



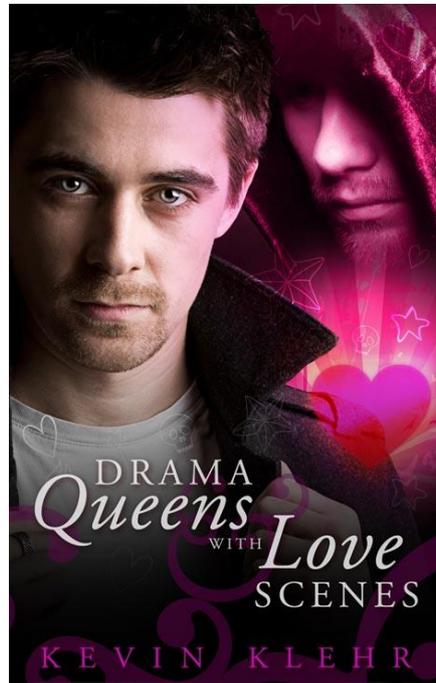
WRITING SAMPLER
Kevin Klehr

Drama Queens with Love Scenes (Book One):

Close friends Allan and Warwick are dead. They're not crazy about the idea so to help them deal with this dilemma are Samantha, a blond bombshell from the 1950s, and Guy, an insecure angel.

Allan also has a secret. He has a romantic crush on his friend, Warwick, but shortly after confiding in his new angel pal, his love interest falls for the cock-sure playwright, Pedro.

Not only does Allan have to win the heart of his companion, he also has to grapple with the faded memory of how he actually died.



Excerpt from *Drama Queens with Love Scenes (Book One):*

Guy was still dragging me along the streets of the Limelight Quarter. The crisp night air was reviving my spirits, albeit through my drunken stupor. Many colorful folk whisked past, some briefly staring at us as they made their way.

"You realize Pedro will be there," I said.

"That's why we're going to call Warwick to come downstairs. You need to talk privately."

We arrived outside of their balcony. I rubbed my arms to keep warm as Guy placed his hand on my shoulder.

"Warwick!" I yelled. "Are you there?"

There was no answer. A couple adorned in bohemian black, stopped in their tracks the moment I shouted to my ex-lover.

"Broken heart," whispered Guy to the interested onlookers.

"I understand," replied the woman. She looked up to her man. "Poor thing."

"Go on, Allan, call out again."

"Warwick! Warwick! I love you." My voice echoed from the building as I looked to my angel friend. He nodded and caressed my shoulder. The couple nodded as well. "Warwick, are you home? I need to talk to you. Will you come down, please?"

"Keep going, Allan."

"I really need to talk to you. I have so much more to say to you. I should never have let you walk out of my door the other night. I've wanted to talk to you so many times during the last few days, but there's nowhere private at the theater. Plus I'd probably break down, which is not a good look when you're wearing white grease paint."

A few onlookers came out from their balconies. I glanced at Guy who was joined by a small audience. Some parents had let their kids stay up well after bedtime, and their freckled little girl was giggling at me. Her mother shushed her so she sat on the ground, sulking.

"Don't worry about it, Allan. Just go on."

"Yes, we're right behind you," said an elderly lady with bad teeth. "You make him listen."

"Warwick, I love you, and I know you love me. You told me so. You said you've been waiting all year for me to make a move, and as you know, I've been waiting for you to make that move too."

"You tell him, love!" interrupted the old woman.

My support team began to chant Warwick's name. I was empowered. I encouraged them to clap their hands in time. They did. There was about ten of them now, and their support gave me a warm glow in that frosty breeze. However, Guy looked worried.

"Allan, shouldn't you wait until he comes downstairs?"

"My dear friend, Warwick is a coward. I know he's up there, but he's too scared to come down because he doesn't want to hurt that imbecile's feelings. The very imbecile who tried to hurt me physically during his dumb-arsed play!"

"Allan..."

"No one should ever break your heart," alleged a handsome older gent behind me.

"Thank you." I turned back to address my ex-lover. "Now listen here, Warwick! You told me that you'd been waiting for me to make a move. I did. We made love over and over under that so-called playwright's nose. And what happens when the going gets good? You freak out. What the hell for? Was the sex that bad that you preferred old teensy-dick instead? Was it all getting too intense for you? Is that the reason?" The crowd became quiet as I felt the bitter cold again. "Were you too scared of being in love? Too much intimacy for your murky heart to deal with? Too much real emotion for your juvenile soul to cope with? Too much effort to be in love with someone who's madly, deeply in love with you? Too much..." I shuddered. "Too much..."

