

Saviour

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For RebeccaSHF, as part of the Angel Femslash ficathon.
Assignment: Fred/Lilah, either shippy or platonic, AU and angst.

Featured fandoms: Angel the Series

Featured pairings: Fred/Lilah

A.S.S Story codes: ff,nc

Story rating: NC17

Lilah had been handcuffed before, of course. Then, it had been padded black leather cuffs with shiny chrome studs on them. They had been fastened to the posts of her own bed, and in spite of being tied down naked and spread-eagle, she had been in control. There had been safewords, and agreements, and even a certain amount of trust.

But that was then.

These cuffs were made out of steel, and they had no padding whatsoever, unless you counted the dried blood. Some of it came from where the steel had rubbed Lilah's wrists raw. Some of it came from elsewhere, and she wasn't even sure if it was human. The surface under her bare skin was raw concrete rather than silk, and the room stank of fear and blood rather than incense.

The cuffs that held her wrists and ankles were connected by short chains to bolts sunk into the concrete. She doubted that even a vampire would've been able to tear loose. Which might well have been a design requirement. The light in the ceiling above her was old and an incandescent bulb rather than a fluorescent tube, which made her guess that she was in a room under the Hyperion Hotel. But she wasn't sure. There had been a small cloud of something coming from the AC vents when she started her car, a brief chemical smell and then she'd woken up here. Chained naked in the center of a large mystical sign scratched deep into the floor, with an IV bottle feeding her basic sustenance through a needle stuck in her arm.

Occasionally she managed to sleep.

Sometimes when she woke up Fred was there.

Fred looked tired and haggard, and there were dark circles around her eyes. She looked even thinner and bonier than Lilah remembered her. Not that she'd met the girl all that often. Mostly she'd seen her on monitors and surveillance photos.

When she came into the room, she didn't look at Lilah. She replaced the IV when it ran low. Occasionally, she sluiced Lilah off with cold water from a hose that she pulled in after her through the door. She scratched at the large sign thing on the floor, adding symbols and words to it. All without ever really looking at her.

Fred also wrote on the walls. With black marker pens, she slowly filled more and more of the walls with rows and rows of mathematics. Lilah didn't understand any of it. She tried to listen to what Fred muttered to herself as she wrote, but even when she could hear it it didn't make more sense than the writing.

She tried to talk to Fred. During the long, long hours when she was lying there alone staring at the ceiling she thought about how to convince the girl to let her free. Logical, rational arguments. Appeals to goodness and common decency. Asking what her friends and parents would think if they knew. Plain old-fashioned begging.

Nothing worked. Fred just wasn't listening.

Slowly, Lilah could feel her own sanity eroding. As the days passed, the memories of her flat and her office and her car and her life took on a mythical sheen, like a fondly remembered dream. They stopped feeling real to her. Real, that was the concrete under her back, the steel around her wrists and the lightbulb's constant glare.

"I went to see Charles today," Fred suddenly said one day. At least Lilah assumed it was a day. Since she couldn't see anything outside the room, except a small slice of corridor when Fred opened the door, she had decided to call it day when she was awake. Night was when she slept. There usually was a lot more day than night.

"How nice," Lilah said, her throat hoarse from lack of use. "How is he?"

"I wish I could've afforded a better headstone for him," Fred said. "But it was all I could do to arrange for him to be buried at all, you see. Not that there was much left to bury anyway..."

She didn't look away from the writing on the wall while she talked, and there was no indication that she had heard a word that Lilah said. The only real difference from her earlier muttering was that she was speaking louder.

"I can get him any headstone you want," Lilah said. "Just let me out of here and I'll buy him a fucking mausoleum."

Fred's head snapped around, and for a moment she looked straight at Lilah.

"See?" Lilah said. "Let me out and I'll help you. I promise. I'll sign a contract. In blood, if you..."

Her voice petered out. There was no response to her words in Fred's face. No compassion, no charity. Just stony disinterest and pain.

Fred walked up to Lilah and knelt down next to her head. She brought her hand up and slapped Lilah's face, hard enough that the whole head snapped to the side and bounced against the concrete. Fred hit her again, and again. Pain brought tears to Lilah's eyes, and her mouth tasted of fresh blood.

"Cows don't speak," Fred said.

As she lay there, Lilah looked at the writing on the walls. It was, after all, the least depressing thing in the room to look at. It didn't matter much that she couldn't understand it. She doubted that anyone but Fred could. It was a mixture of mathematics and magic, as if several of the different magazines that Wesley used to read had mated and had kids.

She wished that she'd studied more science. She'd taken an introductory course in physics while she was studying law, specifically aimed at non-scientists who wanted a basic insight into what physics was all about. It hadn't had much math, of course, but there had been some, at the level of "this is what an equation looks like". She thought that she recognized some of them on the walls, stuck in between other equations and magical sigils.

