

Look Me in the Eyes

by sshg316

Sequel to Living Legacy. Abigail Snape has loved Teddy Lupin for as long as she can remember, but the timing has never been right. Now, it may be too late.

Part One: Unrequited

Chapter 1 of 4

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Part One: Unrequited

Abigail Eileen Snape had never been fond of crowds, and tonight was no exception. Whilst the party being given in honour of her eighteenth birthday took place inside the Burrow, Abigail sat outside in the Weasleys' garden, cloaked by the cover of night. She could hear the music and laughter as it drifted from the open windows, and she was satisfied. She refused to admit, even to herself, that she was hiding, even though that was precisely what she was doing.

She was sitting on the ground, her back up against a tree as she looked up into the night sky. Abigail knew at some point her father or mother would come to fetch her, but she had been unable to stay in the house one moment longer...not once *they* had arrived.

For three years, Abigail had watched and waited, biding her time and waiting for the moment the relationship would fall apart; then it would be her turn. That time had never come, and now ... now it was too late. Tears spilled down her cheeks as she vividly recalled how Teddy and Victoire had arrived at the party arm-in-arm, a small diamond ring on Victoire's left hand. Abigail's heart had broken as her dreams of a life with Teddy went up in smoke before her very eyes.

It wasn't fair.

As children, Teddy and Abigail had been inseparable. He had stolen her heart at the tender age of four when he had rescued Mr Ducky from her older brother. Ben had been angry with her for borrowing his favourite book...all right, so she had added her own illustrations in vivid red crayon. Ben had retaliated by stealing Mr Ducky and threatening to dip him in their father's red ink. Teddy had seen her tears and immediately retrieved her beloved toy. Abigail had been smitten instantly.

As they grew older, she had dreamt of Teddy one day seeing her as something more than a dear friend. She had hoped that he would look her in the eyes, see her love and devotion, and fall on his knees in adoration.

She gave a decidedly unfeminine snort. As if *that* would ever happen.

When Teddy had turned seventeen, Abigail had been dismayed to see him watching the beautiful Victoire with obvious interest. She had been relieved when Victoire had paid little attention to his flirting; but Teddy had pursued her relentlessly until she had finally succumbed to his charm.

And now they were getting married.

Abigail inhaled deeply in an effort to stem the threat of yet more tears, choosing instead to concentrate her anger at Teddy, at love, and at life in general. She hated how he looked at Victoire, as though she were the most precious thing in the world. She wanted him to look at *her* that way! Try as she might, she had never been able to make

herself hate Victoire; she was sweet and kind and loving ... and Abigail *wanted* to hate her. She just couldn't. Even worse, she felt guilty for begrudging her childhood friends the happiness they both deserved. Yet she couldn't stop. It seemed she had loved Teddy Lupin her entire life, but he had never noticed her ... not in that way.

How would she ever get through this? She would be expected to witness and even participate as the man she loved married someone else. She would have to watch as Teddy looked into Victoire's eyes and pledged his life, his love, his heart to her.

It was horrifying.

Abigail angrily swiped at her cheeks. She hated crying...hated it!...yet the tears continued to flow unabated.

The kitchen door squeaked as it opened, and Abigail hastily dried her cheeks and cleared her throat. It was probably her father come to take her back to the party.

"Abigail?"

Oh, no. Anyone but him. Even before she raised her head to look at him, she knew that wish was yet another that would go unfulfilled.

"Hi, Teddy."

He grinned and pushed aside the stubborn lock of turquoise hair that always fell across his brow.

Abigail wanted to cry all over again at the familiar sight.

Teddy plopped down onto the ground next to her. "Happy birthday, pixie. What are you doing out here? The party is inside."

"Yes, I know," she said, and then she punched him in the arm.

"Ow!" he cried as he playfully cowered. He laughed as she rolled her eyes.

"Don't call me pixie," she ordered. "Anyway, you know perfectly well how I feel about crowds. I just needed a break."

He nodded. "Yeah, I reckoned as much. Thought I'd come keep you company for a bit. A girl shouldn't be alone on her birthday, after all. So, how are you? Feels like I haven't seen you in ages."

"Well, you've been busy." She plucked a strand of grass and twisted it between her fingers. "I suppose congratulations are in order."

Teddy blushed and ducked his head, his mouth curving into a satisfied smile. "You saw the ring, didn't you?"

Abigail nodded.

"No one else has noticed yet. Victoire wanted to wait to tell everyone...she didn't want to take the spotlight off the birthday girl," he said with a wink and a nudge to her shoulder.

Those blasted, wretched tears filled her eyes again, and Abigail turned her face away, hoping that he would not see.

"Hey, what's wrong?"

The concern in his voice only made the tears fall faster. The next thing she knew she was in the one place she loved more than anywhere in the entire world...wrapped in Teddy's arms.

He was quiet for several minutes, simply holding her as she cried. When the tears stopped, and the embarrassment set in, he whispered into her hair, "What's going on, Abby?"

She let out a choked giggle; only Teddy had ever called her Abby and escaped un-hexed.

"Talk to me," he said, resting his chin on the top of her head.

Abigail didn't know what to do. There was no chance of him just letting it go. He had always been her confidant, and if she refused to tell him why she was upset, he would be hurt and angry with her. She didn't want to lie, however. Not to Teddy.

"There's this boy," she muttered.

She felt him stiffen, his arms tightening around her. "A boy?"

She nodded and sniffed. "I love him."

"You love him?" he repeated.

She tilted her head back and glared at him. "Yes, I love him. Is that so hard to believe?"

Teddy was dazedly staring over her head; he looked as though he'd been hit by a Bludger. "No," he replied slowly. He shook his head and then said, "I've just never thought of you like that before ... you know, in love with a bloke."

Even though she had been well aware of that fact, Abigail's heart clenched at his words. The pain was almost unbearable.

"I'm just like every other girl, Teddy. Just because I haven't dated much, doesn't mean I'm not interested."

He looked down at her and smiled. "Of course, you are. I would never suggest otherwise."

She narrowed her eyes, looking to see if he was teasing. Mollified somewhat by his answer, but still pained that he would never look at her as more than a friend, she snuggled into his familiar embrace and replied, "See that you don't."

Teddy chuckled. "So what did this boy do to drive you to tears? Do you need me to go beat him up for you?"

Abigail released a brief huff of laughter at the mental picture that brought to mind...Teddy punching himself in the nose. "No. That won't be necessary. It isn't his fault. He doesn't know how I feel."

"Why not?"

She sighed, the image of the diamond engagement on Victoire's hand floating to the surface of her mind. "He's in love with someone else."

"Oh, Abby."

She shook her head and removed herself from his arms. She rose to her feet. "No, don't feel sorry for me. I hate that."

Teddy stood, as well, and placed his hands on her shoulders. "You're my friend, and I care about you. I don't feel sorry for you, but I am sorry about the situation."

She scowled at him, but he merely smiled and pulled her back into his embrace. "So who is he?"

Abigail closed her eyes. "Please, don't ask me that." He would know if she lied ... Teddy always knew.

"You can trust me. I won't tell."

"I know. I just ... I can't tell you. Please, don't make me say." *Please*, she begged silently.

Teddy was quiet for several moments. "You've never kept secrets from me, Abby. Now, you are. I don't think I like it, to tell you the truth. But," he said pointedly when she opened her mouth to interrupt, "you have a right to your privacy. I won't press you for details."

She sagged against him in relief. "Thank you."

"You're quite welcome," he said. "Tell me, did you get everything you wanted for your birthday?"

She smiled wistfully into his shirt. "Almost."

"Teddy? Oh, there you are! Happy birthday, Abigail!"

Abigail swallowed her disappointment and plastered a smile upon her face before stepping out of Teddy's arms and turning to face Victoire. "Thanks. I hope you're enjoying the party."

Victoire smiled. "I'm having a lovely time, thank you. I was just wondering where Teddy had disappeared to. I should have known he was with you."

Abigail sucked in a breath, but one look at Victoire's guileless face told her that the witch who had won Teddy's affections did not consider her a rival in any way, shape, or form. For some reason, that stung.

"Why don't you two go back to the party? I just need a few more minutes to myself before I brave the crowd again," Abigail said; her face felt it might crack under the strain of her smile.

"Are you sure?" Teddy asked, his voice filled with concern even as he moved to wrap an arm around his fiancée's waist.

"Positive." *Please, just go.*

"All right," he said, obviously reluctant to leave her alone. "We'll see you inside in a few minutes, then. Yeah?"

Abigail nodded, and Victoire led Teddy back inside the house. When they reached the door, he glanced back at her, his brow furrowed. She smiled tremulously and tilted her head toward the door, letting him know it was all right for him to go inside. He smiled, and then they were gone.

And Abigail was alone.

Her legs buckled, and she fell to the ground, collapsing under the weight of her grief. Her breath came in heaving gasps as she struggled to control her emotions.

Suddenly, the arms that had comforted her for as long as she could remember were around her, and she was enveloped in the familiar scent of the one man she knew would love her for always.

He held her tightly, saying nothing; he rocked her gently back and forth, his hand stroking her head as he had done whenever she was hurt, since she was a small child.

"Oh, Daddy," she cried, "he's going to marry her. He's going to *marry* her!"

Severus continued to run his hand over her hair, the comforting gesture soothing her wounded spirit. "I know, poppet. I know."

Neither father nor daughter heard the strangled gasp from the turquoise-haired, young wizard who had returned to look for his fiancée's missing hair clip. And neither noticed that same young man return to the house, the hair clip completely forgotten.

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Up next: A wedding ...

Part Two: Liar, Liar

Chapter 2 of 4

Sequel to Living Legacy. Abigail Snape has loved Teddy Lupin for as long as she can remember, but the timing has never been right. Now, it may be too late.

Part Two: Liar, Liar

Sixteen months later ...

It was the perfect evening for a wedding, and now that the ceremony had concluded, the guests had gathered for the reception. A gentle breeze blew through the back garden, carrying along the music and laughter as dozens of guests celebrated the happy occasion. Hundreds of fairy lights provided the only illumination, twinkling like diamonds against the night sky. The scent of roses was heavy in the air...which was no surprise considering the number of blooms Victoire had managed to cram into the small space.

Hermione Snape stood along the edges of the party, a glass of champagne held in her slender hands as she watched the festivities. She smiled as she watched Severus toss his walking stick onto a vacant table so that he could guide a reluctant Eileen across the dance floor.

"Daddy is determined to make Gran have a good time."

