

Macushla

by neelix

This is a song-inspired fic featuring Hermione and Severus. It's only short but I hope you like it all the same!

Chapter One

Chapter 1 of 3

This is a song-inspired fic featuring Hermione and Severus. It's only short but I hope you like it all the same!

A/N: This story was inspired by the Irish folk song Macushla, originally recorded by John McCormack but now being sung by Rufus Wainwright on his live tours. This is a short fic in 3 short chapters, so if you have the time, listen to the song on youtube first - it's beautiful!

Macushla, Macushla your sweet voice is calling

calling me softly again and again

Macushla, Macushla I hear it's dear pleading

my blue-eyed Macushla, I hear it in vain

'You know what will happen,' she sobbed as she flung herself against his robes and gripped at the fabric with her tight fists.

Severus sighed and shuddered as he felt her pain washing through him and mingling with his own.

He had known it was foolish. He had warned her as much. But her beguiling smile and her willing lips had persuaded him otherwise, and for a few weeks at most, they had lived in their own impenetrable bubble. Sometimes, when they had lain together, and she had accepted him within her willingly and enthusiastically, he had allowed himself to believe, to hope, to think of a different future. He should have realised that it was fantasy, and he should have stopped it before it became too late. But it was too late for Severus before it had even begun. He had known he was lost the minute she had tipped her face to his.

He gazed down at her and stroked her chestnut hair softly, feeling her relax into his chest and wrap her gentle arms around him. She took a deep breath, and her tears dried as suddenly as they had started. She extracted herself sheepishly as she rubbed the dampness from her cheeks.

'Forgive me,' she said, her eyes meeting his and flashing slightly.

'Nothing to forgive,' he said stiffly, his lips set in a thin line. He could see the mixed emotions on her face, and he knew that the warrior within her was fighting to win some inner battle. 'But we always knew it would come to this, Hermione,' he said, his voice a little softer.

'I always wished for something else,' she said, and she turned to lift her cloak from the chair where she had placed it the day before. Slowly, she wrapped the cloak around her shoulders and took a small step towards the door of the cottage. Turning, she looked up at him with her jaw set and her eyes defiant.

'We will meet here again?' she said, her voice clear and light. It wasn't as much a question as an affirmation, but still, Severus didn't know what to say to her.

'I will return, if it is possible to do so,' he stated, his voice slightly hoarse.

'So will I, Severus,' she whispered, and a small smile twitched at her lips. Then she turned and walked out of the door, closing it quietly and keeping the brisk draft from entering the small home they had occasionally shared.

Severus watched her from the window. As she always did before leaving, she stood at the edge of the cliff and stared out to sea for a moment, watching the sunrise as if committing it to memory. The wind was whipping her hair and blowing her cloak around her, and Severus felt a surge of pride. *She looks like a Valkyrie*, he thought to himself. As she turned to leave, her eyes met his through the glass. They stared at each other for a short moment, until Severus could bear it no longer and moved away from the window.

He heard the slight crack as she Disapparated away from him.

Hermione waited until the boys were occupied and walked quickly back to the tent, her arms full of sticks. Harry raised his eyes to her briefly.

'I wondered where you were,' he said.

'Gathering wood,' Hermione murmured, keeping her eyes averted carefully.

'What's for breakfast?' Ron asked, his eyes bright.

Hermione dropped the wood at her feet and shook her head slightly before ducking into the tent quickly. She closed her eyes and bit her lip tightly to stop it from trembling, and mouthed Severus's name silently.

Thanks to kizzy7 for sorting out my appalling grammar and comma fetish!

Chapter Two

Chapter 2 of 3

This is a song-inspired fic featuring Hermione and Severus. It's only short but I hope you like it all the same!

Macushla, Macushla your white arms are reaching

I feel them enfolding, caressing me still

fling them out from the darkness my lost love Macushla

let them find me, and bind me again if they will

Severus opened his eyes, and he gasped as awareness flooded his senses. There was excruciating pain, and there was blood. He could feel it trickling down the side of his neck and the throb of his veins pulsing as they pumped his life from him. His fingers probed the wound a little, and he squeezed his eyes closed, panting slightly. Beads of sweat were forming on his brow and upper lip, and with strength he didn't know he had, he started to drag himself from the room and down the narrow tunnel.

It took him almost twenty minutes before he reached the entrance, and he paused to feel the air caress his cheeks. He could hear the sound of battle in the distance, but he knew he could do nothing to help in his current state. Trembling, he dragged himself to his feet, swaying for a moment, before taking a slow, deep breath. He focussed all of his energy on his destination and Apparated directly into the bedroom of the cottage.

Quickly, with trembling hands, he removed the stoppers from the potions he had lined up beside the bed and swallowed them. He sank down onto the mattress gratefully and rested his head on the pillow. His nostrils picked up the fragrance of Hermione's shampoo, and as he closed his eyes, her face swam in front of him, and he smiled sadly. He hoped he would be able to wake from the sleep washing over him. And he hoped she would be there if he did.

They stood in the Shrieking Shack and stared at the place his body should be, and Hermione wanted to shout with joy.

He's alive, she thought. *Alive. Alive.* Over and over, the mantra chanted in her head.

She needed to get to the cottage, but before she could run and Apparate there, Ron and his decidedly sweaty hands were pulling her back to Hogwarts. Her eyes glazed over as she went through the motions, the only reality being her grief at the loss of her friends.

'Drink this,' someone had said, pushing a steaming mug of something into her hands. She had sipped obediently, not tasting, not feeling, her mind a pool of chaos as she tried to find a way of escape.

