

Hero

by Hanagasume

A woman on the bridge in Hogsmeade piques Severus Snape's interest. Everything, however, becomes complicated when he finds out the truth...OOO warning.

In Low Spirits

Chapter 1 of 4

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Kudos go to both Madbrilliant and Alliean for the beta of this fic.

The rain poured from the sky as if it would never cease, shadowing the land with great dark storm clouds and the general sense of gloom that accompanied it. It had been raining for nearly a week, and a wholly depressing week it had been. Not many people had tried to stray out of doors, choosing to remain holed-up in their houses, sitting by the fires with little else to do but eat, sleep, and talk. The local pubs were frequented more often during this time of the year, and were often quite full of men and women alike. It was acceptable for women to do such things in wizarding society.

The town whores usually got a lot more business during these times too hanging around the pubs and looking for easy prey. Generally they were banned from lingering in front of Rosmerta's, but it was too wet for anyone to care. Sometimes the women would leave of their own accord and loiter near the bridge instead. The bridge that night, however, held one solitary person with a bright red umbrella that stood out through the darkness. From a distance even, anyone could have guessed that it was a young woman, presumably looking to find a bed to warm.

Not so far away, a man beneath a black umbrella emerged from the local pub, shaking off the loose women who attempted to compromise him and stalking off grumpily. It had been a very bad week. He went in for a pint and ended up having a whiskey instead, and left as soon as he could, unable to stand the camaraderie in the establishment any longer. One would think those people didn't have a home to go to or a family to take care of, or something of that description. He snorted mentally. He certainly didn't, so what should he care?

Severus Snape hastily beat a solitary path through the rain and back towards his home back to Hogwarts, where the silence and solace could be found in his books and privacy. He didn't know what had driven him out of there in the first place. He had plenty of whiskey in his room; what did he care for the excitement and clamor of a pub? And not just any pub, but the Three Broomsticks at that.

He sighed and continued on, knowing that he would never quite figure out why he had done it, why he had left the castle. It was still the middle of a school term, and there were still students in the castle. He couldn't afford to just walk in intoxicated one day and run the risk of a student seeing him in that state. He would never live it down, and his control of the pupils would lessen significantly.

He was about to cross the bridge from the village to Hogwarts, when he saw a figure standing on the bridge with a red umbrella. She was simply standing there nothing more. Severus could practically taste her mood depression seeped from her pores. It was clearly a woman, and one who seemed relatively young. She was leaning right up against the railing, simply standing there and looking as though she would jump if anyone came along at the wrong moment. It was then that he realized what the

woman was preparing to do.

'If you intend to kill yourself, might I inform you that the water in this part of the river is far too shallow?' he said over the noise of the rain. 'It would be much more efficient to just Avada yourself.'

The woman started and stepped back from the rail, not looking at him, but lowering her head fractionally. 'Oh, believe me, sir, I wasn't intending to jump,' the woman said softly. 'I was just thinking that's all, but thank you for the advice.'

Severus simply nodded unbelievably. 'Why would you come out and stand in the rain on such a dreadful night? You'll catch your death of cold,' he said.

'Oh, you must think me terribly strange. I must look dreadfully sad for you to think that I might kill myself,' she said almost too quietly for him to hear. 'I like the sound of the rain here and the smell of the fresh water.'

Severus debated with himself for a moment, but curiosity won out, and he stepped closer, trying to make out who it was standing there looking so forlorn. What he saw surprised him greatly. It was Hermione Granger well, really she was Hermione Krum now. She was similar to the girl he had once taught, except that her hair was more manageable and fell in soft curls, her face was thinner, and she had dark circles under her eyes. She was, in a word, thin.

'Mrs. Krum, what a surprise to see you here,' he said softly, although he had no idea why he was being nice to her. It just seemed right.

'Professor Snape,' she said with a slight inclination of her head.

He simply stood next to her for a while, staring out at the rain falling into the river as she had been for too long that evening. Severus wondered for a moment, why he was still standing there with this young woman who was married to a man who he would not have picked for her. And then it dawned on him he did not want her to jump. Her death would have resulted in a waste of her intelligence, because she truly had been the most gifted student to ever pass through the halls of Hogwarts while he had been in tenure there.

'What brings you to the dreary Highlands this night?' he asked carefully.

'I really don't know. I suppose this has always been one of my favourite places, and I really just wanted to come back here. I don't suppose I'll ever come back here again though,' she replied almost sadly.

'Why would you not return if you claim to love it here so much?' he pressed.

