

# Crossfire

*by shatteredrose*

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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*Standard disclaimer! Anything you recognize isn't mine! There is sexual content, but it isn't as explicit as the warning suggests. A very big thank you to astopperindeath for all the help she's offered with this story and my others. Thank you to Amber as well for being a great beta!*

Neither of them had expected this to happen. Hermione had been chosen to be the liaison between the Order and Severus Snape, mostly because she was the one who had fought so hard to convince them that Snape was still on their side. Several years had passed since Dumbledore's murder, and there were still those who did not fully trust him.

Maybe that was what called to him; the unflinching trust that he would not betray her. That the light in her was so untainted by the evil she fought. The same evil that had nearly consumed him. He had no illusions that she was perfection or innocence embodied. In fact, he was almost selfish, he would later realize--by being near her, he was trying to steal some of that "light" for himself. Not to corrupt her, oh no, that could never happen, but alas, to purge some of the darkness inside of him. So he grasped at every chance to extend their meetings. She, of course, blossomed with his attention and willingness to answer her endless questions. Their conversations quickly changed from the war to academics. But even with the extended meetings, there were no lingering glances or touches. In fact, even their discussions were not heated, their energy already drained by the constant strain of the war.

It was a particularly nasty night when it happened; a winter storm insisted on covering all of London with sleet. There was no beautiful snow covering the ground or clear starry skies. Only bone chilling winds and sleet drenching everything.

Severus had beat Hermione to the sparsely furnished flat they had rented for these meetings after she tired of backrooms of run-down pubs. It also served both of them as a safe house, a shelter when circumstances demanded it. Although the flat was Unplottable, Hermione had bullied Remus into being their Secret Keeper with the promise of Severus supplying Wolfsbane before every full moon.

Severus stood at the window with his arms crossed, gazing out at the storm. It was dusk, but he would never have been able to tell because the clouds were so dense. Not even the Muggle streetlamps could fight the gloom.

After some time, when it was finally night, he heard the tell-tale "pop" of Apparition. He didn't turn from the view, opting rather to wait for her to initiate the meeting. She moved to stand next to him, and joined him in observing the storm. Finally, "Harry found the fifth Horcrux and is destroying it tonight," she whispered as not to break the silence too harshly.

Severus simply nodded and unfolded his arms. He leaned onto the window sill and closed his eyes while touching his forehead to the freezing glass Hermione waited; by now she had learned that he would answer when he was ready. The silence continued, and Hermione accepted that he wouldn't respond to her this meeting. She turned to leave with silent acceptance.

As she was about to Disapparate, he spoke softly. "It will all be over soon, won't it?"

"Yes," she replied just as softly. He dropped his head, eyes closed for a moment before standing upright. He could feel her watching him, so he turned. She was much closer than he'd anticipated, and he nearly knocked her over. She had been reaching for his shoulder to let him know she was there. She grabbed him as she stumbled, and he reached for her, intending to keep her steady.

Both of them paused in each other's arms, startled. Their eyes met, and that's when seeming chaos broke loose. Their mouths and bodies frantically clashed against each other, and their hands tore at their clothes. Neither of them knew who made the first move to the bed, but they quickly divested the rest of their clothing soon after.

Their coupling was selfish and fast. Neither had the time to explore the other; they were only intent on taking the shelter that was offered at that moment. When they were sated, Severus unceremoniously rolled off of Hermione to stare at the ceiling. Hermione, panting, kept her eyes closed to keep from realizing what just happened.

"I should go," Severus said, though he made no move to sit up.

Hermione protested and reached for him before she could think about it. Severus tensed as she laid her head on his chest, but finally relaxed and slipped his arm around her shoulders on the pretense of being comfortable. He was rather unsure of what the next move would be, knowing it could change everything.

"I'm . . . not expected back at Grimmauld Place for another hour or so," she said hesitantly against his chest.

Severus closed his eyes and squeezed her gently. He would take any light she offered him.

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Hermione concentrated on feeling his body against hers, the security that the situation offered. She dedicated everything to memory: the feeling of his breath against her hair, his sparse chest hair tickling her cheek, even his collar bone pressing uncomfortably against her. She dared not move, fearing to break the connection they currently had. She forced her mind to calm itself and simply to accept this change in their situation.

"It is simply raining now," Severus suddenly spoke.

Hermione focused on the sound coming from outside. "More like a down pour than a simple rain," she commented.

"Mmmh," he grunted, absentmindedly caressing Hermione's naked side. She gazed at him, and the look they shared assured her his mood wasn't going to change until it was needed.

"When I'm with you, Severus, I forget about all of the storms," Hermione told him sincerely. "But . . . I don't think you're going to suggest we continue whatever this is."

"Hermione," he sighed, closing his eyes and swallowing before continuing, "We are but pawns caught in the crossfire between Heaven and Hell. Our actions are not our own to command at this moment."

She squeezed her eyes closed to prevent the unexpected tears from spilling over. She swallowed the sob that was in her throat before speaking. "And when they are? Will we pretend nothing ever happened? Or will we realize we're soul mates, marry, and have seven children that are all book worms?"

Severus barked out in laughter. "They would all have your mess of hair and my nose. As amusing as that picture is, Hermione, promises are futile at this point in the war. It would be unfair to either of us to give a false hope of a happy ending." He slithered out from underneath her and rolled on his side facing her. After propping himself up on his elbow, he twirled an errant curl of hers with his finger. "However . . ."

Hermione let out a burst of air. "Oh, thank you, there is a however!"

Severus grimaced. "However, if that devil goes back to where he's from, then maybe we can figure out whatever this." He gestured to them with a sweep on his arm, "between us is."

She nodded and finally sat up, looking through the pile of clothes so that she could dress. She handed Severus his clothing while searching for her own. As she stood to dress, he stopped her with a hand on her arm. She turned to face him, struggling to keep the conflicting emotions from showing upon her face. He searched her face, for what she couldn't tell, before turning away to dress. She finished quicker than he did, seemingly in a hurry to be away from this confusion. She gathered her wand from where it had fallen to the floor and straightened her hair before looking at him expectantly.

Finally, he turned to face her, fastening the last of the buttons on his frock coat. She eventually looked down, then out the window. "The rain has stopped."

Still looking at her, he replied, "Yes, it has. Hermione, look at me." She looked at him with such hope and trust, he almost looked away, afraid of what was there. Afraid of the light. Darkness had nearly consumed him, and with it he learned pain. But this light that was being offered now was also painful, albeit different. He stepped towards her, reaching for one of her hands. Holding it gently, he gazed at their hands.

Her hands were delicate compared to his, less callused, but still he could see a persistent ink stain on her index finger. Something about that stain called to him, and he brought her hand to his lips. After reverently kissing the back of her hand, he pulled her to him and kissed her lips with a mixture of long forgotten hope and fear. She returned the kiss with the same fervor, desperately holding his hand and pulling him in closer. When they finally could no longer breathe, they parted.

Hermione cracked a weary smile. "That kiss felt like a promise, Severus."

He dropped her hand immediately and stepped away from her. Turning to the center of the flat, he paused, staring ahead of him at the wall. "It was," he whispered, barely loud enough for her to hear.

She reached for him, but before she could touch him or reply, he was gone. She moved to the window, and it had started snowing and giving everything a fresh appearance. "And when this storm has passed, Severus, we'll be here to see if we can overcome our fears."

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*As with all the other authors, reviews are loved! Cookies to those who can correctly guess what inspired this story!*