

## The Penthouse

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# **The Penthouse**

by [WorseOmens](#)

## Summary

There's an apartment block in Mayfair, where a demon lives on the top floor. He's an interesting neighbour, to say the least.

(Or: Crowley sees a tragic human and accidentally adopts him)

# Chapter 1

Leo wasn't great at socialising, but he was good at other things. He was good at his job, and he had a stable income that set him up with a swanky flat in Mayfair, even though he was still just a young man. He moved in during the December of 1967, on his twentieth birthday. It looked like a nice place, with a gorgeous 1930s Bentley parked outside. There was frost on the ground, nipping at his lungs, but he was too excited to move in to really care.

Moving boxes was a good workout, up and down the stairs while the elevator was broken. It kept him warm, but it got old after the third trip. It was a petty annoyance, and it might have tempted him to swear a bit, if not for something else catching his eye.

A man was coming up the stairs toward him. He wore dark glasses, with red hair in a style which made him look like one of the Beatles. He was older than him, sure, but Leo was anything but a traditionalist. Homosexuality had just been decriminalised and, though society would still throw him out on his ear if he took them at their word, he couldn't help himself from letting his eyes roam now and then. He was still terrified of being found out... But at least now, he wouldn't be legally prosecuted if he was.

Perhaps intentionally, Leo bumped into his shoulder, making him drop the cassette tapes he was holding. "Oh, I am so - sorry?" he said, going to help him pick them up, but drawing back slightly as the man let out an almost reptilian hiss of frustration.

"Watch where you're going, boy," he snapped, snatching his tapes back out of Leo's hands and continuing on his way up the stairs. Leo deflated slightly, sighing.

"Well, he was charming," he muttered under his breath once he was out of sight.

"I heard that!" the man called back down the stairwell, making him jump. Leo frowned, brow furrowed. What the fuck...?

That was Leo's first interaction with the man he came to know as Mr Crowley. He only discovered his name by chance, when he was chatting with the landlord. This was almost a month after he'd moved in, and he'd not seen hide nor hair of the man since.

"Thanks for the heads up, Mr Archibald," the landlord, a woman called Eve, said. She was currently checking the seal on the windows in the back of Leo's apartment, which seemed to be coming loose.

"It's no problem. I'd hate to see another tenant falling out a window just because I didn't say anything," he said, leaning against the doorframe.

"Well, most likely person to fall would be Mr Crowley, and I'm pretty sure the other tenants might give you a medal if you saw him off," she said amusedly, stepping back from the window. "He lives in the penthouse, and he has more glass than anyone."

Leo tilted his head. "What's so bad about him?"

"He's a grumpy sod, is all. You might have seen him - red hair, always wearing sunglasses," she said with a shrug. He nodded, recalling their encounter on the stairs. "I don't mind him. He pays rent on time, and he's always been nice enough to me. He says I remind him of someone..."

"Who?" he said, idly trailing her as they meandered toward his front door.

"Another woman called Eve, he said, who he'd known when he was young. Didn't say much more than that," she replied. She paused in the hallway before the door.

"You don't think he fancies you, does he?" he asked. Leo had fully accepted that he had no chance with Mr Crowley, even from their brief first meeting. He'd probably dodged a bullet there anyway, by the sounds of it.

"No, definitely not. He's already got his eyes set on someone, everyone knows that," she said.

He cocked a brow. "No one likes him, but you all know his personal life?"

She smirked. "He's not trying to hide it, Leo," she said. "He's always on the phone to someone, calling her angel, rushing off for her at the drop of a hat. Whoever 'angel' is, he's at her beckon call."

Years passed by. Leo passed by Mr Crowley in the hallways sometimes, or on the stairs. Eve was right. It was fairly common to overhear him talking to 'angel', sometimes jogging out of the building with the phone pressed to his ear. He was definitely a dedicated boyfriend, even if he was a bit of an asshole in the meantime. He'd seen the way he parked that Bentley, and he swore it must be intentional. No one could be that bad at parking by incompetence alone.

