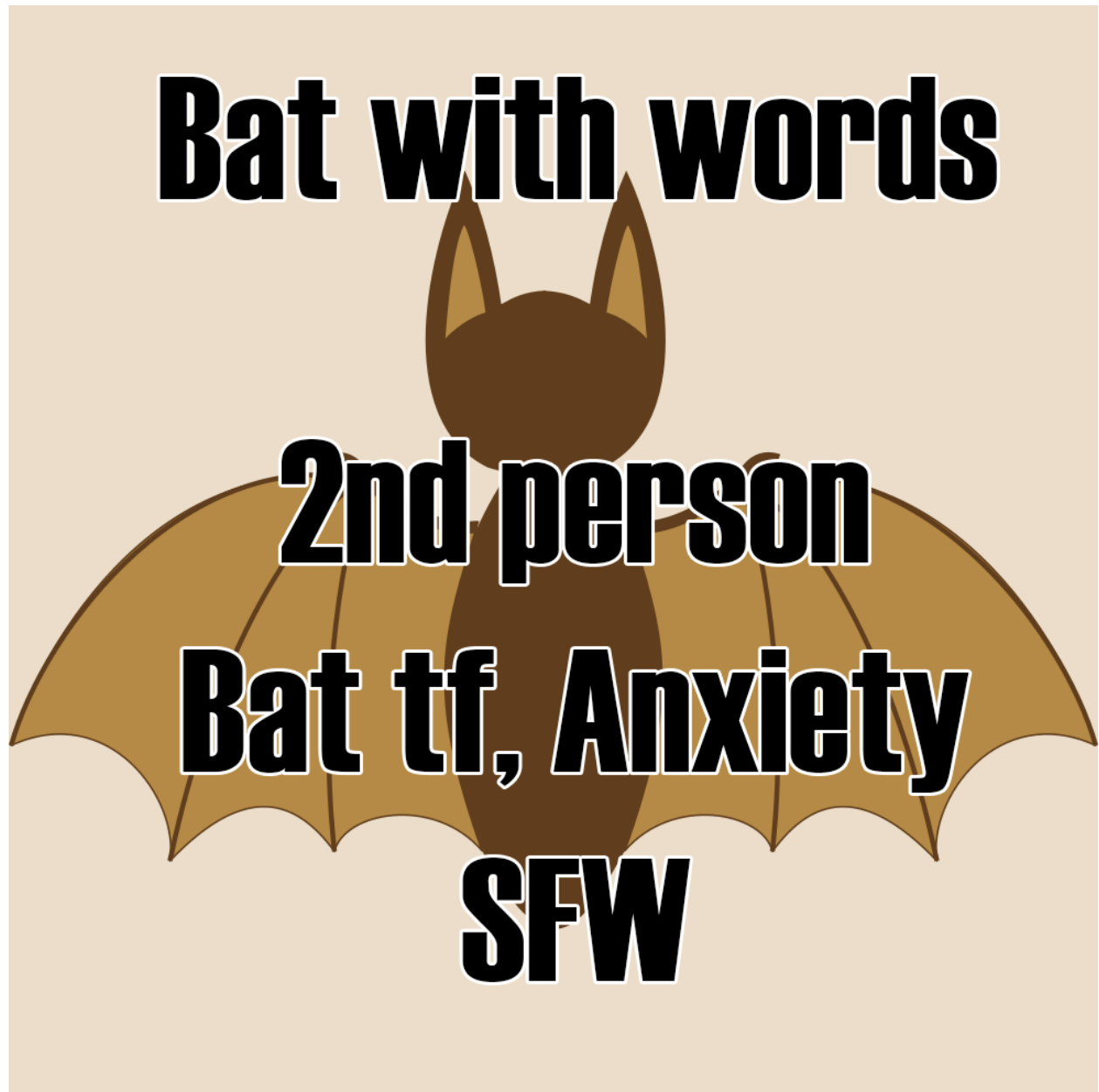


Bat with words



Bat with words

2nd person

Bat tf, Anxiety

SFW

Today you're being bold and talking in the chatroom is going well. That is, until someone you don't know butts in. They pry into your cute bat avatar. You try to turn your attention to something else, but they won't drop the 'issue'.

