A Fitting Memorial

by h_vic

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Author's Notes: Written for KerneyHead for the Clever_claws exchange on LJ.

9 May 1998

Michael Corner stood in the heavy, spring rain, just as he had been for the past ten minutes. It wasn't that he had nowhere to go, or even that he didn't want to go there exactly; he just couldn't make himself take those final few steps across the road, dodging headlights, and through the inconspicuous doorway.

It had been easy to agree two days ago, when they were all together and they had bemoaned the formalised ceremony of commemoration for the fallen as too starchy and not what their friends would have wanted at all. It had been easy then to agree that the battered remnants of the DA should certainly raise a glass in the Leaky Cauldron to the memory of those they'd lost. A Saturday had made sense, when there were no demands on the next morning, should a glass turn into many, and to be together to mark the end of the first week since the world changed had felt that it ought to be right.

Now it felt wrong, or rather, now Michael wasn't sure if he could face it. It wasn't the visible signs of war that he dreaded seeing the bandages swathing Lavender's cheek, George's missing ear, Ernie's limp, or even the gauze patch across his own left eye although those were difficult enough; no, it was those that weren't now visible that he wasn't sure how to accept the spaces he knew would lurk where people should be.

Michael sighed, and shoved back his dripping hair from his forehead. He knew he couldn't leave another gap; he'd have to go in, there were no two ways about it. Perhaps he may even feel a little better after a Firewhisky or two he'd certainly be a little warmer.

A pub should be a riot of noise on a Saturday night, but as he pushed open the door, all that greeted him was a funereal murmur. The pub was mostly empty. Apart from the much depleted DA and Tom, the barman, of course, only a single hag and a scruffy-looking wizard with suspiciously lumpy robes were present, but their being there, Michael knew, was really only a distraction. Their existence did not matter to him one way or the other after all, and making a mental note of their presence only allowed him to the delay the inevitable a moment longer.

Nearest to the door were the Hufflepuffs. Ernie stooped as much as an old man even when seated, and a crutch rested beside his chair. Susan hovered like an anxious nurse behind him, her face the stoically resolute mask of someone who doesn't wish to feel anything more, and a red-eyed Hannah sat beside them in stilted conversation with Zacharias, who rather looked as if he'd be prefer to be anywhere but there (Michael could certainly sympathise with that feeling). An empty chair sat beside them, almost as if by malignant design of fate just to draw attention to the absence of Justin, who would not sit with them ever again. Michael's fingers tightened convulsively on the doorframe and he fought the urge to bolt, forcing down the sharp bile rising in his throat.

Standing by the fireplace were Katie Bell, her arm comfortingly around the shoulder of her teammate, Alicia, as they spoke in muted tones to Angelina and an uncharacteristically dour-looking Lee. With them, in body at least, was George Weasley, although he seemed to shrink from human contact or connection no matter how much they sought to include him and seemed to have placed himself a couple of feet clear of that circle, even if they had all angled their bodies towards him.

Ron and Ginny were clearly keeping a wary eye on him too from where they stood with Harry and Hermione.

Just behind them, as he would, Neville appeared to have taken it upon himself to babysit those who would have no natural support network present and was clearly attempting to distract Dennis and Cho from darker thoughts, whilst Luna stared through them all in dreamy silence.

Within touching distance of Neville, who clearly and understandably had not wanted to stray too far from his own support, were the seated cluster of Dean, Lavender, Parvati and Padma (Seamus' absence wasn't quite as difficult to face as he at least was alive, even if he wasn't yet fit to be discharged from St Mungo's). Padma though kept shooting desperate glances across to the corner of the bar where Michael had avoided looking thus far, and where one of his closest friends stood ... alone.

It brought it home too brutally. Anthony Goldstein should never have had to be in a pub alone; Michael and Terry had promised him that years before, back when they hadn't yet dragged the shy, bookish, young man out of his shell, and before Lisa Turpin had taught all three boys that girls were not an alien species to fear, and when it would have been Anthony's worst nightmare.

Anthony was alone though because Terry was dead, and Lisa was Terry's girl (or should have been given the time that they ought to have had) and took it harder than any of them, and Michael wasn't strong enough to stand and make two-way conversation where there had always been three.

Michael turned, as Anthony caught his eye, and staggered back out of the doorway, the heavy door walloping his heel as he fled into the rain, pausing only long enough to vomit into the gutter before Apparating as far away from them all as he could think to go.

