

Till Your Frightened Eyes Do Close

by Fanny T

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Chapter 1 of 1

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But it's dark and it's late,
so I'll hold you and wait,
till your frightened eyes do close.

...Lullaby for a stormy night, Vienna Teng.

"Door."

"Wrong."

"Darkness."

"Oh, yes, that too. But wrong."

"Death."

The last word was whispered, so softly it barely stirred the air in front of Ollivander's face, and Luna didn't reply for some time. Instead, she reached out, her small hand grasping the dry, old one she couldn't see, but nevertheless could locate as surely as if she'd had use of her eyes. Those two hands had met and clasped so many times, they now found each other by instinct.

"Never," said Luna in a steady, calm voice, clutching the wandmaker's brittle fingers carefully. "I never see that. You shouldn't either."

She gave his hand another gentle squeeze, then let go.

"Well?" she said. "Do you give up?"

Ollivander shook his head, his smile heard if not seen in the near-pitch blackness of their cell, and murmured, "Yes, my dear. I'm afraid I'll have to give up."

Luna made a pleased, almost smug, little noise, then said in a sing-song voice, "I spy with my little eye...dust!"

"Dust?"

"Yes, look." There was a pause, then a laugh that made him wonder, as it had so many times before in these last few months, how he'd ever survived the time before it arrived. "I am very silly sometimes," she said. "I pointed. Isn't it funny?"

"It is," Ollivander agreed. It was funny. She could laugh at anything, even in a place such as this.

"I meant that you should look towards the door," Luna continued, and suddenly she was next to him, her cheek to his. He felt the bones of her face bump against his own, and remembered with sadness the healthy young girl who had been thrust into confinement with him some months ago. Bruised, yes, and very obviously having been through hardships, but well-fed and smooth-cheeked. What would be left of that beautiful young girl when they were eventually released?

(And he would say *when*, only ever *when*, because the one time he had said *if* she had cut him off, using a hard, sharp voice he had only heard twice since then.

"There is no *if*," she had told him, and that had been the end of the discussion.)

"Do you see it?" said Luna, and he was back in the cellar, gazing towards where he knew the door was located to see what she was seeing. At first, darkness and nothing more, darkness so black and thick it was almost tangible. Then, as she put her hand to his other cheek and guided him gently to lean a little way in her direction, he saw the thin crack between door and frame, an ever so small, diffuse ray of pale light. And in that ray, if you strained your eyes, little particles of white, floating gently.

"Isn't it pretty?"

"Beautiful," Ollivander agreed, feeling her smile against his skin and smiling in turn. "Like snow."

"It snowed when I went home for Christmas," said Luna. "Well, I never did make it home, of course. It's a little bit sad, I suppose." And then, as he was about to say how sorry he was, she continued, "But then, if I had made it home I wouldn't have come here, and I'm sure that would have been very lonely for you, wouldn't it?"

Not for long, thought Ollivander. *I wouldn't have survived much longer.*

"Yes, you are right. It would. But I'm sorry for your father, alone at Christmas. And now."

"Yes, I am a little worried," said Luna vaguely. "He can get into terrible trouble sometimes, if I'm not there to look after him. And he messes up the Plimpy soup. He adds Artqwer scales for taste, even though I keep telling him Coldgurt or even parsley is much better."

Ollivander smiled a little. Had he heard such a recipe described in his former life...the one where he stood on two feet, and knew the passage of days by the turnings of the sun, not the arrivals of meagre, moulding food portions...he would surely have scoffed and disputed the existence of the ingredients mentioned. Here, he had learnt to accept whatever she said as an excursion into uncharted land. Was that land real or imaginary? Well, it didn't really matter, did it...not in this place, where imagination was the only thing that could keep them tethered to a world that seemed increasingly far away, where the sound of running water existed only as a fading memory and the feeling of grass beneath his hands was all but forgotten.

His back cracked as he shifted the weight on his right hand, and he winced. Luna sat up immediately and gripped his shoulder.

"I'm sorry, dear, but I'm going to have to sit back up," he said, easing back into an upright position with her help.

"That's all right. It's your turn anyway."

Ollivander chuckled quietly. "I spy with my little eye," he began hesitantly, and then, feeling something scabble across the hand he was using to hold himself up...because they had both agreed that feeling equalled seeing, in their dark world...he said, "something beginning with the letter R."

