

Acceptable

by JackieJLH

Pansy never thought being a traitor could feel so... acceptable.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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'Pansy... are you sleeping? Wake up, we need to talk.'

'Daddy? What's going on? Is... is something wrong? You're shaking!'

Pansy isn't really sure what she's doing here in the middle of summer. She's never seen the school so empty, or heard such silence in the Entrance Hall, and it sends shivers down her spine. Somehow the silence seems suffocating, and she steps as lightly as she can up the stairs, cringing as her shoes make echoing clicks against the stone.

'Listen to me. I want you to stay away from Draco Malfoy. Don't visit him, don't talk to him, don't even talk about him. I forbid it!'

Loyalty... that's such a Hufflepuff trait. And bravery, doing what's right—all Gryffindor. Creating such a well-laid plan that no one on the face of the earth knows where she really is and what she's really doing at this moment? Just a touch of Ravenclaw. It feels odd to find all of these things forcing their way to the surface inside of her. Especially when the Slytherin in her seems to have hidden away completely; she wonders if it's because that part of her is ashamed of her actions.

She's betraying her house, betraying her friend, betraying her father and his Lord, and somehow it all seems worth it, and her Slytherin instincts can't be blamed—for once—because none of this will benefit *her* in any way.

'You can't do this! He's my boyfriend! You can't keep us apart!'

'He is headed for trouble, do you understand me? The Dark Lord has made sure that Draco won't last out the year, and I won't have my only daughter getting herself killed over some foolish boy!'

'What are you talking about? This doesn't make any sense!'

She freezes in front of the stone gargoyle, not sure what to do. Should she knock? Just wait here for him to find her? Maybe she should turn around and go home before anyone realizes she's here at all.

'He's been ordered to kill Dumbledore, Pansy. The Dark Lord demands it. The boy will either be killed by our Lord for his failure or by Aurors for his success; either way, he will die, and you need to stay out of it!'

'Oh God.... I need to go see him, I need to make sure he's all right!'

'No! Aren't you listening to me?! Associating yourself with him will only be risking your own life. And no one can know that I've told you, Pansy, not even Draco, or it will be my head that the Dark Lord is after. I'm not even supposed to know; we're just lucky the boy's uncle talks too much when he drinks. Just please, for once, do as I ask. You're the only one I have, Pansy.... I can't lose you. Please. I don't want to keep you home from school this year, but I will.'

Before she can make a decision, Dumbledore appears at the end of the hallway and greets her with a smile. He doesn't look the least bit shocked to find her there; Pansy wonders if maybe he has forgotten how to look surprised over the years. Surely he can't really know *everything*?

He motions, without a word, for her to follow him to his office, and she does, wringing her hands nervously. Only after they're both seated does Dumbledore look at her gravely from across his desk and ask, 'What can I do for you, Miss Parkinson?'

'This isn't fair! He can't do this! Draco's just a kid, Daddy! The Dark Lord can't do this!'

'He can and he has.'

She knows that if she hesitates, she'll never tell him what she's come here to say, so she takes a slow, shaky breath before saying in a rush, 'The Dark Lord has ordered Draco to try and kill you. Please, Professor Dumbledore, I don't want Draco to die! Find a way to keep him from coming to school this year! Have him thrown in Azkaban if you have to; at least then he'll be alive!'

Tears stream down her face and she raises her voice, her eyes pleading for understanding. 'Please, I know you can help him! I'm sure he doesn't want to do this, he's just scared! Please... I love him. Please do something.'

'You can't change this, Pansy. No one can. When you see him, just act like you don't know anything and then avoid him. I'm begging you, for your own sake.'

'We'll find a way to change his mind...'

'Don't worry, we'll keep him from succeeding.'

'Draco will be safer here than he would be in Azkaban. Trust me, Miss Parkinson, I will do what I can to keep anyone from dying.'

Dumbledore's promises float through her head as she walks back to Hogsmeade. He'd told her these things and then thanked her for her information before promptly dismissing her as if she hadn't just told him someone was plotting his death. She's not sure if she should be comforted by his apparent lack of concern or terrified. What if she has just cost her friend his life? What if Dumbledore and his Order go after him? And what if someone finds out that she told? The Dark Lord will kill her and her father, she's sure of it....

'Promise you'll stay away from the Malfoy boy.'

'Okay, Daddy.... I will.'

She's not ashamed. Not really. But Draco can never find out what she's done. *No one*, for that matter, can ever find out.

'Promise me!'

'I... I promise.'

As she pulls the hood of her cloak up around her face and raises her wand to signal for the Knight Bus, Pansy can't keep herself from wondering if being a traitor is supposed to feel this... *acceptable*.

Many thanks to [Clara Minutes](#) for her fabulous beta work.