

Bereave

by Sugaryfine

Severus Snape was on a mission, one he could not delay any longer. Returning hours later into the night, he got into the soft, warm sheets of his marital bed, sighing and thanking the gods for his luck. He was appeased, and the world with him. Or at least that's what he thought. Mistrust, half-truths, infertility and meddling Weasleys. What will Hermione Snape do?

Bitter Lane

Chapter 1 of 4

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A/N: I thank firstly to MaddyTitone who took time out of her busy life to help me shape this story into something decent to read. For some strange and unfortunate reasons, the story could not be posted at the time (that was four year ago!) thus I ignored it to the best of my abilities. Stories, just like plot bunnies, never let you brood in peace for long and this one was not the exception. Now I must thank my kind beta **blue artemis** for her magical review and corrections. Any errors are solely mine.

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Chapter 1: Bitter Lane

A shadow crossed the foggy alley and melted into the mossy sinister structures at the end of Bitter Lane, somewhere north of Old Street. The pop of Apparition was soon replaced by the faint sound of hurried steps that halted from time to time to be sure there was nothing, or for that matter, nobody, pursuing him to the same destination. The cloaked figure pushed open a rusty gate and walked hastily, passing sad door after sad door. They mocked him with the bright colors of the curtains that hung from the asymmetric windows in a vain attempt to cheer the dingy, gods-forgotten place. The man didn't stop until reaching the last, miserable door, which opened almost effortlessly to its latest visitor.

Manicured hands grabbed the dark man by the arm and pulled him roughly into the room. "Get in, come. Someone 'been chasing ya, sweetie. Look!" the woman told the forbidding man, pointing one of her slender fingers toward a window some stories above in the building across the narrow hall. There up, a black ribbon was hanging from what the residents of that particular street called the watchtower.

The man thanked the harlot with a brusque nod. "Take me to her. I must not waste time."

"This way, Sev. No need to rush, she is not going anywhere," the woman replied, leading the way.

Severus Snape was on a mission, one he could not delay any longer as much as the idea of being followed enraged him. Nothing would be so satisfactory as to chase those who dare to spy upon him, and see them cower before his wrath. It would have to be some other time.

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Severus returned hours later to the sanctuary of his home, relieved the night had turned up what he had expected, all thoughts of being followed quite out of his mind. He stripped his clothes off, Scourgified himself once more, *better safe than sorry*, and got into the soft, warm sheets of his marital bed, sighing and thanking the gods for his luck.

He was appeased, and the world with him.

Or at least that's what he thought.

On the other side of the bed laid his wife, faking rhythmic breathing while fighting back bitter tears that were going to come sooner or later. She closed her eyes, forcing herself not to push her husband's arm from her waist.

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"Is there something bothering you, love? Is it your throat again? I will make more Pepperup. I need to go the apothecary today, though. My supplies are somewhat depleted," Severus told his wife softly from across the room.

Hermione had been quiet for the past two weeks, which was rather disquieting in itself. After ten years of marriage, he was used to her sweet laughter, intelligent discussions and sharp retorts. Silence was like the herald of doom, an ailment he must eradicate soon. Perhaps he was becoming somewhat paranoid, *not like Moody if you please*, but he could swear he saw a brief flash in her eyes, only to die the next second *Surely a trick of the mind*. Thinking of, or rather trying to convince himself that it was, an illness, he rose from his seat and walked over to where she was seated to place his hand on her forehead. She shivered instantly at his touch, and he wondered what could it be since her temperature was normal. He couldn't tell if it was influenza or some other bug, but by the look of her face, puffy eyes and red nose, he would better hurry up with his errand and get back to make her fresh Pepperup.

"I will get you something today. It's really quite annoying seeing you going everywhere with that box of paper tissues. Rest," he said with mock annoyance before kissing her head and heading to the door.

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Hermione was left alone in their small but cozy library. It wasn't "til the roof" of books as her friends put it, but it had a respectable collection. Severus and she had decided to read as many books as they could but would only keep and treasure those they considered worthy to pass down to future generations of Snapes. "*Quality not quantity, my pet*," he would say at her enthusiasm whenever looking for books.

That was before. Back then when she was an idealist; when she thought she could change the world, and fix anything, including herself.

