

The Morning After

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Ten years after, Severus and Hermione remember their dear friend. Set in the Furry Matchmaking universe.

One-shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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Happy anniversary to the HGSS ship!

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Summary: Hermione and Severus celebrate an anniversary. This is set in the Furry Matchmaking universe.

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"Ten years already," Hermione said while staring at the old carpet she'd laid down in front of the fireplace.

Besides her, Severus, her husband of eight years, silently agreed.

"Do you remember that day?" she asked.

How could he not?

When Severus had woken up that morning ten years ago, he'd been in high spirits, thanks to his reunion with Hermione the day before. His mind busy replaying the delicious events of the previous night and imagining a future that included gold rings and curly-haired toddlers, he went straight to the kitchen to make coffee and thus missed the immobile body in front of the hearth in the living-room. He still didn't see it when he took a cup of the dark, hot drink up to the bedroom. Hermione would love to be woken up with an offering of caffeine, he was sure. He turned out to be right. Kissing the taste of coffee off Hermione's lips was amazing.

A short time later, they went down for a full breakfast. The two lovers were so engrossed in each other that once more the furry little body was ignored.

Only later, their bellies full of bacon and eggs, toast and marmalade, Severus and Hermione noticed Crookshanks near the fireplace. The stiffness of the cat's prone body alerted them that something was wrong. Both wondered how they could have missed it the first—or second—time they had passed through the room.

"Crooks!" Hermione exclaimed.

She rushed to her familiar's dead body and, kneeling, reached out a hand to it.

"Oh, Crooks," she sobbed, hunched over her dear friend.

Severus crouched besides her. The animal had been the cause of his relationship with Hermione, and a companion during his stint in Azkaban. Crookshanks' trust in him

had swayed the opinion of a lot of Hermione's friends in his favour. Gazing at the cat, Severus realised that he hadn't done anything to show him the depth of his gratitude. Crookshanks may just have been a pet in most people's eyes, but he was a true friend for Severus. *I'm sorry*, he thought.

"We didn't even offer him milk or tuna yesterday evening," Hermione wailed. Her grief shook her whole body, and Severus put an arm around her shoulders. "He didn't even have a last meal."

"But he died in his favourite place." Hermione hadn't spent enough time in Spinner's End to know that, but truly, Crookshanks had made the carpet in front of the fireplace *his* place. However, Hermione's distress and his own feeling of loss prevented him from saying more. Instead, he kneeled, too, and tightened his grip on Hermione's shoulders. Tears pricked the corners of his eyes. Before he knew it, they were falling, one by one, leaving a wet trail on his cheeks.

After a while, Hermione's sobs subsided. "We have to bury him. Properly," she said between hiccups.

"Yes. Do you want your friends to be there?"

"I think Harry and Ron. And perhaps Ginny will want to come, too."

"Do you want me to call them?"

"No, thanks. I'll do it."

"As you wish." He kissed her lightly and took Crookshanks' body so that Hermione would be able to Floo-call her friends. "I'll find him a shroud."

She nodded, then turned to the fireplace.

Wrapping the little body in a white sheet that had survived from his parents' time, Severus reflected on the debt he owed the ginger half-Kneazle. When Hermione had shown up with the beast in tow at Hogwarts at the start of her third year, he'd thought he'd never seen such an ugly animal. But Hermione, with her golden heart, had seen through his physical appearance, right into Crookshanks' soul. He was beautiful in her eyes.

She saw right into Severus' soul, too, though she'd needed a bit of help to do that. Help called Crookshanks. "Thank you, little one," Severus said softly as he finished folding the sheet over the body. "I owe you my life and happiness. And Hermione's happiness. I didn't have enough time with you, yet I loved you. I hope that wherever you are, you are in a better world."

He was jolted out of his reminiscence by Hermione's sigh. "I miss you, Crooks." She kneeled at the exact place she'd kneeled ten years ago and put a hand on the carpet. "Have a good afterlife, my friend."

Severus joined his wife on the floor. He didn't say anything, just grabbed her free hand and squeezed it. A brisk knock on the door interrupted their contemplation.

"It must be the removal men," Severus said as he stood up. His knees protested loudly against the move. He held out a hand to help Hermione up.

"Thank you. Moving around is starting to get rather difficult with my big belly," she joked meekly, still a bit teary-eyed after that moment of sombre remembrance.

"Your belly is magnificent." Severus' adoration for his wife and unborn child was unmistakable in both his eyes and his tone. Another knock at the door cut off whatever else he might have said.

"Let's not make them wait. And though I have fond memories of my time in this house, I'm looking forward to living in our new home."

"Indeed." Severus strode to the door and opened it. A man in working garb stood there. He was holding out a bundle. "I found it in front of your door. I suppose it's yours."

In his hands was a ginger kitten.