'Oh, well, I really won't be here in Europe much longer. Victor is moving to the Americas and I am going with him. He wants nothing more to do with Europe, so there is no way I shall be able to return,' she answered. 'So I suppose this is it, Professor. I am glad I've been able to see you one last time before I leave. Please know that I really appreciated everything you have done for me.'

And with those parting words, she walked past him towards Hogsmeade and, if what she had just told him was true, out of his life forever. Severus couldn't bring himself to say a word. No matter how much he wanted to, the words just wouldn't come. She was leaving her friends and family, and her work? She was just going to leave with that bull-headed husband of hers, without considering any other options?

He looked up and saw her form and the red umbrella shrinking into the distance. Perhaps he would see her again one time? She wasn't so bad and had been his favourite student to teach, despite his initial annoyance at her when she had first arrived. She had become tolerable towards the end of her education. Maybe she would write to her friends, and he would be able to hear how she was faring there? Maybe she would remain in contact with Minerva, and he would hear of her exploits that way.

With a heavy sigh, he turned in the direction of Hogwarts and began walking slowly back to his peace and quiet. But now it would not be the same not after hearing the spot of back luck that Hermione Granger-Krum had now to face. She was trapped in a marriage where she had to do everything that her husband desired, even if what she did made her miserable. He thought she deserved better than that. Even Ronald Weasley or The-Boy-Who-Insisted-On-Living would have been a better choice than that self-important blockhead, Victor Krum.

He arrived at the castle and charmed the umbrella dry before heading down to the dungeons and slipping into his office. He went to the portrait of Salazar Slytherin that guarded that entry to his chambers, murmured his password, Belladonna, and passed through the portrait hole. The first thing that he noticed was that there was a fire roaring in his sitting room fireplace, and then he sensed another presence in the room another person.

'Ah, Severus, back I see,' said a familiar old voice from the armchair facing the fire. 'How is Hogsmeade this dreary night?'

'It was just fine, Headmaster,' he said, shrugging out of his long black coat and hanging it and the umbrella up on the stand beside the entrance.

He walked across the room and sat in an unoccupied armchair, not bothering to look at Albus and simply staring into the fire, pondering the last half hour of his life. It had all gone rather quickly, and he was amazed that it had even happened. Albus looked over at the pensive young man warily, wondering what the boy was thinking. He could usually tell, but this time, it was a distress that he was unfamiliar with concerning Severus Snape.

'What ails you this night, my friend?' he asked carefully.

'It is hardly any of my business to be ailed by it, Albus,' he replied. 'I really have no idea why it bothers me so, but it has come to my attention that Hermione Granger-Krum is leaving the country.'

'Ah, that unpleasant bit of business,' Albus said insightfully. 'I will admit that it has been on both Minerva's and my own mind for the past few days, and it is within the rights of people to be concerned no matter who they are. Hermione is a clever witch and to lose her is a terrible thing.'

'It is that bull-headed and unpleasant Krum, Albus. I can't help but to be frustrated that she would simply kowtow to his wishes,' Severus said shortly.

'She is a Gryffindor, Severus. She has a deep sense of duty, and because she is married to him, she would never go against him,' Albus said sadly. 'It is a shame that Mr. Krum would seek to separate her from her loved ones.'

'Shame indeed. That buffoon would be better off playing Quidditch again. His vampire chasing exploits have been hard on that girl, and now he seeks to remove her from everything she has ever known in order to satisfy his pursuits,' Severus spat, as if the knowledge had an unpleasant taste. 'He is selfish and cruel beyond reason to commit such a crime.'

Albus nodded. 'I only wish I had been able to stop Hermione from marrying that man out of duty. She never truly loved him she only married for the sake of her parents' admiration of the boy. I can't imagine that they will think too highly of him now, however.'

Severus stared at Albus for a while and then looked back at the fire. It was ridiculous that he would be in this state of mind, but he did not want Granger no, Hermione to do this. He would think of her as Hermione now and call her that. She was no longer his student, and seeing her as an adult would help him to think straighter. She had a lot of potential and could have put it to use here, but now even that was being ripped away from her.

'I shall see myself out now, my boy,' Albus said, standing and clapping Severus on the shoulder. 'Fear not, Severus. We will be in contact with her.'

Severus nodded mutely and watched as his old friend and employer took some Floo powder, tossed it into the flames, and was swallowed up by the green flare before the fire returned to the normal red-orange glow. He summoned a bottle of whiskey to him and poured a glass for himself, indulging for the second time that evening. The only difference was that now he felt like he needed it more.

