Marks of a Hero

by savine_snape

Severus' growing despair means that he sees stains and marks against him everywhere. Can Hermione help him see things in a new light? Written for the 'Stains' prompt on GS100.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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His ears rang with the sound of Bella's triumphant cat-calls and the deafening sound of his own blood as it raced through arteries, veins and capillaries.

Grabbing his charge, he dragged Draco down the stairs of the Astronomy Tower, away from the scene of his greatest betrayal.

His heart leapt into his mouth when he locked eyes briefly with Hermione, her disbelief and hurt painfully clear.

He peered down at his hands, there were no visible stains, but he knew without doubt that another blot was placed against him.

Pulling Draco closer towards him, Severus Apparated from the castle.

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He forced Draco to sit in a battered wing-backed chair that sat like a sentinel on one side of the fire.

Draco was too dazed to notice the coffee stains and cigarette burns that peppered the chair's arms.

Needing something strong to calm his nerves, Severus stumbled into the filthy kitchen. Retrieving a bottle of Ogden's from one cupboard, he frantically searched the others for a relatively clean mug.

He poured a generous measure, closing his eyes as he knocked it back.

Severus groaned as he saw Hermione's face: the betrayal in her beautiful eyes cut him to the core.

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He was relieved when she didn't return the following September. At least he wouldn't have to add the loss of Hermione to the growing stains that surely marked his life. He

prayed each night, to whomever would listen, that she would be safe.

He saw each child the Carrows harmed as another mark against him.

Each new scar was a testament to how much further into the realms of hell he was sinking.

Then it was upon them, the final battle.

He answered the call of his demented Dark Master and faced death with all the dignity he could muster.

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He felt the blood burble in his throat as he gasped for air. His hand instinctively rose to his neck, his fingers filling the gaping wound. It took mere moments for them to become sticky with his own blood.

He almost smiled as he looked at his blood smeared hands; finally, he could see the blood of those he'd failed.

As he drifted between life and death, he heard her soft voice as she Conjured a flask to hold his memories.

"Look at me!" he gasped.

His heart soared as he saw Hermione's reflection in Potter's glasses.

She was alive!

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She sat beside his bed, nursing him, watching him, giving him the potions that would ultimately heal him.

Hermione didn't see Severus's scars as stains against him.

She saw them as a testament to the hero he was, the hero he'd been since Lily's death.

Slowly, he healed, but he still saw the blood of those who he'd failed on his hands.

Patiently, she waited.

Gradually, Severus began to see things clearly.

Hermione loved him unconditionally.

She saw beyond the masquerade of the evil Potions master.

Little by little, he forgot the stains as her love healed his fractured soul.

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Many thanks, as always, go out to Scoffy for taking my work and adding that certain little extra something to really make it sparkle. Babe, you rock my fanfic writing world.