Fresh tears run down her cheeks. Oh how much she hated crying! It didn't help her to think at all, and left her a murderous headache instead. Not that thinking had helped her at all during these past two weeks. It made her heart feel nothing else but sore and bitter. She wished she could dispel her fears and pain with a bit "*of foolish wand-waving*." But short of Imperiusing herself, nothing else had worked. And no matter how much she wished for things to be the way she wanted them to, they just never were.

Wishing, like crying, was of no help. She had dreamed of the day when her husband would trust her enough to come to her and be open about his past, about his dreams and nightmares, about so many other things that may seem unimportant to others but meant the world to her. He meant the world to her. And that was why it hurt the more. Severus was the world to her and she was losing him. Or had she already lost him? It was really heartbreaking to hear him so anxious to get away to wherever he was going.

Away from me.

Away with her.

This ugly fear that perhaps he had never been hers was coming back. Just like eight years ago, and exactly two years into their marriage when the Healers told them they were unable to procreate, or rather her. A few days later after the initial shock, he started going out to something or other, leaving her all alone to her grief. Each time being worse than the previous as he ran out of excuses, to finally stop giving them at all, leaving in silence, only to return late at night, tired with that cursed secret smile he thought she didn't notice. Now it was starting again.

"If you are getting me something Severus, why not a heart? A stony little heart that won't bleed to death because of you," she whispered hoarsely as soon as he Apparated away.

A/N 2: I feel I need to remind you dear readers that this story was written four years ago, and I have decided to leave it just like that, so it comes out now as AU. Read and review! That always helps to cheer up my day!

A Kneazle out of its bag.

Chapter 2 of 4

Severus Snape was on a mission, one he could not delay any longer. Returning hours later into the night, he got into the soft, warm sheets of his marital bed, sighing and thanking the gods for his luck. He was appeased, and the world with him. Or at least that's what he thought. Mistrust, half-truths, infertility and meddling Weasleys. What will Hermione Snape do?

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Chapter 2: A Kneazle out of its bag.

"How is she doing?" Severus asked the same harlot that had received him some days ago. She smiled openly, showing her crooked teeth that reminded him of the uneven tiles of the alley.

"Not bad, not bad. Come in, boy," said the woman, watching at the window as she usually did when Severus came to her domain *Strange*. She could have sworn she saw the ribbon hanging from the window. She shook her head. It would be wiser if she left her rum alone or at least until later on when the temperature dropped to bone-breaking cold. With a sigh, she let the man in. Winter was not as fun as it had been when she was younger.

Some minutes later, Severus left, tightening his thick wool cloak some more. Despite it being noon, the day was as bitter as death. He sneered at his own words and the irony of them. He could feel death oozing steadily, almost lethargically from the place. All he could was to relieve the pain, no "stopper death" this time.

"I must go, Sandra. You know how to contact me," he told the woman, who nodded slowly.

"What 'bout da kitten? Can't keep her," added Sandra as an afterthought.

"I will take her when the time comes, but not now, Sandra. Not now," Severus replied softly to the harlot. His guts were in knots. When the time came, he might lose all he had.

He turned on his heels, cloak billowing despite its weight. He was about to place a gloved hand on the gate when he felt a light tug on his cape. By the strength of the tug, or rather, lack of it, he instantly knew who it was and what it wanted. He turned slowly to see big black eyes set on a pale, tearstained face, watching him imploringly.

She had her long black hair tied with a lavender ribbon trimmed with silver and gold. It was a gift he knew she treasured, since he had given it to her some Christmas ago 'to hold the princess's hair.'

"Don't go, please. Don't go. I promise I will be nice, and quiet, and will do all the chores, and will never fight again, but please don't go! You make mum feel better. You make her laugh. Please stay."

The child couldn't continue with her plea as the sobs racked her small, fragile body. Malnutrition made her look like she was younger than she really was, Severus thought. Eight years were by no means a lot, but when someone lived the kind of life she had, it was a wonder she was still living at all.

He pried her hands from his cloak gently. He crouched to so that they were face to face. "I must go now."

"Please stay!" The tears were flowing, making it harder for Severus to go.

"I must," he said to her, tucking a lanky lock of hair from her face tenderly. Not waiting for a reply to his statement, he stood up and Disappeared right there.

"Helen com' ere. He will come, ya'll see!" Sandra called.

The girl nodded and walked back to where her "aunt" was. Maybe, if she were a better child and didn't fight with Pete that much, he would stay. And she had kicked Pete hard today. It was all his fault for calling her names, and *he* always knew if she behaved or not. Maybe next time ... next time she would ask him to take her with him.