Not only had he discovered Hermione Granger, the most sensible girl of her age group, trying to kill herself that night but he had also realized that he didn't want her to die. He wanted to save her from a terrible fate. He swallowed a generous amount of the amber liquid in the glass and closed his eyes, savoring the burning sensation it caused as it went down his throat.

He would just have to wait for news to see if her situation was as bad as he believed it would be.

Unrelenting

Chapter 2 of 4

A woman on the bridge in Hogsmeade piques Severus Snape's interest. Everything, however, becomes complicated when he finds out the truth...OOOC warning.

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Kudos go to both Madbrilliant and Alliean for the beta of this fic.

This story is based on my favourite episode of Samurai Champloo. I was watching it and was suddenly struck by the idea of using the plot loosely for a fan fic.

Two weeks later, the mail arrived during breakfast, with the sound of owls entering the Great Hall becoming greater than the sound of the continuing rain outside. The charmed ceiling was reflecting the gloom, and most of the owls were a little wet from their trips. The staff received their post, and Severus had been pleased to find that the latest edition of *Ars Alchemica* had been released and he had received his subscription. He noted too, that on the other side of Albus, Minerva McGonagall had received a letter, and despite being so far away, he knew that handwriting anywhere. After all, most of the professors had been on the receiving end of some rather long and thorough essays in that exact script.

He watched as she read from the corner of his eyes, pretending to be too interested in his own magazine, and saw her mounting distress as she read the letter. He just knew that it certainly must have been a letter from Hermione. The older witch passed it to Albus who scanned it quickly, and then finally it was in Severus' hands. He put on his reading glasses, reluctant to admit to requiring them, and began to read the letter that had so distressed his two colleagues and friends to the point of speechlessness.

Dearest Minerva and Albus,

Fear not for me. I am well. Victor and I have moved to Virginia state and he is happily silencing vampires for the Ministry over here. It is raining here too, and it has not stopped for long enough for me to actually see the beauty of the place where I am living, and that in itself is miserable.

Victor has decided that it would be best for me to remain at home and do as I please in the house, which is a roundabout way of saying that he does not desire for me to work. I don't mind, really. It gives me a lot of time to catch up on reading all of those books that I couldn't while working. I would be glad to continue with a correspondence, as I will miss you all dearly. As you know, Victor will not allow me to return, and I will have limited contact with you. Please, for your own sake and mine, do not attempt further contact than that of letters. I do not want to test my husband's patience while he is providing for me.

I will miss you all dearly every day that I am here.

Love Always,

Hermione

Severus read through the letter three more times before it finally sunk in, and he tossed the parchment carelessly onto the table, inwardly seething. How could she let him do that to her? The thought of her being repressed like that, and she was allowing him to treat her like a doormat. She deserved so much better than that selfish moron. He looked at Albus and Minerva and saw that they too were still upset by this letter.

He turned the note over and read the address from which it had come, stamping it clearly in his memory, and passing the letter back to Minerva. 'We can not just sit around and let this happen,' he said gruffly.

'I agree with you, Severus, but we must not interfere. One day she will realize and do what she believes is right,' Minerva said soothingly, her eyes softening at the look of indignation on Severus' face at Hermione's treatment.

'But she couldn't have been more clear in her letter,' he said in frustration. 'Clearly, she is miserable, but is just too scared to admit anything outright.'

'Severus, we both feel your distress, but it is not wise to meddle in the lives of others. Hermione is a powerful and intelligent witch, and she needs to discover these things for herself,' Albus insisted.

He snorted mentally. If anyone should be accustomed to meddling in the lives of others, it was Albus. The man wore the habit like a second skin. Severus, however, had never been interfering in his life, and if he ever had, it had always been for a good reason. This was a good reason to him, and he was prepared to do anything to spare this witch a lifetime of misery. She had wanted to kill herself and end all of the desolation, and he had stopped her. Now, he was feeling responsible for her, to make sure that while she lived, she need not live unhappily.

'Albus, I have never felt like I needed to do anything so much since destroying the Dark Lord. You have to let me go to her and talk some sense into her,' Severus said in a tone that meant business.

'Why are you so caught up on all of this, Severus?' Minerva demanded from her side of the Headmaster.

'Because she is far too bright and has too much potential. Minerva, you know how I admire intelligence, and I admire her,' he answered coolly. 'I will be going to Virginia, whether you approve or not.'

Albus sighed and nodded. He had known the second he had read that letter and passed it to Severus that the younger man would insist on going to Hermione. He had tried talking him out of it, but knew that Severus was right. Hermione did need someone to tell her that she needed to live her life as she saw fit, not live out her life as Victor Krum's obedient wife.

