

Seekers in the Night

by themadmermaid

Two melancholy strangers find unexpected solace in each other. Written for the "Love is Everywhere" challenge at the *erotic_elves* community on LJ.

Chapter 1

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A/N: This was a randomly assigned pairing I received for a challenge. I don't know that I would have ever written this couple otherwise, so it was fun to push my boundaries. Thank you to *rosehiptea* and *alexlady* for being my beta readers.

Cho looked around the Three Broomsticks dejectedly and then raised her glass of firewhisky and knocked some back. Why the hell had she come here? She wasn't sure, but then again, she wasn't sure of much right now.

Everything had been surreal since the war's recent end. The relief everyone felt at Voldemort's fall mixed uneasily with grief over those that had been lost. Today had been one of the last funerals, Fred Weasley's. After the service, Luna told her that many of their classmates would be at the Three Broomsticks that night. Cho had kept mostly to herself lately, but the funeral's unusual levity (it was the send-off for a founder of Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes, after all) and its place at the end of a lengthy queue seemed to make going out to a pub seem somehow sensible.

It was pleasant at first, catching up with a few people without the stultifying atmosphere of a memorial. However, as the night went on, more and more witches and wizards poured into the establishment, and the tone of the gathering changed to one of giddiness bordering on desperation. Cho found herself alone at a table growing melancholy; the strange co-mingling of celebration and mourning made her head spin, and despite her hopes, the liquor only seemed to make it worse.

Cho saw Harry across the room with his arm about Ginny and exchanged a rueful smile. It seemed to her sometimes that the shadow of the war had fallen on her early, with Cedric's death, she mused. His death had somehow changed the spark between Harry and herself. Not only had their relationship never blossomed, their friendship had curdled as well. It wasn't simply the obvious losses. The war had marked all of them in uncountable ways.

With that cheerless thought, Cho sighed and decided it was time to wrap up her evening. Looking at her glass to see what was left, she was distracted by a new group tumbling out of the Floo and saw to her dismay that one was Michael Corner. Instantly, she considered how to quickly get out of the pub. If there was anything worse than being drunk and alone, she thought, it had to be being drunk and in the company of someone that you broke it off with.

Unfortunately, Cho was close to the door of the Three Broomsticks, and Michael, who thankfully hadn't noticed her yet, was between all other sources of escape: Floo, bathrooms, stairs. Apparation and liquor seemed like a recipe for splinching, so with a mental shrug, she hastily gulped her remaining drink down and was out the door into the night.

The evening air was cool but not uncomfortable. Cho stood on the quiet street for a moment and then took a few only slightly unsteady steps away from the Three Broomsticks. She turned back to the pub and looked through the window at the patrons who now seemed so far away. However, her loneliness and melancholy had been replaced by a feeling of freedom.

Through the glass, in the golden glow of lights, Michael was seating himself at a table. Cho looked up at the stars shining in the night sky. "Guess I'm stuck out here for a bit," she said to herself. Not wanting to hang about and run into anyone, she set off at a brisk walk, humming under her breath.

Passing Madame Puddifoot's, Cho shuddered a little, but even that couldn't dampen her newfound cheer. Newfound drunkenness, a cynical part of her corrected, but that didn't bother her either. She wasn't really that drunk. At least, not as drunk as Luna was back there, sitting on Neville's lap and flirting with Ron and Seamus at the same time. Cho wished she had her broomstick. Or was dancing. Her humming increased a little in volume, and her walk turned into a jog.

Apparently at this hour, with the exception of the pubs, Hogsmeade was sleeping. She wound through the streets and alleys on light feet like a secret, going nowhere in particular, occasionally seeing an owl wheel silently overhead or a cat dart across her path. Eventually, she felt almost completely relaxed and turned back towards the Three Broomsticks. She didn't care who was between her and the Floo anymore; Michael Corner or Hippogriff, she could handle it.

She slowed as she walked down a small lane. Forested on the left, the other side held a small graveyard bordered by a low, crumbling stone wall. The breeze picked up, then died down and repeated the process, rustling the leaves in ebbs like waves, and Cho shivered a little, even though she wasn't cold. Then she saw what looked like a person seated, back against the far end of the wall, and slowed even further.

