

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

WICKED
Delicious

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EVANS

ELLORA'S CAVE
Quickies

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Wicked Delicious

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WICKED DELICIOUS

Anna J. Evans

Chapter One

Demon's breath, but this guy was a big one. I cursed myself for choosing only one slice of Key Lime Delight from the dessert cart. I was going to need another. Hell, I might need the whole damn pie.

"I've been waiting all night to sit down across from you," he said, his dark brown eyes full of male appreciation as he angled his athlete's body into the chair across from mine.

I clearly noted the slight whiteness around his left ring finger, a sign that a ring usually rested there, blocking out the sun. Not tonight. Tonight Ray was playing a part and perhaps even choosing his next victim. Three girls were dead. All three had attended a speed-dating event two to three weeks before they were murdered.

The police had probably made the connection even if the desperate, mate-seeking public had not. I certainly suspected this was where the man had been choosing his prey, but I wasn't here to catch a killer. I was here to snag a meal and, boy oh boy, if this man wasn't going to provide that in spades. Adultery was only the beginning. The air was thick with his wickedness. My mouth watered with anticipation.

It took control to wait, to allow my little slice of pie to absorb as much of his sinful aura as possible before I lifted my fork.

"You're the only woman in this room worth spending ten minutes with."

"Only ten minutes?" I grinned, and wrapped a strand of long black hair around my finger. I fiddled with my silverware, knowing I appeared nervous, unsure of myself.

I wasn't, I was starving. It made me jumpier than usual. A week on a small island off the coast of Greece, shooting a swimsuit layout for a prestigious men's magazine had nearly killed me. The inhabitants of the island had all been so relentlessly good—kind, gracious, loyal and forgiving to a fault. I'd been forced to snack on the petty

disobedience of teenagers sneaking out after dark, pushing their mopeds to the end of the drive before gunning them to life and racing down to meet friends for some fun on the pristine white beaches. Mostly *innocent* fun.

The memory was enough to make me shudder. I was more grateful than I could express to be back in New York City, seconds away from a banquet. I needed this badly and damn if I wasn't going to enjoy it.

"Perhaps more than ten minutes." He grinned, a confident twist of the lips. The smile of a man successful in all of his endeavors. He paused, took a long look at my nametag, lingering on the curve of my breast. "Why don't you tell me more about yourself, C.J. You're a model, correct?"

I nodded. "I just got back from a shoot yesterday. We spent a week on a Greek island, but it's good to be home." I speared a tiny sliver of pie and moved it slowly, deliberately between my lips. I nearly moaned as the sin exploded on my tongue, tart and fierce, enough to sustain me for nearly a week in that one tiny bite.

This guy was the one the NYPD were looking for, there was little doubt left in my mind. The only time I'd ever experienced sin like this was when I'd worked briefly as the secretary to the head of a non-profit organization, a man responsible for diverting funds meant to provide healthcare for needy children into his own private bank account. He'd used the money to pay for young male prostitutes—many of them pre-pubescent boys—on his many business trips. He'd also beaten his wife and small daughter, leaving his marks carefully so as never to be seen by his high-profile associates.

I'd eventually quit the job, no matter how rich and regular the food. Even a sinner had a limit, a point at which the flagrancy of the sin became an impediment to enjoyment of the meal. It wasn't something I admitted to anyone else or, many times, even to myself. It went against my nature to have such thoughts, such...compassion.

Shuddering again, I turned more attention to my pie, too hungry to allow anything so weak minded to impede my nourishment.

"I've seen your work. You're very expressive, more so than most girls your age."

Girls my age. He thought I was a great deal younger than the twenty-seven years I owned in this mortal identity. He enjoyed the thought that he was with a much younger woman compared to his own forty-three years, a clean, pure thing he would soon defile. It made his cock thicken, to think of my pale, perfect skin being marked forever by his hands, so much so that, for the first time, he wondered if he should let me live. If the excitement of a living testimony to his work wouldn't be even better than the report of her death.

His thoughts, his desires, flowed into me as I quickly speared two more bites of my dessert, my lips curling into a smile.

"Really? You think so?" I lifted one perfectly arched eyebrow and leaned forward, deliberately treating him to a peek down the front of my wraparound dress. His desire, tinged with a hint of blood lust, washed over my plate until my food practically glowed with it.

"I don't say things I don't mean, C.J. No lies from me, and no lies from you." His voice grew harder, more commanding, testing me to see if I was truly the girl he had been looking for. He needed someone who enjoyed being dominated, who could play the typical submissive to his Dominant for a few weeks before he twisted the relationship into a thing of terror. "That's rule number one. Do you understand?"

"Completely, Mr. Carter," I muttered breathlessly, my hand shaking as I licked the last bit of crust from my fork and motioned for the waiter to bring me another slice of pie.

"Didn't get enough to eat during dinner?" he asked indulgently, pleased with my deferential response.

"Not at all, nothing as delicious as this." I smiled at him, hesitantly, making sure my deep green eyes were filled with nothing but adoration, appreciation and just the slightest bit of fear.

"Well don't eat too much. That would be bad for business in a career field like yours." He motioned to the waiter who delivered my pie, signaling that he wouldn't be finishing his own untouched caramel cheesecake.

I watched the dessert being carried away with a hint of despair. All that lovely sin, going to waste when there were starving lower-demons right here in this very room. I wasn't the only sin-eater in *Marcelo's*. I had noticed at least one other as I dropped my cloak in the coatroom. One of the managers of the establishment. He was a male, however, so there would be no competition for territory between us. Our kind only fed from the opposite sex.

"Besides, I prefer very thin women. I wouldn't want to see too much more meat on those lovely bones," he continued.

Lovely bones. The phrased echoed in my mind, along with images of what this man would do to me if given the chance. For a brief moment I felt ill, and my pie roiled uncomfortably in my stomach. Ray was almost too much, a meal so heavy my body rebelled against the richness, elevating my heart rate like the steak and red wine had done to the older, less physically fit men here this evening.