Guy grabbed me from behind as I felt my legs give way. He eased me to the footpath and shielded me with his wings. I howled, before tears streamed down my face.

"It's okay, Allan," said the angel. "This is a big step for you."

"He doesn't love me, Guy. He doesn't love me the way I love him."

"I don't think that's true."

I began whimpering like a child being punished.

Find out what happens next...

Paperback edition from Amazon - <http://www.amazon.com/Drama-Queens-Scenes-Kevin-Klehr/dp/192518059X/>

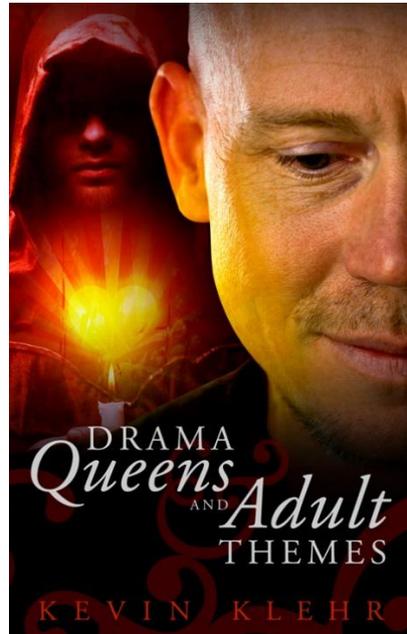
Kindle Edition - <http://www.amazon.com/Drama-Queens-Scenes-Kevin-Klehr-ebook/dp/BooO4K2F4Q/>

Blurb for *Drama Queens and Adult Themes* (Book Two):

Adam's about to discover how much drama a mid-life crisis can be. He's obsessed with Mannix, the nude model in his art class. But Adam has been married to Wade for nearly two decades, and they don't have an open relationship.

Little do they know that Fabien, a warlock from the Afterlife, has secretly cast a spell of lust on Adam and his potential toy-boy.

As things begin to heat up, Adam's guardian angel, Guy, steps in. But what's the best way to save the relationship? Should Guy subdue Adam's wandering passions or instigate a steamy threesome?



Excerpt One from *Drama Queens and Adult Themes* (Book Two):

He had the perfect vee-shaped torso. The kind that would turn on a dozen potential lovers if he wandered into a gay bar. And while his faultless crew cut was artificially red, his other natural features were as intense as James Dean's. I could go riding in his sports car, feeling the breeze as we headed to Lover's Lane. He'd admire me with his penetrating eyes before undressing me for a lovemaking session so powerful, not even a night with a handpicked selection of porn stars would compare.

But unlike anyone I'd ever met, he was blessed with soft charcoal-colored wings. This was Guy's boyfriend, Joshua. I was back at that thespian drinking haven, the Pedestal, at some stage between going to bed and waking up the next morning.

I tried not to drool at this bad boy, while picturing myself taking off his well-fitted leather jacket, slowly. I wanted to let out an orgasmic moan, before any foreplay had begun.

"I think you need to sleep with Mannix," he said.

He sipped on a Bloody Mary.

"Joshua!" his loving partner reprimanded.

"Joshua, we tried," I said.

"And what happened, sweetheart?"

"He freaked out. He gives us all the signals and then runs off in terror."

"Tsk, tsk. Now why would he do that? You're not exactly on the ugly scale."

"Thanks," I replied. "I think."

"Joshua, that's not the issue here," Guy said. "I've been watching over them, and they're getting obsessed with Mannix. And just as odd, Mannix is obsessed with them. It doesn't make sense."

"What's there to make sense of, Petal? They're grown men looking for a bit of spice. This Mannix dude is the spice. Supply and demand. No problem."

"But Guy has a point," I said. "This is doing my head in. One minute, Wade and I are respectable grown men, the next we're one step away from toupees and face-lifts."

"And is this causing you two to argue? Fight? Split up?"

"Strangely, no."

I picked up my cocktail, resting the top of the glass on my lower lip before sipping slowly.

"Joshua, it's still causing drama," continued Guy. "Adam and Wade have their heads in no-man's land, and Mannix is just as bemused."

"Oh my darlings, they're men. Adult men. Every one of them. That which doesn't kill them, will make them stronger. Or separated but I can't see any hint of that. Can you, Adam?" I nodded tensely. "There, you see, Guy? It might be causing a bit of grief, but in the end, they're men. Once they stop questioning it with their emotions, they'll solve it physically and wonder why they didn't get down and dirty sooner."

