

Fashionista

Nymphadora Tonks was a clothes-horse.

She had to be, to some extent, given her career as Auror, specialising in concealment (and therefore quite a bit of domestic espionage). Even if she hadn't been a metamorphmagus, however, even if she had been a librarian or a teacher or one of the other position she'd considered, she decided she probably would have been obsessed by clothing.

She had spent her formative years stealing her father's wonderful Muggle shirts: linen dress shirts that were like robes on her, cotton tees to sleep in, flannel button-downs for work around the house once she was older. At the same time she would spend hours helping her mother try on wizarding robes, admiring the bright colours and the thousands of ways they could be embroidered or trimmed or decorated. High collars, low collars, wide sleeves, cut short or long; fine fabrics, too, silk and velvet and chiffon.

Andromeda, unlike Wicked Cousin Sirius, had waited until she reached her majority and could withdraw a significant amount of money from the family Gringotts account before she rebelled; Nymphadora's parents had begun life with quite a tidy nest egg, between Ted's high-paying Ministry job and Andromeda's investments. Sometimes they went shopping for Wicked Cousin Sirius too, since he was poor for a while but, as pretty men ought, liked to look splendid and allowed women of taste and discretion to dress him.

Sirius was, after all, only Wicked in the best sense, because he played funny tricks on Andromeda and had generally made life miserable for the rest of his family by running away, not dying of starvation after being cut off, and even living scandalously (for the late 1970s) with a woman he wasn't married to. It wasn't until much later that Nymphadora learned that a beard was not just something a man wore on his chin, and understood why Wicked Cousin Sirius had been so nervous the time she'd caught him kissing Sirius' Not Wicked Friend Remus, who gave her books and talked football with her father.

The point was that Nymphadora had Style, she had Cosmopolitan Flair, and she Thought In Capitals a lot. She'd picked it up from a Witch Style Magazine called Spelle, and couldn't seem to break the Habit. And it pained her to see her cousin's former lover wandering about in what amounted to rags. Rags looked good on Remus Lupin, but they were still rags, and anyway he definitely needed cheering up, the summer after Sirius died. He went about his business normally enough, but she could see he was grieving quietly, in his own fashion, and it hurt that he wouldn't let anyone help.

There was even an official-sounding word for it. Remus Lupin needed Retail Therapy.

Of course, she didn't really have much that was appropriate to men in her bedroom closet -- which was, due to a few choice spells, larger than the bedroom itself. She had every kind of outfit imaginable for every sort of woman: curvy, angular, tall, short, old, young, poor, rich, and what her mother called Interminably Bourgeois. Andromeda didn't mind the punk-rock robes, the Muggle shirts, or the pink hair, but she would have been terribly disappointed if her daughter was Average.

Nymphadora did own a pair of Mary Janes, but she wore them Ironically.

She did have some mens' clothing, but she couldn't hold the physical changes required to look like a man for as long, and somehow it felt...well, everything she did as a covert operative was dishonest, but...more dishonest. She didn't like to hide her female-ness, because it was a part of her, an integral part that went more than skin deep. Besides, women could get into places men sometimes couldn't; people were less suspicious of women. (It wasn't Right, but it was True.)

And anyway, the clothing she had wouldn't fit Remus. He would require tailoring. She thrilled at the very idea of taking someone to have something tailored.

"Remus," she said casually, as he passed her a cup of tea after an Order meeting, "For a gay man you have absolutely no sense of style."

"Excuse me?" he asked, frowning. She saw him do a crowd check to see if anyone was in hearing range.

"Don't worry, nobody's paying attention to us," she assured him. "They think we're flirting. Smile."

He gave her a quick smile, and led her by the arm to a quiet corner.

"I'd appreciate it if you would keep at least one of my secrets," he said gently. "And if you can't, you could at least be accurate about them."

"Aren't you?" she asked. "Gay, I mean? I saw you kissing Sirius that one time."

He sipped his tea, winced, blew on it, and sipped again. "Not strictly. Ask Emmaline Vance if you don't believe me."

"That hussy?" Nymphadora asked, with a grin.

"This was before Sirius came back. She's a nice person," he protested, when she rolled her eyes.

