

StarCrossed

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Angel Tears



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StarCrossed 3½

Angel Tears

by Reno MacLeod & Jaye Valentine

Sariel was glad to see that Marlene had been wrong. Not only had all her friends and family come for her this afternoon, but they'd also shown up despite the bitter cold rain that fell. They were gathered around her, comforting one another, talking about how much things would change now. A few spoke of good times they'd shared. Most wished they'd been able to do something. Her father left three white roses on the lid of Marlene's casket before breaking down—the man who never shed a tear. They all felt responsible.

But none felt more responsible than the angel who'd been Marlene's guardian.

From underneath a willow tree, Sariel watched the funeral from a distance. He let one drooping shoulder rest against the comforting solidness of the ancient tree trunk and told himself he'd done all he could. Ultimately, humans were fragile things and masters of their own destiny. Marlene's drug addiction and constant cycles of depression had been too much for even the guiding words of an angel to fix. In the end, Sariel wasn't even sure Marlene believed in him anymore.

The priest stepped forward to conclude the interment, giving thanks to those who had come and wishing them all safe journeys in their own lives. None present except Sariel saw the soft golden light that passed slowly through the crowd. No one except him could hear the soft whispers of apology. As the gathered began to disperse, the ball of energy that was Marlene's soul slowly drifted skyward. Sariel stayed

until he could no longer see her, then tugged up the collar of his duster and turned to leave.

* * * *

John Banks had slept better the previous night than he had in the past twenty years. He'd sent his younger brother Matthew off on a wild goose chase in a nearby town. John had given Matthew the keys to the old Chevy pickup truck along with cash to secure the supplies they needed and more than enough left over for a room and several meals. He'd purposefully made the list of supplies long and complex, with explicit instructions that no more than one or two items were to be purchased from any one store.

Matthew had taken off just after dusk the night before. With Matthew's limited schooling and without John there to answer questions, John had known he wouldn't be seeing Matthew for at least twenty-four hours, if not more.

With Matthew out of the way for at least a whole blessed day, John had splurged. He'd gone to a fancy restaurant and had himself a nice surf-and-turf dinner. He'd bought himself an expensive suit to wear and paid extra to have it tailored on the spot. Best of all, he'd gotten himself a decent place to sleep for a change. More than decent. Compared to the places they usually stayed, this one was damn near palatial.

He'd found a cute little house on the water, with a sign stuck in the lawn that said 'Available for Weekly Rentals' along with a local phone number. John had acquired it as soon as he'd seen the obituary in the paper for one Marlene Catherine Watson. He'd met the owner of the house at a café on Essex Street and had paid for a full two weeks, citing local business and a need for someplace homey to stay. John had no intention of

using the place past sunrise tomorrow if this funeral turned out to be the one he'd been waiting for and things went according to plan. He hoped so. He was so fucking close this time, and he was getting damn tired of waiting.

John leaned against the trunk of a tree, close enough to the funeral party to look like he was part of it, but far enough away that he wouldn't be mistaken for family. He'd cast a few glances in the direction of the mourners, but mostly he'd watched the man with the long blond hair in the weathered, brown leather duster.

The priest said, "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord." John rolled his eyes. The mourners began their slow, depressing amble to their cars. The blond was coming toward him.

John kept his somber facial expression intact, but he was smiling broadly inside. No wonder the demon now known as Jace Barton had a hard-on for angel boys.

* * * *

Sariel paused by the gravesite, his hands tucked into the deep pockets of his duster. Nearly everyone else had gone by then save for one man standing off to the side, watching. Sariel felt the human's eyes on him and looked up. "Friend?"

The man ran the fingers of his left hand through short-cropped dirty-blond hair, pushed away from the tree, and extended his right hand, all with the slow and unsure movements of the newly bereaved. "John Lerner," he said. "Pastor John Lerner."

"Pastor?" Sariel smiled and extended his own hand. "I'm Simon," he added, not quite sure of his new companion. His real name could bring a raised eyebrow to the devout. "Did you know Marlene? I thought I

knew most of her closer friends and family, but your face is unfamiliar to me."

