

A Cord of Three Strands

by Subversa

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One-Shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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The burly man answered the pounding on his door, first extinguishing the lights and sending his wife and daughter to the back of the house. In this day and age, one could not be too careful, although the likelihood of a Death Eater penetrating the wards erected about his house was slim.

Throwing the door open, his wand at the ready, he allowed his bulk to bar the doorway as he barked, 'Who knocks on my door at this time of night?'

There was a moment as his eyes adjusted to the dark, then a man in shabby, patched robes materialised from the gloom. The visitor held his hands open before him, unarmed.

'Oh it's *you*,' Ted Tonks said, glaring at his son-in-law. 'What the hell do you want?'

The moon was two nights past the full, and the werewolf-wizard definitely looked the worse for wear. He was wan and scraggy, but his eyes held a volatile intensity at odds with the implied acquiescence of his empty hands. Licking his chapped lips, he said in his hoarse voice, 'I'm here to see Nymphadora, Ted.'

'Looks like you'll have to pass me to do that,' Ted said, bracing himself in the doorway, ready to duel.

'I know I've been a fool,' Remus said, his burning eyes fixed on Ted's. 'Hex me if you must, but please tell her I'm here to see her. If she sends me away, then so be it.'

Ted stared at the younger man. Damn his better nature he knew Remus Lupin was a decent sort, but you don't tell a pregnant bride that your marriage was a mistake and walk out on her *not ever*. And then there was 'Dora, crying from one end of the house to the other, begging 'Dromeda to tell her what to do to win her husband back again
....

With sudden decision, Ted thrust his wand into its sheath; he noticed a slight relaxation of Remus' posture. Ted's usually friendly face bore a look of Slytherinesque satisfaction then as he pulled his fist back and punched the werewolf in the nose.

'Ow!' Remus yelled, his hands over his nose, which was gushing blood. 'Dammit, Ted!'

Ted thrust a clean handkerchief into Remus' hands. 'Serves you right,' he muttered, half-ashamed of himself. 'Dora's in her room,' he added.

Remus pushed past him, one hand firmly clamping the bloodied handkerchief to his face.

'And no bleeding on the carpet!' Ted bellowed at Remus' retreating back.

Remus trod down the hallway to Andromeda, who stood sentinel outside of Dora's door. He felt some apprehension; Ted's wife was a Black, which made her dangerous by definition. In a flash, her wand was at Remus' throat.

'You swore to me *swore!* that you would take care of her, yet in less than two months, you have impregnated and abandoned her. Tell me why I should let you in, werewolf?'

The door behind her flew open, and Tonks stood there, silhouetted by the light from the oil lamp.

'Mum!' she cried. 'Don't call him that!'

With great reluctance, Andromeda lowered her wand. 'I'll be right outside, Dora.'

Tonks took Remus by the arm and drew him into the room. 'Please don't stand there, Mum,' she said. 'Give us some privacy.' Without waiting for her mother's response, Tonks closed the door and stood facing it.

Remus inwardly cursed his broken, bleeding nose. How did one beg one's wife's forgiveness upon bended knee with one hand clamped to one's face?

'Tonks? I ...'

She seemed to straighten and turned from the door, drawing her wand. Remus did his best not to flinch.

'Move your hand,' she said in a calm voice devoid of emotion.

Remus hesitated. Was she going to curse his nose off? He knew her temper well, who had earned more of her temper than he? Steeling himself, he lowered his hand.

With a moue of disgust, Tonks said, *Episkey!*

Remus felt the familiar hot, then cold sensation of healing, and the bleeding stopped. 'Thank you,' he murmured.

Stepping up in a very wifely way, Tonks lifted the tip of her wand to his face and said, *Tergeo!* The blood was siphoned from his skin and he was clean again, save for the bloody handkerchief, which he hastily stuffed into his pocket.

