

Same Time, Next Year

by linlawless

Nine drabbles from an annual Lycanthropy conference, bookended by two non-conference drabbles. Warning: Passing mention of miscarriage.

A Drabble Series

Chapter 1 of 1

Nine drabbles from an annual Lycanthropy conference, bookended by two non-conference drabbles. Warning: Passing mention of miscarriage.

A/N: This drabble series (1100 words exactly, excluding titles) was written for the 10th anniversary of sshg fanfiction at the celebrate_sshg livejournal community. It was influenced by, but is not faithful to, three prompts: 1) After the war, Hermione and Snape worked together to cure Lycanthropy, and then both went their separate ways. For the last ten years, they have met at the same conference in Paris to teach a class on the proper brewing of their potion. On the 10th Anniversary of their discovery, they are told that there will be no more seminars, since there is no longer a need. How will they handle the fact that they have run out of excuses to see each other anymore? You can make it long, short, light, dark, fluff, angst... Just make it romance. 2) Severus and Hermione are celebrating their tenth anniversary... but they're not married and never have been. So what exactly are they celebrating? 3) When so much water has passed under the bridge, can friends become lovers?

I borrowed the title of this from a 1978 film starring Alan Alda.

Finally, the characters and concepts, as usual, belong to JKR. I own the original aspects of this fic, though I won't be making any money off of it. Still, please don't copy, repost, or distribute it without my express permission.

Same Time, Next Year

0. A Marriage (of Minds)

"So that's it, then," Hermione said, trying to sound happy when inside, she was panicking. Without the research into this potion between them, would she ever see Severus again?

"So it would seem," Severus replied neutrally. "The cure works, finally; what could be left to say? I'm sure your *husband* will be thrilled to have you away from my sphere of influence."

Hermione frowned. "Yes, I suppose he will," she murmured. He didn't respond, so she said, "It's been a pleasure, Severus. Truly," she added at his skeptical look.

"It has been ... acceptable," he replied, dipping his head in acknowledgement.

I. Paper

"I can't believe I'm doing this," Severus grumbled. "I thought I was finished teaching dunderheads the day I left Hogwarts for the last time."

"Still, it's good to see you," Hermione replied. "I've missed you."

"As have I," Severus said absently, before he could restrain himself. She looked pleased, though. *In for a knut, in for a galleon*, he thought. "Perhaps we might dine together this evening?" he asked cautiously.

"That would be lovely," Hermione agreed, smiling broadly. "We have much to catch up on."

"Indeed."

"And I suppose we could review our plans for instructing the dunderheads."

"That, too."

II. Cotton

Hermione resisted the urge to hug him. He didn't like public shows of affection, and anyway, she was still married. That never stopped Ron from being photographed with his Quidditch groupies, but he swore it was just an overzealous photographer selling a story. Still, in deference to Severus's feelings and her own marriage, she just smiled and squeezed his hand as she shook it.

"How have you been?" she asked. It was a shame Ron was still holding a grudge two years after the cure and seven years after the war.

"Fine, and you?"

"Fine, thanks. Dinner, eight o'clock?"

"Naturally."

III. Leather

Their conversations were more intimate this year, Severus mused. The first year, it had been almost all about the lesson plans, with just a few words about their lives. Last year, it had been half and half. This time, they had barely mentioned anything professional at all – surprising really, since they had taken to corresponding via Owl Post immediately after last year's conference.

Their correspondence wasn't professional, either.

If only she weren't married, they could have met for drinks or dinner or dancing or ... something ... all year long, rather than confining themselves to owls and annual meetings amidst the dunderheads.

IV. Fruit and Flowers

I shouldn't have married so young, Hermione thought, staring at her annual dinner companion, realizing anew how attractive she found him. "Ron wants children," she blurted suddenly.

"Ah," was his considered response.

"I'm not ready," she whispered. "I don't know if I ever will be, but I'm definitely not right now."

"What does he say to that?"

"I haven't told him. Not explicitly, anyway."

"You're not known for your subtlety," Severus pointed out gently.

"No, but then, he's not known for his perspicacity, is he?"

"Certainly not. What will you do?"

"I don't know." Feeling awkward, she changed the subject.

V. Wood

"Why didn't you say anything?" Severus felt unaccustomed guilt at not knowing Hermione had suffered two miscarriages in the last year – one just a few weeks ago. "I could have handled things this year if you needed ..."

"No," she broke in. "I needed the escape." She paused, then, "I needed to see you."

"I'd have come anytime, you know. You're one of the very few I consider a friend."

A small smile. "I'm glad. You've become my closest friend, you know. Even though Ron doesn't ... well, it's just complicated, isn't it?"

"More so every year."

"I know," she sighed.

VI. Candy and Iron

"I could hex him for you."

She snorted a laugh. "That's all right, I hexed him already myself."

"Really?"

"Oh, yes," she confided. "And I must say, now that he won't be able to shag her for the next month, Lavender might actually have to talk to him." She gave an exaggerated shudder. "Of course, I suppose he *might* be more interested in beauty secrets than he was in Arithmancy or Runes or Transfiguration Theory..."

His turn to snort. "Well, who could blame him?"

She laughed outright, realizing her future didn't look quite so bleak as it had just yesterday.

VII. Copper and Wool

"You're not considering taking him back?" Her frown told Severus his horror sounded in his voice. This explained neatly why she had seemingly disappeared for the past

two weeks. They had met regularly for eleven-and-a-half months after last year's conference platonically, of course, as she was still recovering from her estrangement.

She stared, looking shocked. Then she sighed. "No, not really. When you shatter trust like that, not even the strongest *Reparo* can fix it, can it?"

"I should think not."

"It seemed easier to let him think I was considering it. I'm sorry."

"You'll say no, then?"

"Of course."

VIII. Bronze and Pottery

"Severus?"

"Hermione?"

"Would you ... That is ... I was wondering ..." Hermione didn't know why she was so nervous. They had been friends for years now. Her divorce had been final six months ago. She had spent more time with him than anyone in the past two years. She was finally ready for more than friendship if she could only manage to ask him.

"You're very articulate this evening, I see."

"Fine, then. I won't ask you to come in for coffee."

"Coffee? You mean ...?"

She felt herself blush. "Only if you want to."

"I most definitely want to. You're sure?"

"Yes."

IX. Pottery and Willow

"Mmmmm, I'm *so* glad we decided to share a room this year," Hermione said, then pressed a sleepy kiss to Severus's bare chest.

"Perhaps ... that is ... I was thinking ..." Severus nearly growled with frustration. He had been working up his nerve for weeks, and now he sounded less articulate than Quirrell in Hermione's first year.

Naturally, she teased him. "You're very articulate today."

"Fine, then, I won't propose marriage."

She sat up, eyes shining. "Propose?"

"Propose."

"Well, go ahead!" But she immediately changed her mind. "No, wait! You can't propose when we're naked! What will we tell the children?"

Children?!

X. Tin and Aluminum

"I can't believe they've decided not to hold the conference this year," Hermione said glumly.

"Why not?" Severus wondered if he was in for another bout of hormonal weeping.

"Well ... our whole relationship developed because of that conference." Sure enough, she sounded teary.

"No, it didn't," he said mildly. "It developed because you had the good sense to leave that prat you married the first time, which left the field clear for me to pursue you."

She smiled. "I pursued you, actually."

"I let you *think* you did," Severus replied smugly.

His wife just rolled her eyes.

Life was good.