9 May 1999

This year Anthony had frog-marched both Michael and Lisa to the pub when it was suggested that the previous year's gathering should become a tradition, saying it would be good for them. In a way he'd been right, and yet wrong too.

The mood was generally surprisingly light, even if the smiles were a little hollow. Maybe it was the evidence of life carrying on that made the past easier to bear. The girls had delighted over the diamond on Alicia's left hand, and everyone had smiled indulgently when Ron and George had proudly shown them the photo of their first niece for the fifteenth time. At the start of the evening, when he'd wandered around talking to the Gryffindors or the Hufflepuffs, or even when he reminisced with Padma, Michael could focus on the pleasure of reuniting with old friends and forget why they were there, but as the evening wore on, everyone settled comfortably into the old cliques, and Michael found himself stood at the bar with Anthony and Lisa.

It wasn't being around Anthony that was making Michael down one Firewhisky after another. The two boys shared a flat after all, so Michael had grown accustomed to being around his friend without Terry being there. No, it was Lisa. Michael never saw Lisa now.

Anthony would go for a coffee with her every now and then, or even have her over for dinner, but Michael always made sure that he was out on those nights. Something could be relied upon to come up suddenly at work, or he'd have 'already arranged' to play pool with Ernie or there'd be a new exhibition opening at the National Gallery that Padma was 'quite insistent' that they had to see.

It wasn't that Michael disliked Lisa, far from it in fact that was the problem. Michael had a thing for Lisa Turpin; he had for as long as he could remember. It was her gentle, hazel eyes, and the way they crinkled at the corners as she laughed; it was the way that she was only half a head shorter than he, despite his lankiness; it was the way she could talk as easily about Proust as about Arithmancy, and as easily about the latest Bond film as about both; it was the way she'd always lost herself completely when she practised on her flute in the corner of the Tower (and that she played the Muggle instrument at all).

It was that she was Lisa.

But Lisa was Terry's girl, or ought to have been. Lisa had clearly been in love with him, and one day Terry would have woken up and seen that, but Terry was dead, and Lisa loved him, and Michael loved Lisa, and Michael couldn't love his dead friend's girl.

He downed the last, peaty dregs of his drink yet again as Anthony staggered off a little unsteadily towards the toilets, and with a start, Michael realised that he was alone with Lisa, who looked at him a little glazed and said she thought she needed some air. Being the gentleman he liked to consider himself, Michael knew he couldn't let a drunken friend wander out into the London night alone, and so, against his better judgment, he followed her out of the pub.

They walked in silence for a few minutes, although there wasn't really silence, because London's never silent. There was the dull thrum of traffic and the occasional roar of a car passing nearer, the beat of tinny music pouring from the bars they passed that mingled with the incoherent buzz of strangers' drunken conversation, and somewhere in the distance, the hoot of an irritated horn. But there were no words, so Michael viewed it as silence, because surely to a Ravenclaw, words were all that mattered after all.

"Are you avoiding me?" Lisa asked suddenly

Michael stopped abruptly, surprised by her bluntness and the resurrection of speech, and turned to face her. The streetlights turned her blonde hair a dirty orange, and he wondered how he hadn't noticed just how thin she'd become.

"No, I ... Work's just been ... Gringotts is always ... Well, you know how it ..." he stuttered before a sudden flash of bitterness crashed over him that she had forced him to use the job he hated as a shield. He wondered what had possessed him to mention work, when she'd know exactly how much his life had diverged from what he and Terry had planned. He should have lived Terry's dreams for his friend who couldn't, but Michael was too weak for that. Acknowledgement of his failure forced crueller words from him than he had intended. "And anyway it's not like you've been battering down my door."

Lisa flinched a little from his words. "It's not easy seeing you, you know!" She fired back at him angrily. "None of it's easy without him."

"I know," Michael said quietly as she began to cry. Silent tears twisted down her face and she shivered a little as Terry's name hung unvoiced in the air between them. Michael pulled off his jacket and placed it around her shoulders; she barely seemed to notice. His hands slid down to the bare flesh of her arms, and her breath came in a short rush between her teeth. She didn't shake him off; instead she tilted her head, just a little, up towards him, and he realised just how close they were standing.

Under the dirty streetlights in a sordid, anonymous, London street, Michael Corner succumbed to the lure of his grubby, little secret and kissed his dead best friend's girl as she cried.

