

The Precious Few

by ConstantComment

Sets of 300-word drabbles featuring HG and SS after the the episode in the Shrieking Shack. EWE, otherwise DH-compliant.

Crimson

Chapter 1 of 11

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Crimson.

The filth seeped into the silk of his cloak, the wool of his trousers, polluting the air with the sickening scent of metal.

Crimson was all he saw but for the eyes that had stared back at him not moments before. A beautiful, striking, bright hue that reminded him of his youth and of his mistakes... and of his life passing him by.

He'd never find out the outcome, would he?

Thirty-nine years of trying to... to recompense, all for naught because the filth was seeping into the silk of his cloak and the wool of his trousers much too fast.

Much too soon.

Thirty-nine years of wishing he... that he could just *die*. And now he really, really didn't want to.

Green eyes that reminded him of *his life passing by*... *No!*

Undignified tears leapt from his eyelids as he choked on the burning venom that seized his nerves and his lungs and his mind. Around his head, shining in a smoky corona, tiny little memories floated like strings of fog above a crimson lake as the blood dripped through the cracks of the unfinished flooring. The Shack continued swaying without him and the world continued spinning without him, just as he had suspected.

No! He managed to groan, trying to resist the venom that seized his muscles, but all that echoed in the musty old room, bouncing off the low ceiling, was the whimper of a small child.

Really, did no one care?

No one?

At all?

The tear tracks glistened down his cheekbones, crawling through his hair and pooling in his ears.

Seconds ticked by, and his heart droned on at a weary pace, as if the usual pitter-patter was now trudging through molasses.

Please? he asked no one in particular.

I don't want to die.

I Promise

Chapter 2 of 11

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Her trainers beat steadily into the lush grass as she barrelled toward the forest, sides hurting as she sprinted, panicked, into the darkness.

The guilt was heavy on her shoulders, but she carried on, finally reaching the gnarled willow and whipping out her wand, willing the tree to sleep even though she was dead on her feet.

The smell assaulted her as soon as she slid through the entrance, causing bile to rise in her throat, but that didn't stop her until she reached the landing, falling to her knees in the bloody mess.

Eyes closed, he bore the remnants of tears on his eyelashes. She searched for a heartbeat at his pulse-point, bloodied from the generous gashes in his neck. Her sobs ripped forth at the weak flutter of a heartbeat.

There were *no words*.

Support his head and uncork the antivenin, then blood-replenisher, coax his jaw open and rub his neck.

All the while, cooing soothingly.

While she slipped the Dittany into her right hand, she held her breath, preparing for the noxious fumes that would furl from his wound. She frantically cleaned the wound and sealed tissue as the potions did their work. There was nothing to be done but breath into his mouth, try to find a way to coax the life back into him. A minute of steadily more panicked resuscitation and he came alive, coughing and choking. She turned him to his side where he retched violently and then rolled back, breathing hard into his starved lungs.

She curled her arm around him and cradled him in her lap, looking down into his face. Tears dripped from his eyes again; relief flooded her, and soon she was joining him.

"I didn't want to go," he mouthed.

"I won't let you go."

"Promise?"

"I promise."

Thankful, he was

Chapter 3 of 11

Sets of 300-word drabbles featuring HG and SS after the episode in the Shrieking Shack. EWE, otherwise DH-compliant.

Of course, it was inevitable that he would return to his sulky self as soon as he was back to a semblance of good health.

He appreciated, however grudgingly, that she ignored his snark and still made him chicken soup when his throat was bothering him.

They had set up a room for him in her parents' old home. In the master bedroom, much to his chagrin.

"Granger!" he'd groaned as she plumped up the down pillows behind his head.

"Oh, stop moaning, would you?" she'd laughed. "I'm not forcing my frilly bedroom on you for that long, Professor. I'm spending way too much of my summer trying to get you back to full health to have you try and off yourself when you see all the pink." She'd given him a very pointed look, arms folded, lips twitching into a grin. "You have a lovely view, anyway. Be thankful."