Hermione turned to face her daughter, her amused smile turning fond as she noticed once again just how grown up her daughter had become. Abigail had always been a lovely girl, but the last few years had transformed her little darling into a beautiful young woman. Dressed as she was now, in her elegant blue dress robes and her dark brown curls accented with tiny sparkling crystals, Abigail was stunning. Hermione only wished her daughter's eyes could be filled with unrestrained joy on this very special day. Instead, they were shadowed with a lingering hurt that Hermione wasn't sure would ever completely disappear.

"You know your father," she said reaching out to briefly embrace her daughter. "He'll do anything to get a rise out of your grandmother."

Abigail smirked...an expression inherited from her father...and said, "He does enjoy baiting her."

Hermione laughed. "That he does." They stood side by side, and Hermione glanced at Abigail from the corner of one eye. "Where is Edward?"

"He's talking Ministry business with Uncle Percy," Abigail replied, waving a hand in the general direction of a table filled with Ministry officials. "He enjoys keeping up with the latest in politics."

Hermione smiled grimly. "Yes, I know."

"Mother..." Abigail warned.

"Well, I'm sorry, Abigail," Hermione said through clenched teeth as she offered a forced smile to a passing guest. "You know how I feel about that boy."

Abigail huffed in exasperation. "He's not a boy, Mum. He's a man..."

"Barely," Hermione muttered under her breath.

"...and yes, you and Daddy have made it perfectly clear that you don't like him, but do, and that's really all that matters."

"I just don't understand what you see in him, sweetheart. He's so pompous and self-righteous. And I don't much care for the way he treats you...as if you're nothing more than a trophy to be won and gloated over." Hermione stopped and closed her eyes. "I'm sorry. You're right, of course. It's none of my business."

Abigail nodded curtly and sipped at her champagne, although Hermione noted that she refused to look at her.

Hermione sighed. They'd had the same conversation many times over the past few weeks, usually ending with Abigail storming from the room. Hermione knew that pushing her daughter was a mistake, but for Merlin's sake, the boy was all wrong for her! In Hermione's opinion, he was a self-centred arse who cared more about how Abigail looked on his arm than who she was as a person. Severus suspected that being connected to a child of two decorated war heroes was just icing on the cake for someone with such lofty political aspirations.

Whilst Hermione hoped that Edward Albright was nothing more than a temporary fixture in Abigail's life, she couldn't help but worry that her daughter was attaching herself to this man in an effort to forget about the one she truly wanted and believed she could never have ... especially now. It wasn't lost on Hermione that Edward was the exact opposite of Teddy Lupin in every way; Abigail wanted no reminders of the wizard who had unwittingly broken her heart.

Unconsciously, Hermione's gaze sought out the turquoise-haired young man who had garnered her daughter's affection so many years ago. He was partially hidden in the shadows, as though he would rather be anywhere else. He had always been a regular visitor at the Snape home ... until a year ago. Around that time, his visits had become few and far between, until finally, he had just stopped coming; his absence had been palpably felt by the Snape family. *Well, everyone but Severus*, she amended. Although even Severus had wished for Teddy's return once Abigail had brought Edward home to meet them.

Hermione smiled sadly as she noted how much Teddy looked like his father at that moment, his expression tired and drawn. His eyes were filled with an inherent kindness and yet were so sad that her heart ached for him.

"Today must be terribly difficult for Teddy," she said absentmindedly, forgetting that her daughter was standing next to her.

Abigail stiffened, her expression unreadable. "I wouldn't know," she said coolly.

Hermione was filled with remorse for her careless words. She knew how hurt Abigail had been by the abrupt loss of her friendship with Teddy. When he had left for Romania without a word to anyone, the poor girl had cried for days...this from the child who had rarely cried over even the harshest of taunts but instead preferred to internalise them and strike back with her cutting tongue ... much like her father had been wont to do.

"Did he ever explain why he left the way he did?"

"No," Abigail said tersely. "He's never explained anything, and at this point, I don't really expect him to."

Despite her daughter's impassive reply, Hermione could hear the hurt, the pain, lingering just under the surface. Knowing that her daughter would not want her pity, she settled for simply standing next to her, letting Abigail know that she was there, if needed. She couldn't help but notice how her daughter's eyes returned again and again to the turquoise-haired wizard who was now talking and laughing with Ben and his wife.

Hermione and Abigail stood together in silence, watching as their friends and family joked and danced and laughed. As the current song came to an end, Hermione noticed Edward stand and then shake hands with Percy.

"I suppose I should get back to my date," Abigail murmured softly.

Hermione's brow furrowed at Abigail's reluctant tone. She reached out and put a hand on her daughter's arm before she could move away. "Sweetheart, are you sure you're all right?"

Abigail closed her eyes briefly before turning to face her mother. "Of course. Why wouldn't I be?"

Hermione's expression was filled with concern. Having watched her daughter over the course of the evening, she knew that not all was as Abigail wanted it to appear. "Are you certain you're over Teddy? You loved him for so long, and now" She trailed off, not knowing what else to say.

Abigail's smile did not quite reach her eyes. "Mum, I feel nothing more for Teddy Lupin than a deep, abiding affection. He was a very good friend for a very long time, and what I thought was love" She shrugged. "It was a crush. Nothing more. Now, if you'll excuse me, Edward is waiting for me."

Hermione watched as Abigail approached her date, laying a hand on his shoulder to alert him to her presence. He greeted her with a kiss to the cheek before he pulled her tightly to his side, his smug expression causing Hermione to frown. Edward began to speak, and Abigail shook her head in disagreement. He persisted, however, tugging her toward the dance floor until she finally nodded her agreement, albeit reluctantly.

It didn't escape Hermione's attention that even as Abigail smiled as she danced with Edward, her gaze was drawn to Teddy Lupin once again.

"Oh, Abigail."

Teddy grinned as his favourite "aunt" edged around the dance floor and slowly made her way over to where he was standing.

"Teddy!" Hermione exclaimed as she finally reached him, one hand reaching out to clasp his. She squeezed and said, "It's so good to see you. We've missed seeing you around the house this past year."

He blushed, his expression sheepish, and then smiled softly. "I missed you, too, Aunt Hermione."

"I had hoped we would see you last night, but Ben said you weren't getting in until this morning ... something about a Portkey mix-up?"

Teddy nodded and hoped his guilt wasn't written all over his face. "Yeah, the International Portkey Office set it for the wrong date...I didn't notice until I missed the departure time." He swore he could hear Abby's voice chanting in his ear, *Liar, liar, pants on fire*.

"Tell me," Hermione said, her eyes focussed on the dancing guests, "are you back to stay, or will you be returning to Romania?"

Teddy shrugged. "I haven't really decided yet. I had hoped to stay, but ... things are different now," he murmured.

She turned to him and placed a hand on his forearm. "Are you all right with all this? The wedding, I mean."

He grinned wryly. "I wouldn't have been Ben's best man if I wasn't. He and Victoire have something special, something she and I never had. They're perfect together, and I'm thrilled for them."

"Truly?" Hermione asked, her face etched with concern.

"Truly," he affirmed. "Victoire and I weren't meant to be." He glanced at where his former fiancée and Ben were dancing, gazing into each other's eyes as they swayed to the music. "They were meant for each other."

Hermione smiled. "Yes, it certainly does appear that way. She's a lovely girl, and she makes my son very happy, indeed."

"I'm glad to hear that. They both deserve to be happy."

Hermione nodded and then shocked him by deftly changing the subject to the one he had thus far managed to avoid. "Abigail looks lovely this evening."

Of their own volition, his eyes sought her out. He found her...and her date...on the dance floor, and he watched the man whisper into her ear. She laughed, then, the melodic sound floating above the music, and Teddy's jaw clenched, his hair turning a deep green.

"Teddy?"

He looked down and noticed Hermione's eyes slide up to his hair. He flushed and forcibly swallowed the jealousy that had coursed through his veins, until his hair returned to its usual colour. He hated that his emotions were always so exposed, always on display for everyone to see.

"Why couldn't I have got Dad's plain brown hair?" he muttered as he raked a hand through his rumpled locks.

Hermione laughed softly and once again, she placed a hand on his arm, her expression turning serious. "She still cares for you, you know."

Teddy shook his head in denial. "After the way I left things between us, I sincerely doubt that."

"It's true," she insisted. "A mother knows these things. Talk to her. All right?"

"Maybe," he said with a shrug.

Hermione patted his arm. "Just try...that's all I ask. And now, I think I will go see if I can find my husband. I believe he owes the mother of the groom a dance," she said with a wink. "Come by the house soon, all right? We've missed you."

"I will," Teddy promised as she walked away.

When she was gone, he turned his attention back to the dance floor...and Abigail. Teddy had observed her all evening, searching for any sign that she might still hold some affection for him, but he'd seen nothing to indicate that she still felt the same as she had a year ago, or even that she still thought of him as a friend. Oh, she looked at him ... probably cursing him to Hades and back for running out on their friendship. It would be nothing less than he deserved.

Abby.

He missed her terribly.

Teddy ran shaking fingers through his hair again. The blame for their estrangement lay solely with him. He had been the one who pushed her away ... but damn it all, he hadn't known what else to do.

He had been engaged to another woman...yes, that had been an idiotic mistake, a last-ditch attempt to piece together a relationship that had been falling apart at the seams, but that was beside the point. He had made a commitment to Victoire, and then suddenly he discovered his best friend was in love with him. How the hell else *could* he have handled things?

He did the only thing he could have done...he distanced himself, setting up new parameters between himself and Abigail. He would be cordial but distant, friendly but aloof.

It had nearly killed him.

Of course, never one to let sleeping Hippogriffs lie, Abigail had immediately confronted him about his abnormal behaviour, and he had ruthlessly brushed aside her concerns. He had been an emotional mess by that point, caught up in an engagement that he was fairly certain he did not want and desperately attempting to keep all thoughts of Abigail out of his head.

And then Victoire had called off the engagement. Teddy's wish to remain in Britain and his desire for a large family had been her deciding factors. She wanted to travel the world, and although she might want a child one day, she also might not. "It's better to end things now," she had said, tears sliding down her cheeks, "rather than get married and then wake up one day and realise how incompatible we are."

Teddy had been relieved in a way. He probably would have married her otherwise, if for no other reason than because he had said he would. By the time he and Victoire had amicably ended things, however, the friendship he'd shared with Abigail had become strained, the damage already done.

He had felt horribly guilty, and yet he'd remained silent. He had still cared about Victoire. They may have been wise enough to realise that a marriage between two people with such vastly different plans for the future would never work, but that didn't mean his feelings for her had just vanished. But at the same time, his mind returned again

and again to Abigail and what he had overheard in the Weasleys' garden.

He couldn't remember ever having been so confused. And so, unable to deal with the break-up and his conflicted feelings for his best friend, he'd packed up his belongings in one afternoon and without a word to anyone, left for Romania to work with Charlie at the dragon reserve. He'd contacted his grandmother once he'd arrived and told her he'd just needed a change.

