



HALLOWEEN

Angel

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Halloween Angel

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Warning: This book contains sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. This story has been rated *Total-e-burning*.

HALLOWEEN ANGEL

J.P. Bowie

Dedication

For Phil, always, and for Michele, Editor Extraordinaire!

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Chapter One

Eddie Gillespie raised his head slowly from his pillow and blinked at the sunlight that was beginning to filter through the bedroom window blinds. Gingerly, he put his fingertips to the side of his face, feeling the puffiness there. He knew, without getting up to look in the mirror, that he was going to have one helluva bruise under his right eye.

Idiot, he thought. Why had he let that moron back into his life after all the shit he'd put up with before?

"You are such a sucker, Eddie," he muttered, struggling out of his bed. He trudged through to the bathroom, flicking on the light so he could peer at his reflection. It was even worse than he had imagined. His cheekbone under his right eye was contused and discoloured, the white of his eye was a bloody red, and his bottom lip was torn and split in two places.

"Jesus..." His eyes filled with tears as he stared at himself. "Bob, you bastard...*why?*"

Only last night, against his better judgement, he'd agreed to meet his ex at the Blue Moon bar on Santa Monica. He'd been worn down by Bob's constant whining on the phone about how much he missed their time together, and how he'd really changed, and how fuckin' sorry he was for all the things he'd done and blah, blah, blah... And Eddie had fallen for it.

"Idiot!" he yelled at his reflection in the mirror. "You stupid idiot!" Because of course he knew Bob hadn't changed. He couldn't change—he was rotten through and through. A narcissist with a cruel and mean streak he could not control—especially after a couple of drinks.

Eddie shuddered as he remembered the look on Bob's face when he'd refused to have him back at his apartment. That cold look of anger had so quickly morphed into an uncontrollable rage then the slapping had begun. It wasn't as if Eddie couldn't defend himself. He could. He wasn't a big man, but he worked out regularly, and at five nine and one-hundred-and-sixty pounds, he was slender but sleekly muscled and strong. He just wasn't a violent man. The thought of hurting someone made him wince. He had never been

able to understand why anyone would want to beat up on another person—especially someone they purported to like—love even.

Well, that was the end of it. He would never allow Bob to get close enough to punch him in the face again. Any phone calls or emails would be ignored. He'd be damned if he was going to be that stupid again. Even if it meant staying home so he wouldn't run into Bob at any of their old haunts.

Fortunately, he did have something to look forward to. Halloween was just a week away, and he'd been invited to one of the biggest parties in LA. Sam Peterson, the movie star, had invited him, personally. Eddie cut Sam's hair every two weeks, come rain or shine. He'd even been flown out to a couple of on-location sites when Sam was unable to get back due to his heavy work schedule. Sam was one of the most beautiful men Eddie had ever seen—the total Hollywood package. Tall, dark and handsome, with the bluest eyes and the whitest teeth, a hard chest, ridged abs and a narrow waist—together it had all made him *People Magazine's* Sexiest Man three years running. Too bad he was straight or Eddie might have had a chance of dancing with the star.

Problem was...what to wear to the party. Sam had already told him he was going to be a vampire so that was out, and ghouls and zombies were so darned unattractive. Chances were there would be quite a few hot young men there, bound to be one or two gays, and Eddie didn't want to take the chance of scaring any of them away. So what were the options? Viking, gladiator, cowboy...? All done to death every year. And he wasn't about to do drag. Wearing heels all night was not his idea of a fun time.

He took another look at his face in the mirror and hoped the swelling would go down before the party—otherwise, only monster makeup would hide all the bruising. *Damn you, Bob!* Eddie's head turned in the direction of the living room as he heard his phone ringing. For a moment, he was tempted to let the answering machine pick it up. If it was Bob—and he had just enough cold nerve to call him even after what he'd done—he didn't want to answer. But it might be Randy or Jenny. He ran to the phone wishing he had caller ID.

"Hello?"

"Hi, sweetcakes."

"Jenny. How're you?"

"I'm good, but I heard what happened last night with that bastard Bob." Anger edged her voice as she continued, "Randy called this morning and told me. Why don't you set the cops on the son-of-a-bitch?"

Eddie sighed. "The cops aren't going to do anything about two fags having a bitch fight, Jenny."

"But that's not what happened."

"I know that, and you know that, but the cops really don't give a damn. Anyway, I don't want to talk about Bob. Wanna get some lunch later? I have the day off."

"That's why I'm calling. Randy and I want to take you out for lunch. Get your mind off the nasties of this world."

"That's sweet—but we'll go Dutch."

"Uh, uh. Our treat...and Eddie..." Jenny hesitated for a moment. "Why can't you fall in love with Randy?"

"What?"

"He adores you. He was so mad about what happened..."

"I know, and he got himself a fat lip for trying to interfere." Eddie chuckled. "I think Bob got a big surprise when Randy got in his face in my defence."

"You two would make a great team. He's cute—"

"Jenny, stop with the matchmaking. I love Randy. He's my best friend. And that's the way I'd like to keep it. Sex just fucks up everything."

Jenny giggled. "Isn't that the idea?"

"Cut it out," Eddie growled. "So what time's lunch?"

"One, at Ricardo's."

"I'll be there—and thanks."

Eddie put down the phone, shaking his head. Jenny was singing that same old tune again. Ever since she'd introduced him to Randy Cox, close to six years ago, she'd been trying to push them together in a very unsubtle way. Even after Eddie had met Bob, she'd kept up the 'Randy would be so much better for you' routine. Just as well Bob was too into himself to ever catch on.

"Time to shower," he muttered, heading back to the bathroom. He took another look at the contusion under his eye as he stood in front of the mirror removing the t-shirt he'd slept

in. "It really isn't a good look for you," he told his reflection, running his hand over his tousled blond hair. "Please go away before Halloween!"

* * * *

Randy and Jenny were already seated at a table when Eddie arrived at Ricardo's. He smiled as he crossed the restaurant towards them. They were both such good friends, he thought as they smiled and waved at him. And Jenny was right, Randy was cute. Maybe he was being foolish in not encouraging him more. Jenny was pretty in an unconventional way – part Mexican, part Asian, she had a smooth creamy complexion and large brown eyes full of mischief.

"Hi, guys." He slid into the booth next to Randy and squeezed his arm. "Thanks again for backing me up last night." He stared at Randy's swollen lip. "Does it hurt?"

"Only when I laugh," Randy kidded. "I put some ice on it when I got home."

"You could kiss it better," Jenny said, wiggling her eyebrows at Eddie.

"Jenny," Eddie warned.

"Your eye looks bad," Randy remarked. "Bob really is a moron. How in hell did you ever put up with him?"

"I was in love with him," Eddie said simply.

"But you're not anymore, are you?" Jenny stared into Eddie's eyes as if daring him to argue with her.

Eddie sighed and picked up his menu. "No, I'm not. I haven't been for some time. Now, I'd really like to talk about something else, if you don't mind."

"What did you have in mind? Jenny asked tartly.

"Halloween."

"I hate Halloween," Jenny said, sipping her water. "An excuse for guys to dress up as characters they could never be in real life."

"Oh, I don't know," Randy chuckled. "I know a few guys who don't wait for Halloween to wear drag."

"You know Sam Peterson invited me to his party," Eddie told them, trying not to sound smug.

"That sounds like it'll be such a blast." Randy was clearly impressed. "What are you going to wear?"

"That's what I want to talk about, because I haven't a clue. I was thinking of a vampire—you know the tux, the cloak—but Sam told me he's got that one pegged. And I'm certainly not going to compete with big Sam Peterson."

"No, that would be a little futile," Jenny agreed.

"Thank you, Jenny Marsden. You are great for my ego."

"Well, we are talking Sam Peterson," Randy said mildly.

"I know, I know. So..." Eddie looked at his friends hopefully. "Any suggestions?"

"A zombie?"

"No."

"A gladiator?"

"No, there'll be at least a dozen buffed guys there, all trying to look better than Russell Crowe."

"Celine Dion."

"Jenny!"

"That *would* be scary," Randy said, laughing.

They were interrupted by the waiter arriving at their table to take their order. After the waiter left, Randy's face lit up.

"I have an idea. Remember that old movie we watched a couple of weeks ago on the Turner channel—*Barbarella*?"

"With a really young Jane Fonda," Eddie said. "What about it?"

"There was a really cute guy in that playing an angel."

"Yeah," Jenny enthused. "He was blind."

"Well, Eddie obviously wouldn't go blind," Randy said quickly. "But the angel costume would be really easy. He only wore like a little silver loincloth."

"And wings," Jenny added.

"Yeah, wings...big wings." Randy thought for a moment. "But we could make those out of like silver foil or something."

Eddie started to like the idea. Not a scary costume, and he could work out extra hard during the next week to get his pecs nice and perky.

"I like it," he said. "Will you guys give me a hand?"

"Sure," Randy said.

"Even though *we're* not invited," Jenny added, pouting prettily.

"Sorry guys. I wish I could bring you both, but Sam's invitation didn't mention guests."

"That's okay," Randy told him with a smile. "Just make sure you take your camera so we get to see all the beautiful people."

"Where do you hide a camera in a loincloth?" Eddie asked, laughing.

"Where the sun don't shine, sweetheart," Jenny deadpanned.

"Ouch!" Randy and Eddie exclaimed together, exchanging pained looks.

"It would be like a very uncomfortable butt plug and would make me walk funny," Eddie said, laughing.

"You mean *funnier*."

"Jenny!"

Chapter Two

After another hectic day at the salon, Eddie had arranged to meet Randy at Tony's Bar on Melrose for a quick drink on the way home. The autumn nights meant an early sunset, and it was dark by the time he had walked over to Tony's from the salon. Randy hadn't arrived, so Eddie sat at the bar and ordered a martini, straight up, rocks. As he waited for his drink to be made, he glanced around and caught the eye of a man sitting a few stools away. For a moment Eddie was startled. Sam Peterson, the movie star? No, on a closer look it wasn't Sam, but the man sure could be his brother. Same dark curly hair and great build but there was something different about his eyes. If anything, this guy was younger and even better looking than Sam, hard as that was to believe.

The man smiled, and Eddie felt his heart skip a beat. *What a doll*, he thought.

"Waiting for someone?" the man asked.

"Uh, yeah...my friend Randy. He's a bit late."

The man nodded and smiled again. "So, your friend's name is Randy...and yours is...?"

"Uh...Eddie. Eddie Gillespie."

The man stood and walked over to stand by Eddie. "My name is Joshua Reynolds." He held out his hand, and Eddie took it for a quick shake then found himself unable—or was it unwilling—to let it go. The man's hand was cool and dry, and as Eddie looked up into his eyes—eyes that were a pale brown, almost amber—he felt something pass between them. A small pulse of energy that seemed to flow from the man's hand sending tiny tingles of pleasure coursing through Eddie's body.

Eddie shivered and pulled his hand away, embarrassed to find that he had an erection, the outline of which he could plainly see through his khakis. Eddie dropped his hand into his lap to cover the bulge and cleared his throat loudly.

"May I join you?"

Joshua didn't seem to notice Eddie's confusion but sat by him on the next stool. As the bartender delivered Eddie's drink, Joshua said, "Add that to my tab, and I'll have another glass of Burgundy."

"Oh, no...really," Eddie protested. "My friend will be here in a minute."

Joshua smiled. "Is he a hairdresser also?"

"No, Randy works for an insurance company. Wait a minute..." Eddie frowned. "How d'you know I'm a hairdresser?"

Joshua touched Eddie's chest lightly. "You are wearing a name tag that says *Silvio's Beauty Salon*."

Eddie grabbed the tag and pulled it off. "Shoot, I forgot to take it off." He grinned ruefully. "I don't usually advertise when I go out."

Joshua smiled at the bartender as he delivered his glass of Burgundy wine. "Cheers," Joshua murmured.

"Cheers," Eddie said. "And thanks for the drink." He took a long sip of his martini then sighed with satisfaction. "That's better." He looked towards the door. "Wonder what's keeping Randy."