'Go to her, Severus,' he said calmly. 'It is Saturday now. I will give you until Monday evening to do something about it. I will cover your classes on Monday if need be.'

'Albus!' Minerva exclaimed. 'You're just going to let him go?'

'He is right, Minnie. We need to let someone talk to her, and who better than Severus? She will listen to him because he will offer her solid facts,' Albus replied hastily. 'She needs us, Minerva...'

Minerva sighed heavily. 'Very well, go and save our Hermione,' she said to Severus, who nodded and stood from his seat at the table, accepting the letter from Minerva.

'Take care, my boy,' Albus said as he strode through the staff door.

Severus walked at a careful pace to his office, trying not to seem too eager to get somewhere, while also trying to get to his rooms as quickly as possible. The way Albus spoke, he was assuming he would need the whole three days to get Hermione to come back to Europe or Hogwarts with him. Although, in that moment, he wasn't sure just how he was to do that either.

'Think, Severus... what do you need?' he muttered to himself as he entered his chambers and whipped out his wand.

He summoned a bag and a few sets of various types of clothes, some books, and some money, before going to remove his frock coat and robes, only to replace them with a normal Muggle jacket and his long black coat. Once he was sure he had everything, he left his chambers and sealed them, going upstairs and escaping through the oak front doors before anyone would notice him leave.

He opened his umbrella and left the grounds, concentrating on the address of Hermione's house and Apparating there as soon as he was past the front gates. He arrived in front of a house that seemed rather large and beautiful. It was her house. He thought about going to the door and knocking, but decided he would wait until he saw her leave and then follow her and pretend to bump into her.

At noon, he got his chance when Hermione, thin as she was and even thinner in her black coat with her red umbrella, emerged from the house and locked the door behind her. She was home alone on a weekend. She began walking down the street, and Severus walked on the other side, an unsuspecting distance away, with a Disillusionment Charm in place just in case she noticed. He followed her all the way to a café in town, and once she had made her purchase, she drank it down quickly and left not too long after that. When they reached her house, Severus waited until she was inside to go and find lodgings for the night.

He returned to town where there was a tavern and inn just above it with deluxe rooms. He took one of those because it had a separate bathroom, sitting room, and bedroom. Most people that stayed couldn't afford the room, so it was in pristine condition for him to use during his stay.

He took a shower and went downstairs to the pub area to order a drink and something to eat while he was at it before he returned to his room and read one of his books. Some time later, he found himself sleepy enough to drift off. He put the book aside then and closed his eyes, settling with his head nestled into the pillow comfortably. He would have to wait until tomorrow to see Hermione and talk to her.

He would probably have to do something ridiculous in order to see her. But he was prepared to make sure he got his chance to get a few words in. He needed to do this he needed to save her from herself.

The next morning, he woke up, showered, and shaved the morning stubble before heading down for breakfast in the little eatery. He had a good strong coffee, a glazed bun, and a boiled egg before paying his tab and telling the innkeeper that he would need the room that night too. The man simply grunted and Severus paid half the fees and said that he would pay the other half when he was ready to leave.

He went for a walk down the street and made his way back to Hermione's house, examining the state of the yard. It was perfect, save for all of the rain but even that painted in a picture would have been beautiful. He noticed Hermione walk out of the house in what one could only assume was her Sunday best, which incidentally comprised of grey trousers, a white blouse, a maroon knitted v-neck jumper and her long black coat. She had a bag and walked down the street and into a church.

Severus waited almost an hour before she finally reemerged from the ancient building. Instead of going home, she went in the direction of town, stopping at the same café as she had the day before on her way to do a few things. Severus decided that now was the perfect time to talk to her. Krum wasn't around, so he needn't be worried.

'Miss Granger, fancy seeing you here,' he said in a flawlessly smooth tone of voice.

Hermione jumped and turned around warily, all too aware of whom had drawled those words to her. She was faced by the sight of a clean-shaven Severus Snape, dressed in nice Muggle attire.

'Professor Snape, I didn't see you come in,' she said hesitantly. 'What brings you to Virginia?'

'You do, Hermione, and before you argue, let's go back to my room at the inn and discuss it before it becomes a little too public here,' he suggested, cursing at his slip of the tongue at saying her name.

'Okay, but just to talk. I can't promise that I will agree to or with anything you say,' she acquiesced, holding her hand out to shake his.

'I can promise that you will not be forced in any way, shape, or form,' he swore.

'Alright, take me to this place of yours and we can talk about it,' she said, shaking his hand in hers firmly, surprised at the strength in his arms.

