We Don't Say Goodbye

by Lorraine Bluestar

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: All characters and concepts of Harry Potter's universe belong to J.K. Rowling; I just borrowed them for a little while.

The poem included belongs to Lord Byron. This story was posted before on Ashwinder, so maybe some of you have already read it.

It was a warm summer evening in Hogwarts but Hermione was feeling an indescribable cold inside her very own soul, the cold of loss, the cold of an empty heart once so full of life. The feeling was overwhelming, and the headache was unbearable but also a kind of blessing that kept her mind incapable of thinking about what had just happened. She had just witnessed the most terrible battle ever: there were corpses everywhere and she had believed that any one of them would die at any moment. Then, somehow, she didn't know how, Harry had killed Voldemort with a curse that came from his own body... They'd have to ask Dumbledore what exactly had happened.

They had lost so much in the battle. Ron was ill in the hospital and his condition was critical. Harry was physically fine, but he'd never be the same. Many of their friends were lost forever. It was hard to think about the loss of Percy, Lavender, Lee, Colin... so many were doomed to be reduced to mere memories. It was so painful, so unreal.

But there was someone for whom she was feeling more sorrow... Severus Snape.

He had died saving her from Voldemort himself. "Why did he do that?" she thought to herself. The shock that had had complete control of her was receding, and she succumbed to the pain for the first time and started crying. She had always respected him as a pupil, despite how cruel he had been to her. When she had returned to Hogwarts to teach Arithmancy four years after her graduation, there had been something else. He had changed his attitude to her: he wasn't all sunshine, but he had been quite nice to her. She had even enjoyed spending time talking to him; he was such an intelligent man who seemed to know something about everything, even Muggles. She was sure that she was mad, but she felt so good when they were together, as if no one could ever understand her mind and the way it worked as he did. He too had that thirst for knowledge so well known to her. She had developed feelings for him, although she knew that was crazy. He had always kept a distance between them. She was sure she was nothing to him but an ex-student and a colleague; there was no chance that he felt the same way.

It took some time before she regained control over her emotions. She wiped away her tears, wondering whether she should go to the dungeons, where his private chambers were. He didn't have anyone in the world, and someone had to sort through his things. The moment she entered his chambers a cold chill ran through her; he had been there just two nights before. Hermione walked toward his bookshelves. She had always admired and envied his vast book collection. She knew how proud he was of it. She opened his wardrobe and pulled one of his black robes to her. It still smelled like him: that unmistakeable essence of ingredients used in potions brewing. She dropped the robe as she noticed a silvery light coming from a stone basin in the bottom of the wardrobe. It was a Pensieve, and in its interior a silvery white substance, like liquid glass, swirled. She couldn't help wondering about its content, and took the basin over to a nearby table.

She bent closer to watch and she gasped when she saw her own image...

It was her seventh year in Hogwarts, and she was desperate about her NEWTs. She had to achieve top marks in order to get the chance to study Advanced Arithmancy, Transfiguration and Potions abroad. He had been asked to be her tutor. She disappointed him in a way he couldn't bear: she was so insufferably perfect in every way.

He heard the knocking on his door and with an expression of utter dissatisfaction went to open it. She was standing there, obviously very nervous.

"Good evening sir..."

He let her in and closed the door behind her. "Good evening Miss Granger. My time is precious, so let's start and finish this quickly."

She nodded nervously and followed him to sit down in a chair in front of his desk. They discussed a book of Advanced Potions she had brought with her and he answered all her questions. The girl was brilliant indeed. All her questions were really well-thought points, and the annoyance he felt for her was surprisingly put aside for a while.

Two hours passed as if they were fifteen minutes and then he spoke. "I suppose it is time for you to return to your common room."

"Yes, I didn't realise how late it is. Thank you so much for your help sir, it's very valuable to me."

"I suppose it is. After all, who else could answer that 'little' list of questions you carried with you?"

He could feel her anxiety, but before she could open her mouth again he dismissed her. "Well, good evening then, Miss Granger. I will see you in class in the morning."

She left his office, leaving him to think about her. He had never seen her in that way before: she had such a gifted mind and talking to her outside the class environment had been really interesting. She had reached such brilliant conclusions about everything. But how had the light in which he saw her changed in just a couple of hours? He felt a chill trickle down his back when he realised that he recognised the spirit of the boy he had once been in her. They were so much more alike than anyone would ever dare to believe. He had tried to take her out of his mind but he couldn't do it. He went to his chambers and tried to sleep.

Some hours later, when he finally did succeed in falling asleep, still thinking about her, he smiled in his dreams...

It was the Graduation Feast; all the seventh year students were moving on to greater things. Everyone was excited but also worried about leaving Hogwarts, about leaving home...

