

I Will Always Love You

by neelix

A series of drabbles, Dolly Parton inspired.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: This was written as a gift for my lovely beta Kizzy7 and was checked over for me by sshg316. It's a song inspired drabble story, not meant to be taken too seriously. I tried to include as many SSHG fan fiction cliché's as I could -- I hope it makes you smile!

1. Here You Come Again.

'Here you come again,

Just as I've begun to get myself together.

You waltz right in the door

Just like you done before

And wrap my heart 'round your little finger'

Dolly Parton.

The door opened swiftly, and Severus looked up from his careful stirring with a raised eyebrow and a scowl ready for whomever had dared to interrupt his brewing without prior notice.

'Granger,' he growled softly from between his gritted, uneven teeth.

Hermione flashed him a bright smile. 'Good to see you too, Severus. Good holiday?' She turned from him as she removed her outdoor clothing.

'*It must be snowing,*' he mused, staring at the damp, melting flakes that clung to her curls and fell as insignificant drops of water as she loosened the ridiculously long, lurid pink scarf from around her neck.

'It's just started snowing,' Hermione said with a touch of joy in her voice.

'I'd never have guessed,' he retorted. 'Ten points from Gryffindor for stating the bloody obvious.'

'Full of Christmas cheer then?' Hermione snapped. As Severus looked up from his brew, he noticed with a slight twitch at the corner of his mouth and also, dammit, his

nether regions, that she was standing legs akimbo with her hands on her hips.

'Was it Christmas? Never noticed,' he said blandly.

'Why can't we ever have a normal conversation?' Hermione sighed with sad resignation. 'You could have said, "Yes, I had a lovely holiday, and how was yours, Hermione? Did you receive any nice gifts?" But no! Always with the sarcasm and the quick retort. For fuck's sake, Severus. We have worked together in this lab for the past three years. I had thought we might even be friends by now.'

Without waiting for a response, Hermione walked into the inner office to gather her paperwork for the day, leaving Severus standing open-mouthed and staring after her.

The two week Christmas break had always been a torturous drag. Now it was even worse, because Hermione always left him behind.

'Fuck it,' he muttered.

2.The Bargain Store.

'Take these old, used memories from the past

and these broken dreams and plans that didn't last.

I'll trade them for a future; I can't use them any more.

I wasted love, but I still have some more.'

Dolly Parton

Severus sat behind his desk. He was trying to mark essays, but it was futile. Each time he tried to concentrate, his mind insisted on replaying Hermione's words. Rubbing his hands over his face, he sighed deeply and cursed whatever gods that chose to listen to him while he whinged. It had been bad enough coping with rejection from Lily Fucking Evans to give her her full title but to be this infatuated with Hermione Bloody Granger as well. Caught twice in the one lifetime. Hadn't he put up with enough shit?

As was normally the way of things where Severus Snape was concerned, he proceeded to drink far too much Firewhisky for his own good. And as was also often the case, he then went on to make a fool of himself in front of Hermione Bloody Granger.

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Hermione had been reading when she thought she heard the knock at her door. She was so engrossed that she wasn't even sure if she had heard correctly, but she decided to investigate anyway.

Thinking that he was being ignored, Severus had slumped like a lovesick puppy against her door, his forehead pressed against the wood as if he was trying to pass through it like a castle ghost. It also served as a way of keeping himself upright. Walking whilst drunk was always precarious, but walking whilst drunk when obsessed with Hermione Bloody Granger made him all the more wobbly on his pins.

Which is why Severus Snape ended up being healed by a slightly confused bushy-haired witch after falling at her feet and breaking his nose and three ribs.

'Feeling any better?' Hermione asked him quietly. She was kneeling on the rug beside the sofa and peering at his face carefully, making sure her hurried attempt at fixing his nose hadn't spoiled it in any way.

'No.' Severus muttered. He was still pissed, but despite his fall nothing would stop him saying what he came to say.

'Do you need a pain potion?' Hermione asked and then went to stand. She was stopped by thin, agile fingers that wrapped themselves gently around her wrist.

'I would like,' he whispered, and his eyes sought hers urgently as he tried to focus through the fog of alcohol that was blurring his vision somewhat, 'to be friends.'

Hermione relaxed, and her eyes were warm as she smiled down into Severus's slightly bruised face.

'Me too,' she replied.

3.Potential New Boyfriend

'Building up an appetite,

You can look but you can't bite.

Better keep your hands of my potential new boyfriend'

Dolly Parton.

Hermione stood in front of her floor-length mirror, twirling the sheath of Slytherin green silk from side to side. It wasn't subtle, but she was beyond subtlety where Severus was concerned. They had been official friends for over two months, and she had been flirting shamelessly with him, with no result, for the past two weeks.