"Perhaps his business has detained him."

"That would be first. He's usually out the door at five like the place is on fire."

Joshua chuckled. "He's not in love with his job?"

"Is anyone?"

"You don't like what you do?"

"Oh, I like it well enough," Eddie said after another swig of his drink. "I get to meet all kinds of fascinating people, along with the dreary of course. Sam Peterson is a client of mine," he added proudly.

Joshua blinked. "Sam who?"

"Sam Peterson, the movie star." Eddie gaped at Joshua. "You don't know who he is?"

"I'm afraid I haven't had the pleasure."

"He's just the biggest star around," Eddie told him. "In fact, you look a bit like him, only younger—but maybe you don't go to the movies?"

"Not often."

"Oh...well, anyway he invited me to his house on Halloween for a costume party. All the big stars will be there."

"That's important to you?"

"What?"

"That you will be in the company of famous people—stars and the like." Joshua's amber eyes locked on Eddie's.

"Uh...oh, not really." Eddie blushed a little and took another long pull on his martini. "I didn't mean to sound like some starry-eyed queen. It's just that Sam is so nice, and being asked to one of his parties is kind of exciting, you know?"

"Are you in love with him?"

"God no!" Eddie laughed. "He's straight, so there wouldn't be much point in that."

Joshua's eyes gleamed as he looked at Eddie over the rim of his wineglass "And this party...what will you dress as?"

"Well, I was thinking originally of a vampire—but Sam said he was doing that one."

"Did he really?" Joshua gave a dry chuckle. "And so what have you decided on?"

"Don't laugh—an angel."

"Why would I laugh? You look like an angel."

Eddie stared at Joshua. Was he pulling his leg or just being nice?

Joshua touched Eddie's swollen cheek. "An angel who knows some very bad people, by the looks of things."

"Just one bad person," Eddie said. "And he's not so bad—just short tempered, and sometimes a bit jealous."

"Short tempered and jealous," Joshua remarked. "A dangerous combination."

"My ex."

"Ah." Joshua ran his fingers gently over Eddie's swollen cheekbone then down the curve of his jaw. Eddie stilled under Joshua's touch, a warm feeling suffusing his skin where Joshua's fingers caressed him. He winced slightly as Joshua's thumb traced the outline of his lower lip. That cut in the corner still stung. Joshua removed his thumb and Eddie noticed a trace of blood on it. Blood from his lip. He stared, mesmerised, as Joshua slowly licked the blood from his thumb. Joshua looked into Eddie's eyes and smiled, and Eddie felt his heart turn over. As Joshua leaned closer, Eddie closed his eyes and parted his lips, sure of the kiss he suddenly longed for and knew would thrill him like no other.

"Hey, sorry I'm late!"

Startled, Eddie stared up at Randy's smiling face. "Oh, hey..." He pulled himself together. "Glad you could make it."

He turned to look at Joshua and introduce him to Randy, but the stool was empty. "That's weird. There was a guy here a moment ago. I wanted you to meet him."

"A guy?" Randy looked at him as if he had five heads. "There wasn't anyone here when I came in."

"Sure there was. Great looking guy—kinda like Sam, only younger and even better looking."

"You're hallucinating." Randy peered at him. "How many martinis have you had?"

"Only one," Eddie protested. "He might have gone to the john when I wasn't looking."

"Right." Randy wasn't convinced. "Order me a Scotch rocks, will you. I gotta pee. If there's anyone in the john who looks like Sam Peterson, I will personally escort him out here for your pleasure."

Eddie waved at the bartender. "Scotch rocks and another martini. Did you see where the guy I was talking to went?"

"He just went to the restroom," the bartender said, nodding at Randy's retreating back.

"No, not him." Eddie frowned with frustration. "The other guy with the dark curly hair."

The bartender shrugged. "Don't know who that is."

"Wait!" But the bartender had moved away to fix the drinks. By the time, he brought them over, Randy had returned from the john, and Eddie thought he just might be going out of his mind.

* * * *

Joshua stood on the opposite side of Melrose in the shadow of a tall laburnum tree and watched as Eddie and Randy left Tony's Bar. The conversation he'd had with Eddie, although brief and sadly interrupted by the arrival of his friend, had been enough to give Joshua hope that Cassandra's prediction might just, at last, come true. The attraction he had felt for Eddie had been almost instantaneous, and there was no doubt in his mind that Eddie had felt that same attraction. Joshua had hidden a smile when he'd seen the obvious bulge in Eddie's shorts and had pretended not to notice his embarrassment. How sweetly adorable the young

man was, Joshua mused. Their next meeting would be much more private – and much more intimate.

Chapter Three

Eddie hovered over the city, keeping himself airborne by the occasional flap of his wings. He looked down at the sprawling, urban mass below him, wondering just where Joshua might be among all those faceless buildings. *Being an angel has its perks*, he thought as he skimmed beneath the clouds. The pollution didn't bother him at all like it had when he was a mere mortal. The yellow haze that engulfed the city almost every day was actually quite pretty when viewed from above.

"Joshua!" he yelled. "Where did you go? Don't you know it's rude to just up and disappear in the middle of a conversation?"

"Eddie." The soft, husky voice whispered in his ear. "Forgive me for leaving you so suddenly."

Joshua.

Strong arms enfolded him and Eddie's heart raced as he turned to find himself in Joshua's embrace. Warm, soft lips took his, and the kiss he had earlier longed for and dreamed of became a thrilling reality. Wrapped in each other's arms with their naked bodies locked together, they soared over the city until the lights below them dwindled to a distant few, then as an unspoken signal passed between them they descended, setting down lightly in a moonlit field of mossy grass.

"Am I dreaming?" Eddie murmured, his lips fluttering over Joshua's cool skin.

"We're both dreaming," Joshua replied. "Sharing a dream where you and I can be alone together."

They fell to their knees facing one another, and Eddie drank in the vision before him, the finely chiselled face under black as midnight hair, the lean and muscular body only a gifted sculptor could have fashioned. Joshua cupped Eddie's face in his hands and moved closer until their lips touched. Eddie suddenly realised he was trembling. His hands shook as he raised them to tangle his fingers in Joshua's mane of curly hair.

"You are so very beautiful," Joshua whispered, his breath sweetly intoxicating. "My beautiful blue-eyed angel."

Eddie opened his mouth to tell Joshua just how amazing all this was, how he felt, how much he wanted this moment, but his parted lips were taken in another searing kiss that blotted out everything but the yearning this man created within him.

"I want you," Joshua said softly, his voice filled with his own longing.

"Then take me." Eddie shuddered from the weight of his desire as Joshua's tongue slipped between his parted lips, bringing a liquid heat to Eddie's blood. Gently, Joshua eased him down upon the grass, lying over him, then it seemed as though Joshua's lips were everywhere at once—moving from Eddie's mouth to his throat, his chest, teasing one nipple until it stood to attention then tracing a red hot path of licks and nibbles to the other, before lapping his way over Eddie's stomach to the head of his cock.

"Sweet Jesus," Eddie gasped, his body writhing under Joshua as this erotic assault took control of all his senses. Nothing, no one had ever filled him with such burning lust and need. His body arched upward as Joshua's lips slid slowly down the length of his throbbing erection, taking all of him in one long swallow then pulling back, his tongue swirling around the head before taking it all again, the flat of his tongue lavaging the underside on the down stroke. Eddie thought he might just come apart from the sensations Joshua was bringing him. Each sensually slow and deliberate suck brought him that much closer to the edge. Oh, he never wanted these moments to end.

"Let me taste you." He just about managed to get the words out on a whispered breath, and Joshua moved over him, bringing his cock within reach of Eddie's lips. His fingers closed around the thick, pulsing flesh. His tongue flicked out to lick at the glistening head. The aromatic pre-cum that leaked from Joshua's cock sent Eddie's senses reeling as he ran his tongue over the crown that felt like velvet and tasted like sweet spice. Hearing Joshua's muffled groans of pleasure, Eddie closed his lips around the hard shaft, sliding down the thick length to the root. Joshua's hips moved rhythmically, fucking Eddie's mouth with measured strokes, his cock gliding over Eddie's soft palette. All the while, his lips and tongue continued their unique magic on Eddie's already straining erection.

The sensation of Joshua's teeth lightly scraping over his now overly sensitive cock had Eddie almost screaming with painful pleasure. There was no holding back. His body stiffened taut as a bow string, and a choking cry tore from him as he came, his semen jetting into Joshua's mouth and down his throat in white hot spasms. Joshua held Eddie until his

body calmed, then in what should have been an impossible move, he stretched out over Eddie, his lips once more on Eddie's mouth. But this was a dream, Eddie reminded himself, revelling in the feel of Joshua's lips on his. A dream where anything was possible. He opened to Joshua's tongue, tasting himself in their deep, hungry kiss. He wound his legs around Joshua's waist, felt hard hot flesh probe at his opening and groaned his pleasure as Joshua entered him, burying his cock inside him, bringing him sensations that bordered again on pain mixed with euphoria.

As Joshua fucked him with long smooth strokes, Eddie clung to him, keeping their mouths locked together, losing himself in the sheer eroticism of Joshua's tongue plundering his mouth, and the ecstasy of Joshua's cock thrusting in and out of his tight hole. His hands cupped Joshua's bottom, caressing the twin globes of muscular flesh then using them to pull him in deeper, as he tightened his legs around Joshua's narrow waist. Their bodies now moved to a driving rhythm, Eddie's pelvis arching upward to meet the power of Joshua's thrusts. Incredibly, Eddie felt another orgasm tugging at his balls. He'd been so intent, so focused, on the sensations of Joshua fucking him that he'd not noticed how hard he'd become again. Joshua's hand now grasping his erection brought that reality to him with stunning force, and he cried out with joy as Joshua urged him on to a shattering climax. Joshua gave one last powerful thrust as he erupted inside Eddie, and they gasped into each other's mouths as they came together in an almost uncontrollable tumult of physical release and emotion.

* * * *

"Joshua!"

Eddie bolted upright in bed, staring into the darkness of his bedroom then, with a groan, he fell back onto his pillow. He'd been dreaming...dreaming of the man he'd met in the bar. The man who'd been there one minute and gone the next—and Eddie was the only one who remembered him. That was the most frustrating part of it. Even the bartender, who had served Joshua his glass of wine, had no recollection of seeing a tall, darkly handsome man sitting next to Eddie.

Randy had suggested that maybe he'd blacked out for a moment or two and imagined it all. Maybe the stress of the encounter with Bob and the approaching Halloween party had made him hallucinate. Despite Randy's kind way of trying to explain what might have happened, Eddie was still sure that Joshua actually existed. He hadn't imagined that whole conversation with the most alluring man he'd ever met in his entire life. A man he'd just dreamed of having incredible sex with.

Eddie pushed himself from his bed. The clock said five. Early, but he could make coffee and watch some morning television. Better than lying in bed, trying to put his thoughts in order—thoughts that were, at the very least, confused. He staggered into the bathroom, flicked on the light.

Hope that bruise looks better, he thought as he turned to peer into the mirror. His startled expression as his reflection came into focus almost made him laugh for a moment. There was no bruise nor was there a trace of the cuts on his lower lip. Eddie touched his cheekbone. No pain. It was like there had never been a bruise or any swelling. Wow, this was truly amazing. He'd planned on a light makeup fix for the party if the bruising hadn't gone by Saturday, but now...

"This is great," he exclaimed happily. "Who knew I could heal this quickly?"

* * * *

Eddie's day at the salon went quickly and without too much drama. He left there shortly after five, feeling pretty good as he headed home. His steps slowed as he approached the window of a store he didn't recognise. *Halloween Costumes* the sign read. It had to be one of those temporary seasonal stores that closed up after the event then reopened for the next major holiday. Funny that he'd never noticed it before.

A bell chimed as he opened the door and slipped inside. A colourful array of fabrics and masks met his gaze as his eyes swept round the small but seemingly well-stocked store. For a moment he stood still, listening to the sound of voices, a strangely familiar man's and a woman's in deep conversation.

