

Rain Cloak

by Ladymage Samiko

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Rivulets of venom flowed down his neck, dripping onto the floor, tickling and burning the skin they touched. Flat black eyes stared at the girl, who, with jaw clenched and brow furrowed, face smudged and hair singed, pulled the poison from his veins through magic and sheer strength of will.

It ought to have been impossible. Wasn't he already dead? Merely waiting for some supernatural guide to indicate his fate?

The final drop trembled to the floor. He registered the silence and the heavy weight as she collapsed over his chest. White and shaking, Hermione Granger smiled up at him.

A sharp curse escaped him; his knife had slipped, slicing his finger. Somehow surprised by the brilliant crimson, Severus watched the blood slide down finger and wrist, soak into the shirtsleeve rolled to the elbow. His other hand was still poised. So simple to add another slice— down the Mark. Finish what ought to have been finished months back.

An exclamation. He found himself dragged to the sink, small hands manipulating his own as she cleaned and dressed the cut, all the while chiding him for his carelessness. Equally competently, Hermione cleaned the knife and replaced it in the block.

Wizards were capable of causing quite a bit of damage to people they didn't like. Severus hadn't expected rotting vegetables and eggs to be part of the arsenal that they'd employ. That, and the mental and physical exhaustion following his trial, explained why he didn't dodge properly.

And, as it turned out, he didn't need to.

He watched her face, grim-set, flinching only slightly as the missiles struck her back. He saw the muck dripping down her robes when she turned.

When she turned... and faced down the crowd like a Fury.

...or an avenging angel.

His avenging angel.

There's a curse placed upon three a.m.— the sort of curse that brings back the most sordid, horrifying memories you possess and makes them real. Over and over again.

It's only long, bitter experience— and the certainty of terror —that keeps you from screaming. And it's an equally bitter triumph when you can wake up with only a cold sweat to betray the exquisite tortures your own mind puts you through.

Severus couldn't comprehend the relief he felt finding her wrapped in his arms like a child's teddy bear. Nor when she, half-asleep, banished both the sweat and the fear.

It had taken... a long time... before he felt ready to come here. To stand before this white marble atrocity and rant and scream at the enshrined 'hero' whose real contribution had been manipulating everyone around him— who had seen trust and loyalty merely as useful tools. Severus hated Albus now, and hated even more knowing that Dumbledore had manipulated him into precisely this emotion.

Eventually, emptied of feeling, he staggered back out, hands bloodied from pounding his fists against the stone. She was waiting, and as he leaned against her, she gently wiped away the traces of his tears.

Raindrops drummed atop Severus's skull, running down his face, rolling off the tip of his nose, soaking into thick wool robes. He merely closed his eyes and tilted his head back.

"Severus!" Hermione hurried over, fingers fumbling with her cloak clasp. "You'll catch your death!" She tossed the garment over both their heads.

He gently disengaged the folds and resettled the cloak properly over her shoulders. "It's only rain, Hermione," he said, smiling. "A good, cleansing spring rain." He wrapped his arm around her, accompanying her back to the house.

She smiled back, adding, "Everything will be blooming come morning."

ANs: I began this on one of those rare California rainy days. (Yes, they do actually occur once in a blue moon.) Whenever they do happen, I seize the opportunity to wear my own rain cloak, a project/gift from my undergrad days back east. It's green and black and bears a coiling snake clasp. (All coincidental; I didn't 'do' HP back then, though it did become a small joke.) But since it is my 'Slytherin cloak', it occurred to me to write some Snapean drabbles using the idea of a protective cloak as a theme. And so Hermione became Severus's 'rain cloak.'

I hope you have enjoyed this little drabble set. If possible, please leave a little token in the review box; praise & concrit are equally welcome.

Cheers,

Lm. Samiko