John's handshake was firm but gentle. "No, I'm new in town. I'm going to be the new assistant to Pastor Gary Carlson over at the New Salem Evangelical Church. Marlene's mother used to be a member there before she converted to Catholicism. Pastor Carlson was discussin' the family and the girl's unfortunate passing over dinner and prayers last night. Sadly, a sickly member of his congregation was in need of ministering this morning. I'm here to offer my respects to the dead in Pastor Carlson's name while he tends to the livin'."

"A kind thing to do. Could I invite you to get some coffee?" Sariel turned his gaze briefly skyward. "It looks like the heavens might open up at any moment and mourn for Marlene itself. There's a place right down the street that makes the most—pardon my phrasing—sinful cinnamon rolls. Perfect with a cup of soul-warming coffee."

"That sounds like a mighty fine idea." John's smile was warm and pleasant, and he gestured toward the access road. "That's my green Explorer over near the front gate. Are you parked nearby, or would you like to ride with me?"

Angels had very little need of cars, and Sariel's nature didn't allow him to have things in his possession just for the thrill of having. He walked or flew or simply materialized wherever he needed to be, and he knew enough people who owned cars that if one were necessary they were at his disposal. Had the weather been better, Sariel would have insisted on walking, but John seemed quite eager to get somewhere sheltered. "I'll ride with you."

As the family and friends of Marlene Watson pulled their cars away from the cemetery, John walked

beside Sariel silently until they reached the green SUV. "It's unlocked," John said as he walked to the driver's side. "Hop right on in."

"Nice ride. I like the color." Sariel slipped into the front passenger seat and buckled up just as the skies opened up and rain hit the windshield in quarter-sized droplets.

"Thanks. I'm kind of fond of it myself." John started the engine, flipped on the lights and the windshield wipers, and pulled the car onto the gravel road. The last of the few remaining mourners had already pulled out onto the main street. The SUV sat still at the gate, John looking both ways before finally pulling out. He made a right-hand turn—heading in the opposite direction of the coffee shop. The sound of the car doors automatically locking interrupted the patter of rain on the roof.

John's eyes slid to Sariel along with a smile that didn't look so pleasant as before. "Sorry," John said. "Not much of a cinnamon roll fan, and my soul's in no need of warming."

Surprised, it took a moment for Sariel to comprehend the situation. The space between his shoulder blades began to tingle with warning. "Did I miss something? John, maybe you should just pull over and I'll be on my way."

"I don't think so, *Sariel*." John's eyes flicked up to check the rear-view mirror, and then re-focused on the road. "And before you think about pullin' any sort of hocus pocus, I got three words for you: Detective Samantha Wright."

Sariel's face fell. Sam was another of the angel's wards, and had become a favorite of Sariel's. More than that, though he'd not gotten up the gumption to admit it to her yet. "I'm guessing you're no preacher. What do you want, John? And how does Sam figure into this?"

John chuckled, turning the wheel. The car headed toward Palmer Cove. "Let's just say she's my insurance policy. I need you to do a little favor for me, and she's my guarantee you will." The rain started falling heavily in windblown, sideways sheets. John turned a knob on the steering column and the windshield wipers sped up. "Unless, of course, you don't mind dealing with the psychological aftereffects of your little sweetie being ravaged by a crazy, sex-starved incubus."

"Who *are* you?" Sariel focused on John, trying to catch the man's eyes with his own. Windows to the soul wasn't merely a metaphor where angels were concerned. With one good look, Sariel would be able to tell John's entire life story. Unfortunately, John must have known that and wasn't being terribly cooperative. "Since you know what I am, you know messing around with an angel is unwise."

"Ask me if I give a fuck." Tires squealed, and the car skidded as John turned the wheel sharply to guide them into a driveway next to a big Victorian-style house. He shut off the engine and extracted the keys from the Explorer's ignition, but kept his gaze straight ahead as he spoke. "My name is John Banks. A friend of yours caused my family and me a considerable amount of grief some years ago. He owes me, and I need *you* to get to him." John finally turned and looked dead into Sariel's eyes. "Does the name Jace Barton ring a bell?"

