

Just a Dream

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Author's note: Hugs and thanks to Annie for her beta-magic.

Hermione shuddered. Her thin nightgown did nothing to shield her from the coldness in the dungeons, a coldness that crept slowly deep beneath her skin.

Quietly, she opened the door to his bedroom. She had never been in there, not even for the weekly intercourse the accursed law required from them. He never allowed her in – his room a forbidden territory like his heart.

However tonight, she felt unable to listen to his screams, to let the nightmare haunt him until dawn.

"No! No-o." His hoarse voice echoed from the bed as she stepped inside. "Don't know where Potter is."

Harry.

Even in his dreams, he is still protecting Lily's son she thought sadly as she moved through the darkness of his room. Carefully, she sat down onto the edge of the bed and placed a soothing hand on his naked shoulder. The nightmare had covered his whole body with cold sweat.

"Shh. Severus, all is well, it is just a dream," she whispered, and her heart clenched. "Harry is safe. You kept him safe."

"Just a dream," he repeated quietly in his sleep.

"You can sleep, now," she assured, brushing a sweat-soaked streak of hair gently from his forehead.

Nestling down into his pillow, he captured her lingering hand. And her chest flooded with this treacherous surge of warmth she always felt when he dared to touch her.

"Love you." A whisper in the darkness; yet Hermione felt her foolish heart lose its rhythm, paralyzed by his unconscious confession.

For endless moments, she sat there and simply watched him. The chances that he would repeat those words to her while awake were next to nothing. Not as long as the Ministry stood still between them. But then... maybe then her heart's deepest desire wasn't a lost cause any longer.

Reluctantly, she freed her hand from his, running the back of her fingers softly along his cheek as she withdrew them.

She had to leave. He wouldn't tolerate her presence here once he was awake.

"Love you, too, Severus." A quiet confession before she found the strength to finally head for the door.

Her hand already rested on the handle when she heard him stir behind her.

She froze, waiting for an assault of harsh words from him.

However, it was the softest of susurrus that shattered her heart.

"Always love you, Lily."

It had all just been a dream.