



*Twelfth Night:  
Stroking Midnight*

*By Raine Weaver*

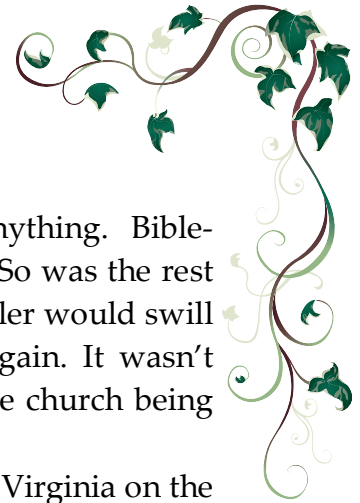


# *Twelfth Night: Stroking Midnight*

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Twelfth Night: Stroking Midnight  
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Calvary Marsh was prepared for just about anything. Bible-thumping, snake-handling, fire and brimstone—anything. So was the rest of the congregation. If they were really lucky, Reverend Tiller would swill strychnine poison from his chalice to prove his worth again. It wasn't exactly high drama, but it was the only explanation for the church being so full this night.

After all, what else was there to do in Meridia, West Virginia on the eve of a New Year?

"You're fidgety tonight, Callie."

"I know." She hung her head at her aunt's whispered words. "But it's very warm in here."

"If you want to fit into this community, these observances are important. And if you decide to take over at the store one day, you'll want people to be comfortable with you." Her companion's pale blue eyes crinkled at the corners. "Then again, you could always just be yourself. A dash of lipstick and showing a little leg wouldn't hurt. There's nothing wrong with being pretty, child."

Calvary could argue that point, but this wasn't the time. "There's nobody in this town I want to impress. And isn't it awfully warm in here?"

Covertly closing the romance novel she'd stashed in her purse, Callie joined the league of menopausal women in reaching for one of the local funeral home fans. You'd never know it was winter. The church's forced-air system had two settings—blast furnace and off—and the heat was so intense her damp underwire was carving a welt beneath her breast.

And as much as she adored her Aunt Rita, she'd had about enough of this particular hell.

This holiday held no glamour for her. She'd done the party-hopping thing in Los Angeles, sucked faces as the ball dropped in Times Square. It was last New Year's Eve that had nearly done *her*, that had sent her scrambling back here to this safe haven. Waking up in Chicago, stark

naked in the apartment of a strange man with chunks of missing memories would do that to a body. No more designer clothes, fancy cars, or substance abuse for her. The simplicity of Rita's mountain shack was nearly all the heaven Callie needed.

Purgatory, however, apparently still lived and breathed in West Virginia. While the ceiling's oak beams seemed to waver in the waves of intense heat, huge flakes of shadowy snow drifted beyond the stained-glass windows. Reverend Tiller frowned on anyone disrupting his sermons, but the thought of clean, cold air was a temptation she couldn't resist.

"Aunt Rita?" Callie tucked her novel away, nudging the shoulder beside her. "I'm gonna step outside for a cool breath. I feel like I'm suffocating in here." A quick glance at the cane propped against her aunt's knee was enough to induce guilt. Fortunately, she was in the right place for it. "Don't worry, I'll be back well before the stroke of midnight, and—"

"Calvary?" Her aunt turned sharply away. With one hand at her throat, she used the other to hold Callie's arm in a death-grip. "Oh my God, Callie, are you seeing this?"

Calvary sighed and swiveled to look, expecting another elaborate Sunday-go-to-meeting hat. It was a standard competition between the ladies of the church, seeing who could come up with the most outrageous bonnet. In the year since she'd arrived she'd seen everything from emu feathers to tie-dyed sheep shearings.

This, however, was not about a hat.

What was making its way down this particular aisle at this particular time had no damn business in a church. No business at all.

He walked through the center of the New Jericho Church with a confident swagger, his head held high, as if he owned the place. Six-foot-three inches of broad-shoulders bore a gray frock coat down the aisle, drawing the attention of every woman in the sanctuary.

Callie gawked in astonishment, watching every determined step he took toward the pulpit. The guy was a magnificent piece of work. He had the kind of short, trim beard that she loved on a rugged jaw, a perfect complement to the shaggy black hair that waved over his upturned collar. An inexplicable magnetism radiated from him that forced her to smother a

schoolgirl sigh, even as his narrow eyes remained focused straight ahead, seemingly oblivious to the gathering.

Rita's cane clattered to the floor, the only sound in the eerily silent church as she twisted to watch. "He walks as if he belongs," she murmured. "Here, among the living."

