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An Angel's Kiss

S.J. THOMAS



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Razor sharp claws slashed inches from his face but Azial only smiled. The brute was tough; a Rage demon from the fourth level and Azial relished the challenge. As a warrior angel his mission was to take down demons that had escaped hell and traveled to the mortal plane. The demons were meant to be brought back alive for punishment, but dead was just as good, and Azial was very, very good at his job.

Catching the demon's arm, Azial yanked him off balance, the demon's great weight sending him flying. As he staggered past, Azial slashed across the demon's leathery wing with his knife. The creature roared with fury, but quickly checked his momentum and flung out a brawny arm, catching Azial across the chest. The force of the blow sent him crashing to the ground, his knife clattering from his grip.

The demon charged but Azial moved fast, rolling to his feet and tackling the demon head on. Scaly hands locked around his arms, venom-tipped claws digging into his skin, but the pain

barely registered. His own hands closed around the demon's throat, squeezing tight to choke the air from him. The demon struggled, black eyes bulging, his lips peeling back from jagged fangs. Azial squeezed tighter, but the demon brought his hands crashing down onto Azial's arms, breaking his hold.

The demon staggered back, sucking in air in great gasping breaths, but Azial gave no quarter. Unsheathing his sword he swung once, his aim true, the only sound the whistle of the blade as it sliced through the air and the double *thud* of the demon's head and body hitting the ground.

Panting, Azial wiped his blade clean, and then slid it back into the sheath at his belt. Around him the world passed by, oblivious to the death that had just occurred. Azial and the demon were outside of the mortal plane, occupying the space between realities, and the mortals moving mere feet from them were completely unaware of the endless battle waged on their behalf.

He looked down at the beheaded demon for a few seconds and then brought his hands up in front of him, palms pressed together. Closing his eyes, he bent his head in silent prayer.

"Sir, this is Azial. The demon is defeated. I need a cleanup crew."

"Another dead demon, Azial? Couldn't you bring this one in alive?"

"Sir, with all due respect, a fourth level Rage demon does not surrender."

"I suppose that's true enough. Very well Azial. Cleanup will be with you shortly."

"Thank you, Sir."

His report delivered, Azial looked around through the haze of the in-between to the mortal world. He stood in a wide space flanked on either side by large buildings; their bland institutional form, together with the young mortals hurrying past, telling him it was some sort of educational institution.

With mild curiosity Azial observed the mortals, rushing through their lives with no appreciation of how precious their time was, how easily their lives could be taken or their souls corrupted. *Pathetic, really.*

A flash of light and Azial turned to see the cleanup crew arrive. He gave them a respectful nod and then turned his attention back to the mortals. So weak, so helpless, so unaware.

Feeling vaguely disgusted Azial spread his wings to rise up to the heavens. A girl suddenly walked into view and he froze. A

single human girl walking with her friends, as frail in her mortality as all the others, but so beautiful something overwhelming flared to life within him. An unfamiliar yearning that almost had him crossing into the mortal plane to take her in his arms.

Azial was shocked by his reaction; he'd never felt anything like this before in all his long existence. He continued to watch her but the feelings only grew stronger, this strange compulsion he did not understand, and when she stepped out of view he forced himself back up to the heavens.

Back in his home Azial paced, but he could not get the image of the girl out of his mind. Pale hair, slender form, expressive eyes; she was everything lovely and he realised he wanted her. Wanted her with a fierce, unfathomable need.

"I must be mad." But even as the words passed his lips Azial descended back to Earth, back to where this human girl had ensnared him.

Staying outside of the mortal's reality he followed the route she had taken earlier, moving through a long corridor that opened into a large hall where the young mortals gathered to eat. Stopping in the doorway Azial scanned the space, his stomach twisting with nervous expectation, until his gaze finally settled on her.

