

The silence burns his ears

by stickleyhunter

COMPLETE One shot. Hermione Granger confesses her love to Professor Snape. Can he be what she needs? Rating for character death and suicide. Inspired by the song "Everytime" though it is not a songfic.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: This was my first fic so be gentle. I welcome compliments and constructive comments. Please keep flames to yourself. I am not J.K. Rowling. I do not own any of the characters or locations mentioned here. I am not making any money off of this story.

Notice me

Take my hand

Why are we strangers when

Our love is strong

Why carry on without me

For weeks, months she has been trying to get his attention. To make him notice her, befriend her, love her. But he only seems to distance himself further. 'At least before the war ended, he acknowledged me. I prefer his insults to his silence' she thinks sadly.

She looks deep in herself at the last of her courage. Her friends are gone. Her family is gone. She has nothing to lose. She will make him understand. She makes her way toward the dungeons. Quietly. Slowly. She does not want to alert anyone to her presence. Not yet. Not until she is in front of him. She is here to make a confession, a declaration. She loves him and she believes that he loves her. She only hopes that he will accept her and her offering. She raises her tiny hand to knock on his door.

"Professor Snape?"

His head snaps up at the sound of her voice. **Her** voice. His temptation, his forbidden, his secret obsession, his love.

"Miss. Granger."

His mind races. She cannot know. He can never let her know. It is the price he pays. He offered his own soul and happiness in exchange that she might live. He had done this on the night of the final battle. He did not know what spirit had heard and accepted his sacrifice, but it did not matter. He would not give in to this love. He could never give in. She was too precious. Her life was too precious to risk for his own selfish wants.

"May I come in?"

"If you must."

He looks at her, into her. She is like sunshine. She lights the room with her perfection. It is almost too much for his eyes to bear, and yet he cannot look away. He prays that his eyes do not give away his longing. Looking at her. It is the only time he can indulge in her. Be with her.

"Professor, I must tell you something."

"Miss Granger, your Head of House is responsible for your trivial problems. Why are you bothering me? Leave."

She does not move. He notices her discomfort.

Her voice is strong. "I love you, Professor."

"What?"

"I said I love you, Professor. I believe that you love me too. I can see it when I look at you. Your eyes, your soul, they call to me. In response, I offer myself to you: heart, body, and soul."

He almost gasps at her confession. His heart aches. She is gifting all he ever wanted. He hungers to hold her, kiss her, declare his own love. He reminds himself that he cannot. He is being tempted, tested. The spirit, who saved her life, is testing his promise. He will never give in.

"You are wrong, Miss Granger. I do not even like you. I suggest you offer your . . . self . . . to someone who can stand to be in your company. Now that you have said what you came to say, I assume that you are capable of leaving?" His heart cries at how easy it is for him to lie. He again reminds himself that this torture is his choice, and he is willing to carry this burden to give her continuance.

She looks at him mournfully. He can almost hear her heart breaking. 'It is better this way.' He tells himself. He watches as she leaves, and the silence burns his ears.

Every time I try to fly, I fall

Without my wings, I feel so small

I guess I need you, baby

And Every time I see you in my dreams

I see your face, it's haunting me

I guess I need you, baby

Weeks pass. She is alone. There is no one to talk to, to be with. There is no one to understand. No Harry. No Ron. No Ginny. No parents. They are all dead. She wonders why her life was spared on that dreadful night. Why is she cursed to this hell on earth? She knows she has changed. She no longer seeks to excel. She just wants to be normal. She does not obsess about N.E.W.T.S or S.P.E.W., she does not care about her future. She would give anything to be carefree again, to feel something other than emptiness.

But she knows she cannot go back. She has seen too much, shared too much, lost too much to be a child. Yet here she is in a school for children. Even at seventeen, the world does not see her as a woman. And so, she is stuck somewhere between. Alone.

He sees her. Watches her. He knows she is lonely. She is fading. She no longer radiates like the sun when she enters his room. She is a flicker of her former self. He tells himself that it will get better. She will get better. He is doing this for her. She rarely makes eye contact with him anymore. He misses her eyes. He longs to see her spark, to see her smile. He cannot remember the last time she smiled. His heart breaks, and the silence burns his ears.

She cannot look at him. She cannot bear to see the face that walks in her dreams. Her perfect dreams. If only her life were like her dreams. In her dreams he loves her. She is not alone in her dreams.

Her desperation slowly consumes her. She must make him understand. Again she finds herself in front of his door. She knocks and waits.

"Come in, Miss Granger." He hopes his voice does not sound weak. He cannot, will not give in.

She approaches his desk. He watches her, indulging in his obsession. He sees that she is not as confident as she once was.

Her voice is broken and tired. "I love you, Professor. I need..."

