

(standing in the desert) wishing for rain

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/345254) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/345254>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	F/M
Fandom:	Vampire Diaries (TV)
Relationship:	Elena Gilbert/Damon Salvatore
Characters:	Stefan Salvatore , Damon Salvatore , Elena Gilbert , Bonnie Bennett
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2012-02-22 Words: 2,277 Chapters: 1/1

(standing in the desert) wishing for rain

by [badboy_fangirl](#)

Summary

His whole life—his whole *human* life—the only person he'd wanted to be like was Damon.

Notes

Title lifted from Ron Pope's "A Drop in the Ocean." I wrote this as a reward for having been working on my original writing, because work is stressing me out and I needed a creative outlet that would be finished in a matter of hours, and lastly, because I want to love Stefan again. This helped with at least one of those issues.

Stefan is standing between them.

It happens literally as he realizes it figuratively. Damon's on one side and Elena's on the other and as he looks back and forth between them, he realizes: *He's standing **between** them.*

In a flash, he wonders if he always has been.

"I thought I could win her from you fair and square; she didn't want me. It's for the best. I'm better at being the bad guy, anyway."

He watches his brother walk away from him, feels his stomach bottom out. He's been preaching, to Elena, to himself, and he'd even said it to Damon that morning: he doesn't deserve her, he's not worthy, she's better than them.

It's all true.

(It's all false.)

Stefan stands, the world crashing at his feet. His whole life—his whole *human* life—the only person he'd wanted to be like was Damon. He wanted to be as tall as him when he was a child; he'd wanted to be as charming as him as adolescence dissolved into adulthood. Then he'd wanted to be as brave as him, standing up to their father about the War.

He had wanted to be able to drink a tumbler full of blood and say goodnight like an almost-normal creature.

So, really, his whole life—both human and vampire—he'd wanted to be like Damon, even when being like Damon was being a monster. Damon's version of monstrosity, in reality, was less heinous than his own.

So, his brother who loved more fiercely, lived less rigidly, and never hesitated, would just walk away, the bad guy again. On purpose. Because he loved Elena too much not to.

(Because he loved Stefan enough.)

He expects her to come to the Boarding House, and he expects her to be angry. He doesn't expect her to stand in the library and demand to speak to Damon alone.

Stefan cocks his head, and his eyes glance off his brother's. Damon smirks, "You know he'll be able to hear us, anyway, right? And what difference does it make? We don't need solitude

for a good round of *I Hate You, Damon!* do we?"

Elena turns her head, looks at him over her shoulder. "Stefan?" she says, exasperation tinting the word.

Exasperation. Not anger. Not judgment. Not intolerance.

He stands in the hallway, just to the right of the door, not even pretending to not listen. Not even trying to spare himself the obvious.

"I get why you did it," she says, and before Damon can respond, there's a catch in her voice, a sob in her throat. "Bonnie doesn't want to see me, Damon. I don't think she'll ever get over it."

His brother murmurs something like *I'll take care of it* and Stefan presses his hands against the wall to steady himself.

He finally walks away when Elena's muffled, "I'm sorry," finds his ears. He's sure it's trapped in Damon's shoulder, and he understands. She's stronger now, and a bit ruthless, so she needs reassurance only available from one source.

He waits on the porch swing for her, and as she walks up the steps she notices him. "Stefan?" she asks, a frown between her brows. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," he says, standing up. "I just...I was in the neighborhood. Wanted to check in on you."

She smiles, a little tremble. "Want to come inside?" she asks, pointing with her head.

He nods, follows her into the kitchen. She makes tea and keeps glancing over at him, but doesn't say anything. Eventually he manages, "I wanted you to know...Damon turned Abby, but it was our idea together. He shouldn't have to take all the responsibility. You shouldn't be mad at him. Or...well, you should be mad, but at us both."

She turns to face him, holding the cup in her palms, blows gently into it. "I know," she says. She shakes her head a little. "It's funny, because now? I think it's what I would have done, too. Remember how you said I've changed? I don't think it's all for the best." She presses her chin to the rim of the mug and murmurs, "I know it's not."

Her eyes shift down, and the pain in his chest spikes. The only way to keep it away is by the one thing he's not doing, so there's no way to prevent the feeling from flooding through him. He can't criticize her, and not just because of the list of wrongs that follow him everywhere, but because Damon, again, is right. "I'll never regret anything that keeps you alive a little longer, Elena," he says, and she blinks, keeping tears from falling into her tea.

She sips at the liquid carefully and then sets the cup on the counter. "Damon told me, you know. About you. Not drinking human blood anymore."

Stefan laughs, as he always does these days, without mirth. "Of course he did," he mutters. Shaking his head, he turns away from her, looks up the hall towards the door. He should go out that way, and never look back, never imagine ever coming here again, never imagine Elena looking at him like she is now...with *hope*.

"It's good," she says, her voice gentle. "You have to do it for yourself, and not any other reason. I realize that now. I understand a lot of things I didn't use to."

He's still debating his path out the door at that speed particular to his kind, but then she's there, her fingers looping around his wrist. "Can I help in anyway?" she asks, forcing his eyes back to her face. He examines her, sees the sweetness there, the offer one of caring and concern, but not necessarily girlfriend-y. She watches him warily, but it's also like she's inspecting him; like at this range she can actually see who she wants to see.

(Who he wishes he was.)

"It just takes time," he says. Months, years, decades. *Your lifetime*.

She nods again, squares her shoulders, gives him another smile. "Thanks for coming by," she says.

He leaves because for once she doesn't want him to stay.

