

Severus' Heart

by nastygrl

Hermione knows what she wants.

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Hermione knows what she wants.

It is his heart I know the least.

I know his hands, with his long pale fingers and slightly buffed nails. The callus on the pad of this index finger as it guides the knife as he prepares his potion ingredients. I know his eyes, the ones that pierce me to the wall and eyes that ask a question or throw an insult. I know the way he shuffles his feet as he approaches the doorway to his lab, as if he is afraid of striding into the room and upsetting the balance of ingredients in his cauldron. I know his voice; for if his voice were food, it would surely be dark chocolate truffles with chocolate and whiskey cream centers.

I know him well, but it is his heart I know least of all. It is the one bit of him that he holds closed off to the world, warded to those who come too close. His name and life's story have been splashed across every major Wizarding newspaper in the world right alongside Harry's. Everyone knows the story of him playing spy for the Order, and worse, his miserable childhood and humiliating experiences at Hogwarts. That these stories run side by side to the stories of his accomplishments in the field of Potions is humiliating to him, though he says nothing. He purses his lips as he throws the daily aside, and I know his heart is shut just a wee bit tighter.

I want his heart, every little beating crease and crevice. I want to feel its weight and breadth, to know how big it really is; not the shriveled one he puts on display for the vultures to feed upon, but the one pulsing with life, the life he could have if he only he would open it to *me*.

We work side-by-side, day in and day out, yet we never speak of the war. It is as dead to us as those bodies that had littered Hogwarts' grounds that final day. We strive to move on, though occasionally one of us will bring up Dumbledore or Remus and, on occasion, even Lily, and then, little pieces of his heart may be glimpsed. It shows itself in a small smile or an extra lift of an eyebrow. But these glimpses are rare and fleeting.

I want his heart, the one that he holds so possessively. I want to own it, to press it to my chest, to reassure him night and day that it is in safe hands; though my grip is of steel, it will be gently held. I will not damage it further; I only want to help it heal. In turn, his heart will help me heal. It will help me overcome this biting loneliness that gnaws at me daily. Knowing his heart is so close, but so achingly out of reach, is painful.

I know Severus' heart is bigger than he shows to the world. I see him handling the plants he harvests in the greenhouses, how he talks soothingly to them, apologizing for snipping at them, reassuring the tender shoots that they will grow bigger and stronger. I see him caressing his cauldron thick with potion, murmuring tender words of encouragement as he stirs and swirls the liquid within. Oh, that he would whisper those words of encouragement and reassurance to me.

One day, I will be worthy of his heart. One day, he will see I am more than just his apprentice.

A/N: Thanks to my betas! Written for Pictureofaman on LiveJournal :)