

Every Night

by ConstantComment

"At night there were no titles, just two souls, taking what comfort they could from a world that had so very little." AU, M for smut.

one-shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: *Beware. Massive, flangsty mind dump. Characters do not belong to me, but the situations herein certainly do.*

~sshg~

It was July nineteenth, 1997. Voldemort and his ever-growing band of followers had staged an attack on Diagon Alley that day, and the Order had responded in kind...Harry, Ron and I obviously the prime targets. Unsurprisingly, that summer day, Mundungus had found a way to wriggle out of his responsibilities as chaperone only minutes before the jets of red and green light whipped past our heads. I had let him go, much to the chagrin of Ron. Harry was indifferent, muttering under his breath about incompetence of certain stoutly built thieves. 'What is five minutes to run to Knockturn Alley, anyway?' I had reasoned. And, naturally...despite my friends' constant attempts to get me to let my guard down, the one time I did...someone died.

Ron.

I can still remember the milky, clouded eyes that stared unseeing at me, his features set into a determined glare once shining with mirth. I did not have time to cry as the Order of the Phoenix materialized in the main square, protecting Wizarding kind and picking up where I had so carelessly left off. And I did not have time to grieve, for the Death Eaters took his body as we retreated.

Other than he, there were no casualties, and everyone returned to Grimmauld Place relatively intact, despite the obvious gaping chasm in our hearts that had always been reserved for the youngest brother Weasley. I blamed myself, withdrawing to my cold room on the third floor, not even bothering to undress as I curled under the covers, facing the large window that revealed a peaceful night sky.

I did not cry.

And so it was like this that he found me, opening the door to a moonlit form that looked decidedly peaceful, despite the circumstances. Too numb to care, I allowed him to sit on the side of my bed, facing the window, but instead he looked intently at my face. He, as if struck by a thoughtless impulse, took hold of my hand.

He had been there, though on the opposite side, doling out sabotage of his 'Master's' plans with his wand, making sure only to hex an appropriate amount of good and silently Stun the bad within close proximity. I could even recognize him, though cloaked in a black and silver disguise. He towered above many of the others...a vision of fear itself. I would have laughed if not for the inappropriate time. It had taken me a long time to believe that he was on our side.

I believed him that night.

When I did not respond to his kind gesture, he let go...hesitantly...and stood to disappear as quietly as he'd come.

"Don't leave," I whispered frantically as his hand grasped the door handle. I could hear his dithering as he turned again to my bed and then again to the door, and he quietly walked to the end of the bed. The springs creaked as he climbed up toward the headboard, curling his own lean form around my mine and wrapping a reassuring arm around my middle. I shook with silent tears and he held me closer.

And so it was... like that, for the duration of the summer, and we never once said a word. It was easier not to talk when our emotions and lives were teetering on a very thin line. We found relief and warmth in each other, and in the silence. We continued to interact, during the daylight, as the mulish Gryffindor and evil-yet-innately-good Potions master, informant to the Order of the Phoenix. But at night there were no titles, just two souls, taking what comfort they could from a world that had so very little.

And then I began to un-tuck both sides of the bed before crawling in at twelve, deliberately ruffling up the covers so it would not appear intentional. I don't think he noticed it was conscious until the third or fourth night, and I could almost feel his smile as he inched under those same sheets to cradle me in his arms, like a big spoon to a littler in a cutlery drawer.

Returning to school was a nightmare, literally. I could barely sleep without his smell and his warmth that had once filled the sheets. And soon, I realized he was suffering, too. I did not say anything until one morning, after a particularly restless night, I found a phial of Dreamless Sleep on my bedside table with a note that simply read:

December 15th

December fifteenth. That day I would return to Grimmauld Place with Harry to stay with the Order. That evening I would ready for bed, trying not to think of all the damage that this war had caused... and what it would ruin as it drew out, spanning for years. That night I would curl into a ball under the covers, facing the moon outside my window, waiting for him. And he would come. The parchment had promised it.

I wore a smile for the first time since Ron had died. I left him a note. A short missive that read:

Counting the hours.

The night of December fifteenth had turned me into a ball of nerves. I changed into my nightgown, my hands shaking. We had broken the 'Vow of Silence', had acknowledged what we had been doing and that we both...

We both wanted it to continue, obviously.

