And Bless You For It

by Leni

Summary

The first time Scarlett O'Hara met her guardian angel, she almost broke a second vase on his head.

Notes

Written for Scribble_MyName at Comment Fic. Prompt: no touchy the wings

The first time Scarlett O'Hara met her guardian angel, she almost grabbed the vase he'd just repaired and hurled it away... straight at his head. To say he'd come to save her from temptation, and then laugh because temptation couldn't run fast enough from her!

"Can't blame him," he said, looking her over with mischievous eyes. "If he gave in, you'd drag him straight to hell, and the fool would bless you for it."

"You, sir, are no gentleman!"

He tutted down at her, and made a show of unfurling his wings. "No, my dear girl. I really am not."

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He visited again in Atlanta, and Scarlett shoved a wailing Wade into his arms before flinging herself...
onto her bed, completely exhausted. "Couldn't you have saved me from that?" she asked mulishly, gesturing to her son.

He hoisted Wade against his shoulder, so the baby didn't see his glare. "You're a selfish little thing, aren't you?"

Against all expectations, she broke into tears. "I just want my life back," she sniffled into the handkerchief he conjured for her. "Even Mellie goes out to play nurse, while I can't go out because I'm a- a-"

"A widow?"

She started crying again.

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"You!" Scarlett exclaimed, not sure if she was more shocked at seeing him in public, or that he looked so normal without the wings. If normal men gave off that sense of power, that was. "I came to help," she said quickly, daring him to drag her back to Aunt Pittypat's house.

"Sure, sure," he said, quirking a smile. "Those poor sisters, falling ill right before the bazaar. That left nobody to tend to their stand, didn't it? What a strange coincidence!"

"Yes." Scarlett sighed in relief, glad that someone didn't disapprove of her presence in public. "A coincidence, indeed."

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"What are you doing?" she hissed when the band started to play, finally recovered from watching a widow accept a dance while she was still in full blacks.

"Freeing you," he told her, all seriousness. "It's part of the job description, my dear girl."

Her expression warred between gratefulness and distrust, for he always was teasing her when he called her that (but he always made her laugh too, and she needed laughter so much that she forgave him everything). Finally, she relented with a smile. "Is that even your real name? Rhett... Butler, was it?"

He shrugged. "It'll do."

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She found him in the nursery often. Her claws would keep her safe, he claimed, and so he could guard Wade's sleep instead. "He's a good boy," he told her often, bouncing the boy on his knees.

"Just like his father," she would respond mechanically, for she'd discovered that was what everybody wanted to hear.

Both knew that, coming from her, it was no compliment.

"He loved you," he reminded her once.

Scarlett hesitated, trying to bring into focus her memories of Charles. "Guess he did," she allowed. "Does it matter now?"

He glanced at Wade and shook his head.
"I didn't know these were in bloom yet." Scarlett showed off the flowers she'd collected to decorate the latest fundraising dance. "I think they're the prettiest, don't you?" she asked, forcing his attention away from Melanie.

He was Rhett Butler today, chaperoning the pretty Widow Hamilton and her sweet sister-in-law. Scarlett liked it better when she had him to herself.

"They're beautiful!" Melanie told her. "And spring still weeks away; it's almost a miracle!"

The word made Scarlett blink and give him a quick glance. But his expression never changed, and she dismissed the silly notion. As if he'd care!

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"It can't be right, that you're waiting in my bedroom," she said as she gave him the handkerchief she'd borrowed the week before. She'd thought of keeping it, a little memory of a nice sunny day; but it was too strange, having something that hadn't existed until he called it into being.

"Should I barge in at visiting hours, then? Perhaps for tea?"

Scarlett thought of Pittypat's reaction to being hostess to the mysterious Mr. Butler. She'd have palpitations for a week!

He was laughing already, obviously sharing her thoughts.

"You're awful!" she told him, but she said it fondly.

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"What happened?" she asked, peering at the spot where his wings peeked out. "It looks...." She frowned, unable to find a kind word. "Different," she decided, reaching out in her curiosity.

He caught her wrist. "No."

She arched an eyebrow, glancing pointedly down at Wade who was happily munching on one of the fallen feathers.

He burst out laughing. "Only you, Scarlett," he chided her, though there was amusement in his gaze. "Only you could be jealous of your own child."

"I'm not jealous!"

"My apologies," he said too easily, tucking in his wings. "But you're still not touching them."

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"I can't," she whispered even as her eyes craved the pretty green hat he carried. "What would everyone say?"

He glanced at her in disbelief. "You're at your pettiest around a celestial being, and you worry about the opinion of a few mortals?"

"Well, you can't ruin my reputation."
"Neither can this hat," he told her, laughing as he placed it on her head.

Scarlett ran to the nearest mirror. "Oh, you shouldn't tempt me so!"

