

No Heaven for Fallen Angels

By Cindy Rae



He was closed off from her, intentionally. Both emotionally and spiritually closed, through their bond. Shut down. Withdrawn. Done, and past done. Retreated. Gone.

And she was gone, physically. Gone because he'd sent her away. Gone because he needed her to be. Gone because, among other things, he swore he could still smell the big man's blood under his fingernails, and feel...*bits* of him, there...

The level of this disaster might have no rival, and few equals.

There was hell to pay for lifting a man from under his chin with the nails of your right hand, then pulling him forward until you bashed his brains into an overhanging rock. Or at least, there were “bits” to pay.

He'd washed the blood, but he couldn't ask Father, couldn't ask anyone to clean *that* from him. Jacob had been getting out the bullet, so he couldn't use his left hand. Now the right one was uncomfortable.

Vincent suddenly understood why lions cleaned their claws.

Ah, well. Sometimes it was worse. Sometimes, there were bits of bone trapped under there, rather than just... something else. He'd pare the nails clean, once Jacob left, again. He'd been too tired to move from the chair, before.

She was gone.

And she'd seen it all.

Hell to pay.

Hell to pay for knowing where the main branches of the femoral artery were, in a leg. His claws had found that, too, unerringly. That had been the first kill, of all of them.

She'd seen it. From first to last.

Hell for bashing Micah against the stones until his slack body was only being held up by the force of the throw.

She'd seen that, too.

No salvation for any of them, this time. For the Outsiders. For Jacob. For him. No salvation. *No chance of Heaven now*, he thought, feeling locked into the heavy chair. Heavy thoughts. Heavy memories. Some of them weighed, like anchors.

"No...Stop." Her voice had been weak, and coming from near the floor.

But he couldn't stop. Not yet. The doomed deviant had held a knife to her face, near her throat. Stop? *Oh, not yet. Not yet, my Catherine.*

Vincent wasn't done killing Micah, by half. He'd thrown their dead leader against the tunnel walls, side to side, *enjoying* the subtle and not-so-subtle breaking of the warped degenerate's bones. There was no question that the vicious sadist would not, could not, run away. He no longer had kneecaps capable of bearing his weight. Or much else.

This wasn't killing for necessity, or self-preservation. This was not that. This was *sport*. And it was grotesquely and irrevocably *satisfying*, in its own dark way.

It was almost ... *fun*, in the most twisted perversion of that word.

Ah, twisted perversions. Well. At least Vincent felt he was in the right company for that.

He'd let the body drop for variety, not out of fatigue. Now the evisceration could begin.

So it had. Horribly.

"*Stop. Just... stop!*" Her voice. Repeated. Aimed at him.

Vincent was furious, and screaming, and he was *feeding*. His arm wasn't even tired yet. *Stop? But why, Catherine? Rigor mortis hasn't even set in, yet...*

In that darkness, part of me ... feeds. And I am... lost in it.

He'd said it. They'd made him say it. All right then, so now she knew. Knew what he knew. She *should* know it. She'd *seen* it.

Do you understand, now, Catherine? Do you? You should.

In that darkness, part of me ... feeds. And I am... lost in it.

But her voice had penetrated, finally. He'd looked over to see her there, lying in the dirt among his ... what could he call them? Victims? Targets? Playthings? It had taken less than two minutes to kill all of them.

And she had seen it, seen it, seen it. All.

He'd only let Micah fall, knowing no force in this world would get the man back on his feet again - If he still had any unbroken bones in those, anyway. Had knelt over him, as he bled into the ground, tearing.

Tearing.

It had been raw, and ugly, and darkly glorious. *He* had been raw, and ugly, and darkly glorious. Destroyer. The Shiva of the tunnels. Shiva dancing.

Shall we dance, Micah? Shall we dance, Hog? Try to keep up now. I am so light on my feet, as I take you off of yours.

Perhaps not Shiva. Perhaps Abaddon. Abaddon was the demon of the pit. And Vincent knew his tunnel home had surely become that. A pit of the damned and the dead.

Vincent had a feeling he knew which one he was.

And then he'd been shot. Proof that no matter how bad this day was, there was *always* room for a little more deterioration.

That had been...what? An hour ago now? Two? No matter. Play time over, and all the playthings, all the toys, put in their place. Broken toys, now. The abyss for all of you, then.