The supernatural world considered *my* kind monstrous. Sometimes I wondered what they would think if they could get a peek into the mind of man like Ray.

"In fact, perhaps you should put that fork down," he commanded.

I hesitated, and considered disobeying his order, preventing any chance of a future meeting.

"Now, C.J." His tone was hard, brittle and his dark eyes were as fearsome in that instant as any devil dancing in the pale moonlight.

I sighed. I was probably going to have to kill him. There would be no rest from that irritatingly gentle voice in my mind until I did so. But not yet, not until he'd helped me regain the weight I'd lost in Greece, all fifteen pounds of it.

Damn what he preferred, I preferred a bit of flesh on my *lovely* bones.

"Of course." I put down my fork, and even managed a regretful smile when the bell rang, signaling it was time for Ray to move on to his final table of the night. He winked and gave me his card, which I slipped into my purse. He was obviously pleased with how the tense moment between us had ended.

"Call me tonight, thirty minutes after the function has ended if you want to remain a subject of interest." His tone was confident. He knew I would call. They all called. Women couldn't resist his looks, his money, his power. He was so certain of his conquest that he stood slowly, allowing the napkin to fall from his lap, revealing the monstrous erection that tented the front of his pants.

This could be yours if you're a good girl, his look seemed to say before he took his elegant coat and held it casually in front of his hips, moving on to the next and final table without a backward glance.

I rolled my eyes and belched lightly behind my hand. Nothing like a pompous asshole overly impressed with his own dick to inspire another fit of indigestion.

"Finally," a deep, amused voice sounded from across the table. "You're the first woman tonight with the sense God gave a street rat."

"Excuse me?" I asked, turning to look up, up, up at the man pulling out the chair Ray had just vacated. Irritation immediately turned to shock as I met the eyes of what was, without a doubt, the most appealing man I'd ever laid eyes on.

"You looked like you were about to lose your dessert." Gabe, according to his nametag, smiled again, bright blue eyes crinkled at the edges, just enough wrinkle to make it clear he was an older man with an older man's experience.

He had lived and learned a few things along the way, and made use of every last bit of that earthly education. Gabe was nobody's fool. He was good at reading situations and even better at reading people. Still the shocked expression on my face must have made him rethink his first assessment for a moment.

"Or is the Key Lime Delight just not as good as it looks?" he asked, sitting down carefully, as if he would go if I asked him to.

"No, the pie is to die for," I said, the first real laugh of the night slipping from my lips.

"I thought so. I'm going to have a piece if you don't mind. You want another?"

I nodded yes, despite the fact I sensed I'd be ingesting no more than sugar and lime as long as I shared a table with this man. He radiated goodness, a fact that usually would have caused me to lose interest immediately. But for some reason I was captivated, intrigued in a way even the other handsome men here this evening had failed to inspire.

He motioned to the waiter and ordered another piece of pie for us both. As he did I tried to discern what it was about him that was so damn appealing. He was gorgeous, yes, but despite the stunning blue eyes, not in a showy way. His short, nearly buzz-cut sandy blond hair was rather uninspiring and his skin paler than I preferred. I placed him near forty, despite the fact that his body would put any gym rat to shame. In fact, the way his dark blue jeans clung to his thick legs had awakened appetites I hadn't expected to be wetted this evening. Just looking at the large, strong hand he now stretched across the table made things low in my body clench.

What was it about a man's forearms that was so alluring?

"Gabe McIntyre," he said, that smile in place that warmed me to my toes.

"C.J. Lucious," I replied, grasping the hand, trying not to moan at the sizzle of awareness that raced between us.

Suddenly my skin felt too small. My body itched, burned to be free of my dress. Sweater material in March in New York City was not usually a foolish choice. It was still cold outside, and the restaurant wasn't known for blasting the heat. Marcelo, the owner, was an obese Italian man who didn't take kindly to anything but sub-zero temperatures. I'd been chilly before, but now...

Now fire licked at my skin, surged through my veins, rushed from the restless place between my legs until it was difficult to remember the reasons why I couldn't move around the table to perch upon Gabe's knee. The reasons why I couldn't pin that thick

thigh between my legs and ride the muscled flesh while Gabe's dark pink lips kissed down my throat, parted my dress and bared my breasts to his teeth and tongue.

"Jesus," he muttered, pulling his hand quickly away.

His eyes were wide and confused. I instinctively knew it wasn't a look he wore often. Evidently I wasn't the only one who had nearly been electrocuted by the force of the attraction between us. Of course, I was also shocked—much less pleasantly I might add—by his invocation of *that* name. Random acts of guilty conscience aside, I was a lesser demon, a sin-eater, and the mention of the Son of God was not pleasing to my ears.

Not pleasing at all. My stomach churned with complaint as the waiter set our desserts before us.

"Static electricity. Crazy stuff this time of year," Gabe said, an awareness in those blue eyes that made it clear he knew static had nothing to do with the pull between us.

He was a good man, surprisingly good, I realized, when not a drop of sinful energy made its way from his aura to my slice of Key Lime Delight. But he was no angel. He was interested in me, curious to see if my skin was as pale and perfect beneath my clothes, to know how I would respond as he made love to me. He envisioned my eyes sliding closed as he moved between my legs.

"Yes, crazy," I replied, breathless from my glimpse into his carnal thoughts.

I might have to give Gabe another chance, despite his goodness and mention of the "J" word. He was Irish by the sound of it, and they tended to be relentlessly Catholic. He'd probably been raised by a woman who invoked the name of the heavenly father, the virgin mother and her son ten times a day. I could, however, take the time to break him of the habit. It would be worth it, I suspected. It had been so long since a man had interested me in this way.

So long, in fact, that I felt awkward, unsure how to proceed.

