

The Ties That Bind

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Word Count: 578

A/N: Written for the prompt of "suicide" at Brigit's Flame, week 4. Many thanks to my fantastic friend and beta, Literaryspell; I am humbled before you. Thank you so much for everything that cannot be put into words; I owe what I am as an author to you.

It is time. I can't deny it any longer. I had carefully chosen my clothes for this moment.

You might think it would be hard to choose what to wear when your life was ending, but it really isn't. Wear what you always did when you wanted to look good: a crisp suit, not too ostentatious, just the right amount of class for such an occasion. Not that they hand out books for this sort of thing; it just seems right.

I may sound callous, as though I am worried about what I look like at a time like this, but nothing could be further from the truth. The act of putting on the clothes allows me to distance myself from what will soon be an incontrovertible fact. I focus on the small details to distract myself from the larger picture.

First my underwear. Why does it always have to be clean during a crisis? I tear into a new package, the plastic distorting and holding out under a surprising amount of force before it finally gives in to my clawed fingers. The fabric feels too stiff against my skin. It's an unwelcome irritation of the flesh when I would rather immerse myself in the emotion of the moment. I frown slightly at my crotch, struck by the ludicrousness of worrying about my underwear at a time like this.

Next come the pants. There is an art to a well-made trouser, and I am sorry to say that these do not fit the bill. My legs have always been a little long, and I feel the familiar flash of annoyance as I see the inseam fall the smallest bit short of my ankle. Not that anyone would notice today, of course. I just want to do my best to present a picture.

I make quick work of the shirt, the buttons slipping through their holes despite my trembling fingers. I shrug the jacket on, black of course, and make sure the note is in the pocket. Can't forget that. The most important part.

Oh, I did forget something. I stand in the bedroom, not able to meet my own eyes in the mirror. Coward. As I make the knot tighter around my neck, I seem to forget how to do the simplest thing. It must have taken me five tries, and it was still not right even then. The helplessness wells around me, and I ball my fists. The clock is ticking. It is time, and I can't get it right.

"Tom?"

I turn my head, but I can't see my wife through the blur of tears. I cough and hurriedly look away.

"Are you having trouble with your tie?"

I just nod, grateful that I don't have to answer.

She stands before me and silently re-ties it for me. It takes her nimble fingers only a moment. "There," she says, patting my chest. "You're ready. Do you have the eulogy?"

"In my pocket," I manage.

"Heather would have—"

"Don't." I slash my hand out blindly, trying to stop her. "Don't say her name to me."

Sue takes my hand and holds it against her cheek. "Okay. It's okay, Tom. Let's go. It's time now."

"How can it ever be time for this?" I ask, hating how my voice breaks, but she doesn't answer, just tugs my hand.

And we walk out the door to our daughter's funeral.