

# And You're the One to Blame

*by WaterSinger*

One-shot fluff of Severus and Hermione. Post HBP. Characters are slightly OOC

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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Disclaimer: The world and characters are all JKR's. I just like to play.

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### ***And you're the one to blame...***

A good man would never blame another for what he has become. In that respect, I suppose it is just as well that I have never been considered a good man. Cold as it may sound, I blame you for whom and what I am now. Without your intervention, I would have been content with death or life in solitude. Instead, I sit, contemplating what might have been.

It must have started when you tracked me down that first time. I had run away from the world for understandable reasons. What I did not expect was for the world to come running right after me. It was even more surprising that you were the one who came to find me. You, the vaunted friend of the Brat-Who-Lived. But what shocked me the most was that you found me to give me your support and offer to help me as much as you could. You did not even want to ask me why I had done what I did. No, all you wanted was to help.

I rebuffed you that first time, of course. I was suspicious of your motives, of your aims. I sent you away the second time out of pride. The third time you came, however, I invited you inside my apartment. If you were surprised to find me living as a Muggle, you made no mention of it. I suspect you'd already figured out how I was keeping the Ministry from finding me.

I led you into the lounge that day and asked you if you would like a cup of tea. You accepted the offer but hardly had you had the cup in your hand that you set it down.

"You must have done it for a reason," you said to me, "so how do I prove it?"

That was the beginning of it all. You would come to visit once a week, and we would converse, each seeking to further our own ends. For you, it was proving me innocent of outright murder; for me, it was keeping you and your friends informed.

It was because of our association that, when the Dark Lord informed his faithful followers of the imminent attack on Hogwarts, I felt no remorse in passing the information on. When you received it, your eyes tightened and your lips thinned. Turning to leave, you looked so ready for war that I could not restrain myself.

"Hermione!" I said, reaching out to grasp one of your hands. "I know that it is foolish to say this, but be careful. I have come to enjoy our time spent together and would like to see you again once the war is finished." You looked at me for a moment before leaning down to kiss my cheek.

"I will be as careful as I can, Severus," you told me as you departed. I had my doubts as to the truth of that statement but kept them to myself. After all, you were no longer my student nor a child. I had to let you do as you saw fit.

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The day of the last battle dawned, not grey and sombre, as I had expected, but bright and sunny and cheerful, as though to mock the importance of our war. I prepared myself, both mentally and physically, for what I knew was to come. I did not expect to survive the day, though I could not say whether I would fall at the hands of the Light or the Dark. Both would see me as a traitor by the end of the battle, so I couldn't see any difference in the two ends.

I damned Albus for his foolish plan then, and not for the first time. The theory behind the plan was sound, yeas, and in the end, it had worked. His death had put him out of his pain. It had also spurred both Potter and Voldemort into moving faster to accomplish their respective goals sooner. And while Potter had you to make sure that he had everything in order and that every possibility was covered, Voldemort didn't and thus made mistakes in his hurry. That part worked perfectly. What didn't work was the plan to secure my future. Potter, being the fool that he always was, failed to notice the hidden messages that night. No one had yet looked at the Pensieve Albus had left detailing our plans. And so, I prepared to die.

It was not to be. According to the plan we had set up, I ensured that Voldemort was distracted for just long enough for Potter to cast the spell that sucked the last bit of the Dark Lord's soul into his wand. Then, Weasley set both wands on fire with a quick Incendio. As the three of you had destroyed all of Voldemort's Horcruxes, that single most simple spell was the end of him. As both wands burnt, I felt pain sear through my left arm and, pulling up my sleeve quickly, looked down to see my Dark Mark turn black and then fade, along with the pain, until it was no more than a faint outline.

Across the battlefield came varied screams of anguish and moans of despair. Death Eaters dropped their wands in surprise and clutched their left forearms or fell to their knees, turning their faces to the sky. A very select few began casting hexes and curses with renewed vigour, as though they were trying to take as many as they could in retribution for their master's defeat. But it was of little use. The war was over, and the Light had won.

I stood in shock in the middle of the grounds, watching as, all around me, the last remaining Death Eaters were being subdued and taken into custody. I realized abruptly that no one was coming to attempt to subdue me and glanced around in amazement. You must have convinced them that I was good for, though no one approached to thank me, they didn't seem to want to kill me. You'd probably found Albus's Pensieve.

I looked around again, trying to locate you so that I could express the proper gratitude and found you kneeling on the ground next to the prone form of the Boy-Who-Lived. This time, however, it appeared that he hadn't lived. I took one step toward you then stopped as Weasley came flying over to you. The two of you exchanged words, and your eyes began to fill with tears. I took another involuntary step towards you but, before I could get any closer, you stood and threw yourself into the young man's arms. The red of anger clouded my vision and, before I realized what I was doing, I whirled about and walked away. I had wanted to be the one to comfort and console you, I seethed. Instead, you chose the embrace of a Weasley. That was an offence I did not think I could forgive.