Someone else would have to clean up the mess. He'd played hard today.

The room was quiet now. Such a juxtaposition, that. There had been so much screaming before. Some of it was him. War cry. War scream. War roar. The last thing most of them ever heard.

War. War was Hell, they said. Well, Hell had an address now. It was his home, and he was living in it.

Alone.

He'd sent her away, alone. Now he sat here the same way. The bond was like so much static, in his ears right now. It often was, when his Beast held court.

Oh, and what a courtroom it had been.

Tried, convicted, and executed; the only one who made it out alive had been the idiot child. The one who'd put a bullet in his arm. Perhaps there was someone else to help him left of their number, somewhere. Perhaps.

Part of Vincent wished desperately that the aim had been higher.

His Beast was pleasantly exhausted now, feeling fat from the kill. *Kills*, Vincent's mind amended.

Hell had a buffet, it seemed, to go with its address. Curled up and sated, and sleeping, his Dark Self dozed.

Vincent himself had no such relaxing instincts. Vincent himself didn't know quite where "he" was. The hopeful lover in him was exiled. The scholar in him was nowhere. The teacher in him, nonexistent.

What could I show them as a teacher?

Today, Children, we will discuss the fastest way to obliterate half a dozen armed maniacs. Pay attention now, and don't forget to take notes as I snap any arm that holds a weapon out, before I reach my claws in for vital organs and major blood pathways...

He swore he could still smell blood under his nails, no matter how much water and disinfectant Jacob had used.

His right wrist was sore. That was the one he'd used to lift the big man, as he'd smashed his head against the rock lintel. On his left hand, the muscles in his fingers ached. It was the hand he favored for gouging.

Well, that should be some form of consolation to them. They had made him sore, at least. It took muscle to snap a man's neck when it did not want to go around. Took strength to make that turn. Not much, apparently, but some...

And she had seen every ... single... second of it.

So of course, he had sent her away.

Jacob had returned after a few minutes, just to check the tightness of the bandage, and of the sling. He was putting away the rest of the medical things, quietly, sensing that quiet was called for. He was moving with the studied carefulness of an exhausted man, as he set his items back where they belonged. He looked tired. Old. Older than he was now, at least.

Micah would grow no older. Nor would any of them. Shrug. The mental kind of shrug, not the actual kind. Vincent knew that lifting his shoulder was a bad idea, right now.

Vincent watched Father, but did not so much as turn his head to do so, simply following his parent with his eyes. The old man looked slow. *Ah, well. "Slow" was better than nothing. Ask the playthings.*

Vincent was not sorry they were dead. He was only sorry that she'd seen them die. All of them. All but the child. *Oh, wouldn't that just have been the icing on catastrophe's cake.*

"Can you sleep?" Jacob asked him, adjusting the sling again, needlessly.

Vincent gave no answer, for an answer. The bullet wound wasn't what was keeping him awake. Well, in a way, that was part of it, but not from the pain.

The question. The one Vincent had been waiting to ask, the *only* one he'd been waiting to ask the old man.

"Why was Catherine down here? With a gun?" Vincent sent the words out between them. It had been bothering him all evening, on some level. He'd told her to stay Above. Told her to stay safe.

Jacob's blue eyes were full of guilt.

"I... I told her to bring it," Father confessed, not wanting to meet his son's gaze. Jacob busied his fingers with a roll of gauze.

"You did? You?" It seemed the night actually could hold one more shock for Vincent's system. Remarkable. Would wonders never cease? Lord, how Vincent wished they would.

Jacob continued, haltingly. "I told Catherine I feared we might... need it." Jacob checked Vincent's expression then had the remarkable good sense to keep his eyes lowered. "I didn't want this to happen, Vincent. I didn't want you to have to be the one." Jacob's eyes rose again, full of honest remorse.

"So you brought Catherine down, into what had become Hell?" Vincent's voice would have been louder, but his throat was already sore from roaring in rage during his killing spree. Another point for the invaders. His throat was sore.

The raspiness of his voice did not lessen the severity of the charge.

"I did." Jacob accepted full responsibility. "I'm sorry, Vincent. It is my fault you were shot."

Do you honestly think that's what this is about?

"No. It is an idiot child's fault I was shot. It was *your* fault Catherine nearly died with a knife in her eye, Father." He wanted to be very clear on this point.