Pain ripped through him. Unfamiliar, unwelcome pain lancing through the very centre of his body, far stronger than anything he had ever experienced before. Of course, he had been injured many times battling demons, but he always healed easily and the physical discomfort quickly passed. This though was something else entirely. This was a paralyzing ache deep in his chest, a burning in his soul that knocked the breath from him.

And all because a mortal girl pressed light kisses to a boy's lips. The boy seemed enraptured by the girl, his expression dazed, his intentions obvious. When he put his arms around her to pull her closer, deadly rage seethed in Azial's chest, his hand clenching as if around his sword hilt.

But violence against humans was forbidden, so all he could do was watch as she wrapped her arms around the boy and continued to press her lips to his. Azial slumped against the door frame, sinking into misery. What could he do?

Return to the heavens, that is what I will do. Forget I ever saw her, forget this pain.

But even as he knew that was what he *should* do, he couldn't leave. It was as if something compelled him to stay, though the more intimate she became with the boy the harsher the pain became. Azial had never feared pain but he'd never courted it before either, and he struggled to understand why he was putting himself through this. He could no more turn away than he could allow a demon to escape.

Suddenly the girl pulled back from the boy and picked up her bag and books. With a smile she turned away and began to walk towards the corridor where Azial stood. His heart slammed into overdrive in his chest. She was going to walk right past him. Did he dare show himself, dare speak to her, Holy Father, maybe even touch her? The thought made his stomach clench, and his body ache.

Deep down he knew this was wrong. Angels were only allowed to interact with mortals on the direct command of the Lord, but at that moment Azial couldn't care less about heavenly orders. He'd happily face any punishment for one moment with the girl.

She was moving closer now, was nearly at the door. Azial backed away till he stood halfway along the corridor. Glancing over his shoulder, he saw that they were alone and when she stepped through the door toward him he acted without thought.

Spreading his wings wide he blurred the boundary to the mortal plane, closing it firmly when she passed through. As she did the girl swayed, her bag and books spilling from her hands, her legs buckling a second later. Azial moved like a flash, his arms circling her to hold her up. She sagged against him, her hands settling lightly on his shoulders, and his breath caught at how good it felt.

The girl blinked a few times, shaking her head as if to clear it. Then she tensed as she looked up at him with wide-eyed awe.

"Am I dead?"

Her words surprised him. "Dead? No of course not."

Her gaze flicked either side of his head before settling back on his face. "But you're an angel, aren't you?"

Of course. He hadn't masked his appearance, so she could see him in all his angelic glory. Holding her more firmly he tried to reassure her. "Yes I am, but I promise you that you are very much alive."

Her brow furrowed. "Why are you here then?"

Azial hesitated. What should he say to her? What reason could he give for his actions? *The truth, always speak the truth.* "I saw you and I couldn't stay away. I wanted to speak to you." As he spoke he brushed the hair from her face, running his fingers through the strands.

"Why?"

Pulling her closer Azial looked deep into her eyes. "Because you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen."

A sharp breath left her and he could feel her heart racing in her chest. She shook her head, her gaze dropping for a moment before rising to meet his. "How can that be? I mean, you're from heaven, surely every angel up there is far more beautiful than me?"

He shrugged. "Maybe some would think so, but none have ever held me as you do."

Her lips parted as she searched his face. "What's your name?"

"Azial. And yours?"

"Sarah, Sarah Ellis." She swallowed and then looked past him at the hazy outline of the corridor. He could see the fear in her eyes. "Where are we?"

Trying again to reassure her he ran his hand lightly along her arm, but the gesture only made her tense, her head whipping back towards him. "It's all right. We are just outside of the mortal plane, alongside but separate. No one can see us here. We are alone."

At that her face reddened, her heart rate ratcheting up again, beating a rhythm he felt inside. Her delicate form felt so good against his strength, the heat of her body warming every part of him. Her face was so close all he would have to do was lean forward slightly and his lips would be pressed to hers. A kiss it was called; something he had never experienced, had never wanted to before, but now it was all Azial could think about.