He was. Much more than he'd managed to tell her.

It was dusk now, and although he'd finally begun to gain movement in his toes, he still had to call her to help him move about. The remnants of a bright day spilled into the room as she came in, holding a glass of cocoa, her hair gilded in purple light.

They exercised until he couldn't take it anymore, and she helped him into bed, pulling the covers over his chest and adjusting the pillows so he could lie flat, ending up in a crushing hug as he wrapped his arms around her, nestling into the crook of her neck.

She seemed taken aback, because her breath hitched and she stilled for a couple moments, until her hands rested on the back of his head, stroking his hair as he tried *—tried—*to convey how very,

Very,

Thankful, he was.

Vindicated

Chapter 4 of 11

Sets of 300-word drabbles featuring HG and SS after the the episode in the Shrieking Shack. EWE, otherwise DH-compliant.

Vindicated.

She was sure it was a wonderful feeling. Or, at least, a bitter 'I told you so.'

He sat to her left (cane propped on his knee), upright and staunchly imposing, even sitting in a wheelchair. His eyes were staring forward determinedly as the Minister continued his oration.

She took a shaky breath as praising words rolled over the audience, dictating a life's worth of service and an eternity of gratitude owed by the entire community.

And as the concluding remarks echoed through the grand atrium and the standing ovation began, she watched him stand shakily on his atrophied legs, weeks of practice barely preparing him for the march to the dais. He wavered as he leaned on the cane, and she put a reassuring hand on his elbow.

"No," he muttered, batting her hand away. "I can do it."

And as the crowd cheered, Severus Snape limped to the podium, bowing and receiving a beautiful purple ribbon bearing a glinting medal, closing his eyes at the pleasant weight of 'this is so right.' She was sure he could no longer hear the raucous applause over the pounding of his heart.

He strode purposefully back to their table, wheezing with the effort, and she caught his hand as he sat heavily, squeezing it tight.

They both chose to ignore that there were tears in his eyes again. Beautiful, happy tears blurred his vision, but never spilled over. Of course, that would be quite undignified. Slytherins certainly didn't cry. Snapes definitely didn't cry.

In public, that is.

And she grasped his shoulder with another hand, leaning in to place a kiss on his cheek.

To say that he was surprised would be an understatement. His cheeks were stained pink.

She stood, and would later swear she had clapped the loudest.

Home

Chapter 5 of 11

Severus insists on accompanying Hermione on her trip.

"I am going with you."

"Wait—what?" She, who had been morosely biting a hangnail, had stood and walked over to him in the doorway.

"You *heard* me, Granger. You are not going to Australia by yourself." He'd tried his best to infuse classroom sternness into his voice and picked up his suitcase with the hand unoccupied by his trusty cane.

"Why, you... you—"

"Hermione, did you *really* believe I hadn't noticed you packing? You aren't exactly the epitome of stealth, I'll have you know."

“So... you'll be coming with me? You'll help me?”

He'd shoved their tickets (that he'd immediately purchased upon discovering the pink, overflowing luggage hidden unceremoniously under the living room sofa) under her nose. Suddenly she had buried her head in his chest, squeezing the air out of him. His luggage had nudged her in the bum as he returned the gesture and nearly knocked them over.

Now, he grumbled at the ticket counter, through security and all the way until they were seated in Business Class, but never admitted that this was a maiden voyage—his harrowing first airplane flight.

She held his hand, though, through take-off and a good hour or so of turbulence, so he figured she knew. It was hard not to conclude when his hand was clenched, white-knuckled, around hers.

Eventually, he allowed her to nestle into the crook of his neck, cuddling into his shoulder and wrapping both hands around his left arm. They slept long into the night, and he woke only when the stewardess offered them coffee.

“Two, please,” he murmured, never taking his eyes off of her slumbering face.

Sydney was clear and beautiful, but could not compare to Hermione when the Wilkinsons invited her in—her smile even brighter when her parents welcomed her home.

Just friends, right?

Chapter 6 of 11

Jane Granger was not one to beat around the bush, but this conversation seemed to be a challenge.