The solitude at the reserve had given him time to heal, time to think, time to move on and look forward to the future. The only problem was, he had discovered that he couldn't imagine a future without Abigail in it. For months, he had struggled with what that meant, with what he wanted. Did he miss her friendship, or did he want something more?

He had waited for some defining moment, some miraculous sign or great epiphany, but nothing had happened. Instead, the answer had come in a quiet moment of reflection as he stood underneath a star-filled night sky and wondered if Abigail was out there somewhere, looking at the same moon as he. It was then that his heart had whispered the answer that had been there all along...he had been just too blind to see it and too stubborn to admit it.

He'd been nervous and anxious to return to Britain...and to Abigail...and Ben and Victoire's wedding had provided the perfect excuse to go home. Even so, he had been such a coward that he'd waited to leave until he could not wait any longer, taking the very last Portkey he possibly could and still make it to the wedding on time.

Watching Abigail now as she danced and laughed with her date, Teddy knew it wouldn't have made a difference if he had come a few days earlier. He was too late...she'd moved on without him.

He looked away and sighed. Hermione was right. He still needed to talk with Abigail, to apologise for how he'd hurt her, and then he could return to the reserve to lick his wounds in peace.

His gaze unerringly returned to her, and he watched as she whispered something to her date and then walked away from the area where the reception was being held. A small smile touched his lips. He knew exactly where she was going, and it would be the perfect place to talk to her away from listening ears.

Without another thought, he followed her away from the party and into Molly Weasley's flower garden.

Abigail wandered further into the garden, desperately wishing she had remembered to grab her wrap. The evening air had cooled once the sun had set, and what had been a warm breeze had quickly turned chilly. She wrapped her arms about her torso in an effort stay warm.

Finally, she reached a familiar tree and stopped, a sad smile upon her lips. Any other day she would have sat on the ground, but that was not an option when wearing dress robes. Instead, she simply stood and looked out at the lovely view of the countryside, her mind finally able to relax.

There had been too many people at the reception, too much chatter and laughter ... too much joy. Whilst she was happy for her brother and Victoire, she couldn't have possibly stayed one more moment in the midst of such happiness...so she had left, hoping to have just a few minutes alone to clear her mind and calm her nerves.

She hadn't expected to see Teddy at the wedding. He had been gone for so long, with no contact whatsoever, and when he had not been at the rehearsal the previous evening, she had believed he had simply skipped out. Seeing him at the wedding, standing at the front next to Ben, had rattled her. She had wanted to run to him and throw herself into his arms, whilst at the same time, she had wanted to slap his smiling face and scream at him to leave. She breathed in deeply and then slowly exhaled. As long as he stayed away from her, she would be fine.

"I thought I'd find you here."

Abigail spun around and found herself face-to-face with the very man she was attempting to avoid. "What do you want?" she snapped, her eyes narrowing as his step faltered.

He held up his hands in surrender and flashed the crooked grin she had always adored. "I come in peace," he joked.

But Abigail saw his trembling hands, the nervous twitch in his cheek, and most visibly, the dark blue of his hair...a sure indicator he was nervous.

"I'd like to be alone," she said, turning away from him in hopes of keeping her emotions in check. "Please leave."

"No."

She whirled to face him, anger and hurt rolling off of her in waves. "Go away, Teddy! I don't want you here!"

"I think," he said, his words deliberate, "we need to talk."

Abigail laughed mirthlessly. "Oh, I see. *Now* you want to talk. When I wanted to talk, you ran off and disappeared without saying a word, and now...over a year later...you decide you're ready to speak to me? Well, you know what? This time, I don't want to talk to you. Goodbye, Teddy."

She began to move, attempting to edge around him and escape his presence as quickly as possible. Teddy reached out and spun her around, pulling her against him as he held her firmly to his chest. Her heart raced at the contact...it had been so long since she had been in his arms...and traitorous tears filled her eyes. She blinked them back; she refused to cry one more tear over Teddy Lupin.

"Let me go," she said, pleased at how steady her voice was.

"No."

"Damn it, let me go!" she demanded, squirming as she attempted to get away, but Teddy only pulled her closer. Realising that he wasn't about to budge, she sighed but remained rigid in his arms. "Fine. Say what you have to say, then."

He tucked her head beneath his chin, and she heard him inhale deeply. An old familiar ache returned ten-fold, and she realised in an instant that she had only been fooling herself by thinking she was over him. She was such a fool.

"I'm so sorry," he murmured into her hair. "I was an utter bastard, leaving the way I did. You didn't deserve that."

Abigail closed her eyes in a vain attempt to block out the memory of the pain, the sense of abandonment that had rocked her entire world. "No, I didn't."

"I don't know that I can explain, but I have to try." He was quiet for a few moments, and Abigail waited in impatient silence as he gathered his thoughts. "I overheard you."

Her brow furrowed. "What are you talking about?"

"On your eighteenth birthday ... after you and I talked. Your dad was comforting you. Victoire lost her hair clip, and I was coming back to find it. I...I heard what you said, and I put it all together. The boy you were crying over ... it was me."

Panic and humiliation pressed at her from all sides, and she could no longer contain her tears. She had spent years desperately hiding her feelings for her best friend, only to be found out thanks to a missing hair clip. In an instant, the events of the past year and a half clicked into place...why he'd been so distant, why he'd left without a word, why he'd never written. Hysterical laughter burst from her throat until her breath came in choked gasps, and she struggled to free herself from his grasp.

"Oh, gods. *Oh, gods!* She had to get away...as far away as possible. "Let me go!" she cried, but he held fast. Her legs gave way, and she collapsed against him even as she begged him to release her. "Please, Teddy," she whispered. "Please, let me go."

He tightened his embrace. "Not yet. I have to finish my apology, and then you may do with me as you will."

He fell silent again, and Abigail waited in horrified mortification as silent tears slipped down her cheeks and onto Teddy's robes.

"I was shocked, of course," he finally said as he once again rested his chin on the top of her head. "I didn't know what to do, so I pushed you away, hoping it was just a crush and that you would get over it if I wasn't around."

Abigail bit the inside of her cheek and screwed her eyes tightly shut in an effort to contain the sob that threatened to escape at his words.

"It apparently worked," he said, the timbre of his voice unusually stiff, "but it also made me aware of a few things that I hadn't been before. I missed you more than I could have ever imagined. I hadn't realised just how big of a part of me you were ... are," he corrected.

Abigail shook her head against his chest. "No. Don't lie."

"I'm not lying."

"Then why did you leave?" she cried, her anger giving her the strength to wrench herself from his grasp. "You left without a single word! No owls, no Floo calls, nothing for over a year! And now you want to waltz back into my life with your paltry apologies and expect everything to just return to the way it was? It doesn't work that way!"

He looked at her with such sad eyes that Abigail almost moved forward to embrace him, but her anger kept her rooted to the spot.

"I know that," he said. "I was a fool, Abby. When my relationship with Victoire ended, I was in a lot of pain. It was the right thing to do, but you have to remember...I thought I loved her. At the same time, I was missing you desperately, but I had already ruined our friendship. I was confused by what I was feeling. I couldn't take it anymore. So, I left."

"Yes," she said stoically. "You left."

He nodded. "It was a snap decision. I had to get away for a while, sort out my feelings."

Unable to stem her natural curiosity, Abigail asked, "And did you?"

"Yes. That's why I came back." He ran a hand through his hair, which had turned an even darker shade of blue, telling Abigail that he was beyond nervous...he was frightened of her reaction to what he was about to say.

"And?" she asked when he remained silent.

"I love you."

Her eyes widened in disbelief, and she tried to step back but was stopped when he grasped her arm again. "No." No it wasn't true, couldn't be true. Not now. Not after everything he'd put her through. Not after she was finally getting over him. *Liar, liar, pants on fire.* She shook off the inner voice which taunted her. It was too late. She wouldn't let him hurt her anymore.

"I love you," he repeated as he moved closer. He released her arm and cupped her face in his hands. "I've loved for you for so long, Abby. I just didn't realise ... didn't recognise it for what it was."

"No. You loved Victoire."

He shook his head. "I thought I did. But it wasn't love...it was infatuation, affection ..." He grimaced. "... lust. Victoire and I ... we weren't meant to be. She belongs with Ben. And I belong with you. I love you."

"Stop saying that!" she cried, her entire body trembling as hope warred with rage.

"Please, Abby," he whispered.

"No. You made your choice when you left. You were my best friend." She watched in morbid satisfaction as he winced at the past tense. "You've had your say. You apologised. You aren't forgiven. Now, let me go."

"I love you," he repeated. "Please give me another chance...a chance to earn back your love and trust."

Abigail stood rigidly, refusing to soften her heart. He had known how much she loved him, and he had abandoned her. It was irrational, but she felt betrayed, and she was not ready to forgive and forget.

"Please," he pleaded.

And then she looked into his eyes, and her breath caught in her throat. For as long as she could remember, she had dreamt of him looking at her just like that, with adoration and desire and love burning his eyes. Unconsciously, she leant toward him, her hands rising of their own accord to rest upon his chest.

"Oh, Abby," Teddy breathed as he began to lower his head, his gaze focussed upon her mouth.

Her eyes slipped shut, and she rose up on her toes to meet his kiss when

"Abigail? Where the dickens are you?"

Startled, Abigail turned her head in the direction of Edward's voice. Teddy's hands fell away, but his eyes remained locked on her.

"Ignore him," he whispered. "Come with me. We can work this out. Please, give me a chance. I love you."

"Abigail? Are you out here?"

Anger washed over her as she realised she had been about to forget everything Teddy had done for just one kiss.

Without thinking of the consequences, she held Teddy's gaze and called out, "I'm over here, Edward."

She had never seen such agony as she did on Teddy's face. It shocked her, amazed her. She immediately questioned her decision, but there was nothing to be done about it now. Edward stepped into view.

"Ah, here you are, darling. Oh, and who is this?" he asked as he wrapped an arm around her waist.

She gave a pained smile and made the introductions, wincing as Teddy refused to shake Edward's extended hand.

Teddy's gaze never wavered from her face.

Edward cleared his throat. "Well, we should get back to the party. It was nice to meet you, Mr Lupin."

Teddy remained silent, and Abigail allowed Edward to lead her back toward the party. When they reached the edge of the garden, she looked back over her shoulder to where Teddy was still standing, watching as she walked away, perhaps out of his life forever.

Many hours later, she lay in her bed and wept yet again over Teddy Lupin, haunted by the memory of him standing in Molly Weasley's garden, his brown hair clearly visible in the moonlight.

