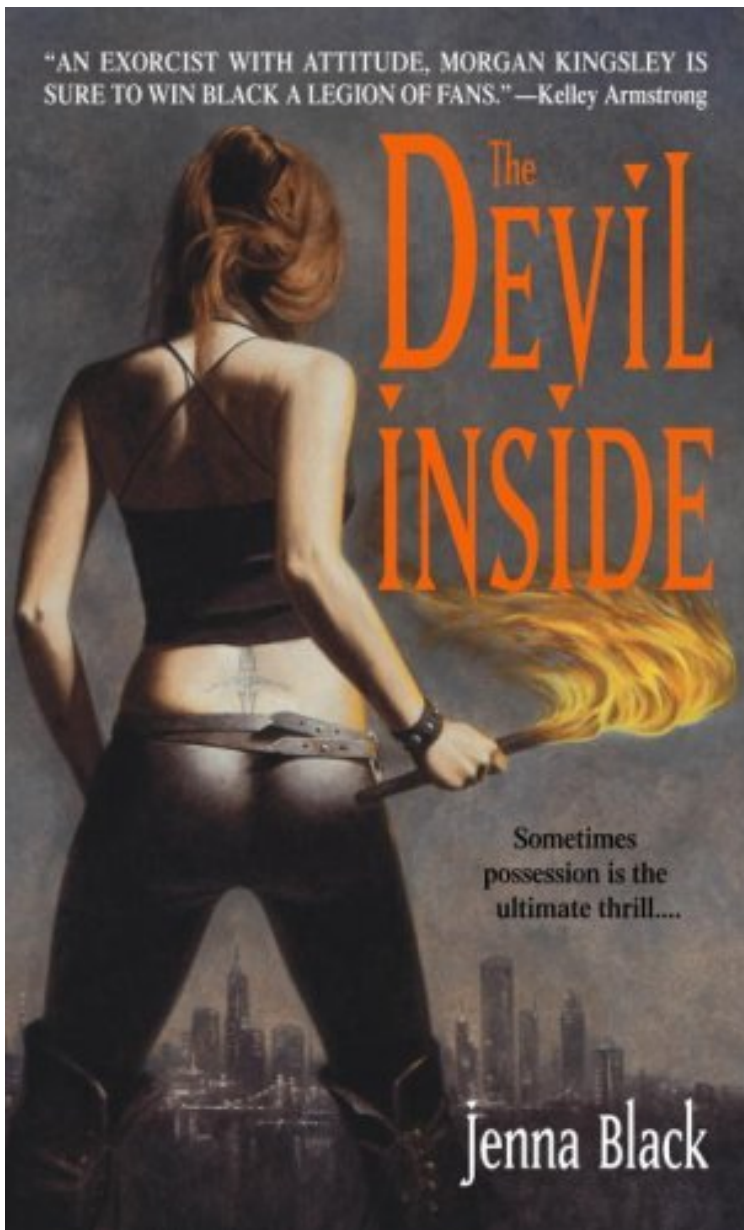


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The Devil Inside



Par Jenna Black
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurPossession. Murder. Mayhem.Let the games begin...Exorcism isnt a job, its a callingand a curse. Just ask Morgan Kingsley, a woman who has a stronger aura than any Demon. Or so she thought. Now, in a pair of black leather pants and a kick-ass tattoo, Morgan is heading back to Philadelphia after a nasty little exorcismand her life is about to be turned upside downby the Demon thats gotten inside her.Not just any Demon. Six foot five inches of dark, delicious temptation, this one is to die forthat is, if he doesnt get Morgan killed first. Because while some humans vilify Demons and others idolize them, Morgans

