

*'The Tower'*  
*Paul Whitfield 2005*  
*Brief Candle*

# ***The Tower***

***by***

***Paul Whitfield***

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***[Angel and Sebastian are sleeping. Sebastian snores. Angel opens her eyes and makes eye contact with the audience. She signs that the audience should be quiet. She moves forward, trying hard not to wake Sebastian. He mumbles and shifts, but stays asleep.]***

**Angel**

***[To audience]***

Shhhh! He snores like a pig. I tease him about it. I can. He doesn't mind. He laughs. "You make the walls shake!" I say, and it makes him smile. "It feels like the whole tower's wobbling!" I say and he says....

***[Sebastian jumps up from sleeping position in to flashback]***

**Sebastian**

What, like this?

***[Sebastian grabs Angel, lifts her up and spins her around. They are both laughing and giggling.]***

**Angel**

Put me down!

Sebastian!

I think I'm going to be sick. No, really, I'm going to be sick!

***[Sebastian puts Angel down. They are both smiling and laughing.]***

**Angel**

One day you'll shake the tower so much it'll come crashing down!

**Sebastian**

Never! This tower is built to last.

**Angel**

I bet it'll last a thousand years!

**Sebastian**

It will last a hundred thousand.

**Angel**

A thousand thousand!

**Sebastian**

It will last longer than us.

**Angel**

A million thousand!

**Sebastian**

***[His tone changes]***

Don't be silly. Haven't you got work to do?

***[Sebastian returns to sleeping position, as at the beginning of the play.]***

**Angel**

***[To audience]***

And of course I have. I always have. But I take his laughter with me while I do it.

I like it when he's asleep. I lean on the window sill and look down at the village. If the wind is in the right direction you can hear talking and shouting and bits of arguments. I try to imagine what their lives are like. A big knotted up mess of people; like a big puzzle you can't make sense of. I'm glad my life isn't like that. I'm up here safe and away from it all. Just me and Sebastian. Looking after each other. Him and me forever.

He farts too, Sebastian, while he's asleep. Like a thunderstorm. He says he doesn't. I can't tease him about it. I tried once. He didn't like it.

I like living in a tower. It's like living in the sky.

I sometimes wonder how we got up here, what with there being no stairs, and what we'd do if there was a fire or something. But Sebastian says not to worry, so I don't. I mean, he'd look after me. He always looks after me.

I'm lucky. Who else gets to live in a place like this? I've got someone to love and look after, and they love and look after me. I'm safe here. High in the sky away from the wicked world. Away from all the bad things, all the bad people.

***[Sebastian wakes and moves over to her.]***

**Sebastian**

Listen, Angel, you are the only light in a dark and terrible world. I never thought it was possible to love anything this much. Never leave me.

**Angel**

'Course I won't! Where would I go?

**Sebastian**

You must never leave Sebastian.

**Angel**

***[To audience.]***

I'd never find anyone else to look after me the way Sebastian does...

**Sebastian**

It's a hard, cruel world out there, Angel.

**Angel**

***[To audience.]***

He's always thinking of what's best for me.

**Sebastian**

Out there it's dog eat dog, every man for himself. The strong get stronger and the weak get crushed underfoot.

**Angel**

*[To audience.]*

He keeps me safe.

**Sebastian**

How long do you think you'd last out there?

**Angel**

Not long.

**Sebastian**

No time at all. Skinny, runty thing like you. Are you strong?

**Angel**

Not really.

**Sebastian**

Can you fight?

**Angel**

I don't think so.

**Sebastian**

Have you got any skills?

**Angel**

I don't know.

**Sebastian**

Let Sebastian tell you. You've got none. None that would keep you alive.

**Angel**

I suppose not.

**Sebastian**

You'd be useless anywhere else. This tower is the only place you can ever belong.

**Angel**

I know.

**Sebastian**

Life for you outside would be painful and short. Be grateful you're here with me.

**Angel**

I am.

**Sebastian**

I know you are.

***[He beckons her over and hugs her.]***

**Sebastian**

We're very lucky people, Angel.

**Angel**

The luckiest people in the world.

**Sebastian**

Go and get the bucket ready.

***[Sebastian exits]***

**Angel**

***[To audience.]***

I'm in charge of the bucket!

