

Lost In Transfiguration

by septentrion

Severus can't believe Hermione is dead, and he's going to prove he's right. Written for the LJ community morethanmolly.

One-shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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This was written for Mollyssister, who is like our fandom's godmother.

Thanks to Melusin for betaing this so quickly.

"I'm sorry, Severus," Kingsley told the dark-haired man. The desk between them suddenly felt like a chasm. "She's probably among the victims of that Fire Curse. You know we couldn't identify the bodies of those who were burnt."

Severus stared at the Minister of Magic long and hard, his eyes two relentless truth seekers drilling into the other man's dark brown eyes. "No," he said with conviction. "She isn't dead. I can feel her. She's alive, somewhere."

Kingsley's eyes expressed pity and sympathy.

Severus stood up abruptly. He did not bother to pick up the chair he had knocked over in his gesture. He turned on his heels and strode away, mulling about what could have happened to his lover, Hermione Granger. He missed the glint of hope in Harry's and Ron's eyes, who were both standing in a corner of the Minister's office.

The four of them missed the second shadow following Severus.

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She could not be dead. He refused to believe it. Severus was a firm believer in soul mates and was therefore convinced that his soul would have suffered the most excruciating pain if Hermione had died. Since he had not gone through such pain, he came to the conclusion that Hermione was still alive. However, he could not shake the feeling that something had happened to her. He did not feel the usual brightness her existence brought to his being, even when she was not with him. It was as if her presence were dimmed, hidden by a veil, or blurred. Severus did not have the exact word to convey his sentiment. She was there, but not complete.

That night, he lay in his bed – it felt so empty without his lover at his side – pondering the mystery of Hermione's disappearance. He reviewed what information he had collected: Hermione and an Auror, whose name he had forgotten, were battling a dangerous duo of Death Eaters when a third had cast the Fire Curse in their direction. Hermione and the Auror just had time to sidestep it, thus avoiding being consumed by the Dark magic, but they were separated by the flames. The day Voldemort was defeated was the last anyone saw the young woman—which did not mean she was dead. To mark his conviction, Severus decided not to attend Hermione's funeral the next day.

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Life resumed. It was a succession of days, of automatic gestures, of mechanical answers, of empty greetings. If someone had asked Severus what he had done during those days, he would have drawn a blank. Or perhaps he would have answered, "Feeling Hermione." That was all that mattered. Feeling Hermione had become even more imperative since he was deprived of his lover's physical presence.

In between everyday obligations, he tried different methods to pinpoint Hermione's location: basic locating spells, elaborate locating spells, Dark locating spells. None worked, for they all led to him. He tried to travel across the country, to the places where she had lived, where she had been. Whatever he did, Hermione's presence neither strengthened nor weakened. How could that be possible?

At least she's always with me, he thought as he woke up one bleak morning in November. He had dreamt all night of Hermione: her smile, her laugh, her bossiness, her genius. When the final battle had occurred five months previously, she was on the cusp of creating a counter-curse for that dreadful, worse than Fiendfyre because it was easier to control, Curse Fire the Dark Lord himself had created. What if she had used that unfinished counter-curse that day? What could have been its effects if she had? What a moron he had been not to think of it!

Spurred into action by that revelation, Severus jumped out of bed, hurriedly shed his old grey nightshirt, donned his customary black robe and billowed to Hermione's study. Its door was still keyed to his wand, so he entered easily. She was so methodical that he had no difficulty in finding her research. Everything was there. She had wanted to create a double spell. Severus blinked. She had wanted to create a spell that could both shield its caster and quell the magical fire. What was more, she had nearly succeeded. Her parchments showed that, had she but only had a fortnight more to work on it, she would have done it. It still did not explain what had happened to her. Ah, yes. There. That line. The spell did not work as intended, yet. For now, it acted like a rubber, erasing the being it was supposed to protect from the Cursed Fire. The first mice she had tested it on had vanished. The last mice she had cast the counter-curse on had dimmed the way the daylight dimmed and turned into night. Hermione had labeled them "twilight mice".

Hermione's presence. She had constantly been with him for all those months, probably waiting for him to find a solution to her predicament, perhaps even trusting him to save her, and he had done nothing useful towards that goal in all that time. He hung his head in shame. "Forgive me, my love," Severus said aloud in the study. He was persuaded she had hugged him, then.

Severus got to work on the counter-spell with a fury that would have put Voldemort's efforts towards immortality to shame. He had to revisit each step of her research before he could go further than her. He forgot to eat, to sleep, to bathe for days, sustained as he was by the need to have Hermione back in his life fully. A shadow was not enough. And he knew that she felt the same. They would be together, or they would not be.

Christmas came and went.

The New Year came and went.

As the days grew longer, as the birds started to chirp again in the morning, Severus's work was at long last successful: he had created a counter-spell for a spell that did not exist as yet. Dishevelled, his clothes in disarray, emaciated—some of his friends feared for his sanity or even his life—he uttered the words his lips had been longing for.

"Could you stand in front of me, my love?"

The familiar shadow Severus had learned to discern appeared on the floor in front of him. He raised his wand, waved it in a complicated pattern while enunciating the magical words that would free Hermione. When he'd finished, he lowered his arm and expectantly watched the empty space.

A shimmer. A shape. Colours. Texture. Flesh. Hair. Warm brown eyes. Arms around him. Hermione was back. She was sobbing, drenching his dirty robe with her tears, but she was back. Her body was pressed against his in a tight embrace. When he opened his eyes, he saw his own tears running along Hermione's hair.

They both knew they had a rough path ahead of them. The lost time would haunt them, probably for years. But as long as they were together, they could face whatever life had in store for them.