Her aunt had always been considered a mite peculiar. Running a shop that sold old-fashioned herbal remedies and potions was tantamount to being the town's official witch. But Rita was no fool. She instinctively knew things about people. It helped her heal their bodies. And Callie wasn't inclined to argue with that instinct now. *No way* this guy was from Meridia. "Look at that. Like a lion moving through the veldt. That's not a man. That's a force of *nature*."

The heating system's blower rattled to a whimpering close, and the cold air from the door he'd left open saturated the hall. Reverend Tiller's dramatic voice died away to nothing as he, too, watched the imposing approach. He stepped away from his microphone as if he'd lost the power to speak. Even Callie, who didn't know the preacher personally, could see the fear in his eyes. For the moment, New Jericho was no longer his church.

The dark figure paused before the altar, his eyes level with the large gilded cross, and the congregation seemed to hold its breath. He remained silent, fists at his sides, and she bit her lip in anticipation. Callie half expected the building to go dark or the foundation to tremble beneath them, and leaned forward in her seat. This beat Reverend Tiller's antics all to hell.

A collective gasp trilled through the air as he fell to his knees, head bowed. He held that position for only a moment. Just long enough to make her heart skip and to curse herself for sitting in the back row. High drama? She would've given anything to see his face just then.

Calvary watched the movement of his arm, stunned to see him make the sign of the cross. And then, in an unbelievably fluid movement, he stood, turned, and trudged back down the aisle and out without a word, a sideways glance, or a care for what any of them thought.

She heard the roar of the furnace return and the bleating of Reverend Tiller at the microphone—but Callie had no time to waste. The

race was on. Thank God she'd sat at the rear of the church, and she was younger and faster than most of the women there. Leaping to her feet, she shouldered her purse, scooted crab-like across the length of the pew, and sprinted toward the door, the first to make it out into the snow.

Several women were right behind her. They tumbled through the exit, pretending to talk on phones, lighting cigarettes they didn't really want—even carrying grandchildren on their hips. Their breath scorched the cold, heavy air as they scattered, casually inspecting the grounds and parked cars.

And Calvary smiled prettily at each of them as she slowly made her way toward the surrounding woods. For she was apparently the only one who'd seen the dark coat disappear into the brush.

She wasn't sure why she was following him or what she would say when—if—she caught up with him. She only knew she had to see him again, to find out more about him.

Waiting until she was sure she wasn't being watched on this Watch Night, Calvary took a deep breath, hugged herself reassuringly, and plunged into the embrace of the shadows.

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Callie had ventured about a quarter of a mile into the woods before she saw the single tiki torch, flooding a small clearing with light. It was exceptionally brilliant in the dense dark that lived between the trees, and apparently strong enough to melt the snow. The entire area within the glow of the torch felt as warm as late spring, and she slowly circled the outskirts, stunned.

A beautiful gazebo, dainty as a dollhouse, stood in the middle of the clearing. The white planks glowed like fine porcelain glazed with the orange light of the flame and sheltered a matching table flanked by wide, curved benches.

It was a fairytale setting in the midst of the harsh winter woods, and she seriously began to doubt her sanity. Snow cover faded to frost that melted into supple grass beneath the flat soles of her boots. The largest mushrooms she'd ever seen sprouted firm and creamy from this

isolated ground, forming delightfully perfect circles as delicate blue flowers dotted the earth like tiny fallen stars.

"Looking for me?"

Callie squealed and jumped, nearly twisting her ankle as the tall man stepped out of the surrounding bushes. He seemed larger, even more strikingly handsome up close. How in the world had he managed to creep up on her without so much as snapping a twig or crunching snow?

"God, you startled me."

He was staring at her, thumbs hooked securely in the pockets of jeans that no man in the entire history of the world had ever worn better.

"Of course I wasn't looking for you. I just came out for a breath of fresh air."

"You wanted to get out of that church. I made a scene and gave you a reason to leave. Thoughtful of me, wasn't it?"

The eyes on the stranger were as black as the shaggy hair being ruffled by the warm breeze. Yes, a *warm breeze*, despite the world beyond this one being shrouded in snow. She ran her hand through her own short bob, brushing off the flakes. Something very wrong was happening here. "You mean to say that little drama was staged for my benefit?"

"Yes."

"And why would you do that?"

"Because you were right. You *are* suffocating here."

Callie froze, her toes curling into knots in her boots. He hadn't even been inside the sanctuary when she'd said that. And she hadn't spoken loud enough to be heard by anyone except her aunt. "Look, mister, the room was hot. I wanted to cool off a bit, that's all. And then I found this...this..."

