



## A Brush of Wings

*Anne Regan (Editor) , Taylor Lochland , Sarah Ann Watts , Réve Garrison , Jana Denardo , Patric Michael , S. Blaise , R.J. Scott , more... Mary Calmes , Matthew Vandrew , Cornelia Grey , Clare London , H.J. Brues , Roland Graeme , Zahra Owens , Diana Copland ...less*

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Guardian spirits walk among us. They are heavenly beings who grant courage, unknown benefactors who offer help, best friends who lend their strength, and celestial beings who embody inspiration. You might not recognize these everyday angels or messengers of mercy, but the men in this anthology are touched by their purity and light and sometimes blessed by love.

## Morning Glow by Taylor Lochland

Benjamin and Alan have been friends since high school. Though they often drift apart, Alan always seems to come back when Benjamin needs him the most—like when Ben is grieving over a bad breakup. As always, Ben feels better just from spending time with Alan, but then he realizes he's in love with Alan. This time when Alan takes off again, Ben isn't going to let him go without a fight.

## A Trail of Feathers by Sarah Ann Watts

Alone on New Year's Day, Daniel is more aware than ever of the self-destructive despair consuming him since his lover's death. Then he meets a stranger shedding feathers in the street, and despite the risk, he takes Leo home with him. But Leo is not the hustler or drug addict Daniel suspected him to be. He's there to give Daniel a gift—a gift Daniel might not know how to accept.

## Heart's Salvation by Réve Garrison

After losing his wife and daughter in a car accident, a distraught Nathaniel approaches the church for comfort, seeking the statue that is said to heal emotional distress. When the angel embodied in statue feels the depth of Nathaniel's pain, he makes the unusual decision to assume human form and comfort the grieving widower. But soon the angel must decide between returning to the statue to comfort others and retaining his humanity for the hope of love.

## In the Hands of the Gods by Jana Denardo

The only business that concerns Tiberius Aelius Rufus is how to extend his olive oil trade from Pompeii to Rome and how to sort out a family when his tastes do not run to taking a wife. Expanding his oil trade is easy enough, but a man of his station can't exactly dally with another man. But when he meets Marcus Lartius Priscus at a party, Tiberius is enchanted and falls hard, hard enough to consider risking his business and his reputation to follow Priscus to Rome.

### A Voice in the Darkness by Patric Michael

Landon Hargrove wakes in darkness and pain to find he and his unconscious husband Bryce are trapped in their car after a landslide. With no help but the moral support of a man named Dan who can speak to him but not reach him, Landon must find a way to rescue them both before the rest of the mountainside breaks free and crushes them... along with their dream of adopting a son.

### Some Comfort by S. Blaise

Dale is having a hard time adjusting to everyday reality after returning from combat when he runs into Mal, a fellow soldier who'd saved his life during a missile attack. Mal seems determined to continue to watch over him even though Dale knows very little about the other man. Why does Mal have such faith in him? And will it be enough to drive the darkness inside Dale away?

### Ascension by RJ Scott

When Sabrael visits Adam Riley, the last remaining descendant of the family under his protection, the angel finds a man consumed with grief after the death of his father and the decision to sell the family bookstore. Sabrael is surprised by a connection to Adam strong enough to redefine his entire purpose, something Sabrael has never felt for any mortal in his charge. Now he wonders if it is part of the Divine plan—if his time to live a mortal life has come. A mortal life with Adam.

### Sariel by Mary Calmes

Jacob Gray is on the trip of a lifetime with his employer only to have it turn into a nightmare. Drugged and taken to an underground catacomb, Jake is forced to make a life or death decision: face torture by the men who kidnapped him or confront a ferocious beast. Much to his captors' surprise, Jacob casts his fate into the hands of an unknown creature instead of surrendering himself to sure death, with only hope as his salvation.

### The Platypus Learns Astrophysics by Matthew Vandrew

Hardworking businessman Jonas Mason is the last person expecting a visit from an angel. Yet Micah, angel of the Divine Plan, shows up in his office, absolutely certain of his mission: to enlighten Jonas's days and fill his heart with love... all by simply touching him. And when nothing happens? Micah will have to wing it: act human, rein in the grumpy and generally unpleasant Jonas, and figure out how to bring Jonas—and himself—lives full of joy.