Together, they left the café, all thoughts on getting a coffee forgotten, until they reached his rooms, and he ordered tea to be sent up for them as they waited patiently in his sitting room. Severus shifted uncomfortably in his seat, waiting until the elf brought some food to them before attempting to start a conversation. Hermione took a bit of her food, and then she cleared her throat to talk.

'So, what are you doing here, and who put you up to this?'

A Shrewd Man

Chapter 3 of 4

A woman on the bridge in Hogsmeade piques Severus Snape's interest. Everything, however, becomes complicated when he finds out the truth...OOC warning.

Disclaimer: All publicly recognizable characters, settings, etc. are the property of their respective owners. The original characters and plot are the property of the author.

A/N - Just as a warning, there is a rape scene depicted in this chapter. If you are sensitive to that, don't proceed any further.

Kudos go to both Madbrilliant and Alliean for the beta of this fic.

The room was silent, save for the scrape of china against china, the clock on the wall in the corner, and the sipping of liquid. Severus gazed at Hermione from his seat directly across from her, sipping from his teacup and waiting for her to speak. It would be easier to get her to say something first without pressuring her to answer something she may not want to. But he already knew what she was doing here. She was just giving up and letting Krum have his way.

'I asked for no one to seek me out, Professor,' she said softly in a trembling voice. 'You could be in a lot of trouble, and so could I.'

'Trouble with whom? The American Ministry? I do not think that is the case. I have various high connections with many wizards and witches that work there,' he said firmly, not breaking eye contact.

She dropped her gaze and stared at her hands in her lap with a crestfallen look. She wanted to tell him how unhappy she was, how he had saved her that night on the bridge from doing something to harm herself. But no matter how hard she tried, the words stuck tightly in her throat. She just sat there, trying to put her feelings into a sentence that would actually be worth uttering to him.

'It is the path I have chosen, sir. He is my husband; how could I betray him and do what I please?' she asked, tears forming in her cinnamon eyes.

'You cannot sit here and tell me that you are happy with the way your life is at present. I can see it in your eyes, Hermione,' he said softly.

She looked up when he said her name and saw the gentle concern that was etched in his features, softening them in a way that made him seem almost tender and attractive to her. She put her teacup down on the table that separated their two chairs and stood up, walking across and kneeling down before him. She placed her hand on his, looking at his face the entire time. She saw the nervousness in his eyes then and felt his hand push hers away gently.

'Can we just sit?' he said gruffly.

She nodded and took her hand away, although not without him brushing his thumb over her soft skin lightly. She smiled a little at that and simply kneeled on the ground in front of his seat.

'The weather here is just as bad as Scotland,' she commented idly. 'I wonder when it shall stop.'

'It is, but that is not my stamp. I am just here to see you really,' he answered with a shrug. 'Albus and Minerva miss you.'

'I miss them, Harry, Ron I even miss poor Neville...' she said softly. 'It is sad that they cannot come here.'

'Tell me, Hermione. Where is your husband this weekend?' he asked carefully, trying to remain professional, but gentle at the same time so she would not be too scared.

'He is working somewhere, but he never tells me where he is hunting,' she replied, holding back a sob. 'I never asked because it hardly seemed relevant.'

'Hermione... this must be very difficult for you,' he said softly.

'It is a very difficult time, but I have chosen this path for myself, not for anyone else,' she said just as softly, looking into his dark eyes and feeling the stirring in her stomach and the need to touch him. He had always been a bit of a hero to her and many others, and now, sitting with him there, her desperation to be touched tenderly made her reach out to him seek his touch. She desperately needed a hero.

Hermione covered his hand with her own once more, but this time he did not seek to pull away. Emboldened, she moved up and closer, pressing her lips to his thin, but yielding ones. She pulled back after a little and saw no rejection in his gaze as he dropped his head halfway to meet her kiss the second time, opening his mouth to her and allowing her to take what she needed from him.

He kissed her slowly, pulling her up from her place at his feet and up onto his lap, letting her control the activity so she was comfortable. She needed this, and if he were honest, he needed it too. She tasted of cinnamon and coffee, a delicious mixture of sweet, bitter, and spicy. Her hands tangled in his dark, silky tresses, and his own found their way into her luscious curls, holding her to him and trying to show her how much he needed her to go back.

'This is so wrong,' she murmured in between their kisses.

'Very,' he agreed, fastening his mouth to hers again and plundering her mouth as if he really didn't care. She didn't stop him either.

'Victor is going to kill me for even agreeing to talk to you, let alone this,' she said as she pulled at his sweater to remove it.