"Do you like it?"

She stared back at him, surprised by the note of eagerness in the gruff voice. "I—I really can't say. I don't understand it, any of it."

"But you like my little oasis. I can tell." Another two steps closer, and now she could see the amusement in his eyes. "I would've gone for palm trees and mangos, but you were right behind me. I didn't have much time."

Cute. So he not only *looked* like a god, he had the ego of one.

"No, really. What is this place? Did you leave a torch burning unattended in these woods? And how can it possibly be so warm here, confined to these few square yards? Some kind of subterranean hot springs?"

"No. But I like your imagery. Boiling heat just beneath the surface." He smiled at her, and the torch flared like a small sun. "We're going to get along very well, Calvary Marsh."

*Uh-oh.* She backed quickly away from him, ready to run. "Okay, that's it. Who the hell are you? You know my name, and it's for damn sure I've never met you before."

Meridia was Podunk Incorporated, with a pea-size population. She'd remember this man. Heck, she'd be dreaming about the way this guy *walked* for the rest of her life.

"I'm called Josh."

"That doesn't really answer my question. What are you doing here, Josh?"

"That really doesn't matter. The important thing is that I know you, Calvary. Everything about you. I know your friends call you Callie. I know you came to Meridia because you were afraid. I know you've surrendered your sexuality and hidden your beauty behind frumpy clothes and, may I say, really dowdy boots."

Callie swallowed hard, becoming angry. Some gossipy old biddy had been running her mouth. Probably Ella Shanks. She was forever in other people's business. "So you've done a little homework. That just means you're creepier than I thought."

"I could point out that you came looking for *me*. And I know more than a little." He walked a slow circle, pinning her in place with sharp, fierce eyes. "I can tell you how often you have erotic dreams so powerful you awaken aroused and shaking with need. I can tell you this because I'm the one who's sending them to you."

"Sending me dreams?" She managed a shaken laugh. "You're insane."

"Am I? I know how often you masturbate, ever so quietly in the dark beneath your Aunt Rita's handmade quilt—and how frustrated you feel because it doesn't seem to help. I'm aware of how you cared for your



aunt when she fell and broke her hip, and how you loathe the taste of beets and asparagus. And as long as we're sharing campfire secrets, you should never wear underwire bras. Your skin is much too sensitive. That welt's going to sting for a couple of days at least." A white butterfly flitted drunkenly between them, settling on one of the lapis gems that adorned the grass. "You don't need a bra anyway. Your breasts are mouth-wateringly perfect."

She felt her jaw drop as her purse slipped from her shoulder and hit the ground with a muted thump. Was she having a hallucination? Some side-effect from whatever freaky kind of drug she'd ingested a year ago?

"No. No drugs." He leaned over to pick up her purse. Carefully setting it on one of the latticework benches, he removed his coat and threw it on another. He had a high, tight butt, the biceps of a bodybuilder, and a silky matting of dark hair on his forearms that made her want to lick them. "Two days of vomiting and being forced to sweat it out of your pores. Three days of nothing but pure spring water. A week of hearty broth and fresh fruit, and you were clean. Your aunt's an able healer."

She tried to speak. If only she could take a breath, or even feel her heart beating, she might manage a word or two. "Who are you? *What* are you—some kind of mind-reader? How do you know these things? Aunt Rita would never have told a living soul."

"As I said—I know all about you. Everything you think. Everything you want, Callie. It's why I'm here."

She didn't like the way he was looking at her, as if he could devour her at any moment. Okay, so that wasn't exactly true—she *did* like the way he looked at her. She just knew she shouldn't. His unvarnished hunger made her oh so perfect mouth-watering breasts feel full, aching to be touched.

"Yes. I'd kill to touch your breasts right now."

"Stop reading my mind. You're making me crazy!"

He moved on her, his strong arm circling her waist, sharply pulling her against his body. Now she could feel her heartbeat. It thundered at twice its normal speed in her ears. Her hands came flat against the hardness of his chest, even his wide mouth stretched into a grin. Was he

laughing at her? She'd concentrated so completely on suppressing her own emotions and needs, had held them in for so long, it was sometimes difficult to read others.

"Then don't hold them in, Calvary." He whispered, even though they were alone, his beard rough against her ear. "I wouldn't hurt you for the world. You need to let it go. It's what I'm here for."