.....

"Shushhh," whispered a voice from behind Hermione. The men that were holding her by her arms were glad they had cast a strong *Silencing* charm before she arrived to meet them. There were no words of comfort for their friend. They had tried before and she had all but begged them to follow Severus as *something* had been off for some time.

At first Bill thought it was only Snape being his usual discreet self, exactly as the other times when he had businesses he knew Hermione would disapprove. She would never understand that business was simply that, and that Snape was not a fool to deal with someone and let himself be involved in whatever troubles said business could bring. He should know. He had tried to tell Fleur the same thing about his own dealings with the Goblins, but women always worried excessively. Only this time Hermione was right. The bastard had a lot of explaining to do.

George knew intuitively that there was more than met the eyes. Perhaps it was the war and the previous interactions he had with Severus over the years that he knew there must be a reason for what he was seeing. It was undeniably that the child looked a lot like him and that more than anything was hurting Hermione. He was sure there was hell to pay for Snape whatever his motives were to keep such a secret from Hermione. *Well, nothing more here to analyze.* The Kneazle was out of the bag. He shared a look with his brother and turned on the spot with Hermione still crying on his shoulder.

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There was something in Hermione that wasn't there before. Severus couldn't shake the feeling that it was killing her inside. She was quiet... too quiet. Not that it was rare to see her appear completely absent-minded while she worked on her own theories about the Magical Flow. She was passionate about her work, her life, with him. Still... today she was not there; and it was this emptiness the same one he had felt in his core before she came to his life that scared him the most. He had never been good with words, especially when he was this scared. Had the time come without him noticing it?

"Love?" he called to her, hoping she didn't notice the quavering in his voice.

She remained silent.

"Hermione?" he tried again, this sitting in the ottoman in front of her.

"Love, am I?" Her raspy voice sounded like she had been crying for quite some time, that much he could tell. He braced himself for the storm that was to come. The time had come indeed.

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"I want to see mum. Please, Aunty?" Helen's voice was somewhat desperate. She could feel it. It was cold... cold inside her chest.

"Go play, darling, she needs to sleep. Old Sev told her he will come see ya all later. Go play!" Sandra urged her. The time was coming, and she only hoped Severus Snape would keep his word, oath or no oath.

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"Yes. My love," Severus whispered to Hermione trying hard not to surrender to fear. He could stand to lose anything... anything but her.

"Talk to me, Hermione," he pleaded, kneeling now in front of her, raising a shaking hand to tuck her unruly curls behind her ear.

"DON'T touch me Severus. Just don't!" she seethed.

"Hermione, please. Tell me, love; what is it?" he begged her. Pride be damned.

"How dare you? How. Dare. You. Severus?" She stared at him while breathing deeply. "What is her name, Severus?" she clenched her jaw in a effort to bite back all the hurtful things she wanted to tell him, things that stormed in her chest.

"Hermione... love, I...? What are you on about now?" Severus asked her, somewhat perplexed. He was trying very hard to not let show how much her mistrust affected him. He never cared about what others thought of him. There was nothing they could say that he haven't already heard. Their insipid imagination and dullness only amused him

at best. But to hear her doubt of his loyalty, of his love for her was more that he could stand.

"Then, your other name, Severus. The one you use when you go visit your other family. Or perhaps there is another Mrs. Snape that I'm not aware of." Her voice was so hollow it was making it hard for him to breathe. It was void of emotions, of the love he was so addicted to.

"My other family? Hermione, you are all I have..." He shook his head, praying all deities there were that she could at least give him a chance to explain.

"Do NOT insult my intelligence pretending there is nobody else!" she hissed. "It's humiliating enough see the pity in the eyes of my friends. Humiliating to know they knew how proud I was of you and how I sang to all sundry what a wonderful man you were, how incapable you were of hurting me, Severus Snape," she choked out miserably.

"Listen," he ordered, prying her hands from her ears. "They know nothing! And if they placed you against me, the worse for them!" His own anger rose like molten lava from his soul. "They know NOTHING!" he roared in panic, his face a few inches from hers.

Silence fell between them ominously.

"I know what I saw today. You broke my heart, Severus; and I don't know if you can fix it... if it can be fixed at all." Hermione whispered fiercely. The moment he let her hands go, she Disapparated from him.

"NO!" he roared to the empty space where she had been sitting. The sound reverberated in the windows and through the solitary halls of the house.

