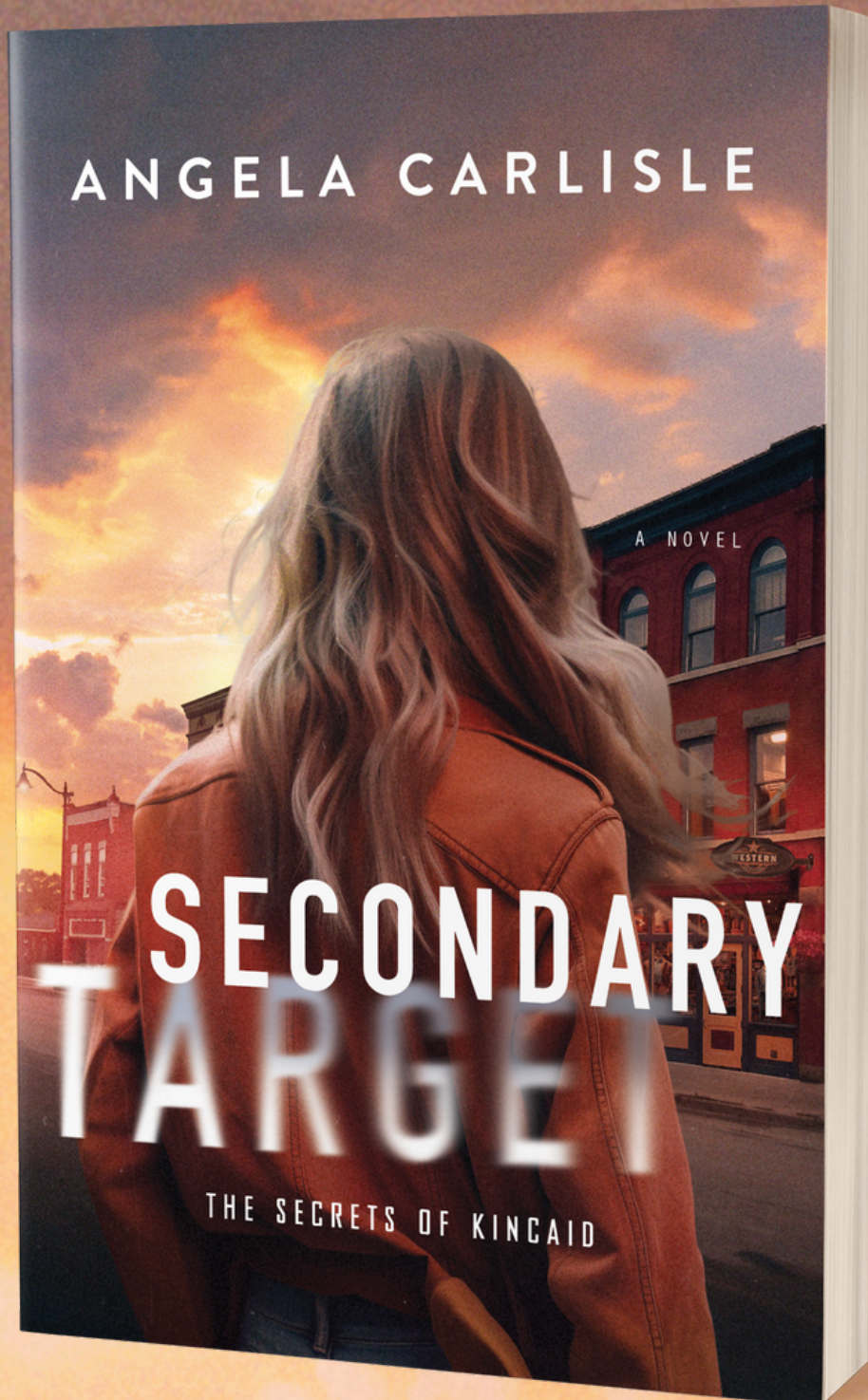
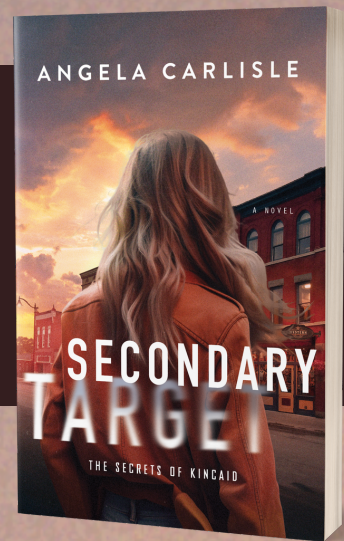


BOOK CLUB GUIDE



FROM THE AUTHOR



Dear Book Club Coordinator,

Thank you for considering *Secondary Target* for your book club choice. These characters have been a part of my life for years, and I'm excited that others can finally enjoy Bryce and Corina's story.

