

A Revelation Beyond Words

by stgulik

Hermione is moments away from the altar when she receives a visit from Severus Snape. Submitted to the GS100 "Married in the Morning" challenge.

A drabble in seven parts

Chapter 1 of 1

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Thank you to Teddyradiator, alpha extraordinaire!

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Hermione stood and shivered in the chapel, alone. Her wedding dress was scant insulation against the chill. Warming charms would rust the antique lace, they'd said, but did the sanctuary have to be kept so cold? Hadn't these Purebloods ever heard of central heating?

No, of course they hadn't. And soon, she would leave that world forever.

She pressed her brow against a stained glass window and stared out at the red-yellow-blue churchyard. Soon the guests would begin to arrive, red-yellow-blue ...

Someone stepped near, and she turned. At the sight of Severus Snape, her heart lurched in her chest.

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"Wh-what are you doing here?" Her voice sounded weak to her ears.

"I came to see the unholy deed done, of course," he replied.

"You weren't invited."

He slouched against a pillar. "An oversight, surely. Besides, who better to give the bride away than her Master?"

Her temper flared, and she welcomed the anger that warmed her blood. "I'm not your apprentice anymore."

"Your leaving was not my idea. It was *you* who dissolved our working association."

She stared at the stone floor. "*I couldn't stay. And you know why.*"

"You don't know my mind, Granger."

"No, indeed," she whispered.

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"What made you behave so recklessly, *Apprentice*? You left school in the dead of night, tore your contract to shreds, got engaged to *thissop*, and only then did I realize you broke my ..."

Miserably waiting for him to continue, Hermione's downturned eyes fell upon the sleeves of his austere black robes. The buttons, usually so meticulously fastened, were nearly all undone, as though he had dressed in a hurry. And his inner robes were also misbuttoned.

Knowing him as she did, it was a revelation beyond words.

"Go on, Severus," she prompted shrewdly. "What exactly did I break?"

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This time his eyes slid away. She saw him take a breath and she extended an imploring hand.

He laughed bitterly. "Why do you still reach for me after everything I said that night?"

"I told you how I feel. You don't return my feelings, but they will never change. I couldn't remain your apprentice when you ..."

He stepped toward her. "I know I must have hurt you, but why did you have to leave?"

"Because I love you!" she cried. "I have to try to move on because you don't love me back!"

"But I *do*."

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The dam seemed to break then. "Hermione, I have loved you utterly, ferociously, from the moment you walked back into my wretched life. But you were my apprentice! It would have placed you in an untenable position, don't you see?" He raked fingers through his hair. "Then that night, I told myself you were just a subordinate who fancied her boss, and I could hardly keep my feelings inside. I wanted to tell you then, but I couldn't."

"Oh, Severus."

He sighed. "I went mad when you left. If you won't come back to me, then I have nothing."

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She moved nearer, tears streaming unchecked down her face. "Please believe I love you, beyond Master and Apprentice."

He took her gently into his arms. "My heart belongs to you, my Hermione. I came here to see if you would claim it."

She reached up on tiptoes and their lips met. She could feel him tremble, and she let loose and sobbed in relief. He had become part of her—stubbornness, misplaced honor, misbuttoned sleeves and all, and he always would be, even if he had never come to find her this morning, even if she had forced herself to—

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A throat cleared. They turned their heads and beheld a surprised wedding party.

"What is the meaning of this?" sputtered the groom. "Hermione?"

"Cal, I'm sorry, I can't marry you. I'm in love with someone else." She nodded ruefully at the man she was still draped around. "~~With~~*this* someone, in fact. I hope you'll forgive me."

"What about my grandmother's dress?" demanded Cal.

She blinked. "I'll go and change at once."

"And I'll help," added Severus. Hermione laughed and kissed him again, just because she could.

"And then where shall we go?" she asked.

"Anywhere," he murmured. "I'm yours."

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Comments and reviews are appreciated, as always.