

# Fade

*by Southern\_Witch\_69*

Losing someone is always hard. Hermione deals with starting over, coping with loss, and the confusion of moving on.

## One-shot Story

*Chapter 1 of 1*

Losing someone is always hard. Hermione deals with starting over, coping with loss, and the confusion of moving on.

**Disclaimer:** I've snatched some characters for a bit, but I'll return them to J.K.R. shortly. No Galleons are being made.

*I'll go ahead and dedicate this to Droxy. She likes this kind of stuff.*

**Thanks go to my mate, CocoaChristy, who kindly stepped in to look this over once I discovered my beta was MIA. Hehe.**

**SW says:** This gave me a few tears while writing, so some may not like the dismal tone. It's someone struggling to deal with the death of a loved one and eventually deal with the confusion of finding another lover.

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"Severus, wait..." I say, voice cracking, words trailing away.

Your eyes find mine, and I see no emotion within. It's as if the black of your iris leads into the depths of your soul. Yet, empty as they may be, I can still detect numerous things: cold determination standing out most.

"I cannot wait," you say, the words a hushed whisper.

Feelings overwhelm me as you simply squeeze my hand in a reassuring gesture. My love for you is my undoing and won't allow me to remain silent. "I cannot live without you, Severus. Please, don't leave me. I love you."

"You will go on, Hermione," you say, trying to smile. "Some things are meant to be. Our relationship," you shrug, "simply was not."

"Don't say that!" I say angrily, bringing the hand that I am still clutching to my lips to press a small kiss on each of your knuckles. "I'll never forget the taste of your skin." I open your hand and press the warm palm against my cheek. "I'll never forget the feel of your touch, the way your skin feels against mine." Tears spill from my eyes, and I momentarily worry that you will think me weak, but then I realize that you likely expected this and are prepared to ignore them.

"All of this will fade one day," you say confidently.

"Never," I vow. "Just don't go. Please. Stay with me."

I see a flicker in your dark eyes. It's one of pain. I know I am being insensitive, but I can't help it. I close my eyes and silently count to ten, realizing the pain is not your own, but it's because I'm hurting...in turn causing your pain.

"I cannot stay, Hermione, but I do hope you know that these past two years... have been the best in my life." There was a slight pause mingled with a wheezing sound. "Live for me. Do everything that we could not."

Nodding and sniffing, I say, "For me as well...the best. I will never forget. A day won't pass by where I don't think of you. You will never fade."

A smile graces your lips before your eyes are finally no longer able to hide the feeling within. I see peace, acceptance, and fading. Finally, I see the dimness of death as the life within dulls. The tears continue on, though they are falling harder, faster, and are not as quiet. I kiss your cheek, not caring that my wet face is pressing against yours. I've never felt such hurt in my life and truly am uncertain that I can carry on. How can I when you won't be there when I wake? How can I when you won't be the last thing I see at night? How can I when our plans and dreams have been destroyed?

Later, when I pull back from you, my breath catches. There is a lone tear on your cheek, and it looks as if it found its way from your eyes, but I know better. You would never cry, too proud, even in death. The droplet is simply a remnant from my bout of sobs as I rested my face against yours. I reach out with my free hand and close your eyes, not wanting you to stare at me with eyes that are not your own any longer.

It's then that I realize I am still holding your hand. Your fingers are not clutching mine any longer, so I bring my other hand over to press them closed against my skin, desperate to feel your touch for as long as I can...even as I feel your skin cooling against mine...even as it is starting to not feel like part of you.

Much later, Harry enters and finds me lying next to your cold body, head on your chest, both hands still clasping the one. I'm afraid that to take my hands from it will forever sever the connection we've forged. When I see the brightness of his eyes, I know his concerned feelings are not for you, but for me. I likely look dreadful... and I don't care. You're gone, and nothing matters to me any longer.

"Come here, Hermione. Let him go," he says quietly.

"Harry," I begin, unable to control the sob that breaks loose, "he didn't wait for me."

"He'll be waiting for you when it's your time," he says firmly, coming to the side of the bed. "He's off in the next existence... probably catching up with Dumbledore about all that's happened."

"And Ginny," I add, realizing that Harry knows my pain. He's lost someone as well. Hell, he's lost many close to him... yet her death is different. It's the equivalent of me losing you, Severus.

He nods. "Yes, and Ginny."

"Does it ever stop, this pain?"

Frowning, he says, "Over time, it fades."

"But it's always there?"

"When you call upon it."

His words are a little reassuring, but I secretly vow to never have to call upon my memories. I will never let them go, simply fading from my mind. I will put them in a Pensieve and visit them often. I look to your still face, noting that the firmness of death is beginning to take over. I quickly make many silent vows, glad Harry cannot hear me as I talk to you in my mind. I will think of you often, relive our memories. Anything to have more time with you, Severus.