"Can I help you?" The female voice came from somewhere in the store, and Eddie walked towards the sound. A short, slightly overweight woman with red hair and green eyes smiled at him as he approached her. "Looking for a Halloween costume?"

Eddie returned her smile. "Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt. Actually, I wasn't looking for a costume—that is, except maybe for some white feathers. My friends are helping me make my costume." He looked around for the man the woman had been talking to. *No sign of the guy. That's odd.*

"Nice," the woman said. "Feathers eh? What's the costume to be?"

"Well..." Eddie blushed a little. "I'm going as an angel—you know the one from *Barbarella*?"

"Ah yes, Pygar, the blind angel." The woman peered up at him. "A good choice for you. You look like an angel."

Eddie blinked. "Thank you. Someone else told me that just yesterday."

"He obviously knows you well. My name is Cassandra, by the way."

"Eddie. Didn't I hear you talking to someone when I came in? I didn't mean to interrupt."

Cassandra laughed, a silvery tinkling sound. "Most likely just me talking to myself. I do it a lot these days. They say it's a sign of getting older."

But it was a man's voice.

Eddie decided not to push the point. "I haven't noticed your store before."

"Oh, I come and go with the seasons." Cassandra beckoned him nearer. "It so happens that I have just what you are looking for." She took Eddie's hand and walked him to the back of the store. "There, is that not what you seek?"

Eddie gasped. There before him was Pygar, the blind angel. At least, the manikin had been dressed to represent the blind angel. The short loincloth of silver fabric was going to be a little risqué, however Eddie felt he could manage that with a tight jock underneath. It was the wings that took his breath away. They were magnificent, towering over the dummy's blond wig with a curving majesty, the feathers brilliantly white, the tips of each one tinted with gold.

"God," Eddie breathed. "It's incredible, but I can tell it's going to be out of my price range."

"Nonsense," Cassandra said, with a wave of her hand. "The rental is only fifty dollars if you return it to me in perfect condition the day after."

"Oh, I'll guard it with my life," Eddie assured her. "It's so beautiful. But, why so cheap? I mean, that Roman gladiator costume is marked at three hundred dollars, and it doesn't come close to being as fantastic."

"A special price for you, my angel." Cassandra's green eyes glinted as she smiled up at Eddie. "Wear it and meet the one of your dreams."

Eddie chuckled. "That's my Halloween wish." He fished in his jeans pocket and pulled out his tips for the day. He counted fifty dollars into Cassandra's small hand. "Can I pick it up just before the party? I'd feel better knowing it was safe here 'til then."

"Of course. Come whenever you wish, and have a wonderful time on Halloween."

Eddie practically skipped out of the store. What a fabulous costume and what a deal. It was almost like fate had brought him to that store! Now to hit the gym.

* * * *

Randy called almost as soon as Eddie got back to his apartment. "Hey, just wondered if you needed some help with your angel costume."

"Randy, you will not believe this," Eddie said, still not quite believing it himself. "I found Pygar's costume."

"Whose costume?"

"Pygar, the blind angel in *Barbarella*. That's his name."

"Oh, right. I knew it was somethin' funny. Where'd you find it?"

"In this really cute Halloween store on Santa Monica. The woman, her name's Cassandra, she knew exactly what I was looking for. And she rented it to me for only fifty bucks."

"Wow, that's amazing," Randy said. "They wanted nearly that much in Wal-Mart for a skuzzy pirate costume."

"You shop at Wal-Mart?" Eddie asked, shocked.

"Forget I mentioned it. So, can I see your angel outfit?"

"Not 'til Saturday. Cassandra's keeping it in the store 'til then. Maybe you could come over and help me with it?"

"Sure. Jenny and I are going to hit the bars just so we can ogle all the beautiful guys wearing – hopefully – next to nothing!"

"Great. If the party's a bust, I might join you."

"Eddie, one thing you can be sure of. Sam Peterson's party will not be a bust!"

Smiling, Eddie put down the phone down then picked up again as it rang almost immediately.

"Hello?"

"Eddie, I'm sorry."

Bob.

"What d'you want, Bob?" Eddie asked coldly.

"To say I'm sorry for the other night." Bob's voice was slightly slurred.

"You're drunk," Eddie snapped.

"Dutch courage so I could call you."

"You shouldn't have bothered, Bob. You and I are through – completely and totally *through.*"

"I know, I know." Eddie flinched as he heard the sound of a sob catch in Bob's throat. "I know I fucked up again, but Eddie, I still love you."

Eddie sighed. "Don't start that again. You don't go beating on the person you love. At least, no one I want to be associated with does. Now, please hang up, and don't call me again."

"Eddie, please –"

Eddie slammed the phone down. "Fuck," he muttered. Bob sure knew how to ruin his day with just one phone call. Sighing, he walked over to the window and looked out onto the dark street below.

Oh no...

Bob was looking up at him from the other side of the street. *He has the nerve to think I'll let him in?* Eddie fumed. *I can't believe this guy!*

Bob started to cross towards Eddie's apartment building, but a dark shadow seemed to swoop down from nowhere. And suddenly, Bob was gone. Eddie's eyes almost bugged out

of his head. What in hell had just happened? Had he imagined Bob out there? No, surely not, but how could he disappear like that? Almost as if something had *taken* him. Eddie picked up his phone and punched in Bob's cell number. His heart pounded from the fear of the unknown.

"Bob Mitchell," Bob answered.

Eddie put down the phone, his breath escaping in a long sigh of relief. Bob was all right. He must have imagined what he'd seen. Another hallucination. Man, it certainly was the Halloween season! He walked to the window again and looked out. This time, the street was quiet and deserted.

Chapter Four

Saturday night, at precisely five, Eddie fled from Silvio's salon, beating a hasty track to the costume store to pick up his angel gear. He had thought of nothing else all day. One of the major problems he had foreseen was crushing the wings in the back of the cab he was taking to Sam's house. But Randy had promised to accompany him that far and help him put on the wings just before he went in. At exactly ten after five, Eddie stood in front of the store staring with unbelieving eyes at the window that was completely devoid of any Halloween costumes or masks.

"What the...?" With a sick feeling in the pit of his stomach he tried the door handle. Locked. "Oh no..." Tears of disappointment mixed with anger welled up in his eyes. He'd been taken for fifty dollars, but worse than that, now he couldn't go to Sam's party. Turning away from the storefront, he trudged back to this apartment, thinking of all the really nasty things he would say to Cassandra if he should ever see her again.

"Angel," she'd called him. Well, she'd find out just how much *devil* was in him, too, if their paths ever crossed again.

"Damn!" he yelled aloud, causing the couple walking in front of him to jump then turn to glare at him. "Sorry," he muttered, bowing his head in misery as he scooted past them.

* * * *

There was a large, brown-paper wrapped parcel leaning against his apartment door when he rounded the corner from the stairwell. A tall parcel. Tall enough to be...

"No!" Eddie stood stock-still, gaping at the parcel. Could it be? But how? Almost jumping up and down with anticipation, he unlocked his apartment door and dragged the parcel inside, ripping at the paper before it was halfway through the door. A gleam of white met his eyes.

"Yes!" he yelped. Cassandra hadn't let him down after all. But how did she know where he lived? He'd paid her in cash. She'd never asked for an address or given him a receipt.

Well, he'd think about all that later. Right now, he'd better lay the wings out so they didn't get rumpled. He stroked the soft feathers gently. They felt so...warm...alive almost. He shivered and pulled his hand back, staring at the wings as if he expected them to rise from the floor and flap their way around his apartment. He wondered what the story was behind them. They couldn't be the originals from the movie. That was forty years ago, and these looked so fresh and vibrant. He pulled back more of the paper wrapping and found the silver loincloth.

It was even skimpier than he remembered. He held it up then tried it round his waist. No, too high—it was going to show too much of his personal property. Maybe round the hips. Yes, that was better. Good fit...

* * * *

Two hours later, Eddie was showered, buffed and smelling faintly of his favourite cologne, a spicy blend he'd worn for years. It was subtle, and he liked that, never able to understand why some guys felt they had to smell like they'd taken a bath in perfume.

Randy knocked at his door promptly at eight. He stared at Eddie with admiration, and something else in his eyes when Eddie opened the door wearing only the silver loincloth.

"That's going to turn a few heads," he remarked, giving Eddie a chaste kiss on the cheek.

"Thanks. Like a drink?"

"Just a beer if you have it."

Eddie went to the fridge, pulled out a can of light beer and handed it to Randy, eyeing his pirate costume. "Wal-Mart?"

"Don't ask, and I won't tell." He watched Eddie pour himself a glass of wine. "Getting in the party mood?"

"Trying. I'm just a little worried about the wings. I'm going to have to be so careful."

"Have you tried them on?"

"Not yet. I think I'll need your help. There's a shoulder harness that looks a little complicated."

Randy knelt by the wings to examine the harness. "They really are beautiful, Eddie," he said. "They can't be from the original movie."

"That's what I thought. They're so...uh...alive."

"Yes, they are." Randy ran his fingertips over the white feathers. "Fantastic workmanship. Here, let's try them on you. I want to see the whole effect."

"Okay." Eddie helped Randy lift the wings then slipped his arms through the harness as Randy held the wings steady.

"They comfortable?"

"Yes and amazingly light, considering their size," Eddie told him, shrugging the harness into place across his shoulders.

Randy stood back to get a good look. "Eddie, they're incredible. You're gonna be the hit of the party."

"You think so?"

"I know so." Randy continued to watch as Eddie moved about the room, the feathers rippling with his movements, the wings themselves seeming to open slightly as Eddie turned his body this way and that. "You know," Randy said quietly, "I think you may have a night you'll never forget."

* * * *

After saying goodbye to Randy and feeling a twinge of regret that he couldn't bring his friend to the party, Eddie made his entrance. He felt as though every eye was on him as he walked down the two steps into the giant living room.

"Eddie! Man, you look great!" Eddie heaved a sigh of relief as Sam advanced on him looking the epitome of what the well-dressed vampire should be. His silk evening suit and cape were of the deepest black accentuated by the blinding whiteness of his shirt and the blood-red of his bowtie. He looked amazing, and he knew it. He had painted a thin trickle of what was supposed to be blood dripping from the corner of his mouth. Eddie stared at it for a moment, remembering how Joshua had licked the blood from his cut lip.

Eddie recognised the beautiful woman clinging to Sam's arm as Debbie Monroe, the Australian sensation. She was appropriately dressed as Vampira, Mistress of the Night, in a

clinging black gown of a see-through, gossamer-like fabric that left nothing to the imagination.

"Eddie, Eddie," Sam said, beckoning to one of the many waiters bearing a tray of champagne. "You really do look like an angel."

"Thanks," Eddie muttered, accepting a glass of champagne with a smile at the waiter.

"I'll say," Debbie cooed in her curious accent. It sounded like 'I'll sigh'. "You're a real humdinger, aren't you?"

"You both look terrific," Eddie said. He was beginning to feel somewhat underdressed as he looked around the room. Almost everyone else's costume seemed to consist of a lot of material with only the occasional pair of arms or legs showing skin. Had this been a terrible mistake?

"You must work out," Debbie remarked. "Lovely chest, hasn't he Sam?"

"Oh, yeah...lovely." Sam winked at Eddie. "Eddie's my hairdresser, Debbie. A genius with the scissors."

"Really?" Her eyes drifted across the room. "Oh, isn't that Nicole and Keith arriving?" She hauled away Sam, leaving Eddie alone and feeling vaguely lost. He was beginning to realise he didn't know another soul at the party, and everyone seemed to be in groups, talking and laughing up a storm.

Then he saw *him*.

"Joshua," he murmured, staring at the man he had spoken to in Tony's bar. The man no one else had seen. The man he had dreamed of and who had taken him to a sensual high like no other.

He stood by the French doors that lined one whole wall at the far end of the room. He was dressed in a black tux and a black shirt, with a red silk scarf draped over his shoulders. Eddie moved towards him, and as he did so, Joshua walked out through the French doors onto the veranda. Eddie followed him outside, shivering slightly from the cool night air on his bare skin.