### The Angel Blues by Cornelia Grey

It's a nondescript, depressing night when Morgan, a seasoned cop, finds a witty stranger perched on his windowsill who shares his appreciation for the blues. Worried for his own sanity, Morgan mostly ignores the man who insists on materializing at the most inappropriate of times... until a life-threatening experience forces Morgan to see just how much the stranger who claims to be an angel means to him.

### Redemption by Clare London

Ziba is a fallen angel, working as a sponsor of lost men, helping them find genuine repentance after a life of sin. Banished to the Arrivals Hall between worlds, he offers them work during their journey to a better afterlife. But for him, personally, that option is closed. His position was so exalted, and his sin so great, that he is imprisoned in Arrivals forever. Until he meets Abdiel, an angel who also fell from grace - but whose love and self-sacrifice offers both of them a new hope of redemption.

### Herbal Tea by H.J. Brues

Douglas, a world-weary, cynical agent of a very special kind of law enforcement, is sent to recruit Justin, a young herbalist, for a unique assignment. Considering the lies and betrayal in his past, Douglas can't help but look for hidden intentions behind every selfless act, and he doesn't trust easily. But Justin will show him that a simple man can have the courage to offer his protection, his love and even his life for those he cares about, because it's not the wings that make the angel, but the readiness to reach out to others with your whole heart in the tips of your fingers.

### The Tenth Avatar by Roland Graeme

When a relative dies and bequeaths to Arun a family heirloom—an old bronze statue of Kalki, the tenth avatar, or incarnation, of the Hindu god Vishnu—the delivery of the statue coincides with the arrival of a new man in Arun's life. Jack is everything Arun has ever desired in a lover, and Arun will have to face his parents' pressure for marriage and Jack's unknown opinion on commitment to move forward to a loving future.

### Santangelo by Zahra Owens

Michael isn't the type of man who needs rescuing, but after he's attacked by a group of skinheads, he's glad Gabriel Santangelo is there to help. Four stitches in his forehead later, Michael is introduced to Gabriel's severely disabled baby daughter and jumps at the chance to get to know Gabriel better. But Gabe has more issues than he's willing to share and when he keeps Michael at a distance, Michael starts wondering who is rescuing who.

### The Archangel of Castro by Diana Copland

What do you get when you mix a former real-estate agent turned diner owner; a sweet, unassuming, movie-star handsome runaway; selfless generosity; and unrequited love? You get Nick at Nick's on Ninth; his live-in friend Brian; a treasured friendship; and two very nearly broken hearts... until the unlikeliest Archangel ever notices the need for a bit of divine intervention.

## A Brush of Wings Details

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## From Reader Review A Brush of Wings for online ebook

### Ije the Devourer of Books says

I found this anthology to be pleasant enough but I can't say that it was exciting for me. All the stories were ok and I really enjoyed 'The Tenth Avatar'. I particularly liked this story because of the way it handled culture and religion and showed how the two main characters found love despite their differences. It would be really good to read a full story about Jack and Arun.

I didn't enjoy Santangelo because of the way it depicted HIV. I find it disappointing when authors depict positive people as living with a death sentence. People living with HIV who have access to treatment are living full and flourishing lives. I find it strange and somewhat unrealistic to find a character in the book who had been positive since 1991 and was living as if he could die at any time even though the story was published in 2010. That's nearly 20 years of living as a positive person. Why then would this character still be living as if he was about to face death? Those pieces in the story just didn't make sense for me and felt quite unreal given the huge advances made in treatment. Had the story been set in a country where treatment is not readily available then it would have made sense.

All in all it is a nice volume of stories but not a great favorite for me.

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### Victoria Zagar says

A Brush Of Wings is a short story anthology from Dreamspinner Press that focuses on stories about angels. I found all of the stories in this book worth reading, some more than others. I'll talk about each short and rate them individually.

#### **Morning Glow by Taylor Lochland: 4 stars**

**Ben is a nurse and works long hours. He's just been through a rough breakup that has taken its toll on him. His friend Alan always shows up in his life when he needs someone to talk to, but disappears just as fast. Ben confronts him and finds the reasons for his disappearances are more complex than Alan simply being a drifter.**

This was a sweet story about old friends becoming lovers and a good way to start the anthology. The writing is strong, the story is sweet and sexy but not too heart-wrenching.