Leo was coming home late from work one night. It was 1975, freezing cold, and the elevator was broken again. He'd asked Eve why it never seemed to work, and she had no idea. She was shelling out a lot of money to get it fixed every time, only for it to break again due to some petty fault in the machinery. She swore that there was some sort of imp at work here (and she wasn't totally wrong, but Crowley would be very offended to hear himself called an imp). Sluggishly, Leo forced himself up the stairs, thinking motivating thoughts about his warm bed and a cup of tea.

Overhead, a door slammed open, making him jump slightly. He heard someone battering the elevator button, only to curse violently. The sound echoed down the concrete stairwell, and Leo felt a pulse of sympathy. Me too, dude... me too. Rapid footsteps sounded shortly after, descending the stairs. Every now and then, they paused, and each pause was followed by the sound of something heavy landing on the floor. He frowned. What was that? He got his answer fairly quickly.

Mr Crowley dropped down from the floor above, landing heavily less than a foot in front of Leo. He screeched, his exhausted mind reeling, and jumped backward in shock. His foot

slipped. He missed the step behind him, and his chest lurched as he fell backwards. Pain exploded in the back of his head. He bounced twice down the steps before coming to a halt on level ground. He slumped against the hard floor, skull throbbing, feeling his blood begin to drip out onto the concrete. He whimpered, cracking open his eyes. The world swam, split and spun, while black spots threatened to blot out his vision entirely.

Then, a figure was leaning over him. He saw an orange smudge, with two black patches that might have been real, or might have been his eyes failing him. "Fuck, fuck, fuck... Are you okay?" someone asked. Leo vaguely knew the voice.

He let out an unintelligent moan, which was supposed to mean: Yeah I'm fine, don't worry about it, wasn't watching where I was going. Should've expected you to drop randomly from the ceiling, honestly. My mistake.

"Shit. Just - don't move," he said. For a split second, Leo's vision cleared slightly. He saw Mr Crowley look back and forth suspiciously. He couldn't help but think he was about to run, leaving him to die on the stairs. After all, no one had been here to see it happen. It would be written off as an accident, and Mr Crowley would go about his life like he always had.

To his surprise, Leo felt a hand on his forehead. It was stone cold, and bony. It was a fleeting touch, then it was gone. As it vanished, so did the wound on his head. He sat up, blinking in shock. His vision cleared, his pain faded and even his fatigue disappeared.

He opened his mouth to thank Mr Crowley, planning to also ask him what the fuck kind of black magic he'd just pulled, but he was too slow. The demon, who had not learnt his lesson at all and didn't like to stick around with the consequences of his actions anyway, had already vaulted over the next railing and dropped onto the floor below. Aziraphale had called him, and he did not want to be late.

One year later, and Eve had convinced the elevator to start moving on a semi-regular basis. It had happened not long after Leo's fall on the stairs, and he couldn't help but wonder if it was connected. Mr Crowley had healed him, after all... Maybe he'd fixed the elevator, too. Who, or what, could he be? He often wondered about that question during lunch breaks, or when his attention drifted away from the TV. Maybe he was a kind of standoffish benevolent spirit, or a particularly surly witch.

He was deep in these thoughts when the elevator doors juddered opened for him. Someone cleared their throat. He looked up with a start; he'd forgotten he'd even called the elevator. Mr Crowley stood inside, leaning nonchalantly in the corner.

"Going down?" he drawled, finger poised over the button for the ground floor.

Leo coughed awkwardly, stepping side. "Uh, yeah," he said. He fidgeted awkwardly for a moment. The lift was slow, barely functional... "Mr Crowley, right?"

"Yup," he replied distractedly. Leo pressed his lips into a thin line, breathing deeply from the metallic air.

"Do you remember - uh - that night last year?" he asked tentatively. The man fixed him with a quizzical stare. "On the stairs, you knocked me over."

His eyebrows raised slightly. "That was you, was it?" he said guardedly. "I remember. Sorry about that."

