

AJ SALEM



## Almost Demon

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## **Almost Demon** AJ Salem

The last thing Gemma Pope expects to study in the after-school book club is demon etiquette but that is exactly what she has to do to succeed as a summoner and save her hometown.

Since taking the blame for the car accident that claimed the lives of her twin brother and two of her best friends, she's been seeing things. Dark shadows, opaque, menacing, multiplying.

The clock starts ticking when the local mild-mannered librarian suffers a psychotic break and pulls a gun on her reading circle. People are dying in disasters and wars all over the world. Gemma's dad is getting weird, her classmates are becoming violent, and the darkness surrounding Harrisport is getting thicker.

Does she trust hot English Lit teacher Mr. Flynn or Ian, the mysterious new kid in town, who has knowledge beyond his years and access to other dimensions?

It is only when the gates to hell are opened, that Gemma learns who her real friends are.

Discover what lies just beyond the veil of humanity in the sleepy town of Harrisport.

## **Almost Demon Details**

Date : Published October 31st 2013 by Salem Books, Inc. (first published September 26th 2013)

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Author : AJ Salem

Format : Paperback 310 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Paranormal, Young Adult, Demons, Horror, Romance, Paranormal Romance

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## **From Reader Review Almost Demon for online ebook**

### **Katherine Paschal says**

Ever since the car accident that killed her twin brother and two good friends and left her in a coma, Gemma has seen black floating shapes. She tries to pretend that her world didn't fall apart with her twin's death, but she has distanced herself from her past life. When senior year of school starts, Gemma dreads going back for good reason. Everyone seems to blame her for the deaths, and the black shapes have multiplied. When the blackness starts to seep into people and cause them to attack her, Gemma knows she is in trouble.

I was not a fan of this book. Some parts I found incredibly interesting, like the portals, demon summoning, the psychic reading, and the black shapes. But nothing meshed well for a complete story. The book was so choppy and skipped around a lot, that at times I was confused as to what was going on and who was saying what. I ended up being completely disconnected from the plot, and only kept reading because a)I hoped it would get better, and b)I hate not finishing books.

Gemma was a terrible character, so incredibly meek even though all these people told her how strong she was. She basically was a mindless pawn for everyone. People would tell her to do something and she just would. Every once in a while she would question them, and they would say "don't question me" or "later" and that was enough to convince her to do their bidding. And she did some crazy things with no explanation-riding in unknown portals, summoning demons...just to name a few. She was ridiculous. Also, she let her brother's girlfriend beat her up repeatedly without putting up a fight. Seriously? Oh and she slept with a boy she knows nothing about, but because he said he would wait for her. Wow, that's desperate. She has a fear of cars but then hops on a motorcycle because someone tells her to. So much more dangerous than a car, but whatever. I really couldn't find anything redeemable about her for me to like. She has two potential love interests, neither one we know anything about, but that's completely fine, let's just go with the flow. Maybe I am too inquisitive to be able to relate to her.

There were so many things that happened in the book with really no explanation to the why or the how.

There is a psychic who does a reading and freaks out at Gemma but I had no idea why, never was explained.

There are many scenarios like that that really just left me stumped, like the author forgot and moved on. The book felt like it was suppose to be a eerie supernatural story, but at times felt like a coming of age story with dealing with loss and acceptance, friendship, sex and overcoming fears. It just really didn't mesh for me.

This is the first in a new series, but I don't think I will be reading any more. I am sure some people will really like this book, but it was not for me.

I received this book from the publisher in exchange for my honest review.

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### **Shelly Phillips says**

I won this book from goodreads...LOVED IT!!

I couldn't put this book down..I fell in love with Gemma Pope and I can't wait to read more from A.J. Salem.

What happened to THOM?? Can't wait for his return!!

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## **Carrie Mansfield says**

Two reviews in as many days! And yes, I read this book in like three hours and change. After the bit of a slog that *Thief's Magic* was, and knowing that the next several books I'm going to be doing are ARCs, I wanted to pick something that would be fun to read and preferably YA (for the easier read). Although I couldn't remember what the story was supposed to be about I love the cover and the title just kept calling out to me so I decided to read this.