I sat with the two angels, none-the-wiser. That dark-skinned woman was back on stage. Sultry jazz was her genre of choice today, and her small ensemble cruised into mellow tones that could set you adrift on a small boat. As she crooned the first lines of "Someone To Watch Over Me", Guy sang the words with her under his breath.

Around me, the mismatched furniture complemented the mismatched cast. A lone African woman, wearing more colors than a peacock's tail, stood transfixed as if the singer was secretly robbing her soul. Her fingers tapped on an imaginary piano, and her wide-eyed stare gave me goose bumps.

An old lady, dressed in clothes her own granddaughter would wear, clutched her wine glass like it was a precious jewel. At the same time, she gazed into the eyes of a mature athletic man who looked like he once had a passion for ballet dancing. Their loving gaze reminded me of the way Wade sometimes looked at me.

"So, Joshua, you think we're making too much of a big deal about this?"

He rubbed the tip of his sculptured jawline as Guy casually leaned toward him.

"Adam, darling, there are men who put themselves through hell and back trying to do the right thing. They won't act until they work out all the final consequences. And let's face it, as much pontificating as humanly possible is not ever going to let you know the final outcome, really! And there are men who are a lot more spirited and take life as a challenge. Go forth and take the risk and see where it leads you."

"Joshua, Adam understands that," Guy said. "But there's Wade to consider. What if their marriage falls apart?"

"Darling, seriously. From what you've told me, they're not going to fall apart. It's all just a bit of fun. Mannix is a new appliance, like a fridge or a vibrator. Something that has a use. And think, Adam. Think of the uses you can come up with, with your new appliance."

Check out the Paperback edition - <http://www.amazon.com/Drama-Queens-Adult-Themes-Kevin/dp/1925180603/> or the Kindle edition - <http://www.amazon.com/Drama-Queens-Adult-Themes-Kevin-ebook/dp/B00O35KN8W/>

Excerpt Two from *Drama Queens and Adult Themes (Book Two)*:

"My darlings, listen to yourselves. You are one of the most 'together' couples I know, gay or straight. But all it takes is this little play-bunny to enter your lives and you both act like Pepé Le Pew pining after what you can't have!"

This was the most stern she had ever been with us. She loved us to death so I guess we were the last people on earth she wanted to see hoodwinked by some wholesome-acting vixen.

Our friendship with Maude was based on openness from day one. She cast us in a play she was work-shopping at the theater group, and we were instantly drawn to her unapologetic spinster status. She took one day at a time, appreciating her posse, never wanting to complicate her life with just one companion. Wade seemed to study her like a poker player weighing up his next move.

"I love you, Maude, but trust us, you've got the situation wrong."

"Have I, Wade? You still know little about him."

"We've met up with him a couple times."

"And tell me, boys, has there been any flirting?" We didn't answer. "I rest my case." She opened the pantry door where she'd stashed more bottles of red. "I think it will take another few glasses for me to talk sense into you."

Before any debate could be entered into, she unscrewed the top and poured. Although Wade expressed concern about driving home inebriated, I welcomed the top-up, even if it was close to midnight with a work day ahead. The crisp raspberry-like scent enticed our palettes.

"Right, my sweethearts, a little perspective. After you met him, Adam, when did you next catch up?"

"We went for a drink that night."

"All three of you?"

"No," replied Wade. "I was at dance class."

"Uh-huh. You chat. You like each other. Then who contacts who?"

"We invite him around for dinner," I answered.

"Quiet night?"

"Pretty quiet," said Wade. "We had dinner, chilled out, then he had to go home to his flatmate as something was wrong."

"Uh-huh. What happened?" Again, we didn't answer. "You actually don't know, do you? You never thought to ask. Are you actually sure this guy has a flatmate, or is it a boyfriend?"

I searched my wine glass for an answer. No mystic visions appeared. Now I knew I was tipsy. Thankfully, Wade was my designated driver.

"And do you get the feeling he might be interested in one of you, more than the other?"

"Oh definitely not," Wade said. Like me, he also studied his glass for an answer. "He's taken an interest in both of us, and yes, now that I hear myself say it, it is a bit bizarre, but trust me, Maude, there is no ulterior motive."

"Maude," I added, "I appreciate your concern, but trust us, there's nothing sinister going on here. Just a bit of mutual infatuation, nothing more, nothing less. We're grown men. We're not about to do anything foolish."

"Adam, we've all witnessed too many couples split up when a touch of spice was added, as you know. I'm determined not to see the same thing happen to my closest buddies. Besides, the politics of who to invite to what occasion is something I don't want to go through again."