"Why do you keep saying that?" She pushed uselessly against him. "I don't need your backwoods brand of therapy. Or to be manhandled. Or—or..." She sniffled, horrifyingly close to crying. "Or to be pitied for keeping myself close. *Safe*."

"If that was what you really wanted, I couldn't be here. You can't hide from the dark side of your nature, Callie. You take it in hand. Play with it. Master it, taste it. Stroke it until that darkness is a comfortable part of you." His large hands cupped her face, his thumbs wiping away the tears that finally spilled over. "Would you deny the attraction between us?"

She barely resisted the urge to touch his face in kind. "It doesn't matter. I don't want to want it."

"Yes, you do. And we haven't much time. Did you really think that being afraid and avoiding sex would make the desire go away?"

One of them was definitely crazy. She felt his erection swelling against her thigh and fisted his shirt sleeves as her mutinous hips pressed against him. Two-bit mentalist or not, this Josh character was making her hot. He was everything she found attractive in a man, with a side order of the forbidden to go. "Who are you, Josh?"

"A stranger you met in the woods. Someone you might lie with and no one need ever know. The forbidden." He ground temptingly against her, his dark eyes dilating. "I am what you want."

She felt her face flush, but didn't bother to deny the truth. "What are you?"

His mouth lowered to within inches of hers, and he smelled of spring and moist, fertile earth. "Jinn. Fallen angel. Incubus. Demon. Take your pick."

"You—you think you're a demon?" she faltered.

"No. Not a demon." He grasped her bottom, fitting her hard

against him. "I am *your* demon."

Holy hell. She was in more trouble than she'd thought. "My own personal demon? As in you've come to torment me with biting flies or boils or big dicks?"

"I don't do torture, but the dick's ready to roll, babe—as long as you claim it before the stroke of midnight."

"Oh, really? Midnight? What kind of hot demon stud has a curfew?"

He laughed, a hoarse, gritty sound, and the light of the torch flickered and dimmed. "It was your need for something—*someone*—like me that drew me to you. You summoned me here with your luscious body growing colder each day. I waited a full year, wanting you more with each passing hour, hoping the spell of the fear would break. You actually became *my* personal demon, Calvary Marsh. But the longer you continue on this course, the more likely you'll keep to it. Midnight is your turning point. And mine."

The idea of spending her life alone in Meridia, repressed and trapped in layers of ugly clothes, was safe but not appealing. And he was right. The longer she went without, the more she felt inclined to do so. "And if I don't want to do this because you're probably demented?"

Josh shrugged and spread his arms. "If what you see here doesn't make you a believer, look at it this way. It's your last chance this year to conquer the fear that's ruled your life. And my last chance this year to get a nut."

"But that's not fair!" She glanced up at the sky. What time was it? How was she supposed to make up her mind so quickly? She hadn't even seen the merchandise!

"Allow me. My pleasure."

She nearly choked at the sound of his zipper and the sight of flushed flesh and matted curls. His cock didn't spring forth. It was so engorged, so heavy, he had to reach in and lift it out.

"What are you doing?" she squealed. "Gawd, how'd you manage to pack it all in? Put that thing away. Somebody might see us!"

"No one will come unless I allow it." His eyes took on a wicked gleam. "Ah, for a moment that idea appealed to you, didn't it?"

Callie shuddered. She couldn't seem to think beyond the moist wetness between her thighs—and the realization that all of the heat in the area wasn't coming from the torch at all. It was coming from *him*. "Maybe we could just be friends?"

He literally growled at her as he stepped out of his jeans, and she could've sworn he grew another inch before her eyes.

"You are kidding, right?"

She moistened her lips, tempted beyond reason. "How long before midnight?"

"I suck at this concept you humans call 'time'. Maybe half an hour. Maybe seconds."

And she thought she'd gone to church prepared for anything?

He reached for her again, his fingers tangling in her hair.

The kiss was soft and tentative at first. Yearning, seeking surrender. Her knees grew weak as she moaned against his mouth, needing more.

His tongue dipped between her lips, claiming her, sliding slowly in and out as she imagined he would with her body, and she practically went limp against him.

"Why don't we start with you stepping out of those really ugly boots for me?"

"But there's snow and cold."

"Not here. Not anymore." He knelt before her as he had at the altar, offering his broad shoulders for support. "Come on. I'll help you."

Callie supported her weight on his shoulders, astonished by the iron hardness of them. She lifted her right leg, and he slid her boot off, tossing it aside as she planted her bare foot in the downy grass.

