

# Diary

*by my little secret*

Voldemort, Harry and Ron are gone. Snape and Hermione plan to marry, but something doesn't seem quite right about Hermione. And then Snape finds her diary underneath a tree...

## Chapter 1

*Chapter 1 of 3*

Voldemort, Harry and Ron are gone. Snape and Hermione plan to marry, but something doesn't seem quite right about Hermione. And then Snape finds her diary underneath a tree...

Voldemort would have a field day if he could see me now, sitting here on this porch, a cup of coffee lightly steaming in my hands, staring down at the gently sloping lawns that spread off to the edge of the woods. Hardly the imposing figure of one who strikes terror into the hearts of many, am I? I chuckle to myself. No matter... Voldemort was an asshole. He exploited me as a child and used me as an adult. I simply regret that I was not able to kill him myself.

Of course, I never expected to survive the war. I would ultimately be seen as a traitor to both sides, and there were far too many witches and wizards out there who were capable of killing me. What I had not counted on was one of them being strong enough to save me.

I had never counted on Hermione.

In the midst of the Final Battle, I had found myself on the business end of Rodolphus Lestrage's wand. The thought of death didn't bother me, but the idea that I would die at the hands of someone as weak and predictable as Lestrage filled me with shame. I closed my eyes and searched my mind, trying to find one instance to hold on to, some memory from a long and vile past that I could actually feel some pride in.

"*Avada...*"

Please, just one... There must be one...

"*Keda-*"

**"*Sectumsempra! Sectumsempra! Sectumsempra!*"**

Rodolphus' menacing growl gurgled into a piercing scream, and I looked up into a face suddenly surging with blood. He staggered backwards, his hands flying up to cover his mutilated visage. As his wand fell from his grip, I rolled forward and snatched it, immediately turning it on him and uttering the curse he'd been unable to finish.

"Professor? Are you all right?"

I turned to her, unsure of what to say. Although my eyes had been closed when it had happened, I could clearly see how she must have looked: robes streaming out behind her, hair flying about her head, eyes both determined and slightly evil at the same time. I felt no surprise at her knowledge of the curse I'd invented; she was Potter's best friend. Of course he had shared it with her.

And she had used it to save my life. A life that I, just a moment ago, had realized was not worth saving.

Before I could answer her, she was gone.

The side of the Light went on to win the battle. We buried our dead, and we mourned. And then those of us that remained returned to Hogwarts.

A few nights later, I followed Hermione as she left the Great Hall after dinner. She was walking slowly down the corridor, her head held much lower than I was used to.

"Miss Granger."

"Yes, Professor?" Her voice conveyed no surprise that I was there.

"May I speak to you for a minute?"

"Of course," she answered.

"I'm not quite sure how to thank you for what you did."

She turned to me, and I realized that the child that had grown up as I watched with varying degrees of interest was now gone, replaced by a fragile and nearly empty shell.

She smiled, a mere shadow across her face. "Then we're even, Professor. I don't know how to thank you for what you did, either."

From that moment on, I sought her out.

I knew, of course, what had happened. It was all the news in the Wizarding world, as news of Harry Potter always was. Ronald Weasley, the boy that she seemed quite enamored of, had been killed in the Final Battle. That alone would have been enough to shatter the girl, but the disappearance of her best friend had dealt the final blow. Oh, Harry Potter had not been lost in the battle, nor had some mysterious spell snatched him away when he killed Voldemort. He had simply chosen to leave after his mission was done; he left with no explanation or goodbye for the girl who had stood by him through every miserable moment of his life for seven years. And in doing so, he had finally broken her.

I'm not entirely sure what I was looking for with her. I didn't know how to make friends, and I certainly wasn't interested in her romantically... at least, not at that time. It just seemed to me that if there was one person who had come out of this war with even more to be bitter about than myself, it was her. She had helped me she had helped everyone and in return, she had lost everything she loved.

Slowly and cautiously, she began to accept my invitations to dinner. We went to Hogsmead and Muggle London together, browsing through bookshops and watching movies. Somehow we did become friends, and I realized how much I had missed the company of an intelligent conversationalist. For months we skirted around the issue of Potter. I knew that she had spent time searching for him, but to no avail. The latest rumors making their way around Hogwarts had him living amongst Muggles in the United States, although none seemed sure of exactly where. On more than one occasion I found her alone in the Gryffindor common room, curled up in a ball in one of the chairs and crying softly. I never let her know that I was there; not only did I realize that her mourning needed to be solitary, I also knew that I could offer no words of condolence. I had not cared for Potter or Weasley when they were alive... to pretend that I felt remorse at their loss now would only insult her memories of them.

