

Ten Years

by sylvanawood

Two close friends celebrate a tenth anniversary dinner. Could it lead to more?

One-shot

Chapter 1 of 1

Two close friends celebrate a tenth anniversary dinner. Could it lead to more?

This was written for the tenth anniversary of the Granger-Snape ship.

Prompt: It was written without prompt, but this one fits anyway: *When so much water has passed under the bridge, can friends become lovers?*

Author's Note: My gratitude, as always, goes to Melusin who is a dream beta and very skilled at nudging the muse.

Full credit will be given at the end of the story.

Try to refresh the page a few times if things don't work the first time. Please have patience, once everything is loaded, it should work just fine. I tried this out with several browsers on Windows XP and Mac. It should work with firefox, Safari and ie.

As an alternative, you can also read and listen here:

<http://asylums.insanejournal.com/storiesfromwood/18952.html>

My earlier link: <http://sylvanawood.webs.com/>, doesn't work properly at the moment. <http://sylvanawood.webs.com/>

If all else fails, you can download the files here: <http://kiwi6.com/users/show/sylvanawood> and listen to them offline. In any case, the spoken text can be read in the transcripts.

Ten Years

Ten years. It would be ten years next Friday.

The years had flown by, and she had been his friend throughout. She had always been there for him: helpful, steadfast, utterly reliable.

It would have to be dinner, and semi-formal, too. Lunch wouldn't do. He doubted that she'd remember the date, but he would never forget. He'd surprise her. That would be nice. And in his favour, surely?

"Dinner?" she enthused. "What a lovely idea. Is there an occasion?" Her eyes met his at that moment, and he saw a faint glimmer of something unexpected. Apprehension? Dread? What could she be afraid of?

"I'll tell you at dinner," he murmured in what he was sure was his most soothing and seductive voice. An eyebrow raised, a slight smirk... There. She smiled again. She couldn't resist his voice, and his smirk always made her smile. "That's so you," she had explained once. He could almost believe that she had meant it to be a positive

attribute.

He made a reservation in a Muggle restaurant in London. Good, but nothing too fancy; he knew her tastes. She wasn't one to indulge in wasteful luxuries.

All he had to do now was wait. Almost a week. It was agony. Was he expecting too much?

On the day of their dinner, he left work early.

Transcript:

He favours a younger man's impatient pace,

skipping round dawdling or

stupidly halted pedestrians.

You're not properly living in

London if you don't use the dodges,

the short cuts.

Yet it's 20 minutes' walk

Gaggles of tourists straggle

more provocatively than ever.

Never mind, he's making good time -

note the active verb -

and he expects she'll be late.

There! The restaurant. He opened the door and stepped inside. The blinding white and orange glare of the street lamps being replaced by the obscuring, misty light of candles and strategically placed fixtures put him in an odd mood. It almost felt as if he had entered the gateway to a different world.

Transcript:

On the threshold,

on the edge of a shadow-world

that is yet to welcome him,

he stands and waits.

Waits for a waiter.

He is noticed, but not recognised,

by a waiter he does not recognise,

but who catches his name in his

right ear, then bows clerically

over the ledger that bulges

from all the names,

the months and years of names,

written in it,

and that sits open on a slope

like a church-lectern Bible.

The Book of Reservations.

As ever, that pause of

anxiety and mute appeal.

But there, happily, it is.

Scriptural confirmation.

Without a smile, without a word, he

is eyebrowed and nodded to follow.

"Thank you. And the wine list, please?"

"On the back."

"I see."

Choose the right wine and have it

ready breathing for

when she arrives.

While waiting, he had a good look round. The restaurant was half-filled with well-dressed Muggles, or were they wizardslike him, in disguiseout to have a slap-up meal with the escort of their choice. His table was in a well-appointed, strategic place, half hidden behind a pillar, and yet with an excellent view of the door. He'd be able to watch her when she arrived.

The waiter who had seated him came back armed with a bottle, startling him out of his thoughts.

Transcript:

Fwop!

The cork leaves the bottle

and his quick nose wants to pick up

the escaping bouquet.

Will it be all right?

The waiter pours out

the statutory measure

- one imperial glug -

which he lifts

and breathes over thoughtfully.

Not corked.