"She's working her way through the Order alphabetically," she retorted.

"Moody would've been next, then," he said, amused. "It was fun while it lasted."

"Well, regardless, even Vance would turn her nose up at this," she said, fingering the fraying cuff of his jacket. He tugged it gently out of her grasp.

"I'm sorry I don't meet your dress code, Tonks," he said, only a trifle bitterly. "When one is unemployed, Mardjinn Alley is more appropriate than Sartori Alley -- "

"Oh! No, I didn't mean to -- " she put a hand to her mouth, realising how she must have sounded. "No, I was -- oh, now you'll think I'm just an idiot."

He gave her a 'just this recently?' look, but then he smiled reassuringly. "I don't think you're an idiot, Tonks. Indiscreet, but not an idiot."

"I'm sorry, Remus, really, I am. I was trying to lead into something."

"Well, now I'll start to think you're picking me up," he answered.

"Please stop being witty at me, it confuses me," she pleaded. "I was just going to ask you if you wanted to go clothes shopping."

"Clothes shopping? But you said I had no sense of style...."

"Not for me, for you. What I mean is, I'd like to take you clothes shopping."

He frowned again.

"I'm afraid I can't afford it this year," he said, finally. "I'll have a look at the cuffs, though; I can probably re-line them, Molly has a scrap basket with some nice brown corduroy that would look all right with this robe -- " He stopped when he saw her put a hand to her face. "I can sew, you know. I'm actually fairly good at it."

"I mean," she said slowly, "I would like to take you to Sartori Alley and buy you some clothing."

"Ah." He nodded. "No thank you, Tonks. That's a very kind offer, however."

She opened her mouth with several excellent arguments ready, but he had brushed past her and gone to greet Kingsley, and clearly she couldn't argue with him like a petulant child in front of her partner. It hadn't gone very well, really, but she had plenty of time to regroup and try again.

The next time she managed to get him alone, he was standing on the third-floor balcony of the Grimmauld Place house and smoking a cigarette. He must have heard the doorlatch click when she stepped out also, but he didn't turn around. Instead, he merely held up his right hand, a small leather cigarette case in it.

"Do you smoke, Tonks?" he asked.

"No," she answered, cursing his sense of smell. Even over cigarette smoke he'd known it was her.

"It wasn't the nose," he said, as if he'd read her mind. "It was the way you opened the door."

She leaned on the railing next to him. "Oh?"

"Harry opens doors like he was born to own the world. James did the same, though for different reasons, I suspect. Hermione always fumbles the first try. Ron doesn't bother with me if the other two are around, and Bill and the twins are out with their parents. You opened the door like you were sneaking in -- or sneaking out. You always do."

"I don't mean to sneak."

"I know." He exhaled smoke in a steady stream, and stubbed out the cigarette. "I smoke outside so that my rooms don't smell. Keeps the children away too. I go up here so that they don't see me setting a bad example." He laughed. "When I taught at Hogwarts it was a nightmare trying to find someplace to have a quiet smoke. Spent a lot of evenings up in the astronomy tower with Sinistra -- lovely woman, somewhat easily distracted -- because it was the only open place the children couldn't see me."

"It's terribly bad for people, isn't it?"

"Not for me. My lungs are...more efficient than most."

"Oh."

"Did you want something? I doubt you came up here for the view."

He gestured to the scrubby back-garden, the other squashed-together houses, the filthy street visible beyond. Grimmauld Place was not a very nice part of town.

"Not really," she said. "I wanted to ask if you had thought at all about my invitation."

He glanced at her. "Of course not. I said no, didn't I?"

"Yes, but we both know why you said that, and I don't think you meant it."

"I doubt very much you know why I said it, Tonks, or you wouldn't have asked in the first place."

"Well, I think you ought to consider it. I'm not poor, you know."

"Yes, I'm aware."

"Neither is Harry."

Remus smiled. "Not with the combined Potter and Black fortunes. Distinctively not."

"Even Molly Weasley gets a new dress or two every year."

"Indeed," he said, opening the cigarette case and taking another one out. He tapped it on the leather, put it between his lips, and lit it with a muttered word in Latin. "I am veritably surrounded by people more wealthy than I."