Nearly a decade ago, an evening conversation followed by a vivid dream sparked the idea for *Secondary Target*—the story of a young woman whose life had completely changed after a death she felt responsible for. I wasn't a writer at the time, but I was an avid reader, and I knew something about stories. This idea had potential, and it latched on tight. What was I to do but put it on paper?

As a by-the-seat-of-my-pants writer, I did a lot of my research as I went, and I may have given Corina a few of my quirks—like being known for her ever-present cowboy boots (I mean, what else is a transplanted Texan supposed to wear?). And some of the minor mishaps mentioned in the book, like unfortunate ingredient substitutions, may or may not have been rooted in real-life experiences. . . .

Secondary Target is far different than I first envisioned it, but a few core elements remain. It's a story about second chances, friendship, grief, and trusting God even when life goes sideways. While I endeavored to give readers the edge-of-your-seat thrill of an engaging suspense, I also hope they'll come away knowing they aren't alone and that there is hope and healing even in the darkest places.

I hope you enjoy reading this story as much as I enjoyed writing it.

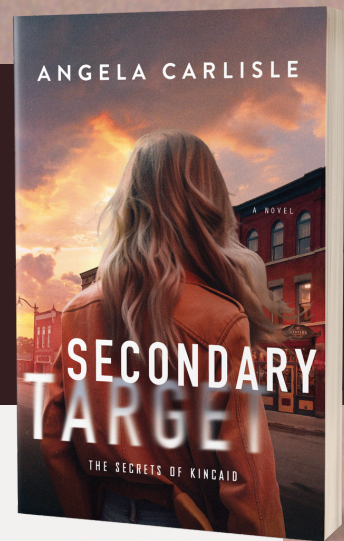
♥
Angela

Angela

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DELETED SCENE



Four months later

“A little to the left. Hold it right . . . there.” The clicks of Allye’s camera came in rapid succession. “Perfect.” She quirked an eyebrow when Corina didn’t move. “You can breathe now.”

Corina grinned and let her shoulders relax, then stuck her tongue out when her friend snapped another picture. Allye laughed, the sound mirroring the lightness in her own heart. She’d expected to feel nervous today, but she only felt peace and a joyful anticipation. She would begin her future with Bryce in less than an hour.

Neither of them had wanted an elaborate ceremony. They’d kept the guest list to family and a few close friends, and the wedding party to a minimum. Eric would stand up with Bryce, Allye with her. And her dad—Corina was still just glad he’d recovered enough to come.

“All right. I think we’ve covered all the shots I had planned.”

“And then some,” Corina said, lips twitching. Allye rolled her eyes but didn’t argue. Despite being the maid of honor, she had insisted on taking all of the prewedding photos she wasn’t in herself, and she wasn’t taking that duty lightly. Corina didn’t really mind. Teasing aside, she had the utmost confidence in her abilities and in the fact that her friend knew both her and Bryce well enough to choose the poses they would consider most meaningful.

“Is there anything we missed?” Allye asked.

“Just the locket pose.”

Allye nodded and began adjusting the settings on her camera while Corina tugged the heart-shaped locket free of her neckline and stared at it a moment. Her mom had worn it on her wedding day, but until last night, Corina had assumed it had been lost years ago. Her dad had slipped it to her in a box after the rehearsal dinner with the instruction not to open it until she was alone. Good advice since she’d burst into tears when she saw it. She had no idea he had been saving it for her all these years. She cried again when she saw what he’d had placed inside.



Allye cleared her throat, and Corina inclined her head toward her friend. “Do you need me to do anything in particular?”

“No, you just keep . . . doing what you’re doing. I’ll move around you to get the best shots.”

With a deep breath, Corina fingered the locket open. She looked first at the smiling faces of her mom and brother and ran her thumb over the miniature. “I miss you two so much,” she whispered. “I hope you’re watching.”

She let her gaze linger on them a moment longer before turning her attention to the other half of the locket, where Derryck’s boyish face grinned back at her. She resisted the urge to chew on her lower lip. She still missed Bryce and Allye’s little brother. Missed his kid-brother attitude, his ability to con anyone into doing anything, his sense of fairness that kept him from misusing that skill—most of the time.