Jacob had the good grace to look embarrassed, at the censure.

"I did not think things would... collapse so quickly. I wanted the gun so you would not have to do... exactly what you had to do." Jacob sighed, having lost his moral center and his son's trust in the same night.

"William isn't right, Vincent. You are not some sort of..." he struggled to find the word.

"Weapon? Killing machine? Assassin?" Vincent supplied the words for him.

Jacob shook his head. He looked very old, indeed.

"There are some half a dozen bodies in the hallway that call you a liar, Father." Vincent closed his eyes wearily, leaning against the back of the chair, knowing he would not sleep. The nightmares would be... legendary.

He was too tired to even call Jacob a fool, all of a sudden. *Another time, perhaps.* But on one thing, they must be clear. He lifted his leonine head.

"You do not *risk* her to save me. Or yourself. Or anyone here."

Vincent said it in a tone that would barely brook breathing, much less an argument. He pinned Jacob with steel inside the blue of his gaze.

"You do not risk her for *anyone*, for any reason. Do we understand each other?"

The tattered threat of violence still simmered inside Vincent, even in his exhaustion. Jacob knew a lick of fear and a pound of contrition at what he'd wrought. He'd been wrong. And he knew it.

"Vincent. I am so sorry. I only sought to spare you... all this," Father tried to explain.

God, would none of them understand? Was this a willful blindness?

"There *is* no sparing me... 'all this,'" Vincent mocked. "It is who I *am*, Father." Why would no one *listen* when he tried to say that?

"It is not who you are." Jacob was adamant.

"Of *course* it is!" A little strength left. Just a little, for this fight.

"William knows it. *Everyone* here knows it. Even all of *them* knew it, in the end." Vincent jerked his head toward the open doorway. "Their leader most of all. I had to save him for last, while I killed the others. I could smell his fear, like the urine that ran down his leg, when I broke him against the stones."

Vincent's head dropped back again. *Would this night never end?*

Jacob owned his guilt, and bowed his head.

Vincent's beaten form sat in the chair, eyes closed, his good hand gripping the arm. By the end of the argument, Vincent's voice had grown weary. Beyond it.

So was Jacob's.

"Try to rest," Jacob said weakly. He didn't know anything else to say. He covered Vincent loosely with a blanket, and made his way quietly out.

Vincent opened his eyes again, to watch Father's retreating back.
Rest? If only.

He could not feel the bond, and could not feel himself. *Numb desolation.* He wasn't sure if that was a blessing or a curse. Probably a blessing, at the moment.

He rose, cleaned the offending hand of the bit of ... something that had been caught there, and walked down to his own chambers, wanting his rooms, wanting his chair. It was more comfortable than Jacob's, not that comfort was the issue. All animals went to ground in times of stress. Went to their dens, to their familiar places. He simply obeyed that urge.

Vincent removed the useless sling, and tossed it aside. The bed was there, but it was useless, too.

He sat in his chair, hating the feeling of the adrenaline crash almost as much as he hated the feeling of the rush. The rush was power, and purpose, but it was carnage. This was a kittenish weakness, and a rudderless feeling, inside of him.

Just the walk from Father's chamber to here had been effort. Yet he knew he would not sleep. His bed and his window were to his back. He needed neither. Was not sure if he ever would, again.

His Shadow Self slept deeply, gorged, while he, Vincent, felt empty and barren.

She can't love you.

Not now that she's seen it, really seen it. She can't.

The message, and the static sound that kept buzzing in his ears would not go away. The message of loss. The message of separation. The shut-down bond, and the "nothing" of sound it left behind, like a television on a dead station.

Surely, they were done now? Even if he saw her again, they were done?

She can't love you. Her saying she does doesn't make it true.

He'd smelled the brutal fight coming. Felt the whip crack of lightning in his veins, the warning rise of tension in his frame, as his body trickled adrenaline into his system. It had been doing that for days, getting him ready.

Wishing it away would not make it go. He knew his senses would become sharper. He would be able to see in the dark better, begin to breathe deeper, pulling in air to his lungs, and muscles.

He knew he was getting ready to kill. Didn't want to face it until he had to, but he knew.

It was the main reason he wanted Catherine out of the tunnels. So she wouldn't have to see... wouldn't have to see...

Exactly what she'd seen.

God, I am an effective abomination.

