

Far Away

by BrenaMarie

After developing a close relationship with Severus during the war, Hermione laments his disappearance from the wizarding world while at her graduation dance.

One-Shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: They belong to JKR; that's why she's got all the money!

Hermione Granger sat alone for the dance segment of the graduation festivities. She was spending her post school/post N.E.W.T. time pondering the past two years of her life. Between the fall of the Dark Lord and then finding out that Dumbledore really wasn't dead, which led to Professor Snape's acquittal, it had been a rocky couple of years.

The golden trio had decided to return to Hogwarts to finish their studies following the final battle. A few others from their year had returned as well. It had been strange for many reasons to Hermione. On one hand, it had felt like she had failed a year and had been held back. On the other hand, being able to have some classes with Ginny had been a big plus.

Returning for her last year had also been strange because she was missing someone's presence. She had probably been the only one who felt that there'd been a hole at the head table where Severus Snape should have sat. Hermione had been corresponding with Snape regularly after Dumbledore's faked demise. Of course, at the time, she'd had no clue Albus was still alive. She'd truly wanted to believe Severus so badly that she'd accepted his help with the situation with the Dark Lord.

They had corresponded via owl-post for most of what would have been her seventh year at Hogwarts, had she attended. She'd tried to ignore his first letter by swearing on the old adage: 'Fool me once shame on you; fool me twice shame on me,' but there was something about his words that had started to eat away at her...

Miss Granger,

I am sending this missive to you as a request for your assistance. I realize, after all that has happened, it is a lot to ask, but you are the only one whom I can trust to see the truth behind my previous actions. I am still, and have been for quite some time, on the side of the light. I cannot explain in detail at this time as to the reasoning for past events. Just know that all will be made clear after the Dark Lord is thoroughly and completely disposed of.

The assistance that I am seeking is simply this...pass whatever information I give you to the appropriate party. Whether it be Minerva or Potter, just make sure that whoever needs to know about Death Eater attacks hears what I have to say.

I know you want to believe me. I also know you would always defend me to those dunderheaded friends of yours. You're an intelligent witch, Hermione. Please don't fail me now.

S.

"Hermione!"

"Huh...What?"

Ron managed to finally startle Hermione out of her reminiscing.

"Well, uh... I was wondering... if, uh... you would dance with me?"

Hermione stared blankly at the blushing redhead in front of her.

"Ron, thanks for asking. I really appreciate it, but for both of our sakes, I don't think we should. It might end up hurting more, you know?"

"Aw, come on, Hermione. Just one dance as friends wouldn't hurt."

"Yes, it would, Ronald! More for you than me, I'm afraid. So, please, just let it go. It didn't work for us, and I'm sorry, but you need to move on."

"Who is it? I know there has to be someone else. I can see it in your eyes. You just seem so far away these days."

"I thought there was, Ron, but sadly it never happened. That still doesn't mean I should attempt to make a relationship between us work when clearly it won't. We're two different people... I'm sorry."

Ron nodded and silently wondered who the mystery man was who had captured his Hermione's heart. She gave him a friendly hug and sat back down. Feeling dismissed, he took his cue to leave her be.

I wonder when he'll get the hint and move on... It's not like I'm trying to keep breaking his heart or anything. He's just not what I need, or shall I say whom.

Hermione resumed her reminiscing after her brief interruption from Ron.

After receiving her first letter from Snape, Hermione became even more introverted than before. She had always had the look of someone who was perpetually working out an advanced Arithmancy equation, but this was even worse. No one asked her what was wrong. Granted, they all had their theories as to where her mind was occupied. Some assumed it was the tragic nature of Dumbledore's death. Others believed it was the fact that the fall term had started and she wasn't at Hogwarts. Hermione never said either way; it just wasn't something the Order members wanted to discuss.

Days turned into weeks, which quickly turned to months, and Severus saved at least forty lives through his letters to Hermione about pending Death Eater raids. After the families were moved to safety, Hermione would write him back, thanking him for his continued service and sacrifices for the light. She would also try to let him know that she was around if he needed someone to just talk to. Hermione never imagined he would accept such a friendly gesture from the resident know-it-all, but it was worth a shot. It was due to that simple suggestion that the Tuesday night ritual began.