A/N: A huge thanks, as always, to my beta readers, Subversa and DeeMichelle, and to my Brit picker, LettyBird. You ladies are my golden trio!

Up next: The conclusion ...

Part Three: Recognition

Chapter 3 of 4

Sequel to Living Legacy. Abigail Snape has loved Teddy Lupin for as long as she can remember, but the timing has never been right. Now, it may be too late.

Part Three: Recognition

One month later ...

Teddy lay on his bed, his hands clasped behind his head as he stared unseeingly at the poster-covered walls. The room had been his when he was growing up, and although he had moved out soon after he had completed Hogwarts, his grandmother had not touched anything since. It looked and felt exactly the same.

Teddy only wished the same could be said about him.

Thirty days. It had been thirty days since his disastrous conversation with Abigail at Ben and Victoire's wedding. He hadn't been able to bring himself to contact her again. Foolishly, he had hoped that his declaration of love would be enough to convince her to give him another chance ... but she'd been justifiably angry and hurt.

More importantly, she was now with someone else. It seemed almost a daily occurrence to see her face smiling up at him from the gossip column of the *Daily Prophet*, always on the arm of the same man...Edward Albright. The reality crashed over him once again...he had been too late. She was gone from him forever.

Merlin knew he had tried to fix things. He had made his apologies, and measly though they might have been, they had been utterly sincere. Abigail had not forgiven him, however...and with good reason. He had been a total prat to her, and his stupidity had cost him not only her love, but knowing Abigail as he did, he was all but certain that their friendship was irrevocably damaged, as well.

Teddy had spent much of the past month contemplating his next course of action, and he had come to the conclusion that he would have to leave Britain. Unlike Abigail, he didn't think he was strong enough to stand by and watch as she made a life with someone else. It was time to go back to Romania and the reserve.

He rubbed his sternum with his fingers, hoping to alleviate the empty ache he felt in his chest. With a sigh, he got up and pulled his trunk away from the foot of the bed. He had cleared out his flat near the reserve in the hope that he would not be returning, and so all of his earthly possessions had been shrunk and stored inside his old school trunk. With the way things now stood, he was glad he'd only unpacked a few necessities. Within minutes, the rest of his belongings were packed away, and he was ready to leave Britain once again.

He was standing in the doorway, giving his old room one last lingering look, when his ruminations were interrupted by the voice of his grandmother.

"Leaving so soon?" she asked from behind him.

He sighed and ran his fingers through his dull, brown hair before turning to face her.

Andromeda Black Tonks had always been a formidable woman. When his parents had been killed in the war, Grandie Andie had taken him in and raised him as her own, even as she grieved the devastating losses of her husband, daughter, and son-in-law. She had never given in, never given up. Teddy had never known a stronger woman. He would miss her.

"Yeah, I just finished packing," he said. "I need to get back to the reserve."

She eyed him coolly, one perfect brow arching in query. "Is that so?"

His cheeks flamed, and his eyes dropped to the floor. "Yes."

"Hmm."

Teddy fought the urge to squirm under her steely gaze.

Finally, she nodded and turned to head back down the stairs to the kitchen. "Come with me, Ted."

He didn't like the sound of that. Grandie only called him Ted when she wanted to have a serious discussion for some transgression on his part. "I really ought to get going. I'd like to be at the reserve before dark."

She paused on the steps. "You will make time for your grandmother," she said firmly, and then she resumed her descent to the kitchen.

Teddy pressed his palms against his closed eyelids and sighed. He knew she would have her say one way or another. *Might as well get it over with now*, he thought, following her into the kitchen.

Andromeda was already sitting at the table when he arrived, her elegant hands clasped in front of her, her lips thinned into a disapproving line.

He felt like an errant schoolboy, unable to meet her eyes as he pulled out a chair and sat down. He stared at the top of the table, waiting, but she said nothing. Finally, he glanced up at her, only to flinch and look away at the cold expression on her face.

"What in Merlin's name do you think you're doing, boy?" she asked, her upper lip curling in distaste.

Teddy shifted in his seat. "I don't know what you mean."

The brow lifted again. "Oh, really?" she asked. "Tell me, were you planning to inform me of your departure before you left, or was this to be a repeat of the last time you ran away?"

"I didn't run away," he denied, his spine straightening with indignation.

She merely continued to look at him.

He slumped in the chair and shrugged. "Not exactly, anyway."

"And now?" Andromeda asked, her tone carefully neutral.

Teddy fidgeted in his seat again. "I was coming to tell you."

"Were you?" she replied sceptically. "And Harry? What about him? Were you planning to owl your godfather once you arrived?"

He opened his mouth to respond, but Andromeda continued to fire off questions.

"What about the rest of your friends? What about Abigail? Doesn't she have the right to know you're leaving again, or are you planning to leave her in the lurch for a second time?"

Teddy didn't appreciate the blatant reminder of the pain he'd caused his best friend. "I don't think that's any of your business."

"The hell it isn't!" Andromeda snapped. "And mind your tone, young man. I'm still your grandmother, and you will show some respect."

Chagrined, Teddy closed his eyes for a moment and then nodded. "I'm sorry, Grandie."

"As you should be," she replied with a haughty sniff. "Now, answer the damn question. Were you planning to leave without speaking with Abigail?"

He sighed and rubbed his face with one palm. "It doesn't matter. She doesn't care if I stay or go."

"You are an idiot."

Teddy groaned. "Grandie..."

But Andromeda was not finished. "Be quiet, Ted. You know it's true as well as I do. The girl was your best friend, and you mucked it up. I understood your infatuation with Victoire...hell, even your grandfather and I went in for a little slap and tickle with other people before we finally wised up and realised we were meant to be together."

"Grandie!" Teddy exclaimed, his eyes wide in mortification at his grandmother's words. The woman had never uttered a profanity in his presence, and in the last thirty seconds, three had slipped from her mouth. Now she was using the words "slap and tickle"...she was his grandmother! He had a distinct urge to *Scourgify* his brain.

Andromeda merely waved a dismissive hand. "The point is that Victoire was a lovely choice for a first girlfriend, but I was not the least bit surprised when the two of you called off your engagement. There was always something missing, something that didn't feel quite right.

"What I take issue with now is how you've treated the witch you claim to be your best friend. She doesn't deserve such thoughtless disregard from you ... especially since the situation is entirely your fault. Abigail has adored you since she was a child, and *you* have always encouraged it, even revelled in it."

"That's not true," Teddy insisted, struggling to remain calm in the wake of such an accusation. "I didn't even know she was in love with me until her eighteenth birthday."

"I didn't say anything about love, Teddy. I said that she *adored* you. Think very carefully. Remember how Abigail was always trailing after you? Remember how her face would light up whenever you entered a room, how she'd run to you and throw her arms around you in welcome?"

Teddy took a deep breath. Yes, he did remember, and he had enjoyed the attention that Abigail had always lavished on him...before he had bollixed everything up. "I suppose that's true, but I adored her just as much..."

"Perhaps," Andromeda interrupted, "but not enough to see what was right in front of you. What did you think her reaction would be when you started avoiding her? Did you ever consider how it would hurt her when you left for Romania?"

"I didn't know what else to do. I ... she" Teddy let his head fall onto the table and spoke into the wood grain. "I told myself it was just a crush, and that if I left, she would get over it. Things would go back to the way they were before."

Andromeda nodded curtly. "As I suspected. Well," she said with another sniff, "normally I would be proud of you for taking after your father ... but not today."

Teddy lifted his head and stared at his grandmother in bewilderment.

The corner of her mouth rose in a humourless smile. "I see I have your attention." She nodded, almost as if in confirmation, and then said, "Sit up, Teddy. You'll be interested in hearing this. I don't think I've ever told you about the times your father left your mother."

At the mention of his parents, Teddy was instantly alert. He sat up in his chair and prepared to pay close attention to his grandmother's words. Discussing his parents had always been difficult for her, and so she rarely indulged in storytelling, leaving such "sentimental claptrap" to his godfather.

"Ah, Teddy," Andromeda said, her eyes glazing over as she remembered her only child, "my Nymphadora was such a delightful girl, filled with mischief and a zeal for life that I must admit, I often didn't understand. She was always so clumsy, and Merlin, did that girl speak her mind. She was such a troublemaker...she didn't make prefect at Hogwarts, thanks to her penchant for misbehaviour, and yet she was also very loving and kind, so loyal and hardworking. A Hufflepuff like you, you know," she inserted with a fond smile. "When she left Hogwarts, she worked very hard to become an Auror, and as you well know, she eventually joined the Order of the Phoenix. I couldn't be more proud of the woman she became.

"She met Remus Lupin through the Order and fell in love at first sight. I'll never forget it...she Apparated directly into your grandfather's and my bedroom in the middle of the night and woke us up when she knocked over a lamp. She'd come directly from Grimmauld Place and proceeded to natter on about your father for at least a full quarter of an hour before she realised that she'd popped into our bedroom at two in the morning. I knew immediately that she was smitten." Andromeda smiled fondly at the memory.

"And Dad?" Teddy asked, amazed and pleased by his grandmother's willingness to talk at length about his parents.

"Your father was a kind, gentle man with a heart of gold. He cared more about others than himself and was loyal to a fault. He had such a lonely childhood, and it wasn't until Hogwarts that he ever felt even a smidgen of acceptance. The few true friendships he had were priceless to him, and the betrayal by that rat Pettigrew, combined with the losses of James and Sirius, nearly broke him. He was a powerful wizard and a wonderful person."

Her fond expression turned serious as she continued. "However, Remus had his faults, just as your mother did. The worst was the way he used his lycanthropy as an excuse to hold people at what he considered a safe distance, telling himself it was for their benefit. The truth was, he was frightened of being hurt, of being rejected. It worked quite well for him, until he met your mother."

"What happened?"

Andromeda smiled, her eyes sparkling. "She refused to remain at a 'safe distance.' However, your father had fallen in love with her, too, you see, but he couldn't accept that. He told her that he was flattered that she fancied him, but it was nothing more than a crush, something that would fade with time and distance. Your mother was devastated when he turned her away again and again. When she was finally able to convince him that what she felt for him was love, he unilaterally decided that he was not young enough, rich enough, or *safe* enough for Nymphadora. He spent months denying that his actions were hurting her far more than the monster inside of him ever could."

"He wanted what was best for her, to keep her safe," Teddy said, feeling the need to somehow defend his father's actions.

His grandmother nodded. "He did, and yet, she was absolutely miserable without him. In fact, her normally pink hair looked, then, much like yours does, now." Andromeda paused and tilted her head in contemplation. "Yes. In appearance you are very much like your mother, but you are your father through and through, aren't you? A good heart, a gentle soul ... yet you do what you think is best and damn the consequences for anyone else."