The most venomous snake on the planet couldn't take down that many human beings that quickly, and he knew it. *One man, perhaps, or two. But that many? Armed and ready? No.* It would run out of venom, first.

The most successful apex predator couldn't do it, not with bare hands. *Bare claws, excuse the description.* No marvelous hunter, no matter how skilled, could unleash that kind of obliteration. They lacked either the strength, the size, the tools, or the intelligence to do it.

His opponents were armed. Knives, boards, chains, a pick axe... All of that, and more.

No beast on the planet could have matched them all.

Save one.

And oh, how he'd matched them. Every bestial trait he had, on full display, and in its full, ugly, *inhuman* glory.

He had every animalistic advantage he'd needed, and he'd used them all. Claws that dug, and cut, and ripped. Fangs that could tear, or just intimidate. An arm that could swing in a blinding arc, to dig the nails into flesh. Strong. Fast. Steady. A thresher, with conviction and cunning.

Sinewy muscle tore, until you hit bone. Bone broke, and then you felt marrow. Arteries felt different from intestines, though both were warm, at first.

The sand drank blood. God. Did she have to see it all?

They hadn't run from him, he'd give them that. They'd just kept coming at him, like fools, stepping into his range of motion.

The young one with the knife had died first. Maybe. Sometimes, it was tough to tell which one of them had stopped breathing first, considering some of them were bleeding out, or dying as their brains hemorrhaged out of their shattered skulls.

Killing was such a ... a *varied* business.

He'd tried to reach out to the child. It was almost comic irony that the smallest of them had been the only one to hurt him. *Because the boy had stayed out of range, that's why. Let the gun do the damage for him.*

And then run for his very life, while Vincent bled and Catherine covered him.

Shot by Catherine's gun. Well. Wasn't that an unusual turn of events. He wondered if she felt as guilty as Jacob seemed to. He hoped she

didn't. And he still wished the aim had been higher. Or more to the right.

He had the horribly certain feeling he would not see Catherine again for a while. Or if he did, that the look on her face, the tone in her voice would be very different than what it was when she'd left.

You can't pretend you didn't see it, Catherine. Can't pretend it was just me saving you, or protecting everyone else. I wasn't resigned, this time, was I? I was marvelous at it. Gifted. Sublime. The studied and ancient art of mutilation, and I am its bereft god.

She'd have time to process. Time to think about it. Time to remember what an excellent slaughterer he'd been.

She would never want his hands to touch her again. Would never want him near her.

Would she flinch, the next time he stood next to her on her balcony? Would she wince, at his nearness?

No.

Because he knew he was never going there again. The balcony was for civilized men, and civilized women. They were through pretending he was one of those.

Alone.

God, what a desolate feeling this is.

It was worse, for having known her. Had this happened three years ago, before Catherine, he might have borne it. But she'd made him *wish so much* that he was a man. So *much*, that she could be *his*, somehow, some day.

"Father, am I a man?"

"Part of you is."

Ohhh, but the part that wasn't.

His dreams for them turned to ash, and he slid down in the chair, brooding.

Vincent knew he must have dozed, some, sort of a twilight sleep. He must have. The sounds of muffled tunnel tapping reached his ears. He had no idea how much time had passed.

Not much, probably. Maybe. He didn't know.

Every muscle screamed in protest as he tried to move. Adrenaline crash, still. The amazing achiness that came from every muscle you owned being tense, and being used, and then over-used, for too long.

He stood wearily. He did not want to sleep. He did not know what he wanted. The static sound in his ears was much quieter, but it was still there.

He half-stumbled forward, not knowing where he was going. Back to where he'd killed them, perhaps. To the abyss, which now doubtless contained their bodies, maybe. He didn't know.

He emerged into the hallway, and almost tripped over her.

He'd told her to go. So she'd left. The rooms, though apparently not the tunnels. If she'd made it to her exit, she'd turned back around. He had no real idea how long she'd been lying there. It looked like a long time. Since after he'd entered the chamber, certainly.

She hadn't left him. Even when he couldn't feel her, she hadn't left him.

She'd taken off her jacket and was using it as a pillow. She'd washed up some, before she'd even left him with Jacob, but that was just her

face and hands. She was lying on the stone floor, still in her street clothes, still half filthy from having been thrown into the sand by a maniac. She was curled nearly into a ball, facing the entrance of his chamber. There was a frown line between her brows as she slept, very uncomfortably.

