

Time Enough

by juniperus

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Spring usually came late to the Highlands, but this year the bitter cold and light flurries had continued long past the time when snow drop should have given way to crocus. The two figures standing on a balcony of Hogwarts' rebuilt central tower were heavily cloaked against the biting wind of a winter unwilling to loosen its grip.

The ache they shared, however, wasn't merely the chill settling into their old bones.

"I cannae imagine Hogwarts without ye, Pomona."

"Then retire with me, Minerva."

"Ye ken I cannae, not afore Mr. Corner is settled as Potion's master and your Longbottom has had a full year as Head of Gryffindor."

Pomona sighed. "I *do* know. I just wish..."

"Aye."

Little was said as the wind whistled around the tower until Pomona reached to take Minerva's hand.

Minerva returned the reassuring squeeze.

"It's not as if you won't be summering with me, nor can you keep me from visiting."

"Aye."

Pomona smiled. Over sixty-five years of friendship she had learned the subtle differences in Minerva's clipped tone, and that ~~that~~ ^{aye} held more hope than she'd heard from her since Pomona shared her intention to leave the greenhouses to her apprentice and enjoy the now-settled peacetime.

"The Roxburghshire house won't be home until you join me, Minerva."

"Aye." The tightening around her eyes eased. "I'll be selling Elphinstone's cottage."

"To Neville?"

"Hannah wishes to be closer to the Three Broomsticks, and t'would be nice tae think of the cottage filled with the sounds of a happy family."

There, where Elph and I had too few years together, left unspoken.

"Elph would be pleased." Pomona squeezed Minerva's hand once more, then both pretended the other wasn't surreptitiously dabbing at their eyes.

"Aye." She straightened. "You're a fine friend, Pomona Sprout."

"As are you, Minerva McGonagall."

The women smiled to themselves.