"That's fine, thank you.

Leave it there."

He'll do the pouring.

It's quite sharp

but should broaden out.

He takes his tumbler of water,

overweight bubbles mobbing up

to greet him,

sips that and feels the chill fizz

smash against his palate.

Thirstier than he thought,

he drinks till the ice rests

on his upper lip.

WOMAN: "Hello."

She's here.

How did that happen?

Had he taken his eyes

off the door for so long?

WOMAN: "I hope I'm not late?"

"You're not late at all."

As she sat down, he explained the occasion.

Transcript:

She hangs her bag,

pampered scarlet leather

over the back of her chair

and skips into the seat.

WOMAN: "How long has it been? Ten years?

No, it can't be that."

"Have some wine.

I'm afraid it...

hasn't really had time."

He pours into the two glasses,

measuring by ear identical notes.

"What's the toast?"

"Happy days?"

"Happy days" it is.

Rims meet and clink,

swaying the cradled liquid.

Dark, sluggish ink.

And they drink.

"Becoming palatable."

"My goodness, hasn't the time flown?" She laughed. "And in all that time, we've been such good friends."

Her hand touched his, in nothing but a friendly gesture, no doubt. "You were always there for me when I needed you."

A waitress arrived with the menu, sizing him up with a smile; he smiled back. Hermione's lips pursed, just a tiny pout, but to him it was as clear a sign as a frown. Something was bothering her.

"Don't you like what's on the menu?"

"Oh, yes, yes, I do."

She made her choice. He made his. The waitress smiled at him again; she was some looker, to be honest. She nodded to Hermione, and went off with their order.

His own smile must have lingered on his face as Hermione studied him critically. "You've become quite a ladies man."

"It was you who bossed me around until I learned how to enjoy life."

"I was obviously more successful than I thought I'd be."

"And I'll always be thankful for it." He smiled, at her this time, full of affection.

Her response was radiant. He couldn't take his eyes off those smiling lips. And her laughing eyes. Her eyes...

It had been those eyes, full of tears, staring into his, that had brought him back to life. She had been the one to go and look for his body, which, technically, had yet to become a corpse and had surprised him greatly. There was one person, at least, who hadn't wanted to leave him there to rot, in the Shrieking Shack, the place of his deepest humiliation, and now, very nearly, of his death.

He'd never forget the spark of realization in those soft, brown eyes. The realization that his own, petrified, eyes, in his petrified body, only looked dead to the casual observer. A casual observer like Potter, who never had been able to look beyond the obvious, beneath the surface. She wasn't Potter, though. She knew the difference. And she'd immediately guessed at his agony since her first words to him were, "I'm looking at you."

Finally. He had tried to convey the message to Potter. Potter, who should have learned the basics of Occlumency from him and who had in the past, unbidden, managed to invade his mind. But his plea, his desperate request to look at him, had only been met with numb indifference. Where was that curiosity, that ever-present urge to stick his nose into affairs that weren't his own, when you needed it? As usual, Potter had failed to do what was expected of him. He had looked at him, all right, but had he seen? No, of course not. As a last resort, he'd had no other choice but to extract the relevant memories—no mean feat, that, while bleeding like a pig and convulsing from the pain to make the boy aware of what he had to do. At least with that he had succeeded. But again, only with her help. She had been the one who'd conjured the flask for his memories. Finally, with his last bit of strength, he had cast the Full Body Bind on himself. And moved no more.

When she came back and looked at him, she saw and understood, and he knew that she had. She released him, and he tried to speak, but he was only able to produce a wet gurgle. She put her finger on her lips, took one glance at his twitching body and put him under the Full Body Bind again. The pain wasn't any less, but at least the spread of the venom would be slowed down. She'd known that mere blood loss couldn't kill a wizard; the venom was another matter, entirely.

He was grateful. It was a chance at survival, and he took it. The moment she had freed him from the Body Bind, she had freed him in more than one sense. He rediscovered life. Or, more precisely, he discovered it for the first time.

She visited him in St. Mungo's. She stood by him in the farce that was his trial at the Ministry. She bossed him into accepting his Order of Merlin, First Class. She made him her confidant, telling him about her happiness to finally have won Weasley's love.