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The final battle happened five days ago. It has been five days since I saw you. Five days since you turned to Ronald Weasley instead of me. Instead of the joy I should be feeling at my solitude and freedom, I find myself missing you. Missing our conversations, missing your company. You have corrupted what should have been triumph and made it less than that. And so I have retreated here, to my little Muggle apartment, where I am somewhat removed from you.

A crash in the kitchen alerts me to the presence of an intruder, and I creep as quietly as a predator to the door of my bedroom and then out into the hall. I pause at the door to the kitchen and then stealthily peer inside. My demeanour changes instantaneously, softening for a second then hardening again.

"Granger!" I bark, storming into the kitchen full of righteous indignation. You jump in surprise but regain your composure quickly. I am impressed; I am intimidating when upset.

"It's been Hermione for some months now, Severus," you reply softly, your eyes glistening. I struggle to keep a hold on my anger but lose, and my next words come out sounding softer than I intend for them to.

"Why are you here, Hermione?" I ask. The glistening in your eyes becomes tears, and you collapse onto the kitchen stool. You bury your face in your hands and your shoulders heave in silent sobs. Again, I find myself moving towards you. This time, however, nothing stops me from kneeling before you and taking you into my arms. Long minutes pass before you have calmed enough to speak.

"I thought you were dead, Severus!" you exclaim wetly. Reaching into a pocket, I produce my handkerchief and hand it to you. "You weren't there after the battle," you continue, "and you weren't with the captured Death Eaters. It was only when I asked someone who had seen you Disapparate if they knew what had happened to you that I found out that you were alive! It was horrible! For the past four days, I thought I'd lost you too!" You devolve again into tears and I am left to cradle you again.

"Why should you care if I am alive or dead?" I ask when I get the chance. "I have served my purpose as informant. Surely your worries would be better used on Mr Weasley?"

"I care because you are my friend, and I care for you!" you retort hotly. "I would care for you even if you hadn't been our informant. And as for worrying about Ron... why should I? He wasn't the one I thought was dead. And it's not like I could ever care for him as more than a friend anyways! Not like..." you trail off and pale from the brilliant blaze of anger to a blush of embarrassment.

"Not like whom, Hermione?" I prompt, lifting your chin to look into your eyes.

"You," you whisper, your eyes reflecting both hope and sadness. It is clear to me that you believe I will turn you down or otherwise hurt you, as others obviously have, intimidated by your intelligence and spirit. And by your bossy nature, no doubt, though I know **that**, at least, will mellow with age.

"Why?" I ask, bringing a spark of surprise to your eyes.

"Because I can talk to you and not feel like there's something wrong with what I find interesting. Because you're not afraid of the person I really am or of my intelligence. Because I can't just push you around. Because you can actually be somewhat nice when you're not trying to keep the class of us from blowing up the whole room. Don't get me wrong, Severus, I know that you aren't an overly affectionate or nice person. You're sarcastic, a perfectionist and very closed-up around others. You aren't perfect by any stretch of the imagination. Then again, neither am I. What I do know is that you're one of the few people I actually feel comfortable around and the only one who isn't like a sibling or parent to me." You stop speaking suddenly and glance at me worriedly. I shut my mouth with a snap and shake my head slightly to regain my senses.

"Well, Hermione," I begin, and then pause as I realize that I can't think of an appropriate response. "That was... the **oddest** declaration I've heard in quite some time." I watch as the hope in your eyes turns to sadness and kick myself mentally. I cast my thoughts about quickly in an effort to find something...**anything**...to show how I feel.

Suddenly, you are leaning towards me or me towards you. Our lips brush, and my whole self snaps back to the here and now of this moment. I kiss you more firmly, revelling in the feelings of rightness and happiness that are thrumming through me.

"Perhaps we can see to arranging something between us," I murmur against your lips. I am rewarded by a gentle laugh that turns to a moan as I press forward to capture your mouth more fully.

Yes, I believe I can safely say that you are the reason I have become what and who I am now. But as I pull your body to mine, I can only think that that is not such a bad thing as it may sound.

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A/N; Yes, they're both a little OOC. I may try to write another one-shot from Hermione's point of view where they both stay more in character but that will be a while. Still, you can assume that something developed during those conversations if it will make you feel a bit better. That's what I had thought when I was writing it, anyways, and it makes their thoughts and actions a bit more excusable.