She should have at least asked to sleep in one of the guest chambers.

But no. He knew why she didn't.

That would have been too far away. From me.

She hadn't *left* him. Even when he told her to, *she hadn't left him.*

She'd come back, got as close as she could, and simply dropped, wherever that was. She shifted a little in her uncomfortable sleep, her little hand trying to cushion her beautiful, fragile cheek. The soft fall of her hair covered the scar he knew to be there. The one the bloodthirsty blonde had held a knife to, wanting to cut it out of her.

She hadn't left him. She'd gone out. Circled back. And was still here. For him.

Knowing he wouldn't accept her in his chambers, she'd simply bedded down in the hallway. Exhausted. Dirty. And needing to be near him so much that none of that mattered.

Lord, how he loved her. So much, it bent him in half some days. *Like this one.*

He crouched softly near her sleeping form, head bent, collecting himself. At least as much as he could.

He thought she'd left. He was sure she had.

She must have returned. Obviously.

"There are dark places in all of us ... I love you."

He reached out with his left hand, because he was left-handed. *Ouch.* Twinge, from the arm. It didn't matter. He lifted her gently and stood, feeling the torn muscles pull, in his bicep. That didn't matter either.

"Mmm?" She was dead tired, and groggy.

"Shhh," he told her, carrying her into his room.

"Your... arm," she murmured, still sleeping.

He ignored her, and settled her on his wide bed, then climbed in after her, kicking off his boots.

"I'm dirty," she told him, trying to rouse.

"You are perfect. Sleep."

She settled her body down, her back curled to his front. She drifted, at first, then, aware, suddenly tried to sit up. "Your arm!" She was trying not to brush it. He laid on his good side, and put the injured one over her, lightly.

"Is holding you."

It was the only way to keep her still – to set the injured limb on top of her. He let his hand rest on her hip. She reached for the other one, and pulled it under her head, using his arm for a pillow. She threaded her fingers with his, kissed them, and let them lie, hands still entwined, loosely.

Not repelled, then.

"I am sorry, Catherine."

She laid facing away from him, toward the stained glass window, still, for a long moment. *He was here. He was near. He was injured. In more ways than one.*

"No. I am," she answered. She'd disobeyed him. She'd brought down the gun. But she would not implicate Jacob. There would be no point.

"It wasn't your fault. Father told me."

She kept her face away from his, squeezing his lax palm with nearly idle fingers.

"That doesn't mean it wasn't my fault." Both the gun, and the dismayed look on her face when she'd begged him to stop. He'd deserved neither wound.

He was too tired to argue. So was she. Tomorrow. Tomorrow, there would be plenty of guilt and blame to go around, for everyone. For five minutes, and then maybe for a couple of hours after, he just wanted to let it *go*, somehow.

"You didn't go home." He stated the obvious fact.

"I wanted to stay near you." Also obvious.

"You have a bad habit of doing things I advise you against." He removed her fingers from his, and pulled her more tightly against his large frame. It felt so sweet, to have her so warm, and so near. She sighed with comfort. So did he.

"I know," she said. "It doesn't mean I don't love you." The words were whispered.

She'd told him she loved him when she left him, earlier that evening. Openly. Vulnerably. She didn't expect him to say it back. She'd just wanted him to know.

"I know it doesn't. I know it doesn't mean that," he answered.

Nothing meant that, apparently. Not him killing a room full of people, or him brutalizing their leader, or him being the weapon they all used

to keep themselves safe... nothing swayed her, or shook her off, or meant she didn't love him. Nothing.

He couldn't give her the words back. Not now. Not when he thought his love was so ... worthless a thing. But he could accept hers, perhaps. A little. Accept the words, and try to hold them to his battered heart.

"I thought you'd gone," he said simply, talking to the honeyed fall of her hair.

"Do you want me to go?" She shifted a little, trying to see his face.

He was glad she still couldn't.

"No. Yes... I don't know," he sighed. "I'm glad you didn't, Catherine." He left it at that, as he tucked her body even more firmly against his. The static buzz in his ears dimmed. Ceased.

"Then I'm glad, too," she said, feeling his warmth. Feeling his weight, as it sank down in.

And they drifted off to sleep, together.



No matter where you are in your own fairy tale, I wish you love. ~ Cindy