

Blood on My Hands

by Gmariam

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Chapter 1 of 1

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There is blood on my hands, and I do not know where it came from.

I do not even know whose blood it is.

I scrub desperately at the red stains, clawing them away, my own blood flowing freely alongside the damning evidence disappearing down the drain. It is a swirling vortex of death, threatening to pull me into its dark depths.

I lean over the sink and vomit, purging the shame and disgust, the guilt for something I cannot remember doing. I gaze into the mirror and a stranger looks back at me, pale and frightened. My shoulder weeps blood from a wound I cannot feel anymore, and there are bruises on my neck.

Where am I?

I walk through the doorway into another life, my old life. Our house, our bedroom—unchanged by what has happened, by what I have done. I do not remember returning. I do not remember leaving.

My mind races, trying to remember. Am I alone?

I hear a sound downstairs. It is not the sound of my family, but of someone searching for me. Someone who knows what I have done, who knows the blood on my hands and in my sink. I must leave.

I take a clean set of robes and release the wards on the house; how I got in, I cannot remember. I Apparate, leaving behind a life to which I will never return. The realization turns my stomach once more, and I vomit as I materialize, spewing my panic all over the steps to the one house where I naively hope I can find safety.

I hurry inside, but others have come before me; they know my past, my movements, my acquaintances. They know where I'll go, who I will seek out for help: nowhere is safe.

I run.

They are chasing me, curses flying past my head, blasting apart the tree in front of me with violent red sparks. Is that what happened earlier? I rub my shoulder as it aches from remembering the magic that wounded it.

I turn to fire back and hear the sound of a body falling to the pavement. I do not stop to see who it was, but Apparate once more, forced to flee from my last refuge; there is only one place they will not find me.

I open my eyes to a broad clearing and hurry toward a small cottage, hoping against hope it remains unoccupied. The storm clouds swirling through the night sky open upon me and release a torrent of driving rain. It blinds me as I hurry toward shelter. I must rest. I must think.

I must finish washing the blood from my hands and remember.

I enter slowly, my heart pounding, my clothes dripping. The cottage is deserted, its owners long gone for many reasons. It is dank and dusty and perfect. I can stop here. I can remember what happened and decide what to do next. I lay down across a threadbare sofa as fever begins to light its fire in my body, my shoulder throbbing with heat. I do not know if they are delusions or dreams, but visions come to me as I sleep . . .

Bodies wrapped together, hands gently exploring, lips lovingly caressing . . .

Curses flying, striking—killing.

A flash of green, a paralyzing fear, a never-ending scream . . .

A funeral.

I wake suddenly, unable to shake the final image from my head: a black coffin, faceless mourners, green eyes lost in anger and pain. I know those eyes, yet I do not know whose death it was that they lamented. I fall back into a fitful sleep, tossing as the visions grow darker . . .

Bodies rolling across silk sheets, consumed by lust, desperate for revenge . . .

A potion abandoned; a charm left undone—failure.

A flash of scarlet, the spurt of blood, a soul ripped in two . . .

Death.

A sound at the door startles me out of evil memories. Someone has found me before I can even find myself. I stand and face them, my wand shaking. Green eyes move toward me, filled with pity and horror. In that face, I see what I have done.

I remember now: I killed.

I planned it and prepared for it and killed him in cold blood. His death is mine. I feel my broken soul begging for wholeness.

I plead for forgiveness, but the green eyes do not seem to understand; perhaps I cannot forgive myself. I am a stranger to everyone now after what I have done. I am a stranger to myself.

I nod, ready to accept my fate. I will not run anymore; the green eyes may take me to face my punishment. I hold out my hands to be bound, but the green eyes turn to icy grey and I scream.

I slash my wand across those eyes—eyes that were dead and dark just hours ago but now watch me with victory and cold malice. I cry out a curse—there is a flash of light—and the eyes shut once more.

And there is blood on my hands once again.

A body falls to the ground, dark hair falling across a pale face marked by a fresh scar to match the old. Green eyes gaze up at me, unseeing, and I collapse next to them, tearing at my hair.

Green eyes—not grey. I am going mad.

And now the blood of two men stains my hands—one of them my best friend. I stand and gaze unseeing around the small cottage, my mind racing blankly. Others will surely follow and find us—one alive, one dead. I cannot face them, but I cannot run any longer.

I cannot see reality anymore. It was taken from me months ago, when I first set out to avenge my loss, to extract my revenge. I see now that even then I was going mad.

It is strange to recognize one's own insanity; it is even stranger to recognize one's imminent death.

I loved him more than life itself, but he was taken from me, cruelly and callously. My love turned to hate, and I took as payment the life of the man who had destroyed my future. And yet in my madness I have also killed the only one who could have saved me.

I killed Harry Potter.

I run outside into the pouring rain. I cast my pain into the storm and rail against my fate. I point my wand to my heart. I form the words on my lips as a sheet of jagged lightning rips apart the black sky.

And I am no more.

Hermione Granger is dead.

But then, she died the day Draco Malfoy killed Ron Weasley.

This story was written for the Hermione Big Bang Challenge on LiveJournal. It was written to accompany a banner created by SnapesTalon. The banner featured Draco and Hermione with the words "When love and hate collide." I hope you can see where Hermione's love and hate collide. Many thanks to SnapesTalon for both the inspiration and for beta-reading this story! It is a very different style for me, and I do hope you enjoy it. :)