"So...Gabe, what do you do?" I asked, wincing at how foolish I sounded. I was a supernatural creature of the night, nearly seventy-five years old, but I was behaving like a virgin on her first date. It was ridiculous, stupid...and intoxicating.

I took a sip of my coffee, hoping to hide the blush that heated my cheeks.

"I'm in law enforcement," he said, grin widening as he watched my flush creep up my neck to stain my pale skin.

He thought I was adorable, a beautiful, intelligent woman who still had the ability to be flustered by her response to a man. Perhaps he had been wrong in his first impression, when he'd glanced my way while I sat across from the cocky bastard in the business suit and sensed an overwhelming despair hovering around me. Surely a woman possessed by depression and suicidal thoughts couldn't look at him with eyes that made his cock thicken to the point of pain.

A sick, broken woman had never been a type he found attractive. It sure as hell hadn't been the type that could make his chest ache, make his heart jump in his chest, screaming out that he'd found her, the one he'd been looking for in the ten lonely years since his first wife had died in the line of duty for the NYPD.

Hell, he was halfway in love with me already, and he didn't even know what I did for a living, what I liked to eat other than Key Lime Delight, whether or not my skin felt as soft as it looked. But that didn't bother him. It had been like that with Katie. He'd just *known* she was the one for him, from the first moment they'd met, no matter how vehemently she'd assured him she wasn't at all the type he was looking for. Katie Devlin had been meant to be his wife, and he'd loved her more than anything in the world.

But now Katie was gone, had been gone for a long time. Now, maybe, just maybe, C.J. Lucious was meant to be his. It wasn't at all what he'd thought to find here tonight, when he'd booked his place in—

"Excuse me," I mumbled, closing my eyes and bringing my hands up to cover my face for a brief moment, blocking his thoughts from mine as best as I was able.

Katie Devlin. His late wife had been a sin-eater, there was no doubt in my mind, the name was a dead giveaway.

Only one kind of man could win a lesser demon for wife, only one breed could steal away the passion for sin, the thrill of feeding from the wickedness of man. There was only one sort capable of convincing a creature born in evil to shun all that had come before, to turn their back on their very nature and repent, trading immortality for a mortal life and a mortal love.

Gabe McIntyre wasn't just a good man, he was a fucking Saint.

And I wanted no part of him.

"I'm not interested," I said, hard and blunt, making my contempt clear in every word. I was up and out of my chair, running toward the door before Gabe could say a word.

Out on the street, I realized I had forgotten my cloak, but I didn't turn back. The cold no longer bothered me. Now the chill air was welcome, just what I needed to clear my mind and banish the desire aroused by a man who gave new meaning to the phrase Mr. Wrong.

Chapter Two

Gabe bolted out of his chair and through the doors of the restaurant, knowing she'd headed left down toward Third Avenue though there was no sign of her on the cold, windy street. She was giving off that vibe again, the one that said she was near death from despair. It hung in the air, a trail of breadcrumbs he followed without thinking twice. Even if she never wanted to see him again, even if he'd been wrong about the connection between them, he had to follow her. There was no other choice.

He'd only felt this level of soul emptiness twice before. Once when he'd met Katie, a drug dealer he'd pulled in off the streets of Spanish Harlem and later lost his heart to. The other was a teenaged girl on the Upper West Side, a victim of sexual abuse who had leapt to her death from the top of her family's exclusive apartment building, just when he'd nearly been close enough to pull her back from the edge. It still made his heart ache to think of that kid's hopeless face, her eyes closing for the last time as she stepped calmly backward and tumbled into the void.

On the chance that C.J. was truly suicidal, he couldn't allow bruised pride to make his decisions for him. She might not be interested, but *he* was. He was interested in keeping her safe from herself, even if he never got the chance to explore the attraction between them, never got to feed that marrow-deep hunger that had made him ache to claim her right there in the restaurant.

"Get it together, McIntyre." Gabe slowed to a walk, cursing as he tried to talk his body down from a state of immediate, obvious arousal.

His hard-on would be obvious even through the thick denim. He had to get control before he followed C.J. down the narrow alleyway a few feet ahead. She was hiding in the semi-darkness there, he felt it in his gut, his detective's instincts kicking in the same way they had when he'd arrived at *Marcelo's* tonight.

His murderer was one of the men still finishing their coffee and dessert back at the restaurant, there was no doubt in his mind. That wasn't going to lead to an arrest, however. At least not right away. He was going to have to do a little digging into each man's life, his habits. See which of them were repeat customers, who had the time and opportunity to carve up a bunch of young women. It wasn't a job that was going to get done tonight, no matter how determined he was to put a stop to the monster before he killed again.

This situation with C.J. however, might be resolved in the next few hours. The thought propelled him forward, around the corner.

Sometimes all it took to bring a person back from the brink was a sign that someone gave a damn. In a cold city filled with oftentimes colder people, human souls could take quite a beating. Thankfully, however, Gabe had a gift for patching up those souls, a gift he was determined to use to benefit the lovely, haunted woman huddled against the bricks, sobbing into the hands pressed tightly to her face.

"C.J., it's Gabe," he said, using his gentlest voice, not wanting to frighten her.

"Leave me alone," she moaned, her words muffled by her hands. She didn't seem surprised to hear his voice, but she sure as hell didn't seem pleased either.

"I'm not here to bother you. I'm here to help."

"I don't want your help." She still hid her face from him.

"Listen, C.J., you're obviously upset. I'm a police officer, I have training in—"

"Go away!"

"I will, just let me see your face. Let's talk for a second and I'll leave. I just want to make sure you're okay," Gabe said, walking slowly closer, as if approaching a wounded animal. Her breathing slowed a bit, a sign he hoped meant she was calming down. "I only want to help you, C.J. I only want to help."

She dropped her hands, lifting tear free emerald green eyes to his. Her mouth twisted in a wry grin. "Oh, I'm sure you do," she said, the words full of darker

meaning. Then she laughed, a nearly silent fit of giggles that made her shoulders shake once more.