I realized that my feelings of affection had grown more serious during one of the movies we attended. Hermione, indulging what I felt to be a disgusting craving for popcorn, had purchased a container the size of a small barrel. Partway through the film she asked me to place the half-full container on the empty seat next to me. I did so, and promptly forgot that it was there. When she leaned across my lap to retrieve another handful a short time later, I found myself breathless with the desire to wrap my arms around her and kiss her senseless.

Knowing that my feelings were inappropriate for a myriad of reasons, I told no one. Although I found it increasingly difficult, I did my best to hide my attraction from Hermione. But more often than not, after spending an evening with her, I would find myself lying alone in my bed, sweaty and sticky, my depleted cock still twitching in my palm.

I eventually decided to move out of Hogwarts and into a London home that had been in my family for years. I asked Hermione to help me decorate the house and Apparated us both there. As she moved through the rooms, I saw life in her face for the first time in months.

"Severus, this is beautiful," she sighed as she made her way back downstairs into the kitchen. "You're very lucky. I would love to have a home this lovely."

"Would you like to live here with me?" I asked before I could stop myself. She stilled, her back to me.

"What do you mean?" Her voice was quiet.

"There is more than enough room for two people," I explained quickly. "You have been saying that you need to find a place to live, and... well, there is more than enough room for two people." My lame finish must have amused her, because she flashed me a gentle smile and assured me that she would think about it.

Two weeks later we had moved all of our belongings in. Living together, although difficult because of my ever-increasing desire, was far more pleasant than I had ever imagined. Learning the intricacies of sharing a living space with someone else was challenging and rewarding, and I couldn't have imagined doing it with anyone other than Hermione.

One winter evening, she approached me as I worked in my study. "Severus? Would you like to go for a walk with me?"

I looked past her toward the window, where soft, fat flakes drifted down. "It's snowing out, Hermione."

"I know that, silly," she chuckled. "Have you never gone for a walk in the snow?"

As a matter of fact, I hadn't. Dressing ourselves in warm coats, hats and gloves, we made our way outside. The silence struck me at once... The snow had cast a heavy blanket over everything, and the moonlight shed a bluish hue over the landscape. As we walked over the ground, our feet made soft crunching sounds. We didn't talk much, other than to cast warming spells over ourselves.

We had walked for about fifteen minutes when we came to the edge of a small pond. Hermione sat on a fallen log and motioned for me to join her. The pond had a thin skin of ice over the top of it, and the falling snowflakes were glistening as they formed small piles on it. Hermione drew her wand and enlarged a small package in her pocket that turned out to be a flask of hot chocolate. Following her lead, I transfigured two nearby rocks into cups, and she filled each. I sipped mine slowly, savoring the warmth and richness.

"You know, I still don't know why he left," she said suddenly, staring across the pond. I knew at once who she spoke of, and I couldn't help but bristle at the idea that she was thinking about Potter while here with me. I looked away without answering, but she continued.

"I can understand that he had to go, I truly do. But what I can't understand is why he couldn't keep in touch... why he couldn't tell me where he was going... why he couldn't even at least say goodbye. And I've tried to figure it out so many times, to figure out what I did wrong..." Her voice broke and against my better judgment I turned to her. Tears slid down her cheeks, and when she looked at me the expression of anguish on her face was so naked, so *pure*, that it stole my breath away.

"I've tried," she repeated, her voice a whisper. "I've tried so *hard*, Severus. Why did he leave me? **Why?**"

I pulled her to me and held her as she cried, her hoarse sobbing cutting straight through to my soul. Anger and misery and confusion filled me, and I wanted nothing more

at that moment than to be able to take away this pain that she felt, to give her some answers. God help me, if I could have flicked my wand and made Potter appear before her again, I would have. Instead, I simply rocked her back and forth, smoothing her hair with my hand and shushing her quietly.

Eventually her sobbing diminished, and I felt her pushing gently away from me. Sitting upright, she wiped her eyes with the handkerchief I offered her.

"I'm so sorry, Severus. I just I just haven't been able to talk to anyone else about this, and it's been inside of me for so long..."

"I know, Hermione. I'm so sorry that you have to go through this. Losing your friends like that... it's too much for someone your age to have to deal with. I wish that I could help you, I truly do. And I have to tell you, I'm honored that you feel you can discuss this with me."

Looking up at me with cheerless eyes, she tried to smile. "Why wouldn't I feel comfortable enough with you? You're my best friend."