"Yeah, I know what you mean," I added, "but... "

"Remember when I told you about the time I accompanied Jean and Simon to the circus and witnessed the trapeze artist flirt with Simon. They ended up running away together to live on a farm, while Jean took on the arduous hobby of stalking. First the letters, then the phone calls, followed by those crazy ticking gifts. I don't want to be meat in the sandwich again, and I'm determined not to see *my boys* split up."



DRAMA QUEENS WITH LOVE SCENES:

Paperback edition from Amazon - <http://www.amazon.com/Drama-Queens-Scenes-Kevin-Klehr/dp/192518059X/>

Kindle Edition - <http://www.amazon.com/Drama-Queens-Scenes-Kevin-Klehr-ebook/dp/BooO4K2F4Q/>

Ebook from Wilde City Press - <http://www.wildecity.com/books/gay-mainstream/drama-queens-with-love-scenes/>

DRAMA QUEENS AND ADULT THEMES:

Check out the Paperback edition - <http://www.amazon.com/Drama-Queens-Adult-Themes-Kevin-Klehr/dp/1925180603/>

The Kindle edition - <http://www.amazon.com/Drama-Queens-Adult-Themes-Kevin-Klehr-ebook/dp/BooO35KN8W/>

or purchase an ebook from Wilde City Press - <http://www.wildecity.com/books/gay-mainstream/drama-queens-with-adult-themes/>

SHORT STORIES:

HER CAT WAS YESTERDAY'S NEWS FEED

By Kevin Klehr

She sat near her window, no longer waiting for her life to begin. She had a huge circle of friends and she liked them all. She liked the pictures of David's housewarming party. She liked keeping abreast of Laura's wedding plans. But most of all, she liked Leah's tales of Paris, after meeting a man there.

She felt secure with her new niche of friends. The old ones stopped ringing months ago as she never picked up the phone. Unlike her new friends, they always told her what they thought about her clothes, her job and her taste in men. With her new companions she never had to justify her decisions.

Her circle was always there when needed, just by pressing a button. No need to venture out into the cruel world where webs of people intermingled; drawing her closer to the ones she depended on when her emotions were low, but sometimes ripping her apart when they no longer depended on her.

Now she had safer paths to travel. No danger in her way. They were narrower tunnels that took her directly to the people that liked her, although they didn't comment as much as they did before.

Lately she was drawing pictures. Pictures of herself as Laura's bridesmaid or as David's girlfriend. Laura and David liked these images, but they no longer commented the way they used to when she would share tales of her cat, Mitzi. She didn't mind. Without their voices there was no danger of critique.

In her sink was the sticky tin that was used to bake her own birthday cake. Mitzi had licked the mixing bowl clean during the morning, as this was the feline's only meal for several days. Now the forgotten pet laid on the floor, too weak to move, watching the birds through the glass while listening to her stomach rumble.

Our girl had a grin like a child sitting on Santa's lap, as comments came flooding in once more. The words 'Happy Birthday' were being wished over and over again, even from Laura and David. The pictures she had shared of herself eating cake had sparked interest. She had countless friends all over the world. Who wouldn't be happier?

GUY'S ROMANTIC LIFE By Kevin Klehr



I stared at myself in the mirror for about five minutes. I didn't like my hair. It took me four outfit changes to be happy with my shirt, but my hair looked like a pot plant on steroids. I had gelled the life out of it and my date was going to be at my front door at any minute.

Okay, I need to explain. I was about to see my teenage sweetheart. The one I hadn't seen since he tried to teach me to fly when we were a lot younger. In those days I was the perfect Prozac candidate; too negative and way too serious.

As I waited for my man to sweep me off my feet, my adolescent insecurities flooded back like a tidal wave. I shut my eyes and took a deep breath. He knocked.

"Is that a hairstyle or a cry for help?" Joshua looked me up and down. "Sorry, Guy, I meant it as a joke. I like it. It has that 'rock star just got out of bed' look." My wings drooped. "Why don't you close the door, I'll knock, and we'll start again?"

"No, no. Come in," I said. "I'm sorry about my mood. I've been battling with my appearance, wanting to make a good impression."

Joshua smiled while shaking his head. His flaming red spikey hair and classic leather jacket made him look like the rock star. I swooned like a hapless groupie.

"Let's try a second time," my handsome date said. He reached for the door knob and gently pulled it shut. Again, he knocked. It was now me who smiled and shook my head before letting him in.

"Hello, Joshua," I said. "I really..."

He lifted his finger to his mouth before planting his lips on mine. My ill-fated hair issues melted away as I floated on a cloud of pure bliss. I breathed in his aura of two day stubble and vodka on the rocks. His love spun around me, securing my irrational self in its whirlwind.