She recognized more of the sigils than of the physics, which said a lot about the kind of life she'd led. That thing over there surrounded by Greek letters and grids of numbers was a summoning sigil, a lesser variant of one she'd seen used when a Senior Partner came to do a review. It worried her. A lot. Fred was keeping her alive here for a reason, and if that reason included summoning things from one or more Hell dimension, it almost certainly wouldn't be enjoyable for Lilah.

As she lay there, she wished that she was free. When that fantasy started to feel too remote and unrealistic, she wished that she was dead.

"I found her!"

Lilah woke up to Fred's fractured yell.

"What?" she said, dazed and confused and not really wanting to be otherwise.

"I found her," Fred repeated. She sat down on the floor next to Lilah, pulling her knees up under her chin and hugging them tightly.

"I looked and I looked and I got all sorts of stuff and I even threw spells that I found in Wesley's old books, and I finally found her!"

"Found who?" Lilah said.

"Cordelia, stupid!" Fred said, giving Lilah's shoulder a friendly slap.

She's snapped, Lilah thought. She's gone crazy. Crazier. I'll die now. She'll forget about me and I'll die from dehydration.

"Really?" she said. "How nice."

"I thought that she'd been sucked away to another dimension, like Pylea," Fred said. "So I tried to follow the trace that her essence should've left as it traversed the dimensional interstices, but it didn't seem to work. Until I tried looking in another direction, although that's not direction as in up or down or left or forward but rather more like in the direction of right angles to last Thursday only not, and there I found her!"

"Really," Lilah said.

"Really!" Fred agreed, and a thrill at actually having had a response from the madwoman ran through Lilah.

"So where is she?" she tried.

"She's ascended to a higher plane," Fred said. "It's hard to look in that direction, because they *really* don't like to be disturbed up there, but I got some tips from this mailing list about magic and science that Willow showed me that's called Schroedinger's Kittens which is kind of a physics joke that I don't expect you get but it's not that funny anyway so never mind, and I found her trace and there's something that's trying to come down here."

Fred looked at Lilah, her face filled with a sort of hopeful fear.

"And that's got to be Cordy, don't you think? I mean, what else would be trying to get down to *here* from a place like that?"

"Yeah," Lilah said. "Got to be sweet little Cordelia. Sure."

Fred leaned forward, brought her mouth close to Lilah's ear.

"I'm going to help her," she whispered.

A short while later, Fred started bringing equipment into the room. She brought the kind of paraphernalia that Lilah knew from work, the braziers and incense and old scrolls and the razor-sharp daggers and the shallow bowls for blood. Since she didn't bring anything to keep an animal tied up with, Lilah supposed that she'd get to provide the blood.

The thought didn't scare her, which surprised her a little. The strongest feeling that rose in her when she thought about being bled to death was relief, relief that her ordeal would finally end.

Along with the magical tools came machines. Black and chrome little boxes with connectors, dials, knobs, displays and little flashing LEDs, tied together with cables in all the colors of the rainbow and then some. Metal stands like those photographers used to hold lamps were put around the circle Lilah was lying in, holding things that looked more like antennas and futuristic weaponry than flashes and floodlights. All of them pointing straight at her.

Fred flitted from machine to machine, adjusting, connecting and programming. She attached leads and sensors to the magical tools, and put crystals and sigils on the computers.

Lilah swung from despair to fear as she imagined what the things might be used for.

But at least she wasn't bored any more.

"There," Fred said. "That should do it."

She took a couple of plastic bags full of blood from a medical refrigerator, tore them open one by one and emptied them into the sacrifice bowl on the altar. Incense was burning, filling the room with a bitter and acrid smell. Through speakers placed around the circle, computer-generated voices chanted in languages Lilah didn't recognize. She doubted they were human.

"Shouldn't there be more people here?" Lilah asked. "To help?"

"The computers can do enough," Fred said. "And I don't have anyone that could help anyway. They're all gone. But I'll get them back. You'll see. This time, it'll be I who save the handsome man and the pretty, pretty lady."

She took the bowl from the altar along with a small paintbrush, and started to carefully fill in the scratched designs on the floor with blood. As she worked, she added to them, added curves and angles and runes that spread from the inner edge of the circle along Lilah's chains onto her skin.

"I hope you're not ticklish," Fred said, giggling slightly. "Because that would be uncomfortable for you."

Like having lain here for I don't know how many days isn't? Lilah thought, but carefully didn't say. Not taunting the crazy person with the sharp implements seemed not only like a good idea but like a basic survival strategy.

And wasn't it remarkable how the mind kept insisting that survival was to be strived for...

"The useful thing about having to paint you with the blood," Fred said, "is that I don't need any saline paste for the electrodes. The blood is quite conductive enough."

"Electrodes?" Lila said. "Like for a heart exam?"

Fred put the bowl and the brush back on the altar. She stood up, unbuttoned and dropped her white lab coat. Under it, she was naked. She picked up a small black box with several wires hanging from it.

"Same basic technology," she said. "Only these can handle more current than the ones on an ECG machine."

"You'll be measuring the magic?"

