Hi, my name is Renee Ahdieh, and I am the author of *The Damned*, which was recently released, and it’s a continuation of the Saga of the Beautiful. This is a vampire love story that asks the all-important question: What does it mean to be human? I’m going to read a short passage out of the book.

Odette Valmont leaned into the wind. Let it buffet her brunette curls about her face and whip her coattails into a frenzy. She reveled in the feeling of weightlessness as she stared down at Jackson Square, her right hand wrapped around the cool metal spire, her left boot dangling in the evening air.

“Ah, it’s just you and me again, n’est-ce pas?” she joked to the metal crucifix mounted above her.

The figure of Christ stared down at Odette in thoughtful silence.

Odette sighed. “Don’t fret, Mon Sauveur. You know I hold your counsel in the highest esteem. It is not every day that a creature such as myself is fortunate enough to count you among her dearest friends.” She grinned.

Perhaps it was blasphemous for a demon of the night to address the savior of mankind in such a familiar fashion. But Odette was in need of guidance, now more than ever.

“I’d like to think you hear my prayers,” she continued. “After all, when I was alive, I made it a point to attend Mass regularly.” She tilted her ear toward the cross. “What was that?” Laughter bubbled from her pale throat. “Mais oui, bien sûr! I knew it. You embraced the sinner. Of course you would welcome me with open arms.” Affection warmed her gaze. “It is why we will always be friends, until the bitter end.” She paused as if she were listening to a reply intended for her ears alone. “You’re too kind,” she said. “And I would never fault you for the sins of the men who have turned your pure words and generous deeds into instruments of power and control.” Once more, Odette whirled around the spire. “Forgive them, for they know not what they do!” she sang, her eyes squeezed shut, a gust of wind rushing toward her face.