She hadn't been crying, she'd been laughing.

For some reason, the knowledge did nothing to soothe the hairs rising on the back of his neck, his body's instinctual response that something wasn't right.

"I do, I honestly do. There are no ulterior motive here," he said, smiling back at her, holding his hands out, palms open, a sign he had nothing to hide.

"You just couldn't resist the challenge, could you? Your sweet soul just couldn't leave me well enough alone." She shook her head back and forth and pressed more tightly to the bricks behind her, cowering away from Gabe in a way that made him stop his advance immediately.

"C.J., I'm not —"

"Well you shouldn't have bothered. I'm not so easily rescued, Gabe." She spat his name like a curse, a filthy thing she didn't want to hold in her mouth too long. "I'm not in the market for salvation."

"That doesn't make much sense, if you don't mind me —"

"I told you I'm not interested. How much more direct do I need to be?" Her voice rose hysterically, echoing against the bricks.

"I didn't follow you based on any personal interest," he said, a hint of anger rising within him. "I followed you because you seemed more upset than was rational based on a few minutes of polite conversation over pie and coffee."

"Rational? What the hell do you know about rational? You, Gabriel, are a fool." She laughed, a short bark of sound that ended in a gasp for air.

"Why am I a fool? Why don't you tell me, C.J.?" He moved closer, deliberately allowing his energy to invade her space.

"Get away from me. I don't go in for your type."

"My type? What do you know about my type?" Gabe was truly angry now, a phenomenon rare enough to disturb him. He would have stepped back, retreated, if she hadn't spoken again.

"I know you're one of the good guys."

"Is there something wrong with that?"

"I don't get off on sweetness and light, Mr. McIntyre. So why don't you take your clean soul and your good intentions and shove them up your ass?"

"Because *I* don't get off on shoving things up my ass," he said, voice even, calm, though what he was about to say made him more than a little nervous, "but if you do, I'd happily oblige."

"What?" she asked, though it wasn't confusion he read in those green eyes. No, it was something a lot more interesting. His gamble had paid off.

"I certainly wouldn't judge you. I'm very open-minded when it comes to making love." Gabe stepped closer, and braced his palms on either side of her head, trapping her in place. He watched with satisfaction as her eyes grew even wider, her breath came faster, and her nipples drew tight beneath her dress. "I touch you anywhere you wanted to be touched, fulfill every fantasy you ever —"

"A man like you wouldn't know how to fuck me properly if he had four hands and an instruction manual," she said, even as she brought her hands up to his arms, delicate fingers curling around his biceps in a gesture that was more a caress than a bid for freedom.

"I'll take that bet," Gabe said, bending his arms until his lips were a whisper away from hers.

"Let me go." Her eyes slid closed and a soft moan escaped her full lips. "What bet? I didn't make you a bet of any kind."

Raw need rippled from her in waves. Gabe could practically feel how she ached for someone to take her, to banish her fear and sorrow in the bliss of skin sliding against

skin. His cock grew even harder in response, and in that moment he knew they were going to do things to each other in this alley that could get them arrested if they were caught.

He was an officer of the law. That thought alone should have been enough to cool his desire, but it wasn't. He didn't pull away, didn't even try to regain his senses. Instead, he leaned the slightest bit closer, rubbing his nose lightly against hers, their mouths so close he could feel the warm puff of her breath heating his lips.

"Then let me make the bet," he said. "If you're not begging me to take you, right here, in the next five minutes, I'll leave and forget I ever knew your name."

"You don't know my —" Her words broke off in a soft cry as he swept his tongue out across the satin skin of her lips.

"I wasn't finished." Gabe moved his hands down to cup her face, tilting her lips up to his, moving gentle fingers along the column of her throat. "If I win, I get to take you out for coffee."

"Before or after you fuck me?" she asked, nails digging into his arms with enough strength to make him wince, and for his cock to twitch uncomfortably in his pants.

God forgive him, but he liked a little bit of pain, taking it and dishing it out, almost as much as he liked hearing the word "fuck" coming from the sweet little mouth of the woman in his arms.

"That will be up to you."

"Right, as if you'd have the balls to —"

"No more talking." He slid his palms down the sides of her body, deliberately avoiding her gorgeous breasts, curving around her hips until he took hold of her ass. She was far thinner than he preferred, but her ass still provided two delightful handfuls, the muscled flesh there the perfect place to dig his own fingers.

"You play the tough guy, but I...oh..."

Gabe pulled her close, groaning as their bodies connected and that nearly overwhelming electricity shot through him again, but this time, straight from his cock.

He closed his eyes and rested his forehead against C.J.'s, struggling to breathe, never having felt so close to orgasm simply from being pressed against a woman. He suspected C.J. felt the same if the circles she was tracing with her hips were any indication. She'd gone from fighting him to grinding against his obvious arousal in seconds, her lips parted and hungry sounds issuing from the back of her throat.

At this rate, he wasn't going to last the five minutes. He was going to lift up her dress, pull off whatever she was wearing underneath and take her against the wall without an invitation. The need to be inside her, to be tunneling in and out of the woman in his arms was greater than anything he'd ever known. It was almost frightening in its intensity

"Kiss me," she whispered, the plaintive note in her voice awakening the ache in Gabe's heart.

"With pleasure, sweetheart." He kissed away any protests she might have made to his use of a term of endearment. Something about C.J. touched him in ways he hadn't dreamed he'd be touched again, ways he knew he couldn't explain to her with words. Not that she'd give him a chance. She'd think he was insane if he told her how much she already meant to him.

Non-verbal communication was definitely better.

She moaned into his mouth, the sound vibrating deliciously against his lips as his tongue swept against hers, tasting sugar and lime and coffee, and beneath that, the subtler taste that was pure C.J. She tasted of summer days on the beach, all heat and salt and a hint of coconut. It made Gabe want to take her to the ocean, to get them both slick with suntan oil and see what kind of trouble they could get up to hidden behind the sand dunes. Maybe he'd suggest someplace tropical for the honeymoon, maybe—

"No. Stop. You're crazy." C.J. pulled away from him, as if she'd been eavesdropping on his admittedly premature musings.

