

The Bone Knife

by kizzy7

Mostly, she lives in her dreams, with him.

One-shot

Chapter 1 of 1

Mostly, she lives in her dreams, with him.

A/N I wrote this for lulabelle72 to her prompt 'the bone knife.' It is the month for chilling tales, my friends. Severus bids you to enjoy...

Hermione shifted the teetering pile of books from one arm to the other, grasping the door handle and pushing against it with all the force of her shoulder.

Wouldn't budge. Damn Ron! He had taken to Muggle locks recently, much to the annoyance of his fiancée.

"*Alohamora*," she grumbled, and the door flew open. She stumbled inside their small flat, the wobbling pile of books and papers finally giving in to the lure of gravity, landing in a cluttered heap around her feet.

"Ronald!" she shouted, huffing at the mess.

"Hermione?" came his voice, distant. Must be upstairs in the office.

"How many bloody times do I have to remind you about the lock?!"

"Oh, sorry. Ummm... glad you're finally home. I have this Aurory report, love, and I need some help. If you could just come up here..."

Hermione closed her eyes and inhaled, attempting to calm her irrational rage. It wasn't his fault that the firm was crazy, that she had to work through the night two times in a row, that she was so exhausted she couldn't even see properly.

Taking the stairs two at a time, Hermione stopped by the loo to scrub her face and teeth before peeling off her work robes and collapsing into bed. Dimly, she was aware that Ron was still talking to her, but his voice faded into the background as she slipped into delicious slumber.

"You look terrible."

Hermione grimaces, stretching out on the ground of nothingness. "Oh, shut it, Snape."

He sits cross-legged, tapping a long finger against his knee. "Work again?"

Shutting her eyes, Hermione frowns. "Yes. I haven't slept in over forty-eight hours."

"I know. I've almost... missed you," he concedes, though he turns his face from hers at the admission. She likes it when she can study the lines of his neck unnoticed.

"I'm glad, Severus. I've missed you as well." And she has. Sometimes, when she wakes, she wonders if things had been different...

If he were still alive, perhaps they could...

But such thoughts are useless.

Severus scoots closer to her. She can feel the cool heat of his body prickling against her skin. They've never touched. Not yet. Hermione imagines his skin would be warm and taut.

"Anything you would like to discuss, Hermione?" he asks, aware of the tension that snaps the air between them.

"Yes, since you're dead," she answers, much bolder in her dreams than she would ever dare in reality. "I imagine fucking you, you know. What it would be like to have your cock inside me." She turns on her side, propping her head up to look into his glittering eyes. "Do you ever think about me?"

He tilts his head, his lips thinned in concentration. "I think..." he begins leisurely, though he is staring at her with such single-minded intensity she can't breathe, "that I would enjoy fucking you, Hermione. Very much."

Squirring, pleasurable threads of arousal ripple from her stomach, tingle to her toes. "Severus, touch me. Please."

Stretching his body next to hers, he extends one pale finger, travelling with slow purpose towards her face. She can't... breathe.

Feather light strokes, circling the wrinkles on her forehead, smoothing down over her eyelids. Now on her nose, and his thumb presses insistently against her lips.

"You feel," she manages between heartbeats, "light."

"Light?" he says, sardonic pleasure tilting his voice.

"Light and dark," she attempts to explain. "Like you're just shadows in my imagination."

"I am."

"No," she says, gurgling rich laughter. "You're here every night. I don't know why."

He withdraws his roving fingers. "Nor do I."

Ron slurped his noodles with noisy, disgusting smacks. "Thanks for picking up dinner, Hermione."

"Um... yeah."

"So I was talking with Harry and Gin. We were thinking about doing something this weekend. Dinner, maybe. Ginny mentioned a weekend away somewhere."

He continued to talk, she knew, and he loved her. But it seemed that Hermione only compared him now, compared him to the soft comfort of Severus in the night.

"I don't know. Might have to work."