I read the first 5% at break. I finished maybe another chapter or two at lunch. I finished the rest after work. It was fast, it was breezy, and it was fun. It's a nice mix of the kind of high school drama you could expect after the unexpected death of several popular students and a magic system that, while nothing radically new, at least had enough flourishes to make it feel a bit fresh.

You can see at least one of the twists regarding the real identities of one of the players coming, but it isn't too obvious and you're still not exactly sure of whom is whom on all the major players at the end of this book.

While this isn't the kind of book that focuses on character development, Gemma is a nice enough MC and the relationship between her and Charlotte feels good and legit; you can buy that these two really are friends. There is a mean-girl/bullying aspect of it, but at least the person behind it isn't a bitch because the plot demands it, but at least has a reason for it and there is some resolution there which is nice too.

This book doesn't attempt to reinvent the paranormal YA wheel and it doesn't need to, it knows what it wants to do and it does it well. If a sequel comes out (as of writing this review I can't find anything definitive) I'll definitely give it a look.

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## **Shelley says**

*Almost Demon* is the debut novel by AJ Salem. It's about Gemma Pope who is the lone survivor of a car crash that killed her twin brother, Brian, and their two friends. Gemma is dealing with anxiety and survivors guilt. This causes her to exclude herself from her normal activities she did before the accident. While dealing with the emotions of the accident, Gemma begins seeing dark, shapeless entities. She begins to worry that she is going crazy when she sees them all over town. Her fears subside when two new arrivals in town, Mr. Thom Flynn, her English, and Ian, her new crush, confirm that what she is seeing is real. As she develops relationships with them, Gemma discovers that her world is full of demons and angels and she is somehow caught in the middle of all of it.

At first I had a very hard time finding Gemma's voice at the beginning of the novel. There is a lot of information and events happening with very little chance to really understand who Gemma is. That changes quickly after the first fifty pages. Gemma is a fatally flawed character which made me really like her. She makes a majority of her decisions based on her emotions instead of taking the advice of those around her. There were plenty of times I wanted to shake her or yell at her to not trust certain people. I feel that she hasn't completely grown as a character by the end of this book. Since this is the first of a series I'm hoping that some of her teen angst will fade as she becomes more confident in who she is.

The biggest flaw I had was that I didn't really understand some of the ending. I don't want to give away any spoilers, so I'm going to try my best to explain. Throughout the book Gemma is learning how to summon demons and angels in order to learn how to stop all the shadows called Dybbuk from taking over the town and possessing people. Her teacher Thom is training her how to do this, but as she learns more about him, there are too many questions about who exactly he is. She begins to not trust him and turns more to Ian. However Ian also may not be who he seems. There are several plot twist at the end that leave a lot more questions than answers. I wanted to see a few key points of the plot answered like why were the the Dybbuk sent to Gemma's town? What exactly was her role in all of it? Considering how exciting the book is and the need to set up the next book it is a minor flaw in an otherwise very enjoyable story. I'm sure that as the series progresses all my questions will be answered, so I will just have to be patient.

Overall this is an exciting read with lots of adventure and plenty of leave the seat of your pants moments. I'm definately going to have to read the next book just so I can find out what happens to Gemma, Thom, Ian, and all her friends. I would recommend reading this and then comment below! I would LOVE to chat about the book because there were lots of OMG moments. I'm giving it 4 out of 5 stars and a couple of thumbs up.

I received this as a "first reads" novel from the author on Goodreads and in no way did this sway my review.

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### **Julie Darley (Never judge a Book by its Movie) says**

Where do I start, first of all thank you to Netgalley for allowing me to read the ARC of this book in return for an honest review.

Second, I LOVE the cover of this book. It is what caught my eye. It reminds me of The Raven Boys and The Dream Thieves, both of which I adored.

I wasn't expecting this story, it really, really captivated me. It starts with Gemma, a girl you immediately know has a story and she does. She is returning back to school following the tragic accident that claimed the life of her beloved twin brother Brian and friends Jenny and Mimi.

She is disconnected to her dad and apart from her friend Charlotte the rest of the school blame her for the deaths. She also has a ghost camping out on her front lawn, a new sexy teacher Mr Flynn and a mysterious new boy Ian.