Tucking myself into my covers, I stared out the window until I heard the telltale creak of the old flooring in the hallway outside my room. I didn't realize I had stopped breathing until I felt him slip under the duvet on the other side of the bed, a sense of urgency in his movements as he shifted until his stomach met my back, the two of us fitting snugly together, like puzzle pieces, like continents long disconnected but rejoined in some seismic shift of tectonic plates.

I'll admit, it's dramatic, but the relief I felt was so very real. He held me tightly, tucking his left arm under my head like a pillow, nestling his nose into the nape of my neck, breathing deeply, and wrapping a possessive right arm around my middle, his fingers splayed across my tummy. I put my hand over his, my eyes filling with happy tears for once, and he pulled me even closer.

I could not help it; I sighed, the tears dripping off my nose and onto his pale bicep. He kissed my temple, my hair, my neck, squeezing the sorrow out of me while I quietly cried.

It was then that I realized that he was shirtless. My thin cotton gown did not cover my shoulders, and I felt the hard, warm planes of his chest and the slowing of his heart rate against my back. His body was much more substantial than I'd originally perceived, the muscles well defined against my back.

He was male. He was male and in my bed. And he cared enough for me to want to sleep next to me every night and to lose sleep when he couldn't.

And I found that I had fallen for him, just like that.

He was warm. He was kindred. And he was the love of my short life.

He was *home*. I knew it, then.

I shook with the enormity of my realization, and he shushed and cooed to me under his breath as my tears ran dry.

The next morning was the first time I woke up before him. I was facing him, curled into his chest as his arms wrapped around me, one hand lazily weaved into my hair. I was content to lie there while his breath sougled at my temple, but of course, as was wont to happen during the most inconvenient times, the loo called.

Having untangled myself from his long limbs, I skittered to the bathroom and performed my morning ablutions, hoping he wouldn't wake as the ancient plumbing creaked and groaned as I washed my face and cleaned my teeth.

When I emerged from the bathroom, he was sitting up in bed, the sheets tangled around his grey and blue flannels. He quirked a sleepy smile at me and stood as I turned to my dresser, pulling out my denims and a simple white tee that I'd forgotten I owned. I sighed dramatically, walked around him and, tossing my clothing on the edge of the mattress, went to get some fresh knickers. Coming back I passed close to him. He stopped me and cupped my jaw, coming at me from the side, kissing my horrid, mussed hair.

"Good morning," he murmured and then headed to my door. His steps echoed in the hallway as he retreated downstairs where the morning tea was waiting.

And so things progressed much like that for the remainder of our month-long break, and I woke up to his surprisingly unlined face every morning. So surreal, and yet I couldn't imagine a night or morning without him in it.

Until Christmas Eve.

It was snowing that day, and Harry, the Weasleys, and I had a lovely time playing Exploding Snap in the living room while Mrs. Weasley cooked up a delicious roast with the help of Remus, surprisingly. I wondered every now and then where *he* was, what he planned on doing tonight, if he would be sharing the bed with me tonight.

I certainly hoped so, for my sanity.

He arrived just in time for dinner, although there was an air to his behaviour that rang of apprehension. He had been placed next to me, though, and had traced runes on my knee while he sipped quietly on some wine, observing the Weasley's bickering and bantering while several other Order members looked on in amusement.

I spent the entire time in silence, deciphering the symbols that give me goose bumps even now. Sun. Moon. Winter. Happiness. Protection...

He was half-way through what might have been Affection when he hissed violently and stood from the table, knocking over his and my glasses as he grasped his left arm to his chest.

Everyone stared at him solemnly as he looked around the room.

"Happy Christmas, everyone," he said unevenly and then fled the room, his eyes haunted.

He did not return that night.

And I did not sleep. I waited up for him with Remus and Dumbledore, pretending to plough through a novel as they spoke in hushed tones. But, they shooed me upstairs at half-three when they'd noticed I'd not read a line.

He did not return, and I could not sleep until the morning hit, and the shadows could no longer chase me.

Christmas morning was grim, but everyone seemed determined to remain in high spirits. After all, we weren't quite dead, yet.

Of course, when George joked about that in a morning toast, I almost lost it.

I received several presents, though, which were a comfort. Most were books. Except, there sat amongst them a small, inconspicuous box with a blue ribbon and no name that I saved for last.

I snuck it up to my room, kicking myself mentally when I prepared for bed as if he would walk through the door and hold me all night.