Tuesday night was the quietest night of the week for both sides for no apparent reason. It seemed that both leaders had other activities to attend to, and nothing major ever happened on that one night of the week. Severus and Hermione would meet for a few hours for coffee Tuesday evening and try to discuss things other than war tactics. The frequency of the meetings started out slowly from only one night in October to a few more in November. By December, they were sharing each other's company weekly. They always changed locations and kept the venues strictly Muggle due to Severus' fugitive status.

"So, did you always want to teach Potions?" Hermione asked Severus while stirring her tea.

"No, I never had any desire to teach. I did always have an affinity for potion making though."

"So, you were hoping to go into research, or have your own business?"

"A little of both, actually. With the amount of skill and knowledge I possessed, I had hoped to have my own business which would fund my own private research when I had spare time..."

"Oh, that does sound appealing. I hope you follow through with that idea once the war is over..."

"Ever the optimist, aren't you, Hermione?"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Simply that you could actually believe that I would not only survive this blasted war, but that I would be able to have any kind of lucrative business afterwards."

"I... well... I guess I am an optimist then..."

Hermione looked up at him and gave him a small smile. If she blinked, she would have missed the tell-tale twitch that signaled his own smile back at her.

It had been around the holidays that Hermione had realized something that she'd been trying not to admit.

"I'm falling for him."

"Well, dearie, that's been obvious to me for some time now. Look how you tame that mess you call hair on Tuesday night."

Hermione was really getting tired of having an enchanted mirror.

"Oh, be quiet!"

Hermione turned away from the mirror and thought, 'I wonder if he'll ever see me as more than just a conduit that information can be passed through or his know-it-all student... if we survive all this, that is.'

A few weeks later had found Severus and Hermione in a different place, engaging in more of the same companionable conversation...

Severus had been staring out the window of the tiny café where they'd ended up that week. While staring out the window at the falling snow, he'd asked Hermione the one question that had been at the forefront of his mind for ages...

"So, I've been wondering, why do you always have to be such a know-it-all?"

"How'd I know you'd eventually bring that up?"

"Humor me."

"Ok, the truth is... I got caught unprepared once in my elementary school. It felt like all the other students did their homework and understood it. I, on the other hand, didn't have the opportunity to complete my work. So, of course, the teacher called on me for the answer to the question she had asked. When I said that I didn't know the answer, the kids next to me started laughing. Then, of course, I had to stay after class. Honestly, it was all very traumatic. In the end, I apparently developed a complex where I would never let myself be caught unprepared for class again..."

"Thank you."

"For what, Severus?"

"For telling me about something that has bothered you for quite some time. For giving me a perfect example of how I am not the only one who has painful childhood memories..."

She'd tried for months to push away the blossoming feelings she'd had for her former professor. Then one night the inevitable had happened. Hermione's mind had taken leave of her body while in his presence.

It was a damp March evening, a winter chill still lingering in the air as they exited a small coffee shop in Whitley Bay. Severus reached towards Hermione to clasp her cloak for her. She reached towards his hands, gently touched his fingers, and felt a shock travel through her. The next moment, she looked up into his eyes... those enchanting, bottomless, onyx eyes. Drawn to him like a moth to a flame, she lifted herself up onto her toes so she could kiss him, and when their lips met, she knew this was home. He was the one, the only one who would ever be able to fill the role of life-mate for her. A few moments passed, then Severus pulled away from her, shaking his head sadly.

"Hermione, no, we can't do this. It will just complicate things too much. It is difficult enough for me as it is to keep these meetings away from the Dark Lord. Plus, we don't even know if I will be able to survive to see the end of this war."

"You're right... I just needed to know."

"Needed to know what?"

"If you felt the same. I mean, if you could see me as more than just... I don't know what I'm trying to say, really; just forget it."

Severus reached his hand out and cupped her cheek. He encouraged her to look back up at him.

"You are an amazing woman, Hermione, and an extremely formidable witch. I am truly not worthy of your affection. I cannot offer you the life you deserve, but if we both survive and I am still the man you desire, I shall do my best to be what you need..."

"Then why did you disappear...?"

"What was that, sweetie?"

"Oh! Sorry, Gin, I didn't realize I was no longer alone over here."

"Who disappeared?"

Hermione knew where Ginny was trying to go with this insistent line of questioning and decided it would be best to change the subject...quickly.