"Doesn't matter if I'm crazy," he said, kissing a searing trail down the soft, hot skin of her neck. She was burning up, as on fire from the chemistry between them as he was. "My five minutes aren't up."

"When a woman asks you to stop, you stop." Her words were hard, but her fingers were already threading through his hair, nails scraping erotically against his skin as she pulled his lips closer to her skin.

"I'll stop after five minutes," he replied, tracing his tongue along the delicate bones of her neck until he reached the hollow at the base of her throat. There he stopped to play, swirling against the sensitive skin until her breath grew faster once more.

"You're awfully wicked for a soul without sin." She sounded pleased with him and didn't resist as he trailed a finger down between her breasts, parting the fabric of her dress, revealing a black lace bra that made Gabe send up a prayer of thanksgiving for the invention of lingerie. That sexy scrap of fabric was enough to distract him from analyzing her words any more closely, from wondering at the strangeness of her continued musings on the state of his soul.

He moved his hands to either side of her breasts, holding the black sweater fabric away as he let his lips trail over the tops of her flushed skin. He nibbled and kissed, and let his tongue play just beneath the lace. He cupped her fullness from beneath and squeezed lightly, fingers and mouth everywhere but where she wanted him, where her body had tightened into two diamond points that practically begged for his touch.

She was panting, tugging at his hair, arching toward his mouth. But her body's begging wasn't going to be enough, he needed her lips to beg, as well, and he was running out of time.

"Beautiful," he whispered as he slowly pulled the lace down, carefully avoiding contact with her swollen tips as he urged the fabric beneath her breasts.

"Gabe, please," she moaned as he placed whisper soft kisses around the strawberry colored skin of her nipples.

"Please what?" He flicked his tongue across one tip and she leapt in his arms.

"Yes, please. Oh please, more. Kiss me. There."

The way she'd asked for her pleasure sent another violent bolt of desire down to his already throbbing arousal, and Gabe began his work in earnest, determined to hear her beg for more.

He traced first one tight, pink tip and then the other with his tongue, gentle touches that he followed with rougher rolls of his fingers and thumb. Back and forth, back and forth, until she squirmed and panted above him. Only then did he draw one nipple into his mouth and suckle her. He wasn't soft or gentle, but funneled every last bit of his own hunger into his work, ending his worship of her sensitive flesh with a sharp nip of his teeth that wrung a cry from C.J.'s throat.

"Hell, yes," she called in a voice thick with desire. "Bite me again, Gabe."

"Ask me, beg me," he said, pinching the nipple he'd just abandoned harder than he would have usually dared, but she enjoyed it, a fact made obvious by the impassioned cry that echoed off the bricks around them.

"Please, Gabe. Please bite my tits. Bite them."

"I didn't think women liked that word," Gabe said, flicking his tongue over the nipples he now held trapped in his hands, tilted toward his mouth. He struggled to keep his mind on anything other than how desperately he wanted to take her. To spin her around and lift up her dress and ram into her from behind.

"Oh yes, please," she panted, moaning again as he softly circled each tip with his thumb. She met his gaze with wide, desperate eyes "Please, Gabe, please. I want—"

Her words ended in a gasp as he raked his teeth over first one tip and then another, again and again, until her nipples were bright pink. Breath coming fast, he paused over one breast and opened his mouth wide, taking as much of her flesh inside his mouth as possible before he bit down, hard enough to draw a hiss of breath from C.J.'s lips. He began suckling her nipple, increasing the pressure of his teeth as he did so, until he knew her delicate skin would be marked.

"Shit," she cried out as he pulled away. She looked down at her own breast, bringing shaking hands up to trace the imprint of where he'd bitten her. "Fuck, Gabe."

"Can I take that as an invitation?"

"Hell yes," she said, moving her trembling fingers to rake lightly over the bulge in his jeans. "I'll even beg you, if you want."

"Oh, I want," he said, his cock pulsing hungrily under her touch.

"Please, Gabe." Her eyes were as clear and unguarded as he'd seen them, a fact that turned him on nearly as much as the words spilling from between her kiss-swollen lips. "Please take me, get your cock out of your pants and inside my —"

"God, C.J." His voice was deep and gravelly, almost a growl, as he swiftly untied the belt at her waist and ripped her dress open completely. A few buttons he hadn't suspected were there flew into the air, but at the moment he couldn't feel bad about ruining her dress.

He'd buy her another, a thousand others, he just had to get his hands and his mouth on her and his aching cock between her legs. He had to claim her as his own, let her know that after tonight there would be no other man for her, no one else but Gabriel Atuesuel McIntyre.

Chapter Three

He wasn't a Saint, after all.

I should have known, should have suspected after the way he'd marked my breast with his teeth that he wasn't simply a mortal with an exceptionally good heart. Saints were known to be sexually irresistible to demons, but they didn't tend to go in for kink the way the others did, those men and women descended from something not of this world.

I'd heard his middle name in his mind – Atuesuel, the angels charged with smoking the monsters of hell from their hiding places. The title was ancient and no longer meant what it had at the beginning of the Earth. As the centuries passed, the feathered ones had lost their wings and eventually even the knowledge of what they were. But they kept passing down their sacred names.

Sadly their loss of awareness of their identity hadn't changed their nature. They still, instinctively, sought evildoers and demons, determined to bring them to justice. They still felt God's presence in their lives, still named their children after angels from the past.

Names like Gabriel. Gabe for short.

How could I have been so stupid? Better question, why didn't I seem to care?

"You want me to make love to you, right here? Where anyone could see us?" he asked, the excitement clear in his voice. Demon's breath, but he was wicked, and it made me hotter, wetter. It made me forget again why I should run from him and his talented hands.