A.N.2: Well, it doesn't look nice at all to Severus, but that's how the bunny wanted it written. Keep reading, it only gets better. Oh! Remember to review too, that makes my day better.

SF

A Visit, of sorts.

Chapter 3 of 4

Severus Snape was on a mission, one he could not delay any longer. Returning hours later into the night, he got into the soft, warm sheets of his marital bed, sighing and thanking the gods for his luck. He was appeased, and the world with him. Or at least that's what he thought. Mistrust, half-truths, infertility and meddling Weasleys. What will Hermione Snape do?

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CHAPTER 3: A visit, of sorts.

"NO!" he roared to the empty space where she had been sitting.

The sound reverberated in the windows and through the solitary halls of the house.

The Burrow was as comforting and peaceful as her parents' home. The only reason she didn't go to her mother and father was to avoid the havoc her mother would cause and to prevent heart failure in her dear father. They loved her fiercely, and though Severus had been a respectful son-in-law, they would kill him – literally – if they got word of what he had done to her. Molly was more than livid when she managed to make Hermione tell her what had happened and who had been responsible for Hermione's state. It was not a surprise, then, that all the Weasleys with Harry had convened at once to comfort her and start at the same time a war council; after all, they were her surrogate family in the Wizarding world. She could not expect less than that from them; though sincerely, she didn't want them to cause bodily harm to Severus. Despite all the pain he had caused her, violence was not the answer. Hermione knew pretty well what her husband was capable of. She simply didn't want him and her loving substitute family to end up at St. Mungo's. They could really end up badly injured, if not dead.

It was not only the fact that he had cheated on her that caused her such a pain. It was the fact that he had raised a child with someone else.

She had tried incessantly to get pregnant for the last eight years, inventing spells and creating potions to enhance her probabilities without success. That child was the proof she was a failure: defective, crippled, a woman with a useless womb incapable of the most primal function, depriving her of giving and receiving special love. A love she craved and couldn't have.

All her dear friends had a brood of their own. Their meetings spiraled around their children and how lovely and talented they were, how proud they were of their children's first signs of magic, their first teeth, their first fights, their first toy brooms and wands.

It was not their fault, of course, but she couldn't get past all that was thrown so casually in front of her face: their plans for the future regarding their broods' education, living, and even vacation plans years ahead. Soon she had nothing to say but became the reference book for anything and everything regarding children. She rapidly grew to be every child's 'Auntie 'Mione,' the fairy godmother that produced a funny Patronus they could all chase and whose cookies were the best. And time after time she returned barehanded to her house, emptier than before. She started to go to fewer of their outings and celebrations, blaming their ex-professor for her ostracism. He would, however, comfort her, wrapping his strong arms around her, kissing her thoroughly and telling her that her friends with children were undoubtedly envious he could shag his wife six ways to Sunday without interruption. It made her feel cherished, special, complete, but it never lasted long enough. She would slip from the bed in the middle of the night and go stand naked before the mirror in their bathroom to stare hard and long at her decidedly flat abdomen until Severus came in and fetched her at her choked sobs, rocking her gently in his arms until she fell into a restless slumber.

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Ginevra Potter let out an outraged huff, shaking Hermione out of her reverie and alerting her siblings of an unwanted visitor.

Like the tide, all rushed forward to have their go with the Greasy Git .

"He's mine," Ginny hollered, reaching for the wand in her robe's sleeve.

Bill growled, walking faster toward the kitchen door, ready to hex.

"Me first!" Ron spat while Lavender hung from his arm in a vain attempt to stop him.

"How dare he!" seethed Harry, going from red to white and back to red and about to snap his wand in ire.

George couldn't trust his eyes. Snape was carrying a little girl in his arms propped up on his broad shoulder. Was she asleep or had Snape snatched and Stunned her to use her like a shield? Nobody stopped to ponder this for long; all of them were after his blood.

"Arthur, please stop them," Hermione begged desperately. The magic was crackling the air and soon the hexes would be flying.

The patriarch stood at the door, raising his voice above the rumbling and cursing of his progeny.

"You will not hex him," he warned a second time to the angry mob. "Let him speak. Let him explain himself first," he commanded. "Then, if his explanation is not acceptable, you will duel him honorably." He raised his hands to stop the impending replies. "One at the time. You will not attack him while he has the child with him, not on these grounds. Am I clear?"

"Yes, father," all of them replied as one.

"He may be the biggest bastard alive, but even bastards deserve a chance to speak." Arthur eyes flashed dangerously.

