

Saving Grace

by luvsev

Hermione saves Severus' life.

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Chapter 1 of 2

Hermione saves Severus' life.

Night had well and truly fallen as his shaking body lay on the dusty floor of the pitiful shack. The moonlight shone through a shattered window and gleamed on the blood pooling near his neck. Shameful. What a shameful way to die: all alone and not knowing if his sacrifice had been for naught.

Please... please don't let it end this way. Don't I deserve better than this? Maybe not... It's only befitting I receive a traitor's death. Betrayed by the Dark and condemned by the Light, and this is how it ends.

Once the shaking in his now frail body subsided, his vision began to dim. Light from the earthly realm was fading fast, and all he could do was close his eyes. His battle with Light and Dark was over, so he gave in and shut out the world. His fight was over at last.

Not a single star dared to light the midnight sky as a chill swept over the well-kept grounds of Hogwarts. A young woman, bedraggled and battle-worn, crept through the darkness and into the village of Hogsmeade. Her strides were slow but purposeful; she had one last thing to do before her night would finally be over.

She entered the rickety shack and climbed the stairs to where she knew he would be. When she opened the splintered door, the stench of blood and layered dirt hit her nostrils, and the scene before her made her drop to her knees. There he was, her former professor, lying helplessly amidst tattered furniture. Blood pooled around his severe-looking robes whilst his body remained motionless. It took all of her power not to wail out her grief.

She crawled to him and bent her head to his chest to listen for a heartbeat. There was a faint flutter, but it was fleeting fast. His life was passing as she knelt beside him, and if she didn't act quickly, he would die without knowing he had succeeded at the one thing he strove for: the fall of the Dark Lord.

Withdrawing her wand from the back pocket of her trousers, she pointed the tip at her fallen professor's neck and began to sing a low, melodic incantation to heal the rip in his throat. The complex wand movement and power required nearly drained her, but she kept on. Once the wound was healed, she quickly found the cobalt-coloured potion she had tucked into her robe.

Pulling the cork out of the phial, she tipped the contents down his throat. Immediately, he began to sputter and cough up the icy liquid.

What can this be? I thought I had died... I felt myself move on to a peaceful place, a place where there was no more pain or torment. Yet, here I am. Someone saw fit not to let me rot.

'Professor, can you hear me? If you can, I need you to open your eyes for me,' she said as she waved a silent cleaning charm over his bloodied robes.

What a soft, feminine voice. It almost has a mellifluous quality to it. Maybe I should listen to her; after all, she is the one who saved me.

She saw his eyes flutter briefly before they closed again. 'Sir, open your eyes. I need you to look at me.'

Her voice is so lovely and soothing; I could lie here and listen to her forever. She's right; I need to look at her. I need to see who saved me.

This time, his eyes fully opened for her.

'Good job, sir. Now, let me get you someplace safe.'

Curly hair the colour of chestnuts, eyes like the deepest, warmest honey, and the voice of an angel... it must be Miss Granger. I should have known if anyone would come back for me, it would be her.

Where is she taking me? Surely she must know I'm a wanted man. Anyone who loved Dumbledore would murder me. She should have let me die. I would have rather died from a snake bite than be tortured by one of my enemies.

'Please, Hermione...' he said so softly she barely caught it.

She saw him tense up as she lifted him into a standing position. 'Relax, sir. I'm not taking you to St. Mungo's. I've healed you, so there is no reason for you to go there. I think you really need a place to lie low until Harry gets things smoothed over. In fact, I have a friend who would be willing to help you.'

She's going to make things better for me to return?

Hermione handed him a piece of paper with something scribbled on it.

Reading it quickly, he asked, 'What is this?'

She looked up at him with a flicker of a smile on her face. 'It's the address of a friend of mine. He knows of the war and the subsequent actions you have had to take. He sympathises with you and is willing to help.'

It's apparent she thought this out. Wait a minute... she knows? Did Potter share my memories with her? How could there have been time?

'How do I know he won't...'

'Professor, I've trusted you when all evidence pointed to your guilt; now I need you to trust me in return. I wouldn't send you to someone who would cause you harm.' Her face flushed as she looked at him with pleading eyes.

How can I refuse her after all she's done? If she wanted to harm me, she would have never come back for me.

'I trust you, Hermione.'

'You'll probably want to go now, sir.'

Actually, I don't want to leave right now. I want to find some way of thanking her.