"Oh, bollocks," Tonks said. "That's not what I meant at all."

"I know," he replied.

"You have enough for cigarettes."

"Unfortunately not. They were a gift from Arthur for helping Ron with his holiday reading. They're not my brand, but I'm most impressed Arthur managed to find a Muggle smoke shop, pay in Muggle cash, and not blithely wander in front of an automobile in the process."

"You don't sound like you hold Arthur in very high esteem."

"On the contrary, if given the chance I would trade lives -- no, perhaps not. I wouldn't wish lycanthropy on anyone. If offered the life he has, I would take it in a heartbeat." He gave her a tired grin. "At least then I'd have something to show for all the poverty. Seven children -- an embarrassment of riches."

"An embarrassment, anyway," she said. "That's what Ron would answer."

"Ron's too young to know how good he has it," Remus replied. "If you don't mind, Tonks, I don't get many cigarettes. I'd like to smoke this one in peace."

She sighed. She could push the issue, but she wouldn't bother this time. Instead, she took a slim parcel out of her pocket and laid it on the railing before she left. He didn't move, but when she checked again later that night, the thin, oh-so-in-season grey leather gloves were gone.

"Mademoiselle Tonks," said the attendant, "c'est simply, marvelously you."

Nymphadora always found it utterly hilarious when someone told her how very her something was, but in this case the man might have a point. The robe was simple, cut for evening wear, and employed the newest French style of ruffling the sleeves, which was annoying when one was working but when all one was expected to do was hold a champagne glass, quite flattering. Not that she had anywhere to wear it, but it was conceivable that she might be sent on a mission to a cocktail party at some point....

She sighed. "I'm afraid it is me, but I'm not it," she answered. "I love it, I really do, but I'd better stick to what I came for."

"Shoes," the man said, a gleam in his eye. "They've been wrapped. Would you prefer to carry them away or have them sent up?"

She laughed at him. "Don't tell me you're just giving them away, I have to pay for them first!"

"Ah, that was covered by your credit," he replied.

"Credit?" she asked, mystified, as she stepped behind the changing-room curtain to remove the splendid robe and change back into her jeans

and Muggle t-shirt.

"Oui. There was, eh, a little extra, but for such a regular customer I was told, 'Give them to her, she'll bring in business'." He chuckled.

"Did my mum put money on credit for me here?" Tonks asked, trying to recall if Andromeda had given her some kind of birthday present. She never kept money on account at any of the places she shopped; it was only a temptation.

"Non, it was a man."

"My father?"

"Monsieur Tonks? No."

She stepped out of the changing room and accepted her package from the attendant, even more curious now. "Who was it?"

"He returned a pair of gloves, apologising that you had purchased them for him and wishing to return them; he seemed to know you, so we said we would be happy, and attempted to interest him in a new hat in exchange. He insisted that you should have credit, instead. A very polite man," the attendant added. "Mademoiselle is not ill?"

Tonks realised she'd probably gone white from sheer rage, and composed herself. "No, sorry -- it was unexpected, that's all."

"Ah. They were a gift? He is a boy-friend, perhaps?" A smile crossed his face. "If I may say so, older men are often much -- "

"I'm going to kill him," she said, clutching the box of new shoes tightly. The attendant looked distressed.

"He was so polite -- ill-dressed perhaps, but then Mademoiselle does so often arrive in, eh, poverty chic? He spoke so highly of you -- "

"He's a dead man!"

"I am sure if he returned the gift, it was merely because they did not fit, and surely if he had not liked the gift he would have made an exchange -- "

"They fit fine, I should think I would know how to pick a man's gloves," Nymphadora fumed. "All I was trying to do was show him a little bit of style. He won't take gifts, you know," she said to the now-cringing man next to her. "Not unless he's done something to earn them. As if walking around in patched robes -- " she was interrupted by a little gasp of horror from the attendant " -- as if that wasn't enough to make any right-thinking person want to buy him a decent shirt."

"I should have sold him the hat," the man murmured. "Clearly such a man is not in his right mind."

"Clearly," Nymphadora answered.

