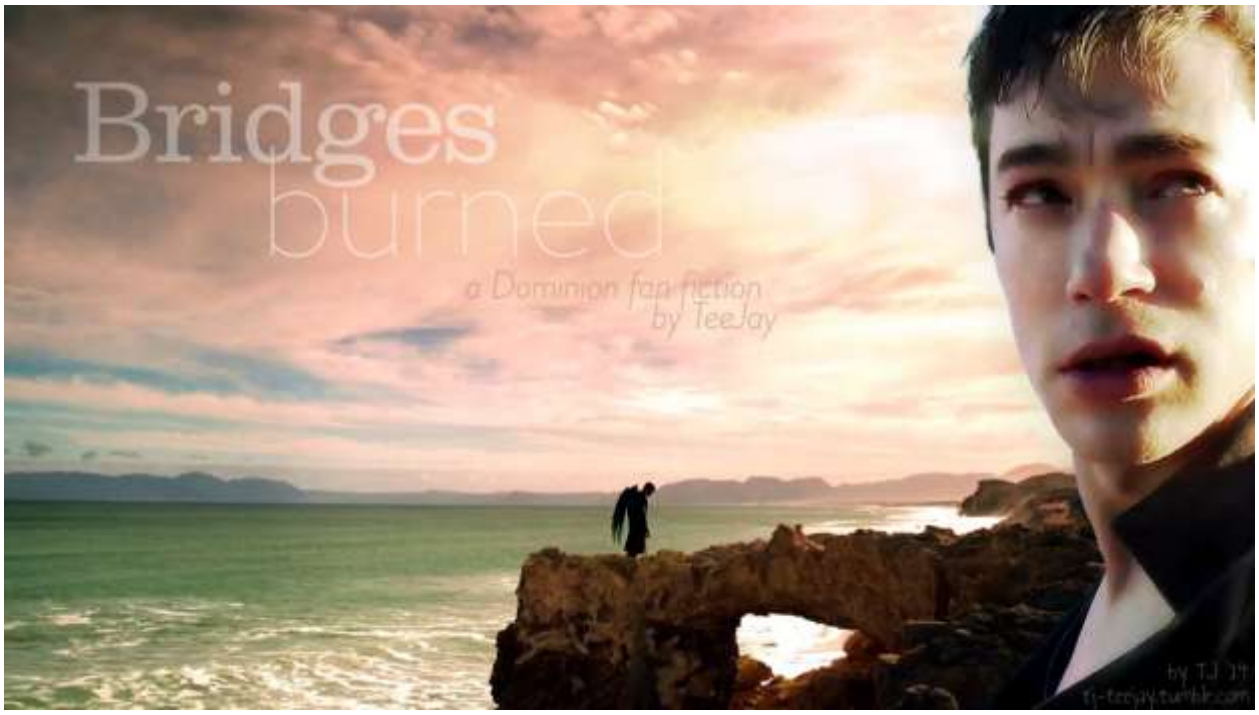


Title: Bridges Burned
Author: tj_teejay (AO3 – Tumblr – Instagram – Reddit – E-Mail)
Genre: Gen
Characters/Pairings: Michael, Lucifer
Rating: PG-13
Warning: Contains spoilers for all of season 1, especially 1x08 "Beware Those Closest To You"
Summary: After what he did to Becca in his blind rage, Michael finds himself face to face with another archangel who is about to exact Michael's rightful punishment. Episode tag to 1x08.
Author's Note: Clearly, I have no idea what I'm doing. I know nothing about archangels or the lore surrounding them. I'm just poking around in the dark, hoping to get away with my complete and utter ignorance and twisted, angsty mind. Let me also just say that if they were ever going to actually introduce Lucifer on the show, I hope he'll be played by Benedict Cumberbatch. That's whom I've cast for the role in my mind anyway (with the full awareness that it isn't ever gonna happen in reality). Feel free to recast at your leisure as you read on. :-) I also need to mention Alipeeps' wonderful post-1x08 story "As Makes The Angels Weep", which largely inspired this one-shot in the first place. We had a very inspirational discussion around a deleted scene from episode 1x08, and she encouraged me to write my own tag to the episode. By no means did I aim at writing something similar or superior. I wrote my own version. That's all it is. Thus, huge thanks go out to the lovely Alipeeps, not only for the inspiration but also for the beta. And thanks also to Tom Wisdom for bringing a wonderfully subdued yet powerful Michael to life. Please do not share or upload this fic anywhere without the author's permission.

