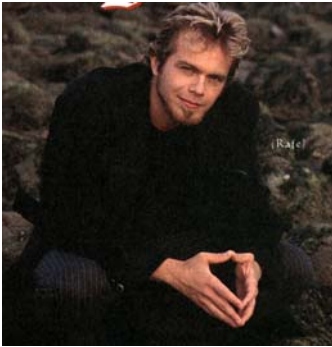


CHARLES'S ANGEL

WHEN VAMPIRES ATTACKED PORT CHARLES, HEAVEN SENT BRIAN GASKILL TO THE RESCUE

BY ADAM KELLY

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JUST THE FACTS:

Born on: January 22, 1970 **Hails from:** Neptune, NJ **Irrational Fear:** "Death. But I don't think that's irrational." **He Drives:** A Mazda Miata **Best Quality:** Ability to accept others' faults **Worst Quality:** Inability to accept his own **Must-See TV:** GILMORE GIRLS and the David E. Kelley oeuvre **Cooking Specialty:** Italian. "It's so relaxing, making a good sauce." **Pets:** Two dogs, Bella and Grace Papaya **Privacy, Please:** Though currently engaged, Gaskill prefers to keep private the details of his personal life.

"I have a funny little story," Brian Gaskill (Rafe) says. "It's not hysterical, but it's a funny coincidence. Stuff like this doesn't happen to me a lot. I was driving down the street the other day, and this Jamie O'Neal song, "When I Think About Angels," was on the radio. I'm blasting it, and this is one of those songs that doesn't fade out; it has a good 'Bam!' ending. So, the second it ends, I hear a horn honking. I look to my left, and it's Lynn Herring [Lucy, PC], who is totally out of her neighborhood, stopped in traffic at the same time as me, listening to the exact same station and song. We thought that was such a funny coincidence."

In any other year, it would hardly qualify as a classic anecdote. But these are strange days on *Port Charles*, and what really makes the story stand out - what layers irony on top of the paradox, karma, and chance - is not simply that two co-stars had tuned to the same FM frequency at the same time. But that their characters have frequent occasion to think about angels because Gaskill's Rafe is, as it turns out, a heavenly creature himself. The mid-October revelation thrilled the actor, who says that *PC*'s newfound emphasis on the metaphysical was part of what finally lured him back to daytime, four years after his boring Bobby left *All My Children* with Anita Santos in tow.

"This audition came along, so I tuned in to see what they were doing, and I guess it was after "Tainted Love" started because Jack was freaking out in the hospital," he relates, "I was like, 'Vampires? What's going on?' But I appreciated the way they were handling it because the actors were taking it seriously and giving it a strong emotional base that wasn't completely tongue-in-cheek. It could have been campy, but it's not. I thought it was great, classic pulp storytelling."

As such, it appealed to a fundamental aspect of Gaskill's personality. "I'm a huge fan of sci-fi, time travel and fantasy," he notes. "As a child, I watched all the monster movies on TV on Sunday afternoons. I related to them more than they scared me. A lot of times, [the monsters] were just misunderstood. Someone like Frankenstein isn't really a monster, except for the fact that he scares the hell out of everybody in town. He's just a brain stuck in a pieced-together body, and now he has to deal with it and he doesn't know what's going on. Who can't relate to that? We're all just here on Earth, not knowing anything, and we've got to figure it all out."

Not surprisingly, Gaskill - like the rest of the world, judging from the popularity of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Anne Rice and Count Dracula - also has more than a passing interest in

vampires. "I think it stems from the fact that people are afraid of dying," he muses. "There's a great attraction to immortality. Plus, vampires are sexy. There's something about somebody dressed in black, whether it's a man or a woman in a low-cut dress. The bloodletting, the biting...it's sexy, period."



Does he think vampires - or angels, or ghosts - really exist? "It's hard to say I've never seen one or had a one-on-one experience. But as far as believing in the supernatural in general goes...let me put it this way: I believe in the natural, and what we perceive as 'natural' is only one version of it. There's probably more going on in the natural world than we're aware of. I don't know what that might be, but the fact is, people use less than 10 percent of their brains. If we could use 100 percent, we might be able to see a lot more."

Until then, we're stuck with artists' assumptions about how the undead look and behave. Luckily, *PC* has foregone stereotypes with Rafe - whereas daytime's last on-contract angel, *Guiding Light*'s Zachary, had a closet full of frilly, white blouses - and Gaskill says the show encourages him to do likewise. "Quite honestly, when you're on certain shows, playing certain characters, people expect you to be a certain way, and you have to [stifle everything about you] that makes you human. But with this, there are no rules. Rafe doesn't have to be cool, or nice, or whatever, I have a lot of freedom to use every part of myself with this character, even all my quirks. It's all pretty ironic," he smiles, "Not being human lets me be completely human."