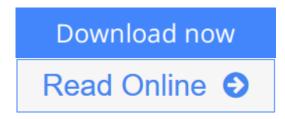


Death's Angel: A Novel of the Lost Angels

By Heather Killough-Walden



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Since the beginning of time, the archangels have longed to know true love. When four female angels were created for the four archangels, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Azrael, a chaos spurred by jealousy erupted, and the archesses were secreted away to Earth. The four favored archangels followed, prompting a search that has lasted millennia...

As the Angel of Death, Azrael could never be like his brothers. While the others fell to Earth in human form, Azrael descended as a vampire. Today, as the lead singer of a popular rock band, he keeps his true nature hidden--a powerful darkness constantly at odds with his angelic self. Beneath his mask, Azrael holds onto the hope that he will one day find the archess who will complete him.

At his brother Gabriel's wedding, Azrael set his golden eyes on Sophie Bryce, the maid of honor. He is certain she is his destined mate, and will do anything to make her his. But Sophie is unaware of her archess identity, and is haunted by unspeakable demons of her own.

When supernatural forces emerge from the shadows, threatening Sophie, Azrael is the only one who can protect her. But to do it, he must reveal his true, savage self.



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Editorial Review

Review

"Good story pacing, believable characters, and sizzling sex add up to an author and a series to watch!"—Romantic Times

About the Author

Heather Killough-Walden is the New York Times and USA Today bestselling author of the Big Bad Wolf series and the October trilogy, as well as the Lost Angels series. A California native, she currently lives in Texas with her husband and child. Visit Heather at killough-walden.com.

With acting credits that span stage and screen, Gildart Jackson is most often recognized for his role as Gideon on Charmed. He has also been featured on Providence and General Hospital, and his theater roles include Trigorin in The Seagull, Henry Higgins in My Fair Lady, and Adrian in Private Eyes at the Old Globe.

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Azrael smiled, flashing perfect white teeth that sported incisors slightly longer than the norm. Some people naturally looked like that, he knew, but on him it looked different enough that he didn't smile often. On him, it seemed to fit too perfectly and only served to reinforce the otherworldly impressions people often had when looking at him.

He was a starkly charismatic individual. He was taller than anyone he knew, save perhaps Samael. His voice could literally mesmerize. He was also uncommonly, almost painfully handsome. He wasn't certain why the Old Man had seen fit to bother with such a thing while simultaneously making him a vampire. It was like the curse of Beethoven, who created the most beautiful music in the world and couldn't hear it. What good was a beautiful face when placed on a monster?

But Sophie didn't seem to mind the hint of fang he exposed. In fact, as he brushed her mind, unable to help himself from drawing nearer to her in any way possible, he was surprised to find that she found it attractive. *My God*, she thought. *He really does look like a vampire*.

This was the second time she had thought such a thing. If he'd been capable of choking, he would have done so the first time her mind had muttered the impression. Hearing it now had nearly as strong an effect on Azrael. Sophie wasn't repulsed by vampires. And the idea that he resembled one was appealing to her.

Of course, Azrael was no fool. A lot of girls believed they would enjoy the company of a vampire – if vampires existed. In reality, he knew they would cower or scream or run, or most likely all three. Still… he found himself hoping.

"Sophie Bryce, right? The maid of honor?" he asked, his smile utterly disarming. He'd had millennia to practice.

Sophie blinked and he read her thoughts. She was desperately trying to find her head in the wake of his sudden presence. She'd been torturing herself over the last few days, and he knew it. He'd watched her every night. Listened to her. He knew damn well that she was drawn to him – and that she hated herself for it.

He sensed it when a slight pain twinged up her arm and Sophie realized that her friend was holding her tight. Taylor's fingers curled into Sophie's forearm in utter distraction, her hazel eyes glued to Azrael. He knew she couldn't help it and wasn't aware of what she was doing, but the fact that she'd brought his archess even the slightest discomfort was difficult for Az to ignore. It upset him.

And with practiced control, he tamped down the anger.

Sophie, on the other hand, appeared to be glad for the pain. It shot through the dazed fog that Az's appearance had caused. It also cleared her senses enough to allow her to pull her arm out of Taylor's grip, clear her throat, and say, "Yes." He tried not to smile when her voice cracked halfway through the single syllable. She cleared her throat some more and forced a smile to her lips. "That's me." She was so fucking cute with half of her glorious golden locks tucked up underneath that Penguins cap. Wisps of it fell about her face, framing it and caressing it the way he wanted to.

He chuckled softly, watching her carefully to gauge the effect his laugh had on her. Sophie's gold eyes brightened, her lips parted, and her cheeks flushed ever so slightly. Az's monster reared its head and he felt his vision begin to heat up. If he wasn't careful, his eyes would begin to glow. "We never got the chance to actually meet the other night," he told her, forcing himself to continue with the charade.