Properly in my nightgown, I sat cross-legged in the candlelight and unwrapped the festive wrapping paper. The fluffy cotton that met my eyes made me giggle silently, as I remembered a running joke in my family...there was always a box full of tissue paper under the tree, disguised as a real present, ever since Daddy in his nervousness had forgotten to put his present into the box for his and Mum's first married Christmas. However, the cotton hid underneath it something of much greater value than air. The sterling silver glinted a cool yellow in the candlelight; it was a Celtic love knot bracelet*. I slid it onto my left wrist, staring at it, teary-eyed, until I was too exhausted to keep my eyes open. I fell asleep in an uncomfortable heap against the headboard.

At two o'clock, I was jarred awake by the sound of my door creaking open. Of course, I shot out of bed, the box and wrapping paper falling to the floor at my feet. I ignored the mess and threw myself toward the door where a dark figure slumped against the frame.

"S-Severus?" My voice cracked, and of course it would, the first time I called him by his given name. He fell into my arms when I reached him, and I realized immediately that he smelled of blood. "Oh, God," I murmured and set him to stand again, although he shook like mad. I closed the door, warded it against intruders and cast a silencing charm on the door. It wasn't until I'd finished when I heard the shower running.

I walked in, tentatively, to see him sitting, knees pulled into his body, under a boiling spray, fully clad in Death Eater regalia. He shook uncontrollably, muttering under his breath and staring at the black tiles. The candle fixtures were dim but cast flickering shadows over his frame. Water was everywhere.

Well, I stepped in with him, my nightgown soaking through to the bone with water so hot that it stung. I slowly closed the shower curtains and sat with him, pulling him toward me and nestling his head in the crook of my neck. We stayed there for the longest time, until the water turned cold and we both were shaking.

I shut the water off eventually and helped him climb out of the tub. "Let's get you dried, how about it?" I whispered soothingly and helped him shrug out of his ceremonial robe. He stared into my face as I began peeling away the soiled pieces of clothing, letting them fall to the tiled floor as we both trembled with cold. I spoke comforting words to him, telling him of trivial things, like what we'd had for dinner and what novel I was currently reading.

In the middle of a vague story that I have no recollection of, he interrupted me, quiet but resolved. "I love you, you know..."

I smiled weakly and just tried to ignore that I was slowly reaching the last layers of clothing. But I trudged on, because he needed to be clean of it all. He stepped out of his pants absently. I towelled his hair slowly and made sure he was dry enough, and then I dried the robes haphazardly, throwing them in the shower, not wanting to look at them again. I turned with a loud sigh toward the bedroom when I was satisfied I had a clean floor. He tugged on my soaked sleeve, though, which stopped me in my tracks.

I turned back to him questioningly, but he gave my sleeve another tug. "Off," he muttered.

"Oh."

I lifted the soggy shift over my head and did away with my knickers, trying to hide myself from him, but he just took hold of my forearms covering me and pulled them to my sides. He leaned in, brushing his lips over my forehead. We shuffled, his hand around my left wrist, fingering his sterling gift as we made it to the bed and tumbled, exhausted, onto the duvet, sloppily pulling it over ourselves as we fell into slumber...a tangle of warm limbs.

I woke to find my hair plastered to the side of my face, having neglected to put it in a pony tail the night before. It always acted up in the mornings when I slept with it wet. All the same Severus snuggled into it, his nose just touching the sensitive spot behind my ear as his easy breathing came in puffs across my neck. Sometime during the night, we'd reverted back to our traditional positions. I hummed contentedly and began to sit up, but his arms quickly wrapped around my waist...that I should have realised was quite bare.

"Stay. It's not yet six. The others rise at eight."

"But I look horrid..."

"Stay. Please."

I flopped down dramatically, huffing and puffing as he chuckled lightly. He turned me around to face him as I snuggled back under the covers, running his hands over my rat's nest several times. A tiny breath of a charm settled around my head, tickling my ears. He'd detangled it, just like that! I looked at him incredulously, but he just smirked and continued to stroke my face. And then all the laughter was gone and replaced by a strange but powerful emotion behind his eyes.

"I meant what I said last night," he whispered.

I frowned but snuggled closer, trying to ignore the fact that he was naked, too. "What was it?" I mumbled, trying to think through the haze of my worry and grief.

"I rather think I've fallen in love with you, Hermione Granger." I gaped at him for a long time, and soon all the hope...that was what it was lurking behind his eyes...had drained from his face and he looked almost like he would cry. Like he'd faced rejection many times before but this was the last straw.

