

Angeli

The Pirate, the Angel
& the Irishman

Amy Vasant

CHAPTER ONE

Sea Isle City, New Jersey. Present Day.

Anne Bonny sat at the outdoor café in Sea Isle City, New Jersey, staring dreamily at the mimosa tree arching above her table. The tree's fuzzy pink flowers gave her the impression of a Dr. Seuss creation, as if Horton himself had decorated it for a summer holiday.

Anne could hear the rhythmic crashing of the surf, the soothing whoosh a soundtrack to the peaceful setting. Around the restaurant's wrought iron table, tiny sparrows hopped across the backyard eating area, snatching up every spare crumb like little feathered vacuum cleaners. A block away, a seagull cackled its wild, agitated laugh.

With only a young couple in love cooing to each other nearby, Anne tried to enjoy her hard-earned tranquility. She had decided to take a few days from her apartment in New York City and explore the Jersey, Delaware and Maryland shores. She doodled on a folded map as she pondered her route: *Should she pause in Cape May? Or should she take the ferry to Delaware?* The last bit of French toast gone from her plate, Anne found herself already wondering where she should stop for lunch.

The female half of the cooing couple stood, scraping her metal chair across the stone pavers. Anne glanced over and watched the girl in the form-fitting tank dress twitch her way into the main building. Anne made brief eye contact with the young man still at the table, flashed

him a polite “whoops, we made eye-contact” smile, and then returned to her thoughts.

Anne had just reached for an overlooked crumble of bacon on her plate, when her attention snapped to the sparrows. They flew away in unison, and Anne’s sharp gaze swept the area to find the cause of their unrest.

“Great little arse,” said a man’s voice in an Irish accent.

Anne sat bolt upright and turned her eyes upon the male half of the couple with whom she shared the patio.

The sandy-haired lovebird, still sitting where his girl had left him, met Anne’s curious gaze with a wicked grin. He abruptly stood and dragged his chair over to Anne’s table with a teeth-rattling screech of metal on stone.

The boy released an overly dramatic sigh of satisfaction, plopped back down into the chair now positioned beside Anne, and beckoned the waitress as she exited the café and stepped onto the patio.

“Could I get four whiskeys here?” he asked, dangling his finger over the table and swirling it as if mixing a drink.

The waitress head cocked to the side with surprise. “Uh, sure, I guess...what kind?”

The man looked at Anne, his face beaming like a child’s on Christmas morning.

“Something Irish and as expensive as possible,” he said as he put his right elbow on the table and rested his head in that hand, his gaze never leaving Anne. “Straight.”

“You can put it on her tab. Or mine. Doesn’t matter really,” he said.

Anne looked at the waitress. “His tab,” she said. The waitress offered them an awkward smile and left to fetch the whiskey.

“Ooh, Annie, you’re still a little evil,” said the young man. “You’re going to stick this lad with my tab.”

Anne’s new table guest sat grinning, thin and pale as an untoasted wafer, but with the fiery eyes of a rebellious imp eager to be unleashed. She’d known the minute she heard the accent that the boy’s body had been appropriated by a friend of hers, Con Carey, who had lost his own corporeal body some years ago. Like a horror movie ghost, Con had a habit of borrowing other people’s bodies in order to communicate with her. Unlike a ghost, the only thing horrifying about Con was his otherworldly ability to consume whiskey.

“Hello, Con,” Anne said. “Did you ask that poor boy if you could borrow his body?”

“Hello, Annie, my love,” Con replied. “Absolutely not. They almost always say no.”

Anne noted how Con’s eyes lit up when she acknowledged him and recalled how thrilled he’d been the first time he’d found a way to use another person’s body. He’d pumped his fists and run around the room screaming with joy until he crashed over a sofa, having momentarily lost control of his borrowed legs.

“How are you? Did you miss me?” he asked.

Before she could answer, Con leapt to his feet and did a few jumping jacks. Wrapped in the young man’s bony frame, he boxed an invisible opponent for a few moments, and then clapped himself on either shoulder, pleased with his performance.