"Mademoiselle, I must know..." at her curt nod, he continued. "These...patched things...were they..."

"Off the rack," she confirmed.

There was a respectful moment of silence for the death of Remus Lupin's fashion sense.

"It is an absolute injustice," the man declared, drawing himself up proudly. "That such a man has entered my shop and departed with nothing. It must be fixed."

"I keep trying to talk him into coming here."

"Mademoiselle is a very loyal patron," he replied. "Will she perhaps allow us to help?"

"Help? I can't even get him near the place."

"Ah, well. If Monsieur...?"

"Lupin."

"If Monsieur Lupin will not come to the mountain, the mountain will go to Monsieur Lupin."

Remus was a remarkably trusting man, really. He never locked his door, except during full moons.

Nymphadora had raided his dresser while he was out and checked the tags on everything, not to mention the condition of his pyjamas (nonexistent, which provided her with several more than pleasant mental images -- she wasn't dead, after all) and the deplorable state of his socks. Between her notes and the entire men's department's memories of his brief visit (apparently they weren't dead either) she managed to procure things that would be close to a perfect fit, if not absolutely. Trousers, shirts, ties, waistcoats, belts, jumpers, robes, underthings -- this while the attendants made sly

jokes about men who wore boxers -- and lots of socks. Shoes were also flannel pyjamas, t-shirts, and another pair of gloves to buy.

The non-locking door came in handy again as she arrived back at the house with what felt like several tons of clothing, and staggered into his room, laying everything out on his bed. Harry, who had been privy to the plan since he caught her snooping in Remus' shirt-drawer, poked his head in and watched her spread all the clothing out for several minutes, until finally he stepped inside when she demanded that he just feel the red silk necktie.

"I, er..." Harry said, and then shyly produced a small paper bag of the sort Gringotts usually gave out for withdrawals. "I thought I might chip in. I've more than enough money."

"That's very sweet of you, Harry," she said, pocketing the bag and smoothing the last pair of trousers, folded on the bed. "Do you want me to tell Remus, or not?"

"No," Harry said. "I don't guess he needs to know. Uh, Tonks..."

"Yes?" she asked, piling the socks in an aesthetically pleasing pyramid.

"Would you take me shopping with you sometime?" he asked.

She must have mis-heard.

"What?" she asked dumbly.

"Could, could I go with you sometime? I mean. I don't know how to...dress like a wizard, nobody ever taught me, and all my clothes are Dudley's old clothes, except for my school uniform, and it looks stupid wearing school uniforms in the summer...and those are sort of...nice trousers," he concluded.

She grinned at him. "Harry, you're a nascent fashionista."

"I am not!"

"No, it's a good thing."

Harry gave her a suspicious look. She handed him a 400-threadcount cotton dress shirt.

"I'll tell you what, if Dumbledore says it's all right, I'll take you before school starts. Not a lot of men could wear green, but I think you could," she said. "Scruffy is always in, if you know how to do it right."

Just then they Remus' voice in the hall, near enough that he must have been walking barefoot down the hallway without being heard. He could easily see Harry through his open door. "Harry, I'm sorry, are you looking for something? I had to go out to pick up some -- "

He stopped inside the doorway, and Harry clutched the shirt he was holding nervously, as though it were a shield.

"Back to school shopping already?" Remus asked, surprised. Harry gave Nymphadora a nervous look, pressed the shirt into Remus' hands, and bolted.

"Harry's next week," she answered, as Remus smoothed out the shirt and folded it neatly, offering it to her.

"Then these are...?"

"For you."

He took in the pile of socks, the trousers, the dress shirts, the soft flannel pyjamas.

"Thank you," he said, calmly. "That was very kind of you, Tonks. I see you replaced the gloves, too."

"They match one of the suits," she mumbled, somehow embarrassed by how collected he was being.

"One of?" he asked.

"I got you three."

"One to wear, one for the laundry, one spare," he said. "Thoughtful. All from the same shop?"

"All but the ties, they sent me to a haberdasher's for the ties."

"I assume the tags will inform me where to return them. For store credit, of course. I'll make sure they notify you."

