

Immobility

by persefone

Companion piece of 'Impulse', although it could be read alone.
Severus' POV.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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I caught her watching me. No, *devouring* me, with her beautiful hazel eyes. They were indeed lovely eyes. Intense, when she chose them to be, but most often simply soft.

Maybe it was just an hallucination, but the next time I ventured to direct a gaze towards her, her eyes were closed, and her relaxed posture hinted it might be a permanent state. However, the image remained clear at the forefront of my mind.

I sighed and stared at the Firewhisky in my glass, even as I tilted the tumbler to take another sip. *I've probably had quite enough of you, if I'm beginning to distort reality.*

However, I didn't put my glass down, but continued to watch the scene before me.

White roses and lilies adorned the maroon tones of the formerly ghoulish ballroom walls. A wise selection; they brightened the room. Most of the guests were already spread out in the armchairs and around the little round tables. Minerva's wedding gift for the young couple, if I recalled correctly. Just five or six couples with no fewer than four Weasleys between them remained dancing to the low beat melody that issued from a Muggle artefact on the bar in the middle of the room.

For a moment I admired the impressive Muggle music system Granger's present. But even more impressive was the fact that it worked. With electricity. *All her doing, of course.* I had seen her a few times during the evening, creating a silver capsule around the equipment with her wand and pushing a series of buttons on it, always with an excited Potter and an enthusiastic Arthur Weasley behind her. She even seemed to welcome their intrusion, her eyes shining with delight whenever she explained something to them.

Just like her eyes light up when she laughs, so frequently, or when she smiled at me in greeting when I arrived for the party...The thought made me start, and I stared at the dregs of Firewhisky in my glass again, this time with accusation. *I've definitely had enough of you. Time to go.*

I left my glass on the table by the armchair and stood, looking for the hosts. They weren't difficult to find, as Miss Weasley's Ginevra, as she wanted me to call her, hair was unmistakable. However, they, or rather their *mouths* were occupied with each other. I smirked; a plausible excuse to not say my goodbyes to them.

I directed my steps towards Minerva instead, who was chatting a tad too chipperly with Desdemona Prewett, Molly's aunt.

"Minerva. I will be going. I trust you to inform the hosts of my leaving. They were... occupied. Enjoy the party," I said, then I took her hand and bowed deeply. I found it very entertaining the way she got flustered each time I acted most courteously around her. But she didn't let go of my hand, and I locked eyes with her, questioningly. *Oh, no. That expression again...*

"Severus! So soon? Didn't you have a pleasant time?"

For her it is always the same combination: warmth, sadness, concern, pity, and guilt. I have read variations of that mix in her eyes and in every single other Order member's, for that matter since the day of the Hogwarts battle. Or since the day in which Potter could not keep his huge mouth shut, as I prefer to call it. I pressed my lips together to keep myself from lashing out as I often did when confronted with that look.

"The evening has provided an acceptable distraction."

After all, I couldn't truly hate Potter for that slip, since it was the reason I wasn't rotting in Azkaban right now, but still...

"I'm glad you enjoyed yourself, Severus. I'll tell Harry and Ginny of your departure. Good night *my boy*."

"Good night, Minerva. Mrs Prewett." I turned and walked towards the exit.

My boy. Another thing that frustrated me to no end. Those two words seemed to have been passed onto her with the Headmistress's position. Along with that look, they were just the thing that either angered or depressed me.

At a moment I couldn't pinpoint precisely during the second phase of the war, I had ceased thinking about what my life could be like if I survived. But before that, I had imagined several possible scenarios. However, I had never pictured myself in this situation.

The wizarding world had finally recognised my efforts, and I was no longer the reviled teacher, true. But the wall of deception Dumbledore and I had created around me that separated me from the rest of the people did not disappear. Instead it was replaced by another unsurmountable wall. They *pitied* me. Each and every one of them. What was more, every bloody magical being in Britain softened their presumptuous eyes as they stared at me, thinking about my pathetic unrequited love.

And that was only those who could meet my gaze. Most people around me including my fellow teachers and Order members couldn't even look me in the eye because of their guilt. Pure, unadulterated guilt: for never truly trusting me or for not trusting me when I needed it the most. So here I was, still alone and what was worse, still isolated.

I reined in my ruminations while buttoning up my robes and sighed. *Depressed again. Damn. And the night truly had been pleasant*

Then I heard a determined clicking of shoes and turned towards the door, keeping my expression neutral, just in time to see her enter. She really was a magnificent sight. Her crimson dress defined her well-placed curves, and the updo she wore accentuated her unmarred neck. No longer an overachieving girl, she had matured into a capable young woman. A young woman whose extensive experience of warfare was reflected in her eyes. Those beautiful hazel eyes, which, at the moment, were intensely fixed on mine.

My hands stilled. She started.

She took a step towards me. I kept still, a small part of me wondering what she wanted while I clung to just one question. *Will I find that gaze in your eyes, too, Miss Granger? Hermione?*

She took another step.

What do you want? What are you doing? Do you even know it? I'm sure I don't.

And another. My breath hitched, and my heart was beating painfully. I couldn't think straight anymore. I didn't react at all. I didn't know *how* we were so incredibly close...

When her hands moved some strands of my hair away to touch my skin, I had to suppress a shiver.

She's going to kiss you a blurred thought in my mind before it went blank.

Her warm breath, sighing over my face with a faint scent of alcohol, made me aware of myself again. But still, I could not move. Her proximity, the hint of body heat were things I craved, and which, at that very moment, I wasn't able to deny myself. A sentence popped into my mind.

Alcohol, what a wonderful and a terrible thing. Another thought followed, with the quintessence of my existence and my anathema, which always merged into a single word. *Lily.*

Lily. My love. My obsession. My redemption, and my chain. But Lily was no more. She had been gone for a long time now. I should be able let her go. I had fulfilled my vow, after all but I didn't know how.

Maybe the woman so close to me this instant could be the key. But...

Is this how I'm going to move on with my life? Letting drunk girls suffering from hero-worship use me to ease my own longing?

At that moment I felt an eerie detachment. I was tired, so tired of longing and never being satisfied. *So be it.* If that was to be my life, I would stop fighting it.

But somehow she must have felt my resignation, for her eyes focussed on mine and she sighed in defeat.

Her head came to rest on my heaving chest. *What is your very own failure, Hermione? What do you need this old man to comfort you for?*

The tingling sensation of her fingers sliding down my skin matched the intense pressure that clenched my heart.

I don't know how much time passed, how long we stood and just felt, nothing more, before she stepped back and broke the enchantment. She looked fragile, but determined and poised.

"Good night, Professor." A stab delivered with a beautiful, sad smile. *What is your curse, Hermione?* I wanted to ask, but she slipped away.

I watched her retreat, feeling strangely empty, and only when she disappeared I let myself react.

I closed my eyes tightly, swallowing hard. In spite of my turbulent thoughts, for a split-second I had believed in the happiness hiding within that unborn kiss.