"He's gone, Harry," I say, finally releasing my grip on your hand, positioning both of yours at your sides comfortably. Arms come from behind me, and I turn into them, crying against Harry's chest as he leads me away from you. I vaguely hear him telling the Healer that you've gone, but I am unable to take part in the conversation.

Numbness is settling over me.

My world has forever changed.

You're gone.

How can I live without you?

I can't believe this is happening.

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It's been two weeks since you left me. I've thought of you every waking second of every day. Life has been so very hard. I've still not gone back to work, as I am unable to concentrate on anything at all. Harry's taken away the Pensieve. He said that it's not healthy to relive so much in a time such as this. He said that one day, when I have a better grasp on things, he'll allow me to borrow it again.

Each night before I submit to sleep, I pray that I'll wake the next morning to find you beside me and that this has all been a nightmare. God isn't answering my prayers.

Each day after I eat lunch, I try to call upon the devil to see if he would make some sort of deal with me. Anything to have you back. My soul for your life. It seems so simple. The devil doesn't answer my offer. He only puts thoughts of suicide in my head, telling me that I can join you if I just take a deadly dose.

But I won't do that. You asked me to live for you. Well, I'm trying, Severus. Really I am. I hope this is good enough.

A horrible part of me longs for you to fade...for me to get over this hurt and pain. I suppress those nasty thoughts. How dare they even enter my conscious thinking?

I suppose I could always pretend that you are off someplace else. Maybe you've gone to gather ingredients. Perhaps you've gone to have your Sunday tea with Lucius in Azkaban. Or... it could be that McGonagall has asked you to supervise some field trip for the students.

I can't believe this is happening.

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Severus, it's been five weeks since you've died. I've been back at work for two, and today, I had a breakthrough! Soon, I think we'll have the cure that we needed for you. A little late, I know, but when I saw how the sample reacted to the potion, I was so happy and wanted to share it with you. I tossed Floo powder into the grate and Flooded into our living room.

The moment I stepped out, of course, I realized that you were not there and that I'd let your death slip from my memory for just a little while. I am sorry. I feel as if I've betrayed you.

Naturally, I cried. You're not here for me any longer. I can't just Floo you and share my news with you. I can't hold you or kiss you. I'm alone.

How could I have forgotten that even for a moment?

Regardless, I know you are happy that I've made progress. It will eventually be enough to spare anyone else from having to go through this.

I will say a quick prayer to God and ask him to please not let this happen again. I don't want to forget you...even for a second.

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The days are passing quickly now, and I still think of you each day. Some of the pain has faded. You were right. Well, Harry was right, too, in a way, mind, I've never had to call upon your memory. You are still with me each day, but I've found that it doesn't hurt as much.

Shock has finally given way to acceptance, albeit reluctantly.

Our potion is complete. It is mostly successful, working on all early stages, but if the sickness has gone too far, it's still too late. I will continue working on it and trying to make it stronger. We'll save them all, Severus. One day, nobody will have to feel this.

Today happens to be your birthday. I didn't want to be bothered, so I found myself a quiet Muggle pub to have a couple of drinks where I could celebrate for you. There was a haunting song that someone played. I can't get it out of my mind even now. The melody and chorus keep repeating inside my head.

The words just struck a chord.

Aloud, I softly sing, feeling that you can hear me, "I wanted to believe as I watched your world crumble in your hands. I wanted to believe as you raised your glass to your last stand, and I wanted to believe you would win the war in your head that I did not understand." My body sways to the rhythm in my mind.

I still don't understand. Why must people die this way? Why are there diseases that we can't cure? It seems surreal to me. All of this. You're a fucking wizard for God's sake! Couldn't our magic duel death and win?

You're gone. I'll never hear that deep chuckle again when you find something amusing. I'll never hear the slur of your voice when you've had one whisky too many. I'll never make love to you.

I hear loud sobbing, wailing even, and look around only to realize that it's me. Your picture is still placed on the table in front of me. I'm still alone.

The date, the liquor, and the sad song are obviously affecting me greatly. I've not broken down like this for a while now. Thinking of the song, I raise the glass in front of me to salute you as I battle my own war within.

I still love you. Happy birthday.

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The anniversary of your death is worse than waking up alone. It's worse than you not being with me for the holidays that have passed. It's worse than you not making breakfast in bed on my birthday.

After this day, I can no longer look back on the previous year and think, 'On this day last year, Severus and I were...' Well, you get the idea. Now, it will be something much worse. Now, I will look back on the same day of the previous year and think, 'This was the day after Severus died a year ago. I threw his ashes from a mountaintop, letting a stiff east wind scatter his remains... letting it free him.'

I still can't believe you are gone. Talking to you like this does help me. If I didn't get this out in this manner at least, I think that I'd lose my sanity.