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The sight of the ocean had always invigorated Michael—the tangy scent of the seaweed, the ragged cliffs meeting the turquoise plains of water, gusts of wind tousling his hair. It had been

pure instinct that had drawn him to the ragged cliff that reached into the frothy water after he he'd fled Becca's lab.

Seeing the atrocities she'd committed against his kind, his mind had been overtaken by uncontrollable rage. He'd been too blinded, too focused, to break the cycle. Before he knew it, he was already up in the air with no clear destination in mind. He left devastation in his wake and shards of broken glass that dropped from the sky and scattered on the roof of House Thorn.

The breeze was getting cooler as he came closer to the sea and he had to work against the air currents to keep a steady flight path. He recognized the familiar rock structure from a distance. The ground was uneven beneath his feet as he found his footing at the edge of the outcropping. He let his wings stay exposed for a moment before he furled them in a practiced motion.

A hollow emptiness overtook him, an emptiness he hadn't felt since the Flood. Physical pain scraped at the edge of his consciousness and his hand instinctively reached for his midriff. His fingers came away with blood on their tips and his mind transported him back to the science lab where he was staring at the crimson-stained edge of Alex's blade pointing at him.

"Everything you've taught me. Everything. And this is how it ends?"

The accusation in Alex's voice was all too evident, the resentment in his eyes hard to overlook. That had been the moment he snapped out of the blinding fury, the moment he'd realized what he'd done. All he could do was to flee.

The late summer sun felt warm on his shoulders, a discordant contrast to the coldness in his soul—if it could be said of angels to even have such a thing. Perhaps it was a human concept but one he could comprehend without scrutiny.

Not a few hours ago, he had stood in the Stratosphere tower and told Becca that he was unequivocally capable of love, that he *loved* her. How was it possible that his hand had clawed at her throat and literally squeezed the life out of her?

He shivered despite the afternoon heat, letting contempt, guilt and shame wash over him. His head dropped to his chin, tears soon following. He let them fall to the ground where they formed dark circles on the wheat coloured rock.

What have you done?!

The question echoed in his mind, accompanied by Becca's lifeless eyes staring up at nothing. He'd dropped her to the floor like a discarded piece of junk. He had not thought it possible he could ever display such blatant disregard of human life. Looking back at it now, it disgusted him. It was hard to comprehend how he could have cast his love for Becca aside so easily.

Alex had been there to watch it all, had tried to stop him with all his might. The deep cut in Michael's torso bore witness to it. Not only had he destroyed precious lives, he'd also betrayed Alex's trust, had annihilated the unwavering respect the boy had for him. He knew there was no excuse for his actions that would stand up to scrutiny and the painful awareness sunk in that he'd burned a bridge that would be difficult and laborious to rebuild.

What would Father think of him now? There was a time when he had felt sure of His intentions, when he'd had a clear vision of what was right and wrong in Father's eyes. Now it was all grey zones swimming into each other and he'd just taken a dangerous step over into the dark anthracite.

The firm grip of a hand on his shoulder surprised him and his head whipped around. Lucifer. He'd recognize that face anywhere.

"I hear you've gotten yourself in deep this time, Michael," the bassy voice boomed.

"Why are you here?" Michael said sharply.

"Come now, are you not happy to see me, old friend?"

Michael turned away from the dark figure to face the ocean. He didn't feel ready to deal with petty jibes and less so with chastisement. He realized with a sense of dread that Lucifer's appearance could only mean one thing.

"You know that there is a certain kind of order to things in our world. You have come dangerously close to crossing the first circle today. This will serve as a fair warning."

Michael balled his hands into fists by his side then unclenched them again. Mercy wasn't a known commodity among his kind. Ironically, he'd often felt that humans were too forgiving. The world he came from, mistakes were rarely left unpunished and retribution was always swift and seldom lenient.