"Joshua?"

He turned and smiled at Eddie. The effect of that smile and Joshua's amber gaze caused Eddie to tremble with desire. God, but this man was so incredibly gorgeous.

"Eddie. You look like an angel should. As I knew you would when you told me how you would dress for the party."

Eddie smiled ruefully. "I feel very *undressed* at the moment. A bit conspicuous, if you know what I mean."

"Conspicuous only because of your beauty," Joshua said, his voice strangely husky.

"I dreamed of you last night," Eddie told him.

Joshua smiled. "I know. I had the same dream." He held out his hand to Eddie. "Come to me."

Eddie felt his legs move as though he had no power over them. He was being propelled forward, not that he didn't want to get closer to Joshua, but it was as if he had no say in the matter. Joshua's hand cupped the side of Eddie's face and drew him in until their lips were a mere inch apart.

"I would like to kiss you," Joshua whispered.

"I would like you to." Eddie closed his eyes as Joshua's lips touched his. The thrill that coursed through his body as his lips were taken in that first kiss caused Eddie to moan and move into Joshua's arms. Joshua's mouth, so soft and succulent, closed over Eddie's, his tongue probing between Eddie's lips, seeking entrance. Willingly, Eddie opened to him and Joshua's tongue slid in, caressing every part of Eddie's mouth, bringing a fire to his groin. He grew hard faster than he thought he could ever be, the flimsy silver fabric that covered his crotch tenting and pushing between Joshua's thighs.

"Eddie!" The voice behind him made Eddie jump and turn his head quickly. Sam stared at them with disbelief. "*Joshua?*"

"Yes, Samuel, it's me – and now that you have seen me, I must go."

"No!" Eddie tightened his arms about Joshua, holding their bodies locked together. "You don't get to leave me again."

"Eddie, get away from him," Sam yelled. "You don't know what he is."

"You two know each other?" Eddie frowned at Joshua. "You said you'd never heard of Sam Peterson." Now when he thought about it, if Joshua hadn't know Sam, how did he get an invitation to the party?

Effortlessly, Joshua released himself from Eddie's arms. "I lied..." He cursed himself for not preventing Samuel's intervention. He could so easily have made him oblivious to his and

Eddie's presence on the veranda. But now, it was too late. Samuel would undoubtedly do his level best to turn Eddie against him.

"He lies about everything," Sam seethed. "Eddie, step away from him before he hurts you."

"Hurts me?"

"Yes, *hurts* you. That's what he does. He's...he's..."

Joshua's smile was sardonic. "Can't quite say it, eh Samuel?"

"Can't say what?" Eddie asked, slipping one arm about Joshua's waist.

Sam stared at them for a long moment without saying a word then he shook his head and laughed mirthlessly. "Oh, this is rich," he said. "An angel and a demon making out on my veranda. And in case you haven't figured out what's going on, Eddie, take a look back there at all the other people. What are they doing? Are they standing around wondering why we're in the middle of a confrontation – why I'm so mad and upset? No, because they can't see what's going on – because *he* won't let them see!"

"What are you talking about?"

"He has powers, Eddie. Powers you would not believe. He's already cast some kind of spell on you."

"Samuel, that's enough," Joshua snapped. He turned to Eddie with a sad smile. "I shouldn't have come here tonight, but I wanted to see you again."

"Then why here?" Sam snarled. "Why my place when you could have chosen just about anywhere for your *date*?"

"Because I wanted to see Eddie dressed as an angel – and my *brother* masquerading as a vampire." Joshua stared at Sam through narrowed eyes. "Even you must see the irony of that, Samuel."

Eddie gaped at the two men. "You're brothers? But of course you are. That first time I saw Joshua in the bar, I thought for a moment I was looking at you, Sam."

Joshua nodded. "Twin brothers. Alike in many things...except the colour of our eyes."

"And one other very important difference," Sam said. "Tell him, Josh."

"I'll leave that to you, *Sam*." He stepped away from Eddie. "As I said earlier, I must go." Loath as he was to leave, Joshua felt he had no choice. This had not gone as he had hoped for, had dreamed of, yet he could blame no one but himself. Once again, he had underestimated

the extent of Samuel's hatred. No matter how hard he had tried to reach Samuel, to show him how much he still loved him, Samuel remained stubbornly convinced that his brother was something to be feared and despised.

Joshua turned to go.

"No!" Eddie yelled. He reached for Joshua's hand and held it tightly. "Please don't go. I may never see you again."

"That would be the best thing that could happen, Eddie," Sam said, quietly.

Eddie glared at Sam. "I'll be the judge of that." He turned to Joshua. "Take me with you."

Sam groaned. "Eddie, no."

But Eddie's eyes were locked on Joshua's, and he no longer wanted Sam to be a part of this. He was leaving with Joshua, no matter what it took. He froze, startled, as he felt a tugging in his spine and across his shoulders. He turned and looked up with amazement as he saw the wings he wore unfurl and begin to beat with a slow and steady rhythm.

He cried out as his feet left the ground. "Joshua, what's happening?"

"Josh!" Sam yelled. "Stop this. You're scaring him to death."

Joshua, ignoring Sam, smiled up at Eddie. "It's your will, Eddie, your wish. Do you still want to leave with me?"

As their eyes locked on one another, Eddie's fear vanished. All he wanted was to feel Joshua's embrace and the sweetness of his kiss. He stretched out his arms to Joshua.

"Yes, Joshua. Take me with you."

And just as in the dream they had shared, he was in Joshua's arms again, and Sam's cries of warning faded into the distance below them.

Chapter Five

They swooped down through the dark night sky until the lights of LA appeared through the clouds. Eddie wondered if anyone could actually see them as they glided over the tops of the buildings. Had anyone, peering out of a window, just wet their pants at seeing an angel fly by?

He gasped as Joshua took them into a steep dive. They landed on a large balcony at the top of a tall building overlooking Sunset Boulevard. The glass doors slid open at their approach, and Joshua led him into a spacious living room decorated with muted colours and modern furnishings. Joshua unfastened the harness that held the angel wings in place.

"I have a million questions," Eddie said softly as Joshua's lips brushed his.

"And you will have answers. Later," Joshua told him, slipping the wings off Eddie's shoulders and laying them carefully on one of the large couches. "But now, all I want to do is hold you, kiss you, make love to you, over and over." Joshua took his hand and led him into the bedroom.

That's what Eddie wanted too. Yes, he had questions, and if he was completely honest with himself, still some fears, but he would never believe this wonderful man would hurt him, no matter what Sam had said about his brother. There was definitely a story there, but it could wait, for he and Joshua were lying together on the bed. Joshua gazed into his eyes and smiled. For now, that was all that mattered. Eddie reached to touch Joshua's face, caressing it with wonder and tracing the outline of his lips.

"I feel at a kind of disadvantage," he murmured. "I'm almost naked, and you still have on all your clothes."

"Easily remedied," Joshua said, shucking off his jacket while Eddie attacked his shirt buttons. He peeled the black shirt over Joshua's shoulders, revealing a smooth muscular chest and ridged abdomen. Joshua threw his shirt to one side then rose to step out of his shoes, socks and pants in what seemed like one deft move. Eddie's eyes widened as he took in the sight of Joshua's hard, erect cock that curved upward from its thatch of black hair.

"Beautiful," Eddie breathed.

"Now *you* are overdressed," Joshua said, smiling as he removed Eddie's silver loincloth. The bulging jockstrap underneath the silver fabric failed to fully contain Eddie's erection, the head of his cock sticking out from under the elastic strip that circled his hips. Joshua leaned forward to take those inches of pulsing flesh between his lips, running his tongue over the glistening head. Eddie eased the jock down his hips, and his cock sprang free, plunging deeper into Joshua's mouth. A long satisfied murmur of appreciation rumbled from Joshua's throat as he sucked on the hard flesh, his tongue scouring the velvety head, his lips pulling on the throbbing mass.

The moan torn from Eddie's lips was a sound he'd never before heard himself make. A cross between a whimper and a plea, it should have embarrassed him. But it was so natural, so spontaneous. And when he felt the delicious fire of Joshua's tongue swirling over every sensitive nerve ending on his cock's head, Eddie moaned again, adding a quick intake of breath as his balls tightened, signalling his approaching orgasm. Eddie clutched at the silken fabric of the comforter beneath him in an attempt to stave off the rush of sensations coursing through him. Joshua raised his head and smiled into Eddie's eyes. Holding the base of Eddie's cock in a gentle grip, he licked and teased his way over Eddie's flat stomach, lingering over his navel before sweeping across his chest and circling each tiny hard nipple with his tongue. As Joshua's lips claimed him, Eddie ran his fingers through the dark, almost black curls that crowned Joshua's head.

I'm dreaming again, he thought. *I must be dreaming*. Everything that had happened since the moment Joshua had first kissed him belonged in a dream. And now, lying here and being made love to by the most beautiful man in the world was just a continuation of this same dream. A wonderful dream from which he never wanted to waken.

"You're not dreaming," Joshua murmured, his lips still on Eddie's. "This time, everything that is happening is real."

"Pinch me, just to make sure."

"I'll kiss you instead," Joshua said, smiling.

"That would work, too."

Their lips met and meshed in long, slow movements, their tongues weaving inside each other's mouths with an insistent eroticism that had Eddie on fire. He rolled Joshua over onto his back attacking his chest with his lips and tongue, scouring the hard flesh and nibbling on

the tiny bud that crowned each pectoral muscle. Eddie slid lower, tracing the contours of Joshua's ridged abdomen with his lips until he could feel the head of Joshua's hard cock press against his face. His tongue snaked out to lick the glistening pre-cum from the slit then laved the sensitive underside with its prominent thick vein, bringing small gasps of pleasure from Joshua's lips. He licked lower, under the soft skin of Joshua's balls, until he could probe at the cleft between his buttocks. Joshua raised his hips, and Eddie dived in, his tongue swirling around Joshua's sphincter muscle.

The scent of Joshua's spicy musk drove Eddie mad with desire, and it seemed his actions were having the same effect on Joshua, for suddenly, he was drawn up into Joshua's arms and his mouth taken in a soul-searing kiss. Before Eddie had time to marvel at Joshua's strength, Joshua had encircled both their cocks in his hand and was bringing Eddie to a state of unrestrained delirium. He gasped into Joshua's mouth as his orgasm ripped through him, a tingling electric jolt raced up his spine, his whole body tensed then spasmed as he came, sending a torrent of semen between their tightly pressed torsos. Eddie clung to Joshua, holding him, caressing the corded muscles on Joshua's back as they stretched and stiffened with the sensation of his imminent orgasm. A deep groan escaped Joshua's lips. The sweetness of his breath filled Eddie's mouth, their deeply sensual kiss binding them together as Joshua's body shuddered in the throes of his climax.

* * * *

Eddie turned to gaze into Joshua's eyes—eyes that held him captive with their intensity. What was it Sam had said? 'He's already cast a spell over you', and it was true, but the spell felt benign and brought no fear with it, only questions.

Joshua smiled. "You can't wait, can you?"

"To have you make love to me again?"

"To ask how all this can be."

"Ah...that." Eddie ran his hand down Joshua's side until it rested on his hip. "I think I'm a bit nervous of the answers to be honest. The tension between you and Sam, what he hinted at when he said you had 'powers', I'm only guessing at. I think if I hear it from your lips, I'll be really afraid."

"You have nothing to fear from me." Joshua's eyes held even more intensity as he spoke, and Eddie felt the nervous tic in the pit of his stomach fade away. "Rest assured, Eddie, contrary to what Samuel said, I will never hurt you."

"I believe you," Eddie whispered.

"Then the rest of what I have to tell you should not make you afraid of me, even though the truth of it is hard to believe."

Eddie nodded. "What happened tonight, the fact that those wings actually worked—you did all that, didn't you?"

"Cassandra and I did all that."