This bucket is the most important thing in our lives. Without this bucket we'd be dead! It's how we get food and everything else we need. And I'm in charge of it. That's how much Sebastian relies on me.

I've been hauling it up and down the side of the tower ever since I was strong enough. It can be hard work, especially when the bucket's full, and sometimes I have to pull it up and down time after time.

Sebastian used to write the notes that said what we wanted, but now he trusts me to do that too! That's a really important job, that is. The most important!

The tower's so tall and it's so far to the bottom that you can't always see who's loading up the bucket. I think the villagers used to send all sorts of different people. Probably because one person would do it and then they'd die from some terrible disease, or in a fight, or their legs would be crushed and mangled in a horrible accident – you know, the kind of stuff that happens out there all the time. But it's been the same person for a while now. A boy, I think. He watches the bucket all the way to the top. I don't know how long he'll last.

Something awful is bound to happen to him. That's what the world out there is like. Sebastian told me. No-one out there lives very long.

And not only do I get to order the food, I get to cook it too!

***[Angel is cooking. Sebastian is reading.]***

**Sebastian**

Is it ready yet?

**Angel**

Nearly.

**Sebastian**

Have you flavoured it properly?

**Angel**

Of course.

**Sebastian**

Are you sure?

**Angel**

I used some of the fresh herbs that came up yesterday.

**Sebastian**

You've tasted it?

**Angel**

Yeah. It's nice.

**Sebastian**

Enough salt?

**Angel**

Just right.

**Sebastian**

I don't want it too bland.

**Angel**

It's not.

**Sebastian**

You know how much I hate bland food.

**Angel**

It's not bland.

**Sebastian**

I like to taste what I'm eating.

**Angel**

**[To audience.]**

Sebastian's fussy about his food. I don't mind. I like getting it right for him.

**Sebastian**

You think maybe it needs a bit more salt?

**Angel**

It's OK.

**Sebastian**

Just to be on the safe side.

**[Angel shrugs. Tastes the food. Adds a little more salt. Tastes it again.]**

**Angel**

I think it's ready.

***[Sebastian gets up.]***

**Sebastian**

Sit yourself down. Sebastian will take over.

**Angel**

***[To audience.]***

He likes to serve the food.

**Sebastian**

You've worked hard. You deserve to be waited on like a Princess!

**Angel**

***[To audience.]***

You see how special he makes me feel!

**Sebastian**

Relax, your Majesty. Dinner is served!

**Angel**

***[To audience.]***

He's rubbish at it! Sometimes he gives me too much. Great piles of food. So much I feel I'm going to explode before I can finish it all.

Other times he gives me so little I might as well be living on thin air.

**Sebastian**

Here it comes!

**Angel**

I hope he piles it high tonight! I'm starving, and it tastes really good!

***[Sebastian presents the plates with a flourish and puts them on the table. Angel looks at the disappointingly small amount she's been given.]***

**Angel**

Thanks.

**Sebastian**

Looks great, doesn't it? Tuck in!

***[They both start to eat. Angel is clearly perfectly happy with it. Sebastian reacts as if he's eating excrement.]***

**Sebastian**

What is this muck? What are you trying to do to me?

**Angel**

What's wrong?

**Sebastian**

It's like eating dog sick!

**Angel**

It tastes all right to me.

**Sebastian**

We obviously can't trust your taste, can we?

**Angel**

I tried to make it nice.

**Sebastian**

And that's what makes it so pathetic! What did you do? Pour in all the salt we've got? I need some water.

**Angel**

I only added a little more, like you said.

**Sebastian**

Oh, so this is Sebastian's fault, is it?

**Angel**

No, but...

**Sebastian**

Was he cooking it, eh?

**Angel**

No.

**Sebastian**

Was he tasting it, eh?

**Angel**

No.

**Sebastian**

But somehow it's still his fault? Incredible! How is Angel ever going to learn if she doesn't face up to her mistakes?

**Angel**

I'll cook you something else.

**Sebastian**

You don't think I'm going to touch anything you cook tonight. Sebastian would rather starve.

**Angel**

I don't mind eating the rest of it.

***[Sebastian snatches it away from her.]***

**Sebastian**

Oh no. It's not fit for anyone. Not even you.

**Angel**

I don't mind.

**Sebastian**

I wouldn't feed it to a dog!