Jane Granger was never one to beat around the bush in unpleasant conversation—in fact she embraced the awkward with terrifying determination and got it over with in record time.

But, this exchange was determined to be uncomfortable for both she and Hermione, who sat at the kitchen table while Severus and dad grilled out back.

The Grangers had embraced Severus without much question other than loyalty, which Jane had taken head on, scaring the professor out of his pants.

Which was why Hermione was feeling queasy, because her mum wouldn't just say *it*.

Jane set the spinach salad on the counter, turning to Hermione for a third try.

Oh, yes, she would surely vomit.

“Is Severus your, ah... Are you two—?”

There was an embarrassing pause as Jane searched for a word.

“Are you *involved*,” she finished just as Hermione exclaimed, “*No!*”

“Because, if you are, darling—that's okay. A little unorthodox, but—”

“Mum, we're just friends!”

“Sure, love. Just... needed to ask.”

“I saved his life and helped him recover and now we're *refriends*.”

“Of course.” Jane turned back to the counter and took a generous gulp of wine.

After a mortified moment, Hermione added, “He was my teacher!”

“It happens all the time at universities. But, I trust you'll keep your head on your shoulders?”

“Mother. We are friends. And where else would I put my head? Don't answer that.”

“You know I have no idea what you magicians can do. Decapitation doesn't seem *that* ridiculous.”

“Mum, you're giving me a headache.”

“I just wanted to tell you outright, if you were worried, dear.”

“I'm not worried because there's nothing to be worried about because we are *just friends*!”

But the seed was planted, and Hermione wouldn't sleep a wink that night.

Just friends, right?

Sleep never came easily

Chapter 7 of 11

Severus receives a visitor after another nightmare.

Sleep never came easily.

But when it did, it was rarely peaceful.

Tonight, there was fire and ash.

His eyes burned from wayward cinders as he watched the cloaked men cut down a young girl of seven, grabbing her by her fine blonde hair and dragging her into the a clearing of rubble, hissing with murderous glee as her helpless family looked on in horror.

He wanted desperately to cry out, to yell, to scream for them to stop, but his lips would not form the words, and he couldn't move a muscle, save for his legs that stalked ever closer.

His wand shook in his hand, gathering a familiar energy, as his mind whispered, *No, no, no!*

He pointed his wand at the weeping, blue-eyed child.

No, please! It's a dream. Wake up, wake up.

He gestured for the others to move.

No. Wake up.

'Avada Ke—'

"No!" Severus yelled into the dark guestroom, sucking in heaps of air as he tried to remember where he was. It was always those dreams that came back. Never the nonsensical, pirouetting hippos.

He wasn't surprised when *she* came in with a glass of water and a sleepy, concerned expression. She sat on the other side of the bed and waited for him to finish.

Severus took his time, not too keen on returning to dreamland. When he was done he turned to find her curled up in a ball on the pillow next to his, fast asleep, her face covered in curls.

He brushed the frizzy mass away and stared at her awhile, noting how her eyelashes kissed her cheeks, how her freckles dashed across her nose, how her rosy lips drew his eye with every slumberous breath.

This time, when he finally drifted off, he dreamt of tap-dancing llamas.

She had most definitely lied

Chapter 8 of 11

Hermione has an epiphany.

It was a week before Severus' impending departure that Hermione realised she had completely lied to her mother.

In fact, she was sure she'd fallen in love.

She woke up next to Severus one morning after one of his nightmares, her face dangerously close to his.

He'd snuggled into his pillow during the night, hugging it closely, nose pressed into the fluffy down and hair tousled like a toddler's.

She decided not to move, instead observing him as he slowly came out of his slumber.

Soon he was yawning and stretching ridiculously until he flopped, facedown, into his pillow again.

"Sweet dreams?" she said, a smirk playing at her lips.

"There was a," he began, his voice muffled.

She was content to look at him while he mustered the brainpower to continue speaking.

"—a drug lord..." He turned his face toward hers, his eyes closed in a frown.