John Banks. Sariel knew that name, and he didn't like where this was headed. As John turned to face him, Sariel got the full force of anger behind John's memories. Sariel turned away, the images too horrible for him to face after the exhausting past few days with Marlene. He dug his fingernails into the door's armrest. "I'm not going to get Jace Barton for you, John. He's

grown up. Civilized, now. You should go back to South Dakota."

"Civilized?" John smiled and snorted. "I doubt it. And you don't have to get him: he's going to come to you. And if it doesn't work out..." John shrugged. "Well, then your baby girl Sammy is going to have herself one hell of a fuckin' ride with my hungry little friend from New Orleans." John's tongue traced the curve of his upper lip slowly. "She'll like him." John chuckled, the sound dark. "He's almost as pretty as you are, and I hear the ladies really like that freezing-cold dick of his once they get used to it a few times." The locks popped open on the doors. "Now, get the fuck out of the car. Follow me into the house without makin' a fuss, and we'll talk about how we can come to a mutually satisfyin' conclusion to this messy little predicament."

Having failed Marlene, the very idea of failing Sam made Sariel feel sick. He swallowed and stepped out of the car. As he followed obediently behind John, Sariel thought, *Jace Barton can take care of himself. He's a demon, after all. A demon with a family that cares for him. A demon that could probably take off John's head without batting an eyelash.*

As soon as they were inside the house, Sariel stopped. "Promise me you'll leave Sam alone."

John closed and locked the door. "Jace would never come to me willingly, so I have no choice but to summon him." John slid out of his raincoat and suit jacket, hanging them neatly on a coat tree by the door. In the dreary gray light that barely penetrated the curtains, John turned to face Sariel, casually loosening the perfect Windsor knot in his tie. A smile just this side of evil spread across John's otherwise handsome face. "I needed somethin' he covets. Congratulations: you're the grand prize chosen especially for him." The

tie slid from under John collar with a whirl of fabric-on-fabric friction before it hit the floor. "Let me see the wings."

Sariel rolled his eyes. "A summoning? You expect me to believe you know how to summon a demon? You realize the danger? That if you get it wrong, whatever you call will eat you?" Sariel had known of countless mortals who had thought themselves strong enough to perform a summons. Very few ever succeeded. The angel started to feel a bit less stressed. He chose to ignore John's request.

With another chuckle, John crossed the living room, unbuttoning his dress shirt as he headed toward a flight of stairs. "If you'd like to meet my incubus friend, I'll be more than obliged to summon him up for you lickity-split as proof." John paused a few steps up and turned around. "Maybe you'd even like to test drive that incredible frozen spike of his before he takes your girlfriend for a tumble." He started up the stairs again. "I know what I'm doin'. I've been summonin' demons since little Sammy Wright was in pigtails and saddle shoes. But if you'd rather see her defiled, well...that can be arranged."

When John reached the top of the staircase and disappeared from view, Sariel closed his eyes and rubbed his hand down his face. He could leave. The door was right there, unlocked. Unfortunately, that quick look into John's fractured mind had given Sariel enough of a glimpse into John's past to know the man wasn't joking. Sariel had seen Jace and Konnor as young demons, but he'd also caught sight of other more recent events. He couldn't be sure, but he thought he might have even seen the incubus of whom John spoke.

As Sariel mounted the staircase, each step up felt as if his feet were encased in concrete. At the top landing, he had a horrible urge to flee. The wickedness

in the very air felt thick enough to choke.

The sound of water running in a sink came from the end of the hall. John's voice spoke over it. "If you're still here and listening—and I'm betting you are—the second door to the left is my favorite room in the house. Big, comfy bed, and there's a nice bottle of Cuervo Gold and two glasses sittin' on the nightstand." Sariel could hear John's deep, dark chuckle over the splash of water. "Rumor has it you've got a little weakness for decent tequila."

"You know an awful lot about me, John. Who's your informant?" Sariel moved toward the bedroom and peered in. The tequila was there, as promised. Sariel shook his head. Jace would be laughing if he knew. Resigned to do as John asked, at least for now, Sariel slipped out of his duster and laid it over the back of a chair, then wandered toward the liquor. A bit of Dutch courage couldn't hurt.