He grasped the bottom of the sweater and pulled it off, tossing it to some corner of the room and continuing his assault on her neck and collarbone. She moaned in approval of his actions and rubbed at his taut chest muscles through the fabric of his shirt. He took the liberty of removing her jumper also, tossing it to where his was, now absolutely sure that she wanted this as much as he did.

Some two hours later, Hermione lay with her head on Severus' shoulder, her warm, unclothed body pressed against his equally nude form, with his strong arms around her and one hand stroking her hair lazily. They were tangled amongst the bed sheets, drowsy and sated for the first time in a long while for the both of them. Hermione's breathing indicated that she was awake, and Severus knew that he would not be able to sleep regardless of the circumstances.

'Let's leave this place,' he said seriously. 'I can't let you do this to yourself anymore.'

She sighed and pressed a kiss to his bared chest, hugging him tighter to her body and holding back her tears. 'You make it sound so simple, but do you have any idea how hard it is to divorce in the wizarding world? I know I don't love him, but I don't know how to get out of this. When I got married to Victor, my parents were so happy, but they just didn't realize that I did not love him. They pressured me into it, and now I am here, doing my duty,' she continued quietly. 'By being here with you, I have broken so many vows, and I should be ashamed, but I'm not. I must seem terribly foolish. Please, do me a favor and change the subject. I appreciate the sentiment, but I'm afraid it is all just a dream.'

Severus turned on his side and looked at her, gently tracing her face with his fingertips before following them with his lips, kissing her eyelids, nose, cheeks, and then her lips tenderly. He finished by kissing her forehead.

'When will your husband return?' he asked softly.

'Tonight, but I can never be sure with him,' she said, sitting up and letting the sheets slide from her form. 'I should go...'

'Don't leave, Hermione. Please don't go,' Severus found himself pleading softly. 'If he is not there, please, will you return to me in the morning?'

She nodded and Summoned her clothes to her, dressing in silence before running her fingers through sex-tangled hair. 'Severus... I want you to know that, if I do not return here, that I will always remember what you have done for me...' she said, holding back the tears that threatened to fall.

He nodded, not moving from the bed as she turned and walked from the room. He heard the door close and sighed heavily. Hermione left the inn and walked back to her

house, fighting the tears until she was in the safety of her own room. It had been a long time since she and Victor had shared a bed, but now she was glad that they did not. All she would be able to think about now was how Severus had looked as he had made love to her how his eyes shone and lips curved into a smile.

The moment the front door closed behind her, she ran up to her room threw herself down onto the bed and cried with every emotion she had coursing through her body. For her miserable life, for her friends and family, for Severus, and for every bad decision she had ever made. This was the hardest thing she had ever had to do.

After a while, she stopped crying and went to the bathroom, taking a long, hot shower, and then a cool one to soothe her body. She was a little sore, most likely from her encounter with Severus and their engagement in an activity that she had not participated in for quite a number of months by that point. Victor had a penchant for sleeping around something that had carried over from his days as part of the Quidditch team. She would have to say that Severus's prowess was far superior to Victor's, and just generally any other man she had experienced.

When she got out of the shower and began dressing, she heard the front door open and close, and her heart filled with heaviness. Victor was back, and she would not be able to go to Severus the next day. To say goodbye to him, she would have to apply herself to being as discrete as possible.

'Wife!' the hoarse male voice called up the stairs.

She hurried and pulled on jeans and a sweater before rushing out of the room, charming her hair into a braid. She met Victor on the stairs. He was dirty, sweaty, and unhappy by the looks of things.

'Yes, Victor?' she asked as he looked her up and down. 'Where have you been?'

'What do you say that for? Hmmm? I ask you here and you ask me questions when I just come home from making a living,' he demanded gruffly. 'Do not question me, woman, or you shall know just what I do when I am angered.'

'Yes, Victor,' she said softly.

And with that, Victor closed in on her and savaged her mouth with his own, kissing her brutally and drawing blood when he bit into her lip. She held back a scream and forced herself not to cry or be sick because of his attack. He picked her up, and she simply slumped into his arms, knowing that to resist him would only hurt her worse. It wouldn't be the first time she felt as though he wanted to brutalize or kill her.

'What are you doing, Victor?' she asked weakly as he dropped her on his bedroom floor and began tearing her clothes from her person violently.

'You, my wife, are going to satisfy me now,' he growled, pulling off his own clothes before throwing her down onto the bed, mounting her, and thrusting in brutally.

Hermione lay pliant beneath him, knowing that if she resisted, he would not be happy, and was glad that he had not decided to make her use her mouth on him or anything else. He thrust dispassionately before he grunted and released, rolling off her and falling asleep instantly. Hermione got up after the ache between her thighs numbed and went back to her room, crying herself to sleep that night...