He looked down into her upturned, heart-shaped face, and his heart turned over in his chest. She was so tiny, yet so fierce she was so droll, yet so passionate she was so kind, yet so just. She was everything a wizard could want in his witch and she deserved so much better a husband than he could ever be.

Tonks had been watching the emotions flit across his face like clouds across the moon; now she turned away from him with an exclamation of disgust. 'Don't bother saying it again, Remus,' she said. She sheathed her wand and her palms lay against her still-flat tummy. 'You mustn't say such things around the baby don't think he can't hear you.'

Remus stepped up close behind her, the fabric of his robes brushing against her soft yellow nightdress; he could smell her shampoo and cosmetics, as well as the scent of her desire for him. He felt the answering animal want which rose in him in response to her and battled it down; it was the irresistible chemistry between them that had brought them to this place to begin with.

'If all you want is a shag, just say so,' she said, her hair going from its soft brown to an angry tomato red, her voice tight with some emotion so painful she could barely speak. 'I'm not wearing any knickers. You can be in and out in three minutes, if you concentrate.'

Instinctively, Remus wrapped his arms around her, pulling her against his body from behind, his nose buried in her sweet-smelling hair as he rasped, "*Doradon't!*"

She twisted in his arms and her fists tangled in the front of his robes; he knew she would have been better off if she had possessed the capacity to remain angry with him, but the coward in him was thankful that she forgave so easily.

Tonks yanked on his robes as she had once done over Bill Weasley's sickbed, the night Dumbledore had died, only tonight, he was her only audience. 'You have to stop this, Remus!' she cried, tears welling up in her dark eyes. 'I'm as strong a witch as you will ever know, but your dithering is breaking my heart! You have to stop running away from me when things get intense!'

He stared down into her face, hating himself more with every breath he drew. He was her husband he had sworn to love and honour her and *he* was the reason her heart was breaking. What was the matter with him?

'You would *never* back down from a confrontation with a Death Eater,' Tonks continued inexorably, 'or turn tail and run from a duel and leave another Order member at risk, would you?'

'I ' he began, but she cut across him.

'Then don't you dare, not *ever again*, run out on me and your son, Remus John Lupin. I swear by Nimue, if you do, I will find you and make sure you never mate again!'

Remus felt himself falling for his wife all over again, a sensation like tumbling down a rocky incline, complete with bumps and jabs from sharp protrusions, until he landed on the ground at her feet, his breath knocked from his lungs by the sheer force of his love for her.

'Do you hear me?' she demanded, but he did not answer her.

'Andromeda?' he called, and immediately the door was opened and the older witch appeared. 'Will you consent to be our bonder?'

Tonks gasped, 'Remus! No! It's too dangerous!'

But Remus had already knelt on the rug and tugged until Tonks knelt as well, then he joined hands with her. Never looking away from her frightened brown eyes, he said, 'I want you to be as sure of me as I am sure of you, love I am not afraid to do this.'

'Let him do it!' Andromeda said, bringing her wand to bear upon their clasped hands. 'It is a stupid, brave thing to do '

'... and you should know, Dromeda, because I did the same thing to win your trust.' From the doorway, Ted gave a crooked smile to the kneeling couple. 'Bonding promises are nothing to a good Unbreakable Vow I'm beginning to think it's the Gryffindor way to win women in this family.'

Remus squeezed her hand and Tonks took a deep breath and began. 'Remus Lupin, do you swear ...'

In the immoderate dark, she clung and cried out and ravaged in her turn, thrilling in the unflagging, consuming appetites of the man whose gentle spirit won her as his wild

mesmerism owned her. Afterwards, they slept entwined, three at peace as one.

Author's Notes: The title of the story comes from the Bible:

Though one may be overpowered,

two can defend themselves.

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Ecclesiastes 4:12

The third strand is meant to refer to God, but I have used this quote with baby Teddy in mind as the third strand of the cord. I like to think he bound his parents together in happiness and love for the remainder of their too-short lives.

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