Then she sees them, dark, black shadowy mists that are lurking on the edge, waiting and watching. When her nemesis Allison, Brian's former girlfriend attacks her she sees the blackness is consuming her. It's in her eyes. When Ian comes to her rescue he tells her he sees them too.

She sparks a friendship with him but also Mr Flynn, a rather yummy character suggests she join his book club. When she reluctantly agrees she realizes she is the only member and Mr Flynn wants to teach her how to summon demons by performing the sigil ritual and chanting from an old grimoire.

What I loved about this story was the easy style of writing, the character development and the way AJ didn't candy coat Gemma's grief, guilt or fear of what was happening. The story flowed and grew with excellent fluidity and you were kept on the hook of wanting more by the ease of flow.

The story built great momentum and even though you knew either Mr Flynn or Ian were double crossing her it wasn't obvious. As the shadows were closing in, taking their hold on the towns people was when it really took off. The scene where she is trapped in the locker room by Allison and Matt was explosive, it was the catalyst to everything going to hell in a hand basket.

Whatthehell

Gemma draws her line of who she trusts (Ian) and who she thinks is leading her to hell (Mr Flynn) and then it explodes. I couldn't turn the page (if you can still say that reading a kindle) fast enough. The summoning of Abaddon was intense and shocking, as too was the bigger story of her mother and her relationship with her brother.

More than that, you could see what was there in the beginning coming together with the ending to make the story complete. I knew when what came from the chamber not to return was the set up for the next adventure and I'm happy to say it didn't end on one of those annoying cliff hangers that has you face planted in the sofa for weeks wondering what just hit you. But you know there is more to come.

This is the first book for AJ Salem and she has done a fabulous job. It had hints of Maya Dyer as well as Beautiful Creatures with a whole host of demonology just to be the right side of awesome. I give it massive thumbs up.

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## **Anastasia ? says**

Full Review on NetGalley

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## **Meredith says**

Almost Demon had a lot of potential with an intriguing plot. I was really excited to read it. Unfortunately, it didn't completely live up to my expectations.

The MC, Gemma, was very passive in the book. She didn't question anyone or anything and she trusted everything everyone said. Maybe if there had been more background concerning Gemma after the accident – what happened, when she started seeing ghosts, how she handled it, etc – then I would believe her not questioning all the supernatural stuff that happened. Clearly she's used to seeing weird things because she can see the Dybbuk. But we had very little else to go on and it just made it hard to comprehend how Gemma could be so accepting and trusting, without really questioning anything or worrying if she was doing the wrong thing. Especially with Mr. Flynne and Ian.. She barely knew them and she acted as though they were the most honest and trust-worthy people in her life, like they would never steer her wrong.

I didn't trust Mr. Flynne at all. I didn't really fall for Ian or trust him completely, either. Gemma kind of has a crush on both guys, but I didn't really picture her with either of them.

The Dybbuk and the possessions were really frustrating, especially where Allison was concerned. I know she

was possessed and therefore not herself, but the things she said and did really irritated me. It was too much. I know the Dybbuk are evil and all that, but it was just too much drama and bitchiness for me. I felt the same way with the scenes with the Dybbuk and her father. I actually almost DNF'd because of the Allison scenes, but I pushed through because the plot had me intrigued and I really wanted to find out what happened next and see how it ended.

About halfway through, I had a hunch who "Ghosty" was. In the end, my hunch was proved to be right! So that was kind of cool.

Some of the scenes happened way too fast. There was no build-up, no time to process everything and then before you know it, the scene is over, the event has passed and there is very little explanation afterwards of what happened. I was actually really confused at times. I had to re-read a lot of sections.

Near the end, there were two pretty significant revelations concerning two characters. But... They really didn't come as a surprise for me. I had already figured both out – most of it, anyway. It was a little bit anti-climatic, honestly. There were so many places in the book where it was obvious something wasn't right with those characters. And because it was so predictable, it took the fun out of finding out the truth.

In general, the writing and plot had so much potential, but it was too flat and too fast and I didn't pick up on the feeling of danger or impending doom. I felt very detached from the story and the characters. It DID get brownie points for being set in the Hudson Valley (Hometown advantage, FTW!).