"Yes, oh yes," I cried out against his lips as he smoothed one large palm down my belly and under my silk panties, finding where I was more than ready for every hard, thick inch of the cock I struggled to free from his pants.

"God, C.J. You feel....amazing."

"I'm ready, so ready." My hands shook as I finally managed to undo his belt and set to work on his button fly.

I was so far gone, so desperate for him even his invocation of the Holy Father did nothing to cool my desire. I needed him inside of me, shoving in and out, banishing this strange ache in my heart that I'd felt since he appeared in the alley. Until that moment, seeing myself reflected in his blue eyes, I hadn't known what a miserable creature I was. I'd known I was wretched, evil, a demon who fed upon the sin of mortals, but I hadn't known how horrible it made me feel. I'd been unaware of my self-loathing, my self-hatred.

Gabe had cursed me with a clear vision of myself, but he could also bless me. He could bless me with the nine inches of hot, ready male I now freed from his pants. He could take away my pain, make me forget why I'd been fighting tears since the moment his lips touched mine.

"Wait, sweetheart, let me touch you first," he said, as he eased my fingers away from his arousal with one hand while he set to work between my legs with the other.

My protest to his order was lost as he kissed me, a rough, bruising kiss that sent another rush of heat flooding onto his hand. He suckled my bottom lip into his mouth and nibbled the aching flesh, the feel of his teeth on me again nearly as exciting as his fingers playing through my folds. He traced every inch of my swollen sex, teasing through where I ached, testing the entry to where I burned for him, flicking across my clit with a gentle, perfect pressure that drove me perilously close to the edge, opening the doors to his mind once more.

Gabe groaned, wishing he could feel the nails I was digging into his shoulders marking his skin, scratching deep enough to sting. He wanted to do everything with me, indulge every fantasy either of us had ever had. He wanted to tie me up and watch me writhe as he brought me to the edge of release again and again before finally allowing me to come on his mouth.

He wanted to master me and be mastered in return, until we knew there was nothing we needed to hide from the other. Until we were turned inside out, laid bare in every way. Until passion and love banished the notion of real pain from our minds forever, leaving only that sweet sting in the middle of the night—the scratch of nails, the raking of teeth across flesh—little hurts that would bring us nothing but more, intoxicating pleasure.

He prayed I would let him love me, let him have me, claim me as his own for the rest of our lives.

“No,” I moaned, fighting the feeling of euphoria his thoughts of happily ever after inspired. I didn’t want this, didn’t want a man to love me, pleasure me, treasure me with a reverence I knew would be humbling in its power.

Did I?

“It’s too late for no, sweetheart,” he said, as he fisted his hand in the silk of my panties and ripped them from my body, the sound of rending fabric one of the sexiest I’d ever heard.

It also hurt just a little bit, which made me even hotter. I knew then that there was no way I was going to fight him. There was no fight left in me as he shoved his jeans and boxers lower on his hips and lifted me as if I weighed even less than one hundred and ten pounds. I spread my legs eagerly, welcoming the feel of the blunt head of his cock nudging my entrance, sighing in pure, blissful pleasure as he slid inside.

He was thick, stretching my inner walls, making us a tight fit at first. He had to shove inside, an action that nearly made me come right then, simply from the way he filled me. He was perfect, our bodies made to pleasure each other, but it was more than just a meeting of bodies that made me feel free in a way I never had before. It was as if our connection banished the sadness from my heart, the pain from my soul.

Damnation. I had a soul. I *really* did. I could feel it for the first time, a small wounded thing that had been too long from the light. But Gabe was the light and he

shone into every hurt corner, into every black thought, sweeping away the darkness until tears began to flow down my cheeks. Slow, silent, happy tears.

For once I could think that word, “happy”, and not shudder with disgust.

“God, C.J., you feel so good,” he whispered against my neck as he held still within me, thinking of how I owned his heart already, how he would never be able to let me go.

I wouldn’t be able to hear his thoughts if I abandoned myself to him completely, but that would be all right. I knew what I needed to know. I knew he cared for me, that he felt the same irresistible pull between us and that he would never let me go or leave me alone with the demons of regret that came to humans in their dreams at night.

“You feel like heaven.”

“So do you.” I didn’t try to hide the sob in my voice. I didn’t want to hide from Gabe anymore, didn’t want to run. It was as if I had finally looked up and seen that the sky was blue and could no longer tell myself it was any other color. There are truths that cannot be denied, and I was holding one in my arms.

Gabe pulled back and looked into me, his bright blue eyes shining as he took me in.

“C.J.” He said my name, only my name, but it was enough. I heard the promise there and I wanted it. Wanted it badly enough to let the last piece of my resistance fade away, melting in the heat of the man who held me with such sure hands.

“I love you,” I murmured, not regretting the small tugging sensation at the base of my spine as the ineffable power that made me what I had been faded away. Lesser demons could not love, but now I could. I did, with a strength that took my breath away.

I was a sin-eater no more. It was a realization that would have caused me nothing but panic and terror a few short minutes before. Now, the only thing I feared was that Gabe might not return my feelings.

"I love you too. So much." He smiled and kissed me with a gentleness that didn't stay gentle for long.

Within moments we were angling our mouths so tightly together that I could feel his teeth pressing against mine through our skin. It was as if we would consume each other from the mouth down, and I knew it would be a meal more erotic, more satisfying than any I had ever eaten. I tasted him as I had never tasted anything before, catching hints of sugar and coffee in Gabe's kiss that had always been overshadowed by the more potent flavor of sin.

The entire world was sharper with my new human eyes and the smell of Gabe, once merely human, was now a thing of wonder. He smelled of bright clean soap, of herbs and smoky campfires and man. Simply...man, I could think of no other way to describe the spicy, musky scent that made me circle my hips, silently begging for him to take me.