She tasted of the smoky heat of the Firewhisky they'd drunk, of the sooty air, of need and of the sourness of guilt. As she kissed him back, and as they Apparated to his flat, and as he took what he needed from her (because it wasn't a union of equals but a desperate, selfish snatching at that elusive spark of the reality of here and now and being alive), the discordant refrain still echoed in his head that she was Terry's girl.

9 May 2000

A new millennium had come, and the world hadn't changed, at least not Michael's world, and at least not on the night of the New Year. He'd spent it with Anthony, watching the fireworks over the Thames, and wished he were with Lisa, even if he knew that wasn't what they had and that would have been too obvious, because Anthony couldn't know.

Anthony had known about that first night, of course. How could he not when Lisa had left their flat with tear-stained cheeks the next morning, dishevelled and wearing the previous night's clothes. Anthony had told Michael that he was an idiot, which he knew, and a bastard, which he knew too. So when it happened again, it seemed sensible

not to tell Anthony, at least not until it was clear exactly what *it* was and why it kept happening. Then, when it became clear that*it* was stupid, and painful and bitter, and destroying both him and Lisa, but that they couldn't stop, it definitely seemed sensible not to tell Anthony.

Suddenly though, they had stopped, or perhaps more accurately, Lisa had stopped. Sometime a little over two months previously, he'd turned up at her flat and she'd opened the door with red-rimmed eyes and told him to leave her the fuck alone, and this time she'd meant it. There was weight in the words the way that there'd never been between them. There'd been so few words between them really, because they were Ravenclaws and words meant something, and this had to mean nothing. She was Terry's girl after all.

After that, she wouldn't reply to any way he tried to contact her, and he hadn't seen her since. He knew Anthony must have seen her, and he didn't know what was going on, but Anthony was shutting him out of late and treating him like a pariah.

So here he sat in the Leaky Cauldron once more, but this time not with Anthony and Lisa. They were on the other side of the room in deep conversation, casting the occasional glance his way (Lisa's eyes looked puffy again as if she'd been crying, but at least she wasn't quite so painfully thin anymore he wasn't quite sure though when that change had come about and was aggravated that he cared), which all rather made Michael think they were talking about him, and rather made him angry angry enough to flirt with Lavender Brown and angry enough to take her home.

9 May 2001

The informal memorial had expanded beyond the bounds of the DA; now there were older friends, siblings and a plethora of Weasleys who cared about the friends they'd shared in the loss of and had wanted to come too, and the Leaky Cauldron had proved too small, so a clearing in the woods bordering Hogsmeade served instead, and as they were all a little older and more sensible (or supposed to be), a night of drinking to forget had become a civilised afternoon picnic.

Michael felt all eyes on him as he walked into the clearing, and the stares were not friendly. He'd figured that they all thought him a bastard already so why not play to the role. He wondered briefly though which was the worse crime in their eyes that he'd knocked up and abandoned his dead best friend's girl, or that he'd dared to bring a Slytherin to their morbid, little reunion and he found he didn't care.

"I don't think they're pleased to see me," Daphne Greengrass whispered to him with a wicked smile that suggested she fully intended to delight in confirming all of their prejudices, even though if they cared to find out they'd discover that she wasn't the cardboard stereotype they all loathed on hypocritical principle. In fact, if his life weren't the hideous mess he'd made it into, he thought perhaps she could be the sort of girl he could be happy with, just as Lavender had been.

He'd been happy for a short while with Lavender at least. It had seemed strange somehow to be in a real relationship without secrecy and shame and grief, but strange in a positive way of course. And then the world fell apart again Lisa told him she was pregnant, and Lavender told him that she thought that he didn't need the added complication of her in his life right then, as he came to terms with that. Not that it mattered really since Lisa didn't want him involved, which rather suited him as he wasn't sure he wanted to be involved anyway.

Michael's child had been born in November, and Anthony was there with Lisa at the birth; Michael wasn't, and he hadn't been there since, which suited all concerned, except Anthony, who thought Michael was being a selfish, immature wanker and wasn't adverse to reminding him of that or attempting to persuade him he should see his daughter.

"Don't worry," Michael reassured his date with a bitter smile. "You're not public enemy number one here."

"Shame," Daphne said with a laugh. "Who is then?"

"That would be me."

Interest sparked in her eyes. "Really? You seem like such a nice boy too. Whatever did you do to offend their delicate sensibilities?"