You stroke your chin, coming up with your reply. There's an onset of a stubble, not good. You kept clean-shaven so you could pick up on this. As you steer the conversation to a different topic, the heckler makes a point that rings true to you: why do you defend yourself this vehemently? It sounds like you're a furry.

A fuzzy scruff grows around your neck. The dense, orange fuzz creeps into your peripherals. You're torn between the active conversation and the onset transformation.

Deep breathes. Try and collect yourself. Stand up for yourself.

You deny being a furry. Yet, when they reply, they've already found your social media accounts. It's full of bat stuff, but not pointing to anything that should flag you as a furry.

The malicious talking partner is attracting the ire of others. His hyper-focus is obvious. He keeps commenting on your chats and it isn't long before he's expelled. He has one final barb however in the form of a lengthy DM. He calls you a "**fucking furfag**" who can't keep his "**owo** and **uwu**" shit out of other people's lives, "constantly reminding others how **horny** you are."

It drives you over the edge. Why does every social interaction turn into a disaster? You bury your face in your hands, the keyboard spews gibberish. You don't care. Fingers elongate as membranes catch the sleeves of your shirt. Cotton cuts into the delicate skin, but the emotional pain is worse. Dark brown hair is growing all over, as your stature becomes lankier. Your face shifts, your nose stretches far down, while your ears migrate upwards.

Pounding in your eardrums is the bustle on the streets a hundred meters from your window. It does not do your mental state any favor. You panic harder, and you grow decimeters longer. Your shirt is confining, and those clumsy claws on the end of your wings make removing it harder. The needles aren't as maneuverable as your dexterous fingers, but you eventually manage to free yourself from the garment.

Huff. Puff. Hyperventilating. Erratic breathing. Need help. Now.

Two needle-claws fumble for the phone in your pocket. The smooth nails and their incredible length make it nearly impossible to grip the slick surface.

Almost. The claws gingerly maneuver your phone to your wing. Time slows as it flips at the worst moment. It threatens to drop on the floor. Your heart sinks, but the slate is caught in your other wing at the last moment.

You've done this before, do it again.

After your near-heart attack, you bring down the wing and slam the phone on the desk. When it rests safely on the surface, you try to use your voice, but mostly manage to hack and cough.

"Ooochkay phev-" You try to intonate, but choke on your words... It makes you panic harder.

Your pants ride upwards as your legs push your chair back. You need help.

"Ccchhk, okaaay, phowne."

This time your phone springs to life, it prompts for a command.

"Kell sechiatreest."

The phone didn't fully understand the command and prompts you if you meant 'call psychiatrist'. You reply with a garbled "yes". The arduous task of calling one of the few people you trust is finally over.

The phone dials and rings, indicating the first try for a contact.

Nothing.

Come on.... Pick up...

Second ring. Tension builds further, your hips can't support your pants and underwear anymore. They drop down. You're now a naked 2.5 meter bat person, hunched over a black slab, contacting a human.

Third ring, still nothing. What if they don't want to talk? What if there's someone who needs more help? What if they're in an important talk?

You heave, the respirations are heavier and more erratic. Not good. Not good.

Fourth ring. This is too much. You tap the screen to end the phone call, only for the mind to catch up to the fact that you don't have fingers anymore. You brush the device away instead.

A "hello" sounds from the corner of your desk. Two claws carefully move the phone back towards you.

"Sorry for taking long, I had to finish something real quick, are you still there?" Your psychiatrist sounds louder than usual, but you can bear it, for now.

"Ha-hellow," intonating still takes a lot of effort, especially with a swollen throat and heaving breaths. "Ah'm hahving an assack." You're still finding your voice, it taking so long to normalize is frustrating.

"Could you speak up? You sound really far away"

You clear your throat, and yell at your phone: "I'm having an anxiety attack!" The clarity is surprising.

"Ah, loud and clear. Concentrate on your breathing, deep in," she exaggerates an inhale. "And deep out," emphasized by a breathe out.

You try to calm down your breathing, but hiccup at first. After a bit, it slows down.

"Ok, that sounds better," your psychiatrist comments. Could you tell me what happened?