"That's not true!" He didn't do that ... did he?

"It's true," she interjected, one shoulder lifting in an understated shrug. "But we'll deal with you later...let's return to your parents' story. Whilst your father may have been adamant, your mother was even more determined. Eventually, Nymphadora wore through his resistance, and they finally married. However, when she became pregnant with you, all of Remus' insecurities and fears returned with a vengeance. I'm certain his decision to leave your mother caused him pain, but it was nothing compared to the agony that Nymphadora experienced. Your father, at least, believed he was doing the right thing. Your mother had no such solace...she only knew that her husband and the father of her child had abandoned her. Eventually, he pulled his head out of his arse and went home to his wife, but not before he had caused great pain to the woman he so adored."

Andromeda fell silent for a moment, visibly contemplating her words. "On the surface, the situation with you and Abigail is obviously much different, but I suspect that you have indeed hurt her a great deal and will continue to hurt her if you persist on this current path."

Teddy remained silent, but his mind was whirling. Abigail's pain had to have been tenfold what he was experiencing now. She had loved him for almost her entire life, whilst he had only been aware of his feelings for a few months. She'd watched him with Victoire for years, whereas he had only had to endure seeing her with another man for a few short hours. He had been the one to cast aside her friendship, telling himself it was for her own good, and he had been the one to abandon her, dismissing her feelings as nothing more than childhood crush. If his pain were so acute now, he could scarcely imagine the agony he had unknowingly put Abigail through over the years.

He felt raw and exposed as he finally allowed himself to recognise the agonising truth. Abigail was his best friend, and he loved her, yet Grandie was right...he had made decisions without even considering her feelings in the matter. Like his father, he had done as he'd thought best and refused to acknowledge the pain of the woman who loved him.

"She deserves more than me," he muttered under his breath. "I've caused her so much pain. I should just leave and let her live her life..."

"There! You see?" Andromeda snapped, slapping her hand upon the table. "You're doing it again! Or are you being deliberately obtuse? You're just like your father, deciding what is and isn't best for someone else! Let me tell you something, Ted Remus Lupin. If your father were here today, he would tell you to stop being such an arse. He would tell you that time is too precious, life too short." She reached out her hands and cupped his cheeks, her expression fierce. "He would tell you that when you find love, you must grab it with both hands and never let go. Don't waste a single moment. That's what he would say to you, Teddy. That's what he would want you to know. You have to decide: are you going to allow this agony to continue, or will you be the man I raised you to be and make things right?"

Teddy closed his eyes and placed his palm over his grandmother's hand, leaning into her comforting touch. "I love her...I do...but it's too late, Grandie," he choked out. "I ruined everything by leaving the way I did. I should have told her something ... anything! But I didn't, and then I only made things worse when I came back. I doubt she wants to even be my friend after the way I've treated her, and she certainly doesn't love me anymore. Not that I blame her."

"What makes you say that?" Andromeda murmured softly, her thumb stroking soothingly across his cheek.

"She's moved on...she's with someone else." His heart clenched as he remembered her dancing and laughing in Edward Albright's arms.

Andromeda released his face and sat back in her chair, smiling widely. "Is she, now?"

Stung by his grandmother's apparent lack of compassion, he grouched, "Yes, she is. I saw them together with my own eyes."

She stood and picked up the *Daily Prophet* from the kitchen counter. "Well, then. Explain this," she said as she tossed the newspaper onto the table.

Teddy sighed and looked down, his eyes widening as he read the headline.

WAR HEROES' DAUGHTER SPLITS FROM UP AND COMING POLITICAL FIGURE

Teddy shook his head in disbelief. Was it possible?

His grandmother laughed in smug satisfaction. "It's time to grovel, my dear. I do hope your knees are up to the task."

The young witch flung the *Daily Prophet* onto the kitchen table. Her grandmother, Eileen Prince, ignored the display of temper and continued to delicately sip her morning tea.

"Did you see this?" Abigail ranted as she threw herself into one of the wooden chairs. "I can't believe Edward gave Rita Skeeter, of all people, an interview about our breakup! No. You know what? I *can* believe it! That man will do anything to see his name in the paper."

Abigail folded her arms across her chest, fully aware that she was sulking but not caring in the slightest. She had known that Edward had been using her, seeing their relationship as nothing more than another rung on his climb up the political ladder, but she had hoped he might care for her at least a little. Granted she had been using him as well, though her reasons had been rooted in emotion rather than ambition, thereby justifying her actions ... in her opinion, anyway.

Even so, she had been surprised and to her dismay, somewhat hurt by the events that had occurred earlier that week. She had gone to dinner with Edward on Wednesday, just as she had every Wednesday for the past three months, and as always, he had selected a restaurant where they would be seen. No quiet, romantic dinners for them. Oh, no. Instead, they had publicity stunts aimed at furthering Edward's political aspirations.

They had been in the middle of the soup course, Edward prattling on about some new measure the Wizengamot was considering implementing, when Abigail had suddenly had enough. She had calmly put down her spoon and reached across the table to place a hand on his forearm. He had immediately ceased talking and looked at her

quizzically. Abigail had simply stated that she believed their relationship had run its course and it was time to move on.

Edward's response had been most unflattering. He had grinned widely and said, "Do you think? Fabulous! Just think of all the sympathetic press I'll receive when I tell the wizarding world that you dumped me!"

Abigail had never been so angry in her life. She had called him a very nasty name and then stormed from the restaurant. Edward had sent her a bouquet of a flowers and a card the next day congratulating her on her "stunningly dramatic" exit.

She had tossed both the card and the flowers into the rubbish bin ... after she had shredded them to bits with her bare hands. She had immediately fled London for Mousehole, seeking sanctuary and solace...and perhaps a bit of spoiling...at her grandmother's cottage.

"I don't know what I saw in that man," she muttered aloud.

"Oh, please," Eileen said, startling Abigail from her reverie. "You know exactly what you saw in him. Don't play coy now, darling."

Abigail's wide eyes and raised brows presented the perfect picture of innocence. "I don't know what you're talking about, Gran."

Eileen rolled her eyes. "You most certainly do. You saw a distraction, something to appease the loneliness. You saw someone who was as different from Ted Lupin as possible."

Abigail prepared to protest but at her grandmother's knowing look, closed her mouth with a snap. She slumped into her chair and then offered a tiny, sheepish smile. "Was I that obvious?" she asked softly.

"Not at all," Eileen replied, her lips twitching in amusement.

Abigail groaned at her grandmother's blatant attempt to appease her. "Wonderful," she muttered. "Everyone knows what a fool I am."

"No one ever thought you were a fool," Eileen said with an affectionate pat to Abigail's cheek. "When you were younger, we all found your crush on Teddy adorable. As you grew older, I'll admit, your parents and I became concerned that your feelings for him were deepening, while his ..."

"Were not," Abigail whispered, unable to meet her grandmother's gaze.

Eileen smiled apologetically. "Not at that time, no. I'm not certain I could say the same today, however."

Abigail's eyes flew to her grandmother's face. "What do you mean?"

"From what I have seen, it's quite obvious that Teddy is head over heels in love with you."

Abigail stiffened and schooled her features into something she hoped resembled cool indifference.

Eileen chuckled. "No use trying that with me, dear heart. I'm quite the expert at reading Slytherins. Something has happened ... am I right?"

Knowing that she would never be able to put one past her grandmother, Abigail gave up and nodded. "He ... approached me ... at Ben and Victoire's wedding," she said slowly.

"Did he?"

"He said that he loves me," Abigail said in a blasé tone.

An amused smile played about Eileen's lips. "I see. And ...?"

"I told him to get lost."

Eileen stilled at Abigail's smug announcement, her teacup suspended in midair. Incredulous, she asked, "Why in the world did you do that?"

Abigail sighed. "It's a long story, Gran."

"I have nothing better to do this morning."

Pushing away from the table, Abigail paced the length of the small kitchen. "He is ... *was* my best friend. I might have fallen in love with him, but I always put our friendship first! I sacrificed my own happiness for his! I thought ..." She faltered for a moment, the pain of his most recent revelation still fresh. "I thought he would never lie to me, never leave me. And yet he did both."

Eileen tilted her head to the side. "Nicely avoided, but it won't work. What happened ... *specifically*?" she asked with a pointed stare.

Sulking a bit at having been unable to evade her grandmother's question, Abigail returned to her seat. Over the next thirty minutes, she told her grandmother everything: how she had fallen for her best friend, the pain of watching him with Victoire, the confusion she had felt when he had begun avoiding her, the joy and guilt when she had learnt he wasn't going to marry Victoire after all, and the horrific, unbearable agony of him leaving Britain without even so much as a goodbye. And then she shared her mortification and the terrible hurt she had felt when Teddy had revealed to her that he had known of her feelings ... and that it was that knowledge which had caused him to leave.

"He thinks he can just Apparate back into my life, say he's sorry, and all will be well! But I can't do it, Gran," she concluded. Her chin tilted stubbornly and her eyes now sparkled with tears she absolutely refused to allow to fall. "I *won't* do it. I have loved Teddy my whole life, and it has brought me nothing but pain. I won't let him have that kind of power over me again. I won't let him hurt me anymore."

Eileen had remained silent as her granddaughter had poured out her heart. She smirked at Abigail's exaggeration. "*Nothing* but pain?"

Abigail blushed and shrugged. "All right, so maybe that's going a bit far, but it does...*did*...hurt," she said with a small pout.

Eileen considered her words carefully, and then finally, she spoke. "In some ways, you are so much like your father."

Abigail smiled softly, even though she was confused by her grandmother's words. Yes, she was like her father...everyone knew that...but what did this have to do with Teddy being a prat?

"Has Severus ever told you about his first love?"

The smile turned into a small frown. "You mean Uncle Harry's mum? I know a bit. Daddy doesn't talk about the past much. He says he'd much rather concentrate on the here and now."

"Yes," Eileen said fondly. "Yes, I'm sure he would. I suppose it's up to me to tell you the story, then."

Abigail leant forward, eager to hear about her father's younger years but a bit unsure about listening to stories about his love for any woman but her mum.

"It started when your father was but a boy, not yet even old enough to attend Hogwarts," Eileen began. "Lily Evans lived nearby and frequently played in the park a few streets away from our home. Your father saw her there, and he soon realised that she was a Muggle-born witch. He was utterly fascinated by her and observed her for a very long time, until one day, he finally gathered up the courage to speak to her." Eileen's eyes filled with empathy. "It didn't go as he had planned, but in spite of his less than smooth efforts, they still became friends ... the best of friends. As they grew older, Severus' infatuation deepened into love, but Lily ... well, she became concerned with your father's increasing interest in the Dark Arts, as well as his Slytherin friends. And then it happened."