"Why aren't you out on the dance floor with Harry?"

"He said something about his feet hurting. I don't believe him though. He isn't dancing in five inch heels! I'm perfectly fine; his excuse just isn't cutting it."

"Well, you know how those boys can be. Slow tunes are fine, but as soon as something with a little beat takes over, they scatter!"

"Too true."

They looked around the Great Hall wistfully, sharing a brief moment, before Ginny stood up again.

"So, um... I'm going to see if I can assist Harry with his foot problem."

The girls shared a conspiratorial giggle.

"You do that, Gin."

Ginny left Hermione sitting alone at one of the tables again. She felt extremely frustrated that she was unable to get any kind of information from her best girlfriend about who was on her mind.

Feeling secure that she was once again alone, Hermione resumed dissecting her memories of Severus.

I remember the last letter he sent me...

Dear Hermione,

I hope everything is ready on your side, because the Dark Lord is ready to go after Potter. I suggest not waiting for him to confront your friend. Take the fight to him instead.

The best time to attack will be 3 April as the sun is rising. Don't ask me why, just follow my instructions. I know that this will be difficult for you, not only because you have probably already come up with ten questions you need to ask but because I'm sure your dunderheaded friends will no doubt give you an extremely difficult time regarding this date and decision. I apologize in advance for the position this has put you in.

You also need to know a few more things before the Dark Lord is defeated. First, I meant what I said in my first letter about my past actions being explained after the Dark Lord is no more. By the way, I truly do appreciate you not badgering me when we first began our correspondence.

Second, should I survive this battle, things will be very difficult for me for a long time. There will most likely be a trial, and I don't want our association to be a part of it. No

one needs to know, and I am deadly serious, Hermione, do not sacrifice your reputation for me. It will not be appreciated should you choose to go against my request, no matter how much you may think it will help me in the long run.

Lastly, I request one thing from you. Please, when all this is well and truly finished, go back to Hogwarts. Talk to Minerva and have her place you in the class behind your original year. You are far too intelligent to not have a formal diploma to accompany your extremely brilliant mind. You deserve one year of school free of the Dark Lord. Please, just do this for me.

S.

After reading that last letter from Severus, Hermione had sprung into action.

Hermione stormed from the library at Grimmauld Place and rushed with fierce determination to her bedroom.

"Where's the fire, Hermione?" Remus Lupin called to her from the opposite end of the hallway.

"I've got an idea, Remus. I'm sorry, I don't have time right now. I'll let you know later tonight," Hermione called back to her friend.

She entered her bedroom and went straight to her writing desk. Pulling out quill, ink, and parchment, she began scribbling out Arithmancy equations.

"Damn, I need to make this look convincing. He could have given me a little more notice! It's the last week of March, for Christ's sake!"

A few hours later...

"So, as you can see, Harry, clearly the third of April is truly the absolute best time to attack."

Harry Potter stared blankly at the numerous parchments in front of him, all of the printed charts and equations mocking his Arithmantic ignorance.

"If you say so, Hermione."

"Harry, this is serious! I have everything laid out for you; you could at least sound convinced."

"Listen, Hermione. I believe you. I am convinced. Maybe a little shocked that all this came about so suddenly, but I am convinced."

Minerva McGonagall leaned forward towards the parchments and glanced over the material Hermione had written down. After a few moments, she let out a defeated sigh. "Yes, she appears to be correct. We shall see the end of this war next week."

Internally, Hermione breathed her own sigh, this one of relief.

'I hope you're right, Severus. I pray you're right...'

So, it began. The Order of the Phoenix arrived at the prescribed time on the lawn of Malfoy Manor. The fighting began immediately and raged on for hours.

"Avada Kedavra."

Hermione turned from the spot where she was standing and began running straight to her best friend. That was when she noticed another stream of green light shooting at the Dark Lord. She was able to pinpoint the location of the second curse caster and knew his identity immediately.

"Severus..." she quietly said to herself.

'I need to get to him. I know he said he wouldn't appreciate it, but I need to be with him. I need to celebrate this with him...'

Before she could take one step in his direction, the form of Severus Snape was taken down by Mad-Eye Moody. In no time, Moody had Severus Stupefied and bound tightly on the ground.

"NO!"

