

Angel

by *BulletTimeScully*

My response to the Behind Closed Doors challenge at grangersnap100 at LJ.
Inspired by the Sarah McLaughlin song "Angel."

*Soon to be available as an audiofic on Hufflehugs.net.

One

Chapter 1 of 1

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~*~*~*~

The street was dark, the cracked pavement wet with rain and littered with the detritus of decay and neglect. The neighborhood was seemingly deserted, most of the houses either falling in on themselves or sporting sun-bleached 'For Sale' signs in barren front gardens. It was a place for forgotten things, once splendid in their beauty, but now lost amidst the chaos of life and left behind by those with sense enough to leave.

A figure crept from the shadows between two of these derelict buildings, stepping cautiously across the street to steal silently towards one of the apparently abandoned homes.

~*~*~*~

Anyone who was watching would have seen the figure raise a thin, pale hand to the knocker and hesitate, fingers curling back into a shaking fist, before rising again to give three short, hard knocks.

They would have then seen a sliver of light split the darkness, visible for a single heartbeat before the figure slipped inside. Then the light was gone. The street was once again empty and desolate. Anyone watching would have then turned away, knowing that like calls to like, and there was nothing they could do about it.

They had learned that a long time ago.

~*~*~*~

She stood just inside the doorway of the tiny house, water puddling at her feet. She could smell him looming behind her. His scent permeated her senses, dulling her mind and loosening her inhibitions... like a drug.

Ironic, really, that the one thing she so desperately wanted could only come from the one man she knew would never give it.

She stood still and straight, afraid of breaking the tense, silent truce they had formed these past months.

The lock on the door bolted shut. She closed her eyes in weary resignation.

Closed doors were the story of her life.

~*~*~*~

She felt him step closer, willed her knees not to give way as he slid his hands over her shoulders to remove her cloak. He hung it absently on a peg behind the door before moving past her, the slight brush of his arm against hers causing fire to boil to life in her middle.

"Come," he whispered, the word rolling off his tongue like the blackest silk.

She followed him up the narrow staircase to the room at the end of the hall. Once inside, he bolted it as well.

He always did have a flair for the dramatic.

~*~*~*~

The room smelled of stale smoke left over from the ashes of half-smoked cigarettes... some filled with tobacco, some filled with opium and hashish. There were other smells as well. Smells of things best left to dark corridors and dank alleyways, things that most decent people would never dream of.

She knew what it took to make an entire room smell like sex. Not just the sheets, her body, his body... but the entire space. Sex, sweat, fear, desire, anger, shame, regret... perhaps love? The room swam with repressed emotions... except for the latter.

No... there was no love here.

~*~*~*~

No conventional love, by any means.

After all, what was love besides something that could be used against you?

She had been coming here for longer than she cared to remember. At first, it was only to find a quick fix, something to numb the pain, both physical and otherwise. After a while, she began to need him, to need his sneering, hard honesty.

It was both a comfort and a curse to hear the truth spill from his mouth *addicted, dirty, forbidden... lonely, forgotten, unwanted... fuck, cock, cunt... needed, desired, oh please god don't leave me don't ever leave me...* even as his seed spilled inside her body.

~*~*~*~

They had yet to speak. They simply watched each other, two wary adversaries, unafraid yet terrified of what the other might do or say.

When he saw her eyes soften a change that he knew would lead her to try and speak the words that he would not allow himself to hear he held up a hand.

"Don't."

"Severus..." her voice trembled, "I... I just..."

"You just... *what*... Hermione?" He leaned in and his nose brushed gently against her ear. His breath was hot against her neck, and she could smell the sickly-sweet scent of something that was *not* tobacco.

~*~*~*~

His pale hand moved slowly up her arm and over her shoulder before his long, thin fingers splayed against her neck. "Had second thoughts? Has eight months of being doped out of your brilliant mind finally caught up with you?"

His fingers tightened beneath her jaw thrilling her and terrifying her all at once and tilted her head so their eyes met.

"Has eight months of seeking me out... *begging* me to fulfill you in ways no other man has ever done... begging me to *fuck* you until you can't remember your own name... Has it become too much, Hermione?"

~*~*~*~

His words were cruel, and Hermione could feel the first tears begin to trickle down her cheeks. This had happened once before, her defiance of him and their... *arrangement*.

