

Smoke Rings

by Melenka

Sometimes, the end can be a beginning.

(one shot)

Chapter 1 of 1

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The last traces of sunset reflected in the lake. Sheltered in a small strand of trees, Angelina drew in the silence and let out a stream of smoke. She'd not done this in some time, but it felt divine. Just the thing to keep her brain from spinning. She took another drag of the cigarette and made smoke rings. Lifting her wand, she changed them into dancers, swirling about before they dissolved into nothingness. She'd felt just like that when he'd left her.

"What the devil do you think you're doing?"

She had heard that voice every day for years. It rolled over her, sent her soaring, chasing after something she couldn't have.

"Smoking, Wood. You're not that daft." She took another drag, letting it go with no fancy tricks.

"I didn't know you smoked. You never did at school." Oliver stepped up beside her. In the dim evening, she couldn't make out his expression.

"Not usually. I found a few times to sneak out. Mostly before exams. A whole pack before my O.W.L.s. That was mad. Thought I'd die of coughing before morning. I quit once I graduated."

"Yet here you are," he said. "Chain smoking, from the look of things."

"It seemed the thing to do."

"That bad, is it?"

"What do you care?" She bristled.

"Just asking after a friend, is all."

"If you were a friend, you'd know what was wrong. Haven't heard from you since you joined Puddlemere United. Figured you were too good for us, yeah?" She knew her anger was misplaced.

He didn't rise to the bait. "It wasn't like that. I just thought..." He looked away.

"You thought what?"

"I thought it best if I left you alone, after everything that happened in the war."

"The war never ended for me." She dropped her cigarette and ground it into the dirt.

"Nor for any of us, I'd wager." He sighed. "If you'd rather I left you be, I'll go."

She crossed her arms over her chest, protecting her heart so she could speak. "George left. Said he couldn't do it anymore. Just like that. Roxanne's at school, so I walked out, too. Haven't been home since."

"Stupid prat." Oliver shook his head.

It took her a moment to realize he wasn't talking about her. "I don't even know what I did. Whatever it was that set him off, I missed it."

"Maybe it wasn't you. He's always been a bit off. One too many bludgers to the head in his youth."

"I'd like to send one flying his way now," she spat.

"Think I'd like to see that. You always were the better player." His smile shone in the darkness.

"Flattery, Wood? That's not like you."

"We all grow up, Angelina. Even me." He shrugged. "I'm sorry it didn't work out for you. That's always hard."

"Yeah. I just wish I'd known."

"Will you hit me if I say it's his loss?"

"Probably." She grinned at him.

"What I really mean to say is that it's my gain."

"How do you figure?" Caution flared.

"Well, here you are. And here I am. And you have something I want."

She was afraid she really would have to hit him. "Oh, what's that?"

"A light." He pulled out a pack of smokes and shook one out.

She laughed, tossing him a lighter. He fumbled the catch, but recovered.

"You're no Seeker," she said.

"Maybe I can learn." He handed her back the lighter, holding onto her hand just a bit longer than necessary.

"I might like to see that," she said, glad her voice didn't falter.

Surrounded by smoke and the comfort of something undefined, they watched the moon rise.

For my friend, because she asked.