#### **A Trail Of Feathers by Sarah Ann Watts: 3.5 stars**

**Daniel is mourning the loss of his lover Luke at the dawn of a new year. He meets Leo, a stranger who wants to take him home and melt away the layer of ice that Daniel has encased his heart in.**

A sweet, heartwarming story about loss and moving on.

#### **Heart's Salvation by Reve Garrison: 3.5 stars**

**A statue comes to life in the form of an angel to help a mourning man move on from the tragic loss of**

**his wife and daughter.**

This sad but sweet story introduces the cliche of the angel becoming human to stay with his earthly lover. It's a good story about moving on from tragedy and finding new love.

**In The Hands Of The Gods by Jana Denardo: 4.5 stars**

**Set in Ancient Rome, Tiberius is a devout man who offers presents to his family gods. Meeting a stranger called Priscus, he falls in love and takes up Priscus' offer to leave Pompeii. Just as well, since a well-known disaster is about to unfold...**

In The Hands Of The Gods looks at a different kind of angel from the ones you know from Christian theology. It was a very clever historical story and it was a welcome break from some of the more typical angel stories in this collection.

**A Voice In The Darkness by Patric Michael: 4 stars**

**Landon is involved in a car crash with his husband, Bryce. The two are about to adopt a child and have suffered much heartache. Dan guides Landon through the danger of their situation and reveals happy news to the couple.**

A wonderfully sweet tale mixed with fear and heartache as Landon and Bryce are trapped in a terrifying situation. The flashbacks are well-written, detailing the couple's difficult journey towards adoption and the ending is a wonderful twist which made me smile.

**Some Comfort by S. Blaise: 2.5 stars**

**Mal saved Dale's life in the Iraq war and Dale remembers a picture of an angel that hung on his wall when he was small.**

This was a very short story compared to the others that didn't really get off the ground for me. I didn't connect with it as well as some of the others.

**Ascension by R.J. Scott: 2.5 stars**

**Sabrael visits a closing bookstore to see the last in the line of the family he'd been watching for generations and falls in love with him.**

I would have liked this story better without the others, but by this point in the anthology I was starting to predict some of the tropes that would show up in this story. Ascension wasn't bad, but didn't stand out.

**Sariel by Mary Calmes: 4 stars**

**Jake Gray is invited on a trip to Italy, but when he gets there he finds that Dr. Pierce plans to offer him up as a sacrifice to a fallen angel. Jake is stronger than Pierce expects and forms an unlikely bond with the fallen angel, freeing him from a tortured existence at the hands of the wicked Doctor.**

This story was a breath of fresh air in an anthology that was starting to become typical. Calmes really plays with the angel stereotype, creating an angel in a form the reader wouldn't expect and also writing some

incredibly sexy scenes. Jake faces his trial with courage and earns his happy ending. A great story.

#### **The Platypus Learns Astrophysics by Matthew Vandrew: 2.5 stars**

**Jonas is an ass who is paid a visit by an angel, who has been commanded to touch him but cannot. He doesn't realize God means he has to emotionally touch Jonas.**

Another cliched story about an angel falling for a human and then becoming human to stay with his partner on Earth. Almost skipped this one, as it was overly long and brought nothing new to the table.

#### **The Angel Blues by Cornelia Grey: 4 stars**

**Morgan loves the blues. He's a cop who can't believe he's having hallucinations of an angel. The angel falls in love with Morgan and saves his life when a bust goes bad.**

I liked this one. Fairly typical, but interestingly written with strong characterizations that make it stand out from the others.

#### **Redemption by Clare London: 4 stars**

**Ziba is a fallen angel whose arrogance led him to be cast out. Unable to be forgiven, he has spent eternity trying to redeem others. Finding a fallen angel just like himself in the Arrivals Hall, Ziba takes in Abdiel and the two form a bond that can't be broken by Abdiel's true mission.**

This was a great story with a strong sense of place. It didn't rely on the usual angel tropes and the ending was somewhat surprising.

#### **Herbal Tea by H.J Brues: 3.5 stars**

**FBI agent Douglas goes into a tea shop and falls for the owner, Justin, even though he's been hurt before and betrayed by his partner. Justin is very protective of others and it leads him into trouble, but luckily Douglas has a job for him that's perfect.**

A short story with a surprising twist. My only complaint was that it felt somewhat insta-love, with Douglas falling for Justin almost at once.

