

ELLORA'S CAVE TWILIGHT



Sensitive

SOMMER
MARSDEN

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What happens when a gorgeous angel is dropped in your lap? If you're psychic-sensitive Harper Brown, first you assume the guy's nuts, then you realize he's not, but you're too busy trying to undo his belt buckle and feel his pecs to care.

When Alex Church shows up to watch over her—supposedly from heaven—

Harper's flattered. And a bit unnerved. Oh, and super turned on. With the cemetery across the street rewing her

psychic engine, Harper's practically vibrating from both psychic *and* sexual energy.

She should be focusing on aiding needy spirits, but with ready-and-willing Alex by her side, Harper's a bit distracted trying to discover just how sinful her very own heavenly creature can be.

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Sensitive

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SENSITIVE

Sommer Marsden

Dedication

To the man. Forever and ever. Amen.

Acknowledgements

For all the folks who listen to me spaz about my books. P.S. Haven, Alison Tyler, Scarlett Greyson, Jeremy Edwards, my twitter friends, the man (duh) and my kids—

who will not read these books for eons but who inspire me every single day.

XOXO Sommer

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Chapter One

I might as well be on my way to the guillotine as far as I was concerned. I waved to the guy backing up the moving truck. “Stop!” I yelled.

He didn't stop. He kept coming toward the fence that separated my brand new swamp of a front yard from the small country road. The truck gave off that incessant beep, beep, beep sound that simply makes you want to bang your head against the wall until the noise stops. I'd give anything for something to bang my head against right now.

“Stop!” I tried again.

Still coming.

“Cease! Desist! No more!” I bellowed. I really thought that was it, but a mere inch from my rickety wooden fence he stopped. I blew out a breath and hung my head.

Thank God for small favors.

I swore I heard a tiny tinkling sound and figured it for wind chimes. I had moved to the country, after all, didn't these people have a thing for wind chimes and those whatchamacallits? Windmills! Or was that the Dutch? Possibly Kansas. Who knew?

“Cutting it a bit close, yeah?” I shouted and the truck driver dropped down from the cab like a human stone.

“Lady, you have some really heavy furniture. I’d have backed this thing up to the front door if I could have.”

I grumbled, but couldn’t blame him. The furniture had been in my family forever and a day.

Handed down from generation to generation. Made from real, honest-to-goodness wood and not microfiber board stuff and whatnot.

“Well, you almost knocked my fence down,” I said.

“I wish I had,” he said and grinned at me. Wiping his brow with his cap despite the chill in the air. “Then I *could* pull up to the front door.”

I turned before I said something rude and shivered in the November wind. Autumn in the country. I should be excited. Okay, so I wasn’t so excited. I was reasonably excited for a woman who had let her ex-boyfriend buy her out of their fabulous remodeled city row home. I was mildly excited after weeks of plotting this move and licking my wounds and leaving Joe to the house we had spent so much time putting together.

Ruby would move in with him, Ruby would be in the house I had helped make fantastic. Ruby would sleep in the master

suite with one brick wall that I had feng shuied the shit out of!

“But I am not bitter and Ruby is the devil,” I breathed. The other moving guy looked up at me, curious and maybe a tiny bit scared. “Hey, hi, how ya doing?” I mumbled and moved away from them.

Neither of them gave off a vibe, but I was picking something up. Maybe one of them had recently lost a loved one or something.

On that note, I guess I should introduce myself. My name is Harper Brown and I am a sensitive. I specialize—through no fault of my own but the cosmic roll of the dice—in dead people. Hear, see, feel, touch, converse with them. They scare the shit out of me sometimes, I pass on messages. All that good stuff. Being a sensitive is how I knew Joe was schtupping Ruby and cheating on me. His grandmother, Ida, ratted him out. From beyond the grave. Trust me, that was a message I loved passing on. It took a bit of the sting out of the whole him-banging-someone-else thing.

“Lady, can we grab some water from the sink?” The driver yelled.

“Sure, yeah. It’s fine. There’s cups in the...well, there are cups somewhere.! If you can find them, have at ’em.”

The driver tipped me a wave and disappeared back inside

my new stone cottage.

My. Stone. Cottage. “Okay, so I’m somewhat excited,” I said to myself.

The same wary mover passed me and gave me a wide berth. I needed to get a dog, otherwise people were going to talk. It’s one thing to see dead people, it’s a whole other ball of wax to walk around talking to yourself all the damn time.

* * * * *

I have to be honest, the first thing I noticed were those eyes. Otherworldly. Truly. A blue that made me think gas flame or a neon sign. The fact that he was tall and broad with rich dark hair and a cut jaw, well, hell, that didn’t hurt so much. Since we’re being honest. He was talking to himself, too. Not in a charming way like I do it, but in a distracted way like he was having a conversation. Now, one would think I’d be fairly forgiving on that front. One would be wrong.

I watched him the way you watch a stray dog or a possibly aggressive child.

Warily. He looked up as if hearing some kind of hidden signal and his face split in a grin that could only be described as a beam. He beamed at me. “Hi, new neighbor.”

Again on the no lying front, that grin set my heart to stumbling over itself in my chest. I had a rush of heat in my cheeks that could only mean I was blushing, which usually drives me insane. This time it simply warmed me all over and a fine tremor took up in my hands. “Um, hi there. I’m Harper, your brand spanking new neighbor.”

My cheeks burned hotter. *Why?* Why had I said *spanking*? A nervous laugh escaped me, the unsexy ones that almost sound like I’m barking. No worries, though, the handsome stranger smiled.

He took my hand and my palm felt tingly. As if he were electrocuting me with a joke buzzer or he was plugged in somewhere, emitting a low level current through my skin. It was pleasant and somewhat erotic, if you must know. “I know. I know you’re new. And I’m Alex. Alex Church. I live up the road.”

Gotta love the country. It’s not the street, it’s road and it’s often pronounced *rud*.

“Hi, hi.”

He leaned in and I inhaled deeply without thinking. The smell of him filled my head. It was a sweet, spicy, yummy but manly smell that eluded me. If you mixed leather with cinnamon and sugar and wood smoke with a hint of pine tree, that is what he smelled like. Or close.

“Are you sure you’re going to be okay here? It won’t be too much for you?” he whispered like a confidant.

His breath was sweet and minty on my face and my lips tingled at having his mouth in such close proximity to me. Other bits of me tingled too, but I tried not to think about that. I was off the men. Men could get bent. No men for me. Ever. If my house had come with a nun’s habit, I would have been a happy, happy girl.

Maybe he was just crazy. I leaned in to meet Alex Church, just a tiny bit more, completely ignoring the irrational lust that seemed to race through me. I held my breath to steady my jangling nerves. “Of course. Why would I not be okay here? This is my brand-new dream home. There is even a window seat, a root cellar and fireplace,” I said.

“Very nice for you,” Alex nodded.

In the house someone dropped something. The sound of tinkling glass hit my ears and I tried not to flinch. “It is very nice for me. I’ve wanted a house like this forever...and now I have it!” I waved my hands in a magical kind of fancy witch gesture, hoping to actually conjure up the good attitude I was presenting to Alex.

“Oh, good. Because I was just worried for a minute that it was too close in proximity.”

He did that weird thing where he appeared to be listening to someone or something not visible to me. He surely was an odd duck. And a tiny bit annoying if you must know.

“Close proximity to *what?*”

“To that,” he said and gently turned my head. So his fingers on my skin caused a decidedly stimulating reaction. I had a vivid mental flash of moving astride Alex in all my sexual glory. Slipping up and down the length of his perfect hard cock and relishing the feel of his hands coming up to tangle in my hair and then...I saw what he was pointing to.

“Oh,” I said.

“Yes, oh.”

“But how do you...”

He shrugged. “I’m kind of a sensitive too. One could say that, anyway. So I know a sensitive when I see one.”

Well, balls and damn and holy hell. His long fingers, perfectly rugged and manly in their gesture, had pointed my eyes to a sight I had not wished to behold. A cemetery.

An old one that had been around for a while it seemed.

“How the hell did I miss that?”

How?” I asked.

Alex shrugged and his big shoulders caught my attention. Which I promptly wrestled away. No, no, no! I am a sensitive. I pick up on the feelings of those around me. Dead and alive. I've managed over years and years and god-blessed *years* of practice to control it. However, the vicinity of that many dead people was going to seriously screw with me. And in my case, the title *sensitive* was appropriate because when my sixth sense went into overdrive my other senses tended to be over-engaged.

As in, I loved to smell, touch, taste and devour everything. Including men I found attractive. And though, oddly, I found Alex and his baggy-cut, trench-coat-sheathed shoulders pretty yummy.

"Well," he said, helpfully, "Were you upset when you came to see the house?"

How did he know this stuff? "Actually, yes," I admitted, sighing. My body was tingling and my ears were ringing. The muted sunlight in the overcast sky seemed too big and too bright, though it wasn't. And I swore I could feel the heat and the pheromones baking off Mr. Alex Church. I cleared my throat. "I had just broken up with my boyfriend. I had let him buy me out of our house. I was searching for a new place to roost. A place to call home and...the trees weren't bare then." I balked, flinging a hand at the now-naked trees whose skeletal trunks and branches now accented the creepy view of the local graveyard.

Being upset can cross my signals. It has even been known to dampen intuition and my ability to tune it. If I was upset—and I was—that would explain why my body and my extra sense didn't react to the close proximity of so many spirits. Spirits tended to linger if they had nothing better to do. You'd be surprised how few of them feel that have better things to do. The ringing sound I heard and the tingling I felt—usually—had been stifled by my anger and sadness over my break up. Of course.

Damn!

Another crash of breaking glass and I fisted my hands, gritted my teeth, tried to smile. “Lady!”

the driver called from the doorway.

I turned to Alex. “Whatever happened to ma’am? Or Ms. Brown? Or just Harper?” I stomped to the back of the truck.

“Yes?”

“We’re done for the night. We’ll bring the second truckload in the morning.”

“But I don’t have a bed frame or—”

“Lady, it was in the contract. Due to the drive, two trips might be required.”

Damn again!

“Fine, fine. I’ll sleep on just the mattress! Thanks so much! My spine will love it!”

He rolled his eyes and waved a hand at me before he and his partner in crime climbed into the big white truck and rolled off back to the city. Granted, it was a two-hour drive and darkness would be falling soon.

“I sense you are upset,” Alex said and put his hand on my arm.

“Gee, you really are a psychic,” I snorted. My body was humming with his touch but I wasn’t about to let Mr. Tall, Dark and Strange know that. Then he made a low noise in his throat and pulled his hand back fast as if I’d burned him. “What?”

“Nothing,” he said but his cheeks were flushed.

I imagined that those cheeks were hot under my hands. I knew if I put my fingers to his cheeks, I’d feel the warmth of blood under the skin. And if I pushed under his duster and trailed my fingers down the front of his navy blue pullover to the worn jeans below, I’d find a nice hard length of man under my fingers. A cock that would make me forget exes and houses and even ghosts. He took a step back from me. “What?” I demanded.

"I don't know if you should be thinking those things about me. I don't know how that fits into this whole experience."

