

Denial

by Shocabo

During the War, Severus and Hermione stumble upon feelings that can't be.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: I was supposed to be working on my NaNoWriMo sshg piece when the Muse bit me and insisted I write this sad, smutless (sorry!) oneshot. Inspired by LJ user rzzmg's prompt #14 for Interhouse Fest 2015. Thank you to my beta consulting_queer, who achieved amazing feats of quick-turn-around-time for me.

Severus pulled back from Granger's mind abruptly. Bloody Occlumency lessons! How the hell did he let Albus talk him into this again, after the Potter fiasco? Probably because it was *her*. And why did Granger have to be so bloody talented at every single thing she did? Now they had a real problem.

He had goaded her into their current disaster, of course. "Is that the best you can do?" were his precise words, if he remembered correctly. Although, to be perfectly honest, recalling his exact phrasing wasn't quite at the top of his priorities at the moment.

Damage control. Right.

"Miss Granger," he demanded, "what... did you... see?"

The young woman was breathing rapidly, panicked. "N-nothing?" she replied, as though denying it would be possible. As though denying it would fix the mess they were in.

"I can look inside your mind again," he threatened, "if you aren't sure you know what you saw." Not that he *wanted* to see her ridiculous, improbable attraction to him again. Severus was quite sure she would reconsider her denial. She wouldn't want him to see any more than he already had. After all, taunting her skill and then stumbling over her feelings had caused her to lash out and leap into his mind in the first place.

Which brought them back to what she had seen there, in that moment of utter surprise when his own shields had been inexcusably lax.

He raised an eyebrow at her, waiting for her compliance.

Granger did not disappoint. She practically fell over herself to prevent him from casting Legilimens on her again. "I saw you and the Headmaster, talking," she said.

"About?"

"Um, about... about his hand, sir." She looked like she still wanted to deny the entire thing.

"Go on."

Granger squeezed her eyes shut and slurred her final words together in a rush to get it over with: "You promised to kill him."

Severus sighed. Yes, it was exactly as dire as he had feared.

She squinted one eye open to look at him, to gauge his reaction. "It's bad that I know, isn't it." At least she wasn't stupid enough to make that sentence into a question.

"That, Miss Granger, is an understatement," Severus agreed.

"And... the other thing..." She fidgeted and flushed even redder than she already was. "That's bad, too. I'm sorry. I didn't mean for you to know." She looked away. "Not ever," she whispered.

"Compared to my task with the Headmaster, our attraction is hardly important," he spat. And then he froze, realizing what he had said. Bloody hell. Granger had him badly rattled. He certainly hadn't meant to admit that.

Of course, it was too much to hope that she'd transfigured into a imbecile in the past thirty seconds. She looked at him in shock. *Our attraction?*" she asked, stressing exactly the word he had hoped she had somehow overlooked.

Maybe denial wasn't such a bad plan.

"I'll have to Obliviate you," he said, ignoring her. "It's too dangerous for you to know the truth." At her wide-eyed stare, he clarified roughly, "The truth about Dumbledore."

"Yes, fine, I know it's necessary," Granger said, dismissing her upcoming mental gaps as though she didn't care at all for her mind's integrity. *Our attraction?*" she repeated insistently.

He had thought he could deny the truth of things? Ha, bloody ha. But he found he couldn't bring himself to lie outright to her. Not when her heart was on her sleeve, a mirror-image of his own more carefully hidden desires.

"Just another thing to be Oblivated," Severus finally said. He didn't know if even his vaunted Occlumency skills were sufficient to the task of hiding how much this would hurt him. To have found such an unexpected flower in the barren wasteland that was his life, only to be forced to uproot it before it could bloom... It felt like more than he could possibly bear. *Damn Albus! Damn this war!*

"I see," she said. Then she set her chin and looked at him squarely. If he had known her better, he would have recognized that gesture for the warning it was. "If you have to Obliviate me anyway, I want to make the most of it now."

Severus' jaw dropped. She couldn't possibly mean what he thought she meant. When she advanced one step towards him, closing the already short distance between them, he stumbled backwards with an uncharacteristic lack of grace. "What—?" he sputtered. He had stood against the Dark Lord himself with more aplomb.

Granger followed after him, effectively pinning him against his desk. This is entirely backwards, he thought distractedly.

"I want this," she said, her forwardness bringing a faint look of surprise to her own face. But she didn't retreat. "I want ~~you~~."

She'd gone mad, Severus decided. It was the only logical explanation, really. She leaned her petite body against his. Definitely mad. He gingerly set his hands on her shoulders, desperately ignoring what his own body begged him to do, and pushed her away from him.

"Miss Granger, this is quite impossible," he said.

"Please," she begged.

Severus closed his eyes against her pleading face. This was *entirely* impossible. "Why?" he croaked out. "Why would you even want... anything... when you know you will be Oblivated immediately afterward?"

"They say the mind forgets," she answered, "but the soul remembers. I know it sounds silly, but I just ~~know~~ I'll regret letting this slip away and never having anything of you. If you really are attracted to me, too—" Granger paused, eying him warily. Severus couldn't even breathe, much less find the words to spin some lie denying it. She nodded to herself, as though that sufficiently answered her question. "Then at least let my soul be content with what we can have right now."

Her lips finally met his, and Severus found he could deny her nothing.

"Look... at... me..."

Tears rolled down Hermione's face, a grief stronger than any she'd ever known consuming her. As she watched the light finally leave Professor Snape's eyes, she felt a connection in her very soul die along with him. She didn't understand where these deep emotions sprang from, but she couldn't deny that she had just lost something precious.

ORIGINAL PROMPT: "Pairing: any male Slytherin/Hermione. A one night affair. They agree that's all it will be—just one night. Set during the war. Would love a bittersweet or sad ending to this."