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Tonight I had a date. No, it wasn't the romantic sort, but it did feel good to have some male company...someone not Harry or Ron. He reminds me of you, you know. He has dark hair and eyes. Hell, his nose even resembles yours. Is it terrible to compare the two of you? For me to pretend, on some level, that I have you back with me? I know he'll never be you, and he'll never take your place in my heart, love, but would it hurt if I have a close friend?

I haven't seen him in years, but when he came to the Ministry today, it felt as if he'd been sent there. I was just thinking in resignation about another lonely dinner when I looked up to see him leaning against my doorjamb.

Did you have something to do with that? When you said you wanted me to live and do everything that we could not do together, did you really mean that?

He told me that he was in town only to meet with someone about starting a new Quidditch team in Scotland. He fell in love with Hogwarts and the countryside when he visited the first time years back. He says that he was going to leave, but before he could activate his Portkey, a gust of wind kicked up, tossing a torn page of an old newspaper onto his chest. He pulled it off of him and saw my name on it.

Knowing that I work at the Ministry, he changed his mind and paid me a visit. Now, he's planning to stay in town for a while, wanting to catch up. I hope you don't mind, but it was a nice evening. Harry thinks I could use a friend.

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I had a dream about you last night. It didn't last very long, only allowing us a small conversation, and I swear when I woke, I could still smell the scent of you in the air. You told me that you were happy for me and that you wanted me to live for you.

I am confused.

Did you really come to me in my dream? Is it my mind trying to ease the guilt that I feel for seeing someone else? I wish I knew. There's nobody that I can talk to about this. If I did bring it up, they would just direct me to move on.

I still love you.

And I do wish that it wouldn't feel like each dinner I share with Viktor taints your memory or what we had.

Has it already been two years?

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Today, I was married. As I walked down the aisle, I nearly stopped. You see, for an instant, it was you waiting for me, a smile on your face. Of course as I got closer, the vision of you faded, and Viktor's face was there. It was his hand that shook my father's.

I only felt momentary disappointment.

What does this mean?

The rest of the ceremony, the reception, and even the trip to our secluded beach passed without another thought of you...until now that is. Severus, I can't help it, but it does feel as if you are fading. This saddens me terribly. I never wanted that to happen.

Some days I realized that it was happening and that Harry had been right all along. Sometimes you have to call upon it to feel it. The loss, I mean, but you already know what I'm talking about. You've been inside of me for so long.

A knock on the door startles me. I suppose I've been in the loo too long. I had only slipped in to change into something more comfortable. As I try to wipe the tears from my cheeks, my husband enters and doesn't look surprised to see me sitting on top of my wedding dress on the floor where I'd sagged to the ground after slipping into a lacey negligee.

He kneels down and cups my cheeks in his hands.

I try to think of the words to say, to explain... He doesn't make me unhappy/I've made me unhappy. I've done something that I swore I'd never do: I let you fade away from me.

"Vot you had vill always be in here," Viktor says, moving one hand down to rest over my heart. "I vill never try to replace him, but I vant to join him. I haff already joined him. There is room for both of us, I think."

I nod and allow him to gather me into his arms. He understands. I don't have to explain. I feel as if a weight has been lifted from my shoulders. Life has moved on, Severus. You were right. You knew this would happen. I should have known. I should have realized. You went through this after your first love died. You lived through the hurt, the shock, and the loss. You never thought you would find anyone else, but then I came along. Although she had been the only one in your heart, you allowed me to slip in. You knew that there was life after death. You also knew that it would all eventually become less horrible and easier to accept...easier to go on with living...because you'd done it yourself.

Another sob rips through me. You died knowing that one day our time together would fade away. That I would indeed go on without you.

And you hoped it would...for my sake.

My heart breaks again.

The best couple of years of your life you'd said to me. And you died knowing that one day they would just be bittersweet memories for me.

"Come with me," Viktor says, interrupting my thoughts. "I vill take care of you."

You wanted to fade away.

I allow Viktor to guide me to the bed where he lays me down and begins making love to me with his mouth. I return his kisses, needing comfort, needing him. He will help soothe my pain... just as I helped soothe yours.

Severus, I do love you still, but I also love him. For the first time, I completely understand you and how much you really did feel for me. And I don't think I've ever felt closer to you.

Fade away... until I call upon you again.

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**Southern's Notes:** Yes, I know it's sad, but isn't it true? For me at least. I've experienced all of these emotions after the tragedy of death. As many of you know, I get on these kicks now and again...thinking of death. In order to get over it, I had to write about it. Thanks for reading.

The song mentioned in this story was playing repeatedly as I wrote it. It's sad, yet very beautiful. You may have heard it if you've listened to the Underworld Soundtrack. It's track number ten, I believe. The song is "Suicide Note," and it's by Johnette Napolitano. I definitely recommend it.

I came to know it from another show that I watch. It's called Third Watch (a discontinued series about NY police officers, fire fighters, and paramedics). It's the only other place (aside from HP) where I can totally get lost in a storyline. They played this after one officer was killed, and they were going to find his shooter. Good stuff.