Michael wished hadn't raised the topic. He shook his head. "It doesn't matter," he said. "Just drop it, okay?"

Daphne just laughed, taking his reticence as a challenge. "Let me guess then. Was it...?"

"Michael!"

He was briefly glad of the reprieve until he realised who his rescuer was Anthony. Michael's heart sunk even lower as his eyes raked over the direction in which Anthony had approached, and he spied Lisa sitting under a parasol with a small bundle cradled in her arms.

Anthony came to a stop in front of the pair of them. "Daphne," he acknowledged with a curt nod and turned to Michael before she could respond.

"Michael, Lisa's here. You should come over and meet Cordelia. She's..." Anthony's heart was always in the right place, and it seemed he couldn't understand how Michael could turn his back on the situation he and Lisa had created. It was something Anthony would never do, and so the other boy made excuses for his friend. He seemed to think it was fear, or reluctance to hurt Lisa again, or any number of other understandable reasons that kept Michael away and was convinced that he could overcome them, much to Michael's chagrin.

"No, I don't think that's..." Michael began.

"Don't be an arse," Anthony interrupted.

"I'm not; I just don't..."

"You owe it to both of them, not to mention yourself. They're here so what excuse could you possibly have?"

"Who's Cordelia?" Daphne asked, and Michael wished he hadn't come at all, let alone brought her with him. He wondered how he'd ever thought it might be a good idea, because he certainly didn't want any of this to be happening and surely he ought to have foreseen that it would, Divination NEWT or no Divination NEWT.

"Michael's daughter," Anthony said, and Michael was a little surprised his friend had bothered to acknowledge the Slytherin and wished he hadn't.

"Oh." Daphne's voice was quiet. "So that's what ... I should ... Yes, I think I should probably go."

"Daphne, wait!" Michael managed to croak out but she had already turned to Apparate.

"Was that really necessary?" Michael growled at his so-called friend.

"Grow up, Michael! Don't you get that this isn't all about you? Do it for Lisa at least. She doesn't deserve to be dealing with this on her own." And then Anthony said the only thing that could possibly have made him change his mind, "You owe it to Terry."

Michael wanted to hit him; he wanted to break Anthony's stupid, snotty, little nose, because he was still the same little brat who thought he was better than Michael, and he hated Terry too. He hated Terry for dying and leaving him to get himself in this mess, because if Terry hadn't died, Lisa could still be Terry's girl, and Michael would never have done anything about it because how could he if she were his best friend's girl? And one day, Michael would have stood up beside Terry as Terry married her, and it would have been Terry's child that Lisa would have had. That was the way it should have been, and everything about the way it'd turned out was wrong, but Michael had no will left to fight anymore, so he followed Anthony back to the picnic blanket.

Lisa was seated on the floor with her legs tucked underneath her and her blue skirt a vivid contrast to the grass, even if the shade of the parasol muted the colours.

She didn't say anything as he sat down beside her. Neither of them looked at each other; they both looked to Anthony instead, who nodded, and then he turned and walked away, leaving them to the silence that wasn't really silence because of the shrieks of the youngest Weasleys and the babble of conversation, and the breeze rustling the branches and the baby's soft gurgles.

"Er, should I hold her?" Michael asked awkwardly, and Lisa held the child out towards him.

"Make sure you support her head," she warned him, and that was it - no 'this is your daughter' or 'congratulations, you're a father', but then the moment was probably long past for that. There was no ceremony about it, just a slightly awkward, shuffling exchange of the small burden.

He held his daughter in his arms, and Michael's world didn't change. He'd always thought he'd feel *something*, maybe not some all-conquering love, but at least some connection, a sort of recognition *something* but he felt precisely nothing as he started into the tiny face. It was a baby like any other except that it had Lisa's blonde hair and his grandmother's blue eyes. It was odd that it should have inherited his grandmother's eyes, because that made it look more like Terry than like him, and it was odd that the child should have the eyes of the man who should have been her father.

Michael felt sick to the pit of stomach, and knew he'd fucked up yet again.

"I'm sorry," he said, shoving the baby back into Lisa's arms, and he meant it, for everything, but he knew that wasn't enough and there was no fixing it, any of.

He refused to look back as he walked away to the edge of the clearing and Apparated, because he didn't want her to see the tears burning behind his eyes.

9 May 2002

Michael sat watching as Lavender smiled at the small child on her lap.

"And when we were at school, we all went to a dance." She leaned towards the little girl conspiratorially as she spoke. "And your Uncle Ron wore a dress!"

Victoire laughed, clapping her hands together, and Michael couldn't help the smile that played on his lips. Hermione though was a different matter; she scowled at Lavender instead.

"Oh really, Lavender, don't be so silly. How can she be expected to take Ron seriously when you tell her things like that? Now, Victoire, let's find your mother it's probably time you had a nap anyway." She scooped the child out of Lavender's arms with a censorious look and stalked off in the direction of the large group of Weasleys, leaving Lavender and Michael alone at the picnic table.

Lavender stuck her tongue out at the other woman's retreating back, and Michael finally allowed himself to laugh. "You're good with her, you know," he said, and then cursed himself for a fool.

Lavender smiled too, and Michael thought perhaps he might just escape his inability to engage his brain before his mouth relatively unscathed on this occasion and not venture too close to the constantly rocky territory of the biggest mistake he'd ever made.

"I like being around kids," she replied. "They have such simple expectations, and anyway, they see me and not just this." She gestured vaguely at the livid scars that ran the length of her jaw Greyback's legacy. "I wanted to be a primary school teacher, you know ... before."

He hadn't known that. She hadn't mentioned it in their time together, and he wondered why. She didn't need to specify what she meant by before though, it was written in the air around them, on that day in particular. "Why didn't you?" he asked.

She picked up her wineglass and swirled the stem between her fingers, watching intently as the straw-coloured liquid played against the sides. "I didn't feel like I had any thing to give them any more, I guess. Children need hope and that was something I'd learnt not to rely on. I suppose I just felt like I was too cynical and damaged to have anything to offer."

Michael nodded. He understood all to well. "I think we all lost something," he said softly.

"Terry..."

"I didn't mean Terry." For once he meant it it wasn't about Terry. "My family has a long history of being Gryffindors. Did you know that?"

"No, I didn't."

"I was always the oddity in preferring a book to hanging upside down off a broom. I don't think any of them have ever known what to make of me. My granddad was an Auror, so is my uncle, and my brother-in-law. If I'd have become an Auror, it would have been something familiar to them, something about me they could finally understand." He didn't mention that it had been Terry's dream too, and so it had just seemed easier to agree that it was what he'd wanted.

"Your eye," Lavender said in sudden comprehension. "You couldn't do it because of your eye."

Michael nodded he'd partially lost the sight in one eye during the Battle. That oughtn't to have prevented him (Mad-Eye Moody was proof of that), but it had provided a convenient excuse when he was too much of a coward to tell everyone else that he didn't want to lead their lives (or Terry's for him), just as he was too much of a coward then to take the risks to do anything he actually wanted too with his life and make the most of that opportunity to escape what he hadn't wanted being a Gringotts actuary was hardly anyone's childhood ambition after all, but it was a safe option so he'd taken it believing, if he was honest, that he wasn't worth anything more.

He wondered just how much of his bitter musing had shown on his face, because Lavender opened her mouth as if to speak, closed it again and stared at him for a long moment before she said anything more. When she did speak, she didn't look at him; she stared at her hands, which were tightly clasped in her lap, slim fingers intertwined, and shaking slightly.

"That wasn't the only reason that I didn't teach, I mean. It would just have been too hard to be around children day after day and to know I couldn't ever have one of my own. I... There were several pretty nasty curses I got hit with, and so I can't... I won't ever be able to have children."

"I'm sorry," Michael said and it sounded lame and insufficient, but then he seemed to have heard and said it a lot in recent years and it never fixed anything. Words used mean something to him; he'd thought they had power, but somewhere along the line he'd realised that they were meaningless and worthless and cheap.

Lavender looked up from her lap, and anguish twisted her features. "I'm sorry too," she said, and Michael thought perhaps that made his words even more meaningless because she had nothing to be sorry for. "That's why I left when Lisa told you she was pregnant it would have been too hard to watch you have what I never could."

She looked at him for a very long moment as if weighing up her words carefully. "I know it's not my place, but I think you're stupid to throw that away. I know everyone's probably told you what you owe to Lisa and to the baby, and that's all very noble and important, but you owe it to yourself too to get to know your daughter. You'll regret it if you don't you'll regret the time you've lost and you'll regret the loss of the man I know you want to be, the sort of man I know you are."

Michael said nothing in response, and Lavender faltered. "I'm sorry it's not my place. I should probably..."

She unwound her legs from where they were tucked behind the leg of her chair and stood up to leave, but Michael spoke before she could. "It's too late; it's all too much of a mess. There'd be no fucking point now."

Lavender stopped. "It's never too late," she said gently and then her voice hardened a little, "And just because something's hard doesn't mean you shouldn't do it. The odds weren't in our favour four years ago, but we all still fought because it was the right thing to do."

"Lisa's not just going to forgive me or let me back into their lives," Michael argued.

"Try her," Lavender said. "Fight for her, if that's what you want."

And with that, she walked away.

9 May 2003

Ernie's words washed over Michael unheeded, but Ernie didn't notice so long as Michael nodded occasionally or asked a generic question, which was just as well as Michael's attention was elsewhere. He was watching Lisa of course who was sat talking with Susan and Padma, whilst Cordelia toddled around with a ball nearby. Lisa looked tired, and older, and Michael wondered if she ever played her flute now or talked about Proust. There seemed to be such a distance between her and so many of their friends, who had not yet set aside their carefree days while she had had no choice. As if to punctuate the thought, Katie Bell swooped low over his and Ernie's heads with a whoop of triumph engendered by the impromptu Quidditch game occurring.

As he watched Cordelia play, there was a little knot of what he was beginning to suspect might just be regret in the pit of his stomach, and his conversation of the previous year with Lavender came back to him. He hadn't acted on Lavender's advice out of sight was out of mind after all but being here was making him think more closely about things better left ignored.

Cordelia was chasing the ball in his direction, and he smiled at her. Suddenly though, he became aware of a Bludger heading straight towards her, and his mind froze in horror, his wand on the grass out of his reach and he too far from the child to get to her in time; he lunged towards her on instinct regardless though. As every muscle tensed, he threw himself between his child and the lethal object, and fell short, his face thudding dully into the mud, where he lay, facedown and winded, steeling himself with eyes screwed shut for the hideous crack of young bones breaking. Instead there was blessed silence, and a small hand patted Michael's cheek in a vaguely perplexed fashion. He pushed himself up to a sitting position, gulping in a ragged lungful of air, to find Cordelia staring at him curiously. She seemed utterly unharmed.

Before he could register more than that though, Lisa was on the floor beside him, drawing the child into her arms and crying.

"Thank you," she choked out to him, between sobs and checking Cordelia from all angles for signs of harm.

"But I didn't get there," he protested. "What happened? Who managed to reach her?"

"I think it may have been Cordelia herself," Ernie suggested from where he and Michael had been sitting. "One moment the Bludger was flying towards her, then when it got within a foot or two of her, suddenly it shot off in a totally different direction. I'd guess it was an instinctive, rudimentary Shield Charm."

Lisa smiled a little shakily. "That's the first sign she's shown of being magical," she said, and Michael felt a little glow of warmth, now the buzz of fear was subsiding, at having been there for it. He smiled hesitantly back at Lisa.

"Something similar happened when I was little and my Mum dropped a skillet on my head," Michael said.

Ernie laughed. "Are you sure it didn't make contact?" he asked as he stood to tactfully leave them alone. "It might explain a lot."

Even Lisa managed to laugh.

"I want to be there next time," Michael blurted out, without the words really having taken root in his brain, before the silence could stretch between them. "I want to be able to protect her."

"It not that simple," Lisa said coldly, but she wouldn't meet his eyes. "You can't just waltz in and out of our lives whenever it suits you."

"I know I've been an idiot." Michael's tone was desperate. Something seemed to suggest that this would be the last chance he'd have to make things right.

"Cordelia's not some new gadget to amuse yourself with for a couple of weeks until you get bored."

"I know. Please just give me a chance ..."

9 May 2004

Michael and Lisa sat together on a picnic blanket, whilst Cordelia played with a stuffed hippogriff toy between them. He thought perhaps there was something of himself in the methodical manner in which she moved it about, and he'd come to understand that whilst Lisa might be Terry's girl, Cordelia wasn't she was his, his and Lisa's. If the atmosphere between him and Lisa was a little frosty still, it was cordial at least.

Michael was still only an occasional feature in their lives, but Lisa was gradually allowing herself to trust to his friendship again or so it seemed to him, and that would do, for now.