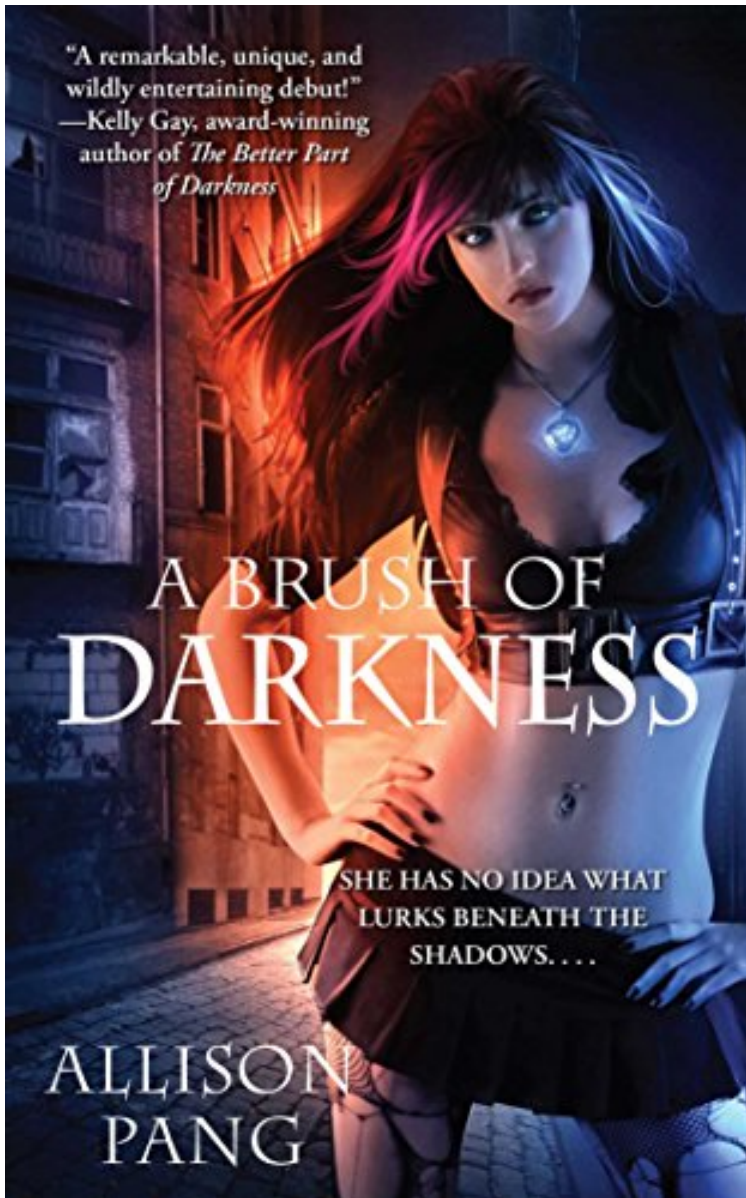


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A Brush of Darkness (Abby Sinclair) (English Edition)



Par Allison Pang
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe man of her dreams might be the cause of her nightmares. Six months ago, Abby Sinclair was struggling to pick up the pieces of her shattered life. Now, she has an enchanted iPod, a miniature unicorn living in her underwear drawer, and a magical marketplace to manage. But despite her growing knowledge of the OtherWorld, Abby isnt at all prepared for Brystion, the dark, mysterious, and sexy-as- sin incubus searching for his sister, convinced Abby has the key to the succubuss whereabouts.