He pulled away.

"Don't stop," I said.

"More of that later, if you're good." Joshua swanned past me with the confidence of a self-made millionaire. I closed the door and followed like a petite geisha girl. "Are you really that worried about your hair, Guy?"

"Look at me. It's got so many bits jutting out, I could slash the neck of someone taller than me."

"Guy, hardly anyone is taller than you."

"What if I fall? I could stab someone through the heart."

“And do what? Here in the Afterlife it’s hardly going to kill them. They’ll just think you’re cupid without the arrows. Striking love with split ends!”

“Very funny.” I gestured to the lounge. “Would you like a drink before we go out?”

“No. Let me be in charge tonight.” He lifted one wing and pointed back toward the front entrance. “I’m happy to go if you are, unless you want to tame that jagged bush growing out of your head.”

“Nah. Between your red mane and my ‘cry for help’ as you put it, we’ll definitely turn heads.”

“Yeah, the other way.”

We arrived at The Pedestal for a drink before dinner. It was a subdued night as Nellie, the sultry songstress, looked like she had a hit of valium before walking on stage. Her raspy voice meandered its way through the theatrical crowd like a faint trail of smoke, seeking out patrons and rendering them under her spell.

Next to the singer, a young man in a sparkling long tail jacket sat elegantly in front of a baby grand. His fingers danced on the keys as the vocalist clutched her microphone like a long lost relative.

I was open to her music. It had taken me years to listen with a jazz ear, yet her voice seemed to hide some sort of pain she was holding onto. I could relate.

Joshua whisked ahead of me, aiming for one of the rare available booths. As I caught up, he reached for my hand and led me to the waiting seat.

“What would you like to drink?” he asked.

“Cranberry and vodka.”

“A fancy choice.”

I looked at him oddly, but he missed my expression as he had already turned to walk to the bar. His swagger had that bad-boy quality. An essence I wanted to melt into like grated cheese on Italian cooking.

Just before Joshua stepped to the bar, his dreamy black wings extended themselves like the arms of someone yawning. He didn’t even check if anyone was within his personal space before they stretched. Fortunately there wasn’t. He then casually retracted them.

It was odd how we met up again. He just came back into my life, out of the blue. No warning that I’d be spellbound at the sight his sculptured jaw or his wistful eyes. He was simply walking up the path to my house when I coincidentally opened the door. He wanted to see me and hinted at a night out, making it clear that he desired to do more than just ‘catch up with an old friend’.

If I was guiding a mortal who was going through this exact situation, I’d tell him to tread carefully. But I hadn’t had sex in a while, so the idea of getting laid was clouding my judgement.

“Cranberry and vodka for my little angel, and vodka straight for moi.” He sat opposite me after sliding into position like a landing glider. “As you loosen up, I’m going to make you drink shots.”

“You are on a mission, aren’t you?”

“No rest for the wicked.”

“Joshua, back off a bit. This is our first real night out to catch up after years. Wouldn’t you like to know what I’ve been up to since puberty?”

“Minor details.” He stared at the pianist as he swallowed half his drink. “That guy is good with his fingers.” He looked back to me. “Threesome?”

“Now I know I’ve made the wrong decision.” I got up to leave, but my date shuffled across to the edge of his seat and stood before me. “What are you doing?”

“Just trying to be funny, but it’s not working.”

“Where is that charismatic angel who visited me the other day?”

“I’m still here, somewhere.”

“Well find him, Joshua, because this loser is cramping my style!”

“When did you get so feisty?”

“When I met someone who showed me my true worth.”

My egotistical friend slowly sat down.

“That used to be me.”

“Aren’t we a bit too sober for deep and meaningful conversation?”

He stared at his drink.

“Um, I guess it’s too late to start this date again.”

“Joshua, what pisses me off the most is being made to feel like an easy conquest! Why did you think...?” I stood. “No! You know what? Even sitting alone at home by myself is better than being here with you right now.”

As I made my first step toward the exit, he jumped up and grabbed me by the wrist.

“I truly am sorry, Guy. I know I’m better than this, and you definitely deserve my better self.” He gently pulled me to my seat as he lowered himself back to his. “Let’s not treat this as a date. Let’s just be two old friends catching up.”

“Yeah, that’s a better suggestion.” I was replying through clenched teeth. “Besides, I want to know what you’ve done since our teenage years.”