Overall, I had some issues with *Almost Demon* but it wasn't a bad read at all. I know I've said it a lot, but it had so much potential and I did enjoy the overall concept of the story. It had a fairly unique plot and that definitely made it more interesting and noteworthy. I'm definitely interested in seeing what Salem comes up with next!

You can also find more from me on my blog: [Pandora's Books](#)

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## **SARIT says**

*Almost Demon* was an engaging read, and I found it very easy to just let myself sit and flow from chapter to chapter. It was a really good mix of demons, angels, spells and gates to hell with a touch of not happy ever after. Whether demon, angel, human, or otherwise, each character has his or her own distinct personality that isn't necessarily what one would expect (like - an angel with a tattered robe and a nail-biting habit who blithely refuses to help rid the town of aggressive spirits, a beady-eyed, overweight demon in a mustard-colored suit and purple shirt trying to kick a smoking habit who likes to call Gemma "chicky.") Gemma herself had a snarky sense of humor that makes her fun to read.

The plot:

Gemma has finally returned to school after the accident – the accident in which her twin brother and her two best friends died. An integral element in this story - everyone blames Gemma for her brother and her best friends' death, even her own father. By following Gemma, we ventured into a rather dark story populated by strange creatures who take possession of bodies and bring a lot of disasters. This is an action-adventure fantasy that establishes a quick pace right from the start. In the first fifty pages, Gemma is attacked by her brother's possessed former girlfriend, meets the hot new boy in school who shows her a portal to other

dimensions, survives the local librarian going postal in the middle of story time, and finds herself the only member of a mysterious new teacher's "book club," in which she studies an ancient book of magic and practices summoning demons.

After introducing to Thom and Ian she learn about attraction and desire and... manipulation. Most of the time she is very busy learning to communicate with demons, in purpose to bring order to her school, to her city and especially to her life. Her relationship with her father (the overworked scientist) is weird - he oscillate between Mr. Jekyll and Mr. Hide and she never now she is going to meet, Until she discovered the secrets that surrounding her birth ...

I love the idea of summoning angels and demons and the tattoos they leave behind. I love the idea of channeling their powers and creating debts and favors and working to discover exactly which angel or demon you need for each job.

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## **Online Eccentric Librarian says**

*More reviews (and no fluff) on the blog <http://surrealtalvi.wordpress.com/>*

There were a lot of things in *Almost Demon* that didn't work for me and it felt very much like a first time writer's work. As well, I think quite a bit of the book felt like I'd read it before: pseudo biblical mythology, missing mysterious mother who may have powers, distant father, mysterious boy coming on to her, etc. It was like pieces were taken from more popular novels such as *Beautiful Creatures* or the *Infernal Devices* books.

The plot follows Gemma, a girl rebounding after the death of her brother and good friends in a car accident. She's reviled by the school, bullied, and has only her good friend Charlotte, a very lucky person, to depend upon. As she starts school, she is greeted by a 20 year old teacher 'hottie' and a new young boy student (also 'hottie'). One wants to teach her how to summons demons and the other wants to take her to mystical places. Both know she can see minor demons/ghosts since the accident. The demons start attacking, taking over souls, and causing mayhem - leading Gemma to decide she needs to use her powers to contract with demons and find answers. But she's meddling where she should and is about to let hell loose.

At times, I felt like I was reading a rejected *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* script. The writing felt immature and as a result, so did the characters. Gemma is supposed to have spirit yet blithely accepts all that is happening around her and happily starts summoning demons - despite being warned not to many times. The demons are continually attacking but completely randomly - they only seem to do it after she's had time to go off on a romantic interlude with mysterious boy or hang out at a slumber party with her friends (never mind that the demons are causing people to be psychotic and kill). As such, the book lacks impetus and tension - and an overall mood. Characters act only in the moment, as if there were car accidents killing friends or librarians suddenly going psychotic and trying to kill masses. Everyone just accepts something happens and there are no consequences.

As well, there is a lot of innuendos - no one ever just tells things normally. E.g., she's warned several times not to follow 'him' - but no one ever says which him, so of course it's an obvious writer tactic to 'surprise' the reader with the reveal at the end. It can be eye rolling at times as a result. Plots, scenes, and dialogues lack



good connector descriptives or segue ways - making following scenes particular abrupt and jarring. Characters often have hidden backgrounds and they just casually state it and no one reacts.

