



Touched: The Caress of Fate

Elisa S. Amore

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Love and death, permanently entwined. That's the central image of Elisa S. Amore's passionate paranormal romance *Touched: The Caress of Fate*. This Twilight-flavored fantasy explores the intersection between mortal lives and the Angels, Executioners, and other celestial guardians that hover around them, unseen. Translated from the Italian by Leah D. Janeczko, *Touched* is both sweet and dark.

When the veil between their two worlds is brushed aside, Evan, an Angel of Death, and Gemma, a high-school girl, are brought together. Evan isn't a messenger from Heaven, though—he's come to take her life. Instead of "transitioning" Gemma, he disappears, leaving her longing for another glimpse. Cupid and Psyche? Romeo and Juliet? Amore confidently plays with the plot's many twists, adding layers of fantasy and suspense.

Amore, a seasoned writer, knows her audience. Although *Touched* isn't exactly breaking new ground in the genre, it caresses all the right nerve endings. Gemma is intelligent but accepting of her lover's supernatural origins. She's still a child in some ways—excited for prom—but eager to grow up and certain that she's meant to do great things. Amore's wonderful scenes of Gemma's home life and her interactions with her schoolmates read as true to life. Dialog and description are well balanced and make Gemma's passion for Evan feel honest and earned.

Touched is smart, self-aware, and perfectly tuned to what works in adult and middle-reader fantasy.

CLAIRE RUDY FOSTER (March/April 2017)

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