Hermione had seen him angry but never like this before, talking with such command.

Molly stepped outside into the yard to receive the sleeping child into her arms. Arthur took the small parcel from Severus' hands and grabbed his arm. "If you want to live to tell the tale, stay close to me," whispered the older man.

Severus thanked him sincerely.

"Don't thank me," Arthur snapped. "Thank Hermione for saving your hide... for now."

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Molly set out mugs on the table for a bit of tea. No one was giving them a glance, much less drinking the steamy liquid, preferring instead to shoot daggers at the Bat-That-Survived-Nagini-Only-To-Be-Killed-Today.

Hermione remained silent, seated in a chair and looking at her hands laced in her lap, surrounded by all the Weasley males, Arthur performing the role of mediator. Severus was not allowed to speak with his wife alone, and his options were narrowed to two: talk to her in front of all of them, or leave on the spot.

"Hermione, love..." All men on the room frowned at the endearment, except for Arthur, who only shifted lightly in his seat.

"Hermione...", Severus started again.

"Out with it, Snape," spat Harry. "We don't have all day to listen to you." The others nodded approvingly.

Severus clenched and relaxed his jaw a few times. They weren't best friends and never would be, but it was neither the time nor the place to give Potter a piece of his mind.

"I came from a funeral. My sister's funeral," he replied.

A.N.2: I know! Don't set me on fire... **The** explanation and the end of this little story coming next. I was distracted and this crazy plot bunny bit me, I swear!

Read and review! It always helps!

SF

Holding you.

Chapter 4 of 4

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CHAPTER 4

"I came from a funeral. My sister's funeral," he said.

"Bullshit," and other expletives were spat with different degrees of rage and hostility.

Severus' knuckles were getting whiter by the second. "My Muggle half-sister," he continued, regardless of the stares and *sotto voce* comments about the "tripe" he was making up. He sipped tea to warm his blood before he gave up all he had in this life. "My father hired the newest prostitute available at the whorehouse months before I was conceived." The glares he received clearly told him that 'like father, like son' was a shared sentiment.

"She gave him a child...a girl. Her mother named her Vivienne." He cleared his throat, making an effort to tell something so private and painful as quickly and concisely as

he could. "The child of a prostitute stays with her mother, if it manages to survive its delivery, that is. The girls became prostitutes, and the boys burglars or mine workers. Vivienne didn't have a choice in her upbringing and became a prostitute just like her mother." Severus ogled the child that rested on the conjured cot at his left, swallowing the lump on his throat. "Sandra, the woman you saw me with, Hermione... she is a witch. A harlot yes, but a witch. I believe she somehow learned my father's last name and related him with me from my days as Death Eater. Snape, after all, is not a widespread name." Snape then muttered something intelligible under his breath.

"Speak louder, Mr. Snape, we can't hear you," urged Bill, flashing dangerous glances toward him.

"I said we Snapes were murdered almost to extinction for being Jews," he retorted through clenched teeth. The murmurs died immediately.

"Don't play your sympathies with us, Mr. Snape. Keep the drama to a minimum, if you please," responded Percy, ever the git.

"I am NOT here digging out my family's past to turn it into a circus show for you to mock it, you insolent prat!" Severus snapped at the redhead. Nobody reacted to his insult. Percy may have come to terms with his family, but he was still the same pompous Ministry poser.

"My father was a miller, a Jewish miller who couldn't stand the fact he had married a witch. He punished and hurt my mother in all possible ways. Physically, verbally, emotionally. It was only by luck that he fathered one child besides me, otherwise my mother would have died from heartbreak in a sea of black haired, harlots' children," Severus hurried to explain before there were more interruptions.

My mother saw Vivienne a Saturday near the synagogue where my father used to go. She had the skin, nose, eyes, hair... every fucking Snape trait." He waved his hand around his face to emphasize his words.

Hermione felt that it was sad she had learned about it this way, him telling her this in front of so many. She had tried innumerable times to make him talk about his family, but he always fought to keep it to himself. He was baring his soul to her, and she could tell each word was true, and each word was hurting him. More so at telling her this in front of so many.