Add in a lot of unimaginative 'magic' (draw a rune, say some random biblical words, up pops demon or angel) and you get the idea that perhaps the author should have waited and put more depth into the writing/story/plot.

Received as an ARC from the publisher.

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## **Koeur says**

<http://koeur.wordpress.com/2013/10/07...>

4.7/5.0

Wow. This was a kick-ass ride. Demons with unique looks and personalities, Angels, alternate universes and teen angst. What more could get you interested? The story-line is a well thought out menagerie that has constant movement coupled to focused character development. There is never a stagnant interlude of drivel filler. The cover art is just plain kick ass. Reminds me of Jo Nesbo's "Redbreast" cover art.

There is not much more to say unless I want to give the story-line away. All I can say is trust me and get this novel and you will be wanting the next in the series ASAP.

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## **Jennifer-Eve Workman says**

I won this through Goodreads First Reads Giveaway.

Almost Demon is a great young adult story about the life of a teenage girl, Gemma, who is trying to handle all that life has thrown at her. When her and her twin brother Brian were little, her mother abandons the family, leaving her father to raise Gemma and Brian, as best he can. Struggling through her high school years, she learns that her boyfriend is spreading lies about just how far she has "gone" sexually, in their relationship, making her feel betrayed and humiliated. Then one awful summer day, Gemma, Brian and her two best friends are in an awful car accident killing everyone but Gemma, but leaving her badly hurt not only physically but mentally as well. As school starts again, Gemma must face her classmates and the rest of her town who all believe that she is the cause of the fatal accident.

Only complicating matters is Gemma's new ability to see ghosts. She soon meets a new teacher and a classmate who both seem to know about this new ability and try to help her figure it out just what is going on. Soon, her friends and the town become threatened by the spirits she is seeing and it is up to Gemma to figure out why and put things back to normal.

The author, A.J. Salem is a fantastic story teller and I definitely recommend this book to everyone, especially teenage readers.

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## **Fandom Monthly says**

**REVIEWER: GRACE** <https://www.goodreads.com/grayczhuang>

Almost Demon by AJ Salem book review (spoiler free)

**Rate:**

3 of 5 stars

★★★

Book reviewer: Grace

I'd give this book 3 of 5 stars.

As a tough book critic, I usually give a book above a 3-3.5 rating. The highest I've really ever given a book was a four. Given that, I actually enjoyed this book a lot.

I love how *Almost Demon* is a bit of everything. Paranormal, sci-fi, romance, historical, it's everything. That's what makes it unique.

But, there were some parts in the book that I did not quite understand. It was confusing sometimes. I don't think I ever ended up incompletely understanding the whole grimoire demon chanting sigil tattoo thing. I would have liked a more elaborate explanation.

The actual idea of summoning demons and such reminded me a bit of *The Mortal Instruments* by Cassandra Clare. Why? Because in the first few books *City of Bones*, Valentine summons downworlders and demons. But this is a fantasy novel and all fantasy novels have something in common.

One thing that I liked a lot, was how there were lots of flashback scenes throughout the book. They were very descriptive and really told you what our main character Gemma has been going through all along since the accident. That was definitely a plus for me. Another thing that I liked was when first start the book, you are immediately thrown into Gemma's world of suffering. It makes the actual reading experience that much more realistic.

Overall, it was a fairly quick read. I liked it. *Almost Demon* is a vivid and insightful page turner. What a debut novel. It had almost everything I wanted in a YA sci-fi novel. It's heartbreaking, humorous, and enthralling at the same time. You'll want to read this one. I'd give it a go.

[View all my GoodReads reviews](#)

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**Fangs for the Fantasy says**

Gemma has finally returned to school after the accident – the accident in which her twin brother and her two best friends died. The accident that half the town and most of the school blames on her.

That's a lot to deal with. Thankfully she has some distractions with an after-school book club that comes with lessons on how to summon demons

But summoning demons isn't a mere amusement – with people of the town being possessed by the shadowy Dybbuk in greater and greater numbers, Gem's ability to summon angels and demons may be the only thing to save them all.