The water shut off with a creaking and groaning of pipes inside the walls of the old house. John appeared in the bedroom doorway moments later, drying his face with a small towel. He was still clothed from the waist down, though he was barefoot now. "I'll have one of those while you're pourin'." John tossed the towel on a dresser by the door and leaned back against the wall, arms folded across his bare chest. "You cooperate and no harm will come to your girl. I give you my word, and I know you can look in my eyes to see if I'm tellin' the truth." John's eyes met Sariel's straight on.

"I'd rather not. One look was enough." Sariel poured a second drink and left it for John. He'd cooperate, but he wasn't happy about it, and he wasn't giving John any more than he had to.

John pushed off the wall and leisurely crossed the room, coming to a stop in front of Sariel. Standing

that close, Sariel had to tilt his head back to look up at John's face; Banks had him by a good six inches. John's gaze lowered to look down at him. That treacherous smile returned. "Cooperation, Sariel. Hand me the glass."

It wasn't the first time that Sariel cursed his lack of height. John's was intimidating and Sariel's wings fluffed. Slowly, he picked up the glass, and after a quick thought of dumping it down John's pants he handed it over.

John clinked his glass lightly against Sariel's, and he downed the booze in one swallow. He set the glass on the nightstand and poured himself another. "This doesn't have to be entirely unpleasant." John's other hand skimmed lightly over Sariel's cheek, and then John fingered a long, thick lock of Sariel's hair. He took another small sip of tequila. "The wings. Let me see 'em."

Sariel had stood perfectly still against John's touch, but he snapped his wings out and nearly knocked John over at the request. The wings were full, glorious, the color of white eggshells. The tips brushed either side of the bedroom. Sariel snorted with disgust. "You have no idea what sort of Pandora's Box you've opened, boy."

"Really," John said, righting himself, and once it looked like he'd reclaimed his balance he downed the rest of his drink. The glass shattered into splinters when he threw it hard against the wall. His eyes roamed Sariel's wings, and then he reached out to stroke one of them with the palm of his hand. The expression on John's face went immediately from angered to awestruck. "Sweet merciful Jesus." John's eyes fluttered closed for a split second. He licked his lips. "Never felt anything that soft. No wonder the demon covets such a thing." John's palm stroked over Sariel's feathers as if

he were petting a cat.

Sariel shivered. Everything about John was predatory. Sariel couldn't begin to imagine what sort of evil the man had done in other places, but he knew that before this was over John had to be put down. The touches were gentle enough, but the look forming on John's face worried Sariel. Few could resist the perfection of a displaying angel, especially those with dark souls. "John, let me go."

John's eyes were on his own hand as it caressed Sariel's wing, but at Sariel's words his gaze returned to Sariel's face. He picked up the tequila bottle, moving as if in slow motion, and he started walking backward, fingers clutching the neck of the bottle, a small nerve near one eye visibly twitching. John's voice sounded dull and quiet when he spoke. "I'll let you go after I've brought the demon to me. Tomorrow morning." John's back hit the wall. The bottle went to his lips.

"You're troubled; I can see that. I'm sure that living the life you've had left some pretty deep wounds inside." Sariel moved toward John, his wings lowering and hands out before him. It was time for another approach. John was damaged goods, that much was obvious, but perhaps he could be healed. "Why don't you talk to me about it? Let some of that boiling anger come to the surface. Maybe I can take it away."

John smirked. "I don't think you really want me to do that." He took another belt of the tequila then lowered the bottle, wiping his mouth with his forearm. "Because the only thing I can think of right now that's going to stop me from boiling over is to slam your pretty little self face down on that bed and fuck you until you can't see." John slid down the wall until he was seated on the floor. Tortured blue eyes, red-rimmed and glistening wet, looked up at Sariel. "But I can't, because you *are* an angel and I'm not that far gone. Not

yet." The bottle hung limply from his hand and John's gaze dropped to the floor. "Not yet."