As she got closer, it appeared to be a man. He hadn't noticed her yet. She wondered what to say to him; she'd have to speak since there were just the two of them on an empty road in the night. Suddenly Cho's tongue felt thick, and she realized how much of the elation she'd been feeling was firewhisky. The wizard turned towards her, and she saw red hair and freckles. She stopped a bit away from him and without precisely intending to say anything, her mouth opened and she heard herself say, "You're a Weasley."

The Weasley in question raised the bottle of Ogden's he was holding at her as if in salute and said with a laugh in his voice, "Indeed."

Cho felt her cheeks burn. "I uh, didn't really mean..." she started and then stopped. What the hell did she mean? Trying again, she said, "What I meant to say..." and stopped again. Suddenly, she spontaneously volunteered, "I've been drinking."

This time the laugh wasn't just in his voice. "Hasn't everyone?" he asked her when he finished chuckling. "I believe, if I'm not mistaken, that you're Cho Chang," he continued, looking at her questioningly. Cho was oddly embarrassed that he knew her, which must have shown on her face because he added, "I like to keep up with the Seekers at Hogwarts."

"Oh," she said and then, "You must be Charlie." She felt herself smiling like she'd figured out something brilliant, and though she knew she must look an idiot, she couldn't stop. Charlie winked at her, raising the bottle again before taking a swig directly from it.

Cho thought suddenly of Fred and felt her smile quickly fade. Charlie saw it too and forestalled her condolences even as they were leaving her lips. "Hush," he said, not unkindly. "We're all sorry right now, for many different reasons," he said and gave her a melancholy smile before continuing. "It's a hard time, but we'll get through it. I reckon you know that."

Cho nodded at him, not sure what to say. She remembered times, shortly after Cedric's death, when she too had tired of sympathy and sorrow. They were all tired of it, if the patrons she'd left behind her earlier were any indication.

Charlie stood and stretched before seating himself on the wall. He was shorter than Ron, the sibling whom Cho knew best, but much stockier. Perhaps because he was older? She was startled from her contemplation when he asked her what she was doing out by herself.

The words tumbled around her mind a bit again, but she settled for, "I had to get away," which she felt didn't make the most sense, but he nodded as if he understood perfectly. Sipping from the bottle again, he held it towards her in offering, and she found herself seated next to him, tipping the Ogden's back herself. The warmth trickled down her throat and made her curl her toes.

They passed the bottle back and forth amicably in silence, and then suddenly they were talking easily about dragons and Hogwarts professors and Quidditch teams. The last devolved into a bit of a row, but soon they were back to discussing anything and everything with surprising ease.

The conversation lulled, and she heard the tide wind in the trees and shivered again, tilting her head back to see the stars, which seemed close enough to touch. She turned to her newfound companion to see that he was closer still. He was looking at her bemusedly, and though she tried to tell herself she was startled when he leaned in to kiss her, she had seen the gleam in his eye.

Charlie's kiss was not tentative; it swooped in and captured her soundly, and she found herself ardently kissing him back, full of the wildness of the night, wind and whiskey, and strange affection for this man who happened to be sharing both it and her melancholy. Hands skimmed over firm muscles and smooth skin, stubby cheeks and delicate ears. They were ferocious as the most intimate lovers, and finally they broke for breath, foreheads together and panting.

"We shouldn't do this," she said without conviction and then smiled a little at herself. How many witches had said that before her, meaning not that they wanted to stop but that they wanted to be persuaded? Charlie didn't respond right away, just kissed her again, running his tongue gently over her lower lip before nipping it between his teeth.

"We'll be lucky if we can, love," he said with that chuckle in his voice again, and when she started to ask him what he was talking about, he stopped her with more kisses and drew her closer. "The bottle of Ogden's is gone, and I believe I downed most of it before you ever appeared," he continued.

She blushed when she got his implication, and he laughed again. "Now if you're embarrassed at that, Cho, it makes me worry about the rest of it."

Her face was quite hot, but she wasn't going to let him one-up her. "The rest of it?" she asked nonchalantly and started to unbutton the top of her shirt. Charlie groaned, and she found herself pulled to sit astride his lap.

The banter ended then, as if they'd reached agreement, and the kissing began again in earnest and this time hands were everywhere: cupping rounded breasts through shirts, grasping hard bulges through denim, taking time in between to tug at clothing and fastenings. Charlie valiantly tried to undo her shirt buttons while kissing her, but eventually he gave up and took his own shirt off while she finished them.