Abby has enough problems without having this seductive shape-shifter literally invade her dreams to get information. But when her Faery boss and some of her friends vanish, as well, Abby and Brystion must form an uneasy alliance. As she is sucked deeper and deeper into this perilous world of faeries, angels, and daemons, Abby realizes her life is in as much danger as her heart and there's no one she can trust to save her. ExtraitCat piss and cabbages. It was the only way to describe it, really. Even on a good day, the bookstore smelled like a mix of dust and dirty feet. The AC had coughed its last an hour ago, leaving me the proud employee of an ad hoc sauna. A drip above the lintel had forced me to keep the door closed to avoid a miniature lake from forming on the warping hardwood floor. The remainder of the morning was doomed to be a soggy, stinky mess. The weathered sign hanging from the shutter outside read PROSPECTUS INTELLIGENTIA TABERNUS. I called it the Pit for short. Probably unkind, but God knows the place reeked like one this morning. Still, the stale odor didn't seem to stop my steady stream of customers from leaving wet trails and dripping umbrellas in their wakes, though I suspected their visits were more of an effort to get out of the rain than driven by any great desire to find a coverless copy of a Dean Koontz novel. The rain let up just before lunch and with it went the last of my customers, an old man waddling into the wet with a paper sack full of ancient sailing books. Bliss. Time for some retro Tom Jones. I loaded up my latest playlist on the silver iPod mounted on the counter and wriggled my way to the front window, tinny speakers blaring. Flipping over the CLOSED FOR LUNCH sign, I mock strutted my way to the minifridge in the storage room for a couple of Cokes and a sandwich, my hips swaying counterpoint. I was half a can and three verses into *She's a Lady* before the main door creaked open again. The bells chimed in their plaintive way, somehow cutting through the rumbling growl of the music. A man drifted across the threshold. The grace of his movements caused the hair on the back of my neck to rise. He seemed a shadow, sucking up all the light from the room. The exquisite darkness of his ebony eyes swept over me, primitive and uncompromising. And overdone as all hell. Still. The silken fall of his hair just brushed the top of his shoulders and I've always been a sucker for good grooming and potential wangst. What the hell. Id bite. Whats new, pussycat? I purred. I need to talk to Moira. The timbre of his words pushed past me, heated and hollow. I'm afraid Moira isn't here. His eyes narrowed, the line of his jaw shifting almost imperceptibly. The alarms in the back of my head suddenly went off. I'm not shy, but the thrum of desire that started beating through my veins as he approached the counter wasn't normal or natural. If this guy was human I'd swear off bacon for a month. I turned down the music in a futile attempt to distract myself from the elegant curve of his cheekbones and the smooth paleness of his skin. He glided toward me, each rolling step filled with a lazy arrogance. A faint shimmer of silver dusted his hair, fading in the damp light that trickled through the front bay window. I blinked. Hed been traveling the CrossRoads. I'd never been there myself, but the silver snowflakes were a dead giveaway hed been moving between worlds. My smile was polite, but I couldn't quite keep the stiffness from my voice. If you'd like, I can take your information and I'll let her know you stopped by. I tapped my pencil on the notebook in front of me. Hed asked for Moira by name, not her official title of Protectorate. I was under no obligation to answer his questions, and as far as I was concerned, the less involved I got in the offshoots of Faery politics, the better. Truthfully, some of the OtherFolk freaked me the hell out, especially when they insisted on walking around in broad daylight like this. For that matter, I didn't even know what he was. Looks aside, he couldn't have been a vampire. Even vampires with TouchStones didn't go walking around at noon. Not like that, anyway. Fae, maybe? Lycanthrope? Oh, what difference did it make? Usually the best policy was to just be polite and wait for them to go away. That being said, I really hated it when they started trying to magic me up. It's rude and nothing pissed me off faster than when one of them tried to get in my face about it. I knew they couldn't always help it, but this guy wasn't even attempting to tamp it down. Glamour oozed out of him, the magic rolling over me in soft waves of lust. Kinda pleasant in its own way, but distracting as all get out. My mouth tightened; I was suddenly very impatient. A frown marred his handsome features, and he looked down as though seeing me for the first time. When will she be back? She's not here, I repeated, a hint of annoyance creeping into my tone. I'm not exactly the most outspoken person in the world, but store clerk or nothuman or not I wasn't some invisible piece of dog shit on the bottom of his shoe either. I don't know when she'll be back, I added. The truth of it galled me because I really didn't. The Faery woman had left nearly four months ago and, except for that last note taped on her office door, I hadn't heard from her at all. But this guy didn't need to know that. Hell, none of them needed to know that. I could barely get the OtherFolk to give me the time of day as it was. God only knew what they'd do if they realized Moira wasn't here to hold them in line. If you'd like to sample some of her . . . other wares, I'll be reopening the shop around back from midnight to one A.M. Will you, now? He stepped closer and I