Sariel dropped to his knees beside John, powerless against a bleeding soul. Not everyone was assigned an angel at birth; there simply weren't enough winged watchers to go around. Sariel could see that John had been one of those to slip through the cracks, and the angel felt a twinge of guilt.

"John, let me help you. I know your childhood was terrible, but if you let me I can help guide you past all that." Sariel reached out, fingers lightly touching John's tear-streaked face. "Let me heal you."

John neither flinched away from nor leaned into Sariel's touch. He simply sat there like stone against the wall, looking numb and defeated, holding onto that half-empty bottle like it was his last friend in the world. "Why weren't you there? Any of you?" John dragged the back of one hand under his eyes. "I can't tell you how many kids in that place were abused. Physically. Emotionally." John let out a long, shuddering sigh. "Sexually." He looked away from Sariel, a shameful blush coloring his cheeks. "I was seven years old the first time it happened. To teach me a lesson because I touched a girl improperly in the classroom." John breathed out again, his lips tightening up in a hard, angry pinch. "She bumped her knee on her desk and started to cry, and I gave her a hug." His eyes lifted again, fury blazing behind them. "You want to heal me? *Fuck* you. *Fuck* you, fuck your mercy, and fuck your absentee God."

Sariel clenched his jaw in frustration. "I'm sorry. I wish one of us had been there. There are places so dark, so evil that even we cannot enter. I can't begin to tell you how many of those places are supposed to be places of devout worship. Somehow, something breaks down. Ideals that were once holy become twisted."

John still seethed. Sariel moved closer, closed his eyes in concentration, and laid his hand over John's chest. Warmth flowed from his fingertips the moment they touched John's bare skin.

John's chest rose and fell rhythmically under Sariel's hand, and rough fingers closed with surprising gentleness around Sariel's wrist. "It's too late; there's nothing left in there to save." Lowering his face, John sniffed at Sariel's forearm, brushing his nose against it. "God, you smell so good. New, and...incorrupt." John's head dropped back against the wall hard. "I promise I won't hurt your lady friend, and I promise you'll be let go as soon as the demon has been delivered to me. That's as good as it gets. I'm sorry, Sariel. Maybe you'd better get some sleep. You can have the bed.

* * * *

John remained on the floor, his back to the wall with the bottle of tequila in hand. He drank from it slowly, taking care to be quiet so as not to wake the presumably sleeping angel. Sariel had crawled into bed without too much protest and, after a fair amount of shifting around and tossing and turning, finally settled in. Sariel hadn't moved since then, and John sat quietly, sipping at the booze as the angel's breathing became slow and regular. John couldn't tell if Sariel was asleep or not since Sariel's back was to him. It must be hard to find a comfortable position to sleep in with the wings, John surmised, stowed away or not. He really wasn't sure how that worked.

When all had been quiet for what John estimated to be well over an hour, he decided it was probably a good idea to grab some shut-eye himself. The morning would arrive before he knew it, along with Matthew and what John knew would be a tiring, stress-

filled day. With one last swig of tequila, he finally parted company with the bottle and set it quietly down on the floor.

He rose to his feet as noiselessly as he could, and then slowly got undressed. He left his trousers and briefs on the floor next to the bottle and carefully crossed the floor, walking easily to try to keep the house's old floorboards from creaking underfoot.

John stood bedside, tilting his head to listen for the sound of Sariel's breathing. In the otherwise dead calm of the night, it came soft and deep and rhythmic. He took the corner of the coverlet between his fingers, lifting just enough to allow him to quickly slip underneath. John lay on his side, spooning up behind Sariel, and he sighed into Sariel's soft hair.

For all John knew, the coming sunrise would be the last one he'd ever see, and he'd be damned if he was sleeping alone tonight.

* * * *

Sariel's dreams were John's. Angels—like many supernatural creatures—didn't dream. They could, however, have premonitions or skim images off another's dreams. With John pressed close against his back, Sariel had a front row seat to John's most terrible nightmares. His wings fluttered restlessly against John's chest and thighs as the worst of it came to fruition, with John seeing images of his father raging over the loss of the demon twins. Sariel felt everything as John the boy was bent over the kitchen table, his father reaching for the switch and demanding John drop his trousers. Sariel awoke, eyes wide, with the first searing snap against his skin.

