

Torn

by *Celisnebula*

A Short AU interlude/companion piece to the infirmary scene in chapter 29 of the Half-Blood Prince.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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It hurts to breathe as I look at his ruined face. I want to sob – to wail and damn God for what has happened, though God has nothing to do with the evil of men. I wish my tears were like the phoenix's so I could heal him, make him whole again.

He barely looks at me, and when he does, he looks right through me, each glance stabbing through my fragile emotions.

The room is so crowded, people pushing and prodding to get a good look at him – gawking at his torn flesh even as they pretend to love him, smothering him with their concern. They try to push me away, try to make me believe that I don't belong; but where else would I go?

Every time I touch him, he flinches away as if my touch burns the very skin of his flesh. Yet they touch him with their pitying hands, making soft cooing sounds, trying to soothe away the pain of his soul with their calloused touches, and he allows it.

The pain of my folly rips through me with a serrated edge each time *she* clasps his hand, her expression smug as his long, tanned fingers grip at her pale hand. I want to grab his hand away from her, bundle him close to my chest and snarl at anyone who dares to come near.

It twists and claws through my gut, the loathing I feel as I look upon her face – those perfect features, golden hair, dark blue eyes, and the slight, wry twist of her lips as she looks at me – mocking me. In weaker moments, I almost believe what those sly looks insinuate – that perhaps his defection only proves that I'm not worthy of his love, not worthy of loving of him.

I want to wipe that smug expression off her pale, pointy face – beat her down until she feels nothing but searing pain – until she feels as broken and as useless as I do, standing in the shadowy corner of this room.

My fingernails dig deep into the palm of my hand as I try to control myself – I will not betray him... will not betray what we are before all of these people, he and I deserve so much more.

Voices murmur around me until *she* screeches out, "What do I care how he looks? I am good-looking enough for both of us, I theenk! All these scars show is zat my husband is brave! And I shall do zat!"

Sucking in a deep breath, I move closer to the bed, slightly bumping into the weeping redhead beside it.

"Is it true?" she sobs. "Is he... is he *really* dead?"

There was no need to ask whom she was referring to – the scene from atop the tower is etched into my soul. I nod my head yes, unable to form any words around the lump

in my throat. I look down at the floor, unwilling to cry as the impact of tonight hits me all at once. It seems the weight of the world rests on my shoulders. I lift my head, watching as *she* mops his brow. I wouldn't have questioned my survival before, I had every reason to live – but now, watching her with him, I wonder if I have a reason to.

~~oOo~~oOo~~oOo~~

Disclaimer: I've only borrowed the characters to play with, in my own sick and twisted way. I wish (fervently) that they were mine, but alas they aren't. I did, however, wash and redress them when I was done.

A/N: I have no bloody clue where this came from, but here it is, in its entire strange glory. Should hopefully have something on An Unconventional Moment and/or Tomorrow's Appeal soon (I know, I know I've been horribly late with updates on those).