"Oh?" They didn't really have those sorts of things in the wizarding world.

"...who was a platypus."

She snorted.

"I think," he muttered, "it may have had something to do with those articles I read in yesterday's news, but it could also be my imminent insanity."

"Probably the latter," Hermione supplied.

"I'm sure." He closed his eyes, again, yawning widely, snuggling into his pillow. He was slow to wake. "You?"

"I was a mouse."

"How intriguing."

"I could smell the cheese, but I swear that maze was impossible."

"Mmm, what kind of cheese?"

"Gouda, of course."

"Yum," he said. "I could *easily* go back to sleep I'm so tired."

"You didn't sleep very well. It's understandable." She was losing him to dreamland.

"It's always better when you're here," he mumbled as he readjusted and curled up to doze. "You chase the bad away."

Yes, Hermione thought.

She had most definitely lied.

And he held on

Chapter 9 of 11

Severus tries to *show* her how he feels.

'Performance of the Year!'

Severus stared at the advertisement in the newspaper.

It taunted him with its convenient schedule and tempting repertoire of composers and musicians.

He had seen the piano in the living room, had stealthily questioned her father about the owner of the Baby Grand. The sheet music included many composers, but mostly Mozart...

...who was featured in this coming concert...

...on their last day together before his return to Spinner's End.

He'd made a full recovery, to Hermione's utter delight.

But Severus had never felt so miserable.

So, Severus went on the computator and bumbled his way to the web-sight, purchasing two tickets and trying not to dwell on things.

She'd been so excited when they'd arrived at the concert hall that she'd wrapped him in a tight hug, telling him how sweet the gesture was.

He'd recovered fairly quickly. "Well, of course. I am, after all, an *extremely* magnanimous man."

After a recital that he'd barely registered (having stared at Hermione for the duration), they headed home.

Before he could trudge up the three steps to the red door, Hermione tugged softly on his sleeve, silently asking him to stay.

"I had a lovely time, Severus," she said, stepping closer.

He couldn't take his eyes off her. It was a disease. "I did as well."

"... I've gotten used to you being around. I don't know what I'll do with myself now I haven't an invalid to coddle."

He scowled appropriately.

Her manner changed, then, watery eyes looking up at him. "I don't want you to leave," she murmured.

His face crumbled as he quickly cupped her cheek. His lips hovered over hers as tears spilled over and down her face. "I don't want to leave you," he croaked.

She kissed him, then.

And he held on.

She'd Promised, After All

Chapter 10 of 11

Hermione decides she cannot go back on her word. At least, not after all that has happened between them.

She'd promised, after all.

Hermione refused to turn around despite the state of the... neighbourhood. So, she marched determinedly up to the green door of his house.

Knock, knock, knock.

She felt the sudden flutter of magic as locks clicked, and the door fell open.

She shoved past a scowling Severus and into the musty living area, peering about curiously. He muttered a befuddled 'Hi' as she scrutinized the small room, noting a newspaper opened to the crossword on his sofa.

"This place could use a good dusting."

"Hermione, what's going on?"

"Nothing, other than the fact that I haven't seen you for a month. I lasted that long, and it was miserable. I don't know how I've survived."

He looked at her as if Confunded but wrapped her in his embrace all the same. "I'm glad you came for a visit," he murmured.

Hermione waited for him to put her down before speaking. "...I don't think you understand."

"Yes, I am sure you're right." He cocked an eyebrow and squeezed her shoulders.

"I'm not leaving."

"... What?"

"These past few months have been so lovely. Getting to know you has been a harrowing but strangely wonderful experience and... our friendship has become invaluable to me. The precious few moments that we've had have driven me absolutely crazy this past month, reminding me how stupid I was to let you leave."

"And besides," she continued when he chose not to comment. "I promised you I'd not let you go, Severus."

He sat down with a soft thump on the sofa.

"I can't leave you. I don't want to leave you because... Well, I love you."

He was on her in milliseconds, scooping her up into a hug, showering her face with kisses, murmuring his reply.