You explain how you tried to socialize online, but got bullied for the effort. You also informed her you fully turned into a bat due to the stress.

You couldn't think of visiting a psychiatrist at first, the stress would easily rise to a batty fever pitch. All things considered, it went fine, good even. You **did** turn into a bat while discussing your anxieties. The expected panic didn't ensue. In fact, your counselor thought you looked cute in the cuddly animal sense. You didn't take the compliment at the time, she was probably being nice to you to calm your nerves. The sessions after that got planned royally, which helped a lot.

Back in the present, your psychiatrist remained positive.

"Don't feel bad. You actually interacted with strangers, it's hard to do at first. Try to build it up a bit, practice by doing it in situations where you're more comfortable. Take it a bit slower and it will come more naturally to you.

You relax your shoulders and hang your arms to your sides. You're finally able to enjoy your changed form. It's ironic that it's triggered by your anxiety, sometimes you *want* to change, just change your mindset.

You melt away into your chair, relaxing your lithe body. The fabric caresses the membranes between the arms. You want to explore them, but the noise from your phone grabs your attention.

"So...are you okay now?"

"Ah sorry, I enjoyed my changes so much, I forgot you were still there"

"Don't be, you need to blow off some steam after all the stress. And there's no better way to do so than to enjoy yourself. So... Do you still need me?"

"Nah, I'm fine, I'll relax for a bit and turn back later. Thank you for your time."

"Don't worry! And see you next week!"

With a harsh noise and some beeps, the phone comes to a rest.

There isn't much else to do this evening and you want to keep the positive vibe. You lay in your bed and bask in your altered form. Your claws ruffle through your fur and explore your body a bit. It's weird being fascinated by something you turn into under duress, but you couldn't help but admire yourself. Not long after, you turn to sleep

That night you had a dream of flying in the night sky, eating fruits, and resting upside-down. You've never tried flying, too worried to get caught, but the idea alone felt exciting.

The next morning you found yourself in bed again, naked. Clothes scattered about last night, but they were intact. The day itself went by well, you chalked it up to the great dream and relaxation you had the night before. But you couldn't shake the need to accomplish more.

The past few weeks went by better. Your psychiatrist gave you exercises that caught on. They let you handle situations better, reducing the chance of transforming. Coupled with less stress, you could feel your transformation setting in better. They allowed you to act a bit sooner before the changes set in. You still transform at inopportune times, but you could duck out at better times.

But another problem presented itself. Damien.

Any time you see him, your heart flutters. Your knees become weak. But worst of all, the transformation starts ever so slowly. Whenever his cute smile comes into view, your chest becomes hairy. Eye contact makes your ears pointy. You need to book it if he comes close to keep your bat form a secret.

It isn't a one-way street either. He steals glances at you when you share a classroom. And when he sees you looking back, he'd be quickly distracted with a blush. He also clams up if you walk past him in the rare moments you aren't taken by infatuation.

The mutual behavior in close proximity caught Damien's attention, and one morning there's a letter in your locker. It has a phone number with Damien's name on it.

"Call me if you're interested."

Wait, is he also? Why you out of all people? Is he interested in *you* or what you *are*? Did he find out?

Vertigo hits you, feign illness. Get out of sight. Bathrooms empty. Lock into stall. Mind racing. Bat form. Shit, shit, shit.

Minutes turn into hours. Being a large, lanky bat in a cramped stall is incredibly uncomfortable. Your mind races, you need a focus. With no good options, you decide to tackle Damien's letter, just to process the situation.

Your first option is to do nothing. Ignore Damien and avoid him as much as you can. It's tempting, but it would cause you more stress if he inevitably confronts you. Changing in public, because you talk to him, sounds like a terrible idea.

Second option: confront him yourself. If you take the initiative, you'd have control. You'd tell him how you feel and explain how it wouldn't work out. He'd probably weaponize his cute smile that makes your stomach flutter just by thinking about it. Even now you're enamored by his fantastic charm, you couldn't do that to him.

That left you with the third option and final option: call him. Damien almost certainly wrote the letter to get a date. It would be risky, but you couldn't put the idea out of your head. It would be the first time you'd do something with someone else and you are both interested in each other. You mulled over it, but couldn't imagine how you'd go about it otherwise.

