

Things in Common

by dracontia

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Please note: no fluff here. I leave it to your interpretation as to whether there's hope.

one shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: Neither my characters nor my world; if I am enriched by them, money has nothing to do with it.

Author's Note: This is utterly unlike anything I have ever written for public consumption. There is no graphic content, but starkness is the nature of minimalism.

They fled the devastation together.

Everyone else was dead or wounded. It seemed pointless to add to that tally.

They were both injured, but still mobile. Nothing that they couldn't fix with help from each other. There was no real discussion. No words could adequately encompass the sheer devastation of both their lives at this point. In the space beyond grieving, she decided to accept that it was enough he had fought on the right side in the end. He decided to accept that it was enough she did not condemn him.

He had abandoned his wand near the body of a disfigured Death Eater. The robes, nearby mask, and build were right. With the wand as evidence, no one would investigate too deeply. He couldn't take the time he really needed, finding a replacement from among those left on the field. He tried to forget that the first wand to respond to him had been Minerva's. Since he couldn't, he used it as little as possible.

She had left her wand near Ginny. There hadn't been enough left of the body to tell it was Ginny, not in the absence of surviving Weasleys to identify her. She almost looked for another wand, but Ginny's worked well enough for her, and it was the only thing she would bring away to remind her of everything that had gone before.

That, and him.

She had never moved the money that had come from her parents' estate to Gringotts. It was a simple matter to withdraw it all then redeposit it under a new name. Had anyone been looking for her, it might have been absurdly simple to discover whom, exactly, Miss Jane Harmony had been. But no one ever looked. There were funds enough to keep them afloat while they sought employment.

He, too, had managed to set aside resources where the Ministry of Magic was not aware of them. There was a small house in a town just large enough that no one asked too many questions of a new face on the street. No one asked why Miss Jane Harmony was living with Mr. Toby Prince, nor did anyone inquire as to why so much time had elapsed between his purchase of the residence and his actually residing there.

Somehow, they felt obliged to find and read accounts of the battle. Hermione felt a pang that Ginny wasn't mentioned as having been there. He skimmed past anything the

paper had to say about Snape.

Neither of them did any magic for days afterwards. Not that they ever did much. Nor did they read anything to do with the war or that world ever again. The official accounts listed them both as dead. That was all that mattered. There were no—well, there was only Jane Harmony in her little room and Toby Prince in his, and the kitchen, bath, and parlor they shared with peaceful equanimity. The names attached to those faces in a former lifetime were irrelevant.

Oh, and the garden. They had a lovely garden. Roses grew over the gate, and the fragrance of crisp herbs wafted. There were vegetables and an apple tree. There was nothing too sweet growing. Death had a sweet smell; mint was the herb that smelled least like it. They each had mint under their bedroom windows. They never questioned each other as to why.

Miss Jane Harmony worked quietly. Her job was clean, clerical, and uninspiring. If it failed to tap even a tenth of her capabilities, so be it. It saved tapping any memories that might be linked to those capabilities.

Mr. Toby Prince likewise did nothing that would attract notice at his place of employment. Research was pleasantly dull, and nothing was ever discovered that obliged him to think about things he'd rather not.

Neither of them really made friends, though they were regarded cordially by their coworkers. It was easier to go unnoticed that way.

There was a great deal of silence, but oddly enough, it was not awkward. There was comfort in knowing that the other knew. There was nothing to hide, but no desire to discuss what had gone before. With anyone else, there might have been a desire to discuss. A need, to which they must never succumb, to reveal. A sense of tension inherent in living a lie. But together, there was only comfortable silence, punctuated by pleasantly neutral discussions of life in their new world.

Twice each month, on a Saturday afternoon, they walked to the library. Quietly, they each selected a stack of books and walked home with them. It helped give them something to discuss.

She was surprised when he went to church at Easter that year, and again at Christmas. But she went with him, and they stood in the back together, singing nothing and saying nothing. They did so every year.

That was all, until he came home early one day. Quietly, as was his habit. Her habit as well, really. He removed his coat. Rather than make tea or read the paper, he walked into his room.

She was there, unclothed, on his coverlet. She was touching herself, moaning softly, looking younger and more radiant than she did with her flesh covered, shocking and beautiful to one who felt beyond all shock and all appreciation of beauty. She seemed startled for a moment upon seeing him, but rather than stop what she was doing, she arrested all movement and speech on his part with a few soft words:

"Make me feel good again."

He tossed away his clothes and with them, his new life. Now they weren't even Miss Harmony and Mr. Prince, they were just a man and woman who hadn't felt good in so very, very, long. It had been too long, too long since either of them had felt anything, much less good.

They were always careful not to say any names. Only soft sounds, and harsher sounds, and breathing sounds, which could have been made by any two people.

There wasn't any discussion afterwards. Just his bed Transfigured, and her things moved into his wardrobe. Eventually, a civil ceremony, and the name 'Prince' put on the letterbox, since that was now the only surname in the house.

Sometimes, she would look at him and see glimpses of other faces. Sometimes she imagined other dark hair or saw another large nose. Sometimes when he touched her, she remembered the feel of another pair of long-fingered hands, another thin, taut body.

Sometimes, he imagined glints of auburn in her brown hair. Sometimes just hearing her voice reminded him of places and people he would never see again, even if he wanted to. Her existence was enough to make him see other eyes that would never open again.

Whether that was cause for resentment or vital to their remnants of identity was something neither of them cared to examine.

Sometimes after they made love, they would quietly turn away from each other. Neither of them questioned the other about the box of tissue on each side of the bed. Both made a point of avoiding the unacknowledged damp spot on each other's pillows. No one had seen or heard either of them cry in many, many, years.

But before the night was over, they always met again in the middle of the bed. And neither of them would let go until morning.

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Author's Note:

In the odd manner of the universe (whose native language is irony), it turns out that this bleak transition is the last story the incomparable LariLee will beta for me, at least for the foreseeable future. The hope is that this will mean seeing more of *her* stories soon!

I am grateful for all the tales we've survived together, and especially for her role as godmother to Reggie, the Fairy God-Jarvey.

Thanks also to averygoodun, who suggested this might actually be worth posting.