"You saved me," he said. Crowley set his jaw hard, and Leo suddenly felt that he had made a mistake.

"Don't mention it. I mean that. Don't," he said tightly. Leo shut his mouth, realising that Mr Crowley probably didn't want word of his abilities getting out. He saw him appraise him through his dark lenses, just out of the corner of his eye. He sighed. "What's your name, kid?"

"Leo," he said quietly. Then, he added on peevishly: "And I'm nearly thirty."

"Good for you, kid," he replied, emphasising the word again this time. "I knew another Leo once, a long time ago. Bright lad. I bought a sketch of the Mona Lisa off him."

With that odd comment, the elevator doors finally opened, and Mr Crowley stepped out without so much as a goodbye. Leo stared after him, baffled, and with a smidge more begrudging respect for him than he had before.

Leo's thirty-fifth birthday was a wild one. There was far too much alcohol, and not enough self control. He'd peeled away from his friends sometime around midnight, sneaking over to a favourite bar of his. He'd returned to his apartment block with another man, around his age, with tousled brown hair and kind green eyes. Admittedly, those weren't the first things on his mind when they were making out in the elevator. He had all but lost himself in the moment, and he certainly hadn't noticed the lift slowing down. There was a ding, and the doors slid open. His heart dropped.

Wrenching himself back, he stumbled over to the other side of the lift. His date did the same, gasping for breath and flushed deep red. Leo's trembling hands gripped at the railing, heart pumping adrenaline through his whole body at an alarming rate. Fuck. Fuck, he was out, he'd been caught, he -

"Uh," Crowley said, scratching the back of his neck. His gaze flicked back and forth between the two men, and he nodded slowly, backing up. "I'll just... er, take the stairs. Sorry."

It had ruined the mood a bit. He tried to enjoy the rest of the night, but in the back of his mind, anxiety was running rampant. He'd been caught. His secret was out, after all this time... He'd been so careful. So many years in the closet, and now he'd gone and ruined it just because of one stupid night. Mr Crowley didn't strike him as the type to gossip, but what did he know? One stray word would ruin him. It was 1982; things weren't as bad as they once had been, perhaps, but that didn't make them good.

Leo fiddled with his hands, heart fluttering. His head was pounding with a monster hangover, but this was too important to leave off. He watched as the floor numbers lit up in succession,

taking him up to the penthouse. It was eight in the morning, and he felt awfully rude calling on someone this early, but he had to make sure he caught him before he went to work. If he did work...

He knocked on Mr Crowley's door. For a moment, he worried no one was home.

"Who is it?" his voice called. He sounded on-edge. Leo guessed he didn't get many house callers.

"It's Leo," he called back weakly. There was a pause.

The door opened a crack, a sliver of black glass appearing as Crowley looked through. "Stairwell boy?" he said.

"Um... Yes?" he said. He'd expected slurs, but that worked too. He guessed that nearly accidentally murdering someone was more memorable than finding them snogging a man in the lift.

"What do you want?"

He was slightly taken aback by the bluntness. "I just wanted to... apologise?"

"What for?" he said, easing the door open a little more. It was the first time Leo had seen him without a blazer, but he'd stuck to his all-black aesthetic nonetheless.

"Last night. You found me and - and that guy, in the lift," he said hesitantly, his throat dry and his head nearly splitting itself open with pain.

"Oh, that. No worries. I don't care," he said. He went to close the door, but Leo's hand shot out, stopping him.

"Please, you don't understand," he begged desperately. "If - if anyone finds out..."

Crowley fixed him with an unreadable stare. The human swallowed hard, resisting the urge to cry. He was probably too dehydrated, anyway. "I understand," he said eventually.

Leo let out an affronted, pained noise. "Do you?" he cried. "Do you have any idea what it's like, loving someone, but knowing that if anyone ever found out, they'd - they'd want to kill you for it?"

Crowley's face answered for him. He set his jaw, his lip twitching slightly. His eyebrows drew themselves together tightly. Leo's mouth dropped open.