"I found my mother in the garden. She... she had bled to death. I was only ten when she... when she was gone. I found out in her old diary why, a few days after meeting Vivienne. I had no choice but to read that blasted diary, Hermione. Too much pain within those miserable pages... nothing I wanted to share with anyone, much less with you, the only good thing in my life" His strangled voice was almost foreign to him. "I would never do that to you, Hermione... ever." He was now looking at her, tears rolling freely down his pale cheeks, his eyes open to her and anybody else's scrutiny. He had nothing to hide; it all was there, displayed before her to see, his regret for keeping this to himself, and his sorrow for causing her such a pain. Fuck! If he could, he would encourage her to use Legillimency on him and allow her to see every damned piece of memory he had hidden in the back of his mind for so long, were he able to remain composed enough and not break down as he was sure he would. After a long minute he continued; he had to tell them tell her ... all he had come to tell, and then leave if she decided he was not worthy of her trust and love anymore.

"Sandra contacted me when Vivienne was in labor eight years ago. Helen was so small and sick she would have never survived had I not taken care of them both. You thought I was cheating on you and for that I slept on the couch for two months. I couldn't tell you what I was doing then. Vivienne was a reminder of my mother's... she was a past I didn't want to talk about." His voice was barely above a whisper.

"Vivienne died yesterday ... of cancer, and I promised her a long time ago that I would care for her child if something ever happened to her. Helen, she is brilliant and a magical child besides. I cannot... I will not let her rot in that blasted whorehouse. I'm not my father." Severus was twisting his traveling cloak on his fists.

Hermione had been crying silently since finding out how his mother had died. Now she understood his bitterness, his resentment and insecurities; how much he had despised himself and had cursed his father. Her heart went out to her husband for disclosing such a tragic childhood. She could see in his eyes his longing for her, for a family, and his fierce resolution to right all the wrong his father had done.

"I'm sorry, Hermione. I'm sorry I broke your heart... I'm sorry I didn't tell you before," Severus said to her, placing all he felt for her into his apology, praying to any existing deity she would forgive him.

Harry stood and grabbed her wrist before she could launch herself to her husband's arms.

"How do we know this is not a sham, that you are not mourning your mistress, and that this child is not yours?" As much as it pained Harry to say these things he knew would hurt Hermione, he had to ask. He had to know Snape was not trying to win his friend back, letting her believe something else and find out later on that he had another mistress and other children, causing her to, gods forbid, kill herself like Eileen Snape had out of grief.

"Please, Harry, let me go to him," Hermione pleaded desperately.

"How?" demanded Harry again, tightening his grip on Hermione as she struggled with him.

"Unhand my wife this instant, Potter." Severus was up in an instant, ready to hurt his nemesis' son with his bare hands; much had been taken away from him because of a Potter, and Severus Snape was not about to let that happen again.

Wands were straightened toward him at once in the blink of an eye.

"Hell! All I want to know is if you are telling the truth. I don't want to be the one to find my best friend bleeding in the garden. For fuck's sake, just tell us!" yelled Harry.

Severus saw and understood the fear in those green eyes. It was the same fear that had gripped his heart the moment his wife Disappeared, leaving him to wallow in it. Deciding it was better to dispel any residual doubt, he straightened his robes, slowly removing his wand from its sheath and placing its tip over his heart. He solemnly said, "I swear this is the truth. Death be upon me this instant if not." A whirl of magic surged from the floor and spiraled around him, causing his black robes to ripple, only to disappear with a faint glimmer seconds later.

"Drama queen," mumbled Ron, who had secretly harbored the idea of dueling his ex-professor. Everyone present struggled mightily to hide their chuckling at Ron's comment, lifting the tension and changing the mood somewhat.

Harry finally let go Hermione from his vise grip, releasing a breath he didn't know he had been holding all this time.

Finally reunited, Severus and Hermione stood there in the middle of the kitchen, sobbing, kissing, holding each other like there was no tomorrow for them.

A sleepy voice called out to him. "Sevy, where are we? And who are they?"

"We are at the Burrow, pumpkin. And they are friends," Severus replied softly, scooping the child up in one arm and going back to hold his wife tighter with the other, relishing in the shocked expression on everyone's faces at being called this way and actually not scowling or hexing the offender. He was convinced they would never look at him as they used to; and at this point, he really didn't care. The only thing that mattered to him was the world he held in his arms. His family.

Finite...

Final A/N:

Well, here you have it. You will find some things odd but remember that this was written four years ago.

I thank you all for reading this story, for reviewing, and for liking it enough to include it within your favorites. And I do really hope this last part was of your liking.

Again reviews, comments or just a smiling face is welcomed.

Till later,

SF