"Is this real?" Sarah asked in a whispered voice.

"Oh yes, this is real." His voice was husky and she shivered in response.

"I still can't quite believe this...that you would think that about me."

She doesn't see what I see. "Well, that boy seemed pleased by your attentions." Azial could hear the bitterness in his voice.

Sarah's face tightened into angry lines. "You were spying on me?"

"I told you I'd seen you and followed you."

"And what else did you see?" The question was a sharp accusation.

"Only that. Tell me...is the boy special to you?"

"Ryan? Well yeah, he's my boyfriend, but we've only been going out a few weeks."

Again Azial was filled with that irrational rage. "You should save yourself for someone more worthy."

"Oh what, someone like you I suppose?" As soon as she'd spoken Sarah's hand flew to her mouth, betraying her embarrassment. Azial gave no answer, just looked at her pointedly, and she gasped, her body trembling. "What...what are you going to do with me?"

He could hear the fear in her voice and it tore at him; he did not want her afraid of him. "I will not do anything you do not want me to."

She relaxed slightly at his words, her hand lowering to rest against his chest. "Then will you let me go?"

Pain once again twisted through him, but he kept his voice steady. "Yes, if that is what you want."

She swallowed once. "And what do you want?"

His gaze dipped to her lips. "I want to kiss you, if you would let me."

He heard her suck in a breath and then she asked in a tremulous voice. "Just a kiss?"

"Yes. I would have my first kiss be with you."

"First? What, you've never kissed before?" Her tone was one of utter disbelief.

"No."

Her brows drew together. "Don't angels kiss?"

Once again he shrugged. "Some do, but I haven't ever been tempted."

"Why not?"

"As I said, no other has ever held me as you do."

A single shaky breath left her and her gaze dipped down to his chest. She shook her head. "I shouldn't. I mean, Ryan..."

Azial raised his hand to her cheek, titling her face up to his. "We are outside of your reality, what happens here is outside of time itself."

They were so close now, their faces mere inches apart, and his heart and body were screaming at him to just pull her lips to his, but he held back. This had to be her choice. *Just please choose me.*

They stood like that for endless moments, but then a fire seemed to spark deep in Sarah's eyes. Slowly she brought her other hand to his face, lightly brushing his cheek with her fingertips, his blood heating at the soft caress. "This is wrong, but I can't help myself. I, I want to kiss you too."

Azial's heart soared at her words, his body aching with desire. For the first time in his life he wasn't quite sure what to do, but when her hand moved to the back of his neck to pull his face down to hers, instinct took over.

With a hungry groan Azial's pulled her tight against him, one hand taking her slim waist, the other moving up to tangle in her hair. The next instant their lips met; the softest sweetest touch imaginable, but it ignited every single part of him.

Holy Father, I had no idea that a kiss would be like this, so perfect, so right.

At first their lips just pressed together, but then Sarah titled her head and began to move her lips on his. He tensed at the sensation but then soon picked up the movement, angling his own head to deepen the contact between them. Each touch of their lips fanned a fire within him and when Sarah tentatively licked at his lip with her tongue, the flames consumed him.

Dear God, she was temptation incarnate and Azial wanted to succumb, wanted to surrender to the lust and desire that coursed through him for the first time. Feelings so strong and unfamiliar they overwhelmed him. With a growl his hand moved lower, clutching her soft curves and pulling her into the hard line of his body.

His shaft throbbed with desperate life and the press of her body against it was too much; Azial couldn't think now, could only touch and feel and kiss, and Sarah seemed just as lost. She clutched him to her almost desperately, her nails scoring his back, her sighs and moans of pleasure driving his need higher.

How long they kissed he didn't know, but when they pulled back both of them were panting and Sarah's face was alight with passion. "Azial." She moaned, her voice full of need.

In that instant Azial knew that she would let him take this as far as he wanted; he could strip her naked and explore every inch of her body, could touch and taste her sweet sex, could sink deep inside her again and again until they were both crying out with pleasure. She would give herself to him entirely and a staggering feeling of possession rushed over him. In that instant he knew he never wanted to be apart from her.

