

The Progression of Madness

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Severus Snape has a hidden secret that is causing an unhealthy obsession with Hermione. One Shot. Complete

Chapter 1

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'A solitary figure walked through the darkness.'

No. Walking was too quotidian to describe what he was doing. Prowled. Skulked. Hunted. Yes. That was a more apt description, he reassured himself. It was not just walking. It was so much more than the everyday act of walking.

'The solitary figure continued, after a moment of internal reflection.'

Professor Severus Snape shook his head, willing his thoughts to reconnect with his conscious self. He couldn't remember how long he had been talking to himself like this. Talking **about** himself like this. His own mind, referring to himself as a 'solitary figure'. Constantly telling a story, in which he was the principal character. Describing his actions as though his brain and body were separate entities.

Since his youth perhaps. He shook his head again. It didn't matter. He had grown accustomed to the running commentary of his daily activities. He was used to it. Them. The voices in his head. He tolerated them. Permitted them. Sometimes even embraced them. The constant prattle in his skull made him feel as though someone else were there. That he was not alone as he prowled, skulked, and hunted.

But deep down he knew this was not true. He **was** alone. He had always been alone. And it had been because of this loneliness, that he realized his own mind could provide the companionship he so desperately wanted. Why not? Even as a child, he knew he was the only one he could count on. The only one that would not leave. The only one he could confide in. The only one capable of rationalizing and understanding such lunacy. And therefore, the only one that knew the truth. His truth. His madness. Madness. He smiled at the word. Yes, perhaps his brain and body **were** separate. Perhaps he had been alone too long. Perhaps he was just deranged.

Probably.

*'The solitary figure continued his silent quest. Down the hall. Up the stairs. Around the corner. It was not necessary for him to think about where he was going. He knew where he was going. Every fiber of his being knew where he was going. Both his body **and** his brain. They knew. They knew because he went there every night. Every night that his presence was not required elsewhere.'*

There was a time when he was unnerved by his self-induced psychosis. Was he isolated because he was unbalanced, or was he unbalanced because he was isolated? His inner monologue swirled in seemingly endless circles attempting to reach a conclusion. Or at least it used to. Until the moment he finally came to a realization. There

was no correct answer to that question. Either way, he was still isolated and unbalanced. Therefore, the catalyst that brought the voices, and took his sanity was unimportant.

'The solitary figure reached his destination. Even in the darkness he could read the sign marking the door. 'Hermione Granger, Head Girl.' For the second time that evening, a smile crossed his lips. His new fascination was just beyond the oak and metal in front of him. He breathed in deeply. He could smell her. Intoxicating. Stimulating. Overwhelming. Even her smell was more satisfying than his own thoughts. He reached for the door instinctively. Eager. He was ready to see her. And she was waiting for him. Even if she didn't know it.'

The air around him crackled as the wards on the door lowered. One of the few benefits of teaching. Trust. Professors needed to be able to reach students. And Hogwarts trusted its Professors implicitly. It was for this reason that he was able to violate her privacy so easily. To enter her sanctuary. As her professor, it was his privilege. As her stalker, it was his pleasure.

'The solitary figure entered the room in complete silence. He didn't want to wake her. Not yet. Tonight was to be special. He closed the door silently, and could feel the gooseflesh as it raised on the back of his neck. Whether from nervousness or anticipation he did not know. He sat next to her on the bed. Her deep breathing reassured him that she was still sleeping. For now. He looked down at her. His need.'

Just like the madness, he could not pinpoint the exact moment that **this** had begun. This fixation. Infatuation. Compulsion. She was all he thought about. All he cared to think about. She was all he wanted. No. Needed. He needed her. He was haunted by her. He knew he didn't love her. He was not capable of love. His parents beat that into him years ago. Snapes do not love. A family mantra. But that did not matter. He did not need to love her. He just needed to consume her. She was his reality.

He reminisced about his past visits to the Head Girl's asylum. Asylum. The word lingered in his mind as he thought about the last few months. After the Dark Lord had been defeated, he had nothing to occupy his time. Nothing to keep his mind off of, well, his mind. He had started following her as a distraction, a hobby. A way to spend his time and keep his espionage skills sharp, should they be needed again. But the more he followed her, the more he thought about her. And the more he thought about her, the less he thought about his loneliness. And the less he thought about his loneliness, the less he heard from the voices in his head. And it was nice. To have your head all to yourself. He didn't want it to end. He no longer wanted to share the space with voices. And from what he could tell, she was the remedy to his disease. When he was around her, the voices were gone. So, it stood to reason that if he could have more of her, the voices would not come back.

And so it began. The first few times he entered her room, he watched her. All night he sat by her bed and gazed at her as she slept. Absorbing her. The way she looked. The way she smelled. The sounds she made.

And he was content. Content to steal her essence from the air.

But all too soon it was not enough. It was not enough to see, smell, and hear her. The voices were returning. They needed more. He needed more. He needed to taste and touch her. He told himself that if he could taste and touch her, he would be cured. That it would be enough. And so it continued. He allowed his fingers and tongue to graze her form. Ever so light. Ever so fake. His mock caresses.

And again he was content, stealing her essence from her flesh.

But with time, his need for her grew. And the voices returned. And there was something new. Anger. Anger at himself. Anger at the voices. Anger at her. Why did she not need him like he needed her? Why should he alone suffer with madness, while her skull was free from intruders? Why did she torture him? Why would she not cure him permanently? He needed more. He needed to ingest her. To be with her. To be in her. And so it progressed. He took her. Forced himself on her. In her. He had not known she was a virgin. But it did not matter. Perhaps her maidenhood would satisfy the voices. Her sacrifice would be his salvation. He called on her every night. Dishonoring her with each visit.