Hermione screamed and started running across the lawn, avoiding bodies lying in her path as she sprinted towards Moody and Severus. She was half-way there before she was cut off by the reappearance of a man whom they all believed to be dead.

"No, my child, you need to let me take care of him now."

"Headmaster?"

She reached out to touch him, just to reassure herself that she was not hallucinating.

"Yes, Miss Granger, I am indeed alive, for the moment at least. You need to listen to me and remember what Severus asked of you. Do not let anyone know of your relationship with him. At least not until I take care of his precarious situation."

"But I can help!"

"Please, Hermione. You've done so much for him already, and I know you want to continue to do so, but you need to let me take over now."

Albus Dumbledore reached out to his former student and placed a comforting hand on her shoulder.

"One last thing I need to ask of you, Hermione. Return to Hogwarts in the fall. Try to convince your friends to do the same..."

Hermione nodded her head in agreement and then fainted.

Even though Albus Dumbledore was indeed alive, the Ministry had insisted on holding a trial against Severus Snape for his apparent duplicity. However, Albus had handled the Wizengamot with as much grace and style as was known of him, and Severus Snape had walked out of the Ministry a free wizard.

Severus Snape had returned to his Muggle home following his trial. There he had been greeted by the presence of

his former mentor and tormentor, Albus Dumbledore.

"Ahhh, Severus, I knew you would come here."

"Apparently, Albus, since you are here, even though I never mentioned it."

"Severus, my boy, you truly should lighten up. I do believe you could use a vacation."

"Vacation?"

"Yes, you know, an extended trip one takes when trying to relax."

"Merlin, Albus! I know what a damn vacation is! What I was questioning was the actual suggestion to take one. I have plenty of matters I need to see to here, and I honestly don't need to be running off before taking care of them."

"Severus, I see you aren't going to make this easy on me. I think you need to take some time away to figure out the direction you need to take when it comes to certain... ah... how should I say it... relationships?"

"Albus, I cannot abide this cryptic discussion any longer. You say what you've come here to say or leave."

"Fine, Severus, I'll say what I have to say, but let's at least go inside and sit down for this discussion, shall we?"

I didn't even go to the trial. Maybe he was disappointed that I wasn't there to support him, even though it would be silently as requested... maybe that's why he left me...

Severus Snape had simply disappeared after his trial. No one had seen or heard from him since 27 June, almost a year ago. In Hermione's mind, it must have been her fault somehow.

Maybe I wanted too much from him, or maybe I was just a friendly companion and nothing more. Maybe I... Merlin, I need to stop thinking about him. I must look ridiculous sitting here by myself at my graduation dance with this contemplative look on my face. Right then, I'm just going to get up and...

"Attention graduates and faculty, I have a few announcements to make before this evening comes to a close."

Ah, yes, the return of Headmaster Dumbledore's announcements.

"I realized throughout this year how important it was for me to see this group of students graduate while in the role of Headmaster. I am truly glad that the war ended when it did, so I could see this dream of mine come true. Alas, my health is still steadily deteriorating, and as such, I am retiring as of the end of this term, and Professor McGonagall will be resuming her former post as Headmistress of this fine institution."

Thunderous applause followed this particular announcement.

Minerva McGonagall flushed slightly and took a bow for those assembled.

"Secondly, I need to announce the resignation of our Potions Professor, Horace Slughorn. Professor Slughorn has been gracious enough to stay for an additional year beyond what I originally requested of him. He has made it clear that retirement suited him far better than monitoring cauldron explosions. Please wish him well in his future endeavors."

Applause resounded throughout the Great Hall for Professor Slughorn, and he obliged the crowd with a bow of his own.

"I will be announcing Professor Slughorn's replacement as my final order of business this evening. There is one more item I need to address prior to that though."

"I have been asked to read this letter prior to the final dance of the evening. It is a very touching piece of reading material. I hope the graduate to whom it is written can understand the difficulty that the writer went through with himself in order to not only write such a heartfelt letter but also to make such a spectacle of himself. So, without further ado..."

Dumbledore reached into his robes and withdrew several pieces of parchment. He looked up and around the Great Hall to ensure that he still had the attention of those present. "Miss Granger," he said politely.

Hermione looked up at the Headmaster, feeling like a deer in headlights.

