

Evernight Publishing



Guardian Angel

by Becky Moore Evernight Publishing | © 2011 Becky Moore

EXCERPT: “Hey, Pete! Get the door, will ya?”

“Yeah, okay.” Peter Gonzalez closed the refrigerator door and shifted the cold fried chicken drumstick to his left hand, next to the bottle of water dangling from his pinkie. He stopped by the door on his way back to the big dining table in Fire Station Four, where his crew had already worked their way through two trays of homemade lasagna. When you were late for dinner, you were relegated to fridge cleanout duty. Hence, the cold chicken.

He wiped his right hand on his pants, and gazed through the front glass at a spectacularly beautiful woman ... with fuchsia hair. He took a breath and looked again ... yep, still a little odd-looking.

She smiled and lifted the big basket in her arms higher so he could see she was holding something. Pete blinked and grinned back. He opened the door wide and invited her in, then reached for the basket. “Sorry, didn’t see the basket at first. Can I help you?”

“Sure, thanks,” Sasha said. She rolled her shoulders and laughed when he dropped his arm to the ground, like the basket was full of lead.

“Oh, come on. It’s not that heavy.”

“Yeah, says you. What can I do for you?” He tilted his head and looked into her eyes, staring long enough to make her blush. “We helped you in the back parking lot a couple weeks ago, right?”

Sasha nodded. “You did. I’m Sasha Mitchell. I’ve been out of town, but I wanted to thank you guys for helping me. Sorry I’m a little late.”

A young, almost pretty guy walked into the room. His short auburn hair was standing on end, and it was clear to her the commotion had woken him up. He watched the malaise for a minute, then turned to look at Pete and Sasha. Pete glared at him.

“Hey, you look a little like Morgan le Fay.” He was cute and sleepy, and smiling so sweetly at her. “Your hair’s pink and everything.”

Sasha beamed. “Thank you!” She was smiling so big she thought her jaw would break. No matter how many people were familiar with her work, it never got old to be recognized. It’s not like graphic novel authors were mobbed on the street or recognized every day. The game was a different story, though.

“I *am* Morgan le Fay.”

Pete stopped waving the bread in the air and turned to look at her. “I thought your name was Sasha.”

She laughed. “It is, but it’s still so cool when somebody recognizes Morgan. I write graphic novels, and I’ve got a game.”

“Oh. My. God!” The kid barreled toward her and grabbed her by the shoulders. “I love *Ethereal*. I’ve got the whole graphic novel series, and the first game. I can’t wait for *Ethereal: Spirit Realm* to release!” He pulled her into a big, bear hug.

Pete gasped and tried to pull Sasha free of Danny’s hold. “Danny, good God, let her go.”

Luckily, though, Sasha was laughing and had hugged him back, so when she gave him a slight shake of her head and a saucy wink, he stepped back.

Danny sighed and let her go, tucking his hands into his pockets. “I’m sorry I grabbed you like that.” The pale skin of his face was beet red. He did look a little stunned. Must’ve been too much excitement to wake up to. Pete whacked him on the shoulder, and then mouthed to him, *I saw her first*. The kid just laughed and mouthed back, *no way*.

“It’s okay. By the way, Danny, there’s an unreleased copy of the game in the basket.” She pointed to the table in a nonchalant manner, like she hadn’t just made the kid’s dreams come true. “There’re a couple copies of the two latest books, too.”

The last person to follow along was a woman wearing the EMT uniform. *Hmm ...* Sasha stopped next to the woman and briefly touched her elbow.

"Excuse me, ma'am," she said, but the woman cut in.

"I'm Delaney Jones, but you can call me Delaney."

Sasha smiled. "Thanks, Delaney. Um, when will your partner be back?"

Delaney looked blank for a second, and then smiled and said, "Oh, you mean Ellie? He's only a volunteer. Works the last two weekdays of each month."

"So he won't be back for another week, huh?" Sasha said, trying to be smooth, though her disappointment was pretty obvious. "What does he do when he's not here?"

"He's a doctor. Splits his time between the VA hospital at Duke University and the Urban Ministries Clinic here in Raleigh."

Pete cleared his throat and stepped a little closer to the conversation, listening raptly. Sasha cut her eyes over and gave him a quick grin, but continued her conversation with Delaney.

"Ellie seems like sort of a strange name for a man. Is that a nickname or a family name, or something?" She shifted on her feet, a little squirmy because Danny stopped fiddling with the Xbox setup and had also turned to listen. The attention made her self-conscious, and she was so not cool enough to pull off being unaffected.

"Nah," Pete answered. "His name's David Ellington, but everybody calls him Duke or Ellie."

"Oh, is he a big jazz fan?"

Pete nodded. "He is. Why the interest in Duke?" He crossed his heavily muscled arms across his broad chest. Whoa, he had one sexy torso. *He'd be a perfect character model.* Sasha had been so intent on being nosy and trying not to get caught looking in the corners for her mystery EMT that she'd overlooked the Herculean firefighter.

She blushed. "I, um, just wanted to thank him. He was so quiet when he was helping me. Didn't say too much, but just, you know, sort of watched." She laughed. "I thought he was going to go after the kid before you let me loose."

Danny and Pete looked at each other. They both sighed, regret clear in the drop of their shoulders: *she* had seen *Ellie* first.

"Yeah, if you give me your information I'll make sure he gets it," said Danny. "Sorry man," he said under his breath to Pete. They did some kind of mental telepathy thing with their eyes, and Danny walked off snickering.

PURCHASE

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