Damien could wait. There's no reason to mull over making the call when you still have the stress of a normal school day to deal with. You close your eyes and simply breathe for a bit, relaxing your body. Slowly, you fill out your usual shape, descending from the height. After a brief meditation, your eyes open again. Your body is back to its default. You dress and go to class, no doubt getting an earful from the teacher.

Your classmates saw you rushing to the bathroom and informed the teacher. You aren't in trouble. Most of your educators know about your anxiety issues and are pretty lenient, but you still feel guilty over having an exemption in the first place. You nod to the classmates who helped you out, acknowledging them, yet keeping to yourself.

The rest of the day went by uneventful, you didn't think of Damien for the rest of the day. But with the hours nearing the end of the day, the moment of reckoning drew near. You couldn't postpone your phone call anymore. You'll have to contact Damien when you're home.

The door slams shut behind you. You change again: how in the hell would you call him?! It's the first time someone expressed genuine interest in you! Your desires make it more complicated. Should you involve your psychiatrist? For something as banal as love?

The stubble is setting in again, and your posture turns lither as your stature reaches for the ceiling. Your clothes are thrown in a pile next to the door, it's second nature to you.

But what should you do?

Call him with your raspy voice? You can't pick up a phone properly!

Shit, the therapist is out of the question then as well.

Text him? With what hands?!

What the fuck do I do?!

Concentrate dammit!

The one thing you need to do is to talk to *Damien*, that isn't too hard. You've talked to many people before, so why is *Damien* any different? Is it the cute smile he has? The way he showed more confidence by making the first move? Or is it the way you melt when he smiles at you? Your panicking gives you less opportunity to be with him.

It's too much, a whole day has gone by and you've done nothing. Waiting has tired you out. You bundle up your clothes in your wings, to your bedroom and dump them in a pile and lie on bed.

Once again you explore your form. Your fur has ruffled due to the stress. You untangle it out with your claws, with a steady rhythm you find patches of disorganized hair and straighten them out. Sleep catches up and you allow it to take your consciousness away.

When you wake up, you notice you're naked in bed in your boring human form. The clock over on the commode informs you it's well past 23:00. Groggily you remember you didn't inform Damien you received his note. You want this to be over with. After going through discarded clothes, you find your phone.

[You awake?]

....Damien0829 is typing

[Thought my note got lost !!!!!]

[Don't call btw, to late]

[Ok]

[You act different around me]

Too tired, get on with it.

[You're interesting]

....Damien0829 is typing

[You're usually not this forward]

[You made the first move]

[True true]

[What makes me interesting]

The stubble sets in again. Dammit, keep it short.

[Don't now, don't care]

[Why slip me a note?]

[Curt huh]

[Tired sry]

No better excuse came to mind, but it rang true in a sense.

....Damien0829 is typing

[Wanna hang out?]

[Ok]

[Walk the halls together, test the waters]

[Sure why not]

[Meet at the library @8?]

[It's a date!]

[No its not]

[And you know it]

[Kidding]

[It's a sorta date]

You groan a bit, you two aren't a thing yet, but here he acts as if it is. You gather the last bit of energy and end it.

[cya!]

[Cya!]

The phone is thrown onto the commode, and you crash onto bed. That went terrible. You talked at the last possible moment, and in the heat of the moment, made the stupid decision to spend more time with Damien. You want to be with him, but it would be hard to keep your secret safe with the effect he has on you.

Internalized anger. Uncertainty. An anguished scream morphs into a shrill shriek as the bat has swapped places with the human form. Tiredness. Confusion. Despair. You can't take it. It runs your tank dry and you sob yourself to sleep.

Don't bail on him. You managed to go to school without worry, and you kept yourself to the appointment, so why are you so anxious at this moment? You take a seat in the library, the sparsely occupied quiet space allows you to pour yourself over your homework. It's not like you're the only one who's engrossed by their educational material.

As you settle into a good reading rhythm you're interrupted by an unexpected "hey". Damien fills your view.

"It got late last evening, were you ok?"