Eddie's eyes widened. "You know Cassandra? But how...?"

"Cassandra saved my life when—well, let me explain why my brother and I are estranged."

"You told me you didn't know who Sam was," Eddie said accusingly.

"It didn't seem appropriate at the time." Joshua kissed Eddie's lips tenderly. "I apologise for lying to you."

Eddie's blood ran hot at Joshua's touch. "When you do that," he said, "you could do anything to me, tell me anything you want, and I will take it all and believe it all."

Joshua stroked Eddie's chest gently. "I must warn you that some of it is bizarre—and may cause you some disbelief. Fifteen years ago, when Samuel and I were twenty, we went on a camping trip together in Yosemite. What happened there is what changed everything in our lives." Joshua paused a moment then said quietly. "We were attacked by a vampire—"

"*What?*" Eddie sat up, his expression a mixture of disbelief and amusement. "But there's no such thing...you're pulling my leg, and here I thought this was going to be a serious explanation."

Joshua raised himself on one elbow and smiled sadly. "I am telling you the truth. Vampires do exist. The one who attacked us was a rogue vampire, an outcast among his own kind."

"Joshua." Eddie's voice was barely audible. "What are you saying?"

"Samuel and I were both bitten by the vampire. He was immensely strong and we, young and in shape though we were, couldn't fight him off. I yelled at Samuel to run, and he did, screaming that he would bring help. Unfortunately, but of course, quite understandably,

Samuel got lost, and it was three days before the rescue team found me. In that time, the vampire had changed me —”

“What d’you mean *changed* you?”

“He made me one of his kind — a vampire.”

“Oh, yeah?” Eddie couldn’t stop the laughter that bubbled in his throat.

Joshua sighed. “I know it’s hard to believe, but it is the truth. The rescue team took me to a nearby hospital, where they gave me blood transfusions and kept me under observation for a couple of days. They couldn’t understand my aversion to sunlight.” His lips twisted in a wry smile. “Of course, Samuel didn’t tell them what had happened — and who would have believed him anyway?”

“Wow,” Eddie said, poking Joshua in the ribs. “That is some Halloween story. Any minute now you’re going to sink your fangs into my neck — where are they anyway?” Eddie touched Joshua’s lips with his forefinger. “You should at least have fangs to go with the story.”

“Eddie.” Joshua took his hand and kissed it gently. “How do you suppose we were able to fly here?”

“Well...” Eddie frowned as he thought for a moment. “Sam said you had powers.”

“And you said you would believe anything I told you.”

“That was when you kissed me,” Eddie said, leering at him. “Kiss me again.”

“Eddie, I am not joking about this.” Joshua held Eddie’s chin firmly in his hand and stared into his eyes. “Think of what happened tonight. Sam’s anger when he saw me there in his home. His warning to you of what I am.”

Eddie lost his smile, and his lips quivered as the intensity of Joshua’s gaze deepened. Suddenly, he knew everything Joshua had told him was the truth.

“Oh, my God,” he whispered. “Joshua.” He wriggled in Joshua’s grasp, trying to break free. “You really are...a vampire.” Joshua released him, and Eddie jumped off the bed. “I can’t believe it!” He stood staring at Joshua, his body trembling, his nakedness making him feel incredibly vulnerable. “What Sam said — that you lie and would hurt me...”

“I have not lied to you, Eddie, nor will I hurt you. I have already promised you that.”

“But...but you’re a vampire for God’s sake. You’re not real, not alive!” A bitter laugh broke from his lips. “I thought my luck with Bob was lousy, but now —”

"Eddie, listen to me." Joshua sat on the edge of the bed but did not approach him. "Remember the other night when you saw Bob cross the street outside your apartment? He was about to confront you again, to threaten you and very possibly beat you up. I stopped him from getting into your apartment building."

Eddie stared at him remembering. "That was you? What did you do to him?"

"I simply removed him from your neighbourhood. I didn't harm him in any way – and he remembers nothing of it."

"Joshua..." Eddie's shoulders slumped with seeming despair. "I just don't know what to do or say."

"Just say you are not afraid of me."

"But I *am* afraid of you. How could I not be? You're a vampire, and everything I know about vampires makes me afraid of you." Eddie started looking around for something to wear. Where was that loincloth?

"Eddie." Joshua's voice was soft and gentle. "Would it make a difference if I told you that I love you?"

"Joshua, don't." Eddie stared at the beautiful man whom he had dreamed of, longed for from the moment they'd met and now – now that they were finally together – this revelation! "Just please let me go. I won't tell anyone about this evening. I promise."

"Sam already knows."

"I'll swear him to secrecy."

"There's no need for that. Sam has kept our secret for fifteen years."

"Okay." Eddie gave up looking for the silver loincloth. It must be under the bed, and he wasn't going anywhere near that right now. He sat down on a large armchair at a safe distance from Joshua and pulled a cushion into his lap. "Let me ask you something. About Sam...why isn't he a vampire? You said he'd been bitten too."

"A vampire bite does not automatically make you a vampire. That's just in movies. The change takes longer, and you have to drink the blood of the vampire to effect that change."

"You *drank* the vampire's blood?"

"I had no choice. I was weakened by him drinking my blood, and he was immensely strong. I have very little memory of it. All I know is when I woke up in the hospital, I was different."

"And how," Eddie muttered. He stared across the room at Joshua. "Are you going to let me leave here alive?"

"Of course."

Eddie relaxed a little. "And Sam? What did he do when he realised what had happened to you?"

"He shut me out of his life. Would have nothing to do with me." Joshua shrugged his wide shoulders. "I can't say I blame him, although at the time I was devastated. I had nowhere to go, no one to turn to – until Cassandra."

"Right, Cassandra. What did she do?"

"She took me in, sheltered me from the light of day, advised me of vampire lore – schooled me in it really. I hadn't a clue, of course. Like you, I only knew of vampires from movies. Through her, I grew strong and well-aware of my powers. Powers that came from the rogue vampire. He was very old – hundreds of years – and had been spawned by a powerful vampire named Darius. The blood he imbued me with brought me powers that normally come to a vampire with great age."

"And Cassandra – what is she?"

"She is an earth witch," Joshua replied. "I suppose one you would call a good witch. She uses the earth, herbs and crystals to heal and protect people. She has the gift of illusion which she used to bring you the angel wings."

"So her Halloween costume shop was an illusion?"

"Yes."

"When I was there, I heard her talking to a man. It was you, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

Despite himself, Eddie found himself fascinated, but he flinched when Joshua stood and beckoned to him.

"Come to me, Eddie."

Eddie shook his head, pushing himself further back into the chair, holding on to the cushion as if to a lifeline.

"Eddie, I could make you come to me, take away your resistance with the snap of my fingers. But I don't want to do that." Joshua smiled, and Eddie felt a tug at his heart. "One of the wonderful things Cassandra did for me was to bring me into a circle of vampires who

actually care for and protect mortals from the likes of the one who attacked Sam and me. I vowed never hurt a mortal when taking their blood. When I have to feed, I leave them with a memory of something wonderful, rather than the nightmare of having their blood sucked by a monster.”

“You think of yourself as a monster?”

“That is how we are perceived, Eddie. Scary monsters.”

“You sure don’t look like a scary monster.”

“Being scared of me is the last thing I want for you,” Joshua said quietly. “There is another alternative.”

“What is it?”

“I can make you forget we ever met, here or at Samuel’s party or even in the bar. I will take you home or to meet up with your friends, and it will be as if we never met—that I never existed in your life.”

Eddie stared at Joshua, his mind trying to grasp all he had discovered about him. He should be scared, he should be *terrified*, and yet the thought that was uppermost in his mind at that moment was how desolate he felt at the idea of the memory of Joshua being taken from him.

“But, I don’t want to forget you, Joshua,” he said, his voice trembling with emotion. And he knew as he said the words that it was the very last thing in the world he wanted.

Joshua held out his hand. “Then come to me of your own free will. I won’t hurt you, Eddie. I promise.”

Eddie rose and took one tentative step forward then another. Joshua opened his arms, and after some moments of hesitation, Eddie moved into them, sighing as he felt Joshua’s embrace enfold him. Instead of the terror he knew should grip him, all he could feel was a need to stay right there, locked in the arms of the man he now knew more intimately than he had ever thought possible. He looked into Joshua’s eyes, those intoxicating eyes that seemed to see into his very soul, and he felt no fear at all, only the desire to be possessed by this man and to stay forever in his arms. Had Joshua cast another spell over him? Whatever it was, it felt good and right. Gently, he brushed Joshua’s mouth with his own, his tongue pushing its way between the slightly parted lips, until with a moan Joshua crushed him in his arms, and Eddie felt his mouth taken in an all consuming, demanding kiss.

They fell upon the bed, and Joshua's lips and tongue moved over Eddie's body, scorching his skin with the heat of his desire. They were both hard and hot, eager for each other's bodies, the revelations put aside in favour of their need for one another—the need to taste, to explore, to prolong each moment, each second of these exquisite sensations. Eddie had never been made love to like this before. Every part of him seemed to hum with sensual desire. Every kiss Joshua laid on his lips and skin burned with an erotic heat that took him to heights of ecstasy he'd never known, and when Joshua took him into the moist depths of his mouth, Eddie's body bucked as if he'd been zapped by a thousand volts of electrical pleasure. He groaned aloud and clutched at Joshua's thick curls as his cock was consumed by a voracious heat that threatened to take him over the edge too quickly.

"No," he panted. "Not yet, not yet." But the fire did not abate, and Eddie found himself writhing like a man possessed as Joshua's lips brought him to the brink, to a blurred dreamlike state where only his craving to be satisfied was real. He came in great spasms that jolted his body and made him feel like he was coming apart. He cried out as Joshua held him, draining him to the last vestige of his essence, until his body quieted and his breathing became calm again. Then Joshua's lips were on his, and he could taste himself in the kiss that followed, and the need for this man to take him any way he wanted overwhelmed Eddie.

This man, this...vampire. Somewhere in Eddie's mind, a tiny prickle of fear formed, and he started to push Joshua away then just as quickly pulled him closer. Joshua, sensing Eddie's fear, kissed him again, and the kiss was all things at once, raw but tender, gentle but all encompassing, and Eddie felt himself surrender to it, giving in to what he knew in his heart he wanted above all else. The kiss deepened, dizzying Eddie's senses, drawing him into a hungry passion and causing him to moan and whimper and press his heated flesh against Joshua's cool skin, demanding satisfaction. The feel of Joshua's hard as steel erection sliding between his thighs sharpened Eddie's hunger. He raised his hips, letting the hard flesh probe at his opening. His thoughts of lube and condom were erased as Joshua pressed forward and the words, *We have no need of them*, formed in his mind. The initial pain as Joshua entered him had Eddie biting down on his lip, drawing blood. Joshua's eyes glinted as a drop of blood spilled onto Eddie's chin. He lowered his face to Eddie's, the tip of his tongue scooping up the blood, licking at Eddie's lower lip then slowly sliding into his mouth. The effect was overwhelmingly sensual, and Eddie moaned aloud, wrapping his arms around Joshua's

neck, kissing him with a fervour matched only by the man he held in his arms. Joshua thrust forward, and Eddie felt the pain recede, being replaced by wave after wave of sensuous pleasure.

Joshua's cock filled Eddie completely, passing over his sweet spot with each downward stroke, bringing him the ultimate pleasure. He gazed up into Joshua's eyes, trying to transmit what he was feeling, to tell him without words what was now in his heart, that the terror he'd once experienced had dissipated in the flood of new-found emotions he could scarce believe were real. But they were real and true. Vampire or no vampire, what he felt for Joshua would not diminish along with the ecstasy he was now bringing him.

Eddie tightened his arms around Joshua's sleek, hard body, pressing himself further into his embrace, matching the rhythm Joshua had created, thrust for thrust. Each thrust brought Joshua deeper until his balls were slamming into Eddie's butt. Eddie wanted more — for this night to never end, for Joshua to make love to him, to take him, to mark him...