shivered, the quiet power coiling behind the words dancing over my skin. Sweat beaded on my forehead, cool and clammy. They don't call it the Midnight Marketplace for nothing. I thrust out my chin in subtle challenge, ignoring the rising panic that fluttered at the base of my throat. "Piss him off, Abby. That will be brilliant." His face was quiet and brimming with secrets like a Cheshire cat. "You're her TouchStone, aren't you?" Of course I am, I agreed pleasantly. And now that we've established the obvious, let's get back to business. Who are you? "Tsk. He waggled a finger at me, and I rolled my eyes. Something about the gesture was very familiar, but if I'd met him before I couldn't recall. Then again, I'd only been Moira's TouchStone for six months and I'd seen an awful lot, much of which had become a muddled mess of fancy sparkles and obscenely beautiful people. Anchoring an OtherFolk to the mortal realm wasn't an easy or straightforward task. Fine, I get it. Names have power and all that, but it makes it a bit hard to leave a message, don't you think?" I pointed out. A flicker of a smile showed on that perfect mouth as his gaze roamed about the bookstore. The store itself was fairly plain, but it had high arches, a giant stone fireplace with overstuffed cushions on the floor, and thick crown molding around the top where the paint was peeling off. I had told Moira the whole thing needed remodeling, or at least some fresh paint, but she insisted the place had character. Shabby chic, maybe. Sounded like laziness to me, but whatever. It wasn't my store. I just worked there. The man wandered through the stacks for a moment. I seized the opportunity to take his measure, or at least attempt to stare at his ass, which was currently encased in delectable black leather pants. Or I assumed it was, based on what I could see below the fall of his duster. Had it been anyone else wearing it, I would have said they were trying way too hard, but he was working it pretty well so I gave him a pass. The duster hung open, inviting an easy view of his chest, a white T-shirt sticking to the muscled ridges of his abdomen. Definitely my type. His dark eyes flicked sideways at me, the edges crinkling in silent laughter, and I shrugged, not bothering to hide the fact that I'd been checking him out. Hell, he'd probably been expecting it. He lingered over a coverless paperback about a French vampire. It was one of those overblown stories that had been really popular about ten years ago, complete with ruffling white shirts, long dark ringlets, and outrageous accents. Even a duster or two, actually. I'd thought it marvelous and horribly sexy when I'd read it, my sixteen-year-old heart near fit to bursting at the idea of some dashing angel of the night feeding from my inner thigh. The reality had been a whole lot messier. It didn't involve my inner thigh either. He blew the dust off the pages, snorting softly when he read the title. I'd always thought Moira had an absolutely craptacular taste in books. From the looks of it, he agreed. My opinion of him rose a notch. "It has a happy ending, you know, I said." His brow furrowed, lips pursed at me, before his attention flicked back to the book. "Does it? All the good romances do. There are no happy endings. And vampires are overrated, bloodsucking tools. Can't argue with that." I sighed. "But the vamp in this one runs off with an emotionally constipated angel, so I suppose it all works out in the end. If you don't like that sort of thing, maybe I can interest you in one of these great how-to-massage books from the seventies. It has pictures, if that makes it easier for you to understand." He ignored me, his expression cryptic. Very clever of her. He tapped the book with his fingers. "Clever of who? Moira. Hiding in plain sight like this. His hand made an eloquent gesture as if to encompass the room. And all thanks to her little mortal TouchStone, so willing to throw herself away and for what?" He pointed at me. "Rumors of a magic iPod and seven years of agelessness?" I bristled. "Enchanted iPod, thank you very much. And what I'm willing to throw myself away for is absolutely no concern of yours. The barb had taken, however, and I looked down at the counter before that little sliver of regret could show itself. He chuckled softly. "Not as good as you had hoped, is it? Neither is your outfit. Did you learn to dress that way in Leather for Bad Boys one-oh-one?" My upper lip curled in derision, suddenly bold in knowing my place. "Sounds to me like someone doesn't have a TouchStone of his own. I noted the time with a little sound of pity. 11:57 A.M. How are those CrossRo...Revue de presse" Pang's at her best in the truly laugh-out-loud humor that, thankfully, is found throughout what is clearly the first in a series. Fans of Kim Harrison and Jaye Wells will relish a new author to follow." - Booklist