"I, uh, kept putting it off. I got nervous thinking about your note."

"You nervous?"

"Kind of, but I still want to try. You know, get to know you a bit better."

"Let me know if it gets too much, I'll bail you out."

You gather your belongings and pack them before the chime rings for the first class. You and Damien hastily make your way to the first class without too much hassle.

It's surprising how easy it is for you to walk the halls with Damien. He's accommodating and attentive.

"So, you seen the latest episode of Strike Fighters?"

"Shoot, I missed it yesterday! Was it any good?"

"You missed out! Jo-yu fought Mar'ex with everything he got, but couldn't win. And when Mar'ex had him where he wanted, he went on about dark madou this and machines superior that. And when Jo-yu used his burner knuckle during Mar'ex' monologue, it didn't do anything! It was nail-biting!"

Dammit, that sounded awesome. Why did you have to put off talking with Damien for so long? You could've witnessed one of the best fights in anime history. But nooooo, you had to stress yourself into your bat form again. Why did the simplest things always go wrong?

"You okay?"

The walls close in on you, hair itches against clothing. Fucking hell, why does everything have to turn into a damn disaster. You break into a jog to the bathrooms. Too far. Air cloying. Need fresh air. Roof.

Stairs fly. Hit the apex, throw the door open, inhale a lungful of air. You avoid hitting your head against the post. No one around. Twist around the exit, duck out of sight.

Calm down, it's ok, you're alone. Arrange your thoughts...

The flat roof makes for a great hangout spot. Now that classes have started, the roof is quiet. As you assess the damage, you notice you're at the same height as the roof entrance: two meters. The bat form didn't fully manifest, but you can't go to class like this, growth spurts and sudden facial hair don't happen in between classes. You fill and empty your lungs with deep breathes, sitting in the shadow of the entrance. You zone out, taking in the breeze and twittering of the birds. Not responding to anything at all. You slowly slide down

Heavy footsteps come up the stairwell, you snap out of your trance. The stomping stops as the source notices you. Damien looks at you with worry.

"I was worried sick for you, and here you are relaxing on the roof."

A wry smile paints his expression. He shouldn't smile like that, it sets you off.

"Sorry, it was too much."

"Why?"

"I... Panicked and had to calm down, so I got some fresh air."

You shift a bit.

"Yesterday was hard on me, and our talk got me in a bad headspace. Sorry I didn't tell you"

Hair itches your neck.

"People stared, the walls closed in, I couldn't breathe. It felt horrible. I had to get out of there."

"I, uh, didn't notice it was that bad," Damien scratches the back of his head, "can I do anything for you?"

"I need some quiet," you sigh. "It sounds rude, but I'm still having a sensory overload: I'm still on edge. Could you leave me alone for a bit?"

His unease still stains his expression, but he nods and leaves.

You throw your shirt off, looking down, you see a dense brown quickly spreading. The membrane in your armpits grows. You didn't lie when you said you had a sensory overload, the itching got unbearable and your hearing already picked up, making every sensation pound like a mallet. The chattering of birds now shrieks causing tinnitus.

As you curl forward, your wings cover your legs. You sit there for a while and ride the anxiety out. Another set of teachers are going to yell at you, and worst of all, if you're set off this easily, you won't be able to do anything with Damien. Dammit, why does it have to be this way?

It took ages to calm down again, your encounter with Damien did not help. A constant stream of emotions perpetuated the bat form. Eventually, the anxiety passed, but when you looked at the time, the next class had already started. You couldn't take it anymore and turned home. Better rest in than a teacher yelling at you.

A notification comes in, it's Damien. He's worried sick. You message him you enjoyed talking with him, but the bout of anxiety screwed with you.

Skipping the day broke the camel's back. You got detention: forced to stay at school for an extra two hours for a whole week. During that time, you didn't see Damien at all, he probably felt guilty about your reaction to something so simple. Still, you felt responsible. He tried to take initiative, and you're the one who made the conversation difficult.

After the week of detention, you had enough, you couldn't leave him hanging. It's obvious you both like each other, maybe you needed a different setting. You message him that you know a usually quiet café, which would work better with your anxiety. He was hesitant, yet surprised that you still wanted to talk to him. After some back and forth you reserved a spot during the weekend.