'Hermione, would you sit with me for a while? I'm not quite ready to leave.'

He led her over to the tatty, green couch with foam sticking out of the arms and back, and they both sat down. As Hermione settled in, he pulled her against him and felt her lean into his chest. For a long time, they merely sat in companionable silence until they fell asleep.

After an endless night, a new day broke, and sunlight streamed in on the sleeping forms of Hermione and Severus, who were curled into each other with legs and arms entwined.

As Severus awoke from his night with Hermione, he couldn't help but feel content. It was the first truly peaceful night he'd ever had.

'Hermione,' he said softly, trying to wake her.

'Yes?'

'I need to go now, and you should return to your friends. They'll be worried.'

They both rose from their positions on the couch and shared an awkward moment. Neither had any words for the night they had spent together.

I still don't want to leave her, but I have to. It's for the best, really.

'Will I see you again, sir?'

'It's Severus, not sir. Yes, you will see me again.' When he finished speaking, he bent to take her into his embrace, but met her lips instead.

His thinner lips gently touched hers in a moment of unexpected bliss. They kissed lightly, enjoying the experience of connectedness for a few moments before he reluctantly pulled away.

'Hermione,' he breathed. 'I have to go, but I will come back for you, I promise.'

When it is safe for me to return, Hermione, I will come for you. I can't leave you forever.

Just as he was ready to walk out the door, he turned around for one last look at her. She was smiling brightly at him, and for the first time in his life, there was hope.

A/N: Thanks go to my incomparable beta, kittylefish. Also, this is written for my dear friend, karelia. Dear, you do so much for us, so it is only fitting you get a little something in return. I hope you enjoy!

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Chapter 2 of 2

Severus makes his return to Hermione after two years.

Severus,

I'll never forget your smile, your kiss, or the way you looked at me as you walked away. When our lips met for a moment of perfect bliss, I knew I would never love another. My heart was yours the night we slept in each other's arms. I was content to have one moment of peace—of true happiness before everything would become more complicated in the months ahead.

Watching you leave, not knowing when I would see you again was quite possibly the hardest thing I have ever done. I knew you had to leave for your own safety, but I wanted you to stay with me more than anything. I wanted to hold you, to protect you, to love you, to cherish you, and to let you know there was a reason I rescued you from death's firm grip.

Although you promised you would return when it was safe, I wondered if it was true. Would you really want to come back to a world where you were vilified? Would I be worth what someone would do to you?

So much time has passed, Severus. Two years have gone by since I last saw you in the rickety shack, and it's been a difficult road. The path to clearing your name has not been an easy one. I battled in court to get them to see who you really are: an honourable man who has spent his life walking the perilous line between Light and Dark so our world would be safe. I tried to make them see how you had forfeited your life the night you were asked to be a spy. Harry and I gave all the evidence we had in your favour, and we waited for the verdict. The decision came down today, and they have exonerated you. After all of the struggling, it's finally over; I can't believe it.

Your exoneration was the easiest part; however, changing public opinion was a monumental task, and it's not something I'd ever like to experience again. For the most part, it should be safe for you to return if you choose to do so, but there are some who still think you deserve death.

I miss you, and I hope you will choose to return.

Hermione

Severus perched on the edge of his overstuffed, emerald-green sofa with his head in his hands *I can't believe she did it. She, along with Potter, actually helped me gain the freedom I've never had. For the first time, my life is my own.*

Placing the folded letter in the pocket of his wrinkled, black trousers, Severus Disapparated. Arriving in Hermione's exotic garden, he made his way to the back door.

A heavy thudding could be heard throughout Hermione's house as she hurried down the stairs with a towel in her still-dripping hair *I wonder who's here? Probably just Harry or Ginny, or maybe Draco. It's sort of late for any of them though.*

Wrenching open the sturdy, grey back door, her gaze fell upon the man she hadn't seen in nearly two years. He looked the same as he did before, only now there was a healthy glow to his skin and a smile curved his lips.

'Severus, I... I didn't think you'd return after everything.' Hermione touched Severus's face and traced over his full bottom lip.

Severus took her hand away from his mouth and held it tightly in his. 'How could I not return? All I want is right here.'

'I just thought—'

'Hush now.' Severus softly kissed her. 'You have no idea how long I've wanted to kiss you.'

A/N: Thanks go to lyn_f for the quick beta.