***[Sebastian takes all the food away.]***

**Sebastian**

I suppose Sebastian will have to get himself something else.

**Angel**

What about me?

**Sebastian**

What about you?

**Angel**

I'm hungry.

**Sebastian**

You should have thought about that before you ruined perfectly good food. Besides, look at the size of you. It'll do you good to miss a meal or two. You're hardly likely to waste away. I was starting to worry that the tower wouldn't bear the weight of you much longer, clumping around it like an over-fed elephant. Wash this lot up and then you can get to bed.

***[Sebastian goes to get himself some food.]***

**Angel**

***[To audience.]***

I don't like it when Sebastian gets angry. But I don't blame him. I can be pretty stupid sometimes. It didn't taste too bad to me, but Sebastian knows best. If he says it was horrible it must have been. Why else would he say it?

***[Sebastian brings Angel a slice of bread.]***

**Sebastian**

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Here, have this. Sebastian is sorry. He knows he can be a grumpy old monster sometimes, but his Angel knows he's not really like that.  
I've given up so much for you. My old life. The whole world. Sometimes it all feels a bit too much.

**Angel**

I know.

**Sebastian**

You are my whole world, Angel.

***[Sebastian exits.]***

**Angel**

***[To audience.]***

You see? He needs me.

I'll show you this. It's kind of a secret. Sebastian doesn't know anything about it. It's a letter. It came up in the bucket. Written to me. Listen!

***[Reading]***

"Sorry there are no eggs. Something upset the chickens. I put some raspberries in instead. Are you a boy or a girl? I think you're a girl, but it's hard to tell from down here. I'm a boy."

No-one has written to me like that before. No-one from outside the Tower has ever asked about me before. I should probably tell Sebastian....

***[Sebastian enters and examines the bucket.]***

**Sebastian**

No eggs!

**Angel**

No.

**Sebastian**

What if I wanted scrambled eggs? What if I wanted omelette?

**Angel**

They sent raspberries instead.

**Sebastian**

Raspberries?

**Angel**

Yeah.

**Sebastian**

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What use are raspberries? Can Sebastian fry a raspberry and have it on his toast?

**Angel**

Probably not.

**Sebastian**

They do this on purpose. They're all imbeciles!

**Angel**

I'll make you something else in a minute. There's plenty of other stuff. We don't have to have eggs.

**Sebastian**

Are you writing to them?

**Angel**

Yes.

**Sebastian**

What have you said?

**Angel**

Not much.

**Sebastian**

Read it to me.

**Angel**

Um... "Where are our eggs, you imbeciles?"

**Sebastian**

Good. Tell them I must have eggs by tomorrow.

**Angel**

I will.

**Sebastian**

Tell them they've got worms for brains...

**Angel**

All right.

**Sebastian**

And they smell of cow manure.

**Angel**

Of course.

**Sebastian**

And show it to me before you send it. I know what you're like. You're too soft hearted. I want them to know how angry Sebastian is.

**Angel**

OK

**Sebastian**

And bring me a cup of tea when you're finished, there's a good girl.

*[Sebastian moves away. Angel, aside, to the audience.]*

**Angel**

I'll write two notes. One for the bucket...

*[Angel writes note.]*

"I am a girl, of course. And I knew you were a boy, even from so far away. My name is Angel. What's your name?"

*[Angel drops the first note in the bucket.]*

*[To audience]*

And one for Sebastian....

*[Reads the second note to Sebastian.]*

**Angel**

"I hope your fingers turn blue in the frost and drop off and your ears are roasted by the sun until they're charred to cinders and fall like dandruff on your shoulders. Never forget our eggs again!"

**Sebastian**

Excellent!

**Angel**

You like it then?

**Sebastian**

Excellent!

**Angel**

*[To audience]*

I like it when Sebastian is pleased with me. But it's not like he's my only friend. Of course he's not. How sad would that be?

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My other friends come to see me every day. I save scraps of food for them. I sneak leftovers when I'm cooking or I leave a little on my plate and hide it in my pocket. They land on the window sill. They were shy at first and flew away when I tried to touch them. But now they come to me and sit on my hands or my head. They've all got names. They can't tell me their names themselves, of course, because I can't talk bird and they can't talk human, but I know them anyway. There's Bomber and Trixie and Atlas and Colin. And Mary and Flash and Omar and Doo-Doo. I know, but I didn't choose them, did I? It's what they came with. Lace was my favourite one of all time. She was really pretty - almost completely white with these little black marks around her eyes and at the edges of her wings. Watching her fly was like watching a tiny cloud in a strong wind. One day she didn't fly anymore. She lay like a stone on the window sill with her eyes wide open but not seeing anything. I remember it like it was today.