It turned dark quickly, making the mood lighting in the café more atmospheric. The orange- and yellow-tinted mood setters complimented the brown overtone of the hardwood interior.

You take a seat and take the interior in to distract yourself from the date. It's relatively quiet today: two other tables are being served. There wasn't too much space: two more tables and a dartboard in the corner. Those piña colodas looked nice. You stumble through

When they left, someone else came into the picture: Damien. He apologized for being late, his parent's errands went on for longer than expected.

"I hope you didn't have to wait for too long."

"It's fine, I just came here. I ordered something for myself already."

"Oh, and what would that be?"

"You'll see," you grin, having already spotted the waiter with your drink.

Damien puts on his charm with a smile and turns to the waiter.

"I'm sorry my date here made a mistake, this one is for two. Could you add an extra straw?"

"Of course!" they reply punctuated by dropping an extra straw in the drink. "Give me a holler if you need anything else."

You shift up a bit, you couldn't get Damien out of your head. His cute mannerisms. The disarming smile. The way he expertly handles the waiting staff. No care in the world.

Until the target of your affections made an observation.

"You look nervous, but it makes you look kinda cute with that stubble."

Alarm bells ring. All of the attention you had for Damien turns to yourself. Immediately you are aware that you're shifting again, this time in a public café! You're already taller and lankier. Hair is already scraping against your clothes and peeking out here and there.

The dim lighting is an advantage, Damien hasn't noticed your change yet, but you had to bolt.

You hurriedly excuse yourself and dash for the bathroom. No one's there. Yet you still panic. Hard. Your breathing became erratic, your form shifting further. Pants drop. Buttons are undone in time to take off your shirt. With the clothing sorted out, you duck into a stall, taking a seat on the lid. You throw your pile of clothes and your shoes in a little alcove.

Suddenly you hear a voice, it's Damien's.

"Are you ok in there? You left so suddenly."

You respond with silence, trying not to be noticed.

"Look I saw you enter, are you embarrassed being in public? I love you too, you know."

"No, it's not what you think it is."

"I get it," his tone drops: "I'm dragging you out into the open and you feel like you're obliged to follow along. But every time you try, it results in anxiety followed by embarrassment. You are interested, but I just cause you grief... I'm sorry for dragging you along."

His footsteps remove themselves from you. You must choose. If you let him go, he'd actively avoid you for your sake. On the other hand, you wouldn't know how he would react to your current state. Would he scream and run away, calling you a monster?

Time ran out. The footsteps removed themselves further and further away from you.

You had to do it! No, you couldn't! He'd never understand you! But he's the one who reached out! Do you still want to run away because something **might** hurt you!?

You had to make a hard choice, the situation stifling enough to prevent most actions. Yet, you decided on a course anyway.

The silence and Damiens walking are interrupted by a door swinging open. He turns to the noise and sees your frame. He stands there with his mouth agape.

"Is that you?" He asks, flabbergasted.

"You think I dodge out of conversations for fun?" You say avoiding his gaze, "I've had this condition for almost all my life: turning into a bat when I'm anxious. You're the first person outside of my family and psychiatrists who is aware of this. I-I love you but this," you gesture awkwardly with your wings.

You can't finish the sentence. Instead, you curl up into a ball. You cry into your wings, shielding your face from Damien.

You sob for a moment, but suddenly feel one of your wings being pulled away from your face.

"Don't cry," he says softly, "I won't hurt you."

You try to snivel up your tears to no avail, resulting in hiccups. Damien steps in closer and wipes the tears out of your eyes. "It's ok, it's ok," he comforts you in his angelic voice.

"Can I...Can I hug you?" You ask gingerly, craving for affection.

His response is to bury his face in your fur. Your reply by folding your wings over him. Both of you are basking in the gesture and warmth. Just relaxing and taking the moment in.

Damien looks up, his eyes set on yours. You both know what you want, despite the differing species. He moves up to your face, bracing against your lithe body. You respond by bending

down. Your lips meet each other. The feeling is indescribable, you want more of it, and so does Damien. The kiss wouldn't break for an eternity.