

The Black, Woollen Blanket

by kittyperry

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Chapter 1 of 1

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- (i) The characters and world of Harry Potter are the property of the remarkably talented J.K. Rowling. I make no money from this.
- (ii) I owe a great debt of gratitude to my brilliant beta, Queen_of_Stars. Thank you for all your help. All errors that ultimately remain are my own.
- (iii) This story was inspired by Melusin's wonderful drabble called Beauty and the Bed, a tale far superior to this meagre offering. She wrote her story based on the particular challenge which was for an 'Inanimagus' drabble, defined as someone who is capable of transforming into an inanimate object.
- (iv) Dear reader, please be generous enough to read and review. Words cannot express how much your feedback means to me.

Hermione found the woollen blanket abandoned in the Shrieking Shack three days after the Battle of Hogwarts. Something forced her to return to the place where she had seen him, the hero, the spy, the man she had always secretly held so dear, die. He had been instrumental to their victory, and she wanted to understand how he could have disappeared. The Aurors had reported, soon after the battle concluded, that upon their arrival at the Shack, they had found no body. Harry had been distraught; but it was as though Professor Snape had vanished into thin air. The Malfoys had been questioned, but their shock, especially Draco's horror at his godfather's body not being found for a fitting burial, had convinced Hermione that they were not responsible for his disappearance. No, the reason for his vanishing was something else entirely. She kept hoping that he had survived, but even that seemed a slim possibility. She could never forget the blood, all that blood.

On Hermione's visit, she noticed that there was still a lot of dried blood on the floor, and patterns swept across it as though a body had been dragged to the far corner. It looked like the Aurors hadn't bothered to clean up after their visit. It didn't surprise her, really. Why should they? There was nothing in the Shack, nothing. But, she was not one to give up easily. Scanning the environs, she searched for something that might prove to be a clue, a symbol of what she sought. She found nothing but the slightly ragged and blood stained, black blanket in an untidy heap in the corner. There was nothing particularly special about it, but something in it called to her. On closer inspection, she found that it was of the best quality cashmere wool, and Hermione, always a sensible, practical girl, could not bear to let something so in need of care, but still something that was so achingly beautiful in its simplicity, just lie there. But it was only three days after the fall of Voldemort, and the blanket, like everything else she possessed, found a home in her beaded bag.

A week passed. Hermione did not, in truth, could not leave Hogwarts. She spent her days helping Poppy with the last of the remaining patients and waited for news of Professor Snape. Something would not let her believe that he was really gone. But when no body was found, the Ministry finally had gone ahead with their plans for a memorial service for the fallen hero and spy. Harry's public testimony had been enough to grant him a posthumous Order of Merlin, First Class and much notoriety in the press. Hermione thought privately that he would have sneered at the reports in the newspapers and found the Order of Merlin much too little, too late.

A month after the Battle found her still living at Hogwarts. She had nowhere else to go. She had tried spending a weekend at the Burrow and had found that she was not

ready to intrude on the Weasleys' grief. Besides which, she found that the Burrow was already too full to give her the kind of space she needed. Hogwarts needed as many hands as were willing to get it back into shape, so she happily volunteered to help. Minerva's tired but grateful smile was all the payment Hermione needed. But she knew that she was merely stalling for time. Soon the work would be complete, and the school would close for the summer. She would have to decide what to do and try to rebuild her life.

Finding her parents was not difficult. She had been very thorough in her directions. However, bringing them back after lifting the memory charm proved an entirely different and a much more difficult matter. Thankfully, Hermione had not acted without their consent. She had sat them down and tried to explain that she wanted them to go into hiding. She had explained her Arithmancy calculations, and she had promised them that this was the only thing to be done. They had not liked it. But she had said that if they did not agree, she would do it anyway. Anger, bitterness, harsh words, nothing would sway her. They could help her, or they could not; it was their decision, but ultimately, Hermione had said without remorse, she would do what was needed to keep them safe. So, when she had given her parents back their memories, despite the anger and the resentment, they did not fault her for her actions. They had known before-hand and had even, on some levels, helped her formulate her plans.