Demon is leading a war of succession no human has ever imagined. For a woman trying to live a life, and hold on to the almost-perfect man, being possessed by a gorgeous rebel Demon will mean a wild ride of uninhibited thrills, shocking surprises, and pure, unadulterated terror. . . .From the Paperback edition. Extrait Chapter One Topeka, Kansas. Demon capital of the world. Not! Demons, the illegal ones at least, tend to like the biggest cities. More anonymity. More prey. But every once in a while, one would pop up in the most unlikely place. Like Topeka. I flew into Kansas City, Missouri, then had to rent a car for the ninety-minute drive to Topeka. I live in the suburbs, but I'm a city girl at heart. Driving ninety minutes on toll roads out in the middle of nowhere is my idea of Hell. But wait, it gets worse no one bothered to tell Kansas it was spring, so it was snowing. I can count on one hand the number of times I've driven in the snow. If I hadn't known they might burn an eleven-year-old girl to death if I didn't show up, I'd have ridden out the storm in Kansas City. The speed limit was seventy, but I drove about thirty-five, squinting out the windshield, hoping there weren't any cows grazing on the interstate under cover of the blizzard. Okay, so maybe it wasn't a blizzard by Midwest standards, but it's all a matter of perspective. Kansas is one of ten states including my home state, Pennsylvania that allow the execution of humans hosting illegal demons. I called from the airport to let them know I'd be late. I almost choked when I noticed the area code for Topeka was 666. Gotta love the irony. Luckily, they weren't anxious to put a cute little girl to flame, despite the fact that she was allegedly possessed by a demon who'd murdered at least three people, so they agreed to wait for me. The demon containment center-cum-execution chamber was in the basement of the courthouse and had more guards than most maximum security prisons. Why the idiots used legions of armed guards was beyond me. What were they going to do, shoot the host to death if a demon escaped? Yeah, that might solve the immediate problem and leave the demon without a body to inhabit, but if it found another host, you can bet revenge would be high on its to-do list. The only way to kill a demon is to exorcise it or burn its host alive. Lovely, huh? I'd read little Lisa Walker's case on the plane. She and her parents had been visiting New York. They'd gone to a Broadway show, and when they were leaving, Lisa got knocked down by some thug who was running from the cops. Probably they thought it was exciting, because, hey, things like that just don't happen in Topeka. It wasn't until they'd gotten home that they'd noticed anything wrong. She didn't do a Linda Blair and spit pea soup, but she definitely wasn't herself. It was the little things that gave it away a suddenly more sophisticated vocabulary, a hint of attitude, the occasional expression in her eyes that was too old for her age. They'd called in a priest, and he'd immediately declared her possessed. Me, I'd have been skeptical. Demons usually prefer strong adult bodies to inhabit, not delicate eleven-year-old girls. And no matter what they claim, priests aren't qualified to declare a person possessed. Yes, some of them are sensitives, and can see auras, but it's not a job requirement like it is for an exorcist. So if I didn't think the kid was possessed, why had I flown all the way out here to bum-fuck Kansas to perform an exorcism? Because the court had ordered it, and the parents had approved it and if the kid really was possessed, they'd barbecue her if an exorcist couldn't cast the demon out. The parents had demanded the best, and they could afford me, so here I was, freezing my tailfeathers off in Corn City, USA. I had to clear two checkpoints before I even got close to the containment center. I'm sure I'd have made it through faster if I'd dressed the part, but if I'd wanted to wear suits, I'd have gone to business school. My uniform was a pair of tight low-rise jeans with a clingy sweater and a pair of kick-ass pointy-toed boots. The director of the Topeka Containment Unit was one Frank Jenkins. He was a short, pudgy guy who looked harmless at first glance. He came out from behind a steel-barred door, smiling until he got a good look at me. Then the smile faded from the outside in until it morphed into a frown of disapproval. The frown didn't look anywhere near as harmless. I put on my best hail-fellow-well-met smile and held out my hand. "Morgan Kingsley," I said, sounding almost perky. "You must be Mr. Jenkins." He shook my hand and nodded, but he didn't look happy about it. "I suppose you came straight to the courthouse without stopping by your hotel," Jenkins said, the frown still firmly in place. That was true, though I wouldn't have changed clothes even if I had checked in. "I thought it would be best for everyone involved if we got this over with," I said. Which was also true. I couldn't imagine what the parents must be going through. Not to mention Lisa, trapped inside a body she could no longer control, a helpless passenger while the demon rampaged. The theory was that the thug in New York had been hosting an illegal demon who was on the run, wanted for three murders. When he bumped into Lisa, the demon thought it had found the perfect escape. Just hitchhike out of New York in an adorable little girl's body and hope to find a more suitable host later. The police had caught the fleeing thug eventually, only to find his brain fried. "Well, let's get to it," Jenkins said, still frowning at me. At five foot nine, I was about three inches taller than him. I got the feeling he didn't like that much. Actually, I got the feeling he didn't like much of anything about me.