“A lot. Wow, where do I start?” He took a small swig of vodka. “I tried a relationship. Maybe that’s why I’m here? I’m trying again.” I looked at him, puzzled. “Guy, there was someone who finally left *me* and I really don’t know why?”

“So you came to me as a rebound?”

“I think I was just trying to prove that there’s nothing wrong with me.”

“Now I’m even more confused. If that was your intention, why did you act like a jerk?”

“I don’t know. Sometimes I don’t understand my own actions.”

“This guy you were in love with, who was he?”

“Dalton. The most sublime man this side of mortality.”

“You were fooling around with a mortal? What about his soul? You were stopping him from being reborn!”

“Yeah, I know. So sue me. But what could I do. We angels have our desires too.” He held up his glass, looking into it as if it held all the answers. “He was as tall as you, Guy. He had more charisma than most pop star divas. All he had to do was enter the room and I’d forget who I was talking to the moment before.”

“Wow. My hero had his heart stolen.” Joshua gazed at me, sullenly. “How long were you together?”

“Almost two years. He became picky at the end. I was never enough.”

“He cheated?”

“No. It was just me. I wasn’t enough. Our relationship wasn’t enough. He wanted more than just a relationship. He wanted to be on the move.”

“Why didn’t you go with him?”

“He didn’t want me around anymore.”

My fallen idol gave me a goofy smile. I reached over and rubbed his shoulder. It seemed I was his rebound and I wasn’t sure if I felt honoured, or if I should have felt like a cheap substitute.

Nellie leaned against the piano singing a love song directly to her accompanist. He was trying to keep a straight face as she teased with her lyrics. Gentle murmurs and laughter filled the club.

At a booth not far away, an older regular held her toy-boy close to her chest, as they both looked on. At the back of the bar, Wilma, the theatre critic, was too caught up in conversation with her A-List friends to notice what was happening on stage. They chatted away oblivious to the mirth around them.

“She’s in her own world,” said a voice above us.

“Carpenter!” cried Joshua. He leaped like a coiled spring. “Guy, this is Carpenter. Carpenter, this is someone from my past, and if I play my cards right, part of my future as well.”

The man shook my hand like a surgeon calmly greeting a new patient.

“It’s nice to meet another angel. You and Joshua are the only two I’ve met, yet this is supposed to be the Afterlife.”

“Someone likes to work in mysterious ways,” I replied.

Carpenter retracted his arm and stood in quiet grace. Somehow he evoked Rodin’s sculpture ‘The Thinker’; wise beyond his years by summing everything up in detail. His crisp white shirt, thick black belt and slim-fit blue pants added to the allure of his thin framed glasses. A class act, even at first glance.

“Am I intruding?” he asked.

Joshua shared a glance with me, but before I could react, he invited Carpenter to sit with us.

“Would you like a drink,” asked my fellow angel.

“No. I was thinking of leaving anyway. It’s still early and I need to hear something more upbeat.”

“Where were you thinking of going?” I asked.

“There’s a new bar that’s taking off just a few blocks away. A friend was supposed to meet me here before we checked it out, but she hasn’t turned up.”

“Maybe she’s fashionably late?” said Joshua.

“There’s ‘fashionably late’ and just plain rude. She’s tipped into the latter category.” He scanned the bar quickly before turning back to us. “Why don’t you join me? I could do with the company.”

Joshua briefly read my face, but I was in two minds, so I had no idea what he believed I was thinking.

“Yeah, why not?” he replied.

I nodded.

“Thank-you. Tonight I want to get wicked, and who better to help me than two angels!”

While Carpenter studied the club like a window shopper looking for an affordable purchase, his playful grin kept fuelling my wayward fantasies. But at this stage we'd had more to drink than a misled teenager.

Joshua had disappointed me with his stinky attitude, and even though this gay discothèque had more spirited contenders than a dating website, I was curious about the man who wasn't interested in me, yet.

"So, Carpenter, do you see anyone you like?" I asked.

I had a smile wider than a sumo wrestler, which I couldn't control. Joshua turned the other way.

"I like that older dude with the full head of hair. He has that 'wise intellectual' look." He fluttered his eyebrows. My grin disappeared. "Good sex and great conversation before more good sex."

"I like the funky nerd on the dance floor," said Joshua.

"Why don't you go and talk to him?" I asked.

He opened his mouth as if he was about to reply, but not a sound came out. I felt odd.

"Yeah, Joshua, go and dance with him," said Carpenter. "Mine looks like he doesn't want to be disturbed. That girl chatting with him must be a friend."

"Can I change the subject?" asked my fellow angel.

"We're talking about men. What other subject is there?"

"Oh, my topic is also about men. But it's about lost causes."