Being one third of the Golden Trio made her more conspicuous than normal, and where one was, the others were expected to be also. She cursed Severus for making the cottage Unplottable. She couldn't even owl him and check on his well-being. Damn it, she didn't even know for certain that he was there, but she had to check. And if he wasn't there, she would wait. He would come. She knew it.

The funerals took place, even for the missing, presumed dead. Two days after the final battle, she attended his funeral without knowing the truth. She didn't grieve, for in her heart she knew he was still breathing. She almost imagined that she could feel him close to her. But she still felt numb because of her absence from him, and the knot in her stomach was growing larger and more persistent with each hour.

'Harry,' she touched his arm softly, and he turned to her, his face pale but calm.

'You're going?' he murmured under his breath, his eyes casting sidelong glances towards Ron, who was standing close to Molly.

Hermione's eyes widened, and she started to stutter. 'I, em, well. Space. I need some space,' she said in a whisper.

'Thank him for me,' Harry said softly.

Hermione stared back at him for a moment. Now was not the time for explanations. She nodded and slipped away quietly around the back of the gathered throng and heard Harry's voice rising slightly as he distracted the others with a memory of Fred. Silently, Hermione made a mental note to thank him for covering for her.

The realisation that she was free at last made her break into a sprint, and she Apparated as soon as she was beyond the castle gates.

Reviews are always helpful. And another hug to kizzy7... she's the fastest beta in the west!

Chapter Three

Chapter 3 of 3

This is a song-inspired fic featuring Hermione and Severus. It's only short but I hope you like it all the same!

Macushla, Macushla your red lips are saying

That death is a dream and love is for aye

Then awaken Macushla, awake from your dreaming

My blue eyed Macushla awaken to stay.

There was a nip in the air, and as Hermione landed on the cliff top, she wrapped the cloak around her tightly. She was always surprised by how blowy this particular outcrop seemed to get, and she wondered if it would be the same in the summer months. There were stars twinkling above the cottage, and the noise of the sea roaring and crashing against the rocks below faded as she approached the weather-beaten door slowly.

There was stillness to the place, and she paused before placing her hand on the rusty metal handle. Her whole life, her whole future, depended on what was within, and she held her breath as she entered.

The small room was cold, and she knew with sinking reality that no fire had been lit in recent days. There was no sign that this room had been occupied since her last visit. A thin layer of dust coated the kitchen table, and the old wooden clock on the mantle needed winding.

Hermione sighed deeply and walked towards the bedroom, pushing the door open roughly. Her hand flew to her mouth as she stared at the bed, and she walked quickly over to Severus's side, her hand reaching out tentatively. His blood was on the pillow, and his potion bottles were empty. He had been here. But he wasn't here now.

Hermione ran her hands through her windswept hair, and with a beating heart, she proceeded to change the bedclothes and tidy the cottage. She worked through the night, sweeping out all of the small corners, hanging the dusty rugs on the garden fence, and letting the wind do her job for her. She chopped wood until her hands blistered, and she set a roaring fire in the grate. It was not the time of year for flowers, but she pulled up some of the more interesting grasses from the surrounding dunes and spelled them to sparkle in the chipped glass vase. She placed the vase on the kitchen table, then proceeded to open what tins she could find and set about making soup, oblivious to the sun as it started to rise over the horizon. Placing a warming charm over the soup, Hermione crawled, exhausted, into bed.

He berated himself for leaving the cottage. He should have just waited for Hermione, but he had needed to know if she had survived, and he hadn't wanted to wait. His potions had run out, and his blood loss had made him weak. Apparating to Hogwarts had been a very bad idea, and he had vomited and almost fainted on landing. He used his last reserves of energy to Disillusion himself. He was thankful that no one had seen his tears of joy and gratitude as he saw her and watched her mourn for those lost in the battle.

He saw her slip away and followed her at a slight distance, until she had started to run. He had no hope of catching up with her in his weakened state, so he had slipped inside the castle and Flooed back to Spinner's End, where he had collapsed onto the old moth-eaten couch and fallen asleep almost immediately.

Severus awoke and stretched uncomfortably, rubbing his hair from his eyes and inhaling his first morning breath. The air in the house was stale, and he needed to get out of there as soon as possible. He knew the place was most likely being watched by one enemy or another. He stood slowly and then walked to his private stores. The Blood Replenishing potion was almost out, and he knew he would need more. But for now, he just needed to enough to get himself to the cottage.

He paused and thought of Hermione, and his stomach flipped over. Had she stayed? She had promised to wait for him. He promised she wouldn't have to wait any longer, and swallowed the potion quickly.

Severus Disillusioned himself and stepped through the Floo to the Three Broomsticks. He walked slowly through the crowd; some were still celebrating Voldermort's downfall, some drowning their sorrows. No one noticed him brushing past them, and he slipped out of the door unnoticed. He didn't glance around himself as he walked through Hogsmeade. He had no desire to remember it, although he knew he wouldn't be returning any time soon. His focus was on one place and one person, and as he

reached the Apparition point, he smiled to himself.

She was sleeping. He gazed down at her for a long time and marvelled at the way her eyelashes sat just beneath her lower lids, caressing her face. Her mouth was slightly parted, and in the half-light, they looked darker than normal. He had never seen anything quite as perfect, and he sighed deeply as he sat down beside her and took her hand in his.

She shifted slowly, and her eyelids opened suddenly to stare at him. Her fingers curled around his, and she squeezed tightly, saying nothing. They looked at each other for a long time, sharing shy smiles until Hermione started to laugh, her head thrown back with joy. She pulled him down beside her and kissed him fiercely before snuggling under his arm and forcing him to hold her. Severus sighed and closed his eyes.

The End

My thanks to kizzy7 for her prompt beta'ing and endless enthusiasm. You're a star, honey!