He was achingly hard again, the friction of the rhythmic motion of their bodies once more bringing him near to climax. He tried to fight it, but the sensation of Joshua's cock impaling him, moving inside him proved too much. His body reared up in ecstasy as he came, and at precisely the same time, a long wrenching groan escaped Joshua's lips. Eddie clung to him as he felt the hard flesh inside him grow even harder then spasm and erupt in a torrent of cum that seared Eddie's insides with its hot blast. Joshua's body shook in Eddie's arms as his orgasm rolled over him. His mouth claimed Eddie's, his lips grinding the soft flesh beneath him as the force of his passion overtook him. His mouth moved to Eddie's jaw, to his throat, licking the soft skin that covered his jugular vein where his lifeblood pulsed.

Eddie arched his neck. "Yes, take me, Joshua...mark me, make me yours..."

Joshua groaned. "Forgive me," he whispered as he bit down. The pain was a searing agony but only for a moment. As Joshua drew blood from the wound into his mouth, Eddie's body was overwhelmed by the hottest sensual rush he'd ever experienced. Every muscle, every nerve vibrated with desire. The heat that suffused him pooled in his groin, and he cried out as he climaxed yet again, clinging to Joshua, exulting as he felt the vampire's cock erupt deep inside him once more.

Eddie thought he must have blacked out, for when he opened his eyes Joshua was leaning over him, cradling him in his strong arms, his amber eyes dark with concern.

"Are you all right, Eddie?" he asked, kissing Eddie's lips tenderly.

Eddie reached up to touch Joshua's face. "Yes. Did all that really happen or was I dreaming?"

"It all really happened. Will you forgive me for taking your blood?"

"I gave it willingly, Joshua. Just promise me something."

"Anything..."

"You said you can make mortals forget that you have taken their blood, that you leave them only with a vague memory of something wonderful—but Joshua, I don't want to forget. I want to remember this night and everything about it for the rest of my life."

"Oh, Eddie..." Joshua's eyes welled with tears. "How I wish that you and I..."

Eddie's fingertips on Joshua's lips stilled his words of longing. "We can work something out," he said. "But just for tonight, let's forget about problems ahead. Just make love to me again and again."

Chapter Six

When Eddie awoke, the room was in darkness and he was alone in the bed. *Where's Joshua?* he wondered sleepily. What time could it be? Swinging his legs off the bed, he padded over to the draped window and peeked out. The Los Angeles sky was a pale blue, heralding another beautiful fall day.

"Must be about eight or so," he muttered, pulling the drape back a little. He looked around the room but saw no sign of a clock.

"Joshua?" he called out. Wait...oh yeah...of course. By necessity, Joshua would be in a dark room, waiting for the sun to set. He walked back over to the bed, wondering if he should try to go back to sleep...wait for Joshua. It was Sunday, and he didn't have to work. He could just chill out and wait...or not. Then he saw it—a note, lying on Joshua's pillow.

Dear Eddie,

You have probably guessed that I cannot join you in the daytime. A weakness of mine, I'm afraid. If you would like to stay, there are coffee and snacks in the kitchen. A TV is in the den. If you want to go home, feel free to wear any of my clothes that might fit you. I know wearing only a silver loincloth, even in the streets of West Hollywood, might not be quite your style. Don't worry about the wings. I will see they are returned to Cassandra.

Last night was wonderful for me, Eddie. You are a rare and beautiful man.

Joshua

"It was wonderful for me too," Eddie whispered. So, stay or go? Eddie opted to stay. He found a terry robe hanging on the back of the bathroom door and slipped it on. It smelled of Joshua...nice. He made himself a pot of coffee and some toast. Later, he called Randy.

"Hi!" His friend sounded glad to hear from him. "How was the party?"

"Unforgettable," Eddie replied. "I met...someone."

"Oh, great...and?"

"And I stayed over at his place. I'm still there...here...at his place, I mean."

"What's his name?" Randy asked.

"Joshua. Uh, Randy, he's Sam's brother."

"Oh, wow."

"They don't get along, so it's going to be a little awkward, at least for a time 'til Sam gets used to it."

"You sound like this guy's going to be around for some time."

"I think he is—I hope so anyway."

"So, when do I get to meet him? Jenny and I are meeting for lunch later. Why don't you both join us?"

"Uh...can't, not today. Joshua has something in mind for us to do."

Randy chuckled. "I bet he does. Lucky you—and Joshua too, of course."

"How was *your* evening?" Eddie thought he'd better ask.

"Okay. Jenny got bored around ten o'clock, so we called it a night. There were some great looking guys out and about, though. There was one I think was kinda interested, but he kept sticking his finger through the gold loop I was wearing in my ear and making asinine remarks, like 'You wanna see me stick my cock in here?' so I blew him off."

"You did?"

"Got rid of him, I mean. Besides..." Randy laughed. "If he really could stick his dick through that loop he wasn't much of a catch."

"Size queen."

"Who, *moi*?"

After he'd said 'bye' to Randy he took a shower, found the den and flipped on the TV. Of course, there were a slew of horror movies on for Halloween, so he settled down to watch a real winner, *Vampire Slaves in Space* that looked like it had been given a budget of two dollars.

He was just about to fall asleep in the deeply comfortable armchair when the phone on a nearby side table rang, startling him. He glanced at the caller ID screen and drew in a surprised breath as he saw Sam's name.

He picked up. "Hello."

"Josh?" Sam sounded nervous. "I thought you'd be asleep. I was going to leave a message."

"Sam, it's Eddie."

"Eddie?" Sam sounded shocked and relieved at the same time. "Eddie, why are you there. Is Josh with you?"

"He's asleep, Sam. Like you thought, it's his time of day to sleep."

"Oh, so you know, and you're still there?"

"He told me everything, Sam," Eddie said quietly. "Everything."

"Not everything, Eddie. Not *everything*. Some things he will never admit to you or anyone else."

"Sam, I know you're upset about this, but —"

"Upset?" Sam snorted in disgust. "Upset doesn't come close. Do you know what he tried to do to me? As if the trauma I'd gone through wasn't enough, my own brother tried to suck my blood. He tried to change me, Eddie. I bet he didn't tell you that."

"No, he didn't. He did say you abandoned him and shut him out of your life."

"Well, can you blame me? He's a fucking vampire!"

"He's also your brother. Joshua went through a horrendous ordeal."

"Oh." Sam let out a long, bitter laugh. "Played with your heartstrings, did he? Spun you a sob story of how he was lost and alone, shunned by all, hiding in the shadows because his big bad brother, who was scared to death of him incidentally, wouldn't give him the time of day — or night?"

"You said he would hurt me, Sam. You'll be glad to know he didn't hurt me."

"He didn't try to bite you — to take your blood?"

"I gave him my blood, willingly."

"Eddie!" Sam groaned out loud. "That's what he does. Don't you see? He's using you like he's used countless other guys before you. That's why he's not welcome in my life. He'll drain you dry, then when you're no longer of any use to him, he'll throw you out."

"I don't believe that," Eddie rasped, although a tiny prickle of fear had slid down his spine at Sam's words. "Joshua is —"

"Josh is a vampire," Sam interrupted. "With all that it entails. Sucking human blood, preying on unsuspecting men and women — he's not even *alive*, Eddie. He's a walking corpse, for Chrissakes! Listen to me, get out of there before he wakes up —"

"Stop it, Sam. I love him."

"Oh, sweet Jesus! Of course, you love him—or think you do. That's his charm, his allure, his *power*, Eddie." Sam's voice increased in volume as he ranted. "His power over you! I mean, c'mon. Do you think for one moment that you would be entertaining all this if you were in your right mind? He's got you in his thrall. It's what vampires do. You're his, until he says different. Now, get out of there while you still can."

He hung up, and Eddie sat very still, holding the phone and staring at it as though he expected Sam to call back at any moment. He looked up as a shadow fell across the room.

"Was that Samuel?" Joshua asked, his tall frame silhouetted in the doorway.

"Yes," Eddie replied, standing up.

"And was he warning you of the dire consequences of knowing me?"

"Yes, he was. He said you were using your power over me to make me love you. That I was in your thrall, and when you'd had enough of me, you'd throw me out."

"Succinct and to the point," Joshua said, with a wry smile, as he walked towards Eddie. "And do you believe him?"

"I don't want to believe him." Eddie hesitated then said, "He did say you tried to change him."

Joshua shook his head. "I had no idea *how* to change him. I was new to the game, so to speak. I wanted his blood, I admit that, and I thought in my naivety that he would give it to me. After all, he of all people, knew what had happened to me. I would have given him my blood if he'd asked...if the positions were reversed. I loved Samuel, very much."

Eddie took a step nearer to Joshua and touched his hand. "But there's no hope of a reconciliation, is there?"

"None. Not now. It's too late." Joshua sighed sadly. "My brother is afraid of me. No matter how many times I have told him I love him and will not harm him, he chooses to not believe me. I could have made him forget me, but it has always been my hope, a selfish one perhaps, that he and I would one day be reconciled."

He drew Eddie into his arms. "He was wrong about one thing. You are not in my thrall. You and I are connected by love, pure and simple. Vampires can love, just as mortals can. I wanted you to come to me, stay with me, of your own free will. You could have left this morning..."

"I didn't want to leave." Eddie gazed into Joshua's eyes. He could feel the power that lay within them, in their beautiful amber depths, but it was not a sinister power. Perhaps Joshua's power could bend Eddie's will to his, but it would be because Eddie wanted it, not through any devious trick or ploy Joshua might use, if he were so inclined. No, Joshua was right, Eddie mused. What bonded them was their mutual love for one another, and if Sam couldn't understand that, then he'd just have to find another hairdresser!

"I love you," Eddie said, snuggling against Joshua's chest.

Joshua tilted Eddie's face towards his own and kissed him gently. "I love you, too, but we must have a serious talk."

Eddie frowned. "I don't like the sound of that."

"There are some things you must know, if you are to be a part of my life."

"Oh, right."

"First..." Joshua sat in the big armchair and pulled Eddie down onto his lap. "You must understand that none of your friends can know about me."

Eddie tensed in Joshua's arms. "But I've already told my bud, Randy, I'd met you."

"But not that I am a vampire, I trust."

"No, just that you're terrific. And of course, he wants to meet you."

"That might be possible, but it will always be problematic. I have a circle of friends here in LA—vampires and mortals with whom I can mingle without fear of discovery. I would like to introduce you to them when you are comfortable with that idea."

Eddie nodded. "Mortals, you said. They have vampire lovers?"

"Some." Joshua massaged the nape of Eddie's neck as he spoke. "For reasons that are personal to them, some mortals wish to stay that way. They will live longer than the average mortal, but not forever."

"But you will?"

"If I'm not killed either by accident or design, yes, I will live for a long time."

"How long?"

"No one actually knows. The oldest vampire I know is more than eighteen hundred years old, yet he still looks like a young man. He tells me that there are vampires even older than him."

"Wow!" Eddie thought that over for a moment. "What do you do for eighteen hundred years, d'you suppose?"

"I have to admit, it sounds daunting," Joshua chuckled.

"So what happens when a vampire's mortal lover starts to fade? I mean, like grow old."

"Well, I only know of one or two instances where that may happen, and right now, the mortals are still very young."

Eddie kissed Joshua's ear. "So we have time to think about all this."

"You have all the time in the world, Eddie," Joshua said gently. "I would never pressure you one way or the other. Being a vampire has its advantages, but also some serious drawbacks. Sam is a prize example. The loss of my brother's love was very hard for me to come to terms with."

"Still is, I think."

Joshua was silent in his agreement, but he wrapped his arms around Eddie and held him tight. "I'm so glad I found you, Eddie. So very glad..." Their kiss was sweet, but with an undercurrent of the hunger for one another that gripped both men. The robes they wore fell away. Eddie's body, pressed to Joshua's, infused warmth into the cool skin of the vampire.