The attraction that had originated in the contrast between good and evil, was now about the contrast of male and female, his hard, muscular chest against my softer breasts. Crisp hairs against smooth skin, strength versus a woman's unique power to yield, to open and take pleasure from invasion.

"Take me, please." I pulled away from our kiss, loathe to end that pleasure, but desperate for pleasure of a different kind.

"With pleasure, sweetheart." He didn't press me back into the wall as I'd thought he would, simply lifted me with his strong hands until only the tip of his arousal remained in my body and then lowered me back down with that same aching restraint.

Once, twice, three times, in and slowly out, until the prelude to orgasm shivered across my skin. But I held release at bay, determined to wait until he abandoned himself to his own pleasure, until he took my body, not merely pleased it. I wanted to be possessed by him, marked by his passion, and slow and sensual wasn't going to get the job done.

"Faster, harder. Please," I begged, clenching the muscles in the legs I wrapped around his waist, struggling to force a faster rhythm.

"I don't want to hurt you."

"You won't hurt me, just fuck me."

"C.J., God, just a little —"

"Fuck me, Gabriel. Fuck me," I whispered into his ear, kissing down his neck until I reached the base where neck met shoulder. There I shoved aside the collar of his shirt and took his flesh in my mouth, biting down until Gabe cried out.

Cried out and pushed me back into the bricks with enough force for it to hurt as my shoulders made contact. Evidently I wasn't the only one with a penchant for teeth. The knowledge made me smile against his lips as he took them in another brutal kiss. My angel had a bit of the devil inside.

No, scratch that, this former devil had an angel inside, *deep* inside.

"Yes, oh yes," I moaned into his mouth as he rammed his cock between my legs. All trace of gentleness had vanished as he plunged into me, so hard and fast that only his hands cradling my ass kept my tailbone from making bruising contact with the bricks behind me. My nipples hardened into stinging points and the tension low in my belly fisted into a tight knot. My lips buzzed and my skin screamed with the need for release from this erotic torture. I was so close, so desperately close, but I wouldn't let myself go, not yet.

"I'm going to come," Gabe gasped, pulling back to meet my eyes, his face twisted with sexual tension in a way that made him even more beautiful. "Come for me first, come on my cock, C.J."

"Yes, yes!" I screamed as I came, my inner walls tightening around Gabe's cock, clutching at him as if I could draw him even deeper into my body, trap him there forever and never let him go.

He lost himself soon after, crying out as his cock shot liquid heat deep inside my body, triggering another orgasm even before I had recovered from the first. The pleasure wasn't merely physical, but mental, spiritual, a celebration of life and love that I could feel bonding me to this man even more tightly than our admissions of love. The

bliss washed over me from head to toe and back again, more pleasure than I had ever known, an absence of darkness that banished any remaining remnants of the woman I had been.

"I love you, so much," Gabe whispered against my lips between soft kisses as he continued to thrust slowly, languidly between my legs, taking us down from the pinnacle of our pleasure with a mastery that made me feel incredibly safe.

"God, Gabe, I love you too." More tears flowed down my face as that previously unspoken name left my mouth without the slightest sting of pain. Instead it brought only warmth, a further softening of the heart that had already melted in the heat of Gabe's love.

We finally stopped moving, but Gabe stayed buried within me, holding me close, our eyes looking fearlessly into each other without saying a word. I'd never felt so close to anyone, and for some reason I knew that he understood what I had been on an instinctual level. And that he didn't care. He believed in me, loved me, knew I could be something better than what had come before.

"I've got something for you in my purse," I said, loath to feel him leave me, but suddenly knowing I had to give him Ray's card, had to help him put a stop to that monster. Even as a lesser demon he had repulsed me. Now the killer made my newly human skin crawl with disgust, loathing, and terror.

"Shit," Gabe said, squeezing his eyes closed for a second. "A condom, right? I didn't use one. I have one in my wallet, but I didn't even think."

"No, no, that's not it at all." I smiled as he pulled slowly out me and set me back on my feet, about to tell him that I couldn't conceive children—I was a thing from hell, born from the devil's own fires and could not foster new life—when I realized my possible mistake.

I wasn't a thing from hell anymore...could that possibly mean...

"You're smiling," Gabe said, smiling back as he tucked himself into his pants and zipped them before helping put me back together again.

"I think I'd like to have kids someday. What about you? Oh wow," I gasped. Even the entirely innocent way he was tucking me back into my bra and rewrapping my dress made me hot, awakening a desire I wouldn't have imagined possible so soon after taking the kind of pleasure we'd had from each other.

"Anytime you're ready." He smiled and bent down to retrieve my ruined underwear. "I'm so sorry about these, and your dress."

"I couldn't care less. I enjoyed it, and I doubt this dress will fit much longer anyway. I plan on gaining some weight." I bent to retrieve my purse.

"I'm glad. You're beautiful, but I'd love to see you looking a little healthier." He brushed a strand of hair from my face as I dug through my small clutch. I shivered at the feel of his calloused fingers sliding behind my ear. Every sensation was so much more intense as a human. I was in love with mortality already, nearly as much as I was in love with Gabe.

"Remember the man who was sitting at my table before you?" I asked when I found the small cream-colored paper. Gabe nodded, face growing serious. "This is his card. He's the one you're looking for."

"The one I'm looking for?"

"Yes. The killer, the one who's been choosing his victims at speed dating events."

Gabe nodded. "I'll start working on the paperwork to get him brought in for questioning tomorrow. But I have to ask—how did you know I was looking for a killer?" he asked, though there wasn't any suspicion in his features, only curiosity.

Still, I was suddenly flustered. How to tell the man I'd heard his thoughts before he'd entered the alley, that I knew he had attended the dating event this evening as part of his investigation?

"Did you ever just...*know* something, without being able to make sense of it, or explain it in a way that would seem sane to someone else?"

He looked at me, into me, for a long moment and then smiled, a small quirk of his lips.