***[Angel cries silently. Sebastian enters.]***

**Sebastian**

What are you crying for?

**Angel**

I'm not.

**Sebastian**

Why are you crying?

***[Angel turns away and attempts to hide her tears from Sebastian.]***

**Sebastian**

No secrets, remember. We have no secrets from one another.

***[Angel points to the dead bird.]***

**Sebastian**

It's only a dead bird. Don't waste your tears. Sebastian loves pigeon pie, but there's not enough meat on that thing to make it worth plucking. Barely a mouthful.

***[Sebastian puts his arms around Angel and holds her close to him.]***

**Sebastian**

There's nothing to cry about. Sebastian's here. You don't need any silly bird. You've got me and that's all you'll ever need. Now dry your eyes, before I give you something to really cry about.

**Angel**

What happens to bird's when they die?

**Sebastian**

If they're near me they get eaten.

**Angel**

No. Not to their bodies. To 'them'.

**Sebastian**

Birds don't have a 'them'. When they're gone they're gone. That's it.

**Angel**

What will happen to me when I die?

**Sebastian**

You're not going to die.

**Angel**

When I do.

**Sebastian**

That's why we live here, Angel. To keep you safe. Up here, in this tower, nothing bad can ever happen to you.

**Angel**

What happens to people when they die?

**Sebastian**

All these questions!

**Angel**

What?

**Sebastian**

If they're very, very good they get to go to heaven where they lie on clouds all day and get fed chocolate. And if they're bad they get sent to hell where fires are always burning and they get roasted in agony day after day and the pain never ends.

**Angel**

What about the people who aren't very good but aren't very bad either?

**Sebastian**

In hell, the hottest fires are kept for little girls who keep asking questions. If I were you I'd keep very quiet and try hard to be very, very good.

**[Sebastian exits]**

**Angel**

**[To audience.]**

I think the people who aren't very good but aren't very bad turn in to birds when they die. It makes sense, doesn't it? They're not good enough to get all the way to heaven, but they get to fly in the sky, which is half way there. That's why I'm kind to the birds, because I'd like someone to be kind to me when I'm dead.

But now I had a new friend. A human friend! And I didn't have to wait long to hear from him again.

**[Angel rummages in the bucket and pulls out a note. Reads it.]**

"My name's Jack. Are you a Princess?"

**[To audience]**

Yeah right, 'cos I look like a Princess, don't I? And Princesses spend all day washing and cleaning and cooking food, just like I do.

**[Reading the note.]**

"I've never heard of anyone being locked in a tower except for Princesses. Do you need rescuing?"

**[To audience]**

What an idiot!

**[Writing reply]**

"Dear Jack. No, I am not a Princess, and I most certainly do not need rescuing, thank you for asking. This is my home. It is where I have always lived and I am very happy here. From Angel."

**[To audience]**

I had to wait a few days for Jack's reply, and in the meantime I wasn't going to abandon my other friends...

**[Angel is at the window. She is calling to the pigeons. She has food for them.]**

**Angel**

Come on then! Where are you? Why won't you come?

**[Sebastian is behind her. The audience are aware of him, Angel isn't.]**

**Angel**

Atlas! Trixie! I've got treats for you!

**Sebastian**

**[He is very quiet and calm.]**

What are you doing?

**[Angel jumps in surprise. She tries to hide the food.]**

**Angel**

Nothing.

**Sebastian**

You're doing something.

**Angel**

Just looking out the window.

**Sebastian**

And talking.

**Angel**

To myself. Making up stories. You like my stories.

**Sebastian**

What's in your hand?

**Angel**

Nothing.

**Sebastian**

Show me.

***[Angel opens her hand to show Sebastian the food.]***

Where did you get it?

**Angel**

I found it.

**Sebastian**

Where?

***[Angel shrugs.]***

Did it fall out of the air? Was it floating on the clouds?

***[Pause]***

How did food get here if it's not Sebastian's food?