Ron emitted a loud, satisfied burp. "Well, we'll see. I'll clean up," he offered.

Shrugging her shoulders, Hermione pushed her plate towards him. "Thanks. I think I'll go off to bed, anyways. Get some good sleep."

He muttered, "All you do is work and sleep," even as she trudged up the stairs and into bed.

She likens this place to an endless nighttime sky, and sometimes, she can feel cool, wet grass beneath her or the rustle of a gentle breeze against her face. "Tell me what you think about," she says. "What you think about when I am gone and you are here alone."

He paces around her, restless this night. "I think about how much I hated life. And now I am here, and I hate this more."

Bitter tonight. He is so unpredictable; she never knows which Severus will greet her after she drifts asleep. "But you have me."

"I have nothing," he states flatly.

Hermione stands and begins to walk in endless circles with him. "I don't love Ron. Not anymore."

Severus laughs short, harsh barks. "Do you think I care about that, Hermione? Who you love? You can't love me. This," he motions with a wide sweeping of his arms, "is just your half-life. *You* get to leave."

She places a hand on his forearm. The fabric of his robes feels sheer, gossamer. "I wish..."

He shoves her away. "Nothing you can say matters to me."

Fat tears trail down her cheeks, gather in the dimple of her chin. For the first time, she can't wait to awaken.

The Three Broomsticks was crowded and dimly lit. Hermione remembered that once when she was a student she saw Snape in here, alone and nursing a large mug of mead by the fire. She shivered.

A wildly waving arm attracted her attention, and she walked over to Harry and Ginny with a smile on her face.

"Hermione!" Harry grinned, running a hand through his messy hair. "Feels like forever since we've seen you."

"Yeah," Ginny agreed. "Here. Sit here. How've you been?"

Armed with her butterbeer, Hermione curled herself into the booth. "Oh, busy. Working a lot."

Harry placed a careless arm round Ginny's bony shoulders. "So... how is the wedding coming along? Ron hasn't said much about it lately."

Twinges of guilt pinched her nerves. "Um... Well, to be honest, I..."

"Hermione," Harry interrupted. "Do you really want to get married? I mean, I'm sure Ron would understand if you wanted to wait a bit more."

Truthfully, trying to imagine herself forever with Ron was difficult, near impossible. Especially since *him*. "I don't know," she said finally.

Ginny tittered and glanced down at her drink. "Well, I'm off to get a refill." Standing, she shot a very pointed look at her husband and headed for the bar.

Harry placed his hands...roughened hands, Hermione noticed, squared nails...atop the table and entwined his fingers with her own. "Ron's been worried about you," he whispered. "He says you rarely eat and all you do is sleep. Hermione, I'm your best friend. What's up?"

The thing was, Hermione didn't know what was up. After her first dream of Severus...not a dream, really, so vivid and alive was that world...she immediately consulted books of dream magic and essays about the afterlife. And... nothing. Nothing that would explain away Severus. Six years later, and she didn't want him to go. She simply... wanted him.

Harry gently caressed her fingers, concern so deep in his eyes that she found herself wanting to tell him. But what could she say? "I'm fine, Harry. Just overworked."

Nodding, he told her that she should take a holiday, maybe get away for a while.

But when Hermione thought of where she most wanted to go, she imagined the deep, starless sky and a windy hilltop.

Something is different. He is not bitter, nor happy, necessarily. He is euphoric and strangely energised.

"I don't think that I am supposed to stay here forever," he announces when she appears before him.

Dismay consumes her, though she struggles not to show it. "Have you... learned something?"

"Yes. Hermione, yes!" Severus...her own dear Severus...clasps her hands. His large nose bumps against her cheek as he whispers excitedly in her ear. "I found something."

He presses it into her hand, wrapping her fingers around it. Eyes drift downwards; she gasps. The handle is black and twisted, but it is the blade that causes her stomach to twist in fear. Long, thin, curved upwards at the end. So purely white that it glows in the darkness engulfing them. And it feels... real.

