

Daisies

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Shameless Remus/Tonks fluff!

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1 - Daisies

There were too many ghosts here. Across the lake the impenetrable darkness of the Forbidden Forest swayed and whispered in the wind and he could not help but remember how things had once been. The agony of changing, the crash and thunder of the hooves and paws that ran beside him, the bright light of the moon high above. Wild, reckless nights where the savagery within him was tempered by friendship and acceptance, when even waking at dawn bloodied and exhausted had seemed more like an adventure than a curse. James was gone, Sirius was gone and by Merlin he swore that Peter Pettigrew would join them if they ever had the misfortune to meet again. Exhaling sharply Remus Lupin felt the unfamiliar burn of tears threatening to spill and rubbed them away roughly. Self pity was not an a luxury he could afford, fighting the beast inside himself once a month was hard enough; collapsing into a snivelling wreck was not going to help anyone.

Tonks watched the dishevelled figure beside the lake for a long time before mustering the courage to approach him. Pacing around the small eccentrically furnished room in the west tower that had been allocated her, she had noticed Lupins' slim frame disappearing into the woodland and wander down towards the lake. She could understand Remus' reasons for wanting to be alone; Merlin knows she had manufactured enough excuses in the past weeks in order to avoid the well meaning concern of her family, the sympathetic looks and whispers cast her way at work. Did Remus have friends outside the order concerned with his welfare? Was there a mother and father somewhere that despaired of his shabby appearance, his too thin frame? He had never mentioned his parents in their few conversations, but then they had never really spoken of much beyond the Order at all.

He and Sirius had been close, that much she knew. In the occasional meetings she had been summoned to at Grimmauld place they had made a disconcerting distraction to the matters at hand - not that she ever needed to find an excuse to let her attention wander, as Mad Eye constantly reminded her. Sirius had been volatile and outspoken; trapped in his ancestral home he had seemed unable to keep still, pacing around the rooms in a manner that reminded her of the one miserable time she had been persuaded to visit a muggle zoo. Azkaban had been purgatory for him, but sometimes she wondered if his parents' house had perhaps been worse.

In contrast Remus Lupins' presence had always been calming, both to Sirius and the rest of the Order. At first she had suppressed giggles at the way Molly Weasley would twitch in his presence; obviously longing for a chance to mend his ragged robes or tidy the shaggy brown hair. Over time she had grown to deeply respect him., there was a quiet intelligence in his eyes, a slump in his shoulders that spoke of hardship and weariness that made him easy to talk to. As the youngest of the order Tonks sometimes felt a little overwhelmed by those she fought beside; an Auror she may have been, but there were those who dismissed her as a mere girl by her youth and unconventional appearance. Remus had never made this assumption, listening to her with the same steady concentration he gave to any of the others and asking her opinion as though it mattered to him.

It was not right that he should sit there all alone.

Suddenly determined Tonks snatched up her cloak and unlatched the door. Slipping outside the cool air ruffled her hair and blew her cloak around her knees, almost causing her to fall. Swearing softly to herself she crossed the impeccably kept lawn and started down the steps leading to the lake, any attempt at stealth foiled by the crunch of woodchips beneath her feet and the crash of a startled deer fleeing through the undergrowth. Carelessly stepping on a dead branch that had fallen across the woodland path she winced at the loud crack that echoed through the trees when it gave way.

“How on earth did you manage to pass stealth and tracking in your exams?” Remus' voice was amused, but he did not look around at the young woman behind him.

“Got lucky I reckon.” Biting her lip Tonks stood at the edge of the forest and wondered if she had made a mistake in coming down the lake. “I think the invigilator was still a bit deaf from the combat tests the day before.”

“Ah.” Shrugging the shabby cloak from his shoulders he laid it out beside him. “You've come to watch the sunset?”

The sunset. For the first time she noticed the blaze of the sun slinking behind the mountains, the riotous colours reflected in the water. Crossing the distance between them she sat down, curling her arms around her knees. For a long time they sat in silence watching the lake gleam gold in the dying light, the occasional splash and ripple of the water. The trees rustled and sighed behind them but he did not speak and she could not think of anything to say.