"If you could please step forward to the center of the dance floor. There you go, child, easy does it. My, don't you look lovely this evening."

Albus Dumbledore gazed down at his very confused Head Girl.

Oh, this is so awkward... I feel so unbelievably exposed right now!

Hermione didn't even need to look at Dumbledore to know that he had that mischievous twinkle in his eyes. She also couldn't believe that this letter was for her; it just couldn't be...

Standing by the refreshment table, Hermione's three closest friends put their heads together. Ginny said what they had all been thinking first.

"I think we're about to get the answer to the question we've been asking ourselves for the past two years..."

"Yeah," Ron followed. "Who in the blue-blazes is the wanker who stole Hermione from me?!"

"I don't think you ever really had her, mate..." Harry stated sheepishly and shrugged.

Ron, in turn, glared at him.

Harry didn't let it go at that. "What? She's had this look about her since the autumn after our sixth year. If I were a girl, I would have known then that she was in love..."

"I was trapped here, so I didn't see the beginnings of it. But I'm gonna have to agree with Harry there, Ron. She had stars in her eyes long before you tried to date her. Whoever this bloke is, he sure means everything to her. You can just see her mind twisting over him day and night. Sometimes she's so wrapped up in him, she talks to herself trying to reason it out. I feel for her."

Ron had a dejected look about him, but his sibling did all that she could think of. Ginny wrapped an arm around him and gave an encouraging squeeze.

"I just hope he treats her right, that's all. As long as it's what she wants, and she's happy..."

Harry looked over to his best friend. "I'm sure she will be, mate."

Hermione was standing in the center of the dance floor, facing the Headmaster with a spotlight shining down on her from the heavens of the enchanted ceiling. She had her back to the doors of the Great Hall and the rest of the graduates, so she missed the anticipatory looks on all their faces.

Dumbledore gave a slight cough and started to read.

"My Dearest Hermione,

I'd like to start this letter by apologizing profusely for my absence over the past year. I am unbelievably sorry for leaving you so abruptly, even after I told you I would do my best to try and be what you needed.

After the war ended, I had a discussion with a close friend. When this talk concluded, I realized, or at least convinced myself, that you would be better off without someone like me in your life. I thought that I would only drag you down and hinder your reputation, since it will be that reputation that will make you or break you in our society.

As the weeks and months passed, I realized how much of a mistake I made. I missed you terribly. I missed your letters and your smile. I would dream of you every night. I could feel you in my arms and then I would wake up... alone.

You are the only woman in the world for me. After so many years hoping that eventually I would be worthy of such a blessing, I was presented this gift in the form of you. You, Hermione, are the only woman who ever took the time to know me for me. The only one who was able to see past my sarcasm and scathing comments. You were able to see the man behind it all and the reasons why I am who I am.

While trying to physically escape the memory of you, I ended up in America. I traveled all over the country and took in the different Muggle and Wizarding societies. Even though I was in an area I never visited with you, I only seemed to be able to think about you. I considered how wonderful it would be to experience all these new places with you at my side. To be able to share the joy of your company and to drown myself in the light that surrounds you.

One evening last month, I found myself in a Muggle diner having a cup of coffee and thinking of you and our Tuesday nights together. I had the pleasure and pain of hearing a song that made me think of the situation that I managed to create between the two of us. I could not fathom how much the words of the singer touched me, and I began to tear up... in public, no less.

Merlin's beard, woman, what have you reduced me to? My apologies, I digress.

During my extremely inappropriate display of emotion, my waitress approached me. She offered me a handkerchief and asked if I needed to talk about it. I declined her offer, but asked who the artist singing was. She didn't know off-hand, but seeing that it was important to me, she asked a few of the younger girls who worked there. I eventually left with my answer and the determination to come home, find you, and tell you how I feel...

I love you, Hermione Granger.

There, I said it, and I pray to any deity listening that you aren't already spoken for. So, now, here it is. The final dance of your graduation ball, and I was able to request the song that will follow the reading of this letter.

Please dance with me. Let me hold you in my arms as we dance to the song that drove me back to you..."

"Miss Granger, if you could please turn around and face your dance partner?"

With her eyes closed and her head facing down, Hermione Granger contemplated what she'd just heard.