"I don't know what to say that could... I don't know how to show you..." I tried, but I couldn't quite get the words right. I reached out and traced the line of his nose with a finger, then smoothed the worry lines between his brows, then combed my finger through his hair. His eyes fluttered closed, a sigh escaping his lips. And then I kissed him. I'd barely touched his lips with mine when his arms snaked around my waist again and brought me to him, crushing our bellies together...his hard stomach against my soft tummy, his... well, his penis caught between us as he pressed his lips more firmly against mine. My hands were trapped against his chest as he clung to me, but I didn't mind all that much. My own eyes fluttered closed as he moved his mouth against me, tentatively nibbling at my lower lip, seeking entrance. I obliged, running my tongue over his lips and his tongue chased mine back into my mouth, one of his hands cupping the base of my skull while the other ran a distracting path across my waist, but never travelling below what would have been the routine boundary...had I been clothed. I rather thought we were past all propriety, but admired his chivalry all the same.

We quickly became drowned in the kiss...it seemed to last an eternity, and when we parted I was panting and he was shaking. "Hermione," he said against my lips. I could tell he was aroused as the evidence burned into my stomach, but I wasn't sure what to do. I chose a relatively direct approach, trailing a hand down his chest to meet with an intimidating patch of fine curls several centimetres beneath his navel. He inhaled loudly but did not protest. I ran my fingers through the curls, and his penis almost twitched, and Severus nuzzled my ear as I looked down in the general direction, although the duvet covered most of my arm.

"Can I see it?" I whispered, my face reddening as he nodded and pushed the covers down past our waists. He was probably getting an eyeful of me, but I couldn't take my eyes off of him. I grasped him loosely in my hand, wondering *how* in God's name something of that size could fit in and-or around my vagina. I must've looked frightened because he chuckled and kissed me on the cheek.

"I assure you, it can fit."

I hummed, amazed but still embarrassed.

"Hermione, as much as it thrills me to be touched by you, it's also bloody torturous."

"I don't know how," I muttered, looking back into his eyes as I gave a tentative stroke. He held his breath, keeping my eyes locked with his as he wrapped a hand around mine, tightening my grip significantly and directing my strokes. I saw his Adam's apple bob up and down as he swallowed, and his eyes drifted down my body, drinking me in. Soon he had his head resting in the crook of my neck as we stroked together, panting harshly onto my skin as I stared down at him in wonderment.

Now I knew how to reduce the Potions master to a puddle of goo. I giggled, but as soon as I had drawn another breath he pinned me on my back, my arms thrown over my head and my nose centimetres from his. "Are you laughing at me, Miss Granger?"

"No! I'm not laughing at you!" I whispered.

"Are you *sure* about that?" He smirked, leaning into me, parting my legs and punctuating his words with a slow thrust of his hips.

"No... Not quite," I breathed, smiling as his forehead leant against mine.

"I should wipe that smile off your face." He thrust again. "How would it be... to reduce my verbose little know-it-all... ~~to~~ *complete* incoherence?"

I hummed approvingly and spread my legs wider.

He leaned in and gave me another heated kiss, but it couldn't compare to the heat searing against my thigh. He leaned up against his elbows and looked into my face. "Looking for something?" I asked.

"You are a beautiful woman, Hermione."

I snorted, unladylike in my doubt.

"I never say things I do not mean." His eyes bore into mine until a smile tugged at his lips. "Unless of course, I'm spying, but I think you understood."

"Severus..." I murmured, my eyes filling with tears.

He leant down and kissed away the salty tracks on my cheeks, making his way to my mouth as I waited for the point of no return. "Hermione," he breathed into me and thrust home.

The pain was white hot, but lasted mere nanoseconds compared to the sheer pleasure he would draw from me. He allowed my arms to curve around his neck, bringing me closer to him as he snuck one hand under my back and the other under my thigh, bringing one leg to hug him round the waist. Our breaths hitched at the sensations barrelling through us, and he crooned words of comfort as the pain finally ebbed away, giving way to a new kind of white-hot feeling in my core. Soon I was moaning his name in pleasure, completely unaware of the answering whimpers that tore from his throat.

I love you I love you I love you...

The words flitted through my haze-filled mind, and I couldn't be sure they were his or mine, we were so connected. All I knew was I agreed.