"Mr Ollivander, that's too easy." Luna's tone was reproachful. "A rat."

"Right you are. A rat, indeed. But yes, it was too easy." He patted her hand, like her knowing where to find it without need of eyes. "This isn't a very easy game to play, in here. For one thing, we don't have nearly enough things to spy."

"No, but it's a shame. I liked having a new game. It was a long time since we tried a new one." There was a pause, and he heard only her breathing in the dark. Trying to figure out another pastime, no doubt.

The games had been her idea. On her third day in the cellar, while she was cleaning out an old wound on his temple, she had started telling a story about something called a Snurdguffle and the young warrior who rode it to victory over the Kék Wizards on the plateau of Mátrabérc. She had talked quietly and steadily, like a mother reading her child a bedtime story, while her hands moved with gentle care across his face. And at a point some time into the story, she had quieted.

"Yes?" he had prompted, having grown interested despite himself in the tale. "What happened when they got to the forest?"

"I don't know," she had said. "I can't think of what would happen next." She thought for some time and then, very naturally, asked him, "Do you know?"

He was annoyed at the school-mistress-like attempt to draw him into the telling, until he realised that her question was serious. (Or maybe it wasn't. He could never be entirely certain either way.) He said nothing, anyway, and after a while she said, "Oh! Of course I know. The path through the forest was a treacherous one, but since egg-laying animals generally like Snurdguffles...you remember, I told you about their very soft feet before...they had help from the birds that inhabited the trees along the way. They would squawk whenever the travellers were headed towards danger..."

She had continued until her treatment of his eye was done, saying as she wiped the last of the water from his skin "...and then they saw what they had not in their wildest dreams dared imagine...the truth behind Mount Dreadful's name."

The silence after this weighty statement had stretched until he realised that this was no mere artistic pause...this was another part where she had run out of inspiration.

Both were silent for a long moment; and then: "Because it was no mountain at all," Ollivander had said. "It was an old Hungarian Horntail, larger than any dragon that had come before or would come after; the last of the Mothers, old Ungya the Dreadful."

"Oh, how clever you are, Mr Ollivander!" Luna had breathed. "I would never have thought of that. So what did they do when they saw the dragon?"

He had continued the story as far as he could tell it, and when his imagination failed him she took over and later he took over from her, and that game had afterwards become one of their most cherished. After they had played it for four days straight, she came up with another, a game where the purpose was to guess the artist of whatever song the other person was singing (a challenge made even harder by not only Luna's rather erratic approach to melody, but their shared ignorance about writers and singers of songs). And after that came a game where they associated words to given subject, and whoever ran out of words first lost.

(But winning or losing wasn't ever the point here. Once, a week or so into Luna's imprisonment, he'd been having a bad day and he questioned there being any point *at all* to these childish exercises. That had been the second time he heard Luna's angry voice.

"If we ever stop thinking or talking or telling stories," she had said, "they win. They shouldn't.")

"Perhaps you can use this opportunity to practise your school work," he suggested now, as the pause stretched out and thickened in the soft silence of their residence, but Luna replied with a noise of dissent.

"I can't do that until after our next meal," she said. "Otherwise I mess the times up."

After every third meal time, Luna exercised her mind by attempting to do her school-work. She counted up ways to counter Belladonna poisoning, practised wrist movements for difficult spells and talked Ollivander through the steps of making a Confusing Concoction. From the start, she had tried to involve him, but he had forgotten most of his school magic and the one question he remembered from an OWL (he remembered none at all from his NEWTS, he was forced to confess) was "Recite the eight uses of Dragon Blood". Luna had answered the question with gentle scorn, smiling at the simplicity of it, and informed him that not only were there now twelve known uses, but the question was also part of their First Year exams. From then on, he had stuck to listening as she made herself remember the words for spells of Healing and the plants that required moonlight to grow.

"I'm trying to remember a game," said Luna thoughtfully, "one I used to play with Neville. It was something about questions..."

"Ten questions?"

"No, that's not what I'm thinking about. Besides, you and I already play that."

"Charades, or something like that, then?" asked Ollivander.

"No, it was something we could play here, something that works for dark and cramped places. A speaking game. Neville and I used to play it when we were hiding from the Carrows."

"The Carrows, that would the brother and sister who teach at Hogwarts now?"

"Oh, I do hope they're not teaching now," said Luna. "They weren't very good at it. Then again, I don't suppose Professor Snape could have fired them, even though he wanted to."

