

An Unlikely Haven

by rosewood

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Chapter 1 of 1

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The dimly lit room was silent, save for the woman who clung to the front of his robes sobbing uncontrollably against his chest. Unsure how to comfort her, Severus Snape hesitantly wrapped his arms around her shoulders and gently stroked her back. After several minutes, her cries subsided to quiet tears, and he slowly pulled back, produced a handkerchief from his pocket and offered it to her.

He found himself momentarily lost within the depths of her saddened eyes.

"Mrs. Granger, I am sorry for your loss," he said softly. "Please take heart in the knowledge that your daughter is safe."

The soft popping sound of Apparition in the small foyer startled Janice Granger from her seat in the sitting room. It had been five months since her husband had been killed in the Death Eater raid upon their home, and she had yet to become used to the sound despite Snape's weekly visits to the safe house to replenish provisions. She set down her book and rose to greet him.

She had been reassured that the Dark Lord considered her dead. However, she had yet to venture beyond the back garden. Snape was her primary connection to the outside world.

He wasn't quite sure what possessed him to maintain such frequent contact with this demure woman. Perhaps it was the simple fact that he understood loneliness more than most and wished to save her from that abject fate. Or, it could be that he found a kindred spirit living in a shattered world and his soul sought a small measure of redemption in her presence.

His brief visits to check upon her well-being eventually turned to offers of tea, and later invitations to dinner. What started as a strained acquaintance through forced circumstance soon became a modest friendship.

One night after a pleasant evening of dinner and wine, Janice impulsively embraced him as he prepared to leave. It had been nearly a year since she was last in his arms that devastating night. She was the sort of person who thrived on another's touch, and he instinctively enveloped her. There was something that felt intuitively right being in his arms. As she began to weep, he gently stroked her back, nuzzled her hair and murmured long-forgotten endearments into her ear.

He tilted her chin up and tenderly brushed his lips against hers, eliciting the softest of sighs.

Late one morning, Severus appeared on her doorstep tattered and worn. There had been a time when he had resigned himself to an early grave. That was until she unexpectedly became entwined in his miserable life.

"The war is over," he whispered as she pulled him into her arms. "You're safe and finally free."

"Hermione?" she tentatively asked.

"She's alive and well, my love," he replied. "You'll see her soon enough."

She graced him with a warm smile, and he felt his heart surge with raw emotion. Once again he dared to hope, to dream, to live, to love...