Homeward Bound

Chapter 4 of 4

A woman on the bridge in Hogsmeade piques Severus Snape's interest. Everything, however, becomes complicated when he finds out the truth...OOC warning.

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Kudos go to both Madbrilliant and Alliean for the beta of this fic.

The sun filtered into the room, and the birds were twittering away just beyond the glass of the window on a tree that happened to be situated nearby. Severus groaned and rolled over, trying to block the noises out, but to his dismay, he was unsuccessful. He was planning on going back to sleep so that he didn't have to remember how miserable he was that he could do nothing for Hermione when a frantic pounding sounded on the door. He shot up and scrambled out of bed.

Summoning a bathrobe, he pulled it on and fastened it shut before running a hand through his hair, untangling the snarls, and going to the door. He opened it cautiously, and when he saw it was a teary-eyed Hermione, he opened it wider and allowed her inside, closing the door behind her after making sure no one had seen her enter. He followed her through and took her coat from her, hanging it before he had an armful of crying Hermione. He held onto her as she clung to him like a limpet.

After a while, she calmed down and he made her a cup of tea and gave her a handkerchief before going to his room, casting a charm on his possessions to pack on their own as he had a shower, and came out dressed in fresh black trousers, a black shirt and a waistcoat. He pulled on his long black coat and shrunk his bag, putting it and his wand into his pocket as he did.

'Severus, is there something wrong?' Hermione asked in a trembling voice as he reentered the room with a frown creasing his brow.

'Go home and pack what you need. We're leaving,' he said firmly.

'You're joking!' she exclaimed. 'It's hopeless. Even if I do make it away from here, he'll come for me, and there will be no hiding. He'll take me back, and he'll kill you if you get in his way. He might even kill me.'

'There is no safer place in the world than Hogwarts. You would be safe there. I would take care of you, and so would Minerva and Albus,' he insisted, glancing out the window as the clouds that had cleared were coming back into town.

'Yes, but... even if I do come I'll be a prisoner there too,' she said softly. 'I would much rather you were safe out of Victor's way than to lose everyone I love when he searches for me.'

Severus stared out at the sky as the rain began to pour again, as if the sky were crying and coating the earth in its tears once more. The sky, too, seemed to be weeping for her. He turned and glanced at Hermione from the corner of his eyes, contemplating what he was about to say. 'When I met you by the bridge that day, Hermione... you were planning to kill yourself, weren't you?' he asked solemnly.

She gasped, and he turned to look at her with dark eyes that seemed sad and full of troubles. 'I was,' she murmured softly. 'If you hadn't come by when you did... I know that right now I would be...'

Her voice caught when she tried to utter the last word, but she just couldn't. He didn't try to make her he simply sat there and waited for her to say what she wanted to say. She stared at the floor, going over her memories of the past couple of weeks day by day, beginning when he had stopped her from killing herself, to the evening before when they had made love, to that very moment, and what words had been exchanged between them.

She looked up at him, making her own mind up for the first time in years. 'Let's leave this place together...' she said with a small smile.

Severus nodded. 'Get whatever you need. I will be waiting for you downstairs,' he said, cupping her cheek in his strong hand and leaning down to kiss her forehead.

Hermione nodded, feeling her stomach churn a little, and grabbed her coat. She turned to him and smiled just before she walked out, and he nodded and tilted his chin to the door, gesturing for her to go. She left without another word, and Severus gathered the last of his things, shrinking them to fit in his coat pocket before looking over the room one last time and descending to the pub below.

He paid for his room for the last few nights and stopped in the dining room next door to get a coffee and the newspaper as he waited for Hermione to return to him. As he sat and drank, he puzzled over why this meant so much to him. He knew that perhaps in the last week or so, he might have come to fancy himself in love with the young woman, but he didn't know why it was so. Maybe it was his penchant to help those who were in distress, but then, he thought not.

He had helped Potter without having any romantic inclinations towards the boy at all. But Hermione... well, he respected her and cared for her deeply, and he just assumed that those feelings were that of the beginnings of love, as he had never felt that particular emotion before meeting her that day on the bridge.

'Severus...' said a soft voice from the archway into the dining room.

He looked up and saw Hermione, standing there in fresh clothes with her long black coat on the same one she had worn on the night that she had nearly killed herself with the red umbrella in her hand and the rest of her things presumably in her pockets. He stood and abandoned his coffee and paper, paying for them on the way out of the building, with Hermione walking alongside him.