He danced at her wedding. They settled into a routine of meeting once a week to discover what having fun in times of peace was all about. Weasley went to Quidditch practice; they ventured into the Muggle world, watching films or plays, attending concerts and visiting museums. They went for drinks and, on occasion, had dinner together.

He knew what she liked, what pleased her and what worried her.

She knew what triggered his anger and his mirth. She had become an expert at making him laugh.

When he started to date, she cheered him on.

When she was pregnant with her daughter, he was allowed to feel the baby move in her belly and, reluctantly, shared her fascination with the growing life.

He encouraged her to advance her career, the baby notwithstanding. He even babysat when she decided that she and Weasley needed some couple time.

She complimented him on his new-found reputation as an unrivalled lover, of always being in demand.

He comforted her when she was worried about the strain on her marriage that her success at work seemed to have caused. Weasley had turned out to be the kind of father who was fun during the good times. Whenever difficult decisions had to be made, obligations had to be met or lines had to be drawn, however, he vanished. Weasley more and more began to resemble his own father, but Hermione was no Molly. She wanted a partner, not an overgrown child. She wanted to be lover, wife and mother, but not matriarch.

When he became chief Auror trainer in defence and tactics, she celebrated with him.

When she became pregnant again, he asked her if she really believed that a child could fix a broken marriage. He held her while she cried. He stood by her when she got divorced. And he agreed to become little Hugo's godfather.

They were best friends.

Transcript:

WOMAN: "This is ground control.

Can you hear me?"

"Loud and clear."

"I'm sorry. My thoughts were taking a wander down memory lane. I was just remembering how we came to be friends."

"Oh? Oh yes, wasn't it wonderful?"

There was her hand again...

Transcript:

He cannot not feel her middle

finger lightly and with calm,

rotatory strokes

massage behind his knuckles,

then her thumb shove into his fist

and nuzzle against his palm.

Just what he doesn't want -

the untimely stirring of what

could become by not so slow degrees

a major bonk.

Not now, please...

"How are your children?"

"They're with their Weasley grandparents. I'll pick them up tomorrow."

So, she was free tonight, he noted.

The waitress came, brought their meals, and gave him another flirtatious smile. As he smiled his reply, a glance at Hermione revealed tiny signs of annoyance again.

Was she jealous? That would be good. And about time. They ate.

"Is something worrying you?" he asked when the silence became deafening.

"No, I was just thinking... That waitress there, she's flirting with you, and I was wondering..."

"Yes?"

She averted her eyes, turning her head away from him.

Transcript:

He'd like to kiss her long neck.

Nibble it.

Nuzzle her jawbone with his nose.

Her eyes swivelled back to him. "You know... she's a Muggle. She can't possibly know about your reputation... er..."

"Maybe I'm just her type?"

"Maybe." She chewed her lip. "And maybe she can't help it. Every woman you meet seems to be irresistibly drawn to you."

"Not every woman. You give me too much credit."

"I've heard stories..." Her cheeks were flushed.

"Have you now?"

"Yes. And in a way, I'm proud of you... Who would have thought..."

"That the greasy git of the dungeons could attract women?"

She laughed. She was allowed to laugh about his past. She was allowed to tease him. She was the only one allowed such liberties.

"Yes, and that you'd have the reputation of shagging like a demon." Her face was beet red, now.

"I always try to give my... best."

"I'm sure you do. Just... how you do it is the puzzle. Are you so different from other men?"

The look she gave him was unreadable. He studied her. Should he be bold? Had the time come?

Transcript:

Sleep-musky kisses that

roused him in the small hours,

peremptory custody of light,

firm limbs,

the polyrhythmic riding

he'll never know again.

Not ever again like that, no. Make-believe wouldn't do any longer. It was time to throw caution to the wind.

"Would you care to find out?"

Eyes widened, cheeks turning pale instead of pink. Breath hitched.

"I can't deny that I'm curious... but what if... I value our friendship so very much. What if we should lose it?"

"We won't let that happen."

"Won't we?"

"We won't."

He hoped that he was right. He poured some more wine.

Transcript:

At rest in the glass,

the wine is rusted purple.

So there exists an affinity,

a strong mutual pull between wine

and tongue.

They are complementary.

They are in love.

