

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 lightening 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.

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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. :)