"He did?"

"Well, of course he must have, mustn't he? They were horrible people."

"But... I mean... Severus Snape is on the Death Eaters' side, isn't he?"

"No, that wouldn't make very much sense, would it? If he had been, then he would have tried to kill Harry a long time ago."

Luna spoke very matter-of-factly whenever she said things like this, as though her conclusion was the only logical one, even when the things she said contradicted everything Ollivander thought he knew.

"I'm not sure why he's doing what they say, now," Luna continued thoughtfully, "but I suppose he's scared. It's scary, to go against them. I was always very frightened whenever Neville and Ginny and I did something we knew would make the Carrows angry, but I imagine sometimes you have to do things even when you're frightened."

"But you are only children, my dear."

"Oh, yes, but no one else would. And someone had to. You understand that, don't you?" she said gently, then went on, "Then again, if we had been adults we might have been able to do something very worthwhile. As it was now, we could only be little annoying things that made their life at Hogwarts a little harder. But I'm hoping it may have stopped them from being nasty to a lot of the other students. Because they were too busy being nasty to us, I mean. And that's good, isn't it?"

There was a short pause, then Luna said, "Mr Ollivander? Mr Ollivander, are you crying? Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to make you cry! Here, I still have our clean handkerchief somewhere..."

"It's all right, my child. Really, it's all right." He wiped his eyes and nose on the filthy sleeve of his robes, trying to gain control over his breathing. "You haven't spoken much about this before. I was just a little shocked, that's all. It must have been so hard for you."

"It was," said Luna complacently. "In the beginning. But then you get used to it. And Neville was very good at making plans and coming up with ideas for sabotage. I'm not very clever at things like that, but after a while things like hexing their chairs at the breakfast table or coaxing the stairs into moving in the wrong direction whenever the Carrows stepped onto them became something we did without thinking. The little things."

Luna was silent for some time after this, and when she went on it was in a slightly subdued voice.

"The really hard part," she said, "was learning not to flinch when they struck or hexed us. If you could stand still, they got bored quicker. But it's very natural to flinch. So, yes, that was probably the hardest."

And Ollivander remembered...

The third and final time he'd heard Luna grow really angry, was when they had come in to beat him one day. She had been his companion for little over a month by then. He had cowered as they entered, recognising their intent from their numbers and clothes...the sweaty, balding man they called Wormtail always wore gloves, so as not to hurt his skin when he threw bruising punches into Ollivander's skinny chest, and Draco Malfoy, who was joining in on the fun for the first time since he'd left in the autumn for the new school year, wore the same set of slightly outgrown robes he'd been using then. They were an old set of Potions robes, Ollivander had gathered, so soiled already that they wouldn't be ruined when he threw up outside the cellar room, once they had finished.

He recognised the looks on their faces, too. Something had gone very wrong, out in the real world. They were pissed off. They needed a distraction.

Although he knew it never made any difference, he tried to move as far back towards the wall as possible, crossing his arms over his chest in flimsy, futile protection.

Luna had stood up then. Small and skinny and straight-backed, she had faced them all...Wormtail, the Malfoys, father and son, and a man Ollivander thought might be called Grant, but he wasn't certain.

"What do you want?" she asked. It was the first time they'd had a visit like this since she came, but she had obviously realised this was not another food delivery. "He has already told you everything he knows."

(She knew this, because he had told her, tearfully confessing his sin with his head resting in her bony lap, reduced to a child begging for forgiveness.)

"Move," Lucius Malfoy answered coldly. "I would hate to hit a girl, even one as shameful to wizardkind as you."

Ollivander had thought Luna was angry when she snapped at him on the two previous occasions, but that, he saw now, was nothing to this. Her back straightened even more, till she stood as stiff and upright as a toy soldier, her shoulders tense.

"You would hit him?" she asked. She was furious.

"We would," said the man possibly called Grant. "Move."

"He's an old man! How dare you?" Luna spat at them. "There's four of you! Four! How could you? And you!" She turned towards Draco Malfoy. He looked away, and she breathed in sharply...almost hissed...raising a hand as if to slap him.

Lucius was faster, backhanding her across the face, hard enough to make her stumble.

"Don't you dare raise a hand to my son, blood traitor," he said quietly.