Maybe I was a little too big-city for him. Without another word, he led me through the steel doors into the heart of the containment center. Why, you might ask, would a small-time burg like Topeka, which hadn't had more than one or two illegal demons in the last five years, need its own containment center? Because Kansas didn't take well to demons, legal or otherwise. Enough of their citizens believed in the Biblical view of demons as minions of Satan to keep execution legal, and they wanted to be prepared in the event they had a chance to rid the world of one more evil. What did this mean to me? It meant that while the personnel had all been trained for the job, they had little or no practical experience. And I saw evidence of that every step of the way as we walked to the execution chamber. "Mr. Jenkins," I said when we stopped outside the chamber for him to key in the passcode, "why are your people not wearing gloves when you have a known illegal demon in custody?" An incorporeal demon needs an invitation to possess a human body, but one that already has a host can transfer from one to another through skin-to-skin contact. No one within a hundred yards of an illegal demon should be showing more skin than absolutely necessary. Jenkins glared at me, liking me even less. "I can assure you, Ms. Kingsley, the demon is contained." I bit my tongue to stop myself from reminding him of several incidents of "contained" demons escaping and wreaking havoc. He didn't strike me as being open to constructive criticism. The door mechanism made a few clicking and ratcheting sounds, then Jenkins swung it open. It gave a sigh when it opened, as if the room behind it had been vacuum sealed. I'd thought the containment center staff not wearing gloves was unprofessional. Brother, I hadn't known what unprofessional was until I stepped into that room. Lisa Walker was strapped onto a sliding steel table. At one end of the table were a pair of heavy metal doors that led into the oven. She was positioned so that her feet faced the doors. So that she could stare with her wide little-girl eyes at the oven that would burn her alive if I failed to exorcize the demon. Tears had matted her eyelashes and the fine yellow hair that framed her face. Her whole body was shaking with terror, and pity stabbed through me so hard I had to fight not to put a hand to my chest. I reminded myself that I could very well be looking at a demon giving an Oscar-worthy performance, but the pity didn't go away. If the child wasn't possessed, she might never recover from this trauma. If she was possessed, then this was a new low for demon-kind. But Lisa Walker's pitiful little frame wasn't what horrified me the most. No, what horrified me the most was that her parents sat huddled together on a bench at the other end of the room. Mrs. Walker's eyes were swollen with tears, and Mr. Walker's face was pale and tense. I whirled on Jenkins. "You're letting the parents watch? Are you nuts?" Exorcisms are never a pretty sight. There's usually a lot of screaming and cursing. From the demon, not from me. And about seventy-five to eighty percent of demon hosts end up dead or catatonic when the demon is cast out. So far, no one has come up with a reliable method of predicting which hosts would survive intact. "She's their daughter," Jenkins said, drawing himself up to his full, not very impressive height. "If you fail, they'll have to sign the consent form." I looked at Lisa Walker and a very unpleasant lump formed in my throat. I hate demons with a passion. And I don't like the legal ones much better than the illegal ones. But even I wasn't sure I could sign the order to burn an eleven-year-old girl alive to destroy the demon. Especially not if the girl was my daughter! "You could have had them sign the consent beforehand," I muttered, disliking Jenkins now as much as he disliked me. "They'd want to say goodbye." I glanced over at the parents, who hadn't said word one to me. They couldn't even bear to look at me. Can't say I blamed them. I wished I'd worn a conservative business suit after all. I don't think my jeans and sweater gave them great confidence in my competence. But the worst thing I could do now was make them wait and worry any longer, so I settled my s...

...From Publishers Weekly Though demon possession is bad enough for the average Joe, Black's new heroine, native Philadelphian Morgan Kingsley, is a professional exorcist making her possession by a powerful demon all the more infuriating (and embarrassing). Worse, the demon inside her, Lugh, is next in line to become king of the demon realm, and factions are hard at work to off him before he takes the throne. As neither of the standard options for demon killing appeal to Morgan (exorcism, which usually leaves the human host a mindless wreck, or burning at the stake, with predictable results), Morgan and Lugh (who communicate in dreams) must race against time to discover how he was implanted into her and, while keeping the rival demons at bay, how to get him out without killing her in the process. Although Black doesn't break any new ground, she's got a winning heroine, a well-crafted contemporary world where demonic possession is just a part of life and a nice balance of mystery, action and sex, making this light but engaging novel an urban fantasy series kickoff full of promise. (Dec.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.