I felt my tired mind try to keep up. It was like listening to an engine whine when some asshole is gunning it and the emergency brake is still on. Next, my head would probably smoke from my struggling gray matter. "What? What?" I sounded like a broken record.

He leaned in as if someone were eavesdropping. Alex's surreal blue eyes darted heavenward and then he whispered. "I don't know if such...lascivious thoughts are allowed," he said.

"Lascivious?" Then it hit me. "Holy shit! Are you in my head?"

"Just a little." He held two fingers close together. My body tingled again. Something was coming.

Which meant the sight of those fingers went straight to my pussy. I leaned in, kissed Alex like a hungry woman falling on a donut. "Miss...um, Harper!"

"Shut up," I said and pushed my body to him. Thank goodness he wasn't immune, because he made a soft needy sound and his big hands, blissfully warm, settled on my ass and he tugged me into him. Yes, there was that hard ridge of male cock I had just wondered about.

"I think I might get in trouble."

"I'm in trouble," I said. "Because my hormones are racing and you are really, really..." I blew out a big frustrated breath before kissing him again. I had never kissed lips quite that soft before.

"Fetching?" he asked.

I froze, pulled back, stared into those gas-flame blue peepers and laughed, though the seam of my pussy was still pressed to his cock. "Fetching? Dude, who *are* you?"

"Hmm," he said.

"Hmm?"

He tried to kiss me, his eyes on my lips. Watching my mouth as if he'd never kissed before. Like it was a brand new experience that he wanted to try again. I let him kiss me for just an instant, feeling the electric shock sensation of his soft, wet tongue touching mine and then I said, "What do you mean, hmm?"

"Nothing," Alex said. His fingers twined in my hair and he tugged me forward, pressing his mouth to mine once more. The tiny bite of pain pushed me past my reasonable senses and I stood in the road outside my new home and ran my fingers along a stranger's jean fly. His cock jumped under the denim, responding to my bold touch.

“No, not nothing. Who are you? You know I’m a sensitive, you anticipate an issue with the dead folk over there and then you’re in my head reading my dirty—very, very dirty—thoughts about you. And now you’re kissing me,” I said, letting him kiss me some more.

“Yes, it’s nice. It’s as nice as I imagined.” His hands had now found their way to my breasts and he stroked his thumbs over the two hard points through my gray swing cardigan. I was such a slut. But that was okay. I deserved this after the year I’d had.

And the coming issue. I knew it was coming because that tinkling sound was back in my head and my whole body was tingling with energy.

“Imagined?”

“Imagined,” Alex confirmed.

I grabbed at him. Being in the vicinity of a boat-load of psychic energy basically turns me into a teenager again. There is never enough food, sex, drink or hormones to satisfy me. I touched his hard arms and his chest, his thighs and his neck. I stroked his stubbly cheek and painted his plump bottom lip with my fingertip, all while trying to make my brain work. “Imagined as in never have done it before?”

Now my hand was on his button and I popped it. Realizing

he was wearing button fly jeans, I grinned and tugged and made the others surrender too.

“Maybe we should go inside your home,” he said softly and matter-of-factly.

“Maybe we should,” I agreed. “But answer me first.”

“No. I’ve never kissed a woman before.”

“A man?” I asked, pushing my fingers into his boxer briefs. Feeling the heat of his skin under my fingers.

“Nope.”

“Who *are* you?” I asked again.

Alex tugged my hand from his jeans and pulled me toward my front door. “Yeah, about that.

See...”

“What?” I yelled getting frustrated. “What, what, what?”

He pulled me into the foyer, pushed me to the wall and kissed me again. His hands now the rowdy, roaming ones. “I’m an angel incarnate,” he said.

I wrapped my hand around his cock, thumbed the tip, kissed him back and tried to sound irate and shocked.

“Hunh,” I said.

Chapter Two

“I’m not as bad as you think,” I said. I mean, wanting sex wasn’t bad per se, but attacking a veritable stranger in the street and yanking his clothes off was mildly bad.

“I know. You become insatiable. You become overheated. You become—Holy moly!” Alex breathed. I had his balls in one hand and his cock in the other and my lips were branding little spots all over his neck.

“Yeah?”

“I had no idea. No wonder you people are aroused all the time.” His hands were back on my bottom, squeezing, kneading, patting. He even gave me a sharp crack that made my pussy flicker with arousal and I yelped. Ass man. Totally.

“You people?”

“Humans,” he said. Alex trapped my hair in his hand, gathering it all in one big fist and he tugged so that my head fell back. His mouth worked a hot line of kisses up my throat and he rested his tongue over my pulse. The slippery sensation of his tongue was intense, I was pretty sure I would come if I even breathed too hard.

I snorted. “You’re human. I mean, look, I see no wings, but

there is no *doubt* that I see this.” I squeezed his cock in my hand and pushed my pelvis to his leg so he could feel the heat of my body. His throat worked but no sound escaped him.

“Trust me. I know I look human. And I am corporeal at the moment but—”

“Yeah?” I dropped to my knees, reminding myself that my body had pretty much been hijacked.

It was all the psychic energy. The swirling vortex of power created by who knew how many deceased folk, many of them lingering, right across the road. I would not, *not*, let myself worry at this moment if I could actually live here, after all. I had the presence of mind to get my read on Alex and...he felt genuine and true. But I would not worry. Because I was too busy licking his hard-on so that he danced like my brawny little puppet against the stone wall of my foyer.

“Oh, my goodness. Are you supposed to put your mouth there?” he said, but his words were so soft they were barely audible.

I couldn't help but laugh, my mouth full of him. I lapped at the slit on the tip of his cock until his fingers grasped at the crumbling mortar and he was breathing like he was going to have a baby. “You can. It's just one of many places *we*

people put our mouths.” I traced the vein down the length of his shaft with the very rigid tip of my tongue and my pussy thumped in time with my pulse. God, I wanted this crazy man who thought he was an angel and very might well be. My only saving grace—in my heart—was that I had wanted him before the full throttle power of the cemetery had crashed down over me.

I would have wanted him anyway.

Finally, Alex the angel shed his loose, long duster and I could see him. Lean through the waist and hips, broad shouldered, flat bellied. I stared a beat too long and he looked down at himself. “What?

Do I look okay?”

“Jesus,” I said, flabbergasted that he’d even *ask* that.

He wagged a finger at me. “Careful.” His smile set off my bells and whistles and my pussy beat with an impatient rhythm. My stomach had twisted in on itself with excitement, my panties were wet, my heart felt fit to beat right out of my chest.

“Sorry. Very sorry to his urm...His Holiness. I’m not very religious. I think I’m spiritual but not religious. I believe a whole lot of stuff all smushed together like when you squish bread up into a ball.

Take all kinds of beliefs and religions and stuff and just mash them all..." I was babbling. How did I shut up?

Alex fixed it. He nodded and said, "Perfectly acceptable where I come from."

Encouraged, really. Searching is good, believing what is in your heart is good." I struggled to my feet and he pinned my hands above my head on the foyer wall and kissed me hard, his naked cock pressed to the front of my favorite holey jeans. Alex was getting the hang of this attraction thing.

"Really?" I shimmied my hips, trying to signal to him to help me out of my jeans.

Pronto! It didn't work. So I pushed with all my might until he released my hands. Then I took his hands and put them on the button of my jeans. Those startling blue eyes met mine and he grinned. That grin made me dance in place faster.

"Yes, really," he said. "It's humans' rule that everyone has to have the same outlook. Not ours."

He tugged and finally—blissfully—I was free of my jeans. Alex tugged my panties, little yellow ones with lime green polka dots, and they surrendered to his manly angel hands. He dropped to his knees and leaned into me, inhaling like I was a fine perfume. My body pebbled with goose bumps, my cunt gave an encouraging slide of my juices. He was

going to put his angelic tongue to my clit and then I was pretty sure I was going to die.

But he froze.

“Maybe I shouldn’t do this,” he said. I could see his pink tongue flashing in the moist humid wonder of his mouth and I almost screamed.

“What? Why? What?” I yelped.

“I mean, isn’t this basically taking advantage of you? You are not yourself. It’s the proximity of all the collective energy and the power of sanctified earth. Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera,” he went on and on and on and all I could see was his tongue in his mouth. The tongue I wanted on me, not babbling about sacred ground and dead people.

“No, it’s fine. I want it.” I stroked his jaw, trying to be gentle and not just grab his face and force him to do my bidding. “I really, really, *really* want it. Bad. Promise.” So help me God, I even crossed my heart for him. Like I was taking the sacred oath of sex or something.

“But—”

I dropped to my knees, my jeans almost tripping me because they were still trapped around my knees. “Listen, I’m going to be painfully, embarrassingly honest with you, okay?”

“Okay,” he said.

“I wanted you before the whole graveyard mojo came washing over me. You were very handsome—albeit weird—walking down the road that way. Like you were...hey!

Were you drawn to me?”

“I chose you,” he said.

“Come again?” My ears were listening but my hands were not. I pushed his boxer briefs down and plucked the clothes from him and myself.

Alex said, “I chose you. You were on the docket, so to speak, and I thought you looked interesting. I chose a body and—”

I ran my hand up his abs and hummed. “You chose this?” I said, pushing his shirt up and helping him out of it. We needed to get the fucking back on track. ASAP.

“Yes, it looked good and sturdy.” He took my hand and put it on his cock. His eyes drifted shut for a moment and he looked very much like a man who was indeed in heaven.

“I’ll say. Good and sturdy, for sure,” I said. “But back to where we were. Not to be pushy—but I will.” I stood and he was still there on his knees. Looking up at me, cobalt blue

eyes full of anticipation and wonder. It was rather stunning in an emotional kind of way. He was like an earth virgin. Or a stark raving mad man, it was an either/or at the moment.

“Right. Are you sure I’m not taking advantage?” He was already half way to me, his finger parting my pussy lips to reveal the flushed, swollen nub of my clit.

I stopped breathing but managed a breathy, “I’m sure.”

He set his tongue to me, licking me gently at first like he feared hurting me. I pushed my hands into his hair, tugging him just hard enough to spur him on. I wanted him to know how good it felt and that he was doing well. It seemed important. “You sure you’ve never done this before?” I gasped when he flattened his tongue and broadly stroked it over my pussy lips and then my clitoris.

Alex laughed and the laughter rumbled up through my pelvis, setting me a bit closer to a release I could barely fathom. My body was loose and warm and tingling like I was being electrocuted by this wonderful, beautiful man. For all I knew, I was.

He draped my leg over his shoulder and pushed my hips to the wall to hold me steady. The stance opened me wide and instinctively or through divine guidance, Alex pushed his fingers into my wetness, testing my pussy, brushing my G-spot and other magical bundles of nerves with his long

fingers. Piano player fingers. *Harp*-er playing fingers, I thought and then snorted.

He froze.

“Carry on!” I said. “Don’t mind me.”

“Is it okay?” he asked, gazing up at me. His plump lips were wet with my nectar, his teeth flashed in the darkening air. If he had sprouted wings in that moment, I would not have been shocked.

He was that stunning to look at.

“You passed okay when you kissed me. It’s...heavenly.”