'Thank God for the Ministry Ball,' she murmured, reaching for her wand. With a flick of her wrist, her hair was piled in an artfully messy heap on top of her head, with a few stray curls to add what she hoped was a bit of allure. The addition of her silver serpent jewellery almost made her laugh out loud. If that didn't give him the biggest hint yet, she would have to hex him, smuggle him into her quarters and then spell it out for him. Hermione felt her evil twin do a little happy dance at the thought of a captured and bound Severus, naked and spread eagled on her bed. Hermione flushed. She hadn't had that thought in quite some time, but now it was there, taunting her. She had to shag Severus tonight or she would explode.

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Severus paced for a few moments outside Hermione's door. He had hoped he hadn't misread her recent actions, for he had decided to treat tonight's ball as a possible date. His hair was tied back with a thin green ribbon, and he had purchased new robes in dark green velvet. He wanted to make a good impression, and so he had purchased a white gardenia for her as a gift. He wasn't good at romantic gestures, but he knew that flowers were usually a sure thing. Taking a breath, he lifted his hand to knock at the door, only to be startled when the wood disappeared and he punched Hermione in the face instead.

'Fucking Hell!' he shouted, watching with horror as blood spurted from Hermione's nose and dripped through her fingers as she tried to stem the flow. Switching into professor mode, Severus grabbed Hermione by the shoulders and propelled her into her sitting room, pushed her onto the sofa and used his wand and basic healing spells to repair the damage. There was nothing much he could do for the bruising that had already started to spread, and he brushed his fingers tenderly over her cheekbones.

'I am so sorry,' he whispered, a lump forming in his throat as he saw the tears welling in Hermione's eyes.

'It's okay. My fault. I set my wards to recognise you, and I couldn't understand why you were just standing there and not knocking. I thought maybe you had changed your mind,' she said softly.

Severus closed his eyes slightly. 'I was a little nervous,' he whispered. He opened his eyes again to see her smiling, and he dropped his gaze a little. The serpent earrings caught his eye, then he took in the green dress and matching heels. He couldn't stop the grin as it spread across his face.

'Nice dress.' He smirked.

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They attracted a significant amount of attention as they entered the Great Hall arm in arm. Not many people had seen the Potions master scrub up so well, and the flutter of approval that went through the female contingent caused Hermione to tighten her hold on her wand and squeeze Severus's arm tightly. He smiled softly at her before going to the bar to get their drinks, and Hermione watched with a sense of excited anticipation as he gracefully walked back to her a few moments later with a glass of champagne in one hand and a Firewhisky in the other. He had almost reached her when he was accosted by a tall, slim girl, and with a hiss, Hermione watched as Pansy Parkinson almost threw herself at him. Severus looked at Hermione like a rabbit caught in the headlights, and his eyes widened in panic.

Hermione walked straight up to them, extracted her wand and poked it gently into Parkinson's stomach so as not to draw too much attention.

'What are you doing?' Pansy said, staring at Hermione with a look of fear in her eyes.

'Fuck off, Parkinson. He's mine,' Hermione spat.

Severus wrapped his arm around Hermione's waist possessively and pulled her close as Parkinson stormed off. Neither of them noticed. They were too busy snogging.

4. Baby, I'm Burning

'I see that you need me

I need you to please me

You touch me and set me on fire '

Dolly Parton.

Hermione walked to her rooms carrying her stupid shoes in one hand and holding onto Severus's hand with the other. The champagne had gone to her head, and emboldened by the alcohol coursing through her veins, she had persuaded Severus to dance with the promise of a nightcap in her rooms afterwards. The result was sore feet (why had she forgotten a cushioning charm?) and the reality of bringing Severus back with her. Suddenly her resolve to 'shag Severus senseless if it's the last thing I do' was fluttering around her stomach, making her nervous and excited all at the same time.

Severus glanced sideways at Hermione as they walked. She kept her gaze forward and worried her bottom lip with her teeth occasionally. With a sinking feeling, Severus realised that she was regretting her promise of a nightcap and trying to figure a way of getting rid of him gently. Fair enough. Champagne can addle the brain and make one act foolishly, he reasoned. But then, she had joined in enthusiastically when he kissed her, spontaneously joyful at her proclamation that he was hers. And her eyes had sparkled at him as they danced, and her laughter had tingled his insides like little bubbles until he felt almost nauseous with nervous anticipation. He couldn't even recall the last time he had been inside a real woman. The whores in London didn't count, being used and abused on a regular basis. A pussy of his own was in the realm of fantasy for Severus Snape.

With a start he realised they were at her door, and Severus stepped back like a gentleman should, bowing slightly to take his leave.