***[Pause]***

If you're going to steal the food from my mouth at least show me a tiny bit of respect. Don't lie about it as well.

**Angel**

I took it from the kitchen. It's only leftovers. It's nothing you'd want to eat anyway.

**Sebastian**

I think I should be the judge of that, don't you?

**Angel**

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have taken it. I only wanted to feed the birds. In winter they look so thin. It's hard for them to find food for themselves.

**Sebastian**

Why do you care? They're only birds.

**Angel**

They're kind of my friends. I talk to them.

**Sebastian**

And do they talk back?

**Angel**

No.

**Sebastian**

But they're more important than Sebastian, these silent friends?

**Angel**

Of course not!

**Sebastian**

You keep them secret. You sneak off to see them when you think I'm not looking. You steal food for them. You'd rather feed them than feed me.

**Angel**

It's not like that!

**Sebastian**

Don't worry about me, Angel. I won't get in the way. Sebastian will quietly disappear. You can be with your new friends.

**Angel**

Sebastian!

**Sebastian**

I don't want to be where I'm not wanted. You've made your choice. If you don't love Sebastian anymore there's nothing he can do about it.

**Angel**

But I do love you!

**Sebastian**

I won't bother you anymore.

**Angel**

Sebastian!

**[Sebastian exits.]**

**Angel**

**[To audience.]**

I didn't mean to hurt him. I should never have kept the birds a secret. And now I'm keeping Jack a secret too. But I can't help it. 'Jack'. My new friend. It's just a shame he's so utterly and completely stupid.

**[Reading the note.]**

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"If you're not a prisoner, why do you stay in the tower? I'd hate to be trapped like that. Is it because you can't walk or you've got no legs or something like that. Sorry if my question upsets you, but I only ever catch a glimpse of you from the shoulders up. Jack."

***[To audience]***

You see? Thick as pig muck.

***[Writing reply.]***

"Dear Jack. I have legs, and they are in perfect working order (which is more than can be said for your brain). Living in the tower does not mean I am trapped, it means I am safe. Unlike you, who must expect a horrible and painful death any time soon. Your friend, Angel."

***[To the audience]***

Really, really dim. Everything he said proved it.

***[Reading the note.]***

"Dear Angel. What are you on about? How can you be safer up there, dangling in the sky, than I am down here on solid ground? If there was a storm and my house blew down we'd all be fine. We'd just build another one. If your tower blew down you'd be dead. Who's safest now, eh? Jack."

***[To audience]***

You see? He had no one like Sebastian to explain things to him. Jack's parents were obviously just as stupid as he was. Or maybe they were dead already! That was probably it. Attacked by bears, or burnt, or drowned or hacked to death in a terrible war. He was an orphan. He couldn't help not knowing the truth about the world. There was no-one to tell him! I was thinking about not writing any more. I didn't like the idea of having a stupid friend, but once I realised it wasn't his fault.....

***[Writing note]***

"Dear Jack. It must be very hard for you to understand what the world is really like. You have probably found me just in time. I will try to teach you. In the meantime, don't play with fire or go too near sick people. Take care. Angel."

**Angel**

***[To audience]***

But it turned out he wasn't just stupid, he was rude too!

***[Reading note]***

"Dear Angel. You don't get to talk to many people do you? Is it really just you and the angry old man who live in the tower? If it is, that might explain why you come out with such weird stuff. I'm looking forward to being 'taught' about the world by someone who's never lived in it. Don't lean too far out of the windows. Keep safe. Jack."

***[To audience]***

Cheeky beggar!

**[Reading the note.]**

"Dear Jack. Yes, it is just me and Sebastian, but that's all either of us need. When you have one person you can totally rely on and who loves you completely why would you need anyone else? And, by the way, he is not old, but he has lived a lot and he is wise. And he's not angry all the time. He is often kind. Angel."

**[To audience]**

There! That told him! I look forward to an apology.

**[Reading note]**

"Dear Angel. If Sebastian is all you need that's fine. I'm glad you're so happy together."

**[To audience]**

At last, he understands.

**[Reading note]**

"If he's all you need, you won't want to hear from me anymore. Goodbye. Jack."

**[To audience]**

Oh....

**[Pause]**

Good riddance! I don't need him. Some stupid boy I've never met. He'll be dead soon anyway. I'll burn his stupid letters. Not now. I'll do it later.