However, Hermione had not accounted for her parents being pleased with life in Australia, nor had she planned for her mother, who had not been able to have another child since Hermione, despite her many attempts, finally conceiving a second time. Into the second trimester of a late pregnancy, Janet Granger was in no way willing to go through the hardship of moving back to England. Hermione, of course, was thrilled at the idea of having a younger brother or sister, but her life was in England, not Australia.

After a wonderful six weeks with her parents, Hermione returned. She promised to come back when her mother had had the baby, but she needed to go back. She claimed that she could not abandon Harry, but in her heart, she knew it was not the truth. She missed Professor Snape, and if she could not be with him, then she would at least be where he lay in Hogwarts. It was a foolish desire, but one which she was not willing to abandon. She had abandoned him in life; at least in death she would remain as close as she could. Moreover, Hermione was determined to sit for her NEWTs, which were to be held in the last week of August before Hogwarts reopened as usual on the first of September.

On her return to England, Hermione lived temporarily at Grimmauld Place. Harry had insisted, but Hermione had agreed only on the premise that it would do until she could find her own little flat. She wanted her own space. She had missed privacy, and a year in a tent had made her realise how much she valued being alone. She hoped she would find something in Hogmeade so that she could, when she desired, pop in to visit his monument. It felt somehow apart from him, and a part of her believed that it was a futile gesture, but the monument provided a symbol for her thoughts to focus on. The dark, cool marble, so like his demeanour, seemed a fitting resting place.

Luck seemed to be with her. Merely three days into her house hunting efforts found her coming across the most perfect little cottage on the edge of Hogmeade. Flung towards the end that lay away from Hogwarts, not too far from the Forbidden Forest, it was a simple, two up, two down construction. For Hermione, it was ideal. There was a large and simple kitchen with a long counter on which she could brew simple medicinal potions that led to a disorganised but rambling back garden, and a sitting-room that opened on to the tiny patch of grass and a honeysuckle hedge that bordered the lane. Upstairs, there was a large bedroom with wide sash windows, just like those that she'd had in her parental home in Surrey that looked out onto the back garden.

Ron had not understood her need for privacy and time alone. Nor could he understand the sorrow she felt at the death of Professor Snape. She should have been, in his mind at least, grieving for Fred, for Tonks, for Remus, not for the Greasy Git whose body could not be found. Hermione did not refrain from grieving over the other dead; she had cried and gone to all of the funerals and memorials, even for that of Vincent Crabbe, but Professor Snape's death haunted her. Possibly, no, definitely because in her heart, she knew she could have done more for the man in his dying moments. She had had enough knowledge of healing to staunch the flow of blood. She had had potions; she knew charms, spells that she could have used to help. But she had done nothing, just gaped like a foolish bint and let him die. She had never told anyone of the crush she had had on him or the way in which she had never really accepted that he was the cold-blooded murderer of Dumbledore. She had always thought that if he was that much of a ruthless killer that he would have killed her and Luna as he fled to the Astronomy Tower that fateful night. He could have killed Flitwick, but instead, he had Stunned the diminutive professor. Those actions did not tally with that of a ruthless, cold-blooded killer. Bellatrix would have killed them all, so would have Lucius. But Professor Snape had not, and Hermione had hung on to that belief. But when it mattered, her intelligence, her heart had failed her. She had done nothing. And so, Hermione mourned his death, his disappearance from her life more deeply than she mourned the death of anyone else. It was something she couldn't explain, but it did mean that the tentative relationship that blossomed during the Battle died as her heart had died not long after on the floor of the Shrieking Shack.