He grinned and put his mouth back to my pussy. The break had done strange things to me and when he restarted his wet ministrations, everything was more sensitive, more intense. I came, my cunt milking his fingers so hard that he stopped to simply watch my face. I curled my fingers on his warm skin and held on for dear life as the orgasm rolled through me, my nipples hard in the cool air of my new home.

“Wowza,” I said.

“Is that good?”

“No. Good is good. Wowza is...” I held my hand high above

my head. “This far above good.”

He did look proud and that made me laugh. I patted him down like a prisoner.

“What are you looking for?”

“Wallet? Condom in the wallet? Are you packing. We have to hurry.” The tinkling in my head had increased and my skin was crawling with psychic energy. Something was going to happen and it wasn’t an orgasm.

“Hurry, why?”

I made a rolling motion with my hands like *never mind*.

“Condom?”

He shrugged, “I don’t need one. And I don’t have a wallet. I am an angel. I can’t—”

“I totally believe you about being an angel and all—” And I pretty much did, believe it or not,

“but I don’t mess with that stuff. So we really, *really* need a condom.” I wildly surveyed my wreck of a house. Taped up boxes as far as the eye could see. What a fucking mess. How? How was I going to find a teeny tiny condom in this train wreck?

Alex had his eyes closed, his dark hair tousled around his

face from going down on me. He looked so sexy and sweet I could only stare before barking, "What are you doing?"

He held up a finger, eyes still closed. Then he bent to his discarded jeans and rifled the pockets.

He pulled a green foil wrapper free and said, "Is this right?"

I snatched it from him, flabbergasted, "Yes, how—"

"Manifested it. Now what do I do with it?" he asked, taking it from me.

I grabbed it back. I was so out of my mind hot and bothered I had no time for this.

"Let me. I'll show you later." I had him sheathed and ready in seconds and then, thank god for foyer tables, Alex laid me back on my distressed, barn-red table and spread my legs for me. He took his time, staring at me, touching me.

"You're very pretty. Beautiful. You look like the dark-haired girls in the paintings.

Long locks, rosy nipples," he said, stroking my nipples so that they rose up, delicately hard under his fingertips.

"Gorgeous curves and perfect skin." He petted my hips and laid a kiss on my belly and I just watched.

My throat felt too small, my heart too big, my pussy so, so

wet. I finally, took his hand and put it between my thighs for him to feel how much I wanted him. "Please, Alex," I said. "We can be slow and sure and lazy next time."

He smiled at me and pushed himself between my legs. Angling himself just so with great concentration, Alex rubbed the sheathed head of his cock against me. I twisted on the table, trying to touch him and trying to still myself all at once. My body ate up the rumbling electric sensation of him, absorbing it and wanting more. It was reminiscent of what I felt in the vicinity of a spirit but times ten.

The tingling power was augmented with an intense kind of joy. Between the cemetery and the angel I was a puppet on a string. Or more like it, a naked puppet on the table.

"You're very pretty. You blossom like a rose when you want sex," he said. He rubbed more firmly, the head of him slipping into my wet pussy and his voice slipped from awed to overwhelmed.

"Oh," he said.

"Yes, oh," I said, managing to snag his big forearms in my hands. I tugged, settling Alex the angel over me in the good old missionary position. "Sorry, but I think missionary gets a bad rap. It gets all the right spots hit—and hit hard—for me. I would personally like to thank the missionaries one day for their sexual position."

I grabbed his very hard, very divine ass and tugged him so that he instinctively moved against me. Alex caught on, his hands tangled in my hair and he stroked my throat with his thumbs as he kissed me. He moved slowly, He moved slowly, taking it all in at once and bringing pleasure with each thrust.

His tongue was sweet on mine and his fingers gave off mild blips and shocks that coursed through my body.

“That is just going to make me come harder,” I sighed as if admitting defeat.

“What?”

“Your natural juice. Your charge,” I tried to explain.

He looked so baffled that I laughed.

“Forgive me if I’m rude but this body is telling me...” Alex hung his head, jaw tight with tension.

“Telling me that I need...”

“Need?”

Alex shook his head. “Forgive me, Harper,” he said and grabbed my ankles. There was that feel of sliding along wood for an instant and my stomach bottomed out like I was on an amusement park ride. Then he my ankles were

at his shoulders and his gas-flame blue eyes were pinned to the sight of his cock slamming into me over and over again. Alex was out of words. Alex was all action.

I gave myself over to the sensation of him. He was big and hard and he filled me perfectly, the tip of him nudging my G-spot over and over so that the long, slow build to orgasm was exquisite. I gripped the edge of my vintage table and bit my lip, my heart jumping as my body grew wetter and slicker and closer to coming.

“Forgive me,” he said again and crushed down on me. His lips desperate and hot on mine, he kissed me, pinning me under himself and my own legs, bent impossibly high. But it opened me wide as he drove into me, the friction of his urgent pounding rubbing my clit until I was grasping at his skin like it could save me from my own pleasure. Alex came with very little sound at all. The intensity of it seemed to steal his very voice, but my orgasm was loud enough for both of us.

When he kissed me, I explained, “You don’t need to ask forgiveness. That huge, big, all encompassing good feeling you just had...”

“Yes?” he asked, brushing my damp hair off my forehead and touching my face like a man reading Braille.

“That was an orgasm and a good, good thing and you don’t

need forgiveness.”

He grinned. “I want to do it again,” he said.

“You and me, both,” I laughed. Then my head was full of bells and I was struggling to sit up and pushing him out of my way.

Alex turned, maybe not hearing my bells but hearing something. “What?”

“I think it will have to wait, the doing it again,” I said, pulling on my jeans fast, barefoot and suddenly chilled I searched the mess of a foyer for my top.

And then there she was. Our first ghost. Tall and pale, impossibly thin the way only young girls can be. Like some awkward bird who hasn't quite figured out its wings yet.

Eighteen? Nineteen? Young. A young, young, hesitant soul. “Hi,” she said.

I gave her a finger wave, the cold and the tingling overtaking me. I wanted food, then, massive amounts of greasy fast food. I wanted wine. I wanted Alex to fuck me again. My body revved like an engine, trying to process all that was now required of it.

It takes a lot of energy to communicate with the other side. “Hi,” I managed.

“Hello,” Alex said, buttoning his button fly and finding his navy blue pullover.

“How—”

She cut him off. “So, am I like...interrupting?”

I could only laugh.

“Of course not,” Alex the angel said. “This is Harper Brown. She owns the house.”

I gave her a nod and sat with my ass on the edge of the table. Was he going to invite her for tea next? I waited without speaking as Alex found his shoes.

“You’re the one,” she said to me. “But he—”

“He’s a whole other issue,” I said. “He’s not human. He’s...” Alex shook his head, barely visible, but I stopped. I guess I wasn’t supposed to say. “Just visiting,” I finished.

“I need my dad to know that Johnny had nothing to do with my death,” she said.

Her dress was white and not something a young woman would pick out to spend her eternity in.

It was basically a horrible mix of an oversized pinafore and a wedding gown.

“You know you can change that,” I said, nodding at her dress.

She looked down as if she'd never seen the dress before. Maybe she hadn't. “I...”

“Just focus on what you'd like it to be and think hard until it shifts. Manifest your mental reality,” I said. Then I waited.

It didn't take long and my new ghost seemed to marvel at that. There she stood in her skinny jeans and a yellow V-neck Forenza sweater. She wore it backward in classic eighties fashion. Her feet were in silver flats and huge chandelier earrings swung from her lobes. Her hair was teased high and sprayed out. Big hair, indeed. An eighties girl.

So, what? She'd been dead for a few decades. “Wow,” she said, looking at what I can only imagine had been her favorite outfit in life.

“Now that you're more comfortable. What's your name?”

“Molly,” she said.

I smacked my forehead before realizing it was rude. Molly? What next? Farmer Ted the ghost? I shook my head. Was this an eighties movie or a nightmare? But then Alex put his arm around me, reading my frustration like a book and I

sighed. So it was real.

And the attraction that slammed me in the solar plexus was very real too. We had to deal with Molly because I wanted Alex all over again. I knew it was hormones mixed with supernatural emissions. I knew that I was an ethereal tuning fork, basically. But it did not stop or even dampen my want of him.

“Right. I’m Harper as you know, this is Alex. Lead the way. Where is your dad?”

We’ll tell him Johnny’s in the clear.”

“I only live up the road. And I’ve been waiting such a long time...” she trailed off and my heart broke a little bit.

Rules to being a successful sensitive include not getting emotionally involved with your ghosts if you can help it. In the end, they are still dead and you cannot change the past. Also, it’s sort of like breaking up over and over and over if you grieve when they finally move on for good or just up and go *poof* as ghosts are prone to doing.

“I hear you. Come on, then, Molly. Let’s get your dad straight.”

Alex took my hand and beamed at me as if I had done the most wonderful magical thing ever.

“What?” I whispered. I don’t know why, Molly could still hear me if she wished. “It’s what I do. It’s how I’m programmed.”

“Yeah, but nowhere in the rules does it say you have to be compassionate. Or nice.

Or patient.” He leaned in and kissed me right on the collarbone and all of me turned to one giant nerve ending, wanting Alex. Craving him the way I used to crave a cigarette after a long flight when I still smoked. I curled my fingers in his shirt and tugged him in for a hard kiss.

“Ahem,” said Molly.

“Of course! Let’s go! Lead the way,” I said on a sigh and she disappeared through the wall.

“Well, we can’t follow you that way!” I yelled.

I heard *Oops* in my head and then she was waiting for us outside the front door. She gave us the follow me hand gesture and off we went. A sensitive, an angel and a ghost.

Sounds like the beginning of a bad joke told in a bar by old drunk men.

I was starving, but the food urges would have to wait. I tried to distract myself by grilling Alex.

“So you chose me, eh? Was it because of my fabulous

beauty?" I teased.

Come to think of it, I wasn't even made up today. Beat up jeans, beat up boots, moving clothes. I hadn't even put on makeup. Just big sunglasses on my head to pull over my naked eyes if need be.

"Oh, I can't see you up there," he said, swinging my hand like a young boy. He seemed to be fascinated with my skin, repeatedly rubbing it with his fingertips like a good luck charm.

"You can't?" I was shocked.

"Well, we can. But not the way you see. It's a whole other kind of perception." Alex leaned in and smelled my hair, touched my eyelashes. It made me laugh, and truth be told, blush.

Molly looked back, her face caught somewhere between a frown and a smile. She seemed a bit sad, a bit jealous and a bit amused. But who could blame her. Being dead wasn't easy.

"So what can you see up there?" I reached out and stroked his forearms—the warm skin, hard muscles, the freckles and a scar. I wondered how he got a scar. Was it already on the body he chose?

Like distressed jeans are already worn and broken in.

“Came with the body,” he said, in my head again. “Up there —” He looked over instead of up.

Then he shrugged. “It’s really all around us, not really up.”

“Oh,” I said. “That makes my head hurt a bit.”

“Anyway, I could see your soul.”

“As dark and gnarled as it is?” I joked, feeling conspicuous and naked at the moment for some odd reason.