"There, now." Josh slid the flat of his hand up the back of her calf before dragging one finger in slow, lazy circles up the inside of her thigh. "Doesn't that feel better?"

She couldn't think of words when sensation was all there was. His finger made her tingle, wandering higher until he barely brushed the moist cotton of her panties and sent a bolt of heat right through her.

"More," he said huskily. She responded, dizzy and breathless with anticipation. He removed the boot, reached beneath her dress, and slid her panties down. "You won't be needing these for a while."

Callie held onto his shoulders for dear life as he trailed a line of slow, intoxicating kisses up her left thigh, nearly hyperventilating when his rough beard nuzzled her most sensitive skin. "Oh, wait. Oh, hell. I'm not sure I can just jump into this and—*oh*."

She felt his tongue on her, slowly licking the tender folds of her flesh. He hadn't lied. He knew her, knew her body and everything she liked, everything she craved. Her clit bloomed, aching for him, and he swirled the tip of his tongue around it in teasing circles before easing closer and sucking it until she tensed and trembled against him.

The moist warmth became an unbearable pulse between her thighs. Reaching cautiously for him, she touched the liquid excitement that glistened at the tip of his erection and brought it to her lips, feverish for the taste. "I can't stay. My Aunt Rita—"

"—Is more canny than you think. And I'll make sure she's safely home."

"I—I don't want to screw up again, Josh."

"I know. Playing it safe is easier. But that's not living, and you can't live without making mistakes." He stood before her, his voice dropping to a whisper. "Wanting you has made me feel alive, Calvary. I promise you no regrets. Let me have you. We don't have much time."

Quick hands. Her coat was off, her dress unbuttoned and undone before she knew it. One practiced flick of his fingers and the clasp of her bra was released. The torch's fire burned black in his eyes as he paused to watch her nipples pucker under his gaze. "Perfect," he murmured. "Just as I said."

She touched his face, smoothed the line of his beard, and had the satisfaction of hearing him groan when she stroked his length with her fingernail. Maybe this wasn't such a bad idea. One quickie on a New Year's eve, one indiscretion with a demon stud...

"*One?* Ha." Effortlessly lifting her into his arms, he moved with that determined stride of his toward the gazebo. Laying her on the table as if she were made of glass, he yanked his shirt off and stretched on top of her.

Callie sighed as he latched onto her breast, suckling like a starving man as his hand kneaded the other, rolling the nipple between his fingers

until she wanted to cry out. The idea that midnight could be one second away, that he might somehow disappear at any moment, was unbearable. She grasped the hard muscles of his buttocks and parted her legs for him.

His tongue soothed the welt beneath her breast and he kissed her shoulders, urging her arms upward. Callie readily complied, gyrating urgently beneath him. Anything to have him cool the frantic fire in her. When he grabbed her wrists, securing them both against the table with one iron hand, she groaned in frustration. "No. I want to be able to touch you."

"Soon enough. But I promised you no regrets, and for that I need control." He returned to her left nipple, nibbling lightly with sharp teeth and sending a shot of raw need through her.

She felt him position himself at the entrance of her sex, the helmet of his cock slick with readiness. "Calvary, I don't want to hurt you. Try to lie still, just for a moment."

He pushed halfway in, his supporting arm trembling for control as his cock widened her nearly to the point of pain. "Tell me if it's too much," he muttered, taking a deep breath. "I may not be able to stop, but tell me anyway. God, you feel like heaven."

Callie squirmed, her body quickly adjusting to the delicious agony of being filled by him. "More."

Josh kissed her deeply, moving by fractions of inches until she thought she would beg for it. Unable to touch him and silenced by his lips on hers, she wrapped her legs around him, rocking in invitation.

He broke the kiss and plunged into her, howling in something like despair. Callie inhaled, absorbing the shock as he throbbed inside her, his root pressing against her tender clit. "More."

"Easy, Callie." His knees pushed her legs wider apart, and his free hand grasped her hip, stilling her frantic motion. "It's been quite a while for you. Let me take the lead."

Effectively trapped, Callie closed her eyes as he withdrew, hesitated, and worked his way even deeper with a long, luscious drive. A rush of moisture from her sex smoothed the way for another stroke, and another as he gradually increased his rhythm, stoking a tight coil of heat in her abdomen.

Her hips bucked beneath him as he pounded into her, and still she couldn't get enough. Waves of pleasure flooded her body, and she cursed him for torturing her after all. "Damn you, Josh."

"By all means."

Her muscles spasmed around his cock, her back bowing off the table as he bared his teeth, grinding against her. "That's it. Let me have you, Callie."

