INSIDE HEAVEN INC:

CONFESSIONS OF AZRAEL



AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

R.C VIELEE

Humanity knows me by many names: Azrael, Mot, As-Sajdah, Ma'at, Anubis, the Grim Reaper. I could go on. You get the idea. Most just call me the Angel of Death.

You're wondering if the Angel of Death is real. I am.

Right about this point there's a bunch of you humans reading this who think my story is fiction at best, blasphemy at worst. I assure you it's neither. You're reading this and saying to yourself, *"Yeah, right. A book written by an Angel. No way."* One day you'll find out I'm telling the truth. On that day, I'll get the last laugh… and you'll be dead.

Then there's the moniker. I never wanted to be known as the Angel of Death. Most are put off by me not for who I am, but because of my title. It's not like I'm the one killing everybody. You're already dead when I show up—most of the time.

I sent a request up through official channels to change my title to 'Angel of Comfort', but it never got approved. The name Death is a bit insensitive if you ask me, but nobody ever asks me… anything. It's always, "Death, got another one for you," or "Death, you're needed at another post office."

Except for my only friend, the Angel Samael, nobody ever says, "Hey Death, what are you doing later?" Everybody knows what I'm doing later. The dead just keep coming in an endless stream of souls. There are just so many of you. And if that weren't enough, there's always a war going on somewhere. What's wrong with you people? And don't get me started on all the whining and complaining when I show up.

You might be asking, *"So, Death, then why do you do it?"*

One simple reason: God picked me for this assignment thousands of years ago. Anyway, that's what Archangel Michael tells me every time I ask to be reassigned.

I know Angels aren't supposed to misrepresent the truth, and I would never make such an assertion that one of us has, but what I want never seems to matter to Archangel Michael. I get the same answer without exception: "We all serve the greater good."

But come on, give me a break. I've been dealing with you dead humans for way too long. Not that all of you are troublesome, it's just that I can't take another soul to the Gates of Hell.

It's no wonder I've had enough.

All I ever desired was to serve God as just another Ordinary Angel. At least it all started out that way.

I had one goal—to find a way out of this job. I knew that if I didn't, my resolve to fend off temptations from the one you humans call Lucifer would eventually fail me. Humans came up with the name *Lucifer* in the fourth century—as you measure time—thanks to some sloppy translation work by a priest with a flair for the dramatic. But the name stuck, and since it's the one you're most familiar with, we'll keep it.

… a rose by any other name.

***

One last thing before we dive into the juicy stuff: we've got a problem. Don't worry, we'll get to the dead soon enough. They're not going anywhere—not until I show up.

As an Angel and all that it entails, I exist in a realm beyond human comprehension. Crafting my story for human consumption has forced me to take creative liberties in translating the reality of divine existence into something you might understand.

The first thing you need to know is I'm writing this in the twenty-first century—again, as you humans measure time. However, the events I'm about to share happened ages ago at the dawn of humanity, long after Lucifer got kicked out of Heaven.

Before the Fall, there were mixed opinions about Lucifer—not so much after. But you know what, Lucifer always had a way of making you feel special. Still does. One day too many of you are going to find out all about Lucifer. On that day, I guarantee you won't get the feel-good treatment. The rest of you, the lucky ones, are going to have to take my word for it.

Throughout your recorded history, Lucifer, as well as the rest of us celestials, has been depicted in various incarnations and given hundreds of different names. Divine creatures such as Angels, devas, demons, jinn, or cherubim are human interpretations of heavenly beings. With no offense intended toward any one religion, I'll be grouping them all together and calling them Angels.

And before you ask, no, Angels don't have gender. Your kind invented that part about us. We're assigned roles, not identities, but you humans insist on slapping pronouns on everything. Who we are in Heaven is so much simpler.

In terms of the names I use in this book, whether the guy was called Noah in *Genesis*, Ziusudra in a Sumerian tale, or Utnapishtim in the Akkadian *Epic of Gilgamesh* doesn't matter. All represent the same character in similar versions of the Great Flood narrative. Whatever label I slap on the character for this book doesn't change the fundamental identity of who they are or who they represent in my story. That goes for humans and celestial beings; Christianity calls some Angel this, Islam calls the same Angel something else. I can't accommodate a bunch of different names for each divine being, human, or event in presenting my narrative.

But know that in writing this book, it's not my intention to shake your belief in God or to contradict your theological scriptures. I'm just telling it like it was. Even if your belief system didn't get it exactly right, God is forgiving of innocent mistakes… most of the time.

And don’t go getting all high and mighty because, in your pre-conceived notion of how an Angel sounds, I fail to measure up to your imagination. How would you even know what an Angel should sound like?

What you think you know about Angels comes from other humans, and mostly by the accounts of men from long ago. Think about it; if the source is human, how accurate can it really be? Some things never change.

And here’s something else to chew on: I’ve handled billions of you dead humans over thousands of years. For better or worse, and it’s probably the latter, you’ve rubbed off on me. So yeah, maybe I don’t sound like other Angels.

Bottom line—this is my story, and I’m telling it my way. I’m sticking with one naming convention grounded in widely accepted lore.

I suppose some of you will take issue with that.

Get over it.

I encourage you to let go of what you think you know, because not everything you’re about to read will be portrayed in a manner matching your particular faith. Before you go getting your nose out of joint, consider this: what you think you know is founded on belief. I, on the other hand, have been witness to it all.