Alex stopped and pulled me in to a shockingly tender hug. “It’s bright and shining like a ball of light,” he informed me with great tenderness. My heart hurt a little at how gently he was treating my fucked-up emotions. “But with the smallest gray and navy blue striations. Sadness. I was intrigued by you. That’s something special. We tend to be a bit...flat? Like we view you all as equals instead of special and unique.”

“Wow,” I said. More because I really believed him about the whole angel thing than anything else.

“Yes, a lot of my fellow angels really see snowflakes as more unique than humans.”

“What makes you different?” I asked.

Molly had stopped in front of a small red cottage similar in shape to mine. She sat on the low stone wall to wait for us. He kissed me quickly. "You. You made me different. Now do your job."

I gaped at him, unsure of what he meant but feeling a gushy, uncomfortable slide of girlish feelings for this possibly mental man. "Um..."

"Go on, help Molly. There's plenty of time for us."

"Okay. No pressure there," I said and followed Molly.

Chapter Three

“Mr. King?” I asked.

Molly’s father looked past her, at me and then at Alex who smiled that heartbreaker smile and gave a respectful nod that men somehow always manage to pull off. “Yes?”

He looked open but confused.

“We’re here about your daughter Molly.”

His face went taut with the look of grief that never quite fades, even with time.

“What about her?”

He didn’t invite us in but he did open the door a bit more and stand more securely in his doorway.

“I’m here with...” This was the tricky part. If the recipient was a believer I could just out myself and pass on the message. If the person had a very definitive set of rules for the universe and the communication between the dead and the living, well, then things were trickier.

“Yes?” He only sounded a tiny bit annoyed, to his credit.

“I’m here with a message from your daughter,” I said swiftly.

He looked hopeful, angry, happy, livid. It all flashed across his face in an instant.

Like watching an oil slick drift across clean water. Ugly and beautiful all at once. In one instant it is a marring effect, in the next you see a gorgeous rainbow.

“Who is it, Ed?” This was Mrs. King. A tall, lanky woman in her late sixties to early seventies .

“Someone about Molly.” He faced me like we were about to fight and her face did a caving in thing that broke my heart. Their grief was still very fresh over the loss of their daughter.

I turned to Molly. She said, “The best way to address it is to just bully through.

That’s how my dad is. Just tell him to stop blaming Johnny for my death.”

I sucked in a breath and said to Alex, “Jeez. I don’t know if I want to do this.”

He came up and nodded again to the dad. He put his hand on my waist and said softly in my ear.

“You don’t have to, you know. Free will and all.”

Molly said nothing, simply waited. And so did her father

who couldn't see his own daughter. I blew out a sigh. "Look if you need some help or something—" Ed King started but I shook my head.

"No, no help. I'm just here to pass on a message from your daughter."

Molly's mother sucked in a great wounded breath that broke my heart. "Listen, lady—"

I barreled on fast before he could shut me down, or worse, shut the door. "Mr.

King, your daughter needs you to know that Johnny didn't have anything to do with her death and she wants you to stop blaming him for it."

I stood there, holding my breath and biting my tongue as Alex ran his thumb along my lower back in a soothing gesture that no one but the ghost could see.

"How dare you," he said, starting to swing the door shut. His face stark with anger and pale from shock.

"Ed!"

"Quiet, Kelsey."

"Ed!"

I stuck my foot in the door, looking at Molly, begging her for more. I was angry and panicky and a bit put out. It all twisted in my belly, a toxic soup of emotions. I could see her mouth moving but it was really hard to pick Molly's words out of the ether. But I managed. "She says to...she says to stop calling Johnny on her birthday and hanging up. But only after he knows it's you."

Molly was talking frantically, I was struggling to hear and Kelsey King said, "Ed?"

Do you do that, Ed?"

"Who are you?" Ed said to me.

I struggled to hear his daughter above all the ruckus. "I am a friend of...I am a friend," I finished.

"She says to stop drinking so much that you pass out on the day she died. That's no way to remember her."

"Ed?" Kelsey said again, her big gray eyes ricocheting between me and him. Her body language said so much of this was news to her.

"She said that she was the one who got the drugs and that Johnny tried to talk her out of it. She tried them anyway. He..." I shook my head.

Molly was yelling now but her voice seemed so far away.

My upset and her mother's fear and her father's anger were all working together to dampen my ability to hear her. Alex said, "He tried to save her."

I turned to the Kings and said, "He tried to save her. He even put the drugs in his pocket to preserve her memory. So you would feel better about her. He took the blame.

And she wishes he hadn't." I gushed now that I could hear her. I didn't breathe. I rushed to push it all out at once. "But they weren't his, they were hers and she bought them with the money from..."

Here it was. I could tell by the urgency with which she said it. This was the part that would convince Ed King that his daughter had given him a message. "The money you paid her to help you pick out the pink leather purse for your wife. You spent the day together and you laughed and you joked and you slipped her a twenty to let you take all the credit for the gift," I breathed.

Ed King stared at me and his wife took his arm and then his face seemed to fold in on itself and he wept. Hard and long and deeply. It was like watching someone dance naked or have sex. I turned to say something to Molly but Alex squeezed my shoulder and said, "Good job, Harper. She's gone."

* * * * *

“That seemed too easy,” I said.

Alex took my hand and we walked up the dark road. So different from the city, this dark moonlit section of road in the middle of the country. The fall wind cut right through my jeans and cardigan and I shivered. Alex, ever the chivalrous angel, took off his loose-fitting duster and draped it around me. “Easy isn’t wrong.”

I snorted. “That’s why you like me,” I said.

Not much on the humor, the angelic. He looked confused and then ponderous and said, “I’m not sure why I’m drawn to you but I am.” He turned and put his huge toasty hands on my waist. I didn’t think, I stood on tiptoe and I kissed him.

“I like you, too,” I said. I remembered seeing him walking somewhat absentmindedly up my road and liking him on sight. Being attracted to his broadness and tallness and darkness. I smiled as he kissed me some more. His hands slipped up under his own coat, cupping my breasts through my sweater. The heat of his skin seeped through the cotton and had my body ready for him that fast. In a blink. In a heartbeat.

“I’m glad you like me, Harper. Am I allowed to...” Alex walked me backward onto the side of the road that was wooded. We stumble-stepped in a drunken kind of synch until we were in the thick section of trees. No houses, no

people, just a barely moonlit trickle of a stream. My back hit the rough trunk of an oak and Alex bit my lip by accident.

I hissed and Alex reached up to touch my mouth. "I'm sorry, Harper. So, sorry! I lost my balance and—"

I grabbed his hair and pressed my front to his front. "Would you think I was a freak if I said I liked it?"

Alex shook his head in the silvery light. "No. I could feel that you liked it. But I was afraid that I had hurt you. And I never want to hurt you," he said.

"Unless I want it," I corrected.

"Yes, unless you want it."

"Gently. Just bite me gently," I said and let his mouth come down on my throat as his hands returned to pinch and stroke my breasts. He pushed up under my cardigan, my skin growing chill at first and then warming with his touch. When he feathered his thumbs over my nipples I moaned low, feeling the tug of arousal deep in my pussy. I wanted him again. I wanted him deep inside me, filling me and fucking me.

His teeth nipped so that bright sparks of pain sparkled on my skin. My nipples spiked harder than before, my pussy going wet so that I could feel the slide of warm fluid in my panties. "Harder," I said.

Alex bit me harder and his hands found my jean button, he tugged and I helped him. "Am I being rude?" he asked. Poor thing, he really was lost at this.

"Be rude," I said. "Be rude some more." I grabbed the front of his jeans and wrestled them until my hand was down inside his pants, holding his cock, touching him so that his breath came hard and fast and his tongue flicked out to touch mine.

"Okay, I can do that." He dropped to his knees and tugged at my jeans. Freed me from them so that when he stood and took my leg and wrapped it around his waist, I didn't fall. My pussy spread and slick for him, he rubbed against me, his warm hard-on maddening against my flesh.

"Condomcondomcondom," I chanted and he sighed heartily.

"I don't need—"

"I need it," I admitted. "Please."

Alex closed his eyes and rested his forehead on mine. He never stopped bucking against me softly. A metronome of motion, sliding his hot skin to my wet slit. And then it was sheathed, his hard-on, and I laughed. "I'll never get used to that."

"I'll never get used to being reminded to do it," he said, slipping the head of his cock into my pussy, pushing my arms low and back so that I had to grip the oak's bark as it bit into my lower back, adding that sharp spark of pain that made my cunt go tight around his thrusting cock.

"Sorry."

"Don't ever be sorry with me," he said and his mouth crushed down on mine. His lips and tongue bullying mine into submission. For an angel, he sure as hell could kiss me so that my ears smoked and my insides started to boil over.

"Okay." I let him push me hard to the trunk, pinning me helpless and tight to the tree, and my legs came up to wrap around his waist. He was as big to me as the monstrous oak. I opened for him, taking his cock as he thrust high and hard into me. "I won't."

"Good. I know that you are this way because of the energy," Alex said, bending his head at an impossible angle to suck at my nipple. He pushed my sweater high on my chest so that he could bite and suck until my insides grew tight around him and I bit my lip to keep from crying out and startling whoever the hell lived across the street.

"Not entirely," I corrected. I shifted under him, eddying like a tide, and he let me. I had experienced an influx of psychic

energy before. I had been able to fend men off and once, even sent a boyfriend I was breaking up with home. Not with Alex. With Alex the insatiable feeling got the better of me. I almost told him he was different, but held it in.

“But why am I this way? Psychic energy and ghosts don’t bother me. Or influence me. Why am I so...uncontrollable around you? Why do I have to have you?”

He thrust harder and the bark of the tree scraped my skin. I felt the warm flow of blood as the tissue tore a bit, but I didn’t want him to stop. I gripped him harder and felt the orgasm rushing toward me like a wave. “I don’t know. I don’t know.”

“I feel like I need you. Like I have to have you. I can’t not have you,” he said. His lips brushed my ear and I came, holding his shoulders like I was going to be tugged underwater by an undertow. “Do you feel that?” he asked.

I hated to admit weakness. Especially being newly single. But I did. I had an undeniable forceful tug to the angel-slash-possible-crazy-man. I nodded, but refused to speak.

“I heard that,” he said, gripping my bottom tight in his fingers so it pinched. My body let loose a warm trickle of juices and I inched closer to coming again. Everything was intense with this man. I wished I could see his gorgeous blue eyes, but I felt the energy that pulsed off him like a

flickering flame.

Lust rolled in my belly and affection flooded my chest. I was a mess.

“You heard me nod? Did my head rattle?”

“Sort of. Not the rattle, but the nod. I heard you nod. I felt your feelings. There is a certain amount of empathy with angels. I can feel what you feel. When you’re open to me. And when we’re joined.” He thrust and thrust and wedged his big hand between us, rolling the slippery ball of his thumb over my clit. “And you are open to me right now.” He came, his teeth on my lower lip where he nipped until I joined him. My pussy milked his cock until we both staggered at the base of the tree, trying to right our messed up clothes.

“Oh, that’s great. So when I was all pissed and frustrated back at Molly’s house?”