Confused, Sariel looked around. There were arms about his waist, holding him tight. Memories of

the past hours came slowly drifting back. He felt John jolt awake behind him with one of those sudden, full-body jerks that humans had when they were yanked too quickly from REM sleep. John's breath was warm and rapid against the sensitive skin between his shoulders. The arms around Sariel's waist drew into a tighter embrace.

"Please, don't get up." The voice was softly muffled, and Sariel could feel John's lips move against his back. "I promise, I won't hurt you. I..." A humid sigh drifted over Sariel's flesh. "I just need somethin' to hold tonight."

Still concerned for Sam and Jace, Sariel let his body relax slowly into John's. He could feel that John was nude against him and had the slight beginnings of an erection. "You're frightened, John, and you should be. Calling a demon is risky business. I *know* Jace. Earthborn or not, he's truly hell's spawn when he's pissed off."

"Save your breath." John shifted slightly, his hips rolling forward, his erection firming quickly and pressing against Sariel's ass. "You're not going to talk me out of it, so just stop your tryin'." A soft moan reached Sariel's ears as John's hips rocked forward again. Sariel felt one of John's hands on his wing, fingers gently fondling, while John's other hand slid lower down on Sariel's belly. "I just want to hold you, to feel somethin' nice and good and pure under my hands for once in my goddamn life. Is that really so much for one of the forsaken to ask?"

"Technically? Yes. But...I'll agree to it for now." Sariel sighed and stared toward the window across the room. The sun wasn't up yet, but he could see pink and lavender fingers stretching across the sky. John's slow rutting was a bit disturbing. Not because of the sex itself—Sariel had learned many years ago that sex

didn't cause an angel to fall so long as the angel wasn't forcing it on another. It was just one more little white lie told to keep angels in line. Sariel smirked. There were days when he wondered if his very purpose in life was a fabrication as well. The longer he lived, the more Sariel found his own life wasn't so different from the mortals he played shepherd over. "Your brother is inherently good, John, and yet you shove him away. Why? He's suffered as much as you have."

"Fuck you, angel. You're no different than they are, just a prettier package." The sound of John's voice had dropped in timbre and tone. "You just don't know when to shut up and leave well enough alone." The hand on Sariel's wing moved higher, gripped tighter, fingernails digging into skin between feathers as John grasped hard at the base and held on. John's other hand drifted lower still, popping the top snap on Sariel's jeans and sliding under to stroke Sariel's genitals through barely-there bikinis. John's voice became a growl. "I told you this could be nice. Don't make me hurt you."

The grip on his wing sent alarm through Sariel. Sex wouldn't make an angel fall, but wings torn from his body would. Sariel gasped lightly at the first touch of John's fingers and stupidly bucked backward against John's rock-hard dick. "I'll be quiet. John, please don't do this. We can lie here together. I'll hold you—" Sariel took a chance, hoping the lies told to God's followers had reached John's ears as well. "You can't defile me—a fallen angel won't bring you Jace."

John's voice came out as a rasping snarl. "You think I don't know the fucking rules?" Sariel's wing-root twisted sharply; hollow bones were a necessity for flight but they really weren't terribly sturdy. John's hand palmed him firmly through his underwear, and John's mouth pressed against his ear, tongue snaking out to

take a lick. "I also know you've got a built-in mechanism to sacrifice yourself before allowing harm to befall others." John chuckled and nibbled Sariel's ear. "And I *know* you're not the only angel in town. You, I've got no intention of fucking. I just want to dirty you up a little before I use you for bait. The others...well, I guess that's up to you now."

Sariel's scream drowned out his answer as fragile wing bones splintered. Tears stung Sariel's eyes. "Stop! Please, God, please stop! I'd let you do it!" Sweat broke out along Sariel's shoulders and down his chest.

"Blood looks nice on these pretty, white feathers." John's tongue swabbed a spot at the root of Sariel's wing. "Tastes so sweet." The hand down Sariel's jeans grabbed roughly at him through the bikinis. "Get yourself naked, or I rip the fucking wing off and make you look like one of those deformed demon freak friends of yours."

