

The Blue Iris

Ashton Bradley

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The Blue Iris is a tantalizing work of erotica with spiritual undertones.

The Blue Iris, by Ashton Bradley, is a novella in the lesser-known religious erotica subgenre. This high-stakes story presents a battle of dark spiritual forces and a battle for possession of a young adult's intimate, innocent sexual self. Ainsley is an emotionally wounded, lonely girl in a world ruled by Lucifer; Gabriel is, as Bible readers will recognize, one of God's most trustworthy angels. The story centers on Ainsley and Gabriel's intense, provocative sexual relationship.

As with many works of erotica, *The Blue Iris* contains not only graphic sex, but also explicit sexual violence. Ainsley's mother is raped, then murdered, by a demon in the opening scene while six-year-old Ainsley hides. Moved by love, Gabriel rescues the young Ainsley and entrusts her to an old man, saying, "I promise you, little kitten, nothing will keep me from you. Not God, not Lucifer, not even death."

Years later, Gabriel fulfills his promise to Ainsley, risking his life and losing his position in the spiritual realm to indulge himself fully in her body. Though he'd always been attracted to her, he now struggles under the consuming power of carnal lust. But though sexuality takes over the plot, the spiritual realm is not silent; God wants his angel back, and he too wants to fight for humans, like Ainsley, who have not joined the cause of Lucifer.

This book is for fans of dark-themed erotica. It is not sweet, sensual erotic fiction. It conforms to the conventions of the genre: detailed, adjective-filled descriptions of sex acts of all sorts. The diction is very frank, and the action, sexual and otherwise, is often violent. While there are some descriptions of characters' personalities and history, deep character development is sidelined in favor of plot. In this way, Bradley fulfills the desires of those with a thirst for sexual fiction.

While Bradley wisely limits Ainsley and Gabriel's sexual relationship to after Ainsley turns eighteen—so she's an adult, not a juvenile—there are suggestive phrases even as Gabriel rescues six-year-old Ainsley: "Gabriel found the small guest room to the right and sat down on the bed with Ainsley still straddling his lap."

The main problem with this book is that it doesn't sufficiently, accurately categorize itself. The genre listed on the back cover ("Religious Fiction") is misleading: though the book has spiritual themes, it is primarily erotica—which is very far from what a typical religious fiction reader would expect. Those anticipating religious fiction will most likely be deeply offended. Additionally, the cartoonish, somewhat anime-style cover art appeals to teens more than adults, and this book is not suitable for teen readers. To better connect the book to its audience, the listed genre would need to change to "erotic fiction" and the cover art would need a more mature style. A subtitle could further clarify the audience of this book.

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MELISSA WUSKE (November 19, 2014)

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