He nodded, grinning and taking my hand. Alex led me toward my new home and said, “Who can blame you? I was frustrated and I’m an angel.”

“Jeez.”

“I wasn’t expecting this,” Alex said, pushing open my brick-red door when we got home.

“What?”

“The way I feel,” he said. His big hands worked to tidy my front entry table. I took his hand in mine. Large and warm and soft on the palm, no calluses.

“Frustrated like a human?” I said, smiling.

Alex reached up and brushed a long brown strand of hair, stained honey from the summer now past, from my face.

“The feelings I have for a human. How intense it is.

Like seeing the light of the inner heaven for the first time.”

“Inner heaven?” I asked.

“Long story. There are degrees of heaven like lots of stuff. Inner, outer, upper. It’s complicated.”

“Hungry?” I asked, letting it go. Heaven was not something I wanted to ponder tonight. Not while exhausted and so hungry I was tempted to eat a cardboard box.

“What’s that?”

“Seriously?”

He grinned. “Seriously. What is that?”

I patted his belly, flat and taut. “Is there an aching gnawing

feeling in here?”

Alex pressed a hand to his taut stomach and nodded. “Is that what that is?”

“Hunger,” I said. He followed me into the kitchen where I opened the fridge.

Nothing but a box of baking soda and a bottle of ketchup the previous owner left stared back at me. “See, yeah. About that. I’m sort of light on food stuff.”

“It’s okay,” he said. He trailed his fingers up my spine and the zing of excitement that flew from his fingertips made me feel a little drunk.

“It’s really not. If you don’t eat, then you will...” I trailed off. Trying to explain something as mundane as eating was hard to do.

“What?”

“Fall down? Stop functioning? You won’t work right. You’re familiar with cars, right?”

“Of course, we see them all the time. We’re familiar with a lot, even eating,” he laughed. “I understand the concept and the human need.” This time his fingers tiptoed up the front of me. His fingers skipped from my bellybutton up the middle of me, like he was tugging up an invisible zipper,

only the sensation made me feel naked not clothed.

“Good. Then you understand that humans eventually die if they don’t eat. Though, I doubt we’re going to die, I do think we could feel gross and bad and not be able to help any more pesky ghosts if we pass out.”

Alex leaned in and kissed me. The smell of him, a mix of manly smells and baking smells filled my head. Is this what heaven smelled like? Or just my version? “I see,”

Alex said. He pressed his soft warm lips to mine and pushed his tongue gently into my mouth.

The sensation of him kissing me warmed my pelvis from the inside out, my pussy going flush and liquid for him again. I was on the verge of bending over my counter and begging him to take me. But my stomach roared with need and I pushed him gently away.

“I know you want it again,” I said, my breath hitching with a needy stutter in my throat. Man, oh man, this angel screwed with my head. And my hormones. “And I do too,” I confessed. “Really, really, *really* do. But we need to eat or you’re going to sex me right into unconsciousness.”

Alex Church got my sense of humor enough that he snorted with soft laughter and I smiled at him, liking it even more. I raided a box on the counter and found a tin of crackers and some peanut butter. I set about making us peanut butter

crackers, with lids, thank you very much. “I think there’s a case of soda in the pantry and a case of water, too.”

Alex pulled the door open and we both jumped. “Um...”

“Damn! Another ghost!” I stared at him, lean and tall and much older than Molly.

“I mean, hi. Sorry. Didn’t mean to be rude.”

The ghost stepped out, nodded, stood in the corner while Alex stared at me. I closed my eyes.

“He wants us to carry on. He can wait. As long as it’s not *too* long,” I gave a hearty sigh. Nothing was creepier than uber patient ghosts.

“So we...just eat? But I...” Alex, poor clueless angel, looked confused.

I waved a hand at him. “He’ll be fine. Don’t worry, he’ll butt in if need be. Might as well grab us some drinks, most likely he won’t talk ’til we’re done. We’ll eat and then he’ll spill the beans. And we’ll have our next mission!” I fake-chirped at him.

“Are you happy?” Alex asked, eyeing me warily.

“Hell, no. But what am I going to do? I doubt I’ll be able to stay in my new dream house,” I sighed. “Ghosts and angels

and what's next? De—”

Alex held up a hand. “Whoa, wouldn't go there,” Alex said.

“Do they really exist?” I asked. I'd never had a run in with an inhuman but I wondered.

“Do I?”

“Good point. If you do, then I guess the opposite of you could.”

“You won't stay here?” He looked sad as he gave the ghost a wide berth and settled at the counter on a red-topped stool.

“I'll never get any rest,” I admitted, passing him a plate of peanut butter crackers. I set about inhaling mine wishing I had more. And maybe a steak to go with it. Alex passed me a soda and I drank deeply. God, I had no idea I was so ravenous for food and drink until it was before me.

“You see them all the time?”

“Mostly. I mean, I can turn it off. I'm lucky, I always have been able to. And I don't quite know how. I just sort of... can. Like you and your shutting your eyes and manifesting stuff, thing. Do you know exactly *how* you do that?”

Alex shook his head, bit into a cracker and grinned widely.

He ate two more without chewing, I was pretty sure. Peanut butter crackers—score! “Nope. I just do it.”

“Same thing. But I can never tune out all of these lingering spirits. And it’s still an active graveyard from what I can tell! They’re burying fresh bodies every week. My god! It’ll be like a twenty-four hour convenience store around here but only with help for the recently deceased.”

“So you’d have to give up your dream home after all you’ve been through because...you’d never get any rest?”

I nodded. “Sad but true,” I sighed. “But hey, we get what we get, right? Gotta play the hand you’re dealt and all that jazz.”

Alex shook his head which baffled me. “That’s sad.” Of all the folks in my life, I’d think he’d know since it had all been going on before he even came down here to help me. Fell to earth? Plummeted?

Dived? Whatever.

“Aren’t you here to help me deal with my loss?” I asked him, thoroughly confused.

I noticed our patient ghost was looking a bit impatient now.

Alex shook his head. “It doesn’t work that way. I don’t know why I’m here or how I can help or even if I can.” He stretched across the counter and pressed his lips to mine.

All of me warmed at the kiss. All of me seemed to crawl with need and I wanted him so bad right then I wished I could blink my eyes and banish my ghostly visitor.

“Why would you be here if you can’t help?” I breathed, pushing my fingers into his soft dark hair. His eyelids drifted shut at the pleasure of my touch and his gas-flame blue eyes were shrouded from me for an instant.

“Sometimes we come to observe or just watch over you. To guard, protect, guide or just watch.”

He outlined my lips where he’d just kissed me with his fingertip. I shivered and I swear to you, I heard that ghost sigh, mightily.

“Ohhhh, I see,” I said. “No, I lied, I don’t really see. But we do have to help this man before he finds a way to beat me from beyond the grave. His patience has met its limit and I feel like...there’s an urgency now.”

Alex smiled. “I guess you’re right.” He very subtly pressed his thumb to my nipple through my cardigan and I made a sound in my throat that was half growl.

“Don’t get me into trouble.”

“I think it’s you who is getting me into trouble,” he said.

“Hey, horny is part of this deal mister!” Again I heard the ghost make a disgruntled noise in my head and I wrangled my libido and my attention. “Fine, fine! Tell me, Mr.

Ghost.”

Walter.

“Tell me, Walter, how can I help you?”

So Walter told me. And thankfully, for the most part, Alex got the gist of it. I simply summed up.

“There is a hospice in the center of town where the souls cannot cross over.

We need to help.”

It seemed the Cherry Grove Hospice had an angel of death—a worker who was

“helping” residents cross over. Not the ones who truly wished for end-of-life assistance, but those who did not. Those still relatively in this earthly plane and happy to be here.

The fear and the anger and the disservice was holding the souls at the facility. Hospices are like airports for the dead. There’s a departure every few minutes some nights.

Something as stressful and disheartening as an angel of death—or more succinctly, a murderer—could clog up the works hugely.

“Let’s go. Or we’ll never ever get to…” Walter had turned his back and I reached out and touched my fingers to Alex’s fly. He was hard under my touch, feeding off my constant sexual energy. I bet if I asked him if he was hungry, he’d say yes. Because I was hungry again, already. And if I pulled out a bottle of wine, you’d have two drunken, hungry, horny ghost facilitators on your hands.

Instead of throwing him down and banging him senseless or eating or drinking, I tugged his hand and we followed Walter.

Chapter Four

My wife is in there, Walter informed me and I sighed. Poor Walter. Poor Walter's wife. Poor hospice people being sent on their departing flights before they were ready.

We climbed in my beat-to-shit Chevy and headed up the hill to the high center of town.

The building was like something out of a movie. Large, dark, rather creepy and as intimidating as hell "Can you see that?" I asked Alex.

Alex nodded. "Yeah, right out of the mind of one of your human horror writers."

I laughed. "Yeah, I bet you're right." The building was swirling with a dark halo of shadows.

Although invisible for most folks, I could see the dark stain of bad psychic energy floating around the hospice like storm clouds. "How about you, Walter?" I asked.

When I turned Walter was gone. I sensed he'd hurried up to see about his wife. I turned to Alex, biting my lip with anxiety. "I have to tell you, I'm scared shitless," I said. My intuition had not hit fever pitch yet. There was still time for me to collect myself and for that I was grateful. Hell, maybe

we'd go in there and Walter would be wrong. Judging by the energy around the building, that was doubtful, but a girl can hope. "I'm really, really scared," I said again.

He looked shocked and then concerned. Alex, newly humanized angel, ran his hand through his hair so it stood in dark spikes and horns. I smoothed one down, rubbing his hair like a worry bead. "You are scared? You don't strike me as the scared type." He took my hand and kissed it gently. My pussy loosed a small trickle of juices.

God, whenever he touched me I wanted him so, so, bad. It scrambled my brains, the way his skin felt touching mine.

"I'm used to small potatoes. A ghost here, a spirit there, a family freaked out by a residual haunt. Most people don't know I'm sensitive but family and the dead. I keep it close to my vest. I don't mind helping, but I don't bang my psychic drum and put my

'open for business' sign out. I freelance computer work, teach a class here and there, write technical stuff. I have a small account from my father's death when I was young and I have no interest in..."

He was holding both my hands in his and the heat of him made me feel like it was June instead of November. I felt like I should have warm sand between my toes and sun in my hair. "In?"

"In being Harper Brown psychic detective. Or medium for hire. Or any of that." I let my body take over for a minute so my lips were drawn to his like I had magnets hidden in my teeth. Alex kissed me back, pulling me to him across the hideous burgundy bench seat of my ancient Chevy Malibu. Gotta love the bench seat.

"I understand. It's not your destiny, if that makes sense."

"Do you know my destiny?" I asked, putting my hand in his lap. Trying to be ladylike and failing.

Instead of being demure, I rubbed my palm up and down his cock, feeling it harden even more under my touch. I loved to feel the excitement of a man grow when I touched him. It was a heady feeling steeped in power and lust and a lot of affection for this particular man, already.

"No. I only know what it's not. And when I focus on you, that is not what I feel."