Sariel moved quickly, in silence. Modest even in the face of what was about to happen, he kept his back to John as he shucked off his jeans under the covers and dropped them to the floor. Black bikini underwear followed. He turned around for John's inspection, face warming with shame.

John licked the remaining blood from his lips, and his hand dropped back under the covers. A smile spread across John's face as Sariel felt those thick fingers stroke his flaccid length. "Uncut. What a nice treat." John gave Sariel's cock a smooth, upward tug, fingers and thumb pinching the tip of the foreskin closed and rolling it around.

Sariel cried out, the foreign touch seeming to burn. It had been several turns of season since Sariel had lain with another. He kept telling himself it wasn't because the desire for anyone but Sam had withered.

"Angels have little need for circumcision."

"I have little need for much else right now than you gettin' hard in my hand." John's lips grazed Sariel's with just the slightest hint of tongue. "Let yourself go, and this'll all be over quickly." The firm, hot head of John's hard cock poked against Sariel's belly.

Sariel's mouth stayed closed, but he felt himself tremble against John's persistent urging. The heat between them rose, and Sariel recognized a hunger in John that went beyond what was typical of humans. Something fueled by desperation. Anger. Hurt. "All right, John. Maybe you're right. I'll be good."

Moaning, John made a soft grunting sound, and Sariel found himself flipped over onto his back with John lewdly straddling his knees. John fisted his own erection with one hand, his other expertly coaxing Sariel's cock toward a similar goal. "Want to see you give it up for me, angel. Want to see the look on your face when I make you come all over your own belly."

Sariel's cheeks felt blazing hot, and his hips lifted upward into the stimulating caresses. Turning his head to one side, Sariel whimpered. But it was too late; his cock had already twitched. Dirty talk worked on him the way it did on most any one. Jace had figured that out long before John.

The result hadn't been lost on John. That feral smile returned. The pliant skin slid along Sariel's hardening shaft under John's nimble fingers. A thumb swiped at the moist head of Sariel's cock when it peeked out from the end of his sheath.

"Well, will you look at that," John said. "Maybe the pious and pure nature of angels has been a little overstated." John's fist on his own cock sped up and looked a bit rougher, and the smile on his face widened. The madness behind those bright blue eyes shone with an inner, insatiable lust, and his voice lowered to a

seductive whisper. "How about I dirty up that pretty little face of yours, Sariel?"

"If it'll make you happy, disgusting cur." Sariel twisted underneath John's weight. His cock grew thicker, harder by the second. "What would your mother think if she saw you now?"

"What the fuck do I care?" John's grip strengthened, drawing the tightening skin over the head of Sariel's hard dick with every upward, maddening stroke. "She stood by like the pious preacher's wife, in her fancy house, in her fancy clothes, drinking her fancy, imported liquor. She stood by and watched it all happen and *she did nothing*." John's hands skimmed harder over Sariel's cock and his own. "My brother doesn't know the truth, but I do. Bitch. I hope she's burnin' in hell right next to the old man. *Fuck...*"

The strokes bordered on painful, and Sariel hissed between clenched teeth and laid one hand over John's. "Easy...you'll pull it straight off at this rate." Dropping his head back to the pillows, Sariel regarded John with careful intent. As a boy, John had suffered. Everything happening now was a direct result of that. "This isn't your fault. I'm sorry they hurt you so badly. Those still alive who were involved will have their day of judgment. Those passed on, I'm sure have already had theirs." A confident, knowing hand slipped around John's erection and gave a gentle tug.

John gasped, and he teetered on his knees as if he'd suddenly been rocked off balance. He leaned forward, the hand that had been replaced by Sariel's on his cock pressing to the mattress for support. John's intense stroking eased up on Sariel's cock under Sariel's guiding hand. They fell into a silent, synergistic rhythm. "And lo," John said in a hushed voice, "the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone 'round them and they were surely afraid."

John's body shivered over Sariel, breath stuttering out, hand quickening. His eyes held Sariel's in a rapturous gaze.