Seven months ago, in a frustrated rage, she had thrown a bottle of narcotic painkiller across the room, breaking it against the wall. His anger at the waste of such an expensive potion had been terrible to witness. He had still demanded payment for the lost goods, but she told him no.

He had only chuckled darkly and flicked a hand at the door, bolting it closed for the first time.

~*~*~*~

He had stalked towards her, his hands moving deftly down the line of buttons on his shirt, pulling it off and tossing it aside before starting on his black, leather belt.

She had watched, terrified yet shamefully aroused, as he had rid himself of his trousers.

He was hard already, and she knew that he was going to get what he wanted, whether she consented or not. The most frightening aspect was that a part of her wanted him to... wanted him to take her roughly... violently even.

She wanted his anger, his frustration.

She wanted to feel... something... *anything*.

~*~*~*~

If she were honest, it was the reason she had thrown the bottle. She knew he had a temper, and she knew that when she finally had nothing else, he would take payment from her flesh.

She had counted on it.

She had not resisted him, had welcomed his harsh words, his rough hands and sharp teeth...

For the first time in years, with his cock buried to the hilt within her, his mouth on her carotid, she had felt the numbness start to recede. It was subtle the first light of spring upon snow-hardened ground but it was there.

~*~*~*~

She snapped back to the present when Severus released her. It wasn't a reprieve; his hands moved to her hair, grasping, forcing her roughly against the closed door. "I shall ask you again is it too much? Have you had enough?"

She looked into his dark eyes, dilated from whatever it was that he had smoked earlier, and hesitated only a fraction of a second. "No..."

His hands tightened in her hair. "No?"

"No... it's... it's not too much... it's... not *enough*... never enough..." She pushed her hips against his, feeling his raging need beneath the fabric of his trousers.

~*~*~*~

He groaned, his cock throbbing mercilessly at the movement. Idly, his drug-soaked mind wondered why they kept up this charade; her desperate addict to his cruel lover. Why hide what they felt who they really were with painkillers and hallucinogens; all they did was dull the pain. Besides, it always came back sharper than ever.

He knew he could never give her what she so desperately wanted, and it left a void of shame and regret in his very soul to admit that to himself.

Shame and regret.

The story of *his* life.

'Not enough,' she had said. 'Never enough...'

~*~*~*~

He released her then and moved to the ancient armoire standing against the far wall. Opening the doors, his fingers found the hidden panel and pushed it aside. He palmed the small cylindrical bottle with practiced ease and closed the door once more.

The vial flashed in the streetlight filtering through the window, a spark of imagined salvation in a hell of their own making. The liquid inside was the color of old blood, dark and thick.

Hermione moved towards him, as she always did.

It was a sick game they played: he offered... she accepted... the blame was divided.

~*~*~*~

Hermione knew that the red liquid would taste like cinnamon. She knew that Severus would uncork the bottle for her the moment she raised her hand to take it. She knew he would tip half the contents down her throat if she hesitated too long.

Severus knew that Hermione would accept the potion. He knew that her amber eyes would never break contact with his as she offered him the second half. He knew that she too would tip the red liquid into his mouth if he dared to hesitate.

It was unspoken.

It was understood.

It was absolutely heartbreaking.

~*~*~*~

The first touch of flesh to flesh was sweet agony. Their minds were still clear enough to realize what they had done; they would both revel in the few seconds of pure honesty that they allowed themselves. Anything more was too frightening... too real.

They escaped the only way they knew how, by dulling their minds and allowing their base natures to take over. Intelligence was a gift, it was said, but to them, it was a curse. Nothing they had ever done could make them forget the horrors they had seen in their lifetimes, Severus more so than Hermione.

~*~*~*~

Ten years since the last spell had been cast at the Battle of Hogwarts; ten years since the world had known the terror of the Dark Lord; ten years of happiness and prosperity... at least for everyone else.

War takes its toll on the young as well as the old, on the untried and the battle-hardened, on the innocent as well as the guilty.

They had both taken lives, lost friends, and given up a part of themselves that would never be returned, could never be returned. Souls were ravaged and broken, lives irrevocably changed; no one stepped away unscathed.