Fred straddled Lilah's hips, touching pubic hair to pubic hair. The sticky, greasy feel of magic in the air that had been growing ever since Fred turned the computer voices on increased sharply.

"No, silly," she said. "Or, well, that too, but not with this. This is for the pain."

Lilah tensed.

"The pain?"

"To power the magic," Fred said. She put the little black box on the floor, and started attaching the wires to Lilah's skin.

"Love and hate are the most powerful emotions for powering spells," she went on. "But they're very hard to produce on demand. So instead, we'll use pleasure and pain. They're not quite as good, but they should be good enough."

Lilah's mouth had gone drier than usual.

"What is that thing?" she said, nodding towards the little black box.

"Transcutaneous electric nerve stimulator," Fred said, moving down Lilah's legs so she could put electrodes on her thighs.

"Modified a little by me. They're used for pain relief, usually. But if you set the frequencies and amplitudes just a little different, they cause pain instead. Rather a lot of it. And it doesn't damage anything, much, so you can keep it running for a long time."

She fastened the last electrode just below Lilah's vulva.

"Wha-what about the pleasure?" Lilah asked.

Fred clambered off Lilah's legs and crawled up to her head. She was blushing.

"I'll, like," she said, "put my, you know, between my legs, against your face, and you'll, you know. With your mouth."

The magic had grown so strong that the words echoed against the edge of the circle.

"You want me to eat you out," Lilah said, disbelieving. "While you torture me."

Fred nodded and smiled nervously.

"Pretty much," she said. She sat up, put one leg across Lilah's head and lowered her crotch towards Lilah's face.

I won't do it, Lilah thought. There is no way. Even now, there are limits. She can kill me, but she can't make me do this.

A small click from a button being pressed, and suddenly there was a razor-sharp pulsating fire under her skin. Her vision blacked out, her muscles spasmed and she could feel herself screaming at the top of her lungs.

"The sooner you begin, the sooner it'll be over," she heard Fred's voice say from far, far away.

All hesitation scourged out of her by the searing, impossibly continuing pain, she fought to gain control of her mouth and to find Fred's waiting sex.

Consciousness returned to Lilah slowly, and she fought it all the way. She screwed her eyes shut to keep out the light, and in spite of her efforts to keep silent whimpering sobs escaped her. She wanted to curl up, roll up into a ball of misery and wait for the world to end. But her arms and legs were still chained, and she had no choice but to remain spread out on the floor.

The floor was softer than usual. She could smell eggs.

Confused, she opened her eyes. The familiar light fixture was still above her, and the familiar concrete ceiling was still there. She turned her head, and out of the corner of her eye she could see that someone had put a blanket under her. Furthermore, where the IV drip had entered her arm was only a band-aid.

"Good morning, sleepyhead," she heard Fred say. "We made it."

Most of the equipment, magical as well as technological, was gone. The blood on the floor had been cleaned away. Fred was kneeling right next to her, dressed in blue jeans and a pink t-shirt. She was holding a tray, which she put on the blanket next to Lilah.

"Hungry?" she asked. Not waiting for an answer, she gathered some scrambled egg on a fork and brought it to Lilah's mouth.

"Made it?" Lilah said. "Made what?"

"Eat and I'll tell you."

Lilah opened her mouth and accepted the eggs.

"She came here," Fred said. "She isn't Cordy, but that's all right. She's been trying to come here to set everything right, and we've helped her make it."

"We have?" Lilah said, still more than a little confused and a whole lot scared. "Where is she?"

Fred fed her another forkful of eggs.

"It's really fantastic, you know?" she said. "It's only been about thirty-six hours since we finished the ritual, and your chorionic gonadotropin level is already over ten thousand mIU per milliliter. It doesn't really look like *human* chorionic gonadotropin, but that's just to be expected, I guess. It should be close enough for your endocrine system."

"My what level?"

Fred giggled. "Your hGC level. You're about six or seven weeks pregnant."

"I'm...? That's impossible," Lilah said. "I haven't..."

"It's magic, silly," Fred said. "She needs a body for this world, so she's making your body make one for her. It won't take long, only a month or two."

Lilah's mind felt blank. Her brain was shutting down, refusing to process the information.

Fred pushed the tray aside and laid down alongside Lilah, with her head on her chest.

"So that's why you have to get solid food," Fred said. "The baby needs to grow, right? So we need to keep you nice and healthy and safe, but I'll do that. I can do that. I know how to keep safe. You hide, in your cave, so no one can find you."

It felt pretty good, her mind leaving. She could still feel the pain in her arms and legs, and the shivering and the fear and the despair, but without anything to process the signals they didn't bother her any more. Slowly, she let more and more of herself slip into oblivion.

"And then she'll be born," Fred said. "And she'll be more powerful than anyone else, and she'll be so beautiful, and everyone will love her."

The words ceased to have any meaning. Without language, they were just sounds.

"And she'll make it so that *everybody* is so, so happy, *forever*. Forever and *ever*."