"Sounds serious," I said.

"I'm not trying to be morbid, but there's something..." His eyes darted to the dance floor. "Carpenter, your future conquest is busting a move."

"It can wait, Joshua. You've got something on your mind."

The one night contender had an angular way of dancing. Every beat was matched with a hieroglyphic stance. His female companion glided around him like a seasoned matador, adding grace to her partner's awkward steps.

"Go on, he's on the floor," Joshua said.

"He looks like the Tin Man on Ecstasy. No, you need to get something off your chest. What is it?"

"Dalton."

"Who's Dalton?"

"His last boyfriend," I replied. "It sounds like the time has come for deep and meaningful conversation. Shoot."

"I, um, don't get what went wrong."

"What did he do?" asked Carpenter.

"He said I'm too self-centred."

I bit my tongue.

"You? Never!"

"Joshua, what did you give of yourself?" I asked.

"I lived up to his expectations."

“But what did you give of yourself?”

“I did everything he asked.”

“But what did you give of yourself?”

There was no answer.

“This Dalton guy never smashed your fortress,” said Carpenter. He gazed into space. “Wow! That almost sounds sexual.”

“So what were you afraid of?” I asked.

Again, no answer.

“Guy, it sounds like our friend feels he needs to hide, even with those he loves.”

“Yeah, now why is that?” I replied.

“Doesn’t feel worthy, maybe?”

“Worried he might put his foot in his mouth?”

“Joshua, this wasn’t just an obsession, was it?”

“No, of course not. He was the spark of every social occasion we were at. His charisma walked three steps ahead of him.”

“Yeah, I get it,” Carpenter answered. “His eyes shone so bright he could lead ships into port. Sounds like an obsession to me.”

“Why do you think I was obsessed?”

“Listen to yourself,” I replied. “We’ve heard nothing about this man except for his physical attributes. Was he kind hearted? Did he have a sense of humour? What was his favourite colour? Did you really know anything about him?”

“I knew I loved him.”

“Ahem, loved him or needed him?”

A shiver ran up my spine on my last word, causing my wings to flutter three times.

“You’re getting straight to the point, Guy,” said Carpenter.

“I’m too drunk to weave around the issue.”

“To weave around Joshua’s issues or yours?”

I looked at him like he was refrigerated food that had passed its use by date.

“I don’t talk,” announced the jilted one.

“Oh you talk,” I replied. “You just don’t communicate. And it sounds like Dalton felt lonely.”

“Yeah, I know.”

“Well if you knew, man, why didn’t you...?” I held up my hand to stop Carpenter speaking.

“Because I needed to hear from someone else what I already knew.”

“But Joshua,” I said, “they’re the conversations you have with your partner.” I looked into the crowd. “Or they’re the conversations you have with your friends while you’re still with your partner.”

That older man seemed to loosen up. His gal pal writhed up and down him like a snake, while he played as straight as he humanly could.

“I’m starting to think I might be in with a chance,” noted Carpenter.

“You’re going to leave this discussion?” I asked.

“Guy, I think this is the discussion where I’m the forgettable co-star.” Joshua and I exchanged glances. “Oh don’t look so weird. There’s chemistry between you, and from what you told me about your history, you both have a lot of catching up to do.” He regarded the gent as if regarding Lois Lane in need of saving. “Now, I can entertain myself, and you two, well you two should entertain each other.”

He winked. My jaw dropped. I didn’t look at Joshua. Carpenter headed for the dance floor.

“Well there’s an unexpected twist,” my fellow angel said.

I watched our friend make his way toward his prize as my damned wings fluttered again.

“Carpenter’s right,” said Joshua.

“Hmm.” Now I wished I returned home earlier.

“Hey, my long lost friend, haven’t you got anything better to say?”

“I’m still dealing with his home truth.”

Carpenter sidled up to the man, twisting his body in improvised sixties’ dance steps. His potential lover did some odd shoe shuffle before making his own groovy arm moves. Sadly he still lacked finesse. His female friend left them alone.

“Guy, you pinned me in one. I don’t communicate well. Please listen. I’ve got a lot to say, so can you at least stop gazing at the dance floor.”

I sipped my cocktail before meeting his eyes.

“Josh, maybe this night is more confronting for both of us than we’d like to admit to? Let’s call it a night.”

He slammed his hand on the table.

“That has to be a reason to stay.” My head tilted back. “Come on, we were good friends once.”

“Once, but that was a long time ago. You disappeared and left me longing.”