He helped her up, kissing her forehead once they stood, and they moved to the inside of the wall. He quickly transfigured his shirt into a blanket, and she let him draw her down next to him, hidden from view by the stones next to them. She lay back and looked at the stars again, a smile curving her lips as he deftly removed her shirt and bra. He rained kisses all over her chest and she sighed happily, unable to control a gasp when he suddenly enveloped a nipple with his warm mouth. He gave the other proper attention before returning his lips to hers, laying atop her this time so she could feel his erection pressed snugly between her own legs.

She ran her hand down between them and squeezed him through his clothing before trying to work at the button. He made an appreciative sound and said, "Take that, Ogden," causing her to giggle. Her one-handed approach wasn't working very well, and she abandoned her attempt as he began distracting her with more kisses.

That was the end of her ability to really process events, as her only concern became the warm cocoon of pleasure that wrapped them both. Charlie stripped away the rest of their garments and returned to her, continuing their eager kisses, and she reveled in the feel of their naked bodies touching at a hundred different places. She couldn't stop her hips from moving against him. Soon his hands were down between them, stroking and gently pinching at her ready wetness, and that only made her more frantic. She found herself reaching down as well, caressing his rigid length, and she drew up her leg and moved her hips again, giving him a not so subtle hint.

She could feel his smile against her cheek, where he was kissing her neck and ear softly, and then he was at her entrance, pushing delicately in and out, entering a little further each time, ignoring the urge of her insistent movements to hurry. He finally slid in completely and she couldn't help a contented sigh, enjoying the wonderful feeling of fullness, and then he was moving inside her.

Instead of the desperation Cho imagined fueled encounters such as these, she and Charlie consoled each other. Charlie comforted her weary heart by inflaming her body with his mouth, his hands, his tongue, and he in turn was soothed by her breathy moans and helpless writhing. They moved together now, and Cho felt as wild and free as

she had earlier, running alone through the night.

Charlie pushed deeper and moved faster, and Cho gladly accommodated him. His breath was hot on her shoulder and she leaned her face to his. She felt the molten tension of her orgasm building up, her breath speeding and her hands tightening on Charlie's buttocks, urging him on. He groaned and managed to strangle out her name in a questioning tone.

She kissed him fiercely and said, "Yes, Charlie. Yes." He kept a steady pace and her climax overtook her; she bit her lip as she cried out and her arms tightened around him, holding him as close as she could. She felt a few tears leaking from the corners of her eyes, and he kissed them away. He drove deep into her then, the pressure somehow painfully sweet, and she felt him shudder several times before all the stress left his body, leaving him as boneless and relaxed as her.

They lay there, in each other's arms, and the breeze started cooling their slick skin. Charlie rolled off her a bit so that he wasn't crushing her, and she brushed his sweaty hair off his face and he smiled at her. They untangled themselves, casting cleaning spells and dressing in a comfortable silence. Cho laughed a little when Charlie tried to turn their blanket back into a shirt and it didn't come out right. He pretended to scowl at her as he fixed it and then solicitously straightened her collar.

He took her arm as they set off, and they moved leisurely towards the Three Broomsticks. She found herself leaning against him and exchanging several glances and smiles, but they remained quiet. Despite the late hour, witches and wizards still crowded the pub. Most of them, however, were so far in their cups that they paid Charlie and Cho no mind, except Luna, who just smiled at Cho as if it was perfectly expected that she should waltz in the door with Ron's older brother on her arm.

They approached the Floo, and Charlie suddenly looked stricken as something occurred to him. "I left the bottle out there," he said, running his hand through his hair distractedly and mussing it terribly. Cho just rolled her eyes at him and reached up and started smoothing his hair back down.

That done, she yawned widely and said, "I guess I'd best be getting home now."

Suddenly, Charlie looked unsure for the first time that evening. He asked her nonchalantly, "Should I, um, owl you then?"

Cho pretended to consider for a moment, but felt bad at the fleeting look of distress that crossed his face. She kissed his cheek quickly and said, "Of course." He broke into a wide grin then, looking more than a little pleased with himself. Cho rolled her eyes again and was surprised when Charlie grabbed her hand.

He kissed it and said seriously, "Thank you, Cho." She felt her cheeks burn a little but she smiled at him.

"Good night, Charlie," she said, turning towards the Floo powder. She could hear him chuckling at her as she threw a handful and shouted her address.