I can't believe this is happening... It is happening... I'm going to turn around, and he'll be here, and... What am I going to say to him? If it really is him, why isn't there any noise from the room at large? You'd think the reappearance of one Severus Snape would cause a little bit of a fuss. Maybe they're all stunned into silence... I guess I'm just going to have to... breathe... Yes, breathing would be what I need to do, and turn around, of course...

After a few seconds that felt like years, Hermione turned around, and in that moment, the Disillusionment Charm was lifted. Severus Snape stood before her, looking amazingly coiffed and extending a single red rose out to her.

All the air could have been sucked out of the Great Hall with the collective gasp that the student body and faculty shared. Then it was so quiet... unbelievably quiet.

There he is... He's here... and... I'm crying; I'm just so happy... I just can't believe he's here...

Hermione was still having trouble comprehending that Severus was actually standing in front of her...

This can't be real; he wouldn't show up here like this. I'm dreaming. Yes, that's it; I fell asleep over at that table while thinking about him and... oh, he's walking towards me... well, if it's a dream, I might as well enjoy it.

Stunned, she started to run towards him, and he held his arms out wide to receive her into his loving embrace.

This time, this place

Misused, Mistakes

Too long, too late

Who was I to make you wait?

"Hermione, love, I'm so sorry. Leaving you here to deal with everything was one of the larger mistakes in my life. I hope it's not too late. I know I never should have kept you waiting for so long..."

"Severus..."

"No... please, don't tell me I'm too late."

"Severus..."

"Talk to me, woman! I know my name!"

"You're real."

"The last time I checked."

"No, I'm not dreaming, right?"

"Of course not! Can't you hear all the dunderheads whispering behind us? I'm sure they think you're crying because the greasy bat is making a huge spectacle out of confessing his love for you."

"Oh, sorry..."

"Will you answer my question now that you know that you aren't actually hallucinating this ordeal?"

"Of course you aren't too late, you fool..."

Severus held her tightly against his chest and praised the heavens for the witch in his arms.

The trio at the refreshment table started to crane their necks and turn their bodies in the direction of the dance floor.

Ginny noticed the man first. He was extremely well dressed in a Muggle tuxedo and was holding a single red rose. She then started to catalogue his physical features: tall, jet-black hair, pale-skinned, large nose... "Oh, no," Ginny whispered. "This isn't going to go well."

Harry stood on the tips of his toes trying to get a glimpse of the mystery man.

"What is it, Gin? He looks... he looks like... SNAPE?!"

Ron heard Harry's last word and spat his drink out onto the floor.

"You're telling me Snape is the one who stole Hermione from me? Oh, Gods, that's him all right..."

Ginny needed to stop the two of them before their hot-headedness got the better of them.

"Listen to me, you two. Remember what you said earlier. You both stood right there and said that the actual bloke didn't matter. It was Hermione's happiness that counted. So, you just keep those big mouths of yours shut and watch what happens next."

The gentle strumming of a guitar could be heard throughout the Great Hall. At that moment, Hermione found herself being led around the dance floor, relishing the feeling of being held so tenderly by her wizard. At the same time, she was trying to pay attention to the lyrics of the song that had brought them together for the moment they were sharing.

'Cause you know

You know, you know

You know

That I love you

I've loved you all along.

"That was the hardest part," Severus said out of what felt like nowhere.

"What was that?" Hermione answered dreamily.

"That part of the song, where he said, 'I love you, I've loved you all along.' I knew you didn't know how I felt about you, and I should have told you."

"Severus, you may have never said the words, but I did know."

"How could you? When with the one intimate advance you made, I pushed you away. That action on my part doesn't exactly project the severity of my feelings for you."

"No, that one action may not have. It was the hundreds of others that spoke to me without you having to say anything at all. It was how you shared yourself with me openly and honestly. The small smiles you'd send me, or the casual touch of your hand across the table."

She looked into his eyes and smiled the warm loving smile that he'd missed so completely. While looking at her, he could feel his heart beat just a little bit faster. Being as caught in the moment as they were, he began to spin her around the dance floor as if the music were not only an extension of his feelings but as if it had somehow taken a hold of his body.

Last chance for one last dance

'Cause with you, I'd withstand

All of hell to hold your hand

I'd give it all

I'd give for us

Give anything but I won't give up

Hermione looked around at the gaping students and let out a small giggle.