#### **The Tenth Avatar by Roland Graeme: 3 stars**

**Arun has a friend, Efrain, who is helping him adapt to life in the U.S. Torn between family and his sexual orientation, Indian-born Arun meets Jack and finds his perfect partner at the same time a statue of a Hindu god is delivered to his house.**

A well-researched Indian flavored story to which the ending was somewhat obvious, but still worth a read. It would have rated higher if Arun didn't sleep with his friend after he started dating Jack - it felt a little too much like cheating even if they hadn't agreed to be exclusive.

#### **Santangelo by Zahra Owens: 4 stars**

**Mike is attacked by a group of thugs and rescued by a doctor who is well-known at the hospital**

**because of his adopted daughter Mia, who is slowly dying from a terminal illness. Gabe is reluctant to date again and Mike slowly weans the truth out of him - Gabe is HIV positive.**

A very sweet story. I had to suspend my disbelief that a man diagnosed with HIV in 1991 would still be around today to enjoy antiretroviral drugs and a viral load of zero, but I'm no expert on HIV. I can't imagine authorities would grant him custody of a child, either, but this was a lovely story regardless that really moved me.

#### **The Archangel Of Castro by Diana Copland: 4.5 stars**

**Nick is a different kind of angel who helps young, homeless gay kids by giving them a place to stay. One such young man, Brian, has become the object of Nick's affections but he has trouble believing that such a handsome young man would want his average looking forty-two year old self until one of his stranger customers, a man who dresses as an angel and calls himself Gabriel tells him that Brian is crazy about him and the two finally come together.**

A really nice story to finish off the anthology about a man taking in homeless GLBT youth and falling for one of them. He doesn't believe he deserves love but Brian shows him otherwise. This story was full of powerful, repressed emotions that finally come out into the open with a happy ending. This story left me with a warm fuzzy feeling at the end of the book.

This review was cross-posted to Infinite Love.

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#### **Cornerofmadness says**

This anthology from Dreamspinner Press is male/male erotic romance (naturally as that's what DSP does) with an angelic theme. Most of the stories revolve around a Judeo-Christian angel archetype unsurprisingly. There are also stories of fallen angels. Some of the sweetest ones would be with people acting like angels themselves. Some of my favorites though would have to be the couple that used guardian spirits from other cultures, like Hindu in *The Tenth Avatar* and ancient Roman in *In the Hands of the Gods*.

Some of my own favorite short stories, besides the ones I mentioned, actually aren't the ones other reviewers have named (not that they're bad stories by any means). I really liked *A Trail of Feathers*, which has a visceral feel of loneliness and desperation to it. Counterbalance that with the sheer good heart in the main character of *The Archangel of Castro*. *Herbal Tea* and *The Angel Blues* were a couple others I especially enjoyed.

All in all, while I'm not really much of a short story reader, I really liked this anthology. If you like m/m erotica, you'll enjoy this.

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#### **Amanda says**

I didn't really care for this anthology. After reading, I realized that angels just aren't my thing. However, there were a few stories that stood out for me and were enjoyable. I liked the following three:

Patric Michael - A Voice in the Darkness  
Mary Calmes - Sariel  
Matthew Vandrew - The Platypus Learns Astrophysics

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### **Jana Denardo says**

It's hard to be completely objective about any anthology that one of your stories are in but I'm sure that if you enjoy male/male romance, you'll like this collection of short stories. They're all top notch and the angels within range from the Judeo-Christian angels that most of us think of when we hear the word, to fallen angels, to humans good enough to be called angels to other religions' guardian spirits such as in *The Tenth Avatar* or my own *In the hands of the Gods* (which is also different from most of the others in its historical setting as well). I can't pick a favorite. Give it a try and find one for yourself.