I haven't seen the birds today either. Everyone's leaving me.

**[Sebastian enters and sets the table for dinner]**

Except Sebastian! He's forgiven me, and he knows I need cheering up. He understands me so well! He's even doing the cooking.

**Sebastian**

Voila! That's French, that is. Get your gnashers around this.

**[They start to eat.]**

Like it?

**Angel**

Yeah. It's great.

**Sebastian**

Thought you would. I should do this more often. Makes a nice change, eh?

**Angel**

It really is like being a Princess!

**Sebastian**

Enjoy it. You deserve it.

**[Pause]**

Now, about these birds.....

**Angel**

I should have told you. I'm sorry.

**Sebastian**

You're right. We should tell each other everything. After all, we're all each other's got in the world. We need to trust each other.

**Angel**

I know that.

**Sebastian**

It's not all your fault. I blame myself too.

**Angel**

Really?

**Sebastian**

I should have explained things to you. You're more grown up now. You deserve the truth. But Sebastian didn't want to upset you.  
Is it good?

**[Angel nods.]**

Good. You know why we live here in this tower?

**Angel**

To be safe.

**Sebastian**

That's it. To be safe from the world....

**Angel**

And all its' wickedness.

**Sebastian**

Right. But do you really understand how dangerous it is, Angel? Out there is a world full of violence and lies and war and disease. It is a dark and evil place and we need to keep it shut out. Tight shut. If you were to step out of this tower in to that nightmare I don't think you'd live to see another sunrise. Do you understand?

**[Angel nods.]**

And if the world were to creep in here, up here where we think we're safe, the end would be just the same.  
Agony and death.

**Angel**

But how would anything get up here?

**Sebastian**

You'd be surprised how cunning the world can be. That's why I had to do what I did with the birds.

**Angel**

What did you do?

**Sebastian**

We can live with them flying around the tower, Angel. Even landing on the window sill and nesting in the eaves above us. But when I realised how close to them you were getting – feeding them, touching them! I didn't sleep a wink. I was terrified all night.

Don't look so worried. Sebastian's not angry with you. You didn't understand. How could you? Poor, innocent, soft-hearted thing that you are. They're full of disease, Angel. They're thick with it. Dirty infections waiting to jump from their feathers to your skin. You, poor weak little thing, you'd have no chance. Catch one of their filthy diseases and you'd be dead in days. I had to get rid of them. For you.

**Angel**

You killed them?

**Sebastian**

I couldn't risk losing you.

**Angel**

You killed the birds?

**Sebastian**

I took no pleasure in it, Angel, believe me. Still, waste not want not, eh? Eat up. A good long, slow cook will have burnt all the infection out of them. All safe now - and nice and tender. I've not done bad, have I? The old magic's still there. Bon appetit – that's French too!

***[Angel runs away from the table to throw up. Sebastian goes to comfort her.]***

**Sebastian**

Poor thing. You poor thing.

***[Sebastian exits.]***

**Angel**

***[To audience]***

I didn't burn Jack's letters. I kept them and read them over and over again, whenever I was sure Sebastian wasn't looking. And every time the bucket came up I'd search it really thoroughly, hoping another note would be there. But it wasn't. Not ever. I wasn't going to be the first one to start writing again. Why should I? I hadn't done anything wrong.

***[Writing note]***

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"Milk, leeks, cabbages. Eggs. Write again. I miss your letters. Sorry. Angel."

**[To audience]**

He wrote back straight away. But he hadn't learnt. He was just as rude and stupid as before.

**[Reading note]**

"Are you really happy?"

**[Writing reply]**

"Of course I am."

**[Reading note]**

"How can you be happy when you've got no-one to play with; when you can't swim in a stream or climb a tree or feel wind in your hair; when you can't taste snow on your tongue or hide in woods or lie in the sun? How can you be happy when your whole world is walls and you can see the sky but you can never live under it? I don't understand your happiness. Jack."

**[Reading note]**

"And I don't understand how you can be happy when any moment your life might be over. When you might be attacked by wolves or trampled by horses or catch some disease or be beaten with sticks or stabbed with knives. I am free up here. Free from danger. I don't understand your happiness. Angel."

**[To audience]**

That night I leant out the window and watched the sun go down. I heard snatches of laughter carried on the wind and thought I saw people from the village dancing in the distance. I wondered what Jack's life was like.