Luna straightened up again, placing her feet a little wider and bending her knees slightly for balance. "Hit me, then," she said. "Don't hit Mr Ollivander."

"No," Ollivander said weakly, but Lucius, obviously having lost patience with the girl in front of him, immediately slapped her three times in quick succession, finishing off with a punch to the stomach.

"Draco, she threatened to punch you," he said calmly, turning from her bent-over form. "You may hit her."

"Father, I don't..." Draco was pale, the nausea that always assailed him after something like this already beginning to make his limbs shake. "I don't want to," he whispered.

The elder Malfoy looked at his son, then back at Luna. She was already standing up again, staring steadily at him. The initial fury seemed to have ebbed away, giving place for the vague, slightly empty expression her face usually held in rest.

"Fine," he snapped, taking his son's arm and making for the door. "Grant, Wormtail, amuse yourselves if you want. We're leaving."

Wormtail looked as though he might have followed, but Grant was already moving towards Luna, cracking his knuckles, and the balding man chose instead to stay, hovering nervously behind his friend.

Hating himself, Ollivander shut his eyes and bit his lips as he listened to knuckles hitting flesh and bone, and the tiny whimpering noises Luna made when her self control failed her.

"Mr Ollivander?" Luna was stroking his hand gently. "You're thinking about when they came in to beat you, aren't you? Please don't. I've told you, there was nothing you could have done."

"Thank you," said Ollivander, not believing a word of it.

"It doesn't matter," Luna went on. "In the long run, it's only bruises. And in the long run, they're the ones who lose."

"Yes, you have a point."

Luna believed firmly in the idea that one's soul could be, and was, tarnished by acts of violence, immorality and wanton cruelty. Ollivander was not so certain...and if it were indeed true, he was not so certain he himself was safe...but he didn't have the heart to contradict her. He didn't want to, for that matter. When Luna spoke, he could believe, for a little while, that everyone eventually got their due. Good or bad.

"They haven't come back since, either."

"No, that's true."

They could hardly have done, could they? However cruel and horrible their captors were, they were not monsters (he was uncertain about the truth in this statement...this hope...in the case of the man Grant, but Grant was only his masters' puppet and would always do their bidding). And no one with an ounce of humanity, or pity, or perhaps most importantly shame in them could stand to beat her when she looked at them with that clear, steady gaze.

There was no judgement in it, nor any hate. In fact, it was a gaze that revealed absolutely naught. It was as if Luna went away somewhere, leaving only her shell of a body to take the beating.

It was creepy as all hell.

It made him wonder, as did her laughter in the dark of the cellar and her calm prattle about things she would do once freed from their captivity ("... and I would like to paint again, preferably something sunny..."), if she wasn't walking down a thin, thin line. And when she put a foot wrong, she would break...

"How are you doing with that game, my dear?" he asked, reverting to a safe topic. Luna sighed.

"I'm afraid I've lost it. I'll have to stop thinking about it for a while. Maybe it'll come back if I give it time." She was silent for a moment, then went on in her calm voice, "I'm a little frightened when I forget things."

"I know."

"It makes me think I may be losing, after all."

"I know. But you're not."

"That's why I do my school-work, even if it may seem silly."

"I know. It doesn't, dear child."

"You're too kind to me, Mr Ollivander. I don't think I'd do half as well without you here."

Ollivander smiled in the darkness. He didn't suppose he'd ever get her to understand that he was not the one carrying her; she was the one carrying him.

"Nor I without you, my dear." He sighed and yawned, shifting position.

"Do you want to sleep for a while?" Luna asked, moving closer to him.

"I think that would be nice, yes. Unless you want to sleep?"

"No...you know I don't need that much sleep. Here, let me help you." She took his elbow in a firm, gentle grip and put her other arm around his shoulders, easing him down until he lay with his head in her lap. "Shall I sing you a bedtime song?"

"Will I recognise it?" asked Ollivander, and she laughed.

"That would be difficult. You can guess which one I'm attempting, if you want."

Softly, stroking his head in an almost absent-minded fashion, she began to hum something that could have been "Sleepy Kneazle Nye" and could have been "Once Upon a Sickle Moon". As he closed his eyes and breathed slowly and heavily, he could almost pretend that they weren't captured and trapped in a black prison cell, but that they were instead nestled in a little world of their own, far from pain and cold and hunger.

She really can't sing, he thought, smiling to himself, and drifted off to sleep.