My Hermione. Stay with me.

Soon, He Thought

Chapter 11 of 11

Epilogue: A year into their relationship, big news arrives at Spinner's End.

Severus woke slowly this morning, smelling breakfast in the air and feeling chilled on one side.

Hermione was up.

Stretching, he tried to hold on to what was left of last night's dream and wound up clinging to one image—a pair of big, dark eyes.

He swung out of bed, hissing as his toes touched the frigid floor, and hopped around to find the sweater Hermione'd given him their first Christmas.

They lived together, now.

Which is nice, Severus thought as he rummaged through their dresser. *Christ, where are my clothes?*

"The toast, Severus," Hermione called as the toaster beeped, glancing over her shoulder as he came downstairs. He did his duty and sat, watching appreciatively from the table as Hermione sashayed around the room. She set his plate down and smiled glowingly at him.

"Excellent, Hermione." He leaned up to place a kiss on her lips. Then, Severus looked down at the table. Something was missing... "Love, where're the mimosas?" They had them every Sunday; it was odd—

"Oh, I didn't feel like one. Yours is in the fridge."

Severus stared incredulously as she stood shakily to get it. If there was one thing he was sure about Hermione, it was that she never passed up the opportunity for alcohol. "Hermione?"

Suddenly, she burst into tears.

He stood and scooped her into his arms, stroking her hair *Crying woman! Crying woman! What to do!?* "What's wrong, dear one?"

She sobbed something unintelligible into his chest. He grunted inquisitively. "I'm pregnant," she repeated, louder.

Severus' surprise formed into incredulity as she wiped her nose on a sleeve. "Why thehell are you crying?"

She wailed, burying her head in his neck. "You *hate* children," she sniffled.

Suddenly, Severus went rigid. "What?"

"Oh, Severus, what are we going to do?"

--

"I can't... can't give it up," she said miserably, cradling her flat stomach.

"Who said you should give it up?"

She looked up at him with big, watery eyes, and his dream came back with force—those eyes, young and wondrous—a child's eyes. "I don't want you to give it up, Hermione. And, frankly, I'm hurt with your assumption that I hate children."

She snorted, cocking an eyebrow.

"I hate *Gryffindor* children," he clarified. "There is a difference. And our child will most certainly *not* be Gryffindor."

"...You mean, I can keep it?"

"For Heaven's sake, it's not a damned puppy, and I'm not asking you to abort a fucking baby!"

She looked stricken.

"Sorry, that was crude. I'm just surprised, that's all, that you'd think so little of me... that I wouldn't want a child. My own child," he said softly. "Our child."

With that she threw herself at him and covered his face with kisses, a mirror of their first meeting at Spinner's End. He smiled widely, lifting her off her feet, spinning them around in the cramped kitchen, depositing her on the counter. "You know what this means, don't you?"

"What?" she asked, tapping the tip of his nose.

He shrugged, feigning nonchalance. "We'll have to move."

"Oh, thank *God!*"

"Get a nice little cottage in Scotland," he continued. "With rosebushes and a big back garden."

"And a swing-set?"

Severus sighed, attempting 'put-upon'. "If you insist."

"Hmm." She smiled mischievously. "Do you know what else I insist upon?"

He squeezed her round the middle.

"I insist that you take me back to bed and shag me senseless. In celebration."

"As you wish, dear one." He grinned as she sped up the stairs, happy once more, and patted the black box in his pocket.

Soon, he thought.

A/N: *Well. *sighs wistfully* That's the end, folks! I'm so happy with all the positive feedback I've been getting on this drabble series and I hope you enjoyed this last double-tribble. Might not be the typical drama-filled day for Sev and Hermione, but I thought it'd be sweet to show how well they're doing a little while into their relationship.*

Thanks so much to Melusin, who agreed to look over this.

*And I'm glad everyone liked Severus' dreams. Yes, he has crazy dreams. *shrugs* So what if he's a little messed up in the head? We all know and love him that way, anyhow. :D*