**[Reading note]**

"Dear Angel. Some of those things might happen to me, but I don't think it's very likely. I like my life. When I get older I'm going to see as much of the world as I can. You should come out of the tower and see what life is like down here. You might like it if you did. Jack."

**[To audience. Sebastian enters, reading.]**

Sebastian would never let me go. But I'm not a little girl anymore. I should be able to make some decisions for myself. Perhaps if Sebastian and I went together.....

**Angel**

Sebastian?

**Sebastian**

Mmm?

**Angel**

Can I ask you something?

**Sebastian**

Of course.

**Angel**

Is it really so bad outside?

**Sebastian**

What?

**Angel**

Because most of the time, when I look out of the window, it looks OK. I mean, I can't see any war or destruction or anything like that. And sometimes I even hear people laughing and it sounds like they're happy. I wonder what it would be like out there.

**Sebastian**

Do you?

**Angel**

I was wondering what it might be like to visit. You and me together, of course, so you were there to look after me.

**Sebastian**

You'd like Sebastian to show you the outside world?

**Angel**

Yes. Well, the bit of it near the tower anyway. I wouldn't want to go too far. Not at first.

**Sebastian**

Not too far.

**Angel**

No.

**Sebastian**

Not at first.

**Angel**

No.

**Sebastian**

But then later, when you felt a bit more confident, you might want to go further?

**Angel**

I don't know. I suppose so.

**Sebastian**

When you didn't need Sebastian anymore. When you had new friends. When you'd thrown me aside, the person who raised you and fed you and looked after you when you couldn't look after yourself.

**Angel**

No.

**Sebastian**

When you'd forgotten me!

**Angel**

That's never going to happen!

**Sebastian**

You want to leave me, Angel, is that it?

**Angel**

I didn't say that. I didn't mean....

**Sebastian**

You think there's someone out there who'd want to be with you? Someone else who'd put up with your stupidity and your selfishness and your cruelty? Do you really think there's anyone out there who would want to be with you?

**Angel**

There might be.

**Sebastian**

No-one would want you. You'd be left to die like a lame dog. You'd starve in a ditch while people walked past and spat on you. No-one out there would put up with you.

**Angel**

How do you know? You might be wrong.

**Sebastian**

I know the world and I know you. There is nowhere for you but here.

**Angel**

There might be other people who would like me.

**Sebastian**

Why would they? What is there to like? You can be here, Angel, and you can be happy. Or you can die out there sad and alone. Those are your only choices.

**[Sebastian exits]**

**Angel**

**[Writing note]**

"Jack. Thanks for offering to show me the world outside, but I don't want to see it. I belong here. Angel."

**[Reading note]**

"You should at least see what the outside world is like. Don't be afraid to live the life you want to live. It's not right for someone to be trapped like you are."

**[Writing note]**

"I am not trapped. This is where I want to be. Really."

**[Reading note]**

"Don't let him stop you."

**[To audience]**

No-one is stopping me.

**[Reading note]**

"If you really want to stay there..."

**[To audience]**

I do. Of course I do.

**[Reading note]**

"It's your decision. I'll keep writing, but I won't ask you anymore. If you change your mind I'll be waiting. It's up to you. Jack."

**Angel**

**[To audience]**

He writes all the time. I write back. Here are all his letters. I keep them safe and hidden. Sebastian will never find them. When I feel lonely, or when I feel this room is too small and the walls are squashing in on me – I get them out and read them.

**[Angel indicates the letters as she describes them. She doesn't need to open them or read them to remember what they say.]**

In this one Jack talks about fishing with his brother. They didn't catch anything. Jack fell in! In this one Jack goes with his Dad to the market in the big town across the valley. His Dad got a bit drunk and they got lost in the dark on the way home! In this one the whole village has a party and they dance until midnight and there's a huge bonfire. I remember that. I remember seeing it glowing all night.

**[Angel opens one of the letters and starts to read it. She is unaware of Sebastian behind her. He watches her for a moment, then snatches the letter from her.]**

**Sebastian**

What's this?

**Angel**

Nothing.

**Sebastian**

More of them? Lots of nothing.

**Angel**

I'll put them away. They don't matter.

**Sebastian**

Let Sebastian read them.