"O - oh," he breathed, the realisation hitting like a ton of bricks. He felt like a fool. He stepped back sheepishly. "Um... I guess Angel isn't - uh... isn't a woman, then?"

Crowley let out a snort, his face twisting into a bitter smile. He shook his head. "No, he's not," he said. "Been eavesdropping on me, have you?"

He shuffled his feet. "Everyone has. For like, fifteen years," he said. He dared to look up apologetically. "I'm so sorry. I had no idea..."

"Likewise. We're no different from anyone else," he said, with a heavy voice. He glanced over his shoulder, mulling something over. "Do you want to come in? You look like you could use an aspirin."

Leo smiled shyly. "Sure. Thanks," he said.

Time flew in Crowley's apartment. Even with the expanse of glass walls letting in the sunshine, it had a muted atmosphere, grey from floor to ceiling. They settled on the sofa, though on the way through, Leo noticed a throne in his office. It was gaudy, but he had to appreciate the flair.

Turns out, Mr Crowley was not as aloof as people thought. Once they got talking, he seemed perfectly normal, if a little eccentric. Leo, relaxed in the presence of another gay man, began to recount stories of sneaking around with previous boyfriends, narrowly avoiding getting caught. Some were funny, others bittersweet. Crowley had a few tales of his own, about a man who was apparently called Mr Fell. He wouldn't say his first name, though. Apparently, Mr Fell wasn't keen for anyone to find out about their involvement, either.

"S'nothing personal," Crowley assured him. "You might meet him one day, who knows?"

"I hope so. I want to see what kind of guy managed to turn your head," he joked. His headache had eased significantly, and he wondered if it was really the aspirin, or another one of Crowley's magic tricks.

Crowley grimaced, muttering something about a goody-two-shoes nerd, and Leo laughed. It was the first of many chats between the two of them. Every few weeks, they'd run into one another and get talking. Sometimes, they'd get a drink in Crowley's flat. Nothing ever happened between the two of them and, honestly, Leo found it refreshing. It was nice to have a platonic male friend he could talk to, without worrying about ruining things. Besides, it was nice to hear him talk about his angel whenever he was drunk and loose-lipped. He hoped that one day, he'd love someone as much as Crowley loved Mr Fell.

People noticed, of course. He heard whispers in the hallways, nasty rumours spreading about what the two of them were getting up to in his flat. He just rolled his eyes at them. Mr Crowley heard them, too, and found them equally as amusing. Sometimes, they'd spend an evening recounting the ridiculous stories people had been spreading, and laughing raucously.

"You and Mr Crowley get on well these days," Eve once commented while she inspected his flat (which, for a well-behaved and long-standing tenant like him, was really more of a social call). A grey streak had appeared in her hair, and laugh lines wrinkled her skin. "How did that happen?"

He shrugged, pouring her some tea. "We just got talking one day," he said casually. "He's not so bad once you get to know him."



"It's just funny, is all," she said, shrugging. She was trying to be non-judgemental, that much was obvious by her tone, and the way she struggled to look directly at him. He could tell what she was thinking.

"I'm not sleeping with him, Eve," he said, a hint of amusement in his voice.

She gave an awkward smile. "I wouldn't hold it against you if you were, you know," she said reassuringly. "It's 1983. Times have changed."

"I know, Eve, but I'm not interested in Mr Crowley, and he has his angel already," he insisted, rolling his eyes at her with a smile. "Besides, he's more like a father figure to me."

She raised a brow. "Really?" she said, in abject disbelief. "Now that is hard to believe."

"Why?"

"He doesn't come across the fatherly type," she said, sipping her tea. She rested her hip against his kitchen worktop.

"Well, he is. He's really taken me under his wing," he said. It was true; Crowley had been around the block more times than he could count, and if ever Leo needed advice these days, his first stop was invariably the penthouse flat.

