

Her Answer

by Jenwryn

Hermione/Severus. There are days when Hermione wonders why she bothers with it all... 4x100 words, written for grangersnape's "Hermione's Bad Day" challenge.

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Chapter 1 of 1

Hermione/Severus. There are days when Hermione wonders why she bothers with it all... 4x100 words, written for grangersnape's "Hermione's Bad Day" challenge.

There is a moment, every day, just one moment, when Hermione wonders why she bothers with it all. It's just as the winter sun is setting, and the torture-scars have begun their dull, whining ache beneath her overcoat, and she stands in the midst of strangers on public transport, and the noise of their divisive silence rings in her ears. She wears her old scarf rolled high, with its faded red and gold, and her woolly hat pulled low, and the loop of cracked plastic she holds to keep her upright is shiny and warm from a thousand strangers' fingers.

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It is while she sways upright in this foreign world, with her knees slack and leaning to the motion, that the question surfaces in her mind, just as it does every day. She could set her clock by it, could, if she but had the energy. Day in, day out, it seeps through her tepid, empty, work-exploited thoughts, even as the tram clatters with its death-rattle to an ungraceful stop and she stumbles out, exhausted, into the narrow street where she makes her home in a terrace house with cracked tiles and a wrought-iron knocker shaped like an ugly baby.

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The question begs an answer as she stands there waiting for the tram to leave, hands buried deep in pockets and old wounds aching beneath the bitter caress of the cold, cold wind. She wonders why she doesn't head south, head east, head home, anywhere but this bleak world of ice and snow and grey-cobbled streets where the worn soles of her boots slip when she walks. The whisper of footsteps on damp stones haunt her in her sleep, stalk her in her dreams, the soundtrack to the faceless fear of those who've seen their life and found it wanting.

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She asks herself again, again, and barely notices as the driver finally forces the tram back into shaking life and it pulls away, moves off, and reveals the man on the other side of the sunken tracks. The man who is waiting for her, who stands with his face hidden in the shadows of his hair. But then she looks up and sees him through the swirling whiteness, and he smiles and speaks her name aloud, and she goes to him, her wizard-in-hiding, her dead man walking, and puts herself inside his strong embrace, and then – and then – she has her answer.