"Severus! What is it?"

"I don't know," he answers. "But it must be important." He kisses her, pressing his lips against her own with force. Hermione shivers at the sensation, for his skin is ghostly and only half-alive beneath her fingertips.

They fuck that night, their naked bodies gleaming in the void. As he comes, Severus grasps the knife beside him.

Fear nibbles against her chest as she presses kisses to his scarred neck.

Ron pounded up the stairs, annoyingly loud. Hermione pulled the quilt over her head, burying herself in the mound of blankets. Her fiancée rushed into the room, yelling her name.

"Hermione? Hermione, come on. Wake up."

She felt his weight settled onto the bed next to her. He gently shook her. "Sweetie?"

Grumbling, she threw the blankets away. "What is it, Ronald?"

With widened eyes, he patted the top of her head, soothing his hand through her hair as if she was a recalcitrant child. "I just wanted to talk. I feel like we never talk anymore."

"I have nothing to say," she said, and it was true.

Ron rubbed his eyes, his face scrunching in pain at her words. "Don't say that, Hermione. We can make this work. I love you."

Resigning herself to a state of wakefulness, she sat up on the bed, curling her feet beneath her. "Fine. What do you want to talk about?"

His lips curved upwards in a relieved grin. "We can start over, Hermione. From the beginning, if you want. Whatever you want."

She squeezed her lips together, trying to control her anger. "Fine. Just talk, if you must."

"Well... how was your day?"

"Exhausting, as always. I had to depose two witnesses and then write up three reports for Mr. Winters."

Ron nodded sympathetically. "Sounds bad.... We found something pretty cool at a raid a couple nights ago. Pretty dark, I think."

Feigning interest, Hermione lifted her head. "Yes? What?"

"Not completely sure yet. A knife of some sort. But it's got this wicked blade, so white it looks like bone. Human bone. Really freaky. Kingsley figures that it was probably used in rituals, like really ancient magical rituals. But then something odd happened."

"What?" she said weakly.

Ron lowered his voice. "It disappeared from evidence. I know I bagged and tagged it, and Kingsley took it to lock-up, but then it was gone. It was ~~just~~ gone."

He went on, of course, but Hermione only heard a heavy rushing in her ears and Severus, somewhere in the back of her heart, saying *you've found something!*

"Did you lie to me?" she demands.

The wind whips her hair. Never before has it been this furious.

He stands before her, impassive and distant. "About what, exactly, Miss Granger?"

"About that *fucking* knife?"

"Hermione," he says, stroking her cheek with loving pressure. "I wish things were different."

Despite herself...because she loves him, loves him pathetically...she leans in to his touch. "Different how?"

"Please forgive me, Hermione. But I have to get out of here."

Fear presses against her chest, but she still slides her cheek against his palm. "I love you, Severus."

"I know," he whispers, leaning in closer towards her lips. "And I believe that I love you, Hermione."

As he kisses her, Hermione closes her eyes. She doesn't see his arm pull back, trembling, the bone knife tight in his grip. She doesn't see the lone tear quiver down his cheek.

But she feels the sharp stinging in her abdomen, and the blood running down her legs.

First, Severus runs and runs and runs until his lungs ache for air and his legs tremble from exhaustion. Sunlight streams hotly on his heated body, and he feels so wonderful. So alive.

Next, he Glamours himself and enters the Three Broomsticks, eating warm food, drinking cool beer. Even the feel of the wooden bench on which he sits is intoxicating.

He returns to Spinner's End, and the sight actually fills him with intense pleasure. His library, his potions...he loses himself in the smell of turning, crinkled pages and the comfort of bubbling elixirs in their cauldrons.

If he feels regret, he does not dwell on it.

He does not even think of her until the waning moon shines through his windows, when he presses his body between clean sheets and inhales the scent of freshly laundered bedclothes. Then, in the twilight of dusk, he remembers.

Will she be there in my dreams, waiting for me?