It was exactly that way, for years. The eighties passed by, then the nineties... Eventually, Leo began to look older than Crowley. He'd long since accepted that his friend probably wasn't human, but if there was ever something he couldn't explain, he politely ignored it. The two of them had never discussed their obvious differences. There was no real need; it was a strong, but easy-going friendship. He never stopped visiting the penthouse, even as the decades crawled by. Crowley was there for him, supporting him behind the scenes, when he decided to start coming out in his mid-forties. He also proved to be an excellent wingman, but that was a story for another time. It was during one of their nights out, in fact, that Leo met his first long-term boyfriend.

He also never stopped thinking of Crowley as a father. Leo's own parents had both died so, when he eventually proposed to his boyfriend, he asked Crowley to give him away at the wedding. The demon might have cried a bit, but he swore that if Leo ever told anyone, he'd throw him out the window. He had then accepted the offer, but refused to make a speech; the ceremony was beautiful... and thankfully not in a church. Even when Crowley had to move out for a few years for work (childcare, surprisingly), they had kept in touch.

As Leo got older, he found it harder and harder to take the stairs. Then, the elevator stopped breaking. In fact, it ran smoother now than it ever had (he suspected it had something to do with the fact that he mentioned his arthritis to Crowley one morning). Leo would be coming up on his seventy-first birthday soon, and his skin had gone wrinkled and leathery with time, his spine had stooped, his joints turned creaky. The demon looked as young as he had when they first bumped into one another in the stairwell, all the way back in 1967.

The news was troubling this summer. The whole M25 had gone up in flames, Atlantis had risen, world politics was going to shit and Crowley had been very irate recently. All these

things happening at once, well... It couldn't be good. When he woke up one morning to find that the news was claiming they were all mass hallucinations, he didn't believe a word of it. That said, he also didn't want to know the truth. He wondered if Crowley was okay... Telling his husband that he was just going to visit, he headed out and took the elevator up to the top floor.

He knocked on the penthouse door, and checked his watch. He was usually up by this time. No one answered. With a frown, he knocked again, harder this time. Finally, the door opened, but it was not Crowley who stood before him.

"Hello there," said the stranger. He had fluffy, white-blond hair, and wore a white coat over the top of an antiquated beige waistcoat. He seemed a little on-edge, and he held something behind his back that Leo suspected was some sort of bludgeoning instrument (he was right). "Can I help you?"

Leo tilted his head slightly. "I'm a friend of Mr Crowley's," he said, his voice rough like sandpaper after years of use, and a bad smoking habit he'd long since kicked (at Crowley's insistence). "I don't think we've met."

"No, I don't believe so," he the man said. He held out his free hand to shake. "I'm Mr Fell. And you are?"

His face twitched in a broad grin. "Leo," he said, clasping both hands over Mr Fell's and shaking vigorously. The angel gave a strained, polite smile, completely befuddled by his odd reaction.

"Um... Shall I fetch Crowley...?" he suggested, stepping back as if to call out to him.

"No, no, of course not. I'm very sorry to interrupt," he snickered, turning back toward the elevator. "I'll call back later. You two enjoy yourselves, won't you?"

"Excuse me?"

As the doors slid shut behind him, concealing Mr Fell's baffled look, Leo broke into a fit of laughter. He took out his phone, typing out a message to Crowley. He may be old, but he had moved with the times.

ME: I just called by your flat. I didn't expect the famous Mr Fell himself to open the door!

CROWLEY: (typing...)

CROWLEY: (typing...)

CROWLEY: I know, he's just telling me about the funny old man who called.

ME: who are you calling old?

CROWLEY: He's acting weird. What did you say to him??

ME: ask him :)

CROWLEY: Just tell me

ME: ask

CROWLEY: all right, I will

Leo tucked his phone in his pocket, stepping out of the elevator and going back into his flat. His husband was still in bed, his loud snores drifting through the open door. He decided to surprise him with a mug of peppermint tea, his favourite, and a biscuit. Humming a tune to himself as he worked, he felt his phone buzz. He took it out, and smirked at the notification on his lock screen.