"What do you sense?" I know what I felt, and I continued to feel it, pulling at his buttons, amazed that already I was ready to have him in my body again. To take him deep and let him be in me and love me all over again. Just fast this time, because there was work to be done. Sadly. The urge to be with him was truly overwhelming, and I didn't question it. I knew that emotions and impressions and appetites ran high when I was surrounded with this kind of energy. I knew I

wanted sex like air but could abstain.

And I also knew that for some reason, with angelic Alex Church, I felt unable to abstain.

"I feel in you an overwhelming, staggering, drowning need to be happy," he said and pushed his palms along my skin, my sweater surging up over his hands as he slipped them under the fabric and along the heated length of my torso. His fingers found my nipples and he pulled my bra down to free them, only to pluck them into eager peaks that sent blips of pleasure from breast to cunt. An invisible tug of desire that ran through the whole of me and made my throat feel ticklish and small and my pussy feel hot and needy.

I pushed him back and climbed onto his lap, facing him, spreading my legs. I was boldly honest.

"I do need to be happy. But I don't know how. But I *do* know you make me happy. All of me, will you make me happy now? Before the big scary bad thing has to be dealt with?"

"I can do that," Alex said, baring my breasts, taking my nipple between his silken lips, licking me with the wet tip of his tongue.

I shimmied around, getting my jeans off and pulling his cock free of his filleted fly.

"Do your thing for me," I begged. "The magical condom

thought-ray.” I grinned.

Alex smiled but ran his thumb along my bottom lip so that I licked it willingly and rocked on his lap, eager to get him inside me. Keen to still the anxiety and fear rolling through me like an invisible ball of fire.

“I don’t need to do that,” he said. “There would be no ill effects or familial effects of our union,”

he said. His lips found my throat and I could feel his heartbeat under my hand where I pressed my palm to his chest. I knew he was telling me the truth.

“Humor me, please,” I asked, humbly.

He put his forehead to mine, closed his brilliant blue eyes and concentrated while his fingers played softly along the skin on my sides. And then he was safe and I was lowering my body onto his hard length. Inch by inch, I took him in, slowly this time.

My hands locked on the headrest behind his head. His face buried at the crux of my neck where he kissed me with impossibly gentle kisses and his hands clasped my waist and he guided me, trying so hard to be patient, I could tell.

He didn’t surge up under me to bury deep, instead, he kept his calm and let me control the speed, though his hands tightened to my skin so that I felt like he was marking me.

That maybe when he moved his hands from me, his brilliant palm prints would stand out on my skin. He held the small of my back as I moved over him, coming down hard to get him deep inside me, my lips in his hair, my hands tight on the back of the seat.

“Harper,” he said.

“Yes?”

Alex looked at me and I felt exposed and adored all at once. He shook his head.

“Just saying your name. I like the sound of it.” His hands stroked the sides of my breasts until my skin erupted in sympathetic goose bumps. “I like the feel of it on my mouth.”

My pussy gripped at him so tightly the friction was maddening. I moved faster, taking him as far as I could, my fingers skimming his warm skin, his eyebrows, the stubble on his jaw. “I like how it sounds coming out of your mouth,” I said and kissed that mouth.

His hands clamped down on my hips and now he did move me. He tugged me to him tighter on each descent I made. Held me close for a beat so that his cock was high and hard inside me, nudging my G-spot so that the warmth that flooded through me was overwhelming. My bones felt leaden but soft, my blood hot and slow. A constant lazy

eddy under my skin.

“Harper, I—”

I shook my head. “Hush,” I said. Whatever he was about to say, I didn’t want to hear it yet. I wanted to be right in the moment, locked body to body with this beautiful man who wasn’t a man. I wanted to feel his cock inside me, his lips on my skin and his fingers tugging at my hips to anchor me so I wouldn’t float away. I wanted to shun the fear for a few more moments and then go deal with it.

I could feel by the restless tug in my solar plexus that whatever Alex Church wanted to say would distract me—maybe in a good way, but no distraction was good when a veil of evil and negativity had settled over what should be mostly a spiritual way station on the road to the afterlife. “Kiss me,” I demanded.

And he did. He kissed me hard, holding me still finally. Holding my flanks in his incredibly strong hands, he fucked me, slamming up from under me so that he controlled the speed with which he entered me. I came around his cock, the slickness of my orgasm quickening his way to his own. I rested my forehead to his, felt his heart pound under my fingers as he came. His breath on my cheek, his hands on my back, moving restlessly like he wanted to feel every inch of me. In case at some point he couldn’t anymore.

Some little piece of my heart broke right then. I remembered that if he wasn't stark raving mad—which I knew he wasn't—Alex Church was an angel and he wouldn't be staying. No matter how attached I'd become to him. I shoved the thought away and laughed, "Boy, howdy, I'm going to be sore when this is over," I said. "When it all wears off."

"When will it wear off?" he asked, rubbing the sharp edge of my cheekbone with the edge of his thumb.

Never. "I don't know," I said. But never was what I felt intuitively. I would never not crave Alex.

As long as he was around, and maybe when he wasn't.

* * * * *

"How the hell are we going to do this?" I asked, the actual logistics of the whole mess finally permeating the sex-fog of the last few hours. "I mean, god, with Molly all I had to do was a parlor trick.

Your daughter told me you are doing X, Y, and Z. Now believe me that she's telling you to stop and *poof!*

all done. No problem. This...this is a whole train station worth of souls, and visitors. And a murderer!" I yelped.

"We'll figure it out. Have faith," Alex said.

“Have faith. Look who’s talking. You’re hardwired for faith.”

“Not so much,” he said. “We are created in faith, but plenty of us go rogue. Fall, walk off, or worse, become numb to their calling. They simply go through the motions.”

“So, you’re basically humans with special magical powers and maybe wings and you can manifest condoms if need be?” I laughed.

Alex smiled, leading me through the maw of two automatic doors. They opened, allowed us entrance and then shut behind us. “Sort of.”

“I feel like the building just swallowed us,” I admitted.

Alex glanced around, the flutter of his pulse visible below the shadow of beard growth on his throat. Even angels needed a shave, apparently. “Me, too,” he said, softly.

“Oh, well that helps! Nothing to worry about there! That a heavenly creature feels insecure and...eaten!”

“Sorry. Honesty isn’t good?” He was dead serious.

I fought the urge to kick him. Or hit him. Or cry. “No, that is not good! You are supposed to be all strong and not worried and guiding me and stuff.”

“Sorry,” he said again, frowning. His eyes, still as blue as the flickering flame on my brand new oven range, roamed the walls and he seemed to be gauging the spiritual energy of the building. “There is a lot of sorrow here. And not from the passing on.

From this person who seems to be holding souls already in a state of transition hostage.”

I closed my eyes and stilled my pounding heart. I breathed and focused only on my breath and my impressions. I felt sure that if not for my natural-born psychic filter, this building would look like a crush of lost souls to my sensitive’s eyes. I would not just see a hospice, I’d see a waiting room of ghosts in need of my attention. Thank goodness for natural talents because when I opened my eyes to confirm my feelings of the same, the only ghost I saw was Walter. Waiting patiently for me to get my bearings and see him despite his obvious worry. Then he turned and led us to the bank of elevators.

Other human visitors flitted around us, most of them quiet and reserved. A hospice is usually a quiet respectful place. And this one was no exception. But for the crushing feel of dread and sadness that the flesh and blood visitors weren’t tuned in to, Cherry Grove Hospice was a peaceful building run by folks full of love. But for one. And that one was the reason for the swirling chaos of black negativity around the crown of the building.

We loaded into an elevator with some others and I tuned into Walter's energy.

When the elevator doors closed, I said simply, "Three," to Alex and he pressed the button.

A young woman with long dark hair was exiting the room facing the elevator when we arrived.

"Walter's daughter," I whispered to Alex. She looked a few years my senior, so mid-thirties. Her pretty face was pinched with sadness and worry. Her mother was in that room. Walter's wife. And from the freakydeaky vibe coming off that room, his daughter— *Sheila*—had just left the angel of death in the room.

"I'm a bit offended that everyone refers to him as an angel. He's a monster," Alex said, his lips pressed to my ear so only I could hear him.

"I hear ya. Call him whatever you like. Asshole works for me," I said. We peeked into the room and there a male nurse was whistling a jaunty tune, tidying and wiping down the tray table. Biding his time to make sure Sheila didn't return, I was sure. "I don't know what to do! What do I do?" Panic swelled in my chest and I twisted the hem of my cardigan around my fingers in a way that drove my mother mad when I still lived at home.

Alex grabbed me hard by the arms, so hard I felt the blood flow pinched off from that flesh, and kissed me. His mouth rough and hard on mine, not tender the way I was used to with him. My breath stalled and I settled a bit, just enough to think. Alex pulled back. “Better?”

“Wow, yes. I still don’t know what the fuck to do but I’m much, much calmer about it.”

“You need to distract him for a few moments. I will talk to the daughter,” he said, pointing to a small balcony that looked out over the grounds and the city below. I shivered to think of unsuspecting Sheila standing underneath the dark cloud of badness above the hospice, trapping the traveling souls the way dense smog would ground flights that needed to take off. But Sheila had no idea what was above her and I had no intention of telling her.

“Okay, okay. I can do that. I’ll go pretend to be visiting...” I tuned in to Walter, who was quietly and ethereally taking all this in from the doorway. *Mary*. “I’ll pretend I’m visiting Mary and then the ang—I mean the monster—won’t be able to do anything until I leave. Which will be...” I stared at Alex willing him to help me.

He did, “When you hear me—can you hear me?” A small tinkling sound filled my head and I nodded. The sounds of small bells I heard when I was near psychic energy or otherworldly things. It varied in degrees depending on the

source. Sometimes it sounded like wind chimes, sometimes like church bells. Alex's chimes were soft and soothing and calm, like him.

"I can. I can hear you." I reached out and took his hand, the feel of him grounding me more. He made me feel tethered to earth like I wouldn't zoom into space. Funny, what with him being an angel and all.

"When you hear me, take off. Because that means she'll be coming soon and you need to leave time for the monster," he smiled at the new term, "to make his move."

"Got it," I said a little overzealously. I was practically vibrating with nerves and the severity of the situation was almost paralyzing. "My god, I think I might throw up."

Alex kissed me again, hard, with teeth and I sighed into his mouth. "Don't do that,"

he said.

"Okay," I agreed. I touched his face, his hair, and finally said, "If we don't move now, then we won't and we'll end up doing something like have sex in the hallway surrounded by grieving people. And Walter..." I looked at him and he frowned.

"Walter wouldn't like that, I don't think."

"I'll go out there and you go in there. And be careful," he said, pulling me in tight.

His hard chest crushed against me and the smell of him swirled around my head.

Nirvana.

"I will. One more," I said and he gave me one more kiss. This one long and soft and toe curling.

* * * * *

"Hi there!" I practically screamed. The angel of death, aka the monster, barely flinched. Working in a docile environment but dealing with distraught families had helped him modulate his reactions. Or he was just a flat line of a person.

"Ma'am," he said, softly. I did catch a small glimmer of what appeared to be disappointment. I had interrupted his fun, poor thing.

