truck were today's offerings: cinnamon sugar, maple dip, chocolate dip, vanilla dip, traditional glazed, and her signature donut—lemon angel food. Light blue cardboard boxes with her *Heavenly Donuts* logo of an angel wearing a donut halo and sitting cross-legged on a cloud were stacked next to the window where she'd take orders. The window would open in 30 minutes, precisely at 8:00 a.m. Hopefully, to a line of hungry people. She turned to take another tray of donuts to the metal cooling rack and—boom! Her feet slipped out from under her. One clog flew off and thumped against the rack. The tray in her hand clattered to the floor, and donuts tumbled through the air. When Dani's petite 5-foot-3-inch body landed with a thud, her head hit the floor and her world went black. When she woke, the light that greeted her was so brilliant and white, she had to squeeze her eyes shut again. "Try opening them slowly," a somewhat familiar voice said. Although feminine, it was husky, like a smoker's voice. "You'll get used to it soon enough." The woman spoke with confidence, as if she was in charge, so Dani did as she was instructed and slowly cracked her eyes open. After blinking a few times, she was able to stop squinting. A woman with chestnut brown hair curling on her shoulders sat in a white chair next to her. She was pretty with smooth skin and mischievous eyes the color of molasses. A small half-inch scar flawed an otherwise flawless cheek. "Cat scratched me when I was a child," the woman said, as if she could read Dani's mind. "Who are you?" Dani asked, attempting to sit up. She realized she was lying on a very soft bed. In fact, it was the most comfortable mattress she'd ever laid on. The woman placed her hand

on Dani's shoulder and gently pushed her down. "Don't try to sit yet. You took a nasty fall. Give yourself a minute." The accident came back to her in a rush. "Yes, I did fall," Dani said, remembering. "I was in my food truck about to open, and I slipped on something, probably oil or icing." She touched the back of her head. "I hit my head, but surprisingly, I don't have a headache." "You should have been more careful, Danielle." The woman lifted an eyebrow. "How do you know me?" Dani asked. Her gaze raked the woman again. She was dressed all in white. "Are you a nurse? Am I in the hospital?" She glanced around the room with its white walls and white ceiling. She was in a white gown as well. "Did someone call 911 and an ambulance brought me? Funny, I can't recall." The woman leaned closer, and Dani thought she smelled divine, like the most fragrant of flowers. "No one called 911, and you're not in the hospital. My name is Karen, and I know everything there is to know about you, Danielle. From the moment you were born until the moment you arrived here. Every detail of your life, it's all written down in my journal." She patted a book wrapped in gold fabric that sat in her lap. "What are you talking about?" Dani wondered if she'd been admitted to the psychiatric ward by mistake. "You see," Karen continued, "when you hit your head, you...died. I'm sorry to blurt it out that way, but I've never been any good at sugar coating things. My mother always told me my mouth would get me in big trouble, and sure enough, she was right." She rolled her eyes. "That's how I ended up here, but that's a story for another time." The breath in Dani's throat caught, and she felt her lungs deflate. "I...died?" Karen nodded. "Yes, that's the bad news, but the good news is that you're in heaven! Well, I take that back. You're not exactly in heaven yet. You're outside the pearly gates in a holding facility." Dani's head shot off the pillow. She bolted upright and swung her feet over the side of the bed. "I don't know who you are, but if this is your idea of a joke, it's not funny." She felt a shiver spiral down her back. "I'd like to speak to your superior, please." "Unfortunately, He's difficult to reach," Karen replied. "Difficult or not, I'd still like to speak to him." "Sorry. I can't oblige." "Why not?" "As I just told you, He's in great demand. Very busy." "Too busy to hear a complaint about one of his nurses?" Karen nodded. "Yes, too busy, but as I said, I'm not a nurse. Never could stand the sight of blood." She made a face like she was gagging. Dani's brows pinched together. "Who is your boss anyway? What's his position here?" Karen angled her head. "Well, He started by creating the heavens and the earth. Nowadays, He listens to everyone's prayers and decides how and when He's going to answer them. Every minute of every day, He helps mankind through hard times, blesses them with what they need, guides them in correcting their wayward paths, and lifts them up when they fall. As you can imagine, He never gets a good night's sleep." Her eyes lifted upward. "Comprende?" Dani looked up at the ceiling. "You mean your boss is..." She stopped mid-sentence, and her mouth dropped open. Karen nodded. "You're getting the picture now." Dani slumped back against the silk headboard. "So, you *are* telling the truth. I really am dead?" "I can't lie," Karen confessed. "It's against the rules." She gave Dani an understanding smile. "I know it's a shock right now, but you'll soon find that life here is very good. In fact, it's perfect. There's no sickness or pain. No anger or jealousy. No sorrow or fear. Only a warm and loving light to bathe in for all eternity." "That sounds nice," Dani admitted, "but I'm only thirty years old. I had big plans for my life. Today was the first day of making my dreams come true by starting my own business. I'm not married yet. I don't even have a steady guy. I hoped to have a family someday." She felt on the verge of tears. "Your feelings are perfectly normal, but trust me, it won't take long for you to realize that your dreams have already come true. You've led the kind of life that would get you into heaven. You have your parents to thank for guiding you down that path." Dani sniffled at the mention of her parents. "That's right, but I'm far from perfect. I've faced a lot of challenges and sometimes made mistakes, but I've done my best." After processing everything for a few moments, she glanced around and said, "Are my mom and dad here?" Karen smiled. "They're in heaven, yes. But remember, you're in the holding facility. You'll get to see them when the time is right. Your grandparents, too, and all your other loved ones who've passed over." Dani's heart pounded with anticipation. It had been five long years since her dad succumbed to cancer, and her mom left her unexpectedly last year. She was an only child; they'd been a close family and she'd missed her folks terribly. "How long before I leave this holding facility and go through the pearly gates?" "You'll have to pass one test before that happens. If you're successful, you'll become a full-fledged angel

