

The Last Rays of the Autumn Sun

by morgaine_dulac

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Chapter 1 of 1

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The rays of the sun were soft and golden, turning the scarlet leaves of the oak tree into a sea of fire. The air smelled of spices and honey, and so did her hair.

The dark wizard sat with his back against the trunk of the mighty tree, his arms tightly wrapped around the woman who had stood by his side for so many years.

He loved her with all his heart, for her kindness and her patience. And he regretted that he had not told her so a long time ago.

He had wasted so much time, too much.

He inhaled deeply and planted a soft kiss on her forehead. As so often, he was rewarded with a smile.

'Are you cold?' he asked and pulled his cloak tighter around them both. The sun was about to set, and cold air was creeping in from the lake. 'We can go back to the castle if you want to.'

She nestled closer against his chest and shook her head. 'I want to watch the sunset with you, Severus.'

As the sun touched the mountains, they exploded with fire and turned into melted gold.

'I will miss this sight,' he said.

'I will miss sitting here in the sun with you, and I will miss holding you in my arms. I will miss the smell of your hair and the sound of your heartbeat.'

She freed herself from his embrace and sat up. Their eyes locked, and they saw right into each other's souls.

'There will be an autumn next year as well, Severus. And the oak will still be here.'

'But I will not be here. I will not survive this war.'

He gave her a sad smile and then kissed away the tears that were running down her cheeks.

He wrapped her into his cloak and pulled her close once more. And as she softly wept against his chest, he wished that he had never said anything. He had not meant to make her cry.

As the sun was nothing more than scarlet line at the horizon, he cupped her chin and made her look.

'Remember that sight, beloved,' he said. 'Come back here and remember me. Remember the love we shared under this tree and the way the sun warmed your skin. And I promise that I will be right here with you. I will always be here.'

He didn't survive the war. He died on the dusty floor in the Shrieking Shack. They had not even said goodbye.

She returned the next autumn, just as he had asked her to. She sat with her back against the trunk of the mighty oak with his bloodstained cloak in her arms. She had not washed it. She wanted his scent to linger.

As the sun set, she buried her face in the black fabric and cried bitter tears.

She looked up just in time to see the sun disappear behind the mountains. And she sensed that Severus was there.

A/N: Dedicated to my dear friend P. Make sure you're still around next autumn.