~*~*~*~

The once proud Potions master had been reduced to a scarred, bitter wreck of a man. The years of war had taken their toll; he now brewed contraband potions and elixirs for those willing to pay the price a price that did not always consist of galleons and sickles and preferred his rundown home to the grandeur of Hogwarts that had been offered to him.

No, he did not want nor deserve such grand things. He was better off here... in the desolate shadow of a lonely, derelict mill, with his books and his narcotics and occasionally Hermione for company.

~*~*~*~

Dear, sweet, infallible, Hermione.

No.

Angry, desperate, *broken* Hermione.

She had been unable to find her feet after everything was said and done. Some would call it post-traumatic stress; others would call it simply being unsatisfied with life.

Severus called it Fate.

She had laughed at him, of course, telling him there was no such thing.

He had sneered cruelly and reminded her of the prophetic events that had started their 'War of the Ages'...

She had stopped laughing.

Instead, she had started to weep, and he had pressed a red bottle into her hand, and everything had been alright.

~~*~

When they finally tumbled to the bed, the narcotics had already dulled the outside world to a miniscule roar. Hand and tongues, skin and sweat, moans and gasps were the only things that mattered. When he rolled her onto her stomach and thrust sharply into her for the first time, the world fell away.

He moved within her, and she tilted her hips into his, urging him deeper... harder.

God, she loved him in these moments... and desperately wished for the courage to be with him without the drugs coursing through her veins, but it was too soon... too real.

~*~*~*~

He would be frightened, she knew, and it would manifest itself as anger, but perhaps next time she would actually say the words. Perhaps she would defy him.

She felt a tug on her hip and rolled onto her back. Looking up, his eyes were fathomless dark as blackest night and the look in his eyes at that moment aroused her beyond words. It ripped at her heart to think that he might never do so without being drugged out of his mind. With a strangled cry, she reached towards him, desperately wanting to touch him... hold him... possess him.

~*~*~*~

Maybe someday they could be together truly be together... no pretenses, no games without the drugs. Maybe someday they could step out from behind the closed doors to take their places on the outside.

Perhaps someday the world would see her as something other than a Fallen Hero, the lingering wraith of someone who had once been a proud, intelligent, beautiful witch.

Perhaps someday the world would see him as something other than a scarred, bitter hermit of a wizard with a penchant for illegal hallucinogens and painkillers.

Perhaps someday they would be accepted.

Perhaps someday they could simply... be.

~*~*~*~

For now, the closed doors were their security, their haven, their salvation as well as well as their damnation.

He moved faster now, reaching for that bright light that would leave him limp and panting.

She met him thrust for thrust, grinding her hips against his, clawing at his back with a grip that was like iron, even as her head rolled bonelessly on her shoulders and her legs splayed indolently across the sheets. She was racing to meet him at that glorious precipice.

Fuck the outside world and their prejudices. It was only the two of them, bodies entwined.

~*~*~*~

They crested, crying out in an explosive haze, each vaguely registering the presence of the other, yet desperately seeking more contact with the phantom on the edge of their awareness.

One tiny candle held the darkness at bay as Hermione felt Severus roll heavily to the side, just as he felt her enfold him in her trembling arms. They lay that way, sprawled across the rumpled sheets of Severus' bed, until the tiny candle burned out and the room went black.

Full darkness was the catalyst. Her voice soft and languid, opium mixed with post-coital bliss, Hermione whispered softly, "I love you."

~*~*~*~

She felt him stir, and even though she couldn't see his eyes, she knew they were boring into her. She waited for him to react, expecting explosive anger, bracing herself for it, even as she silently begged him to repeat the words back to her.

She wanted to hear them needed to even if they were spoken in mockery.

Instead, she felt his fingers on her face, the sensation both far away and intensely close.

He traced her jaw, her lips, her pulse point, her collarbone, down over her breast and back up, before cupping her face tenderly. "I know."

~*~*~*~

Oh, God...

"What?" she forced herself to say through the haze.

"I said I know, Hermione." His voice was soft, a languid rumble in her breast.

"But why have you never..."

A finger to her lips silenced her, before it traced up her cheekbone and down her jaw. "... can't... I just... can't..." He buried his head in the crook of her shoulder, his grip strong and desperate despite the potion.

She wrapped her arms around him once more and pressed her lips to his sweaty forehead. "It's alright, love... I'm sorry. It's enough... always enough."

It would have to be.

~FIN