'Are you sure about this?' he asked as they walked along, both with their umbrellas out to keep the rain off of them.

She nodded and took his hand in her own, urging them both forwards. 'Yes, I'm sure,' she replied. 'I've never been more certain in my entire life.'

Severus nodded and clasped her hand tightly in his, leading her along as they hastened to the nearest Apparation point where there was no way that they could be spotted. As they approached, Hermione could see a figure standing there, with no umbrella to provide shelter from the rain. When they got closer, she saw that it was not just anyone it was Victor, and he did not look at all pleased.

'Hermione, how is it that he is here?' Severus hissed.

'I don't know; he said he was going to be away for a few days... that he had work this morning I thought he had left when I got home,' she said with tears clouding her vision as he stared at them as they approached.

'So is this how it is going to be, witch?' the Bulgarian shouted at her. 'You are going with this man from where you once lived? Is this what you want?'

Hermione clung to Severus, walking behind him as they came to stand before Victor in the alley way. He didn't look like he was going to let her go with Snape one bit. He had never looked so furious in their time together. He had his fists balled and was holding his bulky frame in a way that suggested he would hurt either one or the two of them if they made any wrong moves. The rain had drenched him and was dripping off his great ugly nose that had been broken many times and healed incorrectly.

'How do you think to explain your betrayal? I am your husband, and you would choose this man a man you were supposed to hate over me? Answer me, wife!' Victor demanded.

Hermione straightened at his tone and the way he addressed her, feeling her anger overtake her feelings of fear as she stepped from behind her lover and hero and stood before the man she had married. She pulled out some American Muggle coins from her pocket and weighed them in her hand as she prepared to answer him.

'I won't spend another moment of my life, living the way you want to,' she said softly, looking at the ground before looking him in the eye. 'I am taking my life back, right here and now,' she added, throwing the coins towards his head. 'That is what it costs to free the woman that used to be your wife!'

'You little bitch,' he roared, bringing his hand up and slapping her across the face, making her fall backwards a little.

But she didn't back down and cower as he had expected. She stood proud and tall again and looked him in the eye. She was about to speak, but Severus had moved forward then and had pushed the shorter, stockier Victor against the wall and held him there by his throat, with his wand jammed hard into his ribs.

'Don't you dare harm Hermione again,' he hissed dangerously, roughly shoving him harder against the bricks.

Severus may have been taller and slender, but there was no mistaking the strength and power that he had. He was strong, and he could have easily taken Victor at any time. This was his chance, and he was going to take advantage of it. Hermione moved forward and laid a gentle hand on Severus's arm, making him lock eyes with her. She nodded, and he relaxed his hold somewhat, taking his wand away from the man and releasing him.

By then, all three of them were drenched in the rain. 'I am leaving you, Victor, and I will never come back to you,' Hermione said calmly, her cheek still stinging and red from where he had struck her. 'Expect to be hearing from the Ministry about our divorce.'

She looked at him steadily one last time before looking at Severus, her hero and her future, and taking his proffered hand. She went into his strong arms, still soaked through and shivering, and together they Apparated away from her present life, back to her future and her past combined. She was finally doing what was best for her and living her life as she should be except this time, she intended to do it for herself, with Severus there to provide her with the support she had always needed.

They reappeared at the gates to the Hogwarts grounds and entered it hand in hand, walking towards the castle and her safety until Victor's name was no longer part of her own. She was taking back her identity and forming it without him dominating everything. She could not take her old job at the Ministry back, for it would not have felt right. Victor had made her take that job. No she would study and master a different field, doing what she had always wanted to do.

'Hermione...what are you going to do, now that you are free?' Severus asked when they had finally reached the stairs to go up into the castle.

'I had always wanted to be a Healer before Victor made me take that job as Head of the Ministry Department for International Relations,' she said, allowing him to gather her into his arms. 'I think that I could study that once this Victor thing has been cleared up once and for all...'

'You would make a fine Healer,' he agreed, stroking her hair and suddenly tightening his hold. 'Hermione...what do you want to do about us?'

She looked up at his face and smiled, leaning up to kiss his lips tenderly. 'I want you in my life from now on, Severus...' she whispered against his lips. 'Don't ever let me go...'

Later that night, with them both lying together sated amongst his sheets, she whispered to him 'my hero...' as she drifted off to sleep. Severus had never felt more complete in his entire life, and it was all because he had decided to save a woman he cared for from a fate worse than death itself. With this knowledge, he fell asleep, totally at ease...

A/N Well there you go just a short little fic idea I had, complete in four chapters. Please let me know what you thought and review!