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### **Ryan Loveless says**

I don't consider myself one who holds to conventions of how those associated with religious doctrine should behave (be they priest or angel), yet when I'm faced with fiction in which they don't behave in a pattern I've unknowingly assigned to them, it makes me uncomfortable. Hence, quite a few of the stories here made me a bit uneasy at their end for the sole reason that I consider angels to be beings who wouldn't fall in love with humans. I like to think of angels as bringing two humans together, instead of the oft-repeated theme of falling for the sake of love. In a way, this fits in with my cheating/betrayal squick. What's a bigger betrayal than choosing human love over God's love for his angels? Having said all that, none of it affected my reading of the anthology, nor did it stop some of those stories from being among my favorites. Yes, that theme is repeated several times, but I can easily see why. Overall, the stories hold variety, gave me exposure to some big names in m/m that I'd never read as well as some I'd never heard of. As with any good anthology, there's something here for everyone. Recommended as my two favorites: The Platypus Learns Astrophysics by Matthew Vandrew, a clever short that bucks the traditional plot of romance with a twist and humor and In the Hands of the Gods by Jana Denardo, a wonderful historical set in ancient Greece--all the better if you know your history. And, with honorable mention for its understatedness and the revelation at the end: A Voice in the Darkness by Patric Michael.

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### **R.J. says**

Diana Copland - The Archangel of Castro... this is my definite favourite in the anthology... a romance so perfect it made me smile the whole way through. Brilliant, can not recommend it enough... 6/5 (snigger)

+++++++++

Patric Michael - A Voice in the Darkness... one single line in this book will probably stay with me forever, but I can't write down what it is because it will give everything away! Lovely story, strong committed partners and an angel who I adored... 5/5

Mary Calmes - Sariel - brilliant, the imagery is so intense... Jacob Gray is a strong man and Mary's angel is a monster with a grace that has eroded over time... love it... 5/5

Matthew Vandrew - The Platypus Learns Astrophysics... how can something that had such a thread of humour in it turn my emotions inside out? The goodbye... \*sniff\*... I didn't want this story to end.... 5/5

cornelia Gray - The Angel Blues... This angel was so sweet, loved the descriptions of him, and Morgan as the man on the edge...Would love to see what the punishment was, would it mean Spencer had to leave?? Really good story 4/5

Clare London - Redemption... I read this one with a lot of hope for Ziba... i wasnt disappointed... lovely 4/5

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### **Julio Genao says**

#### **Leaderboard:**

**"Sariel" by Mary Calmes:** 5 of 5 stars

**"The Angel Blues" by Cornelia Grey** 4 of 5 stars

**"Redemption" by Clare London** 4 of 5 stars

All others: not so much.

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### **Audrey says**

A pretty darn good anthology with an angel theme. Full review on *Boy Meets Boy Reviews* will be posted on Christmas Day! :)

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### **Bookwatcher says**

#### **AND THE OSCAR GO TO....**

THE PLATYPUS LEARNS ASTROPHYSICS by Matthew Vandrew

This story was perfect! Hilarious, romantic and so well written that I search for more, and read also a free story of this writer!

And now, for each story, the vote and some times a quick comment (that's the order on this anthology)

\*MORNING GLOW by Taylor Lochland **5 stars**

\*A TRAIL OF FEATHERS by Sarah Ann Watts **2 stars**

\*HEART'S SALVATION by Reve Garrison **5 stars** HOTTTTTTTT! This story is veeeeery HOT!

\*IN THE HANDS OF THE GODS by Jana Denardo **3 stars**. Hot scenes but annoying Latin terms (and I speak Italian, some Latin I understand... just to tell that if annoyed me maybe you will be bored to death)

\*A VOICE IN THE DARKNESS by Patric Michael **5 stars**. OMG Looooove this story! Made my cry so much!

\*SOME COMFORT by S. Blaise **3 stars**. Too much hush... too quick... but is not bad.

\*ACENSION by RJ Scott (*should be ascension, no? Writer or editor distraction?*) **2 stars**

\*SARIEL by Mary Calmes **0 star**. Sorry, but I hate it. Was creepy, and I don't like it. I like horror books (I looooove Stephen King, for example), but this story was gross, not scary!

\*THE PLATYPUS LEARNS ASTROPHYSICS by Matthew Vandrew **5 stars** (if this story was a movie would win my Oscar!)

\*THE ANGEL BLUES by Cornelia Grey **3 stars**.

\*REDEMPTION by Clare London **4 stars**. Marvelous writing!

\*HERBAL TEA by H.J. Blues **4 stars**. Great story, lovely end, huge flaw...if Justin has his cloths ripped (nieeeeece that part) how could he get dressed again? But is a great story, almost got 5 stars!

\*THE TENTH AVATAR by Roland Graeme **5 stars** and made me cry! So beautiful story!

\*SANTANGELO by Zahra Owens **5 stars**. This writer touch deep in my heart. My applause!

