

Mad About You

by TeaOli

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Chapter 1 of 1

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His first time back, he didn't stay very long. Just a quick glance to reassure himself that what was left was as well as it could be. He didn't move beyond the door.

That would change.

A month went by, but he didn't go back. He barely distinguished one day from the next; he could only guess what they were saying about him: "Madness." "Looks like he'll be moving in with his parents." But eventually he heard a real voice, and it said, "It's time, Neville. Don't you think?"

He found that last voice spoke the truth.

This time, he stepped inside. She was gone, of course, and he said a silent prayer of thanks to whichever unknown ally had removed all traces of her last moments there. With the table whole again, the shattered pots either repaired or swept away and everything else cared for – perhaps not as well as he would have done, but competently enough – there was no evidence of what had happened. Only his memory kept that record.

He ran a finger along the table's smooth surface, unable to find the place where the grain had been splintered into piercing shards. Before the overpowering weight of grief could drive him to his knees, he turned and left.

Another ten days passed before he returned. Neville reckoned the others might be right – he might truly be mad – but he also knew the cure couldn't be found in hiding away from the poison. He went back, and this time he stayed an hour, tidying up here and there in the already near-immaculate space.

After that, he stayed a little longer each time, did a bit more. Soon, he stopped counting the minutes, then the hours, he remained. Time escaped his grasp when he remembered the many joys he'd found there more often than the lingering sorrow.

To make up for lost time, he began arriving at dawn to work steadily throughout the day, not leaving off his many tasks till the gloaming wrapped everything in green and purple light.

His back straightened and his hunched shoulders uncurled. Offers for assistance began pouring in. He could only guess what they were saying – "Miraculous!" "Whatever it was, he's over it." – because he refused to hear any of them out.

He was stronger, he realised. His strength grew in step with that of the fruits of his labours. He stroked a leaf the colour of the palest jade. In time, it would darken to a deep emerald, but that wouldn't be for ages from now. It shivered, then curled round his hand, begging for a tickle. Neville obliged, wriggling his fingers. The entire plant squirmed in pleasure.

"Off to sleep with you," he whispered, gently extricating his hand. "You need your rest if you're to grow as brilliantly as your mum did."

His lost love's offspring was clearly reluctant, but didn't protest settling back into its pot for the night.

"Neville?" Hannah called from the door. "It's time. Don't you think?"

A/N: This was inspired by Hooverphonic's video for their song bearing the same name as this fic. View it here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h76jV3aL4p8&>

Disclaimer: As usual, I don't own the characters, the situation, and in this case, I don't own the music or video which inspired the story.