'Oh, no you fucking don't,' said Hermione vehemently, pushing open her door with a firm shove of her arse as she lent forward and grabbed Severus by both hands. Urgently, she dragged him into the room, registering the shock on his face momentarily while she applied her wards, silencing charms and an anti-escape jinx of her own invention.

Severus only had time to pause for breath before Hermione threw herself at him, planting her full lips firmly onto his as her fingers fumbled at his buttons. She was writhing like a slippery caterpillar against his body, gasping and pushing her hips against him like a frothing teenager. Fighting the urge to laugh at her eagerness and his bloody good luck, Severus grasped Hermione's shoulders and pushed her away gently, panting as he stared hard at her heaving chest and red, swollen lips.

'Bedroom,' he said, his voice croaking a little with pent-up lust and lack of saliva. The witch was sucking him dry, and they had only just got started.

'Good idea,' Hermione whispered, then turned, dragging him behind her and slamming the bedroom door open with her wand.

Time stood still for a brief moment as she turned, her hair billowing around her neck as it tumbled from her head. She lifted her hands to her shoulders and let the straps of her dress fall. With a little shimmy of her hips, the fabric pooled at her feet, and Severus gasped as he realised she had been naked underneath the silk all night.

'Naked,' he breathed, unable to think clearly. 'Naked Hermione.'

Hermione giggled as he spoke his thoughts out loud. 'Come here,' she teased, pinching her already tight nipples between her fingers.

Severus didn't need to be told twice.

5. Love is Like a Butterfly

'I feel it when you're with me,

It happens when you kiss me,

That rare and gentle feeling that I feel inside'

Dolly Parton.

Working in the lab had taken on a new dimension now that Hermione and Severus were shagging. It had been a trial at first, because they were so fired up they could hardly keep their hands off each other. They had done it on the potions bench, in Hermione's office, on the chair behind Severus' desk and then on the desk itself. It had been exhausting and exhilarating all at the same time. And then, something changed.

Severus didn't understand what was happening at first. He still felt the same anticipation when Hermione entered the room, but when their eyes met, the feeling that he wanted to peel her clothes off had abated slightly and something else was in its place. Oh, he still wanted to get her naked every now and then. But he was equally as happy just to sit in her rooms by the fire as they both read. Hermione liked to sit on the floor between his knees, and Severus thought he had never felt such contentment as when he was stroking her soft curls with one hand and holding his book with the other.

It was on such an evening that Severus had his epiphany. Hermione had fallen asleep with her head on his inner thigh. The warmth of the fire and her cosy spot on the

floor had all combined to lull her, but Severus's leg was going numb and he needed to pee. He stared down at her and noticed the small smile on her lips and her eyes dancing from some dream or other.

'Hermione,' he whispered, stroking her cheek.

'Mmmm?' Hermione murmured as her eyes fluttered open slowly.

'Let me take you to bed,' he said softly, shifting his position and encouraging her off the floor and into his arms. Effortlessly he lifted her and walked into the bedroom, placing her gently against the pillows and extracting himself from her clinging arms.

Hermione looked at Severus through half-closed eyes and mumbled 'I love you' before falling asleep.

Tears stung his eyes as he bent to kiss her soft, pink mouth. And he knew that he loved her, too.

6. Don't Call It Love

'Don't call it Love,

Heavens Above.

We got a better thing... '

Dolly Parton.

Hermione was pacing the floor again. Severus sighed with exasperation and put his cauldron down with a loud clang.

'Hermione,' he said firmly. 'Either stand still or sit down, but for fuck's sake stop pacing!'

'I can't help it,' she snapped back at him. 'I've been wanting to tell Harry and Ginny the truth about us for so long, and now it's finally happening, I just don't know if I can get the words out.'

Severus glared at her and put down his stirring rod. His lips were set in a thin line and the vein in his neck was starting to pulse. Without another word, he walked out of the lab. They had been discreetly sharing Hermione's rooms for some time, but Severus changed his direction and headed to his own quarters. He needed to think.

There had been a few pointed comments after their public display of affection on the night of the Ministry Ball, but they had agreed, for the sake of their sanity, to laugh it off as a one-night fling that meant nothing. It had given them the time and privacy they had needed to nurture their feelings for each other without interference from the other staff members or Hermione's friends. Since they had become more seriously involved, however, Hermione had been all the more keen to let her friends in on the secret. She hated fobbing them off, she said. It felt dishonest, she said. Severus didn't give a shit who knew, he said. He was proud to be with her, but he knew the impact on Hermione would be greater. Why would anyone want to be associated with him, anyway? And now, it would seem she was having second thoughts about telling them. He couldn't blame her for being embarrassed but it hurt him all the same.

A dark cloud settled over him as he entered his old sitting room. It was cold through lack of use and a layer of dust was starting to gather over all of the furniture. He kicked the leg of the low couch in frustration and summoned his Firewhisky to him. He didn't get to taste it, however, because the bottle and glass were 'Accio'd' out of his hand by a very angry looking Hermione Granger.