All of that is excellent. It's fascinating. It's intriguing. It has elements I have rarely seen in any other book. It has an amazing foundation. I could love this book. I could love this series. It could very easily be one of my favourites. I love the idea of summoning angels and demons and the tattoos they leave behind. I love the idea of channelling their powers and creating debts and favours and working to discover exactly which angel or demon you need for each job. I really like the way that the demons and angels are portrayed – human but not with lots of edges.

The descriptions, especially of the alien realms, are really vivid and powerful. Gem herself is well described and characterised and makes for a solid protagonist

The idea behind the story is truly excellent and one I really enjoyed. The demonic plotting and Gem's slow learning as more and more of the supernatural is revealed to her, the Dybbuk, lost souls possessing people and slowly consuming the entire town adds a perfectly created sense of urgency that really drives the plot and the decisions. Their actions both make the story very personal as people Gem loves are affected while also being almost apocalyptic in the damage it could unleash on the world, let alone the town.

But

Yes. But.

But there were elements that I thought were completely unnecessary additions that served to confuse the story – such as the headmistress of the school being a witch. She added nothing to the story, she did very little, she achieved nothing but a distraction.

An integral element of this story is that everyone blames Gem for her brother and her best friends' death. The reasoning behind this, even when explained, is convoluted and confusing to say the least and, again, it adds nothing to the story beyond a need to add an extra layer of angst on Gem. And having just lost her twin brother and 2 best friends, was there any need to up the ante on the angst dial? Instead it was a clumsy tool to create a clumsy Mean Girl whose purpose was pretty much limited to being a Mean Girl. We then got to see a large number of people persecuting a grieving girl who lost 3 people she loved for those people's deaths – it was unnecessary, pretty difficult to believe (how many people would think attacking her in this manner was remotely acceptable – let alone a majority?) and it just didn't add one single relevant note to the story.

Read More

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## **Meg says**

~ I received a copy of this book from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review ~

So if you have been following Maddi and I for a while you will be well versed in my obsession with books that have a religious undertone. Of course when I saw that such a book was up for grabs on NetGalley I couldn't help but request a copy. Was I disappointed? No, I wasn't.

Salem has written a beautiful debut novel that puts a twist on the old heaven and hell eternal war. The imagination that has gone into creating this urban fantasy world is genius. As a reader you become fully immersed in this world and the tragedy that has fallen upon our main character. Although I did have several issues with Gemma, mainly because she wasn't as desperate to find answers to impending questions when weird things started happening, she was still witty and a loveable main character.

The love interests felt somewhat forced, and I still don't really feel as though anyone would have fallen for Ian..regardless of how hot he is. I felt as though his character was trying to be the sarcastic devilish handsome book-guy that has appeared in countless novels in the same form. The fact that he was linked to the Drift, a secret tunnel world that aloud you access to different realms, made him a whole lot more interesting. I thought that part of the novel was brilliant. That and how everytime Gemma would call upon a demon or angel that she was then tattooed with their sigil..awesome.

What really carried the book for me was the lore. It was incredibly interesting with the black smoke beings possessing people, the tunnels as mentioned before, and even the secret club that made everybody loved up..it was hot. Unfortunately I just felt that reactions to particular events didn't seem realistic and the romance felt forced where Gemma excused weirdness by highlighting that it was ok because the guy was delicious looking.

It was a quick read with an interesting tale. I wasn't a massive fan of the characters, but the world was incredibly creative and written beautifully. This is one that you should give a go if you are into epic battles involving religious events.

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## **Grace (LovingDemBooks) Z. says**

I'd give this book 3 of 5 stars.

As a tough book critic, I usually give a book above a 3-3.5 rating. The highest I've really ever given a book was a four. Given that, I actually enjoyed this book a lot.

I love how Almost Demon is a bit of everything. Paranormal, sci-fi, romance, historical, it's everything. That's what makes it unique.

But, there were some parts in the book that I did not quite understand. It was confusing sometimes. I don't think I ever ended up incompletely understanding the whole grimoire demon chanting sigil tattoo thing. I would have liked a more elaborate explanation.

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Clare. Why? Because in the first few books of *City of Bones*, Valentine summons downworlders and demons. But this is a fantasy novel and all fantasy novels have something in common.

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