"How is she, the dear?" I asked, making like I had ever in my whole life seen the woman in the bed. Walter lounged in the corner, his eyes glued to his Mary. It was touching to see that love did survive the barrier between life and death. One would think Walter would be eager for Mary to join him.

Her time was short most likely, it was a hospice, after all.

He didn't seem to want to be reunited with his wife this way, though.

"She's doing rather well. She's stabilized. There's talk of moving her to a lower floor if she improves further." He smiled. His nametag read *Kenny*. Kenny the killer.

"That's good."

"You don't have a tag," he said, eyeing me.

Shit. There was a tag? Damn. My eyes darted to the door to the balcony where I could see Alex talking to Sheila, his long duster flapping in the autumn wind like a cowboy in a movie. *Come on, Alex.*

Come on..."I flew right past the desk," I said, rushing my words. "Sorry. I know that's bad, I should have checked in. I was just trying to see if Shelly was still here."

Shelly? Shit! Sheila.

His mouth turned down but his eyes seemed to light with a slight predatory glow.

He was on to me, he just wasn't sure how yet. But I had set off his warning bells and whistles.

"Um..."

"Sheila! My cousin. Aunt Mary's daughter. The one who should be here somewhere. I'm her cousin. This is my aunt. And I have hardly ever called her Shelia," I rambled on. "I call her Shelly. Old childhood nickname. You know how kids are," I babbled.

He was nodding but reaching for his walkie-talkie. "You really do need to check in, I'll just call down and..."

Tinkle-tinkle-tinkle...

Thank god! That was Alex. "I'll go right now," I blurted. "Okay? How's that? I'll go there and get the thing, then I'll be back. Maybe I'll find Shelly, I mean Sheila, while I'm out there." I was backing out of the room, slowly but surely as the monster man eyed me warily. He was smiling slightly and it was an entirely creepy and unsettling.

My fingers brushed the doorjamb as I left. I could feel Walter's concern and Kenny's glee and it made me shake like I was dying. I felt horrible leaving Mary in there with a killer, but wasn't sure what else to do but put my trust in Alex.

I waited behind a huge potted fake palm. I held my breath and my ears buzzed from the oxygen deprivation. I could see him just barely as he moved forward toward the bed with a spare pillow in his hand. I saw him settle it over Mary and told myself, *If they are not here by the count of five I'm*

going in.

I'm going in and save Mary and we'll regroup. One...two...

I thought I would scream or cry but it didn't get to that because Sheila came rushing through, swift but silent in her fashionable sneakers. She moved like an athlete and by the time she hit the main hall she was running. Thank goodness. She rushed in and saw Kenny and that's when all the yelling started.

I rushed in right on her heels in time to see Kenny take a swing at Mary's daughter.

"Hey! Hey!" I shouted, not knowing why. Alex was right on my heels but by then Kenny was taking a wild and desperate swing at me. It caught me off guard, though I did manage to dodge it and he clocked poor Alex in the forehead. Alex went down like a heavenly sack of potatoes and I grabbed Kenny's arm. I didn't see the needle he held until the last moment.

I am needle phobic. I am hospital phobic, also, if you must know. I hate everything related to doctors, nurses, needles, hospitals, death or healing. Part of it is the whole sensitive thing where I pick up every damn feeling that I come across if I'm not careful.

The needle glanced off one of the oversized brass buttons on my cardigan swing sweater and I sent up a prayer of

thanks to the fashion gods. "Assshooooooooole!" I screamed and then Sheila rammed Kenny with the fresh tray table that he'd brought in.

In a blink Kenny was down on the ground and I was covered in food. Applesauce, gelatin, soup, milk, lots and lots and lots of fluids. God, I thought this woman was unconscious. They were being a bit optimistic weren't they? But that was neither here nor there because security was rushing in and I was dripping. Everywhere.

How many bodies in the morgue would they be able to trace back to Kenny once they started looking? How many would they never know about? How many would he admit to? Any? I let Alex pull me into his arms and hug me tight. If I wasn't mistaken he laughed softly, his mouth pressed to my hair.

"You're a bit moist," he said in my ear.

I cracked then. The laughter rumbled up and out of me in big hysterical waves. It was all the tension surging to the surface and I just let it go. Laughing, laughing, laughing as Alex held me. Laughing until I fucking cried.

* * * * *

Walter was gone and the hospice director led me to an empty room when the hoopla died down. After all the official

police stuff was said and done, and I came up with some totally made up bullshit story about why a brand new town resident was at the local hospice—presumably shopping around for my aging grandmother. Ms.

Nunley—the director—took pity on me and my messy self. “We’ll find you some scrubs to go home in,” she said softly and left the room.

I was shaking. Something very non-Harper-like. I pride myself on being pretty hard cored and very much a ball buster. Only tonight, dealing with a man who had looked so gleeful over taking out an unwilling, unsuspecting human being, had broken me a bit.

“Here, come on.” Alex peeled my sticky and stiffening cardigan off. He helped me shimmy out of my jeans and turned his face away when I shed my panties.

“Wow. When did you get so demure?” I tried to joke but my voice cracked.

He faced the door, holding out his hand for me to put my dirty clothes in. “I always want to look at you, Harper, but I’m more worried about taking care of the inside you right now than lusting after the outside.”

I smiled. I couldn’t help it. Twisting the HOT knob as far as it would go, I stepped into the clean, shiny, sterile shower. My body seemed to uncoil as the super hot water rained down

on me, traveling a wet silken trail under my hair, along my scalp, down my neck and between my breasts. I groaned as tension slipped away from me and applesauce was washed free of my hair. "Thank you," I said.

Alex sat on a small pink chair in the corner, most likely for a family member or caretaker. He nodded, holding my dirty clothes in his hands like a talisman. "That scared me," he admitted to the doorway.

"You? You're not supposed to be scared, you're an angel!" I laughed, washing my body, keeping the shower curtain cracked so I could see him. I felt a bit unstable and seeing that Alex was still present was reassuring to me.

"I think I'm more man than angel when it comes to you," Alex said. He turned his head toward me so I caught him in profile. It stole my breath, his beauty. I would miss him. Something in my heart twisted up and felt like it might break.

"You don't have to face away from me," I said. "I'm covered."

He turned to me and smiled and I didn't think about it. I pushed the curtain back and waved him in. He shocked me by stepping into the shower fully clothed and gathering me in his arms. "You'll be all wet," I said as he kissed me.

"I'll manifest dry clothes. It's a perk," Alex said, holding me

tight. He kissed my lips but didn't stop there. His mouth traveled my forehead, my eyelids, the tip of my nose. Each kiss was full of adoration. I had never felt more special or more treasured in my life. He ran his hands along my sides so that I trembled even in the warm water.

Alex pinched my nipples until I gasped, moving against him in a way that told him what I wanted. But he didn't give it to me. Instead, he buried his fingers inside me, touching and stroking my flesh until all of me moved against him, desperate and needy and on the edge.

“Alex, I want you to—”

“Next time. This time, just give me this. Just let me do this for you. You'll feel better and I'll feel great.” He smiled at me and those eyes of his flickered like eternal flames in the dim shower. I rested my back to the cool tile and gave into his fingers. His thumb found the ball of my clit and he pressed, painting circles with his wet skin as I bit my lip to stay as silent as I could.

I came in a long slow unwinding rush of pleasure. Grasping at slippery tile and sinking onto his still flexing fingers. Alex kissed me when I came, swallowing my cries so that I didn't have to worry.

Alex shed his clothes and got clean with me, killing two birds with one stone as I tried to explain it. Hygiene was

almost as hard to explain as hunger. We stood there in the stream of rapidly cooling water until I started to shake again. “Damn, I came in here to stop doing that,” I said.

“Let’s get you dressed and get you home.”

I let him help me into the scrubs, I let him talk for me when it came to saying goodbyes, and I let him load me into the car. Hell, I let him drive my piece-of-shit car home. I was all about letting Alex do for me. Under it all, a steady beat of fear pulsed, would he leave now that his mission here was done?

Kenny—that monster—had to be why Alex was here. Now that it was done, would he be called back? A heavenly recall where *zip!* he was gone?

Chapter Five

“Oh, no.” I groaned though I knew it was rude.

Alex grinned and simply said, “Hi, there.”

The ghost nodded at us, giving me the evil eye if I wasn't imagining it. “What can I do for you?” I asked, trying to keep my irritation and exhaustion at bay.

She nodded, her long blonde hair eddying around her small, pale face. She didn't speak to me, this one, she just projected a thought into my head and I laughed. “Well, hell, that's easy enough. I can manage that.”

Alex followed me as I stomped four doors down. My smoking suede ankle boots did not really go with the muddy pink scrubs Mrs. Nunley had given me but everyone would just have to deal with my current fashion atrocity. I knocked hard and waited, wanting nothing more than a huge meal and Alex curled up in my bed for the night.

After all, it might be the last time—hell, the only time—I ever got to spend the night with him.

It made my head hurt to realize that we'd only met hours before. Tons of adventure, stress, sex and flying food and beverages had really messed with my sense of time. The movers would be back tomorrow morning and I might be telling them to head back to the city. I could not keep this frenetic pace of ghost-aiding. It was too much. Too exhausting. And I could especially not do it if they were planning on snatching my angel back to the heavens.

“Do you know what time it is?” said a short, round woman with flaming red hair.

“Yep, it’s ghost time!” I said, laughing. I was tired and hungry and horny and pretty sure I was falling for a heavenly creature, and now she was going to bitch at me?

I don’t think so.

She frowned at me and started to slam the door. I stuck my boot in the jamb and winced. “I wouldn’t do that. Not if you want to know where...” I had to concentrate,

“Grandma Helen’s pearl necklace is!” God, I sounded maniacally victorious even to myself.

“What? Are you the new neighbor from the city? I knew you’d be crazy,” she said almost to herself.

“Hey! Look! I am here to help. Your dead cousin Sarah is telling me that it’s in the jelly car net!” I put my hands on my hips and Alex Church—that beautiful traitor—had the nerve to laugh.

“Well, then, thanks so much,” she snorted. “I’ll run right out and look in the jelly car net.”

Okay. So that sounded wrong. “Wait a moment,” I growled and turned to dead Sarah. I focused on her mouth as she projected. It all came together and I turned. “So, she said jelly cabinet, so sue me. I just stopped the angel of death and took a bath in applesauce.”

Now my brand new shiny neighbor looked damn near terrified. I realized what I had just said sounded mildly unsettling when taken out of context. “Look it’s in a teapot in the jelly cabinet. Your necklace. Now Sarah can rest because you are not upset anymore and I can rest because Sarah can rest.”

“Good night,” I said and turned on my heels, stomping back to my own wreck of a house.

I dug and dug and finally found a box of pasta and a jar of sauce. “There’s wine in that box,” I said, pointing. “I’m starved how about you?”

He patted his belly and said, “Yep, but I keep forgetting what that means.”

“It means food! You need food, food, food and I’m going to make it.” I dumped a can of mushrooms in the sauce and wished for ground beef, but beggars can’t be choosers. I tried to keep my voice light as he uncorked and poured me some wine. “So now what? You go back up there?”

