

Visiting Hours

by TeddyRadiator

This was originally written for the GrangerSnape100 challenge "Behind Closed Doors".

Another Sunday....

Chapter 1 of 1

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Author's Note: Nothing you recognise is mine. I make no money from this.

This drabble series is dedicated to my super beta, stgulik, who is, quite simply, extraordinary in every way. This was originally written for the GrangerSnape100 challenge "Behind Closed Doors".

It is for places like this the word 'hopeless' was created. Black, jagged, rising out of the sea like a defiant finger at the sky, its only companion a lump of stone fashioned into a prison: Azkaban.

Every Sunday is the same now. They have their routine, just as before. They sit, knee to knee, holding hands. Man and woman; wizard and witch; prisoner and visitor.

Every Sunday they lie to each other, and put on their bravest faces. Severus is immaculately dressed; Hermione is pretty in Slytherin green. They could be going to a Ministry function. They are frightened.

The conversation has become part of their Sunday routine as well. Hermione, eyes bright with false happiness, asks, "Are you well? Are you eating properly? Is your cold better?"

Severus shrugs. "As well as can be expected, I suppose, given the circumstances." He looks down at his gaunt frame, and offers a brave little smile. "I was never a huge eater, so..." They both nod, and hold each other's hand a little tighter, as they find less and less in common to talk about as time has passed.

The grip, like the silence, becomes more painful with each passing week.

He knows she is trying her best to inject some normality into their weekly visit, and it touches him. They talk about books they've read. They make plans, as if their separation is voluntary, and temporary. Perhaps it is. She is a thorough little witch; together they are rapidly exhausting every avenue of help available to them.

It has been a long week. Aren't they all? He thinks of her at night, and weeps, cursing his weakness for her body, her love for him. He torments himself with thoughts of her. He is jealous, and fearful, and grasping and desperate.

He looks at his pretty wife. In spite of everything, he knows soon he will not be able to stop himself. He is painfully hard now, and has been since the moment the doors of

the prison cell closed behind them. She knows it too, and he thanks the gods that she still wants it, as well.

He wants to be gentle. He wants to be able to give her a choice in the matter, but seeing her here every Sunday, fresh and smelling of jasmine and love, and he becomes an animal, caught in a shameful tide of lust.

They barely have time to rise until they are fused together, kissing feverishly, allowing their hunger for one another to release itself in the dank air. Passion and silence and absence have negated any need for seduction and finesse, and he is thankful that Hermione accepts it as such. More so, in fact, than he.

He is pushing her toward the now-familiar, less than clean bed in the corner. He knows some twisted prick is watching, but he cannot stop. It has been a week; a long, bitter, mind-numbing week of boredom with alternating bouts of anger, fear and hopelessness.

He has given up a hundred times a day, and the only thing keeping his heart beating is this warm, willing witch he is pushing down on the lumpy mattress. Hermione croons comfort to him, pulling up her Slytherin green robe, pushing her knickers aside.

Together, they fumble with the placket of his trousers and he whimpers as her soft hand closes around his cock and guides it home. She is wet for him, as she is every week, and he marvels at this as well. They make the same noise as he sinks deeply into her waiting, welcoming body.

He is so grateful he barely registers her soft kisses on his face, her gentle voice urging him harder, faster.

This time, he promises himself, he will be slow, and make sure that his gratification comes after hers. She is so generous and understanding, and loves him so; she deserves it. But as always, the moment her wet, sweet petals melt around his raging erection, he cannot stop. Giving over to the hot, desperate pleasure, he takes her too swiftly, fucking her with heedless abandon; head flung back, eyes closed, gasping silently, his face a twisted mask of painful pleasure.

The noises she makes urge him on; Severus forgets that they are in a prison cell; that the sick fucks that pass for prison guards are watching, making leering bets on how long the poor bastard will last.

He usually comes quickly, his cries of pleasure ringing around the room, reaching beneath to frantically finger her to bring her to completion. This time, in spite of the toe-curling pleasure, he feels her climax building, and she cries out his name, and as her beautiful body clenches and throbs around him, he follows her, his orgasm a painful, precious, terrible thing.

The fact he has lasted long enough tells him two things: one, his masturbation before visiting hours does ensure greater longevity, and two, he is getting used to their separation. Both facts make him want to weep. As every week, in that last moment, he wishes he could die, and that she could die too, and they wouldn't have to be apart until next Sunday.

He comes back to himself, holding her, their tears mingling. "Why does it hurt so much?" she sobs, holding him, breaking his heart again. "How can something so beautiful hurt so much when it's over?"

He holds his strong, courageous and beautiful wife, his brave Gryffindor girl, and rocks her against his body. He doesn't know the answer to her question any more than exactly what has brought them here, into this prison cell.

Gradually, reluctantly, they rise, and dry one another's tears. They tidy their clothes, and resume their positions, knee to knee, forehead to forehead. This is the time they talk of the future. She has spoken to the solicitor. He has hopes. The Ministry, bogged down in bureaucratic red tape, as all Ministries are, is slow to respond, but possibly next week...

Severus becomes agitated. Soon the chime will sound. He wastes his precious time with her, dreading the moment when visiting hours will end.

He takes her head in his hands and kisses her tenderly, passionately. "I still have hope. Please don't give up."

She holds his wrists in her tiny hands and smiles her bright, brave smile. "You'd better not give up. You have to stay healthy. This isn't forever." He nods, trying to believe it. He believes it less with every passing day.

The chime sounds and they stand and quickly step apart. They have learned their lesson well.

Suddenly, all the things he has thought about telling her all week come to the forefront of his mind, things he vows he will mention, and each week, he must store back until the next. There will be a next Sunday for a long time.

A prison guard approaches the cell, and Hermione turns to her husband and hugs him. It is a friendly, almost sisterly hug. Her bright façade cracks slightly. "Well, love, I guess it's time." She looks up into his careworn face. "Please don't give up. Your hope is the only thing keeping me upright some days."

Severus wants to beg and plead for more time, but years of dignified silence are too well ingrained, and he nods, fighting tears. "I love you, precious."

"I love you, Severus." She nods, and he can see her control going. His heart breaks a little more. One day it will fly apart, and he can't decide whether to be sad or grateful.

The guard, a former student, respectfully nods at Hermione, and turns to Severus. "I'm sorry, Mr. Snape. Visiting hours are over for the week." He says the same little speech each week. Severus hears it in his dreams.

Equally polite, he nods. "Of course, Mr. Thoroughcroft. Thank you."

Severus and Hermione look at one another. Leaving is the worst. Leaving kills him a little more day after day. He is certain leaving his wife behind in Azkaban will be the cause of his death.

The precious little girl he married tries to be brave, and fails. She steps back, and gestures to the door, almost impatiently, angrily. "Go, now," she whispers, tears streaming down her face. "Go, while I can stand it."

He turns and leaves the cell, his head held high, and walks swiftly down the corridor.

He concentrates on the ring of his boots on the stone floor.

She has done well today. The first Sunday, it started the moment he left the cell; he had to be forcibly removed from the building. Now, he reaches the end of the corridor, just before he leaves her line of sight.

"Severus!" Her wails and pleas tear large, black jagged lumps from his heart, as large and imposing as the island he is standing on.

He clinches his fists, and forces himself not to put his hands over his ears to shut out her voice.

Until next Sunday.