Abigail was completely entranced by this point. "What happened?" she breathed.

"Your father was being harassed by a group of boys who called themselves 'The Marauders.' You know who they are, don't you?"

Abigail nodded. Growing up with Harry Potter as an uncle, she certainly had heard stories involving his father, James, his godfather, Sirius Black, and Teddy's father, Remus. No one bothered to mention the traitor.

"Well," Eileen continued, "they may have grown into decent young men...some of them anyway...but at the time, they were the worst sort of bullies. One day, James Potter used a spell to hoist your father up in the air, upside down ... and Severus was not wearing trousers beneath his robes. Everyone in the vicinity, including Lily, was treated to the sight of his underpants."

"Oh, my gods. How cruel," Abigail whispered. She could only imagine the crushing embarrassment and impotent rage her father must have felt. "And Teddy's father was involved in this?" It didn't sound possible; she had only heard the best of things about Remus Lupin...teacher, friend, husband, father ... hero.

"Not actively, no," Eileen replied. "But he didn't do anything to stop it, either. You know of Remus' ... affliction. He *needed* James and Sirius. He was willing to look the other way in order to not risk their friendship."

Abigail was horrified for her father's sake. She could only imagine the humiliation he must have felt, to have been exposed in such a way in front of the girl he loved.

"That's not the worst of it," Eileen murmured. "They hexed him so that he couldn't move, mocking him the entire time, and then when Severus became angry and spewed out a litany of swearwords, James decided to wash out your father's mouth."

"What did he do?" Abigail asked, her throat tight and vision blurring with unshed tears as she tried to imagine her father...the strongest, bravest, most loving man she knew...at the mercy of some bully's wand.

"*Scourgify*," her grandmother answered flatly.

Abigail gasped in shock. "He could have choked to death!"

"Yes, quite. Lily was outraged and entered right into the fray, demanding that they leave Severus alone. Words were exchanged, as were a few hexes, until Lily finally shouted at them to stop and drew her own wand."

"Oh, no," Abigail breathed. She knew her father very well...his pride would have already been wounded by the mere presence of Lily, but for her to jump to his defence She knew his reaction could not have been good. "What did he do?"

Eileen was silent for a moment, and the suspense was killing Abigail. She leant forward and grasped her grandmother's hand. "What did he do, Gran?"

Black eyes met brown, and Eileen calmly said, "He said that he didn't need help from a filthy little Mudblood."

Abigail's expression crumpled at the hateful words, and the dreaded tears that she had so desperately tried to contain spilled down her cheeks. "No," she said, not believing for a moment that her father would utter that word. "No, he wouldn't ever say such a thing."

"Not now, no. But then" Eileen paused, and Abigail shook her head in denial. "He was a teenage boy, Abigail, who had been taunted and bullied by these same boys repeatedly for years. Lily's words were not alleviating the situation...they were only making it worse. In his shame and anger, Severus uttered the one word he knew would make her stop. And it worked better than he could have imagined."

A new sense of dread washed over Abigail. "Why? What happened?"

"Lily returned his hateful words with ones of her own, and then she turned her back on him ... for good."

"What?" Abigail knew her father; his temper would have cooled almost immediately, and he would have been filled with remorse. "Surely he begged for her forgiveness."

Eileen nodded and replied coolly, "He did...repeatedly...but Lily refused to have anything to do with him. Your father was crushed, and without her friendship and affection, he turned inward, throwing himself fully into the Dark Arts. Whilst Lily became involved with James Potter, your father stupidly decided to join the Death Eaters. When the Potters were targeted by Voldemort to be killed, Severus blamed himself and went to Albus Dumbledore, who was more than happy to use your father's guilt for his own advantage in the war. As you know, it wasn't enough, and Lily died protecting Harry. Your father spent almost two decades as a spy in an effort to earn the forgiveness of a dead woman who had never felt the same depth of emotion for him as he did for her, who had knowingly thrown him to the wolves."

Eileen stopped, her eyes closing as she deeply inhaled in an effort to calm herself. "I'm sorry, Abigail. I'm afraid I don't have much sympathy for Lily Potter, given that she gave up on my son, knowing his history and his ... home life. And all over a word that was spoken in a moment of anger, pride, and desperation. You see, she never did forgive him. Not ever. And your father was unable to forgive himself ... until your mother came along. Her love saved him, and he survived because of her."

Abigail smiled as she wiped the dampness from her cheeks with her fingers, and then her brow furrowed in contemplation. Her grandmother would not have revealed such personal details of her father's history without reason. "Why are you telling me this, Gran?"

Eileen's sharp gaze pierced her. "I am going to ask you a question, and I want you to consider it carefully."

With a shrug, Abigail agreed. "All right."

"I want you to think about Teddy and all that has happened. Now, think of what I just told you about your father and Lily Potter. Tell me, whose part would you have played in that scenario...Severus' or Lily's?"

Abigail didn't have to consider her answer. She confidently replied, "Daddy's, of course."

Eileen stood, the chair scraping lightly against the floor, and then she smiled sadly. "Are you certain of that, dear heart? I think perhaps you need to think about it for a while."

Abigail watched in shock as her grandmother left the kitchen. "What in the world is she talking about?" she muttered petulantly, under her breath. "Over twenty years of unrequited love for your best friend ... I know exactly what that feels like. It's obvious I'm just like Daddy."

Unbidden, the memory of Teddy in Molly Weasley's garden came to mind.

"I love you."

"You aren't forgiven."

Abigail winced as she remembered her words and Teddy's pain-filled eyes. But she had good reason to refuse his apologies! He'd hurt her terribly by leaving her the way he did, by not loving her the way she loved him. He didn't deserve her forgiveness after the way he'd treated her

She groaned and slumped down in her chair, covering her face with her hands. Perhaps she was more like Lily than she cared to believe. Teddy had been her best friend for most of her life, and yet she was holding on to her anger with both hands, lashing out and hurting him for something that wasn't entirely his fault. He couldn't help that he hadn't fallen in love with her, and he'd explained why he had left the way he had. Given the situation, she supposed she could understand his reasoning.

What would she have done, if the situation had been reversed? She tried to imagine it, the confusion and discomfort he must have felt at knowing his best friend had fallen in love with him even as he was engaged to marry someone else.

Now, he had said he loved her. Did he really? Or was he deluding himself in an attempt to win back her affections?

Shaking her head, she dropped her hands in her lap and lifted her gaze to the ceiling as if calling on a higher source for help. Regardless of Teddy's motives, she had to decide who she was going to be. Was she going to be like Lily and refuse to listen, refuse to forgive? Was she really willing to throw away her friendship with Teddy just because he was an idiot and made one stupid mistake...one he seemed desperate to make amends for?

Or would she be like her father and risk her heart once more?

Sitting at her grandmother's kitchen table, Abigail grappled with her roiling emotions until, at last, she came to a decision.

There really wasn't any other choice.

She was her father's daughter.

A/N: Thanks as always to my fabulous beta readers, Subversa and DeeMichelle, and my wonderful Brit picker, LettyBird. I'd also like to thank GinnyW and AnnieTalbot for looking over this chapter and easing my concerns. Part Three is dedicated to MollysSister -- Eileen's appearance is for you, my friend!

*You may have noticed that this is **not** the final chapter. There will be one more.*

Part Four: Resolution

Chapter 4 of 4

Sequel to Living Legacy. Abigail Snape has loved Teddy Lupin for as long as she can remember, but the timing has never been right. Now, it may be too late.

Three days later ...

It was eerily quiet given the number of people present, the silence interrupted only by the sound of the gentle rainfall and the occasional pop of Apparition as the mourners arrived outside the gates.

Teddy's fingers gripped his umbrella tightly as he escorted his grandmother onto Hogwarts' grounds, his steps cautious as his boots caught in the sodden ground. Slowly, they approached the lake and the grouping of chairs that had been set up along the banks, protected from the rain by a large white tent. As they made their way across the grounds, Teddy frowned at his grandmother's unusually quiet demeanour. He knew the day would be difficult for her, not only due to the loss of a family friend, but because it was a reminder of a summer over two decades past when she had attended the funerals of loved one after loved one after loved one.

They continued to walk towards the assemblage of witches and wizards who had already been seated. It was a relatively small group; the Headmistress had not wanted a large memorial service but instead had requested a more intimate affair, with only close friends and their families present. Her health had been failing over the past several years, and so her passing had not been unexpected but upsetting nonetheless.

Teddy and his grandmother took their seats at the far end of a row, leaving empty the chairs to Teddy's left. He sighed and bowed his head, staring at the bit of earth beneath the chair in front of him. It had been three long days since his epiphany regarding Abigail, and he hadn't had a chance to do anything about it. He had been preparing to Apparate to her parents' house to see her when the owl had arrived with the news of the Headmistress' passing. While his heart had ached with the need to go to Abigail and hopefully make things right between them again, he had known that, once again, the timing was all wrong.

Would it ever be right? Or were they destined to tiptoe around each other for the rest of their lives? The thought sent a spasm of pain through his body, spreading from its centre of origin, the space that resided over his heart, to the ends of his fingers and toes.

Suddenly, as if he were metal drawn to a magnet, he lifted his head, turned to look over his shoulder ... and there ~~he~~ was, walking alongside her grandmother as they walked behind her parents across the grounds. He only saw her for an instant before they turned to walk towards the tent, her position behind her father hiding her from his view. Teddy had been concerned about the family that had always welcomed him into their home. While he and Abigail had known Minerva McGonagall as headmistress and a family friend, to Severus and Hermione Snape, she had been much more: a teacher, a colleague ... a friend. Their grief had to be profound.

He watched as they slowly approached and frowned as he noticed his Aunt Hermione clinging to Severus' arm like a lifeline, her lips pursed tightly in an effort to maintain her composure. Her ever-present warm smile and sparkling eyes were noticeably absent; Teddy had never seen her so upset. Even more troubling was Severus' visible dependence on his hated walking stick; he was leaning on it heavily, a clear indication of his own distress. This was particularly disconcerting to Teddy, as Severus rarely displayed an excess of emotion.

Finally, Abigail moved into his line of sight. Teddy sucked in a gulp of air; he hadn't realised he'd been holding his breath. His eyes greedily raked over her, taking in the way her lower lip trembled as she observed her parents with worried eyes. He wanted to rush to her, to pull her into his arms and offer comfort.

And then, as if she sensed his gaze, she turned her head, and their eyes met.

If they had been characters in a novel, the rest of the world would have fallen away, leaving only the two of them as they stared into each other's eyes, wordlessly seeking and offering forgiveness, until finally the heroine would race to the open arms of the hero. He would clasp her to him tightly, then his lips would meet hers, and all would be

well.