"You can't," she said desperately, as he began to pile the trousers on top of each other. He gave her a curious look, and she pressed onwards. "I've told the stores not to accept anything. They know what you look like."

"Passed around a composite sketch, did you?" he asked, starting on the shirts. There were a lot of them, and he had to be careful not to crush any of the collars.

"If you don't wear them, they'll just sit there. They'll go to waste."

"Pity. I suppose I could get almost full market value for them in Mardjinn Alley. They know me at all the thrift stores. I'll pay off the difference next time I have a job; I don't like being in debt."

"Why are you so stubborn?"

"Why are you so persistent?"

"Sirius always let Andromeda buy him things," she said, then put her hand to her mouth. He paused, but he didn't turn to look at her.

"That was family," he said.

"And what do you think this is?"

"This is charity, Tonks," he said, in the same calm tone. He resumed his work on the shirts, folding a few she'd unfolded for display. "And it upsets things that don't need to be rearranged."

"What on earth are you talking about?"

He smoothed the front of a shirt, then turned to face her.

"This is a little lesson in social dynamics, Tonks, and I'd like you to pay close attention. Human relationships are about balance and status, specifically balance of power. I'm older than you. I can remember, just barely, when you were in diapers. That gives me a certain amount of status over you. If I am in debt to you, that upsets the relationship between us in a way unlikely to recover, because I have my pride. I may not have much else, but I have too much to accept charity from anyone, let alone a woman ten years my junior. Do you understand me? Are you listening?"

She registered the words, but she didn't believe that Remus, of all people, was saying them. Gentle, teacherly Remus Lupin didn't think that, he couldn't.

"Then that's all we are to each other. A relationship of status," she said. "What about friendship?"

"Friendship is people acknowledging their equality to each other. Do you consider us friends?" he inquired, grave-faced.

"Yes, I...I did," she said slowly. "That's why I did this. That's what people do for each other."

"This," he said, "is something you do for a spouse, a sibling, a child. I'm not a doll you get to dress, Tonks."

"I didn't think that!" she protested.

"Then what did you think?" he asked, and didn't wait for a reply. "You knew I wouldn't take these clothes and yet you brought them here, you spread them out like a shop display without so much as a by-your-leave." He didn't shout, but she could see cold anger in his face, a wall slamming down behind his eyes. "You bring these things here and taunt me with them, with what I can't have, and for what? Did you think I'd be pleased to be a pity case?"

"I thought you'd like some new clothes," she said, on the verge of tears. She hadn't cried in front of Snape when he'd spent seven years berating her in Potions class, she hadn't cried in front of Kingsley even that time they'd found that awful body, and she was not going to cry in front of Remus Lupin because he was scolding her over a few stupid shirts. "I thought it would cheer you up, that's all. I'm sorry I bollocksd everything up, but I don't know how I'm supposed to go about helping you because he's dead and I know it hurts and I just thought since you won't talk about it -- "

She wanted to say more, but the stricken look on his face stopped her, and then he was there, all worn threadbare fabric and warmth, wrapping his arms around her shoulders.

"I'm sorry, Tonks, I'm so sorry," he said, as she buried her face in his shirt, not crying, but not exactly not crying either. "I shouldn't have shouted."

"You didn't shout," she said, against his chest.

"I didn't have to, I've learned much swifter ways of being hateful," he replied. "It was unfair of me. I'm sorry."

With her eyes open, she could just barely see the edge of his worn collar, and the button coming loose at his throat. He didn't seem inclined to let her go and she didn't particularly want to be let go, but she slipped one hand up his chest and plucked at the stray thread, until the button fell away.

"Don't mind it," he said, and she could see his adam's apple move as he spoke. The next button was barely hanging on as well, but that one

slipped through a frayed buttonhole instead of coming off.

By the time she reached the fourth button, she could feel him tensing.

"Tonks," he said slowly. "Stop."

She flicked the fifth button. One more.

"Tonks, please don't."

Her hand slipped inside his shirt, around the sharp edges where his ribcage ended, and he gasped. She tugged the shirt out of its neat tucks as she went, ripping a small hole near one seam.

"How long has it been," she asked, "since someone touched you?"