"No." His voice was hoarse as he cried the word, pushing Sarah from him.

She staggered back. "What's wrong?"

He shook his head. "Me, this, everything."

"Don't—don't you like this?"

"By all the heavens I love this, but it is wrong. I should not have pursued you, should not have let myself kiss you."

"Why not?" He could hear the anguish in her voice.

"Because contact between mortals and angels is forbidden and now that I have tasted you I do not know how I can live without you." He was shouting now, the words both an accusation and a plea.

Sarah stared at him for long moments and then her lips set into a determined line. "So don't."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't live without me. Stay with me."

"I cannot. I belong in the heavens; I can't stay here with you."

"So take me with you then."

For a moment he was speechless, hope and longing flaring inside him but he couldn't do that to her. He shook his head. "You do not know what you are asking. If I took you to the heavens you could never return here, would never see your family and friends again."

She gave a sharp laugh. "I've just kissed an angel, what on Earth could compare to that? After you the world would seem like ash, being without you would be worse than death. I can't live without you now either."

A terrible hope filled Azial. All he wanted to do was rush to her and take her in his arms but he held back. He was so tempted but he could not believe she truly meant what she was saying.

How could so young a mortal feel so strongly? "You cannot really mean that. To give up everything you have ever known after one kiss?"

"You just said you didn't know how you could live without me after one kiss." She parodied his voice.

"Yes but I am an angel and you are only mortal. An angel's passion cannot truly compare."

At that Sarah stormed towards him, chin raised, fists clenched. "An angel who's never even kissed before today. Who's never been tempted by all the angels in heaven but who was tempted by me, a mortal. Don't you dare think I can't feel as deeply as you."

Aziah looked down, shame filling him. She was right. In his arms she'd matched his passion, had been the one to lead him, but even if he accepted she felt that way about him she still had to understand the consequences of coming with him.

"If I take you I will be punished, and you might be too."

At that her anger dimmed and she swallowed hard. "Punished, how?"

"I cannot be sure. Penance, maybe imprisonment. Or we could be cast out."

Sarah's face paled, but then her expression tightened. "Everything I've ever learned about heaven and angels talks about love and forgiveness. Once they see how we feel won't they forgive us?"

Aziah let out a heavy sigh. "Yes, those are the guiding principles, but heavenly rules are not broken lightly. I cannot say what will happen. We could both be damned."

Sarah stepped closer, taking his hand in hers. "Then we'll be damned together."

Her words burned through him, filling him with a joy he'd never felt before, but somehow Aziah still held himself back, though his body shook with the effort. "Are you really sure you want this Sarah? Because if I take you in my arms again, I won't ever be able to let you go."

"That's all I want." Her tone was resolute, her conviction blazing in her eyes.

Aziah could resist no longer. Surrendering he pulled her to him and kissed her deeply, a demanding scorching kiss that joined them together irrevocably. Sarah melted against him, her

body fitting his perfectly, and he felt a sense of utter possession. She was his now, as he was hers.

With their lips and bodies still joined Azial spread his wings and took them up to the heavens. He wasn't sure what would happen when they got there, but they would face their fate together, and he would gladly take any punishment that was due.

But as he held his woman he knew that he wouldn't let anyone, not even the archangels themselves, take her from him. This was his vow, his pledge, his promise, sealed with an angel's kiss.

BIOGRAPHY

Writing sizzling paranormal romance/erotica and dark paranormal horror I have had short stories published in several anthologies and I have a whole notebook full of ideas for future works. Living in the South West of England with my wonderful husband and a very spoilt Springer Spaniel, I have a full time day job so have to fit my writing in whenever I can, although like every author I would love to write full time one day. When not writing or working I love to read and enjoy walking, geocaching and surfing.

SJ Thomas loves to hear from her readers at;

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