He walks through the front door at the Boarding House to find Bonnie standing in his living room, her arms crossed over her chest defensively. Damon is drinking, standing halfway across the room from her, and saying in a tightly controlled voice, "All I'm saying, *Bonnie*, is that there's no reason to take this out on Elena. Brain whammy me all you want, vow to destroy me, what have you, but don't forget that your best friend is the reason you're still human yourself."

"Oh, so now I'm supposed to thank you for only killing my mother, but not me?" Bonnie snaps.

"Do you not understand *English*?" Damon demands, slamming his glass down on the cabinet.

Stefan watches while Bonnie does in fact *brain whammy* Damon, but it only lasts a moment and then she turns away to walk out in disgust. When she sees him standing just inside the door, she pauses, giving him an equally dirty look. "I should have killed you both when I had the chance," she states, and the venom in her tone penetrates in a way nothing has in months, except Wickery Bridge and *I kissed Damon*.

It's not like Stefan cares; he's never really cared about anything except Elena. Well, maybe moments of penance with Caroline—by helping her he might have gained absolution for his

brother, but he's never admitted that even to himself until this moment. It's this one, though, staring into Bonnie's accusatory eyes, and knowing the truth: *death would be too kind*. The true torment of immortal beings was just that: no end in sight, no relief ever. Only stolen times when no one knew who they really were, or those boons when they were accepted for what they tried to be.

"If you kill us, you lose all your righteous indignation," Damon barks.

Stefan can't help the mediator part of him that steps forward. "Damon," he starts, shaking his head, and Damon's eyes fly to him as though he hadn't heard him come in either.

Bonnie whirls around, putting her back to Stefan. "My Grams died because of you! And now I can't be mad because you snapped Abby's neck? Don't I deserve a little *righteous indignation*, Damon?!"

"Yes, goddammit!" he yells, and the hair on Stefan's neck stands up. "And I'm giving it to you! For the *fifth* time, hate *me*." He pounds his chest for good measure, as though Bonnie doesn't understand his words. "Not Elena. Elena needs you, Bonnie. Elena loves you, and Elena would never do anything to hurt you! She's been willing to die for you more times than I can count, and this is how you repay her? As if she hasn't lost as much as you, as if she hasn't lost all hope at bunnies and rainbows and fucking unicorns? Get over yourself!"

Bonnie turns back, much more slowly now, and leaves the Boarding House, swerving around Stefan when he puts a hand out towards her. "Just, no," she says, shaking her head. When they're alone, the brothers don't look at each other, but Damon's words seem to hang from the chandelier, and the passion behind them makes Stefan a little breathless.

There's love, and then there's Damon Salvatore in love.

Stefan remembers then one other way that he always wanted to be just like his brother.

It's weeks later that he climbs the stairs to his bedroom and hears the sound. The whimpering moan of a woman, the kind that has floated from Damon's room over the centuries to titillate or irritate, depending on Stefan's own mindset at the time, and he tosses his jacket across the back of the chair in front of his desk, before throwing himself into the seat.

He wonders if Elena will show up in the morning in time to catch whomever it is leaving. (He hopes it's not Rebekah again, she'd been at the house a few times, and it was starting to be too often.)

He delves into his current journal, ignoring the groans, the feverish whispers too low to decipher as long as he doesn't focus at all. There is a long, heartfelt sigh that tickles his ear canal, so he writes more determinedly. He's unsure how much time goes by before he hears, "You're kidding me, right?" and it's Damon, and he's in the hall now, not shut away in his Pleasure Palace.

"I just need to get home; Ric will wonder where I am."

Stefan freezes, the pen in his hand veering off the paper, dribbling down the edge of the desk to fall and roll across the floor. There is a moment of disconnect when he tells himself to stay seated, to not move, and the actual moment he darts into the hall himself, sees them standing there, Damon with a bedsheet wrapped haphazardly around him and Elena, her hair hanging down her back in disarray while she tugs her t-shirt on. Her bra and jeans are in a wad under her left arm.

"Oh, God," Damon says, and his eyes widen in horror in a way that no one, not even the king of facial expressions himself could possibly feign.

"You didn't know I was home, huh?" Stefan says, trying to find a shred of levity in the moment, knowing there is none, can never be any.

Elena's unmoving, her neck stiff, as though to let her head swivel around will be the end of the world as they know it. (It is.)

Because really, is it so surprising? Stefan wishes he could tell himself he's shocked, but probably the only one who'd been truly surprised is Damon, who most likely had gotten over it supremely quickly, only to be surprised again, both by Elena's retreat and Stefan's appearance.

She moves around him without looking at him, but pauses when he's standing between them. She lifts her head and her eyes find his for just a moment, but then they're sliding past him to Damon, and the way she looks at him is the biggest thing Stefan has tried to avoid all along.

He's been petty and mean and terrible to Damon because of this: because she loves him, and she won't say it. She might never if he continues to be the specter in this house, never committing to either side, never telling anyone what he's thinking.

Really, he and Elena have the same problem: they love Damon, and they hate themselves for it.

Hating Damon's easier, despising him, looking down on him from a place of superiority; that's what Stefan's tried to do—tried to make himself into someone who had the right to do that. But he was wrong, all along. Always.

Because if he could only be like Damon, he'd be the bigger man. He wouldn't stand between them. He wouldn't try to prevent the inevitable.

"It's okay, Elena," he says, his voice rough. He clears his throat, tries again. "It's okay. It's okay to love him." He looks at Damon, who attempts a smirk, but instead looks more vulnerable than Stefan has ever seen him in all the lifetimes he's known him.

He turns back to his ex-girlfriend, the face of Katherine ever haunting him, the reality of wrong choices going back 146 years. He touches her elbow with the tips of his fingers. "It's okay."

As he walks away—as he steps from *between* them—he feels peace. It's a bitter, broken version of it, but it's quiet, and it's his. Within it, he's finally like his brother.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!