He holds his hand up to stop her. "Miss Granger, I believe we already had this conversation. I do not have time for a silly little schoolgirl with a silly little schoolgirl crush. Please remove yourself from my presence. I cannot bear another confession."

He looks into her eyes. She looks defeated. He can see the light within fading. Is he doing the right thing? He doesn't know anymore.

"Of course, Professor. Thank you for your time." Once again she makes the long walk back to her room, and the silence burns his ears.

I make believe that you are here

It's the only way I see clear

What have I done

You seem to move on easy

She rarely leaves her room anymore. Preferring to spend her time sleeping, dreaming. Her only happiness in her dreams. No one comes to her. She wonders if they even notice that she is not there. She wonders if he notices that she is not there.

And he does. She no longer comes to his class. He cannot bring himself to go to her. Sometimes he sees her in the Great Hall at dinner. But it's not her. Not really. She is a shell, hollow. He watches as she stares into nothing, lost in her thoughts. If there is any light left, he cannot see it. He wonders if she will come to him again. He tells himself that if she comes again, he will not deny her. But she does not come, and the silence burns his ears.

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Weeks pass and he waits. He waits for her to come to him. He waits for the strength to go to her. But he has no strength left. He curses the spirit that owns his soul. This is not why he saved her. She was supposed to go on, to live. This is not living. He sees that she is not living. She walks with a weight on her shoulders. **He** was supposed to carry this burden. It was to be his gift, his absolution.

He hears screaming. It fills the castle, his classroom, his ears. It is not a scream of joy, or a scream of fright. It is anguish. It is despair, loss, and pain. It is as though the person screaming has lost every family member and every friend they ever knew. It is at this moment that Severus understands Hermione. It is at this moment that he realizes his mistake. And it is at this moment that he realizes it is too late.

He runs toward the sound of the screaming, though he already knows where it will take him. He bursts out of the front door and sees her. She is laying on the ground. Broken. Gone. Without light. He turns to Minerva. She is still screaming. He does not think that she can stop. He silences her with a spell and turns to the body on the ground. Hermione. His Hermione.

He kneels at her side. There is nothing he can do for her. The tears fall from his face. He cradles her in his arms. He only wants to hold her. Hold her until death returns to take him from this misery. He will sit here on the lawn with her body forever, if they will let him. But they will not.

I may have made it rain

Please forgive me

My weakness caused you pain

And this song's my sorry

Months pass but his grief does not fade. He pulls a piece of paper from his pocket. It's the letter from her. He received it the day after she jumped. 'She must have told the owl to wait', he thinks. He reads it again and again.

'Dear Professor Snape,

I write this letter to beg your apology. I never meant for my love to cause you inconvenience. I see now how selfish I have been. I cannot continue to live in dreams. There is nothing left for me here and I have decided to remove myself from your presence, as requested. Do not despair, Professor. If all goes well, I will soon be with my family and friends. I am breathing for the first time in months.

With all my love,

Hermione

(Your silly little schoolgirl)'

Tears fills his eyes, but he will not let them fall. This is a ritual for him. He reads the letter every day, some days more than once. It is his penance. He must remember this pain. He cannot listen to the voice that tells him to forgive himself. He must not give in. He will not give in.

He looks up at the ghost in his classroom. Normally he does not allow ghosts in his classroom, but he cannot turn this ghost away. It is the newest ghost at Hogwarts, here only for a few months. The ghost of Hermione Granger. She does not leave his classroom. She sits in her seat. She takes notes during his lectures. She brews perfection during his labs. But she does not look at him and she does not talk to him. She does not talk to anyone. And the silence burns his ears.

At night I pray

That soon your face will fade away

Years pass, but her routine does not change. She has yet to leave his classroom or speak with anyone. Sometimes he wonders if she even knows she's here. 'Does she not know she is a ghost?' For Severus her presence is unbearable. She is in his classroom all day, and in his dreams all night. A constant reminder that he failed her. His guilt is crushing him, and he wonders how much more he can take. How long must one may pay for the errors of his youth? He gave his soul to save her, and still she is gone. His temptation, his forbidden, his secret obsession, his love, his reason for living.

As his mind lingers over these last four words, the ghostly eyes of Hermione Granger meet his for the first time since her death. It is then that he knows what he will do.

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He takes a step forward and smiles. He thought it would be so much harder than this. He feels like he is breathing for the first time in years. The silence no longer burns. He welcomes it and what is about to come. He takes a step forward. His final step. The step that will take him to his freedom. The height of the Astronomy Tower is impressive, but as he falls he sees her. She has left his classroom to watch him. He is pleased. Her presence validates his decision. She stretches her arms towards him and smiles. And for the first time in years, he sees her light. And she knows she will never be dark again.

After all

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