



A Love as Strong as Death is a romance novel by the Bard of the South, Rickey Pittman. It is a love-at-first-sight story of Tristan and Evelyn, two educators who unexpectedly connect in Charleston, S.C.

A Love as Strong as Death

by Rickey Pittman

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A LOVE AS STRONG AS DEATH

A Story of Love at First Sight

RICKEY PITTMAN

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CHAPTER ONE: Love at First Sight

Love is a trap. When it appears, we
see only its light, not its shadows

—Paulo Coelho

Out of habit, Tristan slowed his BMW, chafing under the constraint of the 50-mph speed limit in a poorly marked stretch of highway that any sane person would consider an acceleration zone. He could see the speed limit sign ahead, and between him and the sign sat a State Trooper's car. The trooper stood at its bumper, radar gun in hand, aiming at approaching working citizens in the hope of filling local coffers and raising personal bonuses. Tristan cursed the speed trap and the man who worked it and whipped into the convenience store to his right for gas and coffee. He filled his tank, cursing the country's present administration that somehow had managed to double gas prices. It seemed Tristan cursed a great deal these days.

It had been a hard day at the College of Charleston due to the mandatory office hours, training sessions, and grading of essays. Just before he opened the store's door, a woman wearing a floral print, flowing sundress

stepped out. Tristan stopped, frozen in his tracks, and their eyes locked. Tristan felt sparks in the air. He stared speechlessly at the lady with long, straight, dark-strawberry blonde hair, a lightly freckled face, and blue eyes. Her hands held a fountain drink in a Styrofoam cup and a Snickers bar.

“Well, hey,” Tristan said.

“Hello,” she replied. She smiled, and her hand flipped back her long hair.

Tristan stood at the door an awkward moment longer, feeling like he had been stunned by a taser. Helplessly, he tried to think of something clever to say, but instead, he just smiled moronically, entered the store, and fetched his coffee. He watched the lady as she returned to her car, thinking he must have sounded like an imbecile when he said, “Hey.” His hands trembled as he fished coins out of his pocket to pay for the coffee. The worker at the counter said, “When you leave, watch out for the speed trap.”

“I will. I saw him.” *There are all kinds of traps, a voice inside him said. Like that woman I just saw with the blue eyes.* His eyes were still locked on the siren, watching her talk on her cell phone. She saw him staring at her, gave a little toodle-oo with fluttering, delicate fingers, and drove away. Tristan walked quickly to his car and pulled out of the parking lot closely behind her.

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She had a heavy foot, but he followed at a discreet voyeur's distance—all the way to James Island. He wondered if she remembered his car and noticed that he followed her. Suddenly, a convertible whizzed by him, tailgating her SUV. When the woman turned off into the Charleston Landing subdivision, the bumper-riding dogger raced on down the highway. Tristan thought about following the woman into the subdivision, but witnessing the tailgater spooked him, so he turned around and returned to his apartment near the College of Charleston. As he drove, Tristan thought of her blue eyes—the eyes coveted by emperors and writers, the eyes of an Irish Princess. She possessed the beauty of a Pre-Raphaelite model with red hair, a slim body, and porcelain skin. And his last thoughts before drifting into sleep that night were of how she took his breath away, of how he had never seen someone who could rattle him so easily, of how he knew he could fall in love with this woman. He hoped to see her again, and he asked himself why he didn't just go on and say what he thought when he first saw her: *You are the most beautiful woman I've ever seen in my life*. He also wondered who the tailgater might be.

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