

Boundaries and Lies

by KellyH

Can there be freedom within confinement? Saturday Night Chat Drabble: Snake, Muggle money, and wood.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: I'm playing in JKR's sandbox. I may have built the sculpture, but in the end she owns the sand.

It became increasingly harder to hide from her friends when he asked her to meet him on such a regular basis. She was running out of lies to tell Harry and Ron, and it became a habit at night for her to think of new lies that she could say to get away from them. In truth, she expected to be caught with each new lie she told. What would she tell them when they found out? She did not know – she doubted she would be able to tell the truth even then.

He waited for her at the bottom of the wooden steps, pacing back and forth with his hand upon his head, appearing highly frustrated. She did not ask him what was wrong – she didn't need to. His increasing worry of being caught with her was taking a toll on him.

Reaching the bottom of the step, she eyed the snake-handled wand in his hand as he raised it at the door at the top of the step. This was not his normal wand; she had only seen it once before, but she doubted that Lucius Malfoy would depart from his own wand.

"Why do you have *that* wand?" She whispered her question.

He looked at her and shook his head, indicating to her that he would not answer her question.

Her suspicion grew, and she placed her hands upon her hips in a scolding manner as she asked, "You haven't done anything... bad, have you?"

Again she was met with silence and only the shaking of his head.

She knew his mood and his nature by now, and as much as she questioned him, she knew she wasn't going to get any answers. Pursing her lips, she eyed him with a look that expressed her anger with him as she folded her arms across her chest in a huff. She was acting like a child but she did not care. This game was growing old and she was tired of not getting answers as she was of her own lies.

"Well, why have you called me then?" she asked.

"I wanted - you are to have this," he demanded as he held out a coin to her.

Hermione looked at it with weary eyes. It was Muggle money, a 50 pence coin to be more precise. "What is this for?" she asked as she reached out to take a hold of the coin that was hot from his touch.

"It's becoming increasingly dangerous to keep this up. Both of us know it. Potter and the *Weasley boy* are too inquisitive."

She would have scolded him for talking about Ron like that, and to inform him that he had nothing to worry about, but his words frightened her. He was going away and she worried that she would not see him again. "Severus, if only you would come out of hiding. No one blames you for what has happened. You did what you had to do, even Harry knows that."

He would not listen to her; he never did. Instead he shook his head again and grasped her outstretched hand to bring her closer to himself. "I can't, not yet. There is freedom in this confinement and I shall not give that up."

"You're being a stubborn fool."

"I am," he simply said as he gave her one last lingering kiss upon her forehead and turned to move across the room.

She watched him go, moving toward the door that led out to the back of the house; the door that she always kept unlocked just for him. He did not stop at the doorway to look at her once more like he always did, no, he just continued on without even a backwards glance.

She refused to cry as she made her way up the stairs to return to the boys.

Five weeks from the day he had left she made her way to her room. She had been the last to go to bed that night, and she walked to her room with a candle in one hand and the coin in the other.

Hermione knew why she was given the coin; it wasn't hard to figure out that he would send messages to her through it. But it pained her that she felt obligated to carry it around all the time in the hope that he would send her a message.

He had called things off with her, and his last departing gift was a coin to inform her of when he was ready to come back. It wasn't fair, and she wished she had the strength to throw it away, but she did not. She could not.

Entering the room she pulled the curtains away so she could climb into bed when she suddenly felt the coin heat. It was slightly burning her hand as she looked down to see it filled with a message from him.

It read in very small print: *Will you follow this stubborn fool into his confinement?*

Immediately grabbing her wand she replied, "*Not until you find freedom outside your confinement.*"

She could be as stubborn as him. She had to be. She was so tired of these lies, and her boundaries had to be laid out to him.

The coin grew cold, and she figured that this was to be her answer, a cold departure for not giving in, but then the coin grew hot again, and the words read *that is what needs to be done. It is done.*

Hermione crawled into bed and she smiled into the darkness. She smiled not because she had won, but because she no longer had to lie. There would be no more dark corner trysts and no more hiding affection to someone she loved. Severus might have found freedom within confinement but she could not. Her decision could have broken them apart forever, but he had chosen her, and she would make sure that he would not regret it.

AN: Prompt was three words: snake, Muggle money, and wood. Thanks to Ladyinthecloak for betaing!