CROWLEY: LEO YOU BASTARD

# And They Parted As Friends: An Ending

## Chapter Summary

The end of Leo's story

WARNING: do NOT read unless you want your heart broken

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Leo's heart monitor beeped. It was a slow, steady noise, ever-present in his hospital room. The harsh rasp of the breathing apparatus was slower still. His eyelids were dropping, a deep and heady fatigue lapping closer to him. He could feel something coming. It was like watching the tide come in, rushing up onto the shore and falling back in an endless and unhurried rhythm. He'd be washed away by it soon. He knew that.

There was a light knock by the door. He raised his head, and a crooked smile strained into life on his face. "Hello, stranger," he croaked.

Crowley smiled sadly, leaning on the doorframe. "Heya, kiddo," he said. It had been a week since his last visit. He came in, settling on the chair beside Leo's bed. "How's things?"

"Can't you tell?" he replied wryly.

"Course," he said, sighing deeply. He tried to give his trademark smirk, but it fell short. It was hollow, with none of his usual mischievous spark. "But I have to keep you mortals guessing, don't I?"

Leo let out a low, humming noise. His body felt heavy and slow. His fogged mind could only just grasp conversations, but he'd always felt a little more able when Crowley was by his side. He had to wonder whether or not he would have lived to be 107 if they had never met one another...

"Do you think I'll see Paul again?" he wondered aloud, his clouded eyes angled toward the ceiling. His husband had died almost ten years ago; Crowley had been there for him while he mourned, like he had always been before. "When I'm gone."

Crowley let out a choked noise, pulling off his glasses and cradling his head in his hands. "Fuck. Don't say that," he said, his voice wavering.

"You old softie," he said. One shaking, wrinkled hand reached out to touch him on the shoulder. "You always knew this had to happen, one day..."

"Not so soon," he said, sucking in a long breath. He didn't lift his head.

"It's been decades," Leo said, with a note of amusement. He'd accepted his fate months ago, but he'd guessed that his immortal friend would not take the news as well as he had. He'd guessed correctly.

"That's nothing to me," he said, a trifle sharply. He finally looked up, revealing his slitted yellow eyes.

Leo's brow twitched up slightly. "So that's why you wear sunglasses," he said.

It took Crowley a moment. His eyebrows knitted together, squinting at the elderly man like he'd gone insane, before barking out a laugh from pure exasperation. "You're on your deathbed, you mad old coot, and all you care about is my eyes?" he scoffed, shaking his head. At least he was smiling. "You never change."

"That makes two of us," he quipped, withdrawing his hand back to lay it on the bedsheets. He let out the longest breath that his overtired lungs were capable of holding.

A guilty look passed over Crowley's face like a shadow. "Leo..." he said, fixing his eyes onto him intently. They had gained a red rim, but no tears had fallen. "Listen, I... I need to tell you something."

"You're gay?" he joked. They shared a light chuckle.

"Not quite," he said finally. He sat up a little straighter, an odd occurrence for him, and raised his chin. "In all the time I've known you, I've never told you what I am."

Leo shrugged weakly. "Don't be stupid," he said. "I know what you are."

Crowley's eyebrows shot up. "You do?"

He hummed, a gruff and rumbling noise, like distant thunder. "You're my friend," he murmured, drawing in a shallow breath as his eyelid fluttered.

Crowley's eyes stung. He gaped at him, throat tightening as Leo gave him a fatigued grin. Tentatively, he reached across, taking his hand. It was warm against his reptilian skin, speckled and weathered with age. A single tear fell from the demon's eye. As it dropped onto Leo's gnarled hand, rolling down to soak into the hem of his hospital gown, the sound of a flatlining heart monitor filled his ears. Crowley gritted his teeth, suppressing a scream. He bowed his head, tightening his grip on his hand as Leo faded away. There was a clear DNR sign above his bed. He was ready to go, and Crowley was not evil enough to make him stay.

"Leo..." he sobbed quietly, his whole body shaking. "Leo, you bastard..."

## Chapter End Notes

If it's any consolation to anyone, I cried a bit too. Rest in peace, Leo.



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