

No Need To Say Goodbye

by theslacker

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As You Head Off To The War

Chapter 1 of 1

"I can't help but feel that he knew something of what I wanted to tell him. No one would say that I'm anything but transparent."

I put the kettle on to boil and take a mug and teabag from the cupboard. It's strange, behaving like a Muggle. It's always the small tasks that you have to be careful to not do magically. You always have to be aware when you're doing something so mundane as making tea. I suppose I could use magic when there's nobody about but me, but I prefer not to when I'm staying in my parents' house. They never seem completely comfortable with it, not since Australia.

Nothing's easy about living with my parents now, but I need the space from the wizarding world. There's just so much to sort through in my head. The disillusionment of the past few years, the loose ends connected with being finished with Hogwarts and Voldemort at the same time...the two things that tied me into the wizarding world in the first place. I have no idea what to do with myself now. I have no idea if I've been living something practical and real, or an eleven-year-old's elaborate dream.

But most of all I'm angry with Snape, and I think I'll go mental over not having anyone to talk to about it. Because I'm not angry with him for the way he treated us at school or for killing Dumbledore. It's been a long time since I've blamed him for those things. I'm angry with the bastard for dying like that.

We were the only two who ever seemed to care much for the library at Grimmauld. He found it somewhere to escape to, I suppose, and I refused to be intimidated away from a source of books by his presence. It was inevitable that, sooner or later, I'd be unable to ask a question. I've always asked questions. My parents always encouraged it.

It's been a long time since I've had questions my parents could answer.

I can remember that first question. I was reading Brunhilde Longbeard's *Potions for a Dangerous World*, where she claimed that oak bark chips were the only stabilising agent any serious potioneer should really consider. In class, Snape had always advised us to use sloth's eyes. I needed to know why.

"Longbeard was at the head of a movement that attempted to phase animal-based ingredients out of potions use, Miss Granger," he told me in a bored voice, not looking up from his own book. "It would seem that her dear little heart couldn't bear the thought of innocent little sloths having their eyes scooped out by callous wizards." Then he did lift his eyes to mine. "Potions is not a career choice that ought to be considered by the squeamish or faint of heart."

He didn't seem to realise, at first, how uncharacteristically polite he'd been. It was a moment before he followed with, "One begins to wonder if you exist solely to justify the publication of every fourth-rate tome. Do try to exercise some discernment, Miss Granger."

It seemed that his time in the library was the one space where he would admit his own weariness to himself. He often couldn't be bothered to be rude to me. "Don't be an idiot, Granger. Just because it's in front of you in black letters, doesn't mean you have to believe it," was often the worst he'd deliver.

He was awfully clever and shockingly funny. He began to relax around me; how could I not react in kind? A strange and tentative friendship grew, and I fell for him.

I wish I could explain just why. Saying that he was sharp-witted, that he was interesting, or that he could be considerate seems flat. Saying that he was so bitter and irritable that it was endearing sounds pathetic.

He was so alone. Grudging as it may have been, he gave endlessly. He took so little. So little was offered to him.

Falling for him wasn't something I was very conscious of. Each step to a higher plane of attachment happened without my notice, and then I'd suddenly realise that I'd stumbled further in.

He was just someone to talk to, until the day he missed lunch, and I found him sitting in the library as usual, so engrossed in what he was reading, he'd not noticed his hunger.

He was just someone I had somewhat friendly conversation with, strictly within the walls of that one room, until the afternoon that Tonks spilled hot tea on his hand, giving him a nasty burn, and Fred had laughed at the way he'd jumped.

He was just another cause for me to get defensive over, until I heard him say something absolutely terrible to Remus at the same time that he handed Remus the only thing that made his transformations bearable.

He was just a complicated person I had a strange sort of fondness for, until that embarrassing morning I burnt the eggs, and he was the only one who ate them anyway.

He was just a friend, until the evening his mark burned while we were reading in the library.

He was just a man I was attracted to, until term began again.

He was just a teacher I felt an inappropriate closeness to, until he murdered Dumbledore.

Then he was a man I had once admired, who had revealed everything I believed him to be to be a lie, and I felt utterly betrayed. But it didn't take long, once I'd moved past my emotion, for me to reason out his comparative blamelessness.

How I treasured our tenuous connexion through a portrait that disastrous seventh year. I put an absurd amount of thought into how to phrase the words Phineas might pass on if I asked him to.

In the end, I merely asked him if he'd tell the Headmaster that I knew.

The next minute, Phineas was indignantly leaving his frame. Apparently, Snape had told him to move along. Without Phineas there, we could speak through his frame together. I asked him how he managed that.

"With a spot of wand-waving, Granger," he'd said impatiently. "Now's not the time. You must convince Potter..."

And then it was Harry this, Harry that. As small pools of tears gathered and fell from my eyes, I berated myself for my naivety. I'd been alternately angry, terrified, bored, and despairing for what felt like an eternity on the run, and I'd clung like a leech to the little spark that was my regard for Snape. As he continued on, I wanted to shake him, to slap him, anything to make him feel the shock I felt as I realised, sitting ten feet from a pokey, little tent that was driving me mad, clutching the frame of an empty portrait with white knuckles, that I was terribly in love with him. Finally, he was finished with his instructions.

"Do you understand, Granger?" he asked.

I told him I understood. I noticed, to my shame, that my voice was thick with emotion. He paused before speaking again.

"Granger," he said, "don't give up. Your appalling tenacity is one of your most admirable qualities."

I hiccupped a giggle.

I asked him if I could see him sometime. I was always a Gryffindor, and there was something I wanted to tell him.

Again, he paused. When he spoke, his voice was soft. "It would not be wise, Granger. We'll see each other when all this is over."

I objected. I tried to say something about how we may never get that chance, but he didn't let me get many words past "but what if".

"Don't be silly, Granger," he interrupted quickly.

But I had to tell him. As unlikely as it was, I thought that there was some chance of reciprocation. But I couldn't do it. Halfway through the sentence, I'd changed tack and was telling him that I wanted him to know that I was his friend.

"You're getting maudlin, Granger."

I choked back fresh tears and said something about it not hurting to know such things when you were going to war.

"Well," he sounded distracted, "it's mutual, Granger, but I'd rather not be late for supervising Mr. Tallwood's detention."

I tried once more, one last time. I told him I had only one thing more to say.

"It'll keep, Granger!" he insisted. "Tell me when it's over!" And then he was gone.

I can't help but feel that he knew something of what I wanted to tell him. No one would say that I'm anything but transparent. Was it unwelcome? Did he want to be spared the drama and mess of a young girl's broken heart? I would have been sensible about it. Did he know he wouldn't make it? Would such declarations have been wrenching reminders that his future would soon be cut short? Or did he, perhaps, care for me, too? I try not to be unreasonable and cling onto those words with all the possibility they hold: "We'll see each other when all this is over." But what if he did? Would knowing I would be waiting be just another distraction in an act that took all of his concentration? Or was I not the only one he was trying to convince when he told me that there would be time to talk later?

The kettle screams out that my water is boiling, and I remove it from the burner. I focus my thoughts on making tea the Muggle way.

Crying doesn't take any concentration. Wizards and Muggles both cry alike.