But this wasn't a novel; this was reality.

Instead of rushing into his waiting arms, Abigail's step faltered, and her brow furrowed as her eyes remained locked with his. Teddy's heartbeat echoed in his ears as she and her parents approached with painstaking slowness.

"Shall we sit with Andromeda and Teddy?" he heard Hermione ask Severus quietly as she paused at the end of the row in which he and his grandmother were seated.

Teddy's heart was in his throat as he awaited Abigail's reaction, silently pleading with her to sit with him, to have forgiven him. He had no reason to expect that she had changed her mind since their last meeting, but if she had ... if she was willing to give him another chance He had never wished so hard for anything in his life as he did in that moment, hoping against hope that Abigail would extend an olive branch by taking the vacant seat next to him.

"No," Abigail murmured as she tore her eyes from his and stared resolutely at the middle of her father's back. "Let's sit somewhere else."

Eileen frowned and arched an eyebrow; Teddy had the insane thought that she was looking at her granddaughter in disapproval. Severus and Hermione cast each other a concerned glance and then turned questioning looks to Abigail, but she simply shook her head. Hermione looked as if she might protest, but then she nodded and allowed Severus to lead them to the opposite side of the aisle.

Teddy felt the rejection as a physical blow. He fought against the roiling in his stomach, willing himself to not to be sick and reminding his lungs take in air. He knew Abigail Snape better than he knew anyone...if she were ever going to forgive him, she would have already come to that conclusion. It was clear to him now that he had damaged their friendship beyond repair and with it, the hope of something more. Grief overtook him, and his mind chanted in an endless refrain, *It's over, it's over, it's over.*

Damn it all.

It was over.

Abigail had followed her grandmother and parents into the empty row and then taken the aisle seat next to her mother. Her back was ramrod straight, and she resolutely faced forwards, her eyes on the Ministry official who had begun the funeral service. When her hands began to shake, she curled her fingers into her palms, her nails carving half-moons into her skin.

Her heart had dropped to her shoes when her mother had asked if they should sit with Teddy and his grandmother. There had been a time when Abigail would have leapt at the opportunity to sit with him, to allow him to hold her hand or wrap an arm around her shoulders so that she could draw strength from his comfort...but once again, the timing was all wrong.

She hoped that the right time would present itself soon, because despite everything, she had missed their friendship terribly, and she was desperate to attempt to salvage even the smallest part of their relationship. A part of her wanted nothing more than to drag Teddy off to somewhere private where they could talk things through. It was taking all of her strength to remain seated and not rush to his side that very moment. But this wasn't the proper place or time for such things...she needed to be with her family, and sitting next to Teddy would have automatically shifted her focus to him.

Oh, who was she kidding? She might as well have been sitting in his lap, her thoughts were so centred on him. She could easily imagine his pained expression when she had refused to sit with him. All she had accomplished was to hurt Teddy even more than she had already done...and it was killing her.

She bit the inside of her cheek and fought the compulsion to look in his direction, but she was helpless against the temptation. He was so near, and she had not seen him in so long

She moved only her eyes until she could just barely catch of a glimpse of him, and then she immediately stifled a gasp, quickly returning her gaze to the Ministry official. When she had seen him when they had first arrived, she had been so caught up in his gaze that she hadn't noticed anything other than the fact that he was actually there. Now however, she couldn't help but see the disturbing changes to his appearance. What on earth had happened to Teddy? Unable to resist another peek, she glanced at him from the corners of her eyes for as long as she dared.

Teddy's vibrant hair, which had always entranced her, was the same dull brown it had been when she had last seen him in the Weasleys' garden, and his usual open, friendly expression appeared to be as lifeless as his hair. His eyes, which had always been filled with good-humour, were downcast, seemingly focussed on the ground under the chair in front of him, and his mouth was set in a frown. It felt wrong that Teddy should look so unlike himself. He looked ... defeated.

Abigail was so busy taking stock of the changes in Teddy's appearance that she allowed her gaze to linger a few moments too long; the next thing she knew, she was staring directly into his tortured eyes.

She looked away, unable to withstand the sorrow and grief that emanated from Teddy in waves. His expression had been so bleak, so empty. And yet he had seemed resigned, as if accepting his fate.

Her heart broke for him, and the desire to go to him gripped at her chest, becoming almost as vital to her as breathing. She shook her head; this wasn't the time to be thinking of Teddy. Her family needed her, and she was *supposed* to be there to honour her former headmistress. What sort of person was she, to be mooning over Teddy Lupin, when she ought to be thinking of her parents and remembering the tenacious and powerful witch whom she had known since infancy?

A warm hand found hers and squeezed, and Abigail looked up into her mother's tear-streaked face. Hermione tilted her head to the side and then reached out with her free hand to tuck an errant curl behind Abigail's ear. "Go to him."

"Mum?"

Hermione nodded and whispered, "When the service is over, *go to him* ... before it's too late."

It was a sunny afternoon near Ottery St Catchpole, the warmth a welcome change from the gloomy, rainy morning they had spent in Scotland. The former Order members and their families had been invited to lunch at the Burrow after the funeral service. The small house was now filled to bursting, and the back garden was teeming with children and young witches and wizards. Their laughter as they enjoyed the sunny afternoon echoed through the countryside.

Inside the Burrow, however, the atmosphere was unusually sombre. Teddy was accustomed to the loud and boisterous household; he'd spent as much time in the Weasley home when he was growing up as he had at the Snapes'. The quiet murmurs and subdued faces seemed unnatural, and it was making Teddy more uneasy than he already was.

Wishing to be alone, he had ensconced himself in a dark corner of the sitting room where he could watch and listen to the others with ease.

All right, so he was hiding, but he had no desire to talk to anyone at the moment. He would much rather have gone home and wallowed in solitude, but his grandmother had insisted he escort her to lunch at the Weasleys' and had refused to take no for an answer. And so it was that he sat in the corner, hidden away from view, as he attempted to keep his mind off a certain dark-haired witch.

He almost smiled as he heard the familiar sound of Molly Weasley bustling about the kitchen, fussing at her daughter and four daughters-in-law as they attempted to help her with the final touches for the afternoon meal. After a few minutes, the younger witches streamed from the kitchen, shaking their heads at Molly's insistence that she

finish things up herself.

Teddy's hiding spot, unfortunately, didn't go unnoticed, and before long, the five women had Summoned chairs and encircled him...there would be no escape. The women didn't appear to be put off in the slightest by his disinterest in their attempts at conversation, even though his responses to their queries bordered on rude.

"Are you home for good, Teddy?" asked Aunt Ginny.

Teddy shrugged. He didn't want to think about that right now.

"Are you seeing anyone?" asked Aunt Mandy.

I wish. "No."

"What a handsome boy you 'ave become," commented Aunt Fleur.

He shifted in his seat. "Erm ... thank you."

"Did you enjoy working with the dragons?" asked Aunt Penny.

"Yes." He truly had enjoyed his work...when he hadn't been missing Abigail.

"Have you come across any Capellorks recently?"

Everyone turned to stare at Luna Lovegood Weasley, but her protuberant grey eyes were directed solely at Teddy; her typical dreamy expression was conspicuously absent, replaced by a seriousness he had never before seen in the eccentric witch.

"I ... I don't know."

She nodded and then tilted her head to one side. "I see. I think if you had encountered one, you would know it...they're quite large and intimidating. I only asked because of your hair. I thought a Capellork might have frightened the colour right out ... but perhaps you're merely sad."

And with that pronouncement, she stood to her feet. "I think I'll go find George and Freddy and make sure they aren't up to too much mischief." She walked away to look for her husband and son, happily humming off-tune.

The resulting silence was uncomfortable, and soon, the remaining witches decided they had best check on their children, as well. Teddy breathed a sigh of relief at having been left alone ... finally.

He closed his eyes and rested his head on the wall behind him, hoping that his grandmother would not wish to spend the entire day at the Burrow. He felt guilty even before he finished the thought. His grandmother was mourning the loss of her friend, and he selfishly wanted her to "hurry up" so he could go home and sulk. He was certainly turning into quite the prat.

Disgusted by his own behaviour, he left his hiding place with newfound determination and walked over to the grouping of men on the far side of the room. He took a seat next to his godfather and spent the next half hour listening attentively as the wizards shared their memories of the late headmistress.

He had finally relaxed enough to enjoy listening to men's reminiscences when he felt a warm, familiar hand upon his shoulder. Every muscle in his body tensed when Abigail's hair brushed against his cheek as she leant down to whisper in his ear.

"May I speak with you in private, please?"

Teddy closed his eyes. What more could there possibly be to say? She was never going to forgive him...she had made that perfectly clear earlier that morning...so what was the point?

Suddenly, he heard his grandmother's words clearly in his mind: *"If your father were here today, he would tell you to stop being such an arse. He would tell you that time is too precious, life too short. He would tell you that when you find love, you must grab it with both hands and never let go. Don't waste a single moment."*

So much time had already been lost between them, and Teddy knew he could not allow this moment to be wasted, as well. He would apologise once again...for the *right* things this time...and hope for the best. He didn't expect her to forgive him or to return his feelings any longer, but perhaps some part of their friendship could be salvaged...and it would be enough. It would have to be enough.

He nodded and rose to his feet, only to suck in a breath when Abigail slipped her hand into his and silently led him from the room. Like a love struck puppy, he followed her out of the house and onto the familiar path that led to Molly Weasley's flower garden.

From the kitchen window, three witches stood and watched as Abigail led Teddy away from the house.

"Those two could have taught Shakespeare a lesson on how bumpy the course of true love is," muttered Andromeda, craning her head to catch the last glimpse of the young couple.

Eileen laughed, her dark eyes sparkling with triumph. "They've been dancing around each other for years. About time they did something about it. Speaking of which, I do believe you owe me ten Galleons, Andromeda...Abigail made the first move."

Andromeda huffed even as she waved her wand to Summon her bag. "Teddy was well on his way. He would have beaten her to the punch if Minnie would have held on a few more days."

Hermione gasped, her eyes widening in shock. "Andromeda!"

"Well it's true." She sniffed. "She would have been the first to say it, too...she had twenty Galleons on Teddy."

Hermione shook her head and turned back to face the window, but Teddy and Abigail were already out of sight. "Thank Merlin this is finally over."

"What's finally over?"

The three witches jumped in unison at the sound of Severus' voice and then spun around, presenting a trio of innocent faces to the wizard who had entered the kitchen. His arms were crossed over his chest, an expectant gleam in eyes. "I believe I asked a simple question. I do not wish to repeat it."

"Speak up, darling," Eileen quipped. "I'm an old witch...my hearing isn't what it once was."