and I'll escort you through the pearly gates myself." "Why you?" "Because I'm your guardian angel. I've been with you your entire life, since before you were even born. It'll be my duty and privilege to accompany you into heaven." Flashing before her eyes like scenes from a movie were all the events in Dani's life when she'd faced a crossroad—of having to choose between right and wrong. Again, it seemed Karen could read her mind. "Remember all those times when you thought you heard a voice whisper in your ear to do the right thing? That was me." No wonder her voice sounded so familiar. Dani felt her cheeks flush. "I didn't always make the right decision, though." "No, you didn't, because you were human experiencing life and all its ups and downs. The important thing is that you did more good than harm to those around you. Life sometimes gave you lemons, but you made lemonade, as they say. Because of your ability to stay on the straight and narrow path, despite some trials and tribulations, you scored points with you know who." Again, her gaze lifted upward. Dani felt proud. "I miss my parents and would like to see them as soon as possible. When do I take that test?" On cue, bells began to softly chime, filling the room with beautiful music. Karen stood. "Excuse me, Danielle." Her gown swished around her legs as she strode to the wall and put her ear against what looked to be an intercom speaker. After listening for a moment, she said, "I understand. Thank you." She walked back to the bed and clapped her hands together. "Your assignment has come through!" **Chapter 2** "That was fast." "We don't waste any time around here. Efficiency is next to godliness." "I thought cleanliness was next to godliness." "That, too." Karen crossed her arms over her chest. "Do you want to hear about your assignment or make jokes?" "Sorry." Dani nodded. "Yes, I want to hear. Where am I going? What will I need to do?" Now that she'd, more or less, accepted the result of her fatal injury, she wanted to get on with that test, so she could leave the holding facility and be with her loved ones for eternity. "Will I be ironing angel gowns, or working in the kitchen? Since you know all about me, you know I can cook." Suddenly, something struck her. Ever since she'd decided to open her food truck, she'd known the name of her business would be *Heavenly Donuts*. It came to her in a dream one night. Even stranger was that her signature donut was lemon angel food. Were those coincidences? Karen allowed her no time to contemplate further. "We don't eat here," Karen said. "That's how I maintain my girlish figure, despite my advanced age." "Oh." Dani frowned, thinking how she was going to miss eating, especially her own delicious donuts. "You're very pretty. How old are you?" she dared to inquire. Karen tsk tsked her. "You know better than to ask a lady her age or weight." She cupped her hand around her mouth and whispered, "I died when I was forty, but that was many moons ago. I've been in the triple digits for ages." When Dani's eyes enlarged, Karen planted her hands on her hips and laughed huskily. "I look pretty good for someone Benjamin Franklin tried to court, don't you think?" Dani nodded, unable to utter a response. "Back to business," Karen said. "Your assignment is very important, and time is of the essence, so listen carefully. You're going back to earth and to the exact moment right before you slipped and fell in your truck." "I am?" This was not what Dani expected. "You are. There are people who need your help desperately. Your mission is to help them reconnect with each other, so they can resolve their troubles and move toward happy and fulfilled lives." Dani's interest was piqued while, at the same time, it seemed a heavy burden that she felt unqualified to shoulder. "I'm a bank teller with a passion for making donuts. Wouldn't a counselor or psychiatrist be more equipped for this kind of assignment?" Karen waved off her doubts. "You'll do fine, Danielle. Now, there are three rules to remember while you're back on earth. Rule number one. Don't tell anyone about your 'situation.'" She made air quotes with her fingers. "You mean the 'situation' where I've died, but I'm being sent back to earth by an angel to accomplish a secret mission?" Dani also made air quotes. "If I told that story, the men in white coats would lock me in the looney bin and throw away the key." "You've watched too much television," Karen admonished, shaking her head. "And this assignment is not exactly secret. Rule number two. All your focus must be on the people you're there to help. Your wishes and desires are no longer relevant." Disappointment flooded Dani's veins. She'd only just begun to fulfill her dream. "Rule number three," Karen said. "This is a big one. Do not get emotionally attached to your clients. It will only end badly for all involved. Any questions?" "Yes! Who are these people, and what's their problem? How long will I stay on earth?" "Everything will become clear soon enough." Karen grasped Dani's hands. "Ready to go?" "What? Right now? No.

