

# Love is a Battlefield

By WarpdBabyWarpd

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*After unfaithfulness, how can a pair of lovers learn to trust each other again?*

Provided by Fanart Central.

<http://www.fanart-central.net/stories/user/WarpdBabyWarpd/34782/Love-is-Battlefield>

<b>Chapter 1 - I Wish It Were That Easy</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Chapter 2 - Float Like A Butterfly, Sting Like A Bee</b>	<b>13</b>

# 1 - I Wish It Were That Easy

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The weather could not have more perfectly suited the emotions of the day. The sky was bleak and dark; hopeless and brokenhearted. The raindrops surely didn't outnumber the tears that had fallen from his now dead eyes. The deep chocolate pools were bloodshot and fatigued. His environmental circumstances helped none: the already too small apartment was cluttered with trash, leftovers, and dirty clothes. The air reeked of cheap beer and cigarette smoke. His attempts at comfort had done little to soothe the pain.

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A week ago today, she had slammed the door behind her for the first and final time. Certainly the most beautiful of God's creations, she had walked out with tears in her eyes and pain in her heart. He knew hoping for a second chance was pointless. She was a merciful young woman, true, but strong in her convictions.

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He stumbled in a puddle stepping out of his car; his pant leg soaked a good way up the shin. He put up the collar on his coat and held it tight against the rain. He didn't bother wiping his feet at the door; his shoes were caked with thick mud. The super would be none too happy about mud on his precious stairwell floor, but he would have one less resident soon. The full rent was simply too costly for him to stay.

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He dropped his keys in the hand-painted bowl by the door. He paused, remembering the day she brought it home. Little things like that gave her such pleasure. Now that she learned to appreciate her life, she found extreme happiness in everything. She lived in the moment. It was obvious in her smile, in the ##### in her bright blue eyes. He could feel his own eyes burning and swelling, and he quickly tramped to the kitchen, if you could call it that. Shoving a six-pack in the fridge, he noticed a last herbal energy drink standing out on the barren white shelf. She always drank one before work or class. Things like this made it so hard to move on with life. Books, picture frames, even the shampoo reminded him of her.

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The carpet was soaked in one corner from an open window. He closed it on his way to the couch, fresh smokes and a beer in hand. He hadn't slept on the bed since that night. He shoved empty bottles out of the way to set it down on the table, making sure it was on a coaster. That was one thing she always pestered him about. Now he was sorry he hadn't done it more often. Taking a long drag, he stared at the off-white ceiling and then at the clock. It was about 5:30. She would've been home from work right about now, and after giving her a long "welcome home" kiss, he'd be getting ready for work too. He could still hear her keys jingling in the bowl, her footsteps coming softly down the hall... He fell asleep with these thoughts clinging to his lonely mind.

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The slamming door awoke him. He sat up suddenly, almost spilling his Coors. There she was, standing in the hallway. She was looking around disapprovingly. He stood up and combed his hair down, trying to smile at her. She cleared her throat.

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“I... I came to get some things. I hoped you'd be at work, but I won't be here long.”

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She <i>hoped</i> he'd be gone. She didn't want to see him after all. He nodded and followed her back to the bedroom, watched as she started pulling clothes out and putting them in her suitcase.

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“Can I get you anything?” he asked timidly.

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“No, I'm just picking some things up, I won't be in your way long.” Her voice faded and she absent-mindedly continued her work. He sat down on the bed next to her bag. He stared at the clothes and pictures she had collected to take with her.

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“You aren't in my way,” he said, mostly to himself. More clearly, he said, “You really are leaving aren't you?”

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She didn't falter as she packed another shirt. “Yeah, I guess I am.”

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“I mean... you could stay, you know.” He suggested hopefully.

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She stopped this time. “Don't make this harder than it has to be, James.”

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“But I know you want to stay.”

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“I know that, too.” Her face was turning red and her eyes were glazing over. For the first time, he noticed how rough she looked. Her hair was in a messy bun, and she was wearing the same sweatshirt and jeans she had left in. Her sneakers were soaked, meaning she didn't bother to avoid any puddles. She wasn't wearing any makeup at all.

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“Then stay.”

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She turned and stood in the closet doorway, her face turned down. “I wish it were that simple.” He came and stood beside her.

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“It is.”

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The waterworks started flowing, and she gripped the doorframe in a desperate attempt to keep from leaning on him like she used to do. He put his arm around her shoulders and her knees buckled, forcing her to let him support her. She returned the embrace and cried into his long dark hair. He buried his face

in her delicate shoulder. She still smelled like coconuts. Things like that he had grown to miss the most. Her smell, the taste of her on his lips, these were things that would stay with him always. She calmed down a little, though tears still streamed from her eyes. She let go of him, and when his hold didn't loosen, she pushed him away. She backed away and stood looking like a little lost child.