“Really? You were longing?” I stood, but Joshua grabbed my arm. “If it helps, Guy, let me do the talking. Let me pour my heart out while you just listen. You don’t need to say a word.”

The scene was joyous around us, but all I could see were shadows. The music just thumped, without melody or reason. The lyrics blurred into some uncontained mess. The patrons, distant, even as they swung close.

I sat for serenity. Walking through the crowd would only make me feel alone, so I sat, staring at my drink.

“I get that you don’t want to look at me, Guy, but thanks for hearing me out.” He guzzled his cocktail. “I couldn’t face my teenage crush when we were young, so I left. I’m sorry it was soon after trying to teach you to fly, but your lack of self-belief was the perfect cue for my exit.” I gulped. “But you showed promise. If I stayed I would have ended up teaching you to soar. And we would have soared, together. But I didn’t think I was good enough for you.”

My superhero was unmasked. I looked up.

“Josh, you of all people? I, er, I…”

“I can’t remember you ever being speechless.”

“Maybe it’s because you said something I needed to hear. I thought you thought I was a loser back then.”

“Then why would I ask you on this date?”

“Oh my...”

“Guy, you really are speechless.”

I nodded briskly.

“Joshua, imagine you’re the kid who never knew his parents, and finally you work it out. You realise that the woman raising you couldn’t be related because she wasn’t an angel. Then you hate yourself. You hate yourself because from day one, someone left you behind.” My wings fluttered violently but I firmed my muscles to keep them still. “Then you left me behind at a time I really felt like I was worth something to someone.”

My fellow angel peered at Carpenter.

“Look at us, Guy. We’re a couple of losers.”

I, too, looked to the dancing crowd. Carpenter was jiving close to his lover for the night.

“No, Josh, we were just young and stupid.”

My date lifted his glass, even though its contents were melted ice.

“Here’s to being young and stupid.”

I clinked my glass with his.

“No, here’s to being older and wiser.”

We both swigged, Joshua swallowing the icy remains.

“So what do we do now?”

I studied our former companion writhing with his one-nighter in drunken bliss. Their groins pressed together like pages in a book. The gay first step, complete.

“Let’s dance.”

JUST BEING ADAM By Kevin Klehr

Glancing down at the turquoise sock which engulfed my foot, I was reminded how carefree and camp I'd become. Only a year ago the idea of clothes that screamed at you, rather than lull you into a sense of security, would have sent me rushing to the closet. But there it was, one pastel garment waiting to be peeled off.

"Adam, there's no time for dramatic pauses today," reprimanded my buddy Merrick, "Just pop it in the locker so we can begin your liberation!" My friend and his partner Marco were already draped in their non-designer itchy white towels. One with a key elasticised to where his watch rested a moment ago, the other sporting his as an anklet.

"Yes Adam," continued Marco, "A random act of sex is the perfect antidote for your broken heart." His directness was delivered in soft tones, like a nurse coercing you to use a chamber pot. I ripped off the sock and hurled it into my locker, slammed the door shut, and locked away my concerns.

I'd spent the last year playing husband in a relationship that needed life support for the last few months. It wasn't that I was in denial. It wasn't that I even wanted it to carry on. It was just that it was as familiar as my designer range of multi-coloured socks. Snug, if not too cosy. My ex had done me a grand favour by leaving me.

Guiding me by both hands, my bold friends led me down a fragrant musty hallway where a full length mirror greeted us. I'd never realised my hips swung before, but there was the evidence as we sauntered past our reflections. If one thing my past relationship had taught me, it was to accept who I was, metronome hips or not. Now I just had to uncover the tools to move on.

We were at a crossroad where my mentors decided to skip down one path, leaving me to seek out my own rewards. There was melody in the groans that provided the soundtrack to this experience. Short sharp notes accompanied by lower moans, all in surround sound. Tempting nymphs of all shapes considered facial expressions and body hair, caressing, embracing, tasting. Before I had realised, I was part of this lair, thrill seeking while concealing my caution.

A finger sailed around my Adam's apple, then tracked its way up to my lower lip. His chocolate eyes and latte skin were enough to convince me I had made the right choice. Recalling his expertise in the art of kissing, has forced me to grin during several lonely moments in recent times. For the record his name was Terry-Lee, or perhaps that was his cruising name.

Infatuation may have coaxed me out of the closet twelve months ago, finding acceptance as a supportive member of a loving couple in the eyes of the wider world. That night though, I relished in the encounter of just being. Just being me. Just being Adam.

For more information on Kevin's writing and his novels, go to www.kevinklehr.com

Kevin on Twitter - <https://twitter.com/kevinklehr>