



KATE  
AUSTIN

THE  
DEMON  
NEXT DOOR

ALI

COBBLESTONE PRESS

*The Demon Next Door*

*ALI*

*By*

*Kate Austin*

## **The Demon Next Door: Ali by Kate Austin**

---

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

### **The Demon Next Door: Ali**

Copyright© 2009 Kate Austin

ISBN: 978-1-60088-471-9

Cover Artist: Sable Grey

Editor: Melanie Noto

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced electronically or in print without written permission, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in reviews.

Cobblestone Press, LLC

[www.cobblestone-press.com](http://www.cobblestone-press.com)

## **Dedication**

To Saeed, for my favorite brainstorming session ever—drinking beer in the sun on the Sunshine Coast talking about demons.

## Chapter One

All women have that boy they regret. The one who took them to prom, promised them forever, and then disappeared.

That boy—that man—changed my life.

Twice.

The first time was the night of my senior prom. I'd been mooning over Mike Hubbard for months, hoping he'd ask *me* to prom. Even I, despite my besotted state, knew it was more than unlikely.

I was cute but Mike was the school god. Unlikely didn't come close to describing my chances.

His first three choices turned him down. Should that have been a clue? No shit, Shakespeare. And I was stubborn. Too stubborn to take even the most obvious of hints—still am, for that matter—and when he asked me, I said yes.

I lost more than my virginity that night. I lost my heart and my innocence and my faith in the intrinsic goodness of human nature. At least for a few months.

I spent several weeks—okay, sixteen to be exact—after my deflowering weeping in the shower or the stairwell of our apartment building so my mother wouldn't hear me. But then I met Jim, and then Darryl, and then Tom, and my tears dried up.

\* \* \* \* \*

## The Demon Next Door: Ali by Kate Austin

---

Why am I thinking about Mike Hubbard twenty years later? I had an email from him a couple of months ago. Not a word, not a sighting, not even a *Did you hear what Mike's doing now?* phone call from anyone in the past twenty years, and now this. It was as if he'd vanished right off the face of the earth only to appear again in my inbox.

*Maryalice, I've been thinking about you,* the email said. *Found your address on Classmates.com. Thought I'd check in.*

And I wrote back.

Mistake number two.

Not because there's anything wrong with *this* Mike Hubbard, but because I'm not sure I'm ready for a relationship. And it's clear this is what—sight unseen—this Mike Hubbard seems to want with *me*. Almost too weird for words.

The fortunate thing is that he lives seven or eight hundred miles away so I have time to think about it, the *it* being whether I want to see him at all. And if I do, what restrictions I want to put on the meeting.

We can spend time talking to each other, getting to know each other—which, not surprisingly, we never did back then—before I commit to a face to face.

I'm not gun shy, at least I don't think of myself that way. But I like being single. Relationships mean complications. Single means I can date when I want—or not. I can have sex when I want, with myself or with someone else. Or not.

The sex part is crucial.

Being single means variety. But even more than that, it means *newness*. I love having sex with strangers and, really, first dates are the best time to do that.

It usually goes like this.

I meet a guy at a coffee shop or in a grocery store or through work, often a supplier or a courier or an on-call IT guy. I never date anyone who works with me—something *always* goes wrong. We make that particular kind of eye contact that says, *do you wanna?*, with a response that says, *absolutely*.

So we go for a drink, then dinner at a hotel. They almost all have

those lovely old-fashioned dining rooms. Low lighting. Booths. Older, very discreet waiters.

I always suggest a restaurant in a hotel so it's natural to get a room there. Never my place—too risky—or his. The odds are he has a roommate or his place is a pigpen, both of which are guaranteed to spoil the mood.

By the time we head upstairs, we're ready. We've been playing more than footsies under the tablecloth. The elevator ride is foreplay. We stand in the lobby and wait until we're the only people there and then fall in through the opening doors and slam them shut so no one can join us.

We drop our briefcases to the floor and grab each other in a way that, even in discreet hotel dining rooms, is inappropriate. I tug his shirt out of his trousers, and he pulls my tank out of the waist of my skirt. We're careful not to rip off any buttons—that would be too obvious—but we do whatever is necessary to get our hands on some of that hidden skin we've been lusting after for the past two hours.

He rubs his hands—I especially like this part if he has calluses—across my belly and around my back. He moves up and down until his fingers hover just below my bra. Then, without notice, he'll slide up to discover the front closing. He opens the clasp and pushes the bra aside.

He strokes my nipples with his fingertips, and I tremble.

While all of this is going on, I'm concentrating on my half of the equation. I run my fingers over his belly. I like all kinds of male bellies. Slightly chubby ones, hard ones with a six-pack, and concave ones on thin, un-muscled men. Hairy ones. Hairless ones.

I touch only lightly, carefully. I circle his belly button. I slide my fingers along the skin beneath his belt. This always triggers a groan, a tightening of his abs against my hands and his fingers on my nipples.