\*THE ARCHANGEL OF CASTRO by Diana Copland **5 stars**. Wonderful story to end this amazing anthology.

As you notice, the most of the stories got my 4 or 5 stars, but I'll not give a general vote (would not the fair give less, to the ones that deserve more, and vice versa).

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### **Crouck says**

Specifically for Mary Calmes. I wasn't going to leave a review since that was the only one I read, but ...

#### **\*\*General Spoiler Warning\*\***

Look, it was dumb. It was so very dumb. The worst kind of insta-love, the majority of it was one character's sad sack monologue, and for the love of-- ok, well the end had me cackling.

Also: MC (can't remember his name already~) with his bland-ass first person perspective is not afraid of bugs. That's the grand act of bravery or whatever to earn Sariel's trust. And then Sariel turns into the most beautiful non-human (MC is the most beautiful human, btw) and they have sex-monologue-sex-monologue.

I think, out of the constant eye rolls, the largest eye roll had to go to the part where MC thinks "dying like this would be alright," when Sariel is choking the air out of him. Lol, *No* Sariel decides, no, because MC is willing to die for whatever (non-apparent) reason, then he has passed the test and has earned the One Gay Angel'sTM love.

Also, MC starts speaking like a child, which creeped me out. This conversation, where Sariel basically says he'll commit spousal murder if MC tries to leave him, MC is like "tee-hee!":

"It is the only kind to be made. A covenant with an angel must be one of life and death; all else binds not. Just as I took your oath from your lips, your life freely given to me, there can be no rescinding of your promise. I will take your life should you try and take flight from my side."

I smiled at him. "It's scary when you say it like that."

In the end, MC welcomes Sariel (into his) home (ass).

Spare me. Just. Spare me.

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### **Julesmarie says**

Some of the stories were excellent, but as an anthology, I had a really hard time getting through this one. I appreciate the attempt to include other cultures and belief systems into the guardian spirits and heavenly beings pantheon, but those stories seemed the most forced and contrived to me, like they were trying so hard to twist the story so it would fit into this anthology that they sacrificed the integrity of what could otherwise have been a good story. I felt like I was slogging through, trying to force myself to finish some of these. Because of that, this anthology felt less successful as a whole than some others I've read.

As is usual with me when I read anthologies, I have a few stories that I loved and that I'll read again, and

some I'll be glad to not have to look at again.

I loved:  
Ascension  
Sariel  
The Archangel of Castro

I liked:  
Santangelo  
Heart's Salvation

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### **Marlobo says**

Average rating a little below 3,5 stars.

Morning Glow by Taylor Lochland - 2 stars

A Trail of Feathers by Sarah Ann Watts - DNF

Heart's Salvation by Réve Garrison - 2 stars

In the Hands of the Gods by Jana Denardo - 3,5 stars

A Voice in the Darkness by Patric Michael - 4 stars

Some Comfort by S. Blaise - 4,5 stars

Ascension by RJ Scott - 2 stars

Sariel by Mary Calmes - 2 stars

### **The Platypus Learns Astrophysics by Matthew Vandrew - 5 stars**

The Angel Blues by Cornelia Grey - 3 stars

Redemption by Clare London - 2,5 stars

Herbal Tea by H.J. Brues - 3 stars

The Tenth Avatar by Roland Graeme - 3.5 stars

Santangelo by Zahra Owens - 4 stars

The Archangel of Castro by Diana Copland - 4 stars

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## Genre says

I have to admit that I was a bit unsure about getting this anthology. Not because I thought the writing would be bad, or that I wouldn't enjoy the stories; I had simply convinced myself that the stories were all going to be far too similar in theme and therefore I would get bored of the anthology before the end. I'm quite glad to say that this wasn't the case at all and I was surprised at how varied the themes within each of the stories turned out to be.

