

# Where You Belong

*by selinabl*

It's the evening before Umbridge's final hearing and Severus realizes something important.

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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It was past midnight as Severus raised his tired eyes from Umbridge's case file, running a hand over his face. They had worked for days to prepare the Order's statement for the final hearing tomorrow.

His gaze traveled to the young partner who Minerva had assigned him for the whole endeavor. A ghost of a smile touched his lips.

Hermione's head was resting on the book she had been reading, brown curls spilling over the surface of the table. Her hand still clutched the quill, although she was apparently sound asleep, her calm breathing filling the silence of Spinner's End.

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Without a sound, he rose from the armchair, moving to stand beside her. Warmth unfurled in his chest at the sight of her peaceful slumber, and long fingers couldn't resist reaching out and brushing an unruly strand of hair from her cheek, baring her profile to his gaze.

Dark lashes graced her rosy skin, while the soft waves of her lips were curved into a slight smile; only those lines around her mouth betrayed the hardships of war she had endured.

It was unsettling how everything about this young woman had become beautiful to him, now that their cooperation ended.

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He knew he should wake her. He had done it before. But he couldn't—not tonight. She needed a few hours of undisturbed rest. The hearing would start early in the morning.

Careful, he lifted her into his arms, holding her securely as he climbed upstairs. But his legs nearly failed him as he felt her snuggle into the crook of his neck, her warm breath tickling his skin with a content sigh.

"Mmh... nice, Severus."

“Hush, little nuisance. Sleep.”

As he was sure she would, he inhaled deeply—once, twice, fighting the surging desire that seared his soul.

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Long moments passed before he entered the semi-darkness of her bedroom. Gently, he laid her sleeping form on the sheets, and cold night air assaulted his chest immediately, covering the remaining tracks of her warmth. Regret filled his eyes as they lingered on her face, a face he had become so fond of.

Their work was done. Tomorrow, she would return to where she belonged, and that wasn't Spinner's End, that wasn't with him. And he would have to let her go. Leaning down, he placed a kiss on her forehead, unspoken emotion constricting his heart.

“Good night, Mrs. Weasley.”