



## Wicked Nights (Angels of the Dark)

By Gena Showalter

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"One of the premiere authors of paranormal romance!"

--#1 New York Times bestselling author Kresley Cole

"Combining passion, humor, pulse-pounding action and just plain fun, Gena Showalter's books are always a refreshing escape!"

--New York Times bestselling author Lara Adrian

"Showalter gives her fans another treat, sure to satisfy!"

-RT Book Reviews on The Darkest Passion

"The versatile Showalter...once again shows that she can blend humor and poignancy while keeping readers entertained from start to finish."

-Booklist on Catch a Mate

#### About the Author

Gena Showalter is the New York Times and USA TODAY bestselling author of over fifty books, including the acclaimed Lords of the Underworld and Angels of the Dark series, and the White Rabbit Chronicles. She writes sizzling paranormal romance, heartwarming contemporary romance, and unputdownable young adult novels, and lives in Oklahoma City with her family and menagerie of dogs. Visit her at [GenaShowalter.com](http://GenaShowalter.com).

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"How does that make you feel, Annabelle?" The male voice lingered over the word "feel," adding a disgusting layer of sleaze.

Annabelle tilted her head to the side, her gaze locked on Dr. Fitzherbert, though the other patients in the "trust circle" remained in her periphery. In his early forties, the doctor had thinning salt and pepper hair, dark brown eyes and perfectly tanned, though slightly lined, skin. At five ten, he was only a bit taller than her, on the thin side and, if you ignored the blackness of his soul, moderately attractive.

The longer she stared at him, silent, the more his lips curled upward. How that smugness grated—not that she'd ever let him know. She would never willingly do anything to please him.

He'd drugged her once. Well, he'd drugged her every day of his two-month employment at the Moffat County Institution for the Criminally Insane. But last night he had sedated her with the express purpose of stripping her, touching her in ways he shouldn't and taking pictures.

Such a pretty girl, he'd said. Out there in the real world, a stunner like you would make me work for something as simple as a dinner date. Here, you're completely at my mercy. You're mine to do with as I please. Mine to control.

Humiliation still burned hot and deep, a fire in her blood. She'd like to say he was the first medical professional to violate her confidence. Yeah, she'd like to say that.

Over the last four years, the doctors and nurses in charge of her care had changed more times than her roommates, some of them shining stars of their profession, others simply going through the motions, doing what needed doing, while a select few were worse than the convicted criminals they were supposed to treat.

"Annabelle," Fitzpervert chided. "Silence isn't to be tolerated."

Well, then. "I feel like I'm one hundred percent cured. You should probably let me go."

He frowned with exasperation, all I'm such a good doctor and I could save you if only you'd let me. "You know better than to answer my questions so flippantly. That doesn't help you deal with your emotions or your problems. That doesn't help anyone here deal with their emotions or problems."

"Ah, so I'm a lot like you then." As if he cared about helping anyone but himself.

Several patients snickered. A couple merely drooled, foamy bubbles falling from babbling lips and catching on the shoulders of their gowns.

Fitzpervert's frown morphed into a scowl, the pretense of being here to help vanishing. He enjoyed his power, and he would not hesitate to strike at her for challenging it. "That smart mouth will get you into trouble." Not a threat. A vow.

Didn't matter. Her "smart mouth" was her life raft, her only way of fighting back. She lived in constant fear of creaking doors, shadows and footsteps. Of drugs and people and...things. Of herself.

The innocent, naive girl she'd once been was dead, killed the same day as her parents, the ghost somehow alive inside her, haunting her. At the worst times, she would remember things she had no business remembering.

Taste this, honey. It'll be the best thing you've ever eaten!

A terrible cook, her mother. Saki had loved to tweak recipes to "improve" them.

Did you see that? Another touchdown for the Sooners!

A diehard football fan, her dad. He had attended OU in Oklahoma for three semesters, and had never cut those ties.

She would remember, and she would cry. She would crave the things that had once been—the things that should have been. But okay, fine, whatever. Whaa, whaa, whaa, she'd lost the people she loved. So had millions of other people. She was dealing.

When she failed to give an outward reaction to his threat, Fitzpervert's scowl darkened, his gaze dropping

and lingering on the mouth he'd just rebuked. Within seconds, the fire in his eyes no longer spoke of anger but of lust.