"No," she agreed, relieved that she was finally finding her voice. "We didn't."

He cocked his head to one side and slid his gaze from hers to regard her friends. He needed to look away – just for a moment. Long enough to get himself under control once more. His gold eyes slowly scanned the faces of her companions – and then stopped on the pair of men who sat behind them.

A quick scan of their minds told him they were recent graduates from Carnegie Mellon University. The one on the right was the son of a wealthy factory owner here in the city. His name was Richard. And he'd been thinking all sorts of biblical things about Sophie that night.

Azrael grew very still and something dark flickered across his face. He knew it was there; he knew he was failing to hide his sudden fury. But he barely cared.

Richard fell back into the curve of his seat and swallowed hard as the blood drained from his face. Below him, Sophie cleared her throat, at once drawing Azrael's attention. Sophie slowly stood and turned to face him. "Az, these are my friends, Taylor and Emily." She gestured toward them and they smiled nervously, but politely, nodding in his direction.

Emily and Taylor's eyes were still a little glazed over at his presence, so, Az allowed some of his vampiric influence to snake around and through the girls, easing them into a more comfortable state of relaxation.

It worked like a charm. Within seconds, Taylor was smiling easily and standing to greet him properly. "It's a pleasure to meet you," she said, extending her hand.

"Likewise," Az agreed, and with a slight bow, accepted the offered hands of both Taylor and then Emily, who quickly followed suit.

While he shook hands, Sophie's thoughts echoed through Az's mind.

She couldn't believe that her friends weren't guessing he was the Masked One. It seemed so obvious to her now that she knew his secret. Everything about him screamed of the kind of rock star charisma that it took to hold millions of fans in sway.

Meanwhile, Sophie's gaze traveled over Azrael's form, and he tried not to visibly crow with the triumph he felt when she shamelessly took in the way the black button-up shirt under his sports coat stretched taut across the muscles of his chest. She was particularly fond of the curve of his neck where it met his shoulder.

Azrael released Emily's hand, straightened again, and heard Sophie's heart rate speed up.

He looked up to see that her sunshine eyes were glassy with unabashed desire. And, as if it would hide the way her mouth watered for him, she had pressed her bottom lip between two perfect, white teeth. Azrael's gaze locked on the plump lip. He quickly slipped his hands into the pockets of his trench coat as they tightened into fists at his sides, and his nails began to cut into his palms. He imagined her pressing hard enough with her teeth to draw blood.

If she did... it would all be over.

"Juliette mentioned you live in Pittsburgh," he said, trying to break through not only his tension, but hers. "I'd forgotten." His tone was gentle, personal. He knew that to her, it was as if they were the only two in the arena.

"For now," she told him flat-out. She didn't want to bore him with the fact that she would only be there for two more days, but he was well aware.

"But what are you doing here?" she asked, honestly curious. It was quite a coincidence to her that she had never seen him before in her life – and then, suddenly, she'd seen him twice in the space of a week. She wasn't stupid; she was wary.

That was okay with him. He had a story and he would use it, but even this lie was too much of a secret for him to share with her friends. Az glanced at Taylor and Emily and smiled an easy, even somewhat shy smile. "It's a personal matter actually," he said. "However..." he paused, turned, and glanced up toward the private booths up above them. His band awaited him in one of them; they had a bird's eye view of the entire arena from their vantage point. He knew because he'd been watching Sophie from it all night.

He also knew that Sophie had never been in one of those suites herself, and he was hoping she'd be tempted enough by what he was about to offer that he could pull her away from her companions at least for a little while. "Second period will begin in a few minutes," he said, looking back down at her and scorching her once more with stark eyes. "And there is plenty of room in our suite for another guest." He chanced another glance at the men seated behind Sophie – especially Richard – and was smugly satisfied when the young man looked as though he wanted to piss himself. "Perhaps you would care to join me?" he asked, turning his gaze back on his archess.

He could hear her blood rushing through her veins. He was scaring her and thrilling her at the same time. She was finding it hard to think.

He wasn't opposed to working with that; he had no desire to stand here and play the good guy much longer anyway.

A gentle push of his power, and it surrounded Sophie. In a few moments, she not only found it difficult to think, she found it impossible. Seconds ago, she'd had a thousand reasons why she should keep away from Azrael. And the fact that he belonged to – was destined to be with – another, was the most powerful.

But just then, every reason she'd had, and in fact, reason *itself*, fled from her consciousness and she found herself saying, "Yes." She'd barely whispered it, but it was enough.

Azrael's smile broadened.

Users Review

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