

# No Simple Affair

*by Anastasia*

"Death is no simple affair. You should have gone."

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

"Death is no simple affair. You should have gone."

*Disclaimer: No money, fame or glory here. Only admiration for the one that owns them all.*

*AN: I've gotten into drabbles lately. It's amazing just how valuable words become when there's a limit. They certainly must prove their worth.*

*Many thanks to Ariadne AWS. My beta, my author. :)*

*Darkness lies ahead...*

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Bark crumbled under her nails. Each time the screams rose, her hand contracted, twisted, unable to remain still. The sounds reverberated, compelling birds to crash blindly through the upper branches and burst into the cold night. Another tree fell in flames, slamming to the ground and exploding in a shower of sparks. Voices broke more with each strike, descending into incoherent ramblings, declarations, and vows.

Another gnarled strip jerked away, gripped in her trembling hand as they circled, trapped now, the door firmly shut.

Their robes swept the forest floor, eyes blazing by the light of a single wand.

His.

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A rough hand closed over hers, a cool shade of black hair slipping down against her cheek.

"Death is no simple affair. You should have gone."

She couldn't move, scarcely drawing breath as he pressed his fingers between hers and brought his lips to her ear.

Baring his teeth, he whispered, "No. Not simple at all."

The others were closer now.

Watching.

"Severus..."

He pounded his fist next to her, shattering brittle bark, twisted his hand in her hair, and jerked her head backwards.

"The walking dead should not dare to speak," he growled, his breath washing over her neck.

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Staring up at the intricate intersection of branches, rocking wildly, snapping back, reversing black against red. Another spell blasting upwards. Hollow screams, shouts, failing curses carried on the high wind...

Fading.

Narrowing to only the heat of him.

So close.

His hair swept across her collarbone as he swiftly turned his head, his shoulders rising in a timeless declaration of possession.

Someone else was near, lingering, then moving away.

He gripped her waist, his weight shifting in slow, deliberate degrees. Fingers spread, thumb over her ribcage, tracing each rise and fall.

Loosening his grip on her hair, he murmured, "Easy..."

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Eyes closed, her fingers drove deeper, sharp splinters cutting through the haze.

His teeth dragged lightly over her throat; his hand splayed across her back, drawing her closer.

Her shaking hand moving up to his cheek, a whispered apology, a bitter tear blurring into her own personal night.

A fierce wind tore through the trees, twisting and thrashing the tangle above. A foreign war raged a world away, and his voice emerged from the dark, rising from a deep, ancient place.

His shoulder eased back, his other arm encircling her before she registered the light of a wand.

Then nothing.

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A damp chill, hovering just above the floor, forced her to curl tighter, pulling the thick fabric over her shoulders. A heavy, deserted scent hung in the air, easing only when a ragged curtain flailed upwards briefly, paused, then fell against a broken window.

A flask settled next to her, its pale yellow contents swirling, then turning up over onto itself in a perpetually crashing wave. She peered at it, found her wand, and raised her head.

Black wool pooled onto the floor, and a hand lightly touched her hair.

"No longer among the walking or sleeping dead, I see."

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Shadows glided, overlapping, climbing, and falling over gossamer threads, wavering on an unsteady current of air.

He shifted slightly, his knee coming to rest on the parched wooden floor. While brushing his robes aside, her eyes fell to his sleeve, its tattered ribbons.

Her question was asked with no more than a glance, and his response came in a failed murmur:

"None."

His hand rested on hers, his eyes grave, looking away when she leaned towards him.

When the voices outside rose sharply, she gripped her wand, then his hand, drawing back when he shook his head slightly.

"It's useless."

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A frigid wind dragged its way through the broken window, a hollow sound full of dread. Each snap of the thin fabric increasing in speed as a faraway storm edged its way determinately across the sky.

The wind caught his hair, blending it back smooth, then she saw it too...

Images of a crimson sky bleeding over black, convulsing violently, crashing down into a fathomless mist, streaming low, a heartless companion to the dead.

Discovery, vicious demands, bloodthirsty warnings, an overwhelming attack, traitorous condemnation, and then –

Silence.

Wordlessly, she reached out and touched his damp sleeve.

"Yes," he said. "Both."

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His gaze fell to her hand, her fingers falling through thinning strands.

Sounds rose in her mind, part memory, part nightmare: a piercing call slicing through the night, a refusal to heed – and dire consequences.

"You..."

A tearing of his sleeve as he viciously pulled away gave voice to his rage. He stood and paced, sending an ominous ripple through the wards.

Stepping into his path, she forced him to halt, his turbulent glare questioning her, conveying shock both at her acceptance and her timeless question asked through a tentative touch.

He stilled, his robes coming to rest –

– and answered.

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A crushing, desperate kiss born of regret, possession, passion, and pain. Blindly falling backwards, hitting the wall – hard. He paused, his thumb gripping the point of her hip. Hot breath over a cold draft, her arm pressed against the window, the wards folding inward in an ignored warning.

She gripped his sleeve, his tendons straining in response. Head bowed, he shifted against her, hair swaying in time with his heart. His hand caught between them, her own following, twisted in the tattered ruins.

Swiftly, he raised his head and growled as the first light bled across the sky, "The last..."

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Stark white shadows streaked across tattered wallpaper, their jagged angles fading slowly. Reaching, her nails dragging, clawing his sleeve, jerking, then tearing free as they fell. His voice against her throat, deep, soothing words descending into dark promises; her feverish response, full of grim resolution, desire, and hope, even as voices outside grew louder. His hair spilling over, sweeping, rocking back, falling forward, words lost in a fluid crash of light and dark as a last dispassionate branch of lightning fractured the sky.

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Time trembled as she met his dark gaze, took the turbulent potion from his hand – and drank.

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"No simple affair, death," he whispered.

His voice lost meaning, fading under a current of white noise. Her hand clasped his, and his voice returned, murmuring a tragedy of forgotten words against her skin. A flight of a failing dream, the faraway crashing of waves, a sudden vibration under her fingertips as they trailed the floor, rocking, misted voices joining his, growing louder. Further away, lowering against the cold floor, his arms tightening around her, beating heart and warm wool, angling until his weight joined hers, and a final voice offered promises, devotion, and timeless vows without boundaries.

Then –

Nothing.