Alex stopped, pinning me with a gaze that made me feel like a bug under a pin.

“It’s up to me. Free will and all.”

“Even for you?” I asked, shocked.

“Even for me. For all of us, free will.”

“Ah, so now that your work here is done, you get to go back and what? Rest, choose again?”

He stared, sipping his wine and wincing at the sharp taste.
“Wow.”

“Yeah, it takes some getting used to,” I laughed.

“I can do what I like. I can go back and study, I can go back and choose a new person to aide. I can...”

“You can?” Big giant butterflies seemed to have taken up residence in my stomach.

I turned my back on him so he couldn't see my fear.

“I can stay if I want. For as long as I want.”

“Ah,” I said on a shaky breath. “Well, it seems your work here is done. You've helped me, we rescued someone from an untimely death and helped a few ghosts.

Good stuff. I guess you'll be on your way soon.”

I stirred and stirred and stirred and heard him leave the room. When I heard the front door click behind him, I started to cry. Damn, damn, damn! Wasn't it too soon for this shit? Did it seem fair that I had just moved to a new place after a break up, lost the house I worked so hard on, lost the guy I thought was the one to Ruby—also known as Satan herself—met an angel. Then had to deal with movers *and* ghosts and *then* a murderer! Got covered in applesauce had the door slammed in my face and now a guy I seemed to have fallen for hook, line and sinker on first sight had just...left. Call me crazy, but that didn't seem fair.

I drank my wine, but did not eat my stupid-ass spaghetti.

Though the buzzing energy of the cemetery was still there, it was a low level vibe that didn't make me feel nearly as crazed as when I'd shown up. Still, there was no way I could live there if they knew about me, and by now they did.

I curled up in my bedframeless bed in the scrubs from the hospice. It's not like I had to impress anyone. This was the point where I wished I'd broken down and bought a cat or a dog—hell a guinea pig.

Well, maybe not a guinea pigs since I could crush a guinea pig in my sleep. But a cat or a dog, yeah.

I dozed instantly. Being exhausted and overworked and freshly broken hearted—again—will do that to a girl.

* * * * *

It seems I have slept alone long enough now that my very first impulse when feeling the weight of another person settle in my bed is to punch. So I punched. Hard.

“Ow!” Alex yelled, but it was muffled. In the dim light from the hall I could see him clutching his beautiful face.

“Oh shit! Oh sorry!” I sat up, feeling around in the dark for anything to offer him to put to his bleeding nose. Though I admit, the part of me that broke when he walked out the front door was a tiny bit gleeful at how hard I'd nailed him. By the time I found a wadded up tissue in the nightstand he was fine.

“It's fine. It's fine, it's really not important.”

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry!" I was kinetic then. Grasping at him, pulling at him, touching his face.

"What are you doing here?"

"Shh, Harper," he said. He leaned in, kissing me. Warm long kisses that stilled the wild thing that had bloomed in my chest from the fear and the surprise.

"I am shushing. I am," I lied. I tugged at his hair and I felt the resounding growl in his throat. I felt the hardening of his cock along my thigh. I felt him press to me, between my legs, rocking his hard cock against the soft fabric of my clothes. Pinning my panties to me under my scrubs. I held him close and kissed him hard because there was a very real chance, I realized, that I was dreaming this.

"No you're not shushing. You're talking." His strong fingers pushed down the horrible pink scrub pants. The top was next. When I was naked under him, he kissed me again.

I hadn't talked while he undressed me. That had to count for something.

"Where were you?" I asked but he started to rock. Pressing the length of his hard-on along the seam of my sex, tripping all the nerves around my pussy lips, getting just the right friction on my clit so that my brain sort of staggered to a stop and my breath froze in my lungs. Damn. For an angel, he sure knew how to be bad.

"Taking care of some things."

I pressed a hand between us and laughed. "Don't worry," he

said, when my fingers found the familiar feel of thin latex. “I always keep my word.”

“Next time, okay? Next time all naked, all the way. Promise,” I said, parting my thighs, touching his hot skin. Wishing I could see him better in the crappy light. The light seemed to brighten and then I could. Those smiling blue eyes and staggering face.

But most of all, with Alex Church, the total feel of him. The goodness of him. All of it.

“I’m going to hold you to that,” he said, and pulled my hands high, pinning them wide, pushing into me on a smooth, restrained thrust so that I whimpered like he was hurting me. But quite the opposite. My body bunched up around him, eager and wet and ready to couple with him again. Well trained to the pleasures that were Alex.

“After all, you are my first lover.”

He moved into me, slow and easy until I tugged and pushed against his restraining hold. Then his movement grew with each driving motion, filling me so that I said his name over and over like a prayer.

His mouth came down on my throat, his tongue lapping at my clavicle, my nipple, my breast. He sucked so hard that pleasure tugged at my pussy, tumbling me over into my first orgasm. Soft and somehow graceful. I came, trying so hard to free my hands from him, but not really wanting to break his hold or his spell. “Stay still for me, Harper,” he laughed. “I’m not done with you yet.”

He wasn't. He kept me there, rather easily, with his grasp, though he had switched to one hand.

The other snaked under my knee, lifting my leg high, skewing my body so that he brushed new bunches of secret flesh as he fucked me. I put my mouth to his shoulder, in lieu of having hands, and bit him as the second orgasm rushed over me and pulled me under. I bit him none too gently and heard him make a sound that made me smile in the dark. That spark of pain had him toeing the line between being in control and losing it.

"I had to make sure everything was good for you," he said, flipping me before I could track his motion. The world twirled around me and there I was, on hands and knees, ass high in the air, Alex's huge hands on my hips as he pushed into me from behind, anchoring me with his firm touch. He tugged me back to him even as he drove forward with greedy thrusts. The less refined side of him had my stomach dipping with crazy nerves and my blood hummed in my ears like feedback.

Because he's leaving. He had to make sure everything was good for you and now he'll leave.

After a goodbye fuck, of course...

I bit my tongue, refusing to give into pity as he moved faster and faster, his fingers sliding over the skin of my bottom. His finger pressed the small star of my anus and he pushed just enough of his finger in so that sparkles of bittersweet, unexpected pain flared in my body. "Not because I'm leaving,"

he said, moving more aggressively. Truly taking me, claiming me with the harsh overtone of this encounter. "Because I'm staying."

because I realized I can't leave. Because I saw you over all the things there were to see for a reason. You stood out to me for a reason, out of all the souls, all the people. And *you*, Harper, are the reason I belong here." His voice broke and he pushed me so my face was flush on the mattress. When he came, I came with him, crying into my pillow, but realizing it was a relief cry, not pain.

Alex collapsed flush on me, squeezing the air from my lungs with his weight so that I wheezed in a most unattractive way. It made me laugh. I lay under him, the pounding of his heart on my shoulder blade, the heat of him covering me. He laughed softly at my hysterical snickers. "What's so funny?"

"I made a sound like a deflating pool toy."

He twined his fingers in mine, stretching my arms, pinning me to the bed, spread-eagle, face down, I don't think I'd ever been so comfortable. "I'm crushing you. But I'll move in a moment."

"It's fine. Where did you go?" I breathed shallowly. I smiled. I was suffocating but thrilled.

"I went across the street. To set them straight," he said in my ear. Alex kissed the back of my neck and I shivered, my scalp tingling with the sensation of him.

I finally did turn, but he didn't move off me, he simply let me lay under him facing up instead of down. "Why over there?"

"I told them you are available once a season. One day out of each season, four times a year, they can come for help or to be heard. Beyond that, you are off-limits. You have a life."

"Wow. Did it work?"

He grinned. "Of course it worked. I'm an angel. It seems helping you get control of your gift and your urge to help is part of my mission, too. That and falling for you."

I blushed, turned away. He took my face, gently, turned it back. "I love you, Harper."

"I..." I swallowed.

"I love you, Harper. And I know now I came here *to* love you. And I will tell you that I love you a thousand times a day until you feel safe telling me you love me, too."

"But what if I..." I swallowed again. I would not cry. Not, not, not!

"You will. You'll tell me, because you do. You love me," he said. He grinned. He kissed me.

Something in me melted and something else in me flared up like a fire sparking in a fire pit.

"You're so sure of that?" I asked, curling myself in on him.

"Yep. I am. And I'm sure of something else too." He palmed my ass, pulling me in,.

I didn't think I'd ever, *ever* get tired of feeling him against me.

"What's that? That you want me again?" I asked, trying to joke but sounding all sexpot and breathy.

"Well, yeah. That. That's always a given." His tongue tangled with mine and heat flushed my cheeks. "But that wasn't it."

He pulled me flush to him, my back nestled to his front. His arms came around me, his lips to the back of my neck. I wiggled in and he groaned his fresh arousal. I laughed.

"What was it then?"

"That you are going to be very, very busy once a season."

I laughed. "You'll help me?"

"Always."

I shut my eyes, knowing that part of my fear was I'd wake and find Alex gone.

Gone back to heaven. But then I realized that I could wake to find anyone in my life gone. It was the risk that came with love. New or burgeoning or well-tended love. It was all about the trust. "I trust you," I blurted.

"And you love me," he said.

"Oh, you're so sure of that. You are all knowing, are you?" In my mind I saw him taking me from behind again. I had liked

the feel of bending to his will, of him taking me and making me his. I smiled secretively, touching his leg.

“Yes, I am all knowing. I know that soon I’m going to do exactly what you just imagined and that you love me.”

I blushed, laughed, wiggled again. “How long does this mind reading thing last?”

“The longer I’m incarnate the less it becomes. It’ll get weaker and weaker each day.”

“Whew.”

“Yeah, I guess it’s kind of intrusive, but for now, just for a bit, can I enjoy it?”

“Sure.” The more I tried to keep the dirty thoughts out of my head, the faster they came. My mouth on his cock, his mouth on me, him taking me oh...anywhere! On the steps, against the wall, in the kitchen, in the tub. It went on and on, flashing through my mind at fast forward. “Enjoy,” I managed.

“Yeah. Let’s start working through those one by one.” He sat up and tugged me up with him.

“What? You peeked again. Where are we going?” I balked, but my body did an all-over tremble of excitement. Alex Church the angel did strange things to me.

“To the tub of course. And the steps...and the living room...”

"Oh, I like the way you think. Or should I say I like the way you spy?"

"Either or. And don't forget...you love me," he said, nudging me toward my brand new bathroom door.

"How could I forget?" I sighed.

"You never will," he said and pushed me over the threshold, pressing me to the wall, kissing me hard with his hands in my hair. "I won't let you."

For some reason I believed him, knew he spoke the truth
But I am a sensitive. I know these things.

About the Author

Sommer Marsden writes from her cozy Baltimore home, which she shares with a very patient family and a chunky wiener dog. She's widely published in the erotica genre. Her work has appeared in dozens of anthologies, multiple magazines and on numerous websites. When she's not writing, you can find her haunting thrift stores, walking, drinking red wine and eating frozen blueberries. Often simultaneously. Visit Sommer at her blog, Smut Girl (www.smutgirl.blogspot.com), to keep up with her dirty ramblings and daily updates about her life of controlled chaos.

Sommer 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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