Hidden from Eddie at that moment were Joshua's thoughts. Joshua trembled in Eddie's arms as he revelled in the feel of the young man's strength and vitality. This was what he needed to give him a reason to go on with this half-life. Perhaps now, the thoughts that had plagued him for the past year could be put to rest. Thoughts he had kept from his friends, even from Cassandra. Thoughts of his death...his final death. A death that would free him from the loneliness he had found more and more difficult to ignore—until now. For now, holding this wonderful man in his arms, feeling the smoothness of his willing body pressed to his own, his hopes for a better existence were renewed.

Please let it be so, he prayed. Please let him be 'the one'. The one Cassandra had told him of, and of whom he had begun to despair ever meeting. A wounded soul like himself, a man ready to take a risk, willing to overlook things that most men would not—but most importantly of all, ready to love.

Eddie, sensing Joshua's need, pushed himself further into Joshua's embrace until, with a groan, Joshua stood, and holding Eddie in his arms, carried him through to the bedroom. With great tenderness, Joshua lowered Eddie onto the bed, then lay over him, his amber eyes searching Eddie's blue gaze.

"You're sad," Eddie whispered, caressing Joshua's face.

"Not sad, just a little apprehensive of how you will feel when you leave here."

"Why should my feelings change?"

"Because in the cold light of day this may feel...wrong."

Eddie shook his head. "It will never feel wrong. I know it's not going to be easy, but I'm game, if you are."

"Oh, Eddie..." Joshua lips were soft and moist on Eddie's, his kiss a rapture that Eddie was lost in and never wanted to escape. When he closed his eyes and gave himself up to the sweet sensation of Joshua's kiss, that was all he felt. The slow sensuous movement of Joshua's lips on his, the little electrical charge when the tip of Joshua's tongue slipped between his lips, and he eagerly drew him in. Then the taste and scent of him enveloped Eddie's senses, bringing a fierce desire that swept through him, urging him to press the full length of his body to Joshua's, to feel every part of his hard muscled flesh meshed with his, to revel in the strength of Joshua's arms about him, and to give himself in sweet surrender to both their needs.

Just before the lust and desire for Joshua overwhelmed him once more, Eddie swore to himself that nothing would make him give this man up. Whatever lay ahead, they would deal with, one way or another.

Chapter Seven

Returning to work forced reality upon him, and Eddie found it hard to concentrate on things he now considered humdrum and pointless. All he thought of was Joshua and the incredible time they had spent together. Had it only been two nights? So much had happened, had been said and revealed. He wanted to share all this wonder with Randy and Jenny, but Joshua's words of warning resounded in his brain loud and clear, and he wasn't about to jeopardise his newfound relationship in any way.

Randy stopped by the salon on his lunch break and, of course, had a thousand questions, but the biggie was, "When do we get to meet him?"

"Soon," Eddie told him. "But he's out of town for a few days." He added the lie reluctantly. "Maybe when he gets back we can plan something."

"Well, it doesn't have to be anything fancy," Randy said. "Just lunch or a drink after work."

"Right. I'll check with him on his schedule."

"He must be very busy," Randy remarked, frowning.

"He is very busy," Eddie said, trying to think of some way to change the subject. "Uh...are you and Jenny going out tonight?"

"No, she's taking a class in something or other. I'm pretty bushed from Halloween so I'm taking it easy. What about you?"

"Going straight home," Eddie said.

"Cool. Maybe I'll come round later, if I get a second wind."

"That'd be fine, but just call first. I might make it an early night."

* * * *

Eddie hadn't lied about going home. He just hadn't mentioned he wouldn't be staying there. Joshua had asked Eddie to join him at his penthouse, and wild horses wouldn't stop him from keeping that date. His day at the salon over, Eddie rushed home to shower and change. He suddenly realised that Joshua had never seen him fully clothed, apart from the

very first time they'd met in Tony's bar. He grinned at his reflection as he remembered how Joshua had flown him back to his apartment in the wee small hours of the morning, before the sun came up. Totally naked, wrapped in Joshua's arms, he'd clung to his lover as they took to the air, arriving at Eddie's building within a few minutes. He wondered if he'd ever get used to that insane rush as they left the ground far behind and soared through the darkened skies.

Hmm...a little extra care was needed in choosing what he'd wear—although did it matter? He wouldn't be wearing it for very long. That thought gave him a delicious tingle—Joshua and him naked, bodies pressed together, cocks achingly hard...

"Whoa!" He laughed at himself. "Just get ready, Eddie!"

* * * *

When Eddie buzzed for entry to Joshua's building, a woman answered.

"Oh hi, is Joshua home?" he asked, surprised, although the voice had a familiar tone.

"Indeed he is, Eddie. Come on up." The door unlatched, and Eddie pushed his way in then headed for the elevator. The door to Joshua's apartment was open, and Cassandra stood in the doorway, a smile of welcome wreathing her plump face.

"Hi, Cassandra." Eddie returned her smile. "This is a nice surprise."

"Joshua tells me you were a wonderful angel," she said, taking Eddie's arm and drawing him inside. "Thank you for taking such good care of the wings."

"And thank you for delivering them to my door. Did Joshua tell you they actually work?" Eddie asked, grinning.

"But, of course, I knew that," Cassandra replied. "They have been used for flight many times before."

Eddie stared into the witch's green eyes and saw no reason not to believe her, even though he still found it all so bizarre. If he hadn't actually been the one to fly, he would have been totally sceptical or downright unbelieving.

"Where is Joshua?"

Cassandra frowned. "On the phone with his brother. I'm afraid Sam is making some rather strange threats."

"He is?" Eddie had a sudden feeling of uneasiness. "Probably, because of me. He was madder than a hornet when he found out I knew about Joshua and still wanted to stay with him."

Cassandra nodded. "Sam tends to become unstable when he confronts Joshua. The years have done nothing to make him more accepting of Joshua's dilemma."

"I got the impression they don't see very much of one another."

"They don't. Saturday night was the first time they had met in several years. Joshua has always honoured Sam's demand that he stay out of his life."

"So Joshua risked a lot by coming to the party to see me."

"He considers it a worthwhile risk. You have become very special to him."

Eddie smiled. "And he is very special to me. I have never met anyone quite like him."

"Chances are, you will not," Cassandra said, chuckling. She looked to the bedroom door as it opened and Joshua walked into the living room. "Your angel is here, Joshua."

The grim expression on Joshua's face vanished in a flash when he smiled at Eddie. With long strides, he reached Eddie's side and swept him into his arms, his face buried in the warmth of Eddie's neck.

"I am so glad to see you again," he whispered, kissing Eddie's neck.

Eddie shivered with delight and desire at Joshua's touch but glanced over his shoulder at Cassandra. He didn't want to make a spectacle of himself in front of her. However, the witch was not there.

"Where...?"

Joshua grinned. "I hear the clinking of glasses. She's making you a drink. I told her you were a martini man, and Cassandra makes a mean one."

Eddie drew Joshua's face closer and kissed his lips, hard. "I couldn't wait to see you again. I thought of you all day long."

"I dreamed of you all day long," Joshua said, his eyes twinkling.

"Cassandra said Sam is being a problem..."

Joshua sighed. "Sam is afraid, and his fear is his weakness. He said he wants me to disappear forever, or he'll kill me."

Eddie stared at him in horror. "*What?* He can't mean that, Joshua."

"He thinks he means it. I tried to pacify him, but he's a little unbalanced at the moment."

Somehow, Eddie couldn't picture Sam in the role of a killer. "You think he would try to carry out his threat?"

"I hope not. I have never resorted to violence, despite what Sam thinks. But if I am forced to defend myself—" He broke off as Cassandra entered the room carrying a tray of drinks. "Thank you, my darling." He bent to kiss Cassandra's cheek. "I have told Eddie what a wonderful friend you have been to me."

"What wonderful friends we have been to each other," Cassandra said as Joshua handed Eddie his martini. She had poured Joshua a glass of red wine, and a glass of white for herself. "Well, cheers. Here's to the two of you."

The three of them clinked glasses, and Eddie took a sip of his martini. "Wow," he gasped and smiled at Cassandra. "That's got some kick!" But the smile died on his lips as he thought of what Joshua had just told him. "So, what can we do about Sam?" he asked soberly.

"I will do my best to avoid him, just as I have done for years," Joshua said.

"I could bespell him," Cassandra murmured. "Make him forget you exist."

Eddie gaped at her. "You can do that?"

"That and more," Joshua chuckled. "Cassandra's powers put mine in the shade."

"Then do it," Eddie exclaimed. "Get him over here and hex him!"

Cassandra's laughter filled the room. "Oh, Eddie. Such a tiger when roused."

"I just don't want anything to happen to Joshua," Eddie said defensively, putting an arm around his lover's waist.

"Nor shall it," Cassandra told him, her expression solemn. Her eyes took on a far away look. "It is not his destiny to die at the hands of his brother."

"And what is Sam's destiny?" Eddie asked.

"A long life—albeit an unhappy one." Her green eyes focused on Eddie. "And yours, my angel...yours is irrevocably intertwined with the man you love."

"That's good," Eddie said, smiling happily. He kissed Joshua's cheek. "You did mean Joshua, right?"

Cassandra's smile was enigmatic, but whatever she was about to say was stayed by a loud banging at the door.

"Samuel," Joshua muttered. "He was on his cell when he called."

"But how did he get past the security door?" Eddie gasped, suddenly afraid of what might happen between the two brothers. "Don't let him in."

"I must," Joshua said, striding towards the door.

"Do something," Eddie hissed at Cassandra. "Bespell him or whatever it is you do!"

"It's not that simple. It is a process..."

"Oh, for cryin' out loud!" Eddie ran after Joshua, just in time to see him open the door and Sam barge in, red-faced mad and totally out of control.

"Sam!" Eddie yelled, and the man swung round, his dilated eyes fixing on Eddie.

"You," he seethed. "You're as bad as him! I tried to save you from this...this monster, but you're just as vile and —"

"Stop that, Samuel!" Joshua reached out and grabbed Sam by the lapels of his coat. "How many more times must you be told you have nothing to fear from me? You are my brother, and I love you." Their faces only inches apart, Joshua pleaded, "Why can you not accept that? What else can I do to convince you?"

"You can die—again!" Sam pulled a wooden stake from inside his coat and pressed it against Joshua's chest.

"No!" Eddie roared as he sprang forward, pushing Joshua out of harm's way. The point of the stake entered Eddie's chest, and as Sam stumbled forward, it passed through Eddie's body and Eddie's shirtfront immediately soaked with his blood. Sam stared in horror at what he had done, while Eddie, a stunned look of pain and disbelief etched on his face, slowly collapsed into Joshua's arms.

"Oh, Eddie!" Sam staggered back. "Oh, my God, Eddie, I'm so sorry!"

Joshua lifted Eddie into his arms. "Cassandra, take care of Samuel." His eyes were hard as they met hers. "You know what to do. He is gone from me, forever."

He carried Eddie into the bedroom and laid him on the bed. His lover was dying, and Joshua knew he had only a little time to save him. Using his strength and speed, he plucked the stake from Eddie's chest, staunching the blood by pressing his hands over the wound.

The rich coppery scent of Eddie's blood set Joshua's senses reeling with desire. With supreme effort he forced himself to concentrate on what he must do.

"Eddie," he whispered, his lips close to Eddie's ear. "Can you hear me?"

"Yes." Eddie's breath rasped in his throat, and a trickle of blood ran from the corner of his mouth over his jaw.

"I love you, Eddie. Will you remember that when you awaken?"

"Yes." His lips tried to form more words. "I love..."

"Hush, Eddie my angel..." Tears formed in Joshua's eyes as he lowered his head to drink his lover's blood.

* * * *

Hours later, he returned to the living room to find Cassandra patiently waiting for him. She looked up at him with hopeful eyes. Joshua nodded and sat in a chair opposite her.

"Did you foresee this?" he asked.

"It was inevitable. He is the one."

Joshua sighed. "I hope you are right. I tried to make the transition from this life to the next as easy as I could. But you know I have never changed anyone before. It is said that sometimes the trauma can reverse feelings of love to hate."

"Eddie will never hate you, Joshua," Cassandra said with conviction.