"What does C.J. stand for?" he asked.

"Consumpta Jayne." I blinked, confused by the abrupt change of subject, but glad the awkward moment had passed.

"Aikaterina Devlin. That was my first wife's name." He studied me, calmly. "Aika, the root word, is ancient Greek for 'torture'."

My heart raced as I opened my mouth to speak and then shut it quickly again, not knowing how to respond. What the hell was this about? Did he suspect my true nature? I had sensed nothing in his thoughts before, but I could no longer read his mind. I hadn't realized how much I depended upon that gift until it was gone. Perhaps I had been too hasty, too quick to turn my back on the supernatural power of the demon realms and the —

"I'm here for you. I love you." He cupped my face in his hands and pressed a quick kiss to my lips as if he sensed my moment of doubt. "I will spend the rest of my life convincing you that you made the right choice."

"Gabe, I don't understand," I said, unsure what it was I read in those twinkling blue eyes.

"My ex-wife was two-hundred and thirty-three years old when I met her." He tucked the card into his pocket and looped my arm around his. I was sufficiently shocked that I made no effort to pull away as he guided us out onto the deserted street. "Much harder to tempt a demon that old. It took me two weeks to convince her I was the man for her."

"Are you saying I was easy?"

"Never. You just weren't as deeply entrenched in evil. I could feel the good in you from that first moment, when I saw how disgusted you were by that piece of shit sitting across from you."

"You knew. But I didn't..."

"I hunt greater demons during the summer months with my family. I've learned to watch my thoughts."

"You lied to me." I pulled away, an aching in my chest so fierce I felt my ribs would collapse. I pressed a hand to my heart and struggled to breathe. "You pretended to—"

"I pretended nothing," he turned to face me, fire in his eyes. "I love you, C.J. Everything I felt for you from the first moment was entirely real. Yes, I knew that the reason I felt so strongly for you was because of what you were, but that doesn't change anything."

"It does, it changes everything. I thought you really cared, I thought you wanted me for me, not simply because you wanted to remove another demon from the earthly plane." I started backing away, tears pricking at the backs of my eyes. These new human emotions were so overwhelming, so much deeper, stronger, wilder than anything I'd felt as a lesser demon.

"C.J., don't do this to yourself. Trust me, please. I love you, I don't know what I'd do if you decided you didn't want me in your life." His eyes were truly troubled, desperate even, but I couldn't seem to think past the fear.

Being mortal wasn't all yummy smells and tastes, and the blissful feelings of new love. It was also uncertainty, fear, and a pain deeper than the superficial physical wounds I'd been aware of as a demon.

"I don't, I can't. I just—"

He closed the distance between us with a swiftness I didn't expect and pulled me into his arms, immediately I felt calmer, safer. Loved. I wrapped my arms around him and held on for dear life, knowing he was my life raft in this vast ocean of new human thoughts and feelings.

"There's a reason we're made this way, to fall for each other. I understand what you're going through right now, and I can help you."

"I don't want your pity," I said, saddened by the thought, though true despair was held at bay so long as he held me in his arms.

"Are you crazy?" He cupped my chin and forced me to look into his eyes. "You are a gorgeous, smart, kind and sexy woman who any man would kill to be with. And I get to call you mine. I get to fuck you and feel the love pouring out of you and know it's all for me."

"Really?" My pussy clenched at the sound of the word "fuck" on his lips, even though my throat grew tight as I watched Gabe's eyes fill with tears. This manly man was nearly crying because he loved me so much. I was...humbled, and grateful.

"Really," he said, banishing my doubt with that one word.

This was the real thing. We'd been given a gift, and I wasn't going to let fear or doubt keep me from reaching for this sweet dream with both hands.

"All right," I whispered, wrapping my arms around his neck and standing on tiptoe to kiss him softly. "So...now what do we do?"

"I think you promised me a coffee date."

"Are you sure you want to go out for coffee?" I asked, pressing tighter to him, relishing the feel of his cock growing harder against my belly. "I have an espresso machine in my apartment. We could go there and..."

"Why Consumpta Jayne, I believe you're trying to get me back in bed." He grinned, with a heat in his eyes that made electricity sizzle along my skin.

"Not *back* in bed, just in bed, period. I don't believe fucking against the wall qualifies as being in bed."

"I like you against the wall," he said, rocking his hips forward ever so slightly, nudging me with his erection. I gasped and bit my lip, fighting the urge to wrestle him to the concrete right there, or perhaps drag him back to our nice deserted alley.

"There are walls in my apartment," I managed to get out as Gabe trailed heated kisses down the column of my neck. "And an extra-large shower, a tub big enough for

two and a picture window that looks out on the city. It's getting dark, and I've fantasized about being taken from behind while pressed up against the glass. With all the lights in front of us I think —"

"Let's go find a cab." He pulled me toward the end of the block where a busier street headed toward uptown. I followed with a smile.

The feel of his strong hand in mine, the love in his eyes as he glanced back at me with a grin, the knowledge that I'd finally have him naked in less than thirty minutes — all of them drove me wild. The anticipation of what we were going to do tonight and for the rest of our mortal lives was more than I'd ever dreamed I'd find, filling me with a joy that was wickedly, wonderfully delicious.

God's breath, but I'd found a good one, and I was going to make sure he knew how much I loved him, tonight, and every night that I was blessed to hold him in my arms.

About the Author

Anna J. Evans came back to her true love of writing fiction after working Off-off-off-Broadway and in a few Hollywood C-movies. She quit the biz to become a stay at home Mom-Writer and she's loving every minute of it!

Anna lives in Arkansas with her Air Force husband, her real-life romantic hero, their three kids and all the stories still making their way from her imagination to the page.

Anna has been awarded multiple Recommended Reads for her paranormal and fantasy erotic adventures, but her favorite feedback always comes from fans. So feel free to drop her a line or join her newsletter, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/anna_j_evans_newsletter/

Anna welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

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