A fiery blast of sensation exploded from her core and ripped through her body, sending her into sweet convulsions. The rich glow of the torch burst into a blinding white light behind her eyes, dimming only when her muscles gradually relaxed and she felt him holding her firmly in his arms.

"Listen," he whispered huskily.

Still shivering, she heard the sounds of bells and gunfire in the distance. For a dull-witted minute, she thought they might have been celebrating her liberation and the most powerful orgasms she'd ever had. Only when Josh barked a laugh did she remember the secondary occasion. "Midnight."

He released her arms and gently smoothed her hair, smiling down at her. "And all things are fresh and new."

Callie returned his smile with a smirk of her own. Some things had carried over from the old year. He was still hilt-hard inside of her.

Grasping his shoulders, she pushed him onto his back, straddling his hips and sinking onto him with a sigh. "You know the old adage—that whatever you're doing when the New Year begins is what you'll be doing for the rest of the year?" She circled his nipples with her fingernails, smiling as he quivered in response. "What say we test that theory?"

\*\*\*

Ella Shanks, late and nearly out of breath, maneuvered her way past the tilted knees of Calvary Marsh to the end of the pew. The church was crowded this Watch Night. It gave her an excuse to indulge her curiosity. "Hello, Callie." She settled in, lowering her voice. The new preacher wasn't as loud as old Reverend Tiller, and the new heating

system provided far less background noise. "How nice to see you here."

The girl crossed her legs and beamed at her. "Happy New Year's Eve, Mrs. Shanks. That's a lovely hat."

"Why, thank you. My goddaughter made it in one of her craft classes, and I thought it was just the cutest thing." No, it wasn't her imagination. Calvary Marsh had changed quite a bit lately. She'd let her hair grow and taken to wearing lipstick that was a tad too dark. That little black dress was darling, but the split up the front was much too high to be appropriate for church. And she was liable to break her neck with those spiked heels on the slippery walk out front. "Is Rita still in Arizona? How nice that you could afford to spare her this cold winter. The shop must be doing well. You've even bought your own place, not far from hers. I hear you had a lovely gazebo built."

"Yes. Things have been going well."

Such a complacent smile. It could only mean she was hiding something interesting. "I simply had to come this Watch Night." She lowered her eyelids and leaned in closer. "You know—in case that gorgeous guy who blew through here last year puts in another appearance? You were here then, weren't you?"

"Hmm. Let me think. It's so hard to remember back a whole year, isn't it?"

The rear doors of the church flew open as if blown by a storm, and the entire congregation expectantly turned as one.

They were not disappointed. A tall, kingly man in a long gray coat strode down the center aisle, his hawk-like eyes fastened on the altar.

Ella strained to watch every step, almost forced to stand to see past all the ridiculous hats. She'd heard rumors that he might be a maverick preacher, jealous of the harmony of New Jericho. There were those who said he was some sort of rock star, who could only bear to return to his roots once a year.

She had a kindly heart, however, and preferred to believe he was a lost soul, so sinful he could only enter and quickly beg forgiveness before returning to his decadent life.

The dark stranger knelt at the altar, crossed himself, and retraced his steps down the aisle. Ella perched on the edge of the pew, watching



him walk that gunslinger walk, and—

To her amazement, he stopped, looked sideways—and assumed a seat right next to Calvary Marsh.

Ella couldn't seem to stop staring. Even after the preacher had nervously resumed his sermon and everyone else had stopped gaping she continued to steal sidelong glances. Callie, it seems, had interesting secrets indeed.

The vague, sweet scent of mangos seemed to permeate the church, though the star attractions didn't seem to notice. They ignored their surroundings, putting their heads together to share secret conversations. At one point the girl even reached over to lightly stroke his beard.

The visitor flashed a killer smile at Callie and covertly slipped a large, smooth hand through the slit of her dress.

Ella felt her face flame at the sound of Calvary's chuckle and forced her eyes away. When she ventured to take another peek, the stranger's fingers had moved even higher and the girl's gaze had turned on her.

"You look flushed, Mrs. Shanks." Callie laughed softly and gave her a conspiratorial wink. "Here, have a fan. It is awfully warm in here, isn't it?"

The End

### **Author Bio**

Raine is a Weaver of dreams, a teller of tales, and has wanted to be a writer her entire life. In the sanctuary of her little enchanted cottage she creates stories featuring seductive heroines and brooding heroes—her own worlds, her own reality. You can find out more about Raine and her books at <http://www.raineweaver.com>.