**Angel**

Don't.....

**Sebastian**

If they're 'not important' you won't mind me looking at them, will you?

*[Silence as Sebastian reads.]*

**Sebastian**

Who is Jack?

**Angel**

No-one.

**Sebastian**

Who is he?

**Angel**

Really, he's no-one. I made him up.

**Sebastian**

Who are these letters from, then?

**Angel**

They're a game. A story. I wrote them to myself.

**Sebastian**

Did you? What a strange girl you are.

**Angel**

You know how I like making up stories.

**Sebastian**

And you even changed your hand-writing too.

**Angel**

Yes.

**Sebastian**

Getting right in to character weren't you!

**Angel**

I liked the game.

**Sebastian**

If I didn't know better, I'd believe these letters were from someone else. Someone outside.

**Angel**

I'm really good at stories!

**Sebastian**

Write one for me now.

**Angel**

What?

**Sebastian**

Here you are. Pencil and paper. Write a letter from your imaginary friend Jack.

*[Sebastian hands her pencil and paper.]*

**Angel**

I don't think I can.

**Sebastian**

Why not?

**Angel**

I have to be in the mood. I can't think of any ideas.

**Sebastian**

Let Sebastian help. He'll dictate. That'll make it easier for you.  
You just write down what I say in 'Jack's' handwriting.

**Angel**

I don't know....

**Sebastian**

Of course I won't be able to come up with anything as clever as you, but at least I'll feel like I'm joining in.  
Sebastian will be part of your secret game.

**Angel**

I don't think I'll be able to do it if someone else is....

**Sebastian**

Write!

*[Dictating]*

'The Tower'  
Paul Whitfield 2005  
Brief Candle

"The grass is green. The sky is blue. The blossom on the trees is all pink and fluffy"

**[To Angel]**

Keep up!

**[Dictating]**

"All the baa-baa lambs are out in the fields. I went skippety skippety through the daisies like a big girl...."

**[To Angel]**

Come on! Not fast enough!

**[Dictating]**

"I thought of my lovely friend in the big tower and how lovely she was and how much I love her and how much I want to rescue her and take her away from the one person who really cares about her!"

**[To Angel]**

Show me!

**Angel**

You were going so fast I couldn't do it right.

**Sebastian**

Show me!

**[Angel hands the paper to Sebastian. He looks at it, compares it to the other letter, then screws it up and throws it back at her.]**

**Sebastian**

You're a liar.

**Angel**

I couldn't keep up.

**Sebastian**

Shut that mouth! I don't want to hear.

**Angel**

Sebastian!

**Sebastian**

Silence! I don't want to hear anything from you because everything you say is a lie. Your tongue is twisted like a snake's. Sebastian has kept a snake in his house these past months, lying to him with her little forked tongue. I cared for you and protected you and loved you, and in return you've betrayed me. How long has this been going on? Years?

**[Angel tries to answer.]**

No! Not a word. Sebastian can't stand any more lies. You are forbidden to speak. You will live in silence from now on. Maybe in a year or two, when you can prove you know what truth is, maybe then you can speak again.

**Angel**

Sebastian!

**Sebastian**

Open your mouth one more time and I will cut your tongue so you can never lie again.

You will write a note and you will put it in the bucket. You will ask for steel shutters, bolts of iron and padlocks with only one key. Sebastian will bar the windows and shut out the world forever. We will live by candlelight so even the sun will be just a memory. It is the only way I can keep you safe. You will ask for someone else to fill the bucket. No more Jack. Tell them Sebastian wants him driven out of the village. And think yourself lucky I don't give them instructions to kill him. I could. I could send down so much money his own parents would be happy to burn him for me themselves.

Give me the letters. I will burn those. You are lucky Sebastian is such a kind man and loves you so deeply. Imagine how you might suffer if he wasn't so forgiving.

***[Sebastian takes Angel's wrist and pulls her very close to him.]***

You must try hard to please me from now on. Remember, there is only you and me and no-one else will ever know what happens here.

Write the note.

***[Sebastian exits]***

**Angel**

***[Angel looks at the paper and thinks about writing.]***

This has always been my world. I don't know anything else. I'm scared. I don't even know if the rope will take my weight, but I won't stay here. I need to know what's out there, whatever it is.

***[Writing note]***

"Jack, help me down. Angel."

**END**