“Featherweight,” he said, flopping back into his chair.

“Feather*brain*,” drawled Anne. She paused as the waitress returned to set four whiskeys on the table. Unsure of the appropriate way to dole out four Irish whiskeys between two people so early in the morning, the girl lumped them in the middle of the table.

Con took the first shot and swallowed it down before the waitress could fully release the last glass from her grasp.

“Slow down,” said Anne. “She could have lost a finger.”

“Uhhhhmmmm...” Con groaned, ignoring Anne in his ecstasy as he shot back the whiskey.

Anne watched with amusement as Con licked his lips, tilted back his head and closed his eyes. As a disembodied spirit, not having lips or a throat had cut into his quality drinking time. Anne snatched the second whiskey from the table before Con could grab it, shot it back, and slapped it back into his empty paw.

Con jerked his hand from the empty glass as if it had burned his fingertips. His jaw clenched. He pushed away Anne’s empty shot glass and deliberately clamped his fingers upon the next full shot. He trained his eyes on Anne’s, daring her to make a move for it.

He raised the third shot to his mouth.

With lightning-fast reflexes, Anne snatched the glass from Con’s paw. She put the glass against her lips, threatening to drink it.

“Harpy!” Con roared, slamming his fist to the table. The glasses jumped and clattered on the wrought iron.

Anne froze, allowing Con to hang, and then slowly handed the glass back, a smug grin on her face. Visibly relieved, Con downed the shot.

“Surely, Annie, you know better than to break my heart like that,” said Con, wiping his mouth. “You might have spilled it.”

Anne grinned, unable as always to be annoyed with Con for very long. She *was* happy to see him again, even if he inhabited the body of yet another innocent passerby. He hadn’t made one of his appearances in months. Still,

she wasn't sure what she was supposed to do when the blonde girl came back from the ladies' room expecting to find her boyfriend patiently waiting for her and *not* chatting up a busty strawberry blonde at the next table. She hadn't been in a cat fight in *ages*.

"I really wish you would time these visits a little better," she said. "His girlfriend will be back here any second."

"I'll be quick."

Anne nodded and took some small solace in the fact that Con had waited until the girl had left the table and that he had chosen a *boy* to borrow. During a past impromptu visit, Con had possessed the body of a young woman and proceeded to give Anne a sloppy kiss in front of a crowd that included the woman's grandmother. Anne felt lucky the waitress wasn't currently sitting in her lap.

Anne nodded to the empty whiskey glasses. "You know what they say; *Drinky, Drinky, Little Dinky*," she held up her pinky and waggled it for effect.

Con stopped in mock horror, the last shot nearly to his lips. He put the glass down, pulled out the waistband of his plaid shorts and looked inside. With a shrug, he snapped them shut.

"Sorry, Luv, but it looks as though I might as well drink."

Anne sighed. "So why are you here, Con?"

"I've come to give you a warning," said Con. "Your pal is on the move."

"My pal?"

"Michael."

Con turned his head to feign spitting on the floor in disgust as he said Michael's name.

"There's trouble. I haven't been able to gather all the details yet, but something is afoot."

“Is that where you’ve been the last few months? Spying on Michael?” asked Anne.

Con raised one of the empty shot glasses, smelled it, and tried to reach his tongue to the bottom to sop up any last drops.

“I said: *have you been spying on Michael,*” repeated Anne, taking the glass out of his hand and putting it back on the table. Con scowled and pursed his lips with disappointment.

“Among other things.”

Anne played it cool, as if Con’s news meant nothing to her, but her chest felt tight. She opened and closed her fist several times before Con placed his hand on hers to soothe her jitters. She turned back to him and smiled, realizing what a poor actress she had been.

“You’ll be fine, you always are,” he said in a gentle tone. “I just wanted to let you know to prepare yourself.”

Without warning, Con leaned over and put his hand on the back of Anne’s head, pulling her face to his. He ravished her with a kiss, and Anne thought how strange it was that the kiss felt like Con and not like the stranger whose lips actually pressed against her own.