I stared at her, my mind spinning. While I knew that her emotions were sincere and tender, they were so far removed from what I wanted to have with her. I felt a sudden sense of loss, knowing that my attraction was neither acknowledged nor returned. So this was how it was to be... friends. The fantasies that I'd been harboring for months now would never be realized. This awareness was too much to take, and I stood quickly and strode away from her.

"Severus?" Her voice was concerned now, and I marveled at how easily she shifted her focus from her own problems to mine. "What is it? Did I say something wrong?"

I watched the thick flakes land silently on my woolen coat, the heat of the warming spell making them disappear swiftly. *As swiftly as my dreams*, a little voice inside my head taunted. I had been a fool to think that Hermione would ever feel about me as I did about her. She was so young, and her most notable life experiences to date were a war and the loss of her two best friends. So much darkness in such a short time... Why would she ever be drawn to a man like me? I could offer her no light... only, perhaps, a slightly paler shade of gray than she had known thus far.

I jumped when she placed her hand on my arm. "Severus, please. Tell me what's wrong."

The melting snow had dampened her hair, and her eyes were still red from crying. I had never seen her look more beautiful. Rubbing my forehead with the back of my hand, I walked back to the fallen log and sat down heavily on it.

"Hermione... I don't know what to say. I just wish I could make things better for you."

"But you have!" she insisted. "Just being able to finally talk about this, to have someone to share these things with... Don't you know what a difference that makes?" Reaching over she turned my face toward hers. "Don't you know what a difference *you've* made, Severus?"

Her hand on my cheek was soft and warm, and I fought with myself not to turn and place a kiss on her palm. Instead, I looked into her eyes, telling myself that I might never get another chance to be this close to her.

"You are an extraordinary witch, Hermione Granger. You have nothing but my admiration, my loyalty, and my respect for as long as you will accept it."

Bringing up one hand to cover hers, I continued. "I cannot tell you why he left you. Why *anyone* would leave you is beyond me."

"Severus," she whispered.

"But you have my solemn word, as your friend, and as a man, that I will never leave you."

Tears welled up in her eyes, and I lifted my other hand to push her hair back from her face. I watched as that same hand slowly slid around to the back of her neck, almost as though it belonged to someone else.

"You have my heart," I murmured, leaning forward.

"Please," she whispered, just before my lips touched hers.

I reveled in the softness of her mouth as I moved mine against it. My heart nearly exploded as she began to respond, her hand sliding up my arm to my shoulder, her breath quick as we broke apart and came together again and again. When I gently prodded her lips with my tongue she quickly opened them, and I pulled her tightly against me as I delved into her mouth. One hand wound tightly into her hair as the other wrapped around her waist. I couldn't believe this was happening; only moments ago I had been sure that she would never feel this way for me, and now here she was in my arms. I didn't want to let her go. I never wanted to let her go.

When I was finally able to release my grip on her, she pulled back quickly and turned her gaze out over the snow. I struggled to control my breathing and waited for her to speak.

"Perhaps we should head back," she said gently after a moment. As I stood and extended a hand to her, she quickly wiped a stray snowflake from her cheek.

Weeks later, we became lovers. In what I considered to be an incredibly romantic intimation, she cried softly afterwards. I held her close, feeling a bit overwhelmed myself at the feelings coursing through me. Those same feelings returned six months later, when I asked her to marry me. I will never forget how she looked that day, staring down at the floor for such a long time that I thought that she surely would decline me. When she looked up, her eyes were once again filled with tears, as she simply said, "Yes."

Although I was beside myself with joy, Hermione seemed much calmer and more serene about our union. I suggested to her that we wed that weekend, in a small church in the neighboring town, but she was hesitant. "I think it would be best to wait a while. Please don't take that the wrong way," she hastily added. "I just would prefer to..." As she trailed off, I chuckled to myself.

"I understand," I consoled her, kissing her softly on the cheek. "You want time to plan a proper wedding. Of course, love. Take all the time that you need. It is enough for me that you have said yes."

Had the circumstances not been so joyous, the smile that she gave me would have seemed almost... sad. Knowing that she could not be feeling that way, I attributed her lukewarm demeanor to her being tired... and possibly overwhelmed with all the preparations that she was now facing.

Yes. That must be it.

Now, nearly a year later, I had a better life than I ever deserved. Thanks to the money I had saved during all my years at Hogwarts, I no longer needed a job, but I continued to work in Potions, doing private research for several hospitals. Hermione didn't have to work, either, but she chose to, and knowing how much she valued her independence, I would never ask her to give it up. So, four days a week she went to work for a bookstore in Wizarding London, invariably spending almost her entire salary on books. Our times together were spent quietly and happily; evenings at home, dinners out, holidays spent either alone or with the other Hogwarts survivors. Hermione remained in close contact with the Weasleys, and although I was not altogether pleased with this, it had only taken one heated argument and an extremely quiet week around the house for me to learn that this subject was *not* up for discussion.