Most nights she would cry. He did not take happiness in her crying, though it did not sadden him either. He knew that her tears would be his sanity. And he knew that the voices relished in her sorrow. Other nights, instead of crying, she lay perfectly still. Frozen, as though petrified. Perhaps willing him to be gone or pretending he was not there. But some nights, rare as though they were, some nights she responded wantonly. And those nights were his favorite. The nights that she enjoyed his attentions. The nights that she gifted her essence, and he did not have to steal it. He wished that she could remember those nights. That he could let her remember those nights. But he could not. He could not let her remember any of the nights. So each morning, with a quick 'obliviate', he would erase her memory, and return her innocence. Only he would know that she spent her nights giving him absolution. And only he would know that some nights she enjoyed it.

And for awhile he had been content, stealing her essence from within.

'The solitary figure looked down at her face again. There would be crying tonight. Tonight would be special. Different. It was a good night for crying. Maybe for screaming. Yes. Definitely a good night for screaming.'

He shook his head again. The voices had returned. They were strong. And cruel. Always referring to him as 'solitary figure'. Always reminding him that he was alone. Always telling him that they were his only friends. He sighed. Some friends. He would rather be friends with Potter than endure this mental 'friendship' another day. He needed to do this soon. He needed to silence the voices. This time it would be different. This time it would be permanent.

He had engineered a plan of escape over the last few days, as his torment progressed to the point of dementia. He could no longer tell his own thoughts from the voices. It confused him even more when he remembered that the voices had been his own thoughts all along. It was so much easier to pretend that they were someone else, and that he merely allowed them to visit. But now, it felt as though they were in command. And he was the visitor.

The thoughts and voices flooded his consciousness. Eating away at him. There was no escape. His headaches were monumental. He was at a loss as to how he taught his classes. Was he even teaching classes? He remembered giving a lecture, but he could not remember when. It might have been this morning. But it felt like it was yesterday. Maybe school was not even in session. Was it summer holiday? No. That's not right. He could see students. Perhaps it was the weekend, and that is why he did not teach class today. Possibly. Maybe this was all just a bad dream. A horrible, loathsome, endless nightmare. Some after affect of a mind altering potion he took in high school. Unlikely.

Even now the voices plagued him. Melting his brain like acid. Devouring the last of his sanity. Tormenting, taunting, teasing. There was no escape. No relief. Eternal damnation between his ears.

He shook his head again, and then frowned when he realized how many times he had done that this evening. It was not like him to become accustomed to such a habit. He was known for being calm, detached, and calculating. The epitome of 'grace under pressure.' However, even if that had been true in the past, it was not true anymore. He was deteriorating quickly. He needed to finish this. He needed out of this personal hell.

'The solitary figure reached towards the girl, magically removing her clothes. She lay on the bed in sleep. A nude farce of a lover. Her peaceful rest mocking his pain. Reminding him of what he could not be. Her ignorance feeding his resentment He positioned himself over her, anticipating their union. With a bitter fist, he backhanded the side of her cheek. Splitting her lip. Releasing her blood. She awoke with a cry, and he entered her in one brutal motion. Violently pumping away his frustrations. The beginning of the end. He smiled when he realized that tonight there would be no 'Obliviate'. It would not be needed.'

His fist connected with her face again and again. He needed to be rid of her. To be rid of the voices. This was the only way. Over and over again he reassured himself. The only way. The only way. She was crying. He expected it. The voices wanted it. But, she was not screaming. This surprised him. He needed her to scream. There would be no release without screaming. He calmed himself when he realized she would be screaming soon enough. He could make her scream. He **would** make her scream. It was the only way.

He could feel the hard steel against his skin. Waiting. With each thrust, the cold blade reminded him of its presence. Reminded him of what needed to be done. What would

be done. He thought he perceived a lone voice telling him to stop, that this was wrong. But it was gone before he could be sure it was there. The other voices censoring it's speech. Chanting for him to continue. Telling him what to do. Completely in control. He was at their mercy. She was at their mercy. Mercy. Ha. Unlikely.

'The solitary figure unsheathed the dagger, hidden on his back. It was intimidating. At least twelve inches in length. Smooth on one side, serrated on the other. He held it high, allowing the moonlight to reflect from its surface. He could see the terror in her eyes, as her fate became clear. He could hear the terror in her voice, when she screamed for clemency.'

He allowed her to scream for several moments before plunging his knife into her gut. Deep. He twisted the blade. Her screams of terror turned into screams of anguish and agony. Torture. Not since the days of the Dark Lord had he heard such screaming. It was brutal in its intensity. It was enough for his needs. Perhaps even too much. Every scream burned him inside. Somewhere deep. As deep as her wound. His soul? His heart? Maybe he was capable of love after all.

Doubtful.

He plunged his blade into her throat, silencing her. Cries gave way to gurgles, as the blood pooled around her body. He bathed his hands in the redness. Liquid deliverance. If he could have drowned himself in it, he would have. But he couldn't. Wouldn't. Too craven to do unto himself as he did unto others.

He could feel the last of her essence fade as the door flew open. They were here. The end was here. At last he would be liberated. He knew they would take him to those that could grant his freedom. Soon. He could picture it in his mind's eye. Angels of justice, clothed in midnight. Their skeletal hands, reaching for him. Welcoming him. Sweet relief. He could almost feel their lips pressed against his. Dead. Scabbed.

Kissing the voices from his head.