"What are you laughing at?"

"Them, you... this whole situation is a little strange, if you think about it."

"I figured I would need some grand gesture to prove to you that I'm serious about you... I needed you to know how much I would withstand just to have you in my arms again."

"Oh, Severus, you really didn't need to go through all this for me, although I do appreciate it very much. I actually feel like one of those princesses from the Disney movies."

"Really now, so that would make me whom? I didn't fight a dragon for you."

"No, but you fought a Dark Lord; that was much scarier."

"I didn't chase after you with a shoe."

"No, but you did cross an ocean to get back to me."

"I didn't wake you up with a kiss."

"No, you didn't, but you can from now on..."

So Far Away

Been far away for far too long

"Are we really having this discussion?"

"Yes, of course we are. You're apparently a Disney princess, but I don't seem to recall any scary, sarcastic, former teachers as princes."

"That's it, I must be dreaming. How do you even know about these films?"

"You can't tell me you didn't know Walt Disney was a wizard?"

"And you embrace all forms of entertainment produced by a member of Wizarding society."

"Of course."

"Okay, Aladdin."

"What did you just call me?"

"Well, you wanted to know who you were, and I've come to the conclusion that you must be Aladdin. We can say Dumbledore is your Genie too, for arguments sake."

"Might I inquire how you've come to this conclusion?"

"There are quite a few similarities, actually. The first being that Aladdin put on a grand show for Jasmine, thinking that was the best way for him to prove his love for her, kind of like what you're doing now. She didn't need all that attention, though. Then when all the glitz and glamour was taken away, he ran away because he didn't think he was good enough for her."

"Hmmp. Next you're going to tell me I need a pet monkey."

"Actually, no, although that would be hilarious. What I really want to say is that it wasn't until Aladdin was alone and all the props were taken away that he showed Jasmine who he really was."

Hermione removed her arm from behind Severus' back and lifted her palm to cup his cheek as she continued speaking.

"Jasmine got to know him, and it didn't matter that he wasn't really a prince. It didn't matter that he was poor and that he didn't have the status of all her other suitors. What mattered was that she knew he genuinely loved her for who she was. He didn't see her as just the daughter of a sultan. He didn't see her as a conquest or a shrew to be tamed. He just loved her, for her... There are two more similarities, Severus; do you know what they are?"

"No, but you're apparently going to tell me."

"She loved him too."

Severus looked at the beautiful witch in his arms, his witch, and quietly repeated her words.

"She loved him too..."

"Yes, Severus, I love you too."

I need to hear you say

That I love you

I've loved you all along

And I forgive you

For being away for far too long

So keep breathing

'Cause I'm not leaving you anymore

Severus was so happy, he threw all his weight into their shared dancing embrace and lifted Hermione into the air, then spun her around. He spun her so the entire room could see how beautiful she was and how happy they were together.

As he set her feet back on the ground, he realized something...

"Hermione, you said there were two more similarities. What is the other one?"

Believe it

Hold onto me, and never let me go.

The tears of joy had returned to her eyes as she answered his question...

"They lived happily ever after."

~ The End ~

A/N: Major hugs and love go out to *debjunk*, not only for her awesome beta skills but for giving me the perfect reason to finish this fic that's been sitting on my hard-drive for three years. Thank you so much, honey!

Also much loves goes out to *lariope* for the second beta read. Thanks, honey!

I'd like to take a moment to dedicate this fic to my grandmother. I started to write this fic in the summer of 2006. Before I could complete it, she was diagnosed with lung

cancer. Since this fic is very fluffy and romantic, I couldn't find the right state of mind to finish it with her being so sick. After she passed away, I still couldn't bring myself to work on it because I kept thinking about her. Then *debjunk* came along and was like "Hey, SB4?" So, I finally found the perfect reason to finish it, and when the ending came to me, it really reminded me of my grandmother. So, here's to you Bopgee, for the amazing presence you were in my life for twenty-five years and for the impact you made on me that carries me throughout the rest of my life.

The song used throughout this piece is titled "Far Away" by Nickelback. The song was written by Chad Kroeger. My most sincere thanks go out to him for writing such a powerful song that gave me the ideas used in this story. I take no creative responsibility for the lyrics of this song, as it all belongs to Mr. Kroeger.