"I suppose it feels like home to them too," he thought with a trace of disgust for the noise surrounding him. He had never liked the feasts or the balls. In fact, he always looked for a way to avoid them, but Albus always insisted that he must be present in the Leaving Feast.

He surveyed them with a smirk on his face. "Certainly I am pleased that I will not have to see the 'boy who lived' everyday.

He looked down at the Gryffindor table to Potter and all his friends. They seemed so excited, but in their eyes was a trace of melancholy. Then she caught his gaze. She looked beautiful, almost... He shook his head trying to get rid of his own thoughts. He couldn't bear to face why he was so upset. He should not be thinking about her. She was just a girl...and more than that, Potter's best friend.

Hermione and the Weasley boy were holding hands. He was whispering something into her ear and the most amazing thing... She seemed to enjoy it. She was laughing.

He sighed and left the Great Hall. He walked into the dungeons, trying to tame his feelings. How could she look so happy with someone like Weasley? He hadn't got half of her talent. He was drowning in his own misery when he heard a knock in his door.

"Enter," he said with utter indifference. His eyes widened when he saw who stood at the door.

"Miss Granger, what are you doing here? You can hardly be here to discuss an academic subject since you have already graduated." Snorting, he continued, "and I don't think you are here to 'enjoy' my amazing company."

"I... I saw you leaving the Great Hall and I thought that I might miss the chance to thank you for everything you did for me this year."

"How touching, Miss Granger, but I think you did it all by yourself."

"Well, I could never have achieved it without your guidance."

He stared at her silently for an instant and noticed that she was blushing profusely.

"Although I would like to admit that you're right, I could never take all the credit. I must confess that your own capacities always made you an outstanding student, and one way or another you would have achieved it."

She bit her lower lip while playing with her hands, it seemed like a miracle that she had lost the ability to speak, but that was too good to be true...

"Coming from you, sir, I suppose that is one of the greatest compliments I have been paid."

He smirked at her, feeling a little nervous. He had to send her away quickly...

"Well, Miss Granger, I bid you farewell. If you do not mind, I have things to do."

She nodded in understanding, but before leaving, she did the most unexpected thing. She came close to him and hugged him for a brief instant. His mind was telling him to move away but his body couldn't react at all. She stepped back awkwardly and looked into his confused eyes before saying goodbye and thanking him again.

And he stood there trying to understand what just happened and why he was feeling so miserable about the idea of not seeing her again. Of course, it was for the best. She was on her way to becoming a woman, and her mind would gain her an extraordinary position in the wizarding world. But why he was feeling this way? As if he had developed 'feelings' for her. He tried to get rid of the idea, shaking his head, but as on many nights before, it was useless. She was not only in his head... but he dreaded thinking about it.

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He was reading a fascinating French book about the latest discoveries about potions ingredients in the Staff Room when Minerva McGonagall came in smiling. He decided not to pay attention to the woman, hiding himself behind the book, but his attempts were useless. She was standing just in front of him, ignoring the fact that he was trying to avoid her.

"Well, it seems that we have made a decision and we have a new Arithmancy teacher."

Severus sighed, and looked at her, uninterested. He really didn't care about it and his book was definitely a thousand times more interesting than any person.

"Don't you want to know who it is?" she asked him.

"Not really Minerva, but I suppose I will have to hear it despite my wishes ..."

"Hermione Granger. Do you remember her?"

He felt a jolt in his stomach. Remember her? He hadn't stopped thinking about her during the last four years, since the last time he saw her. He controlled himself before answering Minerva, "Of course I remember her, brilliant but very annoying."

"How can you say that? She was the most talented student we have had in years. She achieved better marks than Percy Weasley. That made her the best student in decades."

"I suppose that makes you think she will be a good professor too. Let's see if you are right about this one. Now, if you will excuse me I have to go to Hogsmeade's apothecary to buy some ingredients I need."

He left the staff room before someone could notice how upset he was. The thought of seeing her after so much time made him feel nervous but very excited. He had actually dreamed about the day when he would see her again...

Severus was pacing impatiently from one side to another of his chamber, before sitting in a chair, massaging his temples. His headache was unbearable, and with reason ... but this was so utterly insane. He had tried to force her from his mind, harder than he had ever tried anything before, and he had done everything to insure that all those memories were kept out of his mind, but every day a new thought about her presented itself making his effort useless. And since she had come back, his condition was even worse

"Where would I find someone else like her? There cannot be someone just like that, with the same emotions, the same expression in her smile; with that look of utter fascination she had every time I talked to her about Potions and other things; despite the indifference I always pretend when she is around. A woman who can bear my bad temper without complaining about it, but understanding my motives for being so nasty. How annoying it is to feel like this about her, but at the same time how amazing. It surprises me that things have reached this point..."

He took a picture he had of her and looked at it for several minutes. He sighed, and walked to a bookshelf and took down a book. He sat down again and opened it at a certain page well known to him. He could not remember how he had come by the book, but it had an apt description of Hermione...

She walks in beauty, like the night of

Cloudless climes and starry skies

And all that's best of dark and bright

Meets in her aspect and her eyes

Whose mellowed by that tender light

Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less

Had half impaired the nameless grace

Which waves in every raven tress

Or softly lightens over her face

Where thoughts serenely sweet express

How pure, how dear there dwelling place

And on that cheek, and over that brow

So soft, so calm, so eloquent

The smiles that win, the tints that glow

But tell of days in goodness spent

A mind at peace with all below

A heart whose love is innocent.

What a superb description of her. He had always moved between the dark and the light and he could see that she was no longer innocent; her work in the Order was also taking its toll on her. But she was still so pure, so full of light. Who would not love her? Hearing her laughter was his salvation, looking at his own image in her eyes was his redemption and loving her was his resurrection. He looked at the clock on the wall, forced himself to stand up and tried to get her out of his mind before walking to the dungeons for a class. It was a difficult task, but he managed to stop thinking about her, at least for a while...

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Tomorrow was the day, the day the Order fixed for the final assault against Voldemort and his Death Eaters. After all these years they had got the support of the Ministry and the aid of all the Aurors to defeat the Dark Lord, so this promised to be the final battle.

He hoped so much that that was true. He had so many plans for his future, and all of them involved one person. He had no doubt about his love for her, and it seemed that she did not dislike him as much as she did as a student. Maybe she would not refuse him. Maybe with time she would eventually have feelings for him... maybe.

He shook his head as he took out the Pensieve he had in his wardrobe. This was the last memory he would take from his mind. After the battle if everything happened as planned, he would have his second chance and she would know how much he loved her. He took the tattered picture from his robe and looked at her image; after tomorrow every thing would change...

She came out from the Pensieve crying. There were so many memories of her there, too many to count, and every one seemed to be more surprising than the next... She felt an incredible pain but also an incredible anger in her heart: why did he never tell her? They had wasted precious time in denial of their feelings. If he had only had the courage to tell her...

"I suppose you have found out what he was always afraid to tell you," Albus Dumbledore's voice sounded at her back. He looked so tired and all his years seemed to have fallen over him.

She turned back to face him and wiped away her tears. "I don't understand it. Why?"

"Hermione, he loved you with all his being. He wasn't a man who could do things by halves, but he knew that in his position that was a danger for you. At any moment the Dark Lord could have found out his feelings for you and used them to ensure his loyalty above everything."

Suddenly realisation came to her, sinking in her soul. She could understand everything and the pain was bigger now than she could bear. "That's why he kept all those memories in the Pensieve?"

"Exactly. He had to keep you safe at any cost, even above his own feelings and his own despair. He was determined to tell you everything once, but he didn't do it hoping he'd have a second chance once the war was over and the world was safe for you two to start a new life with each other."

Hermione was in shock. He loved her so much and she hadn't noticed it; how blind she had been. He wouldn't have had anything to fear; she would have loved him back. She would have accepted his love and would have been the happiest woman in the world, but that chance would never come. He was lost forever, and with him a part of her soul.

"I loved him; he taught me the greatest lesson, without realising it. He taught me to love above everything, and I didn't even have a chance to say it to him, to tell him how much I care for him, how much I love him... I wasn't able to say goodbye."

Dumbledore placed a hand on her shoulder. "I'm sure he knew all that deep in his heart, but are you certain this is a goodbye?"

The grief was overwhelming but Hermione looked at him, trying to stay calm, and then she knew. "He didn't say goodbye at all; he'll live forever in my memory. It's not necessary to remember when you can't forget... I just hope he never forgets about me."

Dumbledore smiled at her in agreement. "He won't Hermione; I'm sure about it. He loved you that much."

She smiled at him and then looked at Severus' Pensieve. As long as she kept it and the memories she had of him, he'd be with her after death, although they had never had the chance to be together in life.

"We don't say goodbye. I'll find my way to you; just wait for me..."

Lorraine's Notes: I wrote this fic almost two years ago and it was meant to be an entry for the Pensieve challenge on WIKTT in 2004. It's my favourite fic, so it was ridiculous it wasn't posted here, in this beautiful site Theresa created for us and that means a lot to me.

Many thanks to Shiv5468, who beta read this fic long time ago. Also, thanks go to NotSoSaintly for her helpful advice.

Melanie (Usagistu) created a beautiful picture for my story, you can see it here: http://www.deviantart.com/view/17927487/ This marked the beginning of our friendship, so this pic means a lot to me.