The fear she so despised crept cold fingers down her spine. He'll come to my room tonight. Only this time, I'll be prepared. Her old toothbrush was now the perfect shank. One thing she'd learned over the years was that she could rely on no one but herself. Her complaints of foul treatment went unheeded, because most higher-ups believed she deserved what she got. If they believed her at all.

"I'd love to tell you how I feel, Dr. Fitzherbert," the man beside her said.

Fitzpervert cleared his throat before skating his attention to the serial arsonist who'd torched an entire apartment building, along with the men, women and children living inside of it.

As they discussed feelings and urges and ways to control them both, she tuned them out. For the most part, at least. Wherever she was, whomever she was with, she kept part of herself alert. A girl never knew when a threat would make itself known, be that threat human or...otherwise.

Out of habit, she studied her surroundings. The room was as dreary as her circumstances. There were ugly yellow water stains on the paneled ceiling, the walls were a peeling gray, and the floor carpeted with frayed brown shag. The uncomfortable metal chairs the occupants sat upon were the only furniture. Of course, Fitzpervert luxuriated on a special cushion.

Meanwhile, Annabelle's hands were cuffed behind her back and hooked to the sides of her chair, straining muscles and tendons already sore from abuse. Considering the amount of sedatives pumping through her system, the cuffs were overkill. But four weeks ago she'd brutally fought two fellow patients, and two weeks ago one of her nurses, so she was considered too much of a menace to leave unrestrained, no matter that she'd only been fighting to defend herself.

For the past thirteen days, she'd been kept in the hole, a dark, padded room where deprivation of the senses slowly drove you (genuinely) insane. She had been starved for contact, and had thought any interaction would do—until Fitzpervert drugged and photographed her.

This morning, he'd arranged this outing for her. A be nice to me, and I'll be nice to you bribe.

If my parents could see me now... She bit back a sudden, choking sob as she imagined her mother. A fall of hair so black the strands had appeared blue, much like Annabelle's own. Eyes upturned and golden, much like Annabelle's used to be. Skin a rich, creamy mix of honey and cinnamon, with not a single flaw. Saki Miller—once Saki Tanaka—had been born in Japan but raised in Georgetown, Colorado.

Saki's traditional parents had freaked when she and the white-as-can-be Rick Miller fell hopelessly in love and married. He'd come home from college on holiday, met her, and moved back to be with her.

Both Annabelle and her older brother were a combination of their parents' heritages. They shared their mother's hair and skin, the shape of her face, yet had their father's height and slender—though in Brax's case, strong—build.

Although, Annabelle's eyes no longer belonged to either Saki or Rick.

Once her eyes had been a pretty golden brown. Normal. After that horrible morning in her garage, after her

arrest for their murders, after her conviction, her lifelong sentencing to this institution for the criminally insane, she'd finally found the courage to face herself in a mirror. What she'd seen had startled her. Eyes the color of winter ice, deep in the heart of an Arctic snowstorm, eerie and crystalline, barely blue with no hint of...humanity. Worse, she could see things with these eyes, things no one should ever have to see.

Case in point: as the "trust circle" yammered on, two creatures simply walked through the far wall, stopping to orient themselves. She looked at her fellow patients, expecting to hear shrieks of terror. No one else seemed to notice the visitors.

How could they not? One creature had the body of a horse and the torso of a man. Rather than skin, he was covered by glimmering silver...metal? His hooves were rust-colored and possibly some kind of metal as well, sharpened into deadly points.

His companion was shorter, with stooped shoulders weighed down by sharp, protruding horns, and legs twisted in the wrong direction. He wore a loincloth and nothing else, his chest furred, muscled and scarred.

The scent of rotten eggs filled the room, as familiar as it was horrifying. Fear and anger, though muted by the drugs in her system, nearly burned a hole in her chest. Her biceps and thighs tensed, her body preparing for attack. The creatures wouldn't leave without a fight. They never did.

They came in all shapes and sizes, all colors, both sexes—and maybe something in-between—but they had one thing in common: they always came for her. Unlike that morning with her parents, the creatures never attacked anyone but her.

Every doctor who'd ever treated her had tried to convince her that the beings were merely figments of her imagination. Complex hallucinations, they said. Despite the wounds the creatures always left behind—wounds the doctors claimed she managed to inflict upon herself—she sometimes believed them. That didn't stop her from fighting, though. Nothing could.

