

Winter's Sweet Relief

by DarkFate

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: I own nothing but the plot. Disregard HBP and DH. Hermione is of age in this story and has long been out of Hogwarts; her actual age is irrelevant.

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Her lips had taken on a bluish hue, and her cheeks were red as cherries as the crisp winter air swirled around her. Her robes swept about her dramatically as her snow-covered hair whipped mercilessly in the cold wind. She stood alone on the field, the majestic castle of Hogwarts looming behind her. She knew not the time and felt not the cold; she could feel nothing but the icy case that seemed to enclose her heart. It had been nine long years, yet the anguished cries of her only child still rang clearly in her ears. She had lost everything: her child, her husband, her life... all for the "greater good" of this world.

Yet while she had lost so much, those around her seemed to have gained, now that the war had finally come to an end and peace was restored. The victory was neither as clean nor as easy as the books sensationalized. No; what most didn't realize was that once the Dark Lord was defeated, it had taken years to remove the threat of his followers. She knew, as few others did, what a slippery bunch they had been. It was as though the Death Eaters faded into the background, silently slipping away into whatever aliases they had previously used as disguise. Yet at last peace was allowed to prevail, but it came with a cost, one too high for even the bravest and strongest of people to withstand.

She suffered in this new era of peace and freedom while all those around her rejoiced and started to rebuild their lives. She should have been among them, building a life of love and happiness, free from the constant threat of death that seemed to have been hanging over her for most of her life. But no, she was left to her miseries as her friends and colleagues started families and pursued their dreams. Any dreams and ambitions she had seemed to have died with *him*.

"Him" being the man she loved, her beloved, her husband, her saviour. He who had given his life for "The Cause". He who never failed her, who was looked down upon always, and whose loyalty was questioned constantly. No matter what he did, it was never enough for them; even in death they questioned his devotion. Yet she never did. Not once in all their acquaintance had she ever doubted him, his honour, or his loyalty. He was everything she could have ever wanted in a man, a husband and a father.

Their path to each other was not easy, nor was it safe. Even after they realized their feelings for each other, they struggled. Life was not made easy or simple for them, for even after marriage they were scorned for their love. Those who knew her best found her choice to be with him incomprehensible. Yet she paid them no heed. In time the others came to understand, or at least accept their love for each other.

However, it was not until the arrival of their beautiful daughter that the others truly accepted them. For how could they scorn the parents of such an angelic child, a child

who brought joy into the lives of everyone she touched? Their daughter, Eva, was as pure as pure could be, loving and sweet, carefree and beautiful. She was the light of their lives. Everything about her radiated joy and love. She was the perfect mix of both her parents in both looks and personality. She had a beautiful head of inky black curls and large almond-shaped, onyx-coloured eyes. While she was a spitting image of her father (with the exception of the nose, of course), she had all the spirit and inquisitiveness of her mother. If there was ever perfection in a child, it was in her, and as all perfect things are fated to be, she was destroyed.

Eva met her end too soon, for she was murdered in the most brutal and terrible way possible. Having only just turned five, that sweet angel left this world. She was with her mother when they were both kidnapped by Death Eaters. They were beaten and tortured mercilessly for days on end. Held in a tiny, dank cell, she and her mother could do nothing but sit and wait desperately to be rescued. Eva would cry agonisingly, begging for her father, for the pain to stop; and her poor mother could do nothing but lie helplessly, listening to her daughter's pleas for salvation. She could do nothing to protect her baby, could do nothing but pray that someone would come soon, would find them before it was too late. Every night she would hold her daughter in her arms, singing her to sleep and promising that daddy would come find them soon.

He came; after months of searching furiously, he found them. Yet for all his labours, he was too late. Too late to save his little girl, yet thankfully in time to save his wife. For an instant he had thought her to be dead, as she lay there, sprawled out on the cold floor, bleeding profusely but stubbornly clinging to the fragment of life she had left. Fury blazed in his soul as his eyes raked over the tiny cell that she occupied. All coherent thought, anger or otherwise dissolved at the overwhelming horror that met his eyes.

He crumbled to the floor at the sight before him. There on the dungeon floor lay what remained of his baby's body. She lay crumpled, contorted, and mutilated on the ground, left to rot without a care. It was no wonder that his wife was sprawled as far away from their daughter as she could get. Her cruel tormentors had left her daughter's body to rot as an added form of torture and torment to a mother who had already lost her will to live.

Yet she recovered in time, at least physically, though the anguished screams and desperate pleas of her daughter still echoed relentlessly in her mind. The couple struggled to hold themselves together as they continued to fight the war that had claimed their child's life. Days turned to years, and her nightmares diminished but never left her completely. Many a night she would wake up in a cold sweat from another dream-memory of what had happened in that cell. Her husband could do nothing but comfort her, and in time, Eva's death became a dull ache that, while never forgotten, did not hinder their lives as it once did.

Four years later after months and years of careful planning, endless war, and senseless killing the end finally drew near. The battle was as bloody as it was gruesome, raging for hours on end. At last, with an air of finality, the Chosen One, his faithful friends by his side, struck down the Dark Lord.

The reign of darkness had finally come to an end.

The trio turned to each other in triumph, only to behold a sight that would forever be embedded in their minds. There, in the centre of a ring of Death Eaters, stood her husband, Severus Snape. She watched in horror, time seeming to stand still, as he crumpled to his knees and fell. Nearly twenty curses had hit him simultaneously; the most notable, the deadly green flash. Her heart twisted painfully as his eyes caught hers before he fell.

In a fit of anguished rage, she let her magic take control. She single-handedly wiped out all twenty Death Eaters who circled her fallen husband's body. No one dared approach her as she collapsed next to him, racked with heart-wrenching sobs. She held the body of her dead love and cried for hours, long after the battle had ended.

This is what found her, five years later, outside in the bitter cold with naught but a cloak to keep her warm. What use would it be? The cold could not touch her, for she was already numb with grief, inconsolable in her pain. Her friends had tried valiantly to comfort her, help her deal with her loss, but it soon became apparent that she would not recover in the near future. So they let her be, allowing her to mourn in peace. She had once been a spirited and joyful young woman, yet now all that remained was a tortured soul, one who had lost all she held dear. She was a shadow of what she once was, and nothing could be done to bring her back.

A week later, her friends had been out looking for her, with no luck. Her bouts of silence and solitude were common, yet her best friend had an uneasy feeling. He was right. After several hours of searching the school grounds, they found her. She lay there, seemingly asleep, covered in delicate snowflakes. Her skin was blue, her wild hair strewn about her on the cold frozen ground. She the one who turned the tide in the war, the driving force who orchestrated the Dark Lord's fall lay frozen in the snow, lost to the world, but at peace at last.

Her friends mourned her for years, but knew that her time had come. She had fulfilled her duty to the Order and accomplished her goal of helping end the Dark Lord's reign. Her friends saw to it that she was buried with her family by her husband's side. Her legacy was never forgotten; her figure graced the halls of many a building, as she was revered for her bravery, brilliance, love, devotion and loyalty. Yet she was not remembered as just the nameless friend of the Chosen One, no... She would forever be remembered as she had been Hermione Snape.

Thanks for reading, leave a review please!