

In The Rain

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Chapter 1 of 1

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"Dew-stained grass. Useful in mind-sharpening potions and elementary steps in creating the *Visio Amore*."

Severus paused and looked around. "Who can tell me what the *Visio Amore* is used for?"

A third-year Gryffindor eagerly raised her hand, and he absentmindedly called on her.

Halfway through her increasingly lengthy answer, his breath caught.

That look.

She handed him the parchment, smiling smugly as he unrolled it.

"Ashwinder eggs. They are volatile when mixed with minced blueroot."

He grumbled and, after reading the few short paragraphs, acknowledged that she was right.

Hermione sat down next to him. "So you believe me now?" she asked impishly.

He attempted to sneer he failed miserably, and she knew he was proud of her. He could see the triumphant gleam she always held in her eye when she was able to prove her knowledge. It made her sparkle, illuminating her face and making it glow.

He glared at the girl she faltered, visibly shrinking away from his gaze.

Hermione would never have done that he thought with a bitter smirk.

The class shifted uneasily, wary of their professor's eerie mood.

Severus snapped back to attention and waved his hand over the chalk. "Page 225," he said as the piece of chalk began writing on the board behind him.

As the students began turning the pages of their books, Severus wearily sank into his chair and released a silent sigh.

He was too tired to grade any essays, too irritated to do anything else.

Looking up, he froze, staring at the third-year whose name he couldn't even remember.

Frowning in confusion, she was biting her lip.

"Stop it."

She jumped, startled, and glared. "Don't scare me like that."

"Don't bite your lip like that."

"Why not?" she challenged. "It's my lip."

His eyes dropped to her lips, slightly pushed out in her indignation. After lingering there for a moment, his eyes caught hers.

They stared at each other in silence until Severus cleared his throat and turned away. "Do whatever you wish it's not my concern."

She caught his arm and tugged him back so that he was looking at her. Their faces were inches away when she spoke.

"I want it to be your concern."

He stood, transfixed, staring at her, at her eyes, her lips.

Before either of them knew it, their lips were pressed together, softly, harshly, gently, forcefully.

Passionately.

Severus jerked back in his seat, stunned by the powerful memory of her.

He was shaking he needed them out, *now*. Standing abruptly, all eyes turned to him.

"Class dismissed," he said, a dangerous edge to his voice.

They immediately packed their things and left, unwilling to try Snape's patience.

He stood at the front of the empty room, blind to what was around him.

"No!" She grabbed at his robes and pulled him close to her, pressing her face against his chest. "You can't go; he'll kill you!"

He held her for only a second before pushing her away. "You know of my duty more than even Albus does. I must go."

She let out an anguished cry as he attempted to put on his mask. "But they know they know, and he'll kill you and..."

He broke her off by drawing her close and placing a bittersweet kiss on her lips.

He ran a finger down the side of his face. The scar was no longer visible, but he could feel it, as he could feel the other legions of scars marking his body.

He had been captured that night and beaten, cursed, mutilated a diversion, of course, for Dumbledore and The-Boy-Who-Lived Potter to come riding in with their Aurors and the Order.

They won, of course, but he had lost.

When he awoke in the Hospital Wing, he immediately knew something was wrong.

"Where is Hermione?" he demanded of the mediwitch he did not know.

She stared wide-eyed at him, frightened. Letting out a small squeak, she ran off, leaving him seething on the bed.

Albus came in, and Severus sighed. Finally, answers.

"Where is Hermione?" he repeated.

The sorrow in Albus' eyes froze Severus' blood. "No no, she can't be dead she wasn't even fighting!"

Albus sat at the edge of Severus' bed. "No one is sure if she is dead when we were at the castle, student Death Eaters cast a spell on her, and she disappeared. We... we haven't been able to locate her or the spell they used."

"So she is alive."

Albus grimaced. "She may be."

Severus turned to the wall without another word.

After many long moments, Albus heaved a sigh and was gone.

Pitter patter,

Patter splatter.

Severus watched the raindrops dance against the window.

He strode out into the corridor. A small Slytherin fourth-year saw him, froze, and turned, jogging back the way he came.

He had to get out and away from the memories. It was useless to even think about... about her and the long time he'd waited for them to find her, for her to come back, for... for him to even get the feeling that she was *alive*, anywhere.

Outside, the rain steadily came.

"Do you hear it?"

He raised an eyebrow as she grinned at him over the book she had been reading. "Hear what?"

They sat in silence for a moment as he tried to hear. After a few moments, he shook his head. "All I hear is the rain."

"That's exactly it," she said, setting aside the book and moving closer to him. His end of the couch sagged slightly as she came and nestled next to him. "The voices in the rain of all the people who came before us."

He resisted the urge to snort. "Hermione, I don't hear any voices in the rain you can barely even hear the rain as it is."

"I hear them," she said mysteriously before laughing and setting her head on his chest contentedly. "And maybe someday, when I'm gone, you'll hear them too and hear me..."

His hold on her tightened at her words and cold settled on his heart. "If I'm lucky, you'll be the one hearing my voice in the rain. I...I won't..."

"Hush," she whispered and wrapped her arms around him. "We have now."

He stood in the middle of the Quidditch pitch, rain drenching his clothes and blinding his eyes. The memories here had nothing to do with Hermione and everything to do with Quidditch with Potter, Black, the Weasleys, McGonagall.

Pitter patter,

Patter splatter.

His robes hung limply from his body, a mirror image of the hair that hung limply and scraggly on his face.

Time, the loss of Hermione they had worked their worries on him, and he had become almost worse than before the war. Dreams at night haunted him, and he could never sleep without accidentally flinging an arm to the side of the bed where he thought she would be.

I promised that one day I'd find you, he thought grimly. And you promised that you would never leave.

But I don't know where to look, and I have looked everywhere. I see you in everything I look at, feel you in everything I know... but I have yet to find you.

He sighed and turned to go back in, to face his fears and his loneliness once more, when he suddenly felt that he should stay.

Looking up, he was kissed by the raindrops that fell on his forehead, his cheeks, his nose, his lips.

And then...

"...Severus..."

He stared wide-eyed into the sky, falling down in his shock and landing in a heap on the ground.

"...Severus..."

His throat was closed he couldn't breathe, couldn't speak. All he could do was listen and hope...

"...Severus..."

He reached upward and was grasped by strong hands, lifted up. His face was covered with kisses, and his lips gods, his lips were being kissed by those of the one woman he'd treasured, *loved*.

When he could, he whispered, "Hermione...*Hermione*..."

And she whispered back, "*I'm here*."

No one knew what to make of it. They hadn't seen the Professor leave, and up until his last class of the day, no one had thought he'd acted strangely, other than his increasingly melancholy nature as his wife was never discovered.

When the Slytherin fourth-year had come running to the Headmistress and screamed, to all professors present in her office, that Professor Snape was in the Quidditch pitch, no one, in the midst of the confusion and shock that followed, understood any of it.

All they could do was hope and feel their hearts burn as they looked down at the body of the wearied man, lying face up in the middle of the pitch.

And they wondered how the man who had had such a horrible life, who had lost everything and everyone he had ever loved, could have such a peaceful, loving smile on his face.