Glowing red gazes panned the room before at last settling on her. Both males smiled, their sharp, dripping fangs revealed.

"Mine," Horsey said.

"No. Mine!" Horns snapped.

Always they wanted to claim her as property, and she had no idea why.

"Only one way to settle this." Horsey licked his lips in anticipation.

"Fight," Horns agreed.

He did not mean they should fight each other. They planned to fight her. In their minds, subduing her meant owning her. Owning her meant touching her, beating her, belittling her.

They never raped her, though. No matter how evil they were, and some were worse than others, none of them had ever crossed that line. Annabelle knew many of them had wanted to, because several had even spread her legs and tried. But just before penetration, a wave of terror would wash over their faces and they would stumble away from her.

Don't you see, Annabelle? one of the doctors had told her once. The fact that these creatures will not rape you proves they are hallucinations. Your mind stops them from doing something you can't handle.

As if she could handle any of the rest. How do you explain the injuries I receive while bound?

We found the tools you hid in your room, Annabelle. Shanks, a hammer we're still trying to figure out how you got, glass shards. Shall I go on?

"Who goes first?" Horsey asked, drawing her out of her mind.

"Me."

"No, me."

Adrenaline crashed through her, burning and chilling her at the same time. You can do this. It's just more of the same. Though no other patients were aware of what was going on, they were all sensitive to her shift in mood. Grunts and groans erupted around her. Both men and women, young and old, writhed in their seats, wanting to run away.

The guards posted at the only exit stiffened, going on alert but unsure who was to blame.

Fitzpervert knew, pegging Annabelle with his patented king-of-the-world frown. "You look worried, Annabelle. Why don't you tell us what's bothering you, hmm? Are you regretting your earlier outburst?"

"Screw you, Fitzpervert." Her gaze returned to her targets. They were the bigger threat. "Your turn will come."

He sucked in a breath. "You are not allowed to speak to me that way, Miss Miller."

"You're right. Sorry. I meant, screw you, Dr. Fitzpervert." Unarmed did not mean helpless, she told herself, and neither did bound; today, she would prove it to the creatures and Fitzpervert.

"Spirited," Horsey said with a gleeful nod.

"So fun to break," Horns cackled.

From the corner of her eye, she saw the good doctor motion one of the guards forward, and she knew the guy would take her jaw in a punishing grip and shove her cheek against his stomach to hold her in place. A degrading and suggestive position that humiliated even as it cowed, preventing her from biting so that Fitzherbert could inject her with a sedative.

Have to act now. Perfect timing, too. In one fluid move, she slid as far back in her chair as possible, straightening her legs and pressing her stomach against her thighs. When her butt cleared the space between top and bottom, she bent her legs so that they came out over the top, the folding metal now positioned in front of her like a shield.

The guard reached her.

She swung to the left, slamming her shield—and only weapon—into his stomach. Oxygen gushed from his

mouth as he hunched over. Another swing and she nailed the side of his head, sending him to the floor in an unconscious heap.

A few patients shouted with agitation, and a few others cheered her on. The droolers continued leaking. Fitzpervert rushed to the door to force the remaining guard to act as his buffer, as well as summon more with the single press of a button. An alarm screeched to life, tossing the already disconcerted patients into more of a frenzy.

No longer content to bicker on the sidelines, the creatures stalked toward her, slow and steady, taunting her.

"Oh, the things we'll do to you, little girl."

"Oh, how you'll scream!"

Closer...closer...almost within reach...totally within reach...they laughed.

She kept the chair raised, but she couldn't track both her adversaries at the same time as one claimed the front and the other claimed the back. They swiped at her with their claws and tried to bite her with their poisoned fangs.

I can handle this. She rammed the top of the chair under Horsey's chin, knocking his teeth together and his brain, if he had one, into the back of his skull. At the same time, she kicked out a leg behind her, punting Horns in the stomach. Both creatures stumbled away from her, their grins vanishing.

"That all you got, girls?" she goaded. Two more minutes, that's all she had, and then the guards would rush inside and tackle her, pinning her down, Fitzpervert and his needle taking charge. She wanted these creatures finished.

"Let's find out," Horsey hissed, pushing the arsonist at Annabelle.

## Users Review

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