The smell of whiskey helped.

Anne felt herself giving in to the kiss. It was at that moment that Con left his host and she found herself lip-locked with a very confused young man.

“What are you *doing?*!” came a screech from across the patio.

Anne’s eyes popped open wide, her lips still pressed against the young man’s. His girlfriend had returned, and now stood, mouth agape, pointing at Anne.

The boy pulled back from Anne’s kiss, holding his arms wide, as if declaring himself safe.

“Wha...?” The boy stood up and put his fingers on

the table to steady himself as the full effect of three whiskies and a recent possession took its toll on his 135 pounds of human flesh.

“Whoa,” he said.

The boy glanced down at Anne and then back at his girlfriend, hoping someone or something could explain his disorientation. He looked back at Anne’s memorable cleavage and tried to squelch the involuntary grin creeping to his lips. He burped, putting his hand to his mouth in surprise when he tasted whiskey.

“I said *what* are you *doing*?” said the girl, her tone still a glass-breaking screech.

Anne stood.

“He agreed to test our new line of lipsticks,” she said, gathering her things and beginning to move towards the restaurant’s backdoor. “In order to get *you* a free sampler kit from us, which I’ll go get from the car now.”

The girl glowered with anger and confusion, torn between free makeup and an implausible explanation for what she had just witnessed. She took a step toward her equally confused boyfriend, tossing her locks with pique.

“Why do you smell like booze?”

“Whiskey flavored lipstick!” Anne called back, attempting to throw the boy a bone. “*Irish Rose*.”

Anne paid her tab at the register and headed out.

On the street, Anne made her way back to her car and considered what Con had said. Anytime Con noticed Michael acting suspiciously, bad things followed.

Michael was an Angelus, a race of extraordinary creatures whose sole duty was to watch over the welfare of humans. Anne was a Sentinel. She worked for the Angeli as a sort of bounty hunter, helping to track and kill Perfidia, Angeli who preyed on humans instead of

protecting them. Anytime Michael called her, she knew a battle lay ahead, and while she had once relished these challenges, since a Perfidian had nearly killed her fellow Sentinel, Con, she'd felt death had become her constant companion.

In addition, Michael and Anne were involved in a complicated romance that only added stress to every exchange between them.

If what Con said was true, Anne was in danger once more. She wished she could fly away from the whole mess, but today, disappearing would be especially difficult.

Her car was missing.

The parking spot she'd been so happy to find had a new tenant and her Jaguar was nowhere to be seen.

"Blast," Anne swore as she scanned the area.

Across the street, between two beach duplexes, she spotted her car parked on the next block.

Anne scowled. There was *no way* she could have parked one block over from the restaurant. Perhaps Con had moved the car as a joke before he visited her at the café. That would be like him. Or, perhaps she was going senile. She *was* slightly over 300 years old. A long life was one of the perks of being a Sentinel, assuming you could stay alive with Perfidia constantly trying to kill you.

Anne cut between the beach houses towards her vehicle, ducking and slipping through a small fence to enter a secluded backyard. Before she could stand upright, the figure of a man appeared directly in front of her.

Anne lacked even a moment to react.

The man raised a small pistol, and shot her directly between the eyes.

Amy Vansant

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amy Vansant is the editor of the best-selling *Moms Are Nuts* humor anthology, former editor for *Surfer Magazine*, and author of *The Surfer's Guide to Florida*. She writes humor for places like *McSweeney's Internet Tendencies*, *Barnes and Noble Review* and others. You can read more at her humor/self promotional site, <http://AmyVansant.com>. Or follow her on Twitter @AmyVansant. She'd like that. Be a dear.

Amy lives in Maryland with her husband Michael and their Labradoodle, Gordon. Both Mike and Gordon were in this book. Amy has a limited imagination. Amy also has a niece named Camden who *insisted* she be mentioned here. The other three nieces aren't quite as pushy.