The elevator ride only lasts a few moments and when the bell rings for our floor, we both step back and tuck in our clothes. I pull my jacket over my chest—my undone bra and erect nipples are a little too obvious.

The hallway is a blur but the door to our room opens like magic. No lights are ever on until I move to the bathroom, turn on the overhead,

## The Demon Next Door: Ali by Kate Austin

---

and close the door, leaving only a sliver of light illuminating the bed.

No point in pretending we're going to do anything other than fuck, so we sit down on opposite edges of the bed and remove our clothing. There's something completely erotic about taking off your clothes in front of a stranger.

By the time my clothes are off and neatly folded on a chair, my pussy is damp and my skin is flushed. When he turns to me, his cock stands at attention, pointing like a dowsing rod having sensed buried water.

We stand for a moment, trailing our eyes over all that gorgeous bare skin. And it *is* gorgeous—no matter what he looks like—because it's *my* skin to play with for the next couple of hours.

This is where things can change. It all depends on how adventurous he is. Sometimes it's just *wham, bam, thank you, ma'am*. And sometimes—the best times of all—it's a long, slow glide into orgasm after orgasm until I can hardly bear it anymore.

But either way? I'm so hot by the time I get into the elevator that I only need his cock inside me to make me explode. I've had hours of foreplay, and I'm *ready*.

So you can see why I'm hesitant about Mike and his intentions. He hasn't come right out and said he wants a relationship with me, but he uses all the buzz words. The ones that make me nervous. Words like *home* and *kids* and *cooking* and *vacations*.

No way.

Vacations, for me, are solitary pursuits. New locations and new men with whom to have no holds barred, no strings attached sex.

But—and here's the rub—I've always been as curious as a cat, and I want to see what kind of man Mike's become. I want to see if he's grown out of the boy who callously broke my heart all those years ago. I want to see if the school god has turned into...what? A geek? A dweeb? A nerd? An insurance salesman? A used car dealer? Even worse, a mortician or a politician? Or a guy I'd take to a hotel dining room?

He *says* he's retired, but hasn't said from what—which is a red flag right away, because he's my age and only drug dealers or gangsters can

## The Demon Next Door: Ali by Kate Austin

---

afford to retire before they're forty. He says he has three ex-wives but they're all his friends—definitely another red flag. And five kids from various wives—*and* he wants more?

The guy he describes is so *not* what, if I'd taken the time to think about him over the past twenty years, I could have imagined the school god turning out to be. The good news is that I've managed—so far—to restrict my curiosity to the online world, and I'm going to keep doing that for a few weeks yet. I may keep doing it forever.

But I doubt I'll make it that far.

My cat sense is tingling. I want to know who he is now, how he's evolved.

Is it obvious I'm lying? No kidding. I'll admit what I want is to take this sexy body and even more sexy mind I've grown into and show him who he screwed with twenty years ago.

I want revenge.

\* \* \* \* \*

The cat and mouse game continued for a few weeks. He'd email me, I'd email back, we'd talk about his family and about my work. He'd talk—a lot—about me when I was younger.

He talked as if he'd been in love with me from the time we first met at thirteen. He remembered things about me even I didn't remember. And his memory of prom was the complete opposite of mine.

Oh, he remembered popping my cherry, but in his mind it was a joyous experience for both of us. He remembered the dress I wore—pink and fluffy and short. *I* didn't remember the dress. He remembered the car he drove to pick me up. He remembered the care he'd taken to bring a dark-colored blanket for the back seat.

In his mind, that made him a hero.

In my mind, that made him a dirty, rotten scumbag.

It made him an eighteen year old who would do whatever it took—including lying and cheating—to get into the pants of a naïve teenage girl. And then leave her crying on the damp grass in front of her

apartment building, her bloody panties wadded up in a ball in her hands.

And even worse, he'd leave her pregnant without a thought or a care. I was lucky I didn't end up with an STD as well. And lucky that I miscarried that child a few weeks later. Before I or my mother or my classmates or even my doctor knew what had happened.

I never spoke to Mike Hubbard after prom night, not until he emailed me.

But I'd always dreamed about what would happen if I ran—*ran* being the operative word—into him on the street. An accident, of course, but a fatal one. A long, drawn out, painful, but eventually fatal accident.

This was better.

This was going to be up close and personal.

I had spent the past few weeks planning my revenge. I still wasn't sure whether I'd get him all excited and tie him up and then walk away, or if I'd figure out some way to give him a disfiguring disease. Or I might tell the world—with the aid of blogs and Twitter and Facebook and MySpace—what a scumbag he was.

Complete with pictures. Doctored ones, of course.

Although tying him up and then taking pictures might be even better.

At this rate, it would take me months to figure out what to do, but Mike Hubbard was keen and the minute I said *yes*, he'd be in the car on his way down to the city. I had to be ready.

I wasn't.