Quiet reflection was not a natural state for Tonks. Watching Remus' breath mingle with hers in the cooling air she wished she found it that easy to converse with him; he had not looked at her, had not really acknowledged her presence since she had sat down. Suddenly uncomfortable at how much that bothered her she tucked her legs beneath her and searched for something to distract her attention. Picking a few half closed flowers from the grass beside her she brushed a finger over the silky petals.

“Daisies?”

Tonks looked up startled, the little white flowers she had plucked from the grass beside her momentarily forgotten.

“You like daisies?” Remus nodded towards blooms that had fallen into her lap. “I would have thought you'd prefer something a little brighter.” Retrieving a flower from his cloak he offered it to her with a wry smile.

“Daisies are fine.” Reaching out to take it Tonks felt his fingers brush against hers and there it was.

The spark.

For one brief second they stared at each other incredulously, before Remus snatched his hand away as though she'd burnt him. Shifting away from her a little, the lake once again seemed to become a source of endless fascination.

Tonks blinked stupidly at the daisy in her hand, *this was not part of the plan, this was not why she had*

come down here. The silence between them seemed to grow heavier as each second passed, unable to bear it any longer Tonks hunted for something to say.

“The thing about daisies is that they're everywhere, I mean even by muggle roads and poking through concrete.” Realising that she was babbling she slowed down a little, “you don't notice them until you look for them and then there they are.” Embarrassed she fiddled with her robes. “I dunno it's just nice to think that there can be beautiful things amongst the ugliness.”

“Hope amongst the darkness?” Finally turning to look at her he gave a sad smile, his amber eyes gleaming with something she did not dare to identify.

“Something like that,” she mumbled, “only a bit less poetic.”

“We have Dumbeldore, we have Harry,” *and we have you* he thought silently

“I don't think Harry would like to be compared to a flower, teenagers are a bit funny like that.” Smiling she looked out over the lake, her indigo hair whipping around her face and obscuring her expression. “Dumbledore might be flattered though...”

“I don't doubt it.” Glancing at her surreptitiously he watched her flick her hair irritably away from her eyes, the dark strands a sharp contrast to her pale skin.

“It's going to get worse isn't it,” she asked quietly. “It won't be long before everything changes.”

“I don't know,” he replied honestly. “I don't know what to think any more.”

“Are you scared?”

“Sometimes.” Finally looking at her properly he attempted a smile, “Voldemort fell from power once - all we have to do is make sure history repeats itself.”

“He came back though.” Dropping her eyes Tonks realised she had squashed the flower she had been holding beyond all recognition. Picking the petals out from between her fingers she swallowed nervously.

“Do you miss Sirius?”

“He was my brother,” Remus said simply.

“Do you ever...” glancing across at him her voice faltered. The fading light had hollowed his cheeks and shadowed his eyes, for the first time she noticed how tired he looked.

“Sirius was never one to run from danger.” Rubbing a hand through his greying hair his voice softened as he looked at the young woman beside him. “There was nothing you or I could have done to keep him from fighting that night.”

“Doesn't stop you wondering though.” Reaching out her hand she let her fingers trail down his stubbled cheek and brush across his lower lip. He sighed and reached up a hand to grip her wrist, and for a

moment she thought he meant to push her away. Instead Tonks found herself pulled roughly against him, his mouth hot and urgent against hers. This was not like the fumbling kisses she had shared with boys her own age; this was hot and sweet and...*right*.

In the depths of the great lake the giant squid lifted a languid tentacle and let it drop with a noisy splash, startling them both. Grabbing his wand at the sudden sound Remus pushed Tonks backwards with his free hand, his eyes searching their surroundings for Death Eaters.

"Don't need that chivalry rubbish." Having wriggled out of his reach she watched as the creature disappeared beneath the water and shook her wand at him reproachfully, "I'm an Auror remember, we don't panic every time the squid makes a noise."

"Forgive me."

Great one Nymphadora. Watching as Lupin stood she reluctantly accepted his proffered hand and let him haul her to her feet.

"It's getting cold."

"Yeah."

For a moment their hands remained clasped and she could have sworn he was going to pull her closer.

"Best we get back." Turning back towards the school he made his way up the pathway with far more grace than she had descended it. Watching the retreating figure Tonks resisted the urge to hex herself, why couldn't diplomacy have been part of her training? With a noisy splash behind her the squid surfaced once again, its tentacles waving like a strange plant in the middle of the lake. *And you can shut up as well* she thought viciously before heading back towards Hogwarts.