"But will he love me?"

"He is the one I foresaw."

"And what of Samuel?" Joshua asked, his voice coloured with regret and sorrow.

"He has no memory of tonight—nor of you, Joshua." She rose from her chair and brought him a glass of wine. "I thought it best to also erase Eddie from his memory. Eddie's new existence will be easier if fewer people remember him as he was."

"He has friends..."

"And he will have to deal with them in his own time, and as he sees fit." Cassandra touched Joshua's arm gently. "I tried very hard to infuse Sam's mind with pleasant thoughts of you, memories of your boyhoods together, but his psyche resisted me. There was much hatred there."

"More fear than hatred, I think," Joshua said, his sadness dulling his voice. "Well, at least he has nothing to be afraid of now."

Cassandra's smile was without pleasure. "Except, perhaps, the fear of being alone."

* * * *

Joshua let Eddie rest, watching over him while the change took place. He knew it was better not rushed, this change from mortal to immortal, this strange new existence where day became night, and the thoughts of others became as words spoken aloud. He remembered the terror of it only too well, but there had been no one then to love him, to hold him and guide him into this new life—no one until Cassandra. But he would be there for Eddie when he awoke from his death. There to comfort him and give him love—if he wanted it from him. That doubt lingered in his mind even as he sat by Eddie's side, smoothing back the shaggy blond hair that covered Eddie's forehead. He bent to kiss the cool lips tenderly and started slightly as they parted under his.

"Eddie," he murmured.

Eddie's eyes fluttered open, and Joshua slipped an arm under him, supporting him as he struggled to sit up. He looked around the room as if trying to place where he was. Joshua's heart hammered in his chest as he waited for the realisation of what had happened to finally dawn on Eddie.

"Joshua?" Eddie turned his gaze on the man who held him. "I had an amazing dream—you and I...and Sam...and Cassandra...we were all in it, and Sam was trying to k—" He looked at Joshua, a flare of panic in his eyes. "But it wasn't a dream, was it? Sam was trying to kill you, and I tried to stop him, and—"

Joshua tightened his embrace around Eddie's slender body. "No, it wasn't a dream. It was real, but Sam is gone, and he'll never trouble us again." He kissed Eddie's lips gently. "It's just you and me now. Do you understand what has happened to you?"

"I feel different. I'm like you, I think. Am I a vampire like you?"

"Yes. I'm sorry. You were dying. It was too late to call for help. I could only think of one way to save you, to keep you in my life."

Eddie nodded then was silent, thinking. "So," he said, finally, "I have your blood in my veins?"

"Yes."

"But I don't remember drinking it." He poked a finger into his mouth and jumped. "Oh yeah, fangs there...sharp." He slipped out of Joshua's arms and rolled off the bed. "Hmm...feels pretty good. I feel lighter."

Joshua gazed at Eddie, drinking in the sight of his sleekly muscled body, at the hidden power that now lay within him, power that as yet he did not know he possessed.

Eddie turned and smiled at Joshua, a feral glint in his blue eyes. "Do you still love me, Joshua?"

"More than ever."

Eddie laughed and threw himself on Joshua, taking his lips with a searing kiss. The sensuousness of the vampire was already in that kiss, bringing a fierce surge of desire through Joshua's body.

"Then make love to me," Eddie whispered.

Joshua held him in a fierce embrace, knowing that now his vampire strength would not hurt Eddie.

"Drink from me first," he murmured. "Let the first taste of blood you remember be mine."

Eddie's lips scoured Joshua's throat, his fangs sinking into the jugular vein that throbbed and pulsed with strength-giving blood. Joshua's hand cupped the back of Eddie's head, his fingers tangling in the thickness of Eddie's hair, holding him pressed to his flesh as he drank. Joshua could feel Eddie's cock harden against his thigh as the rich blood imbued his lover's body with its sensual power. He reached to take it in his grasp, his thumb caressing the head, spreading the copious pre-cum over the velvety flesh. Eddie groaned and pulled back slightly, licking the blood from Joshua's neck. Their lips met in a bruisingly passionate kiss, and as Eddie opened to him, Joshua's tongue curled around Eddie's, tasting his own blood in that kiss. For the first time as vampires together, they explored one another with deep, hungry kisses, their tongues swirling and tussling inside the moist heat of their mouths.

Their bodies moved together to a slow and sensual rhythm born of need and desire. It seemed that there was no closeness close enough. Joshua turned Eddie over onto his back, covering his torso with burning kisses, his senses inflamed by the spicy scent emanating from Eddie's body – a scent unique to vampires and as irresistible and arousing to them as to any mortal.

Eddie writhed under him, arching his body, grinding his crotch into Joshua's, caressing and stroking the muscled flesh beneath his hands. Joshua's kisses moved lower, skimming over Eddie's stomach to tease and tantalise the hard shaft that pushed against his lips. His tongue flicked out to lick the glistening head, to savour the sweet juice that leaked from the slit. Eddie moaned and thrust his hips upward. Joshua took all that was offered, his lips gliding down the hard flesh, enveloping it with the slick heat of his mouth. As he moved back up the pulsing length of Eddie's cock, he felt another quick gush of pre-cum coat his tongue.

"Fuck me, Joshua."

Joshua raised his head to gaze into his vampire lover's eyes, the light blue made darker by the feral lust that glowed there. He traced a trail of kisses from Eddie's crotch to his mouth, covering his lips with a kiss of such intensity that the young vampire beneath him shuddered with an almost uncontrollable desire.

"Fuck me Joshua," Eddie repeated, his voice filled with a plaintive breathlessness. "I want all of your vampire strength inside me. I want to feel you like I've never felt you before...give you what I never could before." As he spoke, he wound his legs around Joshua's torso and lifted his pelvis, giving Joshua access to his tight hole.

Slowly, his amber gaze locked on Eddie's gleaming blue eyes, Joshua drove his raging erection inside Eddie. His long, deep thrust brought a guttural cry of elation from Eddie's lips as he clung to Joshua, their bodies now fused as one. Joshua groaned as Eddie's silken heat enclosed his throbbing shaft. He slipped his hands under the curve of Eddie's ass and leaned back, lifting Eddie onto his lap. Eddie wrapped his arms around Joshua's neck and sank farther down, impaling himself to the hilt on Joshua's hard-as-steel cock. Together, smiling into each other's eyes, they began a slow, steady and sensuous rhythm, Eddie pressing down to meet his lover's powerful upward thrusts. For both of them, this union was different from those that had pleased them before, for now they intuitively shared myriad

sensations that coursed through them as if they were one being. Now, the physicality of their coupling was compounded by the connection of their minds brought about by the fusion of their blood. Nothing was hidden from either man—the love and lust they felt for one another was evident, not only in their passionate kisses and caresses, but in the tender thoughts of adoration they shared. For Eddie this was a wonderment scarcely to be believed. Not only was the man he loved holding him, fucking him with a fervour few beings would ever experience, he knew without a doubt that every overwhelming emotion he felt so ardently was echoed in his lover's thoughts.

"I love you," he whispered as his breath caught in his chest, his impending orgasm rendering him almost speechless.

Joshua caught Eddie's lips in a searing kiss as the movement of his hips and pelvis quickened, driving himself into Eddie with such force that he cried out—a long visceral cry of utter pleasure. His body arched in ecstasy as he climaxed, long streams of semen spraying across Joshua's chest, his sphincter muscles clenching around Joshua's hard flesh.

"Eddie, oh Eddie, my love..." Joshua pulled the young vampire into his embrace as he came, his hot seed scalding Eddie's insides with the intensity of his orgasm. They clung to one another, their bodies shuddering in the aftermath of their lovemaking, leaving them spent and breathless in each other's arms.

Gently, Joshua pushed Eddie onto his back and lay over him. Their lips touched, the feral glint in Joshua's eyes replaced with a loving warmth. For the first time since he'd been changed those fifteen years ago, Joshua felt complete. Here, at last, was the man who would join him on life's journey, however long or short it might be.

Epilogue

Halloween, one year later

Sam Peterson looked around the crowded room with some satisfaction. His invitations to 'everybody who was anybody' had, for the most part, been accepted, and the recipients had actually shown up. There were one or two notable absentees, but 'screw 'em' had been Sam's reaction. Who needed Spielberg anyway?

It had been a strange year in some ways since last Halloween, he reflected. His much publicised affair with Debbie Monroe had been a bust. *What a bitch she'd turned out to be*, he thought grimly. Then there had been that night when the cops had picked him up wandering in a daze down Sunset Boulevard. He still couldn't remember what the heck he'd been doing there. They'd tested him for booze and drugs, but that had come up negative. Fortunately, there had not been a repeat episode, and his doctor had told him he was in great shape.

He caught a glimpse of himself in one of the many full-length mirrors built into the wall of the living room and thought he looked damned fine in his gladiator costume.

"Yep, you're in great shape all right," he remarked to his reflection.

For some reason, and he just couldn't quite figure it out, he'd felt the need to ban vampire costumes from the party. *No Vampires!* he'd added under the date, time and place on the invitations. Funny that. Grabbing a drink from a passing waiter, he ambled over to chat with some guests.

"Sam!" one fat and balding guest, also dressed as a gladiator, called out.

A bad choice, Sam thought smugly, as he grinned and joined the group.

"So, no lady friend tonight?" the fat man asked. *What the hell was the guy's name?*

"No need," Sam joked.

"Oh, right..." There was the trace of a sneer in the fat man's words. "Sam the Man can have his pick of the chicks. Least, that's how it used to be, I hear."

Who the hell is this asshole?

"Still is, my friend," Sam said, blandly, looking out through the French doors. "Still is. Excuse me."

He wandered out onto the veranda, enjoying the feel of the cool night air on his bare arms and legs. "Hey guys," he greeted the two men standing by the veranda railing with a wave of his hand. "Enjoying the view?"

The two men turned to face him, and Sam was momentarily startled by their pale ethereal beauty. One, blond and slender, wore angel wings. *Pretty impressive*, Sam thought. *Looks familiar...where do I know him from?* The other, tall and darkly handsome, dressed completely in black also stirred some latent memory in Sam's mind.

The two men smiled at him. "Hello Sam," the blond man said.

Man, he's really cute. If I wasn't straight, I'd go for that. Sam coughed, pushing that particular thought to the back of his mind.

"We've met?" Sam asked.

"A long time ago. I'm Eddie, and this is my lover, Joshua."

"Oh, great...you guys are together. Cool..."

"So, how's it going for you these days, Samuel?" Joshua asked.

"Samuel?" Sam gave a half laugh. "Nobody calls me that anymore." What was he talking about? No one had *ever* called him that—except... But he couldn't remember who. "Anyway, keeping busy you know. Couple of movies coming up." He wasn't about to tell these gay guys that things hadn't been so good for him of late. *Lost his lustre* one tabloid had recently said of him, while another had meanly poked at his acting ability or *lack of same*. That had hurt.

"That's good," Eddie said, smiling, the moonlight glinting on his fangs.

Sam laughed. "Oh, that's great! An angel with fangs. Cool idea!"

"I thought so, too," Eddie said. "Well, you did say, 'No Vampires'." He turned to Joshua. "Time to go?"

"Ready when you are." The two men clasped hands, Eddie's wings spread out majestically over his shoulders, then, in front of Sam's slack-jawed stare, they both rose gracefully into the air, hovering over him for a few seconds before flying off into the night.

A few minutes later, some of the guests strolled out onto the veranda and found their host passed out on the tile. When Sam came to, his guests were startled to hear him babbling

about a gay angel and a man in black, and them both being able to fly. After a lot of head shaking and rolling of eyes, they left him slumped on a chair, staring out into the darkness of the Halloween night.

About the Author

J.P. Bowie was born in Scotland and toured British theatres in numerous musical shows including Stephen Sondheim's Company.

Emigrated to the States and worked in Las Vegas, Nevada for the magicians Siegfried and Roy as their Head of Wardrobe at the Mirage Hotel. Currently living in Henderson, Nevada.

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