Sariel moaned as he rocked his groin against John's hand. He let himself fall into the rhythm. The pain of pressure on the fractured wing was nearly unbearable, but he knew to complain would prolong the agony. He needed to please John and get the angry man to expel his lust as quickly as possible. "John, if it would please you, I've heard others say the taste of an angel is unlike any other. And I...I need help."

It was like throwing gasoline onto an open, blazing fire. John couldn't seem to move quickly enough. His hand still stripping his own cock for all he was worth, John scooted backward, his heavy balls grazing Sariel's shins as John took Sariel into his mouth.

The counteraction was instantaneous. Sariel's hips lurched upward, nearly stabbing John's soft palate with his cock before sliding down the back of John's throat. Back arched, Sariel tossed his head side-to-side against the pillow, eyes closed as he did his best to let go. He felt something graze the tight ring of his hole but back away before invading. Sariel shivered. His thighs trembled. His hands fell into John's hair.

The flat of John's tongue ran the length of Sariel's dick, up the underside from balls to tip. A thick dollop of precome bubbled at the slit. John licked it up. "Better than a stale old wafer on the tongue," John said, and then he stuck his tongue out as if to show Sariel his own offering. John swallowed; his tongue slowly cleaned his lips. "Pour your grace into me, angel. Fill me up." And then his mouth was on Sariel again, wet and slick and hot.

Sariel closed his eyes and imagined another place, another time, another mouth. The pace of his

rocking hips increased, as did his sighs and moans. To John's credit, the man was skilled with tongue and lips, and Sariel didn't have to fantasize much before he was panting like a dog and balancing on the edge of orgasm. "Coming...*fuck!* John!" Sariel tossed back his head, mouth open wide with a silent scream as he gave John everything all at once.

The sound of John moaning around Sariel's cock and swallowing to keep up was clearly audible, and once Sariel's ejaculation ceased John moved forward to straddle Sariel's hips. Come dribbled down John's chin from the corners of his mouth, and John's hand flew over his cock in a masturbatory blur. John leaned forward, supporting his weight with one hand on the wall behind them. Blue eyes closed to half-lidded slits looked down at Sariel as if peering through a drug-induced haze. "Open your mouth."

Horror filled Sariel. It was one thing to let a human taste him, but quite another to taste back. Sariel's jaw clamped tight and he shook his head.

"It's a long hard fall, angel," John snarled, face contorting into a painful mask of mixed-up agony and ecstasy. The first shot of semen landed sticky and wet on Sariel's neck, just as John's supporting hand slipped from the wall to latch onto the base of Sariel's good wing. A sound like twigs snapping echoed off plaster walls.

Sariel screamed and took the rest on his tongue. It was salty and hot, the consistency too slippery to cast out before it had slipped down his throat. Choking, Sariel felt John's remaining seed coat the left side of his face. Sariel went limp and silent.

"Fuck." John looked down at his hands, one covered in his own spunk, the other in Sariel's bright red blood. A look of bitter anguish crossed his face, a shimmer of sorrow underlying. "What have I..." A

choked sob sputtered off his lips, and without meeting Sariel's eyes again, John crawled off and got up from the bed. He snatched his clothes and the bottle from the floor, and the door slammed loudly behind him when he left the room. The door locked with a click.

Sariel lay unmoving, listening to the horrible sobs floating up from downstairs until the sun rose. Even without the threat John had made against Sam, Sariel would have remained. He couldn't afford to let John out of his sight. People like John and Matthew Banks should have never been left alone in the first place. Sariel closed his eyes and softly wept.

The End

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Reno MacLeod and Jaye Valentine are currently based in a small New England town famous for producing bungee cords and a notorious ax murderess. Together they write gay urban fantasy, horror, and sci-fi novels that are not for the faint of heart. They have also written a BDSM-themed contemporary novel, *Soft Focus*, with plans to write a sequel.

Reno and Jaye enjoy the company of their cats and fish, and spend far too much time watching competitive reality shows, particularly those revolving around models and fashion. You can stop laughing at any time.

Visit <http://jaye-valentine.livejournal.com> for more information on Jaye and Reno's backlist, works-in-progress, and upcoming new releases.

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