

Make This Go On Forever

by h_vic

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Lavender,

I don't know where to begin. But, it's not the way you must be thinking it is. I'm not the person you think I am. I'm sorry. I never chose any of this...

Draco stared at the paper for a long moment before ripping it in half with a snarl and hurling the fragments across the room. Why wouldn't the right words come to him? But then, that was part of the problem. Which were the right words? Should he write the words he wanted to, the words he ought to, or the words he knew Lavender would want to hear?

What could he possibly say to justify what he had done? How could he justify becoming everything she feared he was and everything he swore he would never become? How was he supposed to explain that she was right, that he had lied to her and all through their time together he was truly everything she despised? He could try telling her the truth, but he doubted she'd believe it, and the truth had never exactly come easily to his lips (or his quill). Why would she ever believe him again after what he had done? And anyway, maybe it would be better if she hated him. At least that way she wouldn't care when he died, when one of her friends killed him. They would kill him if they ever caught up with him, he was sure. He had lost the Dark Lord's protection through his failure, and yet he had carried through enough of his plan to make him a dead man if the other side should find him, or enough at least to offer him a life sentence in Azkaban. He'd take his own life in preference to that, coward that he knew he was.

Still, he couldn't regret what he'd done; the price of refusal would have been death at the hands of the Dark Lord, and Draco knew he was not strong enough to make a different choice. He would always put his own life above that of the meddling old man who died on the top of the Astronomy tower five nights ago. And he could never expect Lavender Brown to understand that. She was a Gryffindor, after all, and she had all of the fool notions about honour and courage that defined her House.

But despite that, Draco loved her.

They had been lost and lonely together. They had found each other when his life had seemed wretched, when there had been little hope of completing his task (not that he had ever been able to share the source of his misery with her - she assumed it was the trauma of his father's incarceration and the loss of his family's reputation that haunted him, and he had let her believe that). She was smarting from the wound to her pride left by Weasley's rejection of her and looking for comfort anywhere she could

find it, even if it had to come from a Slytherin. For such a large castle, Hogwarts had, it turned out, a very limited number of good spots to brood alone. If two people attempted to find likely places, they would inevitably encounter each other a little too often. There had come a point when, instead of leaving each other to their separate misery to find a more secluded location, it had only been natural to talk and to share in their pain.

Strangely, although there was so much that he kept from her, he felt like he had given more of himself to her in those two short months than he had previously given to anyone. In many ways Lavender knew him better than anyone had before, but now she would believe she had never truly known him at all. Maybe that was for the best.

There was a little bit of him that was determined to cling to the noble delusion that, if he didn't write to her, he would be doing it for her own good. It would be safer for Lavender to hate him. He knew, however, that what was really stopping the words from coming was fear—fear of opening himself up so completely. He also knew the whispering little voice of reason in the back of his head was right—silence would be safer for her—but Draco was not that honourable. He knew he was weak, and he knew he would send the letter.

He knew he would send the letter because he had thought of nothing but her since he had started running. Nothing else seemed to matter except the image of her eyes burnt into his mind. Eyes that he could only imagine now as cold and reproachful. Eyes that he so desperately wanted to meet again, and yet he knew they would hold his judgement.

She would never be as weak as he; she would always choose to die herself rather than kill, and she expected the same from him. But that was not who Draco was, and it was never who he could be. So how could she judge him for not living up to standards that he had never claimed he could meet?

Anger surged through him. *Damn her!* He had never asked for his life to be turned upside-down, or to question what he had always been told was right, but that was exactly what she had done. And, because of her, he failed!

A year ago he could have done it. He knew that a year ago he could have killed the Headmaster. But, as he stood there in the darkness that night, all he could hear was her voice in his mind. As Dumbledore tried to reason with him and gently chide him, it was not the old man's words that froze him—it was the disapproving whisper of her voice that filled his mind, the fear of letting her down, of losing her. The sickening realisation had gripped him that by this act he would pitch himself on the opposite side of the battle to where Lavender stood and everything between them would change. Perhaps he would never even see her again. But understanding had come too late, and events moved inexorably beyond his control. So he failed her and ran. But how long could he keep running? How long did he *want* to keep running if he'd truly lost her?

Draco pushed himself away from the desk with a frustrated sigh and ran his hands through his hair, pushing it off his face. It wasn't as if they had ever had a chance. They were forced to meet in secret, the unspoken words hanging heavily between them. Words that would acknowledge the dividing wall between their lives—the gulf between Slytherin and Gryffindor, between half-blood and pureblood. Draco's world could not admit her blood, and Lavender's could not accept his allegiances. They had never discussed it, but it was always there as the black-robed elephant in the corner.

Draco began to pace distractedly. They could never have survived; they should never have started, but still Draco couldn't let go. He couldn't simply forget her, not when she changed him so deeply.

She caused him to see things differently, to question everything that mattered. She accepted none of the prejudices that hemmed his life and constrained him. She thought for herself rather than seeing the world as others told her to. Most of all, she was adamant—she really believed—that blood didn't matter. For the entirety of his life, Draco had been told that he was special, he was better, he was more deserving, simply because of his birth. Yet she was so much more than he in so many ways, despite her tainted blood. It was an uncomfortable realisation, but one that he couldn't escape. She changed him, and he failed her, and now he would never see her again. All he could offer her in explanation were words that she would not believe, if she even read them (if he even wrote them). It was a poor recompense for everything she had given him. Lavender taught him to live—to really live. She taught him to live for the moment and to worry about the future later (a strange experience for a Slytherin, in truth), but that only worked if there were really nothing to worry about later. It was hard to live for the present when Draco knew he had already begun to manipulate the future, but she had taken him the nearest he had ever been.

Their last night should have been about living for that night alone. Lavender had immersed herself in the moment, but how could he when he knew what was coming? She had told him she loved him that night, and he hadn't answered. What was he supposed to say—you don't know me, and you wouldn't love me if you did? No, he wasn't that strong. But he couldn't reply, he couldn't worsen the lie, even though his love would never be a lie. He had kept his silence, and now she would know the truth.

Those words hadn't come, and now no others would because there were no words to say everything he wanted to—*Thank you, I'm sorry... even I love you*. None of them were enough. None of them were even a beginning.

He was lost once again, his salvation all too brief.