"Oh, really?" Severus replied stoically. "I'll remember that the next time you come to visit. Hermione and I won't feel the need to curb our regular nocturnal activities."

"Severus!" Hermione gasped, her cheeks turning bright red.

He waved a dismissive hand. "We do have two children, my dear. Only one of them was conceived the old fashioned way. The other was a direct result of 'nocturnal activities.' I believe you can rest assured that she, and the rest of the world for that matter, is entirely aware that we engage in...."

"Severus!" Hermione repeated, but now her tone was stern. "I do believe that is quite enough on that subject."

He smirked. "Yes, dear. Now answer my question. What is finally over?"

Hermione stepped forward and placed a hand on her husband's forearm. "You may not be pleased about this, but try to remember that this is what Abigail wants, and you want her to be happy. All right?"

Severus' eyes narrowed. "Why do I suddenly have the feeling I am not going to be pleased with the answer to my query?"

"Because you're a very observant wizard," Andromeda offered helpfully, her expression utterly guileless.

He pinched the bridge of his nose between his thumb and forefinger. "She cracked, didn't she?"

"Yes." The three witches answered in unison.

Sighing, Severus reached into his robes and pulled out a small pouch. He opened it up and then pulled out several coins before stepping forward. "Fifty for you," he said to his mother, placing the Galleons into her palm.

Eileen nodded as her fingers curled around the heavy coins. "Thank you."

Severus scowled.

Andromeda's expression was smug as she held out her hand. "And Fifty for you," Severus muttered, pressing the coins into her hand.

"Wait a minute," Hermione said, simultaneously irate and puzzled. "You bet on our daughter's love life? And why on earth are you paying both of them?" She pointed in the general direction of the older witches.

Severus grimaced. "Isn't it obvious? I lost a bet."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Yes, I get that. But Andromeda thought Teddy would give in first, while Eileen had her money on Abigail."

Severus grumbled under his breath and then strode out of the room.

Hermione blinked and then looked to the other two women. "What was that all about?"

Eileen grinned. "Last year, he overheard us discussing the situation. He informed us, and I quote, "Abigail has more sense than to tie herself to that blue-haired Casanova.' We told him he was wrong, he disagreed, so we asked him to put his money where his mouth is."

"It worked quite well for us. You see no matter which of our 'star-crossed lovers' came to their senses first, Eileen and I came out ahead in the end," Andromeda added with a satisfied smile as she pocketed her fifty Galleons.

And then the room exploded in laughter.

Abigail fervently hoped that Teddy did not notice the dampness coating her palm or feel the pounding of her blood through her veins as she pulled him toward their destination. It seemed fitting that they have this conversation...the one that would determine if their futures lay together or apart...in this particular garden. Whilst their previous encounters in the garden had ended poorly, Abigail could only hope that this one would be different.

Swallowing her nervousness, she continued down the path until finally they arrived and came to a stop deep in the flower garden, in the midst of the colourful blooms. Reluctantly, she dropped Teddy's hand, her fingers lingering as she released him, and then she turned, slowly lifting her eyes to his.

Her brow furrowed in concern as she once again took in his appearance. "You look dreadful," she whispered before she could stop herself. Her cheeks flushed pink and her eyes closed in mortification at her blunder. "I'm sorry..."

"Don't be," Teddy interjected wearily as he raked a hand through his hair, ruffling it even more. "I look like something the Kneazle dragged in, and I know it. It's ... ah ... it's been a long month."

Abigail nodded and released a slow breath from between her lips. "Yes, it has."

Teddy turned his body away from her and rubbed the back of his neck with a palm. "Yeah."

They stood in uncomfortable silence for several minutes, neither able to look at the other. Now that they were alone, Abigail didn't know what to say. She needed to apologise as well as forgive, but she was at a loss as to where to begin. She took a deep breath to steady her nerves and prepared to say whatever came to mind, just as Teddy moved to face her.

"Teddy..."

"I need to..."

One corner of her mouth lifted in a small smile. Curious as to what he had to say...and still unsure of her own words...she said, "Please, go ahead."

He nodded and looked at the ground, his head lowered. After a few moments, he raised his gaze to hers and held out his hands, palms up. "I need to apologise, Abby," he said in a strangled voice. "I was wrong to leave the way I did. After all the years of friendship we shared, you deserved more than that. But I'm not just sorry for that...I feel horrible for how I approached you at Ben and Victoire's wedding. It was stupid and egotistical of me to expect you to welcome me back with open arms. I've made a lot of mistakes. A lot of them. And to be honest, I don't know what to do to even begin to make things up to you. When I think of all the years of pain I've caused you, it kills me." His voice broke, and his eyes closed briefly, as he visibly struggled to maintain his composure.

Abigail couldn't stand to seem him so distressed. "Stop blaming yourself for that, Teddy. You couldn't have done anything," she whispered. "You didn't know that I loved you."

He winced and looked away.

"Teddy?"

"I...I deserve that. I do. I just ... I'd hoped that maybe we could ... Maybe we can't. But I have to try."

Abigail was utterly confused; he was talking in circles, and she was having a difficult time making sense of his train of thought. "What are you talking about?"

Slowly, he turned to face her again, his expression bleak but earnest. "I can think of a million reasons why I want you with me, but I can also think of a million reasons of

why you should never forgive me. I know it's too little, too late, but you're my best friend, and I miss you. Abby, please. If there's anything, anything at all, that will make you love me again or ... or at least forgive me ... if there's anything I can do to salvage our friendship, I'll do it. Whatever it is, I swear I'll do it. Just ... I know I've been a terrible friend to you the last year or so. Maybe I've always been a bad friend, I don't know. I'm ..."

He was still rambling, but Abigail was hanging on his every word, hope beginning to unfurl in her heart like a sail in the wind.

"... I'm lost without you, Abby. You're everything ... *everything* to me. I just didn't realise it until I pushed you away. I told you the truth the last time we were here. I love you. I've probably always loved you. I'm just an idiot, and I'm not making any sense, I know. But you have to know. You have to *know*."

His hands were clenched into fists at his sides, and he held himself so rigidly, Abigail marvelled that he remained upright.

"I don't deserve you...you deserve better than me...but if there is anything the last few weeks have taught me, it's that I'm a selfish bastard. I love you, Abby, and if you can give me another chance, I swear I'll make it up to you somehow. Please. I know you don't love me anymore, and I'm okay with that ... sort of ... but I need you even if it's only as a friend. Can't we start over? That would work, wouldn't it? If we just started over and..."

"No," Abigail interrupted. For once, she didn't mind the tears that filled her eyes.

Teddy's face fell, and he nodded. "That's nothing less than what I deserve. I won't bother you again..."

"I don't want to start over, you git," she interrupted. A smile slowly began to emerge. "I want to move forward ... with you."

Teddy remained still for a moment, staring at her as if she had grown a second head, and then in the blink of an eye, his hair turned to the brightest turquoise she had ever seen, and his entire face seemed to light up.

"Abby!" he breathed as he stepped toward her, his arms outstretched.

She launched herself at him, her arms wrapping around his neck as he caught her about the waist, lifting her up until her toes no longer touched the ground. She wept against his neck, tears of relief and joy, and revelled in the feel of him beneath her hands. He gripped her tightly to him, one hand moving up until he threaded his fingers in her hair. Fervent kisses were pressed to the top of her head, and she could hear him whispering over and over, "I'm sorry. I'm sorry."

"Oh, Teddy," she choked. "I'm sorry, too."

He pulled back slightly so that he could see her face, the corners of his mouth turning downward into a frown. "What do you have to be sorry for?"

"I was terrible to you the last time we spoke," she explained sorrowfully. "I was so angry at you for not loving me back the way I wanted, and that was unfair of me. Watching you with Victoire for so long, only for you to leave just when it seemed there might be a chance for us" She closed her eyes, and a tear slipped down her cheek at the remembered pain. "I wanted to hurt you, and so I did. It was awful of me. So you see, I must ask your forgiveness, as well. Not only did I hurt you purposefully, I kept my true feelings from you for years, and it was that decision which led to all of this. I'm so sorry, Teddy. So very, very sorry."

He pulled her back into his arms. "There's nothing to forgive. It doesn't matter now, because I do love you. I love you so much."

Abigail couldn't help it; she began to laugh in unrestrained joy.

Teddy began to laugh, as well, releasing her so that he could grasp her face between his palms. He looked at her intently, his eyes sparkling with happiness and a few tears of his own.

She felt her breath catch in her throat, her laughter immediately quieting as she saw the look in his eyes...love, adoration, devotion, passion. All of it was right there ... and it was all for her.

"Abby. My Abby," he murmured, and then he lowered his head until his mouth was a whispered breath away from hers. "I love you."

And then he closed the distance.

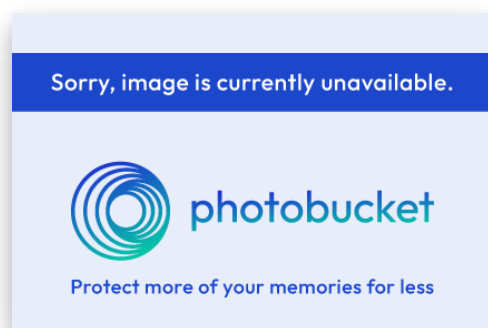
They stood, kissing in Molly Weasley's garden, the air heavy with jasmine and lavender, and Abigail had never felt anything so right in her entire life. She had dreamed of this moment for years, had lain in her bed at night and wondered how it would feel to be kissed by Teddy. Her imagination had not even come close. It was amazing, wonderful, all-consuming. The air she breathed was permeated with his familiar scent, but now it was mixed with desire and pleasure and love and all those secret things that had been discussed in whispered tones in the girls' dormitories at Hogwarts that Abigail had yearned to know but had never experienced.

Greedily, she clutched the front of his robes, then delved inside, memorising the feel of him beneath her fingers. He had held her in his arms countless times, and she had relished every moment, committing them to memory, but this ... *this* was more than just comfort or friendship or silliness: this was a lovers' embrace.

His tongue slipped between her lips to tangle with her own, and her knees buckled at the sheer intensity of her emotions. Teddy smiled against her mouth and then rested his forehead against her own, his breath mingling with hers as they gazed into each other's eyes.

There was still much to be said, and trust to rebuild, but she knew they could do it. Against all odds, they had found their way back to each other, and there was nothing on earth that would part them now.

She'd seen it in his eyes.



A/N: Thank you, as always, to DeeMichelle and Subversa for beta reading and to LettyBird for Brit picking. I adore you all!

The lovely artwork is by the fabulous Camillo. Thank you so much!

I hope you enjoyed the conclusion!