As Allye moved around her, zooming in and out, she let herself remember the good times. The simple days with Colton and their parents in Texas. The years after when friendship with the Jessup siblings had kept her from feeling alone in her new world. They’d created so many good memories together before tragedy struck. In the past few months, she’d finally realized she couldn’t let the bad eclipse the good. None of the people she’d lost would have wanted that.

She sighed. “You know, while talking things through with my grief counselor, I remembered something from the accident.”

The camera stopped clicking. She could feel Allye’s gaze on her.

“All the times I relived that day in my nightmares—all the times the memories tried to crowd in on me—I always shut down when I saw Derryck. When I saw the —” She couldn’t bring herself to say *blood* even now. She swallowed, her eyes misting. “But he didn’t die on impact.”

Allye slowly lowered her camera and let it hang from the strap around her neck. “We knew that,” she said softly. “He told you to tell us good-bye. That he’d see us later.”

She nodded. “But he said something else too. That he was looking forward to being my brother.” A tear slipped from her eye.

Allye put her hands on Corina’s shoulders and turned her to completely face her. Tears shimmered in her eyes too, but she blinked them back. “Today he will be.” She pulled her into a quick hug. “Now”—she reached for a tissue and dabbed at Corina’s face—“no more crying until we get you down that aisle.”



Thirty minutes later, it was time.

Allye poked her head outside the small room they'd gotten ready in. "Coast is clear." She moved around Corina and lifted her train in one hand. "Ready when you are."

Picking up her simple bouquet of daisies and yellow roses, Corina took a deep breath and stepped into the hall adjoining the church's foyer. Music filtered through the closed doors leading to the sanctuary.

Her dad waited at the end in his wheelchair, Eric beside him. Why was he still back here? He should be up front with Bryce like they'd practiced.

Her dad reached a hand toward her. "Come here and let me get a good look at you." He smiled as she moved in front of him. "I'm so proud of you."

She grinned, but before she could respond, the music changed to the processional, and someone flung the sanctuary doors open. Her dad drew in a breath and looked at the officer by his side. "Eric?"

With a quick but gentle movement, Eric slipped a hand beneath his arm and hefted him to his feet.

Corina gasped. "What are you doing?"

"I can't let my little girl walk down that aisle by herself." He swayed a bit with the final words, and Eric reached out to steady him again.

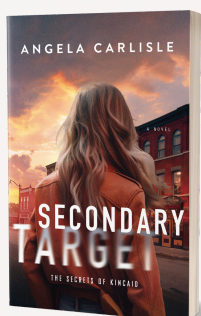
Tears filled her eyes. "Dad, are you sure you're up to it?"

He scowled at her. "Positive. We've been working on this for weeks." He waved a hand at Eric and Allye. "You two better go before your music runs out."

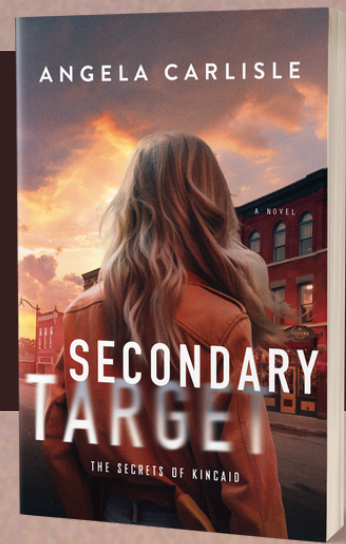
As her friends started toward the front of the church, Corina let her dad take her arm. They carefully made their way to the sanctuary's entrance as the processional drew to a close. Her heartbeat doubled as her song began.

Her dad cleared his throat and glanced down at her. "You ready for this, baby girl?"

She looked ahead to see Bryce's beaming face. Their eyes met, and her smile felt like it was splitting her face. She squeezed her dad's hand and took the first step. "More than ready."



DISCUSSION GUIDE



1. Will chose to hide the truth from Corina about the danger to their family when she was a teenager. What would you do as a parent in this type of situation?
2. Corina's father moved them to a middle-of-nowhere town to hide from the man trying to kill them. If you ever had to relocate secretly, what type of location would you choose? Why?
3. Corina coped with her grief over Derryck's death by isolating herself from relationships; Bryce fled the situation entirely. How could they have worked through their grief in positive ways instead?
4. Even though it wasn't the same as it used to be, Allye refused to let her friendship with Corina die when Corina attempted to pull away from everyone. What do you think makes a loyal friend?
5. Corina's stalker had grown bitter in his grief and hoped that avenging his loved ones would bring him peace. Although very few people go to this extreme, many do become bitter after significant loss. In what ways can bitterness harm a person and those around them?
6. Corina says that God left when Bryce did. What does the Bible say about God's faithfulness to believers?



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