"I most certainly should," he said, tying the laces. "Must keep things fair, after all."

But Scarlett wasn't listening, already enamored of her reflection.

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"You're a fool, Scarlett O'Hara!"

It wasn't a shout, but his words still made Scarlett jump in alarm. Then embarrassment flooded her as she realized he'd seen her spy Ashley and Melanie entering their bedroom. "I..."

"Oh, don't worry," he sneered. "I'm sure he'll be thinking of you tonight."

The words were the right ones, but the tone... She knew that tone. He was mocking her! Mocking her feelings! And she didn't know how. "I'm just happy that he's alive," she said, happy to be telling the truth.

(He could always tell otherwise.)

But he still caught her lie. "'Just'?

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He passed the ball toward Wade, and when the boy kicked it back aimlessly, a wave of his hand made it roll straight to him.

"Isn't that cheating?" Scarlett asked, bored enough to spend time in the nursery during a rainy day.

"So is kissing another woman's husband," he said, not bothering to lower his voice.

"Hush!" she cried, glancing around. "Don't you know that walls have ears, and Uncle Peter's are especially sharp."

"Good thing his eyes are failing, then." Wade squealed for attention. But before he returned to their game, he added, "And still you're the blindest one."

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"I love dancing with you," Scarlett said, and she surprised herself by saying it as actual praise and not just the usual opening sentence to use on a dance partner.

His smile seemed just as sincere. "You're quite lovely as well, Mrs. Hamilton."

Right. They were Mrs. Hamilton and Mr. Butler tonight. One of Atlanta's beauties - especially now that she dressed in color again - and the elusive bachelor who managed to be in town for every grand ball. It occurred to Scarlett that they presented a good-looking couple to the rest of the city.

The thought, strangely, made her smile.

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"Oh, you're unbelievable!" he snapped, pulling on her shoulder to drag her from the pillows she'd
been sobbing on for the last hour. "What did you expect?" He rolled his eyes at her tear-stained face, but presented a dry handkerchief to her. "You aren't as innocent as to think they'd just sleep!"

"B-but it was only a week!"

He laughed meanly. "And your son was the result of much lengthier labors?"

Scarlett looked sickened at that reminder. "Lengthy enough," she scowled, tossing his used kerchief back at him.

"There." He grinned at her. "Better that murderous glare than useless tears."

*

"I want to go home." For once Scarlett felt too despondent to nudge her boy away when he came to cuddle against her skirts. "We need to go! Can't you do something?"

He wasn't wearing his wings today, but he wasn't posing as Mr. Butler either. Scarlett wasn't sure what to make of this man, except to be surprised that she wasn't uncomfortable with his presence.

He shook his head. "I warned you it would get worse; you didn't listen."

"Surely we can't lose!"

His eyes were pitying. "I'll be here."

She frowned. "But how does that help me now?"

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"Where were you?!" she screeched, beating at his chest. "Mellie is sick, and everybody is too busy to help - and you weren't coming!"

He laughed even as he pulled her into a tight embrace. "Selfish to the end, eh? The whole city will be a ruin before dawn, and you still believe you're the only one in need of a guardian angel?"

She sniffled once more. "But you're mine."

He laughed again, drying her tears with a handkerchief he had to pull from a pocket. "I suppose you're right, dear. Now hurry. Grab Wade and Mrs. Wilkes - your carriage awaits!"

*

Scarlett was terrified. The city was burning, and she was trapped in it with a passel of helpless hands and only one man to rely on. How had it come to this? "Can't you do something?" she begged, clutching his arm.

He shook his head. "I'm all out of miracles, love. We'll have to do this the old-fashioned way."

But he seemed so certain that they'd manage, despite the fire and the advancing enemy army. Scarlett clung to him, trying to seep into that strength. "Just get us out, please."

"Don't worry," he said darkly, "I've only doomed myself tonight."

*
After the shocks of the day - the torturous birth, the burning city, the dangerous roads - nothing should have fazed her. She'd barely noticed as he pulled her down and took her deeper into the shadows. But seeing the charred lumps that had once been such beautiful things woke her up. "Your wings!"

"Stealing the sorriest horse in creation could have been forgiven," he told her, ignoring her reaction. "But the real reason I did it? I should be begging for mercy, making oaths of contrition." He met her bewildered eyes and laughed. "And you don't know what I'm talking about!"

*

The first time Scarlett heard a guardian angel curse was followed by the feeling of his lips on hers. It wasn't a kiss. Later, she reasoned that he wouldn't know how to do it properly, of course. He didn't bother to taste her, he devoured instead.

It was over before she could convince herself that she disliked it.

She stared at him for a long moment, uncountably confused and too exhausted to think. "Does this mean you're staying to help?"

His laughter filled the night, but for once the sound hinted at hope instead of just mockery. "Yes. I'll stay."

The End
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