September found Hermione at a loose end. NEWTs done, house cleaned and garden tidied, she needed another project. With that in mind, she decided that she would redecorate her cottage and make sure all that she carried in her beaded bag was finally housed somewhere else. Thus, one sunny afternoon Hermione began to one by one pull out everything her trusty bag contained. A part of her realised that it was an important step to healing the trauma of the war. She was constantly plagued by nightmares, and unpacking her bag seemed to her a way of telling her mind that the days on the run were truly over. She would still carry healing potions and other emergency paraphernalia with her, but there was no need to keep all of her books and clothes that were not in use safely ensconced in her bag.

It was then, as she was finally putting everything away, that she once again found the blanket. It now stank of dried blood and looked even worse than before. She almost threw it away, but her mother's lessons on how to remove blood stains stopped her hand. Besides, the stains wouldn't really show on the black wool. Indeed, all it really needed was a good soak in shampoo and cold water to loosen the dried blood and a few repeated scrubs and washes until the water finally ran clear. When she was satisfied that it was thoroughly cleansed, she lay it out on the sweet smelling grass in her back garden to dry. The September sun had been strong, and by evening, as the weather turned chilly, it was dry. Sitting by the kitchen fire, carefully mending the ragged edges of the blanket while it draped over her knees provided her with a comfortable warmth.

The sense of security she felt when enveloped in the blanket meant that soon, she grew accustomed to having it on her bed every night, as well as wrapped around her while she read throughout the day. Autumn came rapidly, and the woollen blanket became a cherished possession. It was unexpected that the warmth and security the blanket provided chased the nightmares of Professor Snape's death away, but it reminded her so starkly of his black robes that she assumed it was providing her with an unconscious substitute.

When she travelled to Australia for the birth of her brother, Geoffrey, the blanket went with her. She could not part with it. Through the nights, it had proved that it was her safe harbour. The warmer climate soon had her sleeping in the nude, but the blanket, ah, the blanket, it still stayed flung casually over her bare form.

Soon, much too soon, the dreams began. Dreams in which a shadowy, dark lover whispered salaciously in her ears but which left her confused and drenched in a tangle each morning with the blanket. She tried, of course, to recall what was said in the dreams, but all she had was an impression of a dark, erotic voice and lips ghosting over her body.

Frost was in the air when she returned once more to her cottage. Hermione sighed with quiet joy at the pleasant sight of home. She loved her baby brother, and being with her parents had been marvellous, if slightly awkward, but it was good to be home.

The first thing Hermione did was light a fire in her bedroom; the cottage was freezing. Then, after a long, hot bath, she slid naked between the crisp sheets of her bed, her beloved blanket draped on top. Somehow though, it did not prove enough comfort. Now, she needed the feel of her soft woollen blanket on her bare body. Perhaps it was that she was entirely alone in the house, perhaps it was being back so near Hogwarts, but her thoughts as she drifted off to sleep turned once more towards Professor Snape. She caressed her body as she remembered his dark, seductive voice as it delivered heated insults. She recalled his graceful stalk and could not resist slipping her fingers down to play with her already wet core. It was his face she saw as she pumped her fingers desperately into her waiting heat, his body she imagined riding her as she reached orgasm.

The dream that night was much more intense. No longer did her shadowy lover merely whisper in her ear. Nor did ghostly lips simply caress her already sated body. Tonight, she felt fingers massaging her already sensitised flesh and then plunge repeatedly into her. As dawn approached, the fingers were first replaced by a ghostly tongue that licked, sucked and fucked her to completion. Then, she was flipped onto her front so that a ghostly cock could take her virginity. Unheeded, unexpected, Hermione awoke as she orgasmed, gasping, "Severus," in a throaty, hoarse voice.

Still shuddering from her orgasm, Hermione was disoriented and confused. But it did not take her more than a few seconds to realise that she was not alone in her bed. Reaching for her protective blanket, she instead encountered the tangled cotton sheet and warm, living male. Disbelief warred with incomprehension and embarrassment as Hermione turned her head to gaze upon the sated and relaxed, yet sardonically smirking, visage of Severus Snape.

A.N. Love it or hate it, please to let me know what you think.