

Lips of an Angel

by Gelsey

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Chapter 1 of 1

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"Viktor."

His eyes fell closed at the soft, sweet voice saying his name over the phone. The simple, light tones never failed to feather along his senses and flutter around his heart briefly before tentatively settling around the organ as if unsure of the welcome its warmth would receive.

"Herm-own-ninny," he greeted quietly, the way he had first said her name, though he had long since been able to say it correctly. Turning to lean against the wall, he first glanced down the hall, making sure that Natalya was still in the kitchen preparing a late supper. They'd been out late at a publicity appearance with only finger foods and champagne, and both were rather hungry.

It was late, much later than she normally called. Not that she called often, but usually she picked some time in the middle of the day when she knew he would be home and Natalya at work. Even then, it was only a few times a year at best.

His greeting was met by a half-laugh, half-strangled sob, and he was immediately concerned. "What is wrong? Why are you crying?" he asked, beetle-brows snapping together over dark eyes. He barely remembered to keep his voice down, practically forgetting his fiancée in the next room.

"It's okay, really," she said, obviously sniffing a little before gathering herself together. She was so good at doing that, he knew; he supposed it was her years on the front lines of the war, having to marshal others together, to plan, to attack, without time to cry over pain or grief. "I'm just ... oh, I shouldn't have called. It's too late for this. I just —"

He broke off her rambling with a soft, deep chuckle. "You're rambling, *dusha*," he said, fondness echoing through the air waves to reach Hermione on her end.

There was another small laugh, this time without the hiccupping sob at the end. "I just wanted to hear your voice." The admission left her lips without permission, and he smiled unconsciously. Neither knew that they mimicked each other's position, leaning against a wall, small smiles, almost sad, on their lips, heads bent as they talked in low voices.

Her admission made him feel strong and weak and a million other things he shouldn't be feeling. He could hear pots and pans rattling in the kitchen as Natalya made their meal, and he reminded himself again that he was with her now. There could be nothing between Hermione and him, except friendship, nothing but that.

"Where is Ron?" he asked. "Will he not be upset that you are talking with me?" Ron Weasley had never liked him, and even the simple, friendly owl post Hermione and he exchanged was subject to much jealousy and examination. He knew the last time the redhead had caught her talking on the phone with him, the reaction had been quite explosive.

"He's not here right now. We ... argued." He could hear the tears in her voice again, but more importantly than that, he could hear what wasn't said. Her silences were as rich with meaning as her words were, all the more so because they were much rarer. They had argued ... again. He had stormed out ... again. Left her to wait in tears ... again.

Ronald Weasley didn't deserve the likes of Hermione Granger, he thought fiercely.

"What about Natalya?" she asked softly.

His head bowed again, and he felt guilt flow over him as he thought about the honey-blond he was engaged to, the woman he did love, who had no idea that he was in here, talking to the one woman he had never been able to forget. "She's fine. In the kitchen, making dinner."

There was an almost-awkward, charged silence, both of their significant others intruding without even being present. Things had never had a chance with them; everything had always been a little off, a little wrong. First she had been too young, and then the war--the war had stolen what could have been from them. Every time they had met during the course of it, there had been no time for courting, for kisses, for promises. Hermione had fallen into bed with Ron, and in his travels Viktor had met Natalya and fallen for her.

But he'd never forgotten her, and she'd never forgotten him. They'd never moved on from each other, but their lives had kept on going inexorably. By the time the war had finished, both were too entangled to try again. Too many other promises, other obligations. Unknowingly, both pressed their eyes tightly closed at the vague pain of it all, nebulous and hovering. Caught in their existence and unsure if they could leave, both stayed with what they knew, unable to break free.

Temptation had never been as sweet as when it was wrapped in the package that was Hermione. It was hard, so hard, to refuse her, even when she wasn't asking anything of him. Her heart called to his, and his called to hers, as it always had, but they both loved others as well. They would remain faithful because there was no other way for people like them to be.

"Viktor, dinner." The Slavic voice of his fiancée lilted through the hall.

"Coming, Natalya," he called back, covering the mouthpiece of the phone, though he knew Hermione heard regardless. He was reluctant to end their brief conversation, to say goodbye, again.

"I'll just let you go." Her voice was soft again but always vibrant with emotion, barely suppressed. He knew her too well; he always heard it no matter how hard she tried.

"Hermione--"

"I'll talk to you some other time. Goodbye, Viktor."

The phone clicked softly in his ear, and he gently set the receiver down in the cradle. Face as unreadable as normal, he went back to the kitchen, giving his soon-to-be wife a faint, tired smile. She wouldn't see the pain etched in his heart over this or the guilt on his soul. She never saw those things. Only Hermione ever seemed to see it, but Natalya wasn't Hermione. He felt guilty for occasionally wishing she was.

Even as he sat down to eat, he still heard that last word, his name, echoing through his mind. His name had never sounded so sweet, coming from the lips of an angel.

A/N: This was inspired by Hinder's Lips of an Angel, though it's not precisely songfic. It is, however, highly influenced by the song, as it has been stuck in my head for quite awhile and I couldn't refuse the fic. Lyrics can be found: http://www.angelfire.com/magic2/night_fall/angel_lips.htm, and conveniently enough, the song is also playing in the background there. Comments and crit are love.

Dusha is Bulgarian for "soul" and is used as an endearment sometimes.