I had no close friends to speak of, myself. Years ago there had been Lucius, but that relationship, like so many other people and things, had fallen victim to Voldemort's reign. I still missed him... his biting wit, his unparalleled arrogance. In that respect, I understood Hermione's pain over Weasley and Potter.

Indeed, losing her two comrades had stripped Hermione of something fundamental, something that I had hoped I would be able to give back to her but had not. Whether it was her innocence, her ability to trust or just a chance to have a normal and unblemished childhood, I don't know; whatever it was, I hadn't seen a trace of it since I had approached her that day in the castle corridor. She seemed happy, and she often told me that she loved me, but there was no glint in her eyes as there had been before the war. I missed the energy that I had so often seen in her as a student, and for some time I had attempted to bring that shine back to her. Eventually I had realized that it

was a moot point; what was lost was lost, and just as Hermione loved me despite all that my life had taken from me, so would I love her as she now was.

I hear her walking through the kitchen, and I know that she is coming out to say goodbye before she leaves for work. I tip my head back for the gentle kiss that I know is coming, the one that I count on.

"Would you mind terribly if I went to dinner with Ginny this evening, Severus?"

I frown slightly, for I do, indeed, mind. She has seen the youngest Weasley far too often for my liking lately. It is not that I want to keep her from seeing her friend; it is just that I would prefer to spend that time with her myself.

"I know, I know... I've been going out with Ginny a lot lately." She laughed, almost nervously. "It's just that she needs someone to talk to, you know, since she broke up with her boyfriend..."

"Hermione, that happened nearly two months ago, did it not?" She nods in confirmation. "I would think Miss Weasley would be over the relationship by now. At the very least, I would expect her to be beyond the point where she needs someone to hold her hand while she cries."

"He was very important to her! Do you expect her to just forget about him that easily?"

I shrug. "If the relationship is over, than it is best for her to accept it and move on."

She looks at me oddly for a moment, then asks quietly, "And you, Severus? Could you move on so easily if I left you?"

"That is an entirely different circumstance, Hermione, and you know it. You are to be my wife, not just someone that I was dating for a matter of weeks, good for a few shags." I ignore her scowl and continue. "Your friend has been through many relationships before this, and I will wager a bet that she will go through many more in the future. Somehow I doubt that this is the be-all and end-all of her existence."

"You didn't answer my question," she reminds me softly, with that same strange expression on her face.

*I know what she wants, I think to myself. She's looking for reassurance that you still love her. With the wedding coming up and having to nurse her friend through this breakup, she's feeling insecure.* Although I prefer to show my emotions when I choose to, and not as the result of coquettish pleas, I realize that it will be easier in the long run to just say the words that she needs to hear.

"No, Hermione. I could not move on without you. I don't think that I could move at all without you. You are the only reason that I exist today, the only reason that this sad, pathetic excuse for a man has not disappeared from the face of the world. I don't know why the gods have seen fit to give you to me, but I thank them every day that they have found me worthy. I don't know how to explain to you how much I love you, but I can tell you this: if you were to leave me, there would never be another. No one has ever owned my heart before, and no one ever will again. I love you now, and I will love you forever."

I watch as her lips tremble and tears slowly gather in her brown eyes. I stand and pull her to me, cupping her face with my hand. But as I bend to kiss her, she turns her head, and my lips brush her cheek instead.

"I should get going. I don't want to be late."

She angles her head toward me and gives me a brief kiss, then walks to the end of the porch and Apparates away.

Sighing, I shake my head. I wonder for the umpteenth time if there is any way to return Hermione to the passionate, fiery woman that I had seen years before. I realize how ludicrous it is that I, of all people, should complain that someone doesn't show their feelings readily enough; however, it seems so unnatural, so vaguely obscene, for Hermione to be as reserved as she's become.

*What's wrong, Severus? Are you feeling insecure now? Need to hear her tell you how much she loves you, how special you are?*

Snorting in disgust, I head down to my lab to begin my potions for the day. Looking at my list, I realize that I don't have enough fresh lovage on hand to create the Clarifying Draught requested by St. Steven's Children's Ward. Thankfully, many of the herbs and plants that I use in my concoctions can be found in the woods at the edge of our property. Grabbing one of my collection satchels, I leave the house and trek across the lawn.

Several hours later, I've gathered enough lovage to create the potions for the hospital, and I find that I'm quite famished. As I head back toward home, I spot Crookshanks lounging underneath one of the