I tightened into a bow of tension just moments before my release, seeing stars when he pulled my orgasm from me. He was quick to follow, spilling into me as my muscles fluttered from their exertion.

We lay slick and sweaty for a long while until he rolled away from me and took his place as Bigger Spoon once more. I watched the sunrise sleepily as I fingered my new bracelet.

"Do you know what this symbolizes?" he asked quietly, tracing the knot with me as the sun poured onto the bed from the wide window.

"Not entirely. Eternity, being one with nature..."

"It means that I will always be with you, no matter what happens."

I turned quickly in his arms so I could look him in the eye. I knew what that meant.

"No matter what happens...? Severus, that sounds like someone's last words! Don't tell me you just jumped in bed to take my sodding virginity and then leave to join your Death Eaters!"

"Hermione, Hermione," he shushed as I huffed, my face red with anger. "It means I will try to be here for you, always."

"Be here for me?"

"Here, there... Anywhere."

"Every night?"

"And day, if I can manage. You are quite insufferable; I might have to take a break every now and again."

She poked him in the shoulder, but he just sniggered. "If I didn't love you so much, you'd be getting a punch in the gut, mister."

He nuzzled my nose. "I love you, too."

There would come a time when he said those words to me again, but they would be too soon and much more in the form of goodbye.

A skirmish sprung up in the last week of my seventh year, and the Order was called to fight. The frantic shouts and chaotic mess of battle managed to provide enough cover for us to communicate, although briefly, that we still cared and if we could help it, we'd elope to Timbuktu together and avoid all this Dark Lord rubbish. "Don't go!" I shouted as he retreated with his fellow Death Eaters. I ran to him, shoving the bracelet into his free hand as he backed away, tears in his eyes. When all he could do was shake his head, I blurted, "Come find me. When it's over. When it's all over!"

"I love you," he mouthed and ran from me.

I managed a nasty Stinging Hex to his right shoulder blade before an Order member pulled me to fight somewhere else. I knew he had to keep his loyalties secreted away, so I turned. And fought for the Light.

A year-and-a-half passed without so much as a word, and I had begun to think he was dead...that he would wind up in a ditch on some Muggle back road and no one...I...would never know. And then Harry, in some freakishly lucky feat where he'd faced Voldemort alone *again*, killed the bastard and the dark reign ended. Just like that. No grand battle. No dramatics. It was all over.

And I still didn't hear from him. Of course, it was a while before any Death Eaters could be accounted for, so if he were still alive, it might not be safe, but I somehow knew he would not come find me.

I tried not to care.

Got a Ministry job. Boring, but well paid.

Moved back in with my parents when their Obliviates had worn off.

Tried to stop loving him.

So, it came as quite a shock when a small, conspicuous box with a blue bow came in the Muggle post that Christmas. I sprinted to my room, sitting cross-legged on my bed and staring at the silvery wrapping paper, willing it to be real.

When I finally convinced myself to open it, I nearly fainted when a scrap of parchment slipped out onto my lap, spidery writing burning into my retinas as I read it over and over.

'I will try to be here for you, always.

Here, there... Anywhere.

Every night and day, if I can manage.'

I touched a finger to the parchment, feeling a frightening tug around my navel as I was whisked far away.

I shrieked when I landed on an unfamiliar, squishy couch in a dusty but sundrenched room, arms flailing as I stood and tried to achieve balance without tossing up all over the floor. A pair of hands reached out from beyond my vision as I steadied myself, and sooner than they'd grasped for my shoulders, I had my wand pointed in the kidnapper's face.

Severus stared back at me, wide-eyed, in the small living room.

I fell into him just as quickly as I'd whipped my weapon out and was sobbing into his sweater as he wrapped his arms around me.

"Bloody, sodding git," I snuffled and he nuzzled my hair.

"Should've given me some warning... Or a sign that you were bloody, sodding *alive!*"

He just chuckled and carried me up the stairs, proceeding to make it up to me in much more pleasurable a form than a heated argument or weepy reunion over the fact that he'd been imprisoned for several months, escaped, and had been living abroad until news of the war had come back to him.

Much, *much* more pleasurable.

And as we lie sated in his cosy bed on Spinner's End, spoons Big and Little once more, he slips his bracelet back onto my wrist, vowing to keep his promise for the rest of our lives.

~sshg~

*See the bracelet here:

<http://stores.theirishjewelrycompany.com/-strse-489/Celtic-Lovers-Knot-Bangle/Detail.bok>