A shadow moved beside him, Lucifer stepping forward to stand next to him. "You know that your actions must have consequences."

It wasn't a question and Michael knew exactly what it meant. He cringed on the inside, waiting for his sentence.

Lucifer turned to him. "I don't know why Father gave you the capability for compassion. A gift, some might say. A flaw in my eyes. It has weakened you, made you dependent on human company. Perhaps we should start there."

The tiniest of smiles cracked at the corner of Lucifer's mouth and his gaze bore into him. Michael knew he had no choice, that surrender was inevitable. Powerful as Michael might be, to go against Lucifer was a futile endeavour. He'd learned that lesson long ago and had not forgotten it since.

Michael stepped forward and inclined his head in submission. The cool skin of Lucifer's palms wrapped around his jawline on either side and he felt a slight prickle at the nape of his neck. It took a mere two seconds then Lucifer broke the physical contact.

"Enjoy the silence," he stated with an almost malicious expression before he stepped away, unfurled his wings and thrust himself upwards into the air.

Michael closed his eyes and felt his knees buckle. Silence didn't quite describe it. If he had felt an emptiness inside of him before, it was barren desolation now. Gone was the low murmur of hushed voices, the presence of those closest to him. Lucifer had taken his ability to sense the humans, to locate their presence, to perceive their emotional states—a constant of his existence that had given him more comfort than he would care to admit.

He felt bereft of an integral part of his being, a hole he didn't know how to fill. He hadn't been prepared for the overwhelming impact of it but he knew it was what he deserved. Perhaps it wasn't even enough in the face of what he had done.

He tried to remember the sensation, tried to hold on to it, to have a reason to do what it took to win it back. What had he sensed last? His own rage and shame had blurred everything out and he had trouble finding a tangible thread of an awareness that already seemed like a hazy memory.

The wind whipped his hair and he looked upward towards the sky.

“If ever there was a time for your return, it would be now,” he urged into the emptiness. “Please. The silence is deafening.”

His eyes scanned the rugged landscape around him, but it was still just him and the forces of nature. The plea had been a long shot, he’d known that. He couldn’t help but let out a hopeless sigh before he started to climb back up the rocks to get to more even ground.

Unsure where to go, he let himself wander aimlessly along the seaside for a while. Daylight was waning and something dropped onto his head. When he looked up, seemingly out of nowhere menacing clouds were now obscuring the sun, thick droplets of rain starting to fleck the ground. For a split second, he wondered if it was a sign from Father, a message to say he was condoning Michael’s punishment. The notion wasn’t entirely far-fetched.

He deliberated what would come next. Time was an entirely different concept if you lived forever and he often struggled with the divergence between his perception and the humans’. For all he knew, he could seek out the remotest place on this earth and hide for the next few decades to watch his brother finally succeeding in his war against humanity—or, if fate would have it, watch the humans destroy each other instead.

It was that thought that brought clarity amidst the confusion. There was a sudden, unexpected certainty in his heart that he could not let either happen. Lucifer may have taken away the sense that connected him physically to the humans but the bond was much stronger than that.

A newfound resolve energized him and the sound of his wings expanding was lost among the waves angrily crashing against the rocky cliffs below. Struggling against the heavy raindrops that were pelting his face, he soared into the air.

His first instinct to reach out and find a connection was met by an unfamiliar void. He felt disoriented for a moment then collected himself and made his way towards Gabriel’s aerie. If there was any way to save humanity, Gabriel’s evil machinations were the first place to start.

He was no closer to discerning what it all meant, or how the Chosen One would fulfil his destiny, but Michael had never been surer that Alex’s chances to succeed without his help were considerably low. The rubble of those bridges he’d burned could be cleared away and a new one built if he only tried hard enough. Forgiveness would come.

A gust of wind gave him uplift just as the rain suddenly stopped. The orange sun broke through a rift in the clouds just above the horizon and three single rays illuminated the sea in the distance. He took this as a sign that he had righted his path.

Michael spread his wings wide and glided towards his fate.

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THE END