'Now what?' she demanded, placing the decanter down on the table by the fire.

Severus ignored her and folded his arms, staring at some point over her shoulder.

'Don't you start that with me, Severus Snape,' Hermione hissed. She walked towards him with one hand on her hip, the other holding her wand and trembling slightly. 'I will not tolerate your sulking, as you well know. You will tell me eventually anyway, so why don't we cut to the chase and you tell me what's got up your arse this time?' Hermione was standing inches from Severus's chest, and little sparks of magic were starting to crackle in the air around her.

Severus stared at her for a moment, knowing that she was right and being slightly scared at this sudden display. Her magic was not under her full control, and he didn't care to think what might happen if he didn't just 'fess up. Sighing, he dropped his arms to his sides resignedly and sank onto the sofa behind him. Leaning forward, Severus hung his head in his hands.

'You don't need to tell them if you don't want to, Hermione. We could just continue as we are,' he said softly.

Hermione lowered her wand slowly as his words sunk in.

'Don't you want me to tell them, then?' she asked him, sounding confused.

'I don't care who knows. I'm so happy with you, at times it feels like someone else's life. But I understand if you're embarrassed. We can just keep it quiet, if you think it would be easier.' Severus closed his eyes and leaned back against the saggy cushion. He felt Hermione sit beside him, and as he opened his eyes, he realised she was crying soft, silent tears.

'Severus,' she whispered, 'I can't believe you thought I was embarrassed to tell them.'

'Aren't you?' he asked, a little perplexed.

'No, not at all. Quite the opposite, actually. I just think that to tell them that I love you, well... ' Hermione paused, 'it doesn't quite describe what we have, does it? It just doesn't seem enough, somehow.' She smiled softly at him.

Severus felt his heart lurch into his throat. He smiled at Hermione and took her hand in his. 'No, it's not enough at all,' he murmured.

7. I Really Got The Feeling

'I love my Daddy, but it really doesn't matter what my Daddy might say,

I really got the feeling that I'll love you 'til my dying day'

Dolly Parton.

'Severus, are you ready?' Hermione called loudly. They were already running late, and Hermione had expected him to be sitting, waiting for her.

Severus stepped out of the bedroom and did a little twirl. He was wearing a dark blue Muggle suit with a white shirt and pale blue tie, and his hair was brushed behind his ears.

'Will I pass, do you think?' he asked her with a shy smile.

'Oh,' Hermione gasped, 'you look lovely, Severus. Really handsome. Mum will fall in love with you, I just know it.'

Severus grunted. 'I am adept at wooing Granger women,' he said seductively as Hermione came in for a kiss. 'It's your father that concerns me.'

Hermione smiled softly. 'Do you really think it will make a difference if my dad approves or not? I mean, even if he refuses to give you my hand, I'm going to marry you anyway.'

Severus grinned at her widely. 'I know,' he said, bending to capture her lips with his.

By the time they had finished and located their clothing, they were over an hour late.

8. We Had It All

'I know that we can never live those times again,

But I let my dreams take me back to where we've been.

And I stay there with you, just as long as I can.

It was so good,

Oh, it was so good, when you were my man.'

Dolly Parton.

The wind was whipping around Hermione's robes as she wound her way through the little copse and followed the path through the line of trees. Her grey hair was caught at the nape of her neck in a black ribbon, but it wasn't any symbol of grief. It was just to stop her curls flying into her face. Suddenly sheltered by the trees as she reached her destination, she loosened the ribbon and allowed her hair to tumble onto her shoulders. Severus had always loved it like that.

Hermione walked purposefully up to the headstone and traced his name with her fingers.

'Hello, Severus,' she said softly. 'I told you I'd come today, didn't I? I almost didn't make it. Dunderheads and cauldrons don't mix. You were absolutely right.'

Hermione sat beside the grave for hours, as she always did on special occasions. Today was her birthday, and she reminded Severus of the time he had forgotten and she had sulked for almost a week, until he had surprised her with a weekend away in Paris to make up for it. She laughed out loud as she spoke to him.

Hermione was humming to herself softly with her eyes closed, lost in thought. She didn't notice that she wasn't on her own.

'Mum,' said a soft, male voice.

Hermione opened her eyes and smiled at her son. 'Hello, Marcus.'

'It's freezing out here, Mum. Come back to the castle,' he said with concern.

'I just wanted to be with your father for a while.' Hermione smiled at him as she stood. He was so like his father that Hermione knew she wasn't leaving Severus behind. Not really.

Bending to stroke the headstone, she murmured 'Goodbye, Severus,' and then turned to let herself be guided home.

The End