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“James... you can't honestly expect me to stay. Not after what you did.”

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“I've apologized a thousand times, tell me what else you want me to do and I'll do it.”

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She pushed past him and went into the bathroom to gather her personal things.

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“There's this thing called a second chance, you know,” he persisted.

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“Don't you get sarcastic with me.” She tried to give him an angry look, but she was far too upset and her face simply looked contorted with pain. “I cannot just forgive something like that. I can't just act like it didn't happen.” She wiped her eyes and sniffled. “She was in our bed, James, *our* bed.”

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He sighed and hung his head. “I was drunk, Harper. I was too hammered to walk straight.”

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“You don't think you'll never be wasted again?”

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“If that'll make you stay, than I won't.”

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“I want to be able to trust you to go out with your friends without bringing home a goddamn hooker!”

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“She wasn't a hooker, and you weren't even in town!”

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“Oh, so I have to baby-sit you now?”

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“No, but I trusted you enough to go out with your friends for a whole weekend! Doing God knows what that I could never know about!”

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He felt the sting before he realized what had happened. Her hand was still in midair. “Don't you dare ever accuse me of being unfaithful! Especially after what you just did!”

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“People make mistakes, Harper. Everyone except you, that is.”

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"I never said I was perfect, but I would never do something like you did. Stop trying to turn this around and stop making excuses!"

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"I don't know what else you want me to do. But I'm going to go mad without you."

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"Listen. I know you would take it back if you could. But you can't, James. And if I just let this happen, how can I know it won't happen again?"

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He took her hands in his. "Because I love you, Harp. And I'm going to marry you."

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"You think once we're married things will change? You'll still be you, and I still won't be able to trust you. James, I can't keep getting hurt like this. You know I have zero tolerance for cheating." Sighing and looking at it one last time, she slid the ring off her tiny fingers and set it in his hands. She picked up her makeup bag and walked out. She zipped everything up in her travel bag and slung it over her shoulder.

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"I'll probably be back for more stuff some time next week."

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He had closed his fist around the ring and was standing, staring blankly ahead of him. It was really over. She started down the hall without saying goodbye again. He set the ring down and called to her. She turned around slowly, and he stood before her.

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With tears in his eyes, he put his arms around her and kissed her. She obliged it, and then whispered, "Why?" She pulled away from him slowly, as if she didn't really want to go. He gripped her hand in his, trying to stop her from moving any closer to the door, but she shied away from this touch of affection and left without another word.

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## 2 - Float Like A Butterfly, Sting Like A Bee

Harper came back to the apartment about a week later. Once again, he should've been at work. Instead, he was home packing. She hit a few boxes as she opened the door. "Going somewhere?"

"Well hello to you too." The spite in both their voices stung him. "Yea, i have to move out. You know the rent is too high for one person."

She picked up a box and took it to their old bedroom, and started packing up some more of her things. She was wearing a long-sleeved shirt and jeans. He stopped what he was doing and followed her.

"It's 90 degrees outside, Harp. A little warm for sleeves, don't you think?" He reached for her arm, but she snatched it away.

"You know I'm cold natured."

"Not that cold natured."

"I know what you're getting at, James. I'm not cutting again. I'm not that stupid."

"So show me."

"I don't have to prove myself to you."

It was silent for a while. He couldn't believe how much she had changed. It wasn't like her to just be cold-hearted towards someone. She was courteous to even her worst enemies. "You used to love me, you know." he said softly.

"You're pathetic."

He whimpered in spite of himself. They used to be so in love. "Can't we even be civilized?"

"Civilized people don't cheat on their fiances, James."

The perfect comeback finally came to him. "You're mom cheated on your dad, Harp! For two and a half YEARS! But he forgave her."

"No, he didn't. He gave her an ultimatum. She got pregnant when i was about 4, and Dad said if she had the baby, he'd take Sam and me and get the hell out of Dodge. Bet you never knew that, huh?"

"Why did you tell me that?"

"Because, James, you need to realize that everything has consequences. My dad never forgave my mom, but they both loved us very much. So mom got an abortion and they started sharing the bed

again." She was crying now. "You think you have all the answers, James, but you don't. Ok? We're over, and that's all there is to it."

"That can't just be it. I love you, Harper."

She wiped her face on her sleeve and picked her box up. "Sam is waiting downstairs with his truck. Him and Scott are going to get some of my bigger things.. Mom's china cabinet and whatnot. I don't think he'd be too happy to see you."

Harper's older brother already didn't like him very much for insisting they move in together while she was in school. But he was too upset to be very intimidated right now. "Are you kicking me out of my own apartment?"

"Grow up, James. And for god's sake, go back to work. You're only 24. Don't let this be the end of your life."

It was the nicest thing she'd said to him all day, in a the-truth-hurts kind of way. But didn't she realize?

She was his life.