Wait a minute." Her pulse began to accelerate. "Bye, bye. Have a nice trip." When something feeling like a low volt of electricity shot through Dani's hands, Karen released them, and Dani heard a whoosh, like she was being sucked into a vacuum. Her world went black again, but from somewhere far away, she heard Karen's distant voice say, "I'm always with you." When she opened her eyes, Dani was standing inside her truck holding a tray of fresh-baked donuts. The watch on her wrist read 7:30 a.m. The CD player was still on and Bruno Mars was still singing. She turned, and instead of slipping on something slick on the floor, she walked to the metal rack without incident. She glanced at her clothes and was relieved to see she no longer wore a white gown. She was back in her yoga pants, T-shirt, and apron. "Wow. What just happened? Was that all a horrible nightmare?" "It was no nightmare," a deep voice whispered in her ear. Dani jumped, expecting to see her guardian angel standing behind her. Although she couldn't see her, Dani felt her presence. "Okay, Karen. Thank you for clearing that up." She inhaled a deep breath and shook her head in disbelief. After she attended to last-minute details and readied to open the truck window, Dani's heart pounded out a staccato. When 8:00 quickly rolled around, she pushed up the window and was shocked to see a line at least 30 people deep in front of her truck and more cars parking. As she welcomed each guest with a genuine smile, she couldn't help but feel proud for accomplishing her goal, especially when her customers complimented the logo she'd designed and told her how excited they were to try her donuts. All of them wished her well. However, the heavenly assignment she'd been tasked with niggled in the back of her mind. Life as she knew it would be over once her mission was completed. It was still a bit difficult to comprehend.

This novella is a short read and can be read in 2 hours or less.

It's a dream come true when Dani Walker opens the first donut food truck in her Central Florida town. Unfortunately, that dream is cut short with a slip and fall accident that lands her just outside the Pearly Gates. To learn that she has died is a great disappointment. But once the shock wears off, Dani is anxious to be reunited with her departed loved ones. It's explained, however, that she must first complete an important assignment before being escorted into heaven.

Under the guidance of her feisty guardian angel, Karen, Dani is whisked back to earth with three rules to follow and a vague description of the mission she's been tasked with.

After meeting the father and daughter who desperately need help, the task becomes even more complicated when romantic sparks fly. While Dani is reminded of the life and love she could have had, Karen encourages her to keep her eye on the donut and not on the hole.

Will Dani earn her halo and become a full-fledged angel? Or will Divine Intervention change the course of her life once more?

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