The theme that I thought would be most prevalent in the anthology is that of the guardian angel who falls in love with his charge. This story or a variation of that theme did appear in the anthology on a few occasions, but was so well done by most of the authors that two of those stories turned out to be amongst my favourites. *The Angel Blues* by Cornelia Grey told of world weary cop Morgan who is visited by a strange man. The man appears and disappears at random, causing Morgan to suspect that he is going insane, especially when he holds conversation with the strange man. This story had one of my favourite lines in it which made me smile. Morgan asks the strange man, who he now convinced is his guardian angel, what his name is, to which the reply is, Spencer:

*Morgan snorted a half-laugh. "Right. What kind of angel has a name like Spencer? It should sound, like, aristocratic. Something snobby and important, you know. Maybe in French," he added, suddenly intrigued. French did seem very apt for an angel.*

*"Sorry to disappoint you," the angel—Spencer, whatever—said, cocking his head to the side. "I'll make sure I bring this very important matter up during the next council. All angels should switch their names to French."*

The second story containing this theme that I liked is *The Platypus Learns Astrophysics* by Matthew Vandrew. The story follows bad tempered Jonas who is not impressed when an angel appears in his office wanting to change his life. When things go pear shaped, Jonas is stuck with the angel until they can figure out how to clear up the problem. The mix of the sarcastic Jonas and the confused angel, coupled with a sharp witty tone to the writing, made this a delightful story to read.

Another theme which cropped up from time to time is that of the angel who uses his powers to help two men who are in trouble or to get them together. In *A Voice in the Darkness* by Patric Michael, two men are trapped in a car after a rock slide falls on their car. Landon comes round to find his husband, Bryce, unconscious and possibly badly injured. The voice of a strange man outside the car, helps Landon through the ordeal and gives him the encouragement to escape his confinement. This was a poignant story, told partly through flashback, of the relationship between Landon and Bryce and how they came to be travelling that lonely road in a storm. I was gripped by the tension of their present situation, which then contrasted nicely with the parts which showed their love for each other. Another story which used this theme was a much sweeter and light-hearted story, *The Archangel of Castro* by Diana Copland, which told of a kind hearted older man, Nick, who is in love with Brian, a younger man but Nick's low self esteem means that he thinks he has no chance of love with him. It takes a nudge from a very unusual angel to get them together.

I liked the stories which took the angel mythology and worked it into the story. For example, my favourite story from the anthology, *Redemption* by Clare London, took place in the "Arrivals Hall" of what seemed to be hell. Ziba takes men to work for him so that they can eventually redeem themselves. His attention is drawn to a man, kneeling unobtrusively at the back of the hall. The story then follows Ziba's relationship with this man and his reasons for being at the arrivals hall. The atmosphere of the story was full of

oppressiveness and sorrow at the beginning and I liked how this gradually changed as the story progressed. I also liked the faint note of hope running through the story.

There were many other stories I could recommend from the anthology and honourable mentions should go to *The Tenth Avatar* by Roland Graeme, which told the story of a Indian gay man whose relationship with a delivery man causes him to evaluate his life and his Hindu faith; and *In the Hands of the Gods* by Jana Denardo whose historical story set in ancient Pompeii, gave an insight into the customs and expectations of living in Roman society.

There were also a couple of stories to which I had mixed feelings. *Sariel* by Mary Calmes, began really well with a great mixture of horror, sexual tension and angelic mythology, but I felt it lost its way a little towards the end and that the HEA was a little forced. Also *A Trail of Feathers* by Sarah Ann Watts, was well written but the dreamlike quality to the writing left me feeling a little disconnected to the events and characters.

Overall, I would recommend this anthology. Its themes and characters are varied, the writing is consistently good throughout all the stories, and the ideas are well constructed and executed. If you like fantasy stories then this should be an anthology which appeals to you. I'll also say that for those of you who don't really like angel stories, the definition of 'angel' in this anthology is wide enough that I think that many of the stories should still appeal to you too. I think I shall find myself re-reading some of these stories again in the future, which to me is a sign of a good anthology.

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### **SheReadsALot says**

I really wanted to read "Sariel" by Mary Calmes and I did.

Fucking.  
Loved.  
It.

### **4.5 Stars**

It was Mary Calmes goodness wrapped together with history - I love history. Yep, there's an alpha angel who possessed the hell out of Jacob, a regular grad student who almost raped by bad guys. We don't know a lot of Jacob's back story. I didn't think it was needed so I am happy. It's instalove but it surpasses it because for angels in this story, there is no in between. They can see your inner most desires and wants . it's either black or white. No gray. So I won't gripe with the binding declarations made because it was inevitable. But also made from free will.

Hot stuff.

Angels are not my fave paranormal read. I lump them together with psychics. (Bottom of the totem pole for me) I might read more stories from the anthology, I might not. \*shrugs\*

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