"How long has it been since Sirius died?" he replied, releasing her and stepping back. "Don't. Don't do this."

"I'm not going to do anything," she said, and honestly meant it. She pushed the collar of his shirt back, so that the shoulder slipped down over his arm. He sucked in a breath, and the scars on his chest shifted slightly. When she did the same thing on the other side, he stayed still.

A few more carefully-placed touches and his shirt was off. He might have protested, but she could see in his eyes that the human contact, even if it was just her fingertips on his shoulders, was worth more to him than his pride and dignity.

She reached around him, picking up the last shirt he'd folded. It was a deep mustard-yellow, beautiful Egyptian cotton, Mandarin collar. Just seeing it on a mannequin had taken her breath away.

He didn't move as she slipped the sleeve over his left arm; he did turn to watch as she fitted it over his right arm as well, buttoning the cuff effortlessly. It hung on his shoulders like it was part of his skin. She saw him swallow behind the high, banded collar.

She touched his worn and discoloured leather belt, and when he didn't protest, she unbuckled it. His only movement was to catch one side of his trousers before they slipped down his hips. When she touched his hand, he let go, and they fell easily, too easily -- far too big for him in the waist.

She'd expected, considering the short, sharp hiss he made and the blush spreading across his chest, that he might be hard; Merlin knew she was hyper-aware of her own skin, the sudden sensitivity of her breasts, the way her head spun. He must have the self-control of a zen monk, or perhaps werewolves were better at this sort of thing; stripped naked except for the open shirt, he simply stood there, watching her with dazed eyes, body tense but not aroused.

She helped him into the silk boxers and the black linen trousers, tucking his shirt carefully as she did the buckle on the new black leather belt -- she'd anticipated the last hole in the belt wouldn't be enough, and she'd had them add an extra one, which brought it snug against his hips.

A thought occurred to her as she was buttoning the shirt, one hand already reaching for the black waistcoat. She waited until her fingers rested on the collar-button before she spoke.

"Friendship isn't about power," she said quietly. "It's not about equal status."

"No?" he asked, looking straight ahead.

"No. Friendship is about trust."

He allowed her to pull the waistcoat tight around his body. The attendants' estimates had not been wrong. "I can't trust anyone."

"You trust Harry."

"I love Harry. There's a great difference."

The shirt needed no tie, not with that collar, so instead she found the jacket that matched it. He didn't move.

"Do you trust me?" she asked, slipping one sleeve of the black jacket over his left arm, as she'd done the shirt.

"I'm not allowed."

"Because you're a werewolf?" Right arm, right sleeve. She pinched the shoulders of the jacket; slightly too wide, but then he was an active man who would need the room to move in.

"Among other reasons."

She circled, still too close to take in the full effect, and forced him to meet her eyes.

"Do you trust me?" she asked.

"Don't you know?" he said, glancing away. "That's what makes this so dangerous."

She moved behind him, leaning over his right shoulder, and flicked her wand at the wall. It rippled, and a wide mirrored surface appeared.

He sucked in a breath, and there was honest shock on his face.

"Oh," he said, brokenly.

"I liked this one best," she whispered.

"Oh -- "

"Is the collar too tight?"

He touched the edge of it with his right hand, hesitantly, and shook his head.

"There's a wizarding robe that goes with it -- black with gold trim."

"Oh."

"Remus, please say something other than 'oh'."

"It hardly looks like me, even," he said, touching the waistcoat, the belt, the fall of jacket across his thighs.

"Do you like it?"

He was silent, but she was sure the light in his eyes wasn't just the shirt bringing out hints of hazel in the brown.

"Trust me," she said, wrapping one arm around his waist to hook in the front of his belt, "not to abuse this. Trust me to give this to you as a gift, free and clear of obligation."

"I haven't done anything to deserve it."

"You made my cousin happy," she said against his shoulder, and she saw him close his eyes. "You would make me happy if you'd wear this to the Order meeting tonight."

"Is it worth so much to you?"

She smiled. "The look on Snape's face would be priceless."

He ducked his head a little, hand moving to cover hers, and they stood there for long moments, neither of them at all interested in the mirror anymore.

END