The silent tongue calls out,

and the wine,

though inanimate,

will heed the call.

Well, it's a theory.

Lent support when the glass rises

and, this time,

not stopping short,

delivers one lover to the other.

They kiss.

There's a little death,

an insufficient bliss,

but repeatable later.

"What would you like to do now?" he asked after they had left the restaurant.

She looked down and bit her lip. "Coffee at your place, perhaps?"

"Coffee it is."

How odd to see a mature, successful woman, mother of two children, so insecure, almost like a very young girl...

Her hands trembled when he handed her the cup, and yet...

Transcript:

He steals a peep.

Every movement has elegance

and economy, is swift and deft.

The jut of her wrist bone, marvel

of engineering, holds the secret,

and as a connoisseur,

he yearns to inspect it at closer

quarters, by eye and by touch.

But how can he catch it?

Like a butterfly hunter,

he ponders the problem.

"I think I've fallen in love

with your wrist.

I think I've become

a wrist fetishist."

That seemed to break the ice. She laughed.

"I... I'm a bit self-conscious, you know. My figure isn't what it used to be after the two babies. And you, with all those other women..."

"Sweetheart." How odd. The endearment flowed freely from his lips. "If anyone should be worried about sagging tissue, it should be me, not you. You are beautiful, and your figure is lovely. It is you I want to make love to, not merely your body."

Now her smile almost blinded him. "You charmer."

He smirked. She put down her cup, and he leaned towards her...

Transcript:

...and be met halfway

with a soft peck,

smack in the middle of his mouth.

He could do better than that. He knew exactly how to kiss her to make her gasp, and so he did until she did. Her gaze was soft, her eyes glassy. More kissing, then, until she practically tore his clothes off...and her own.

So his plan of skilful, slow, seductive undressing would have to wait for another time. There hopefully would be another time...

When they were both naked, he attacked. Here, too, he knew exactly where to touch and how. Slow strokes down her throat and collarbone. Nibbling and sucking right there. Oh yes, her enthusiastic sighs were encouraging.

Her breasts, such lovely peaks, so sensitive to the touch. He didn't need to ask. A slight tweak here, a soft knead, a slight squeeze there, and her heart was beating faster; he saw the pulse beneath her skin betray her excitement.

His hands wandered downwards. She moaned. Another touch, right there, a twist, a rub, a nudge and she fell apart under his hands.

Her hands were roaming over his body, and he rejoiced in the slightest touch from her. He didn't need any more encouragement. Another touch of his, just where he knew she liked it, and she was gasping, close to the edge again. His eyes sought her permission; it was given, and he finally drove home.

Nothing in the past had prepared him for this. All his refined techniques couldn't have prepared him for this. She looked at him when they joined. A gaze, so full of trust, devotion, lust, and... love? He felt the emotions grow thick between them, almost palpable, just a tiny bit beyond his grasp. Lust. Trust. Love.

Dared he hope?

He moved. He knew exactly how. She screamed. That surprised him; he hadn't known. He liked making her scream. Again. And again.

When exhaustion finally sent them to sleep, she lay diagonally-draped across him, like an award, a medal on a sash. His prize.

In the early morning, they did it again. With just as much passion, but less pathos. Instead, there were soft murmurs and laughter.

"What do I have to do to keep you?" she asked between rounds.

"Just say the word. I'm yours."

"You're mine?"

"I have been for a long time."

"Stay with me, then?"

"Nothing would please me more."

"Do you love me?"

"With all my blackened, wicked heart."

That made her laugh again.

"I love you, too. So much. I didn't know before, but now I do."

He smiled into her eyes. He could put away the potion and the Time Turner. He didn't need those gadgets any more. No more practice runs. No more finding out, by making love to his younger, Polyjuiced self, how she liked to be touched. He had the real thing, now. And he'd do anything to keep it.

Ten years, as friends.

A lifetime, as lovers.

Disclaimer: Nothing belongs to me except for the concept. Characters belong to JKR. Voices belong to the wonderful Emma Thompson and Alan Rickman. The poem 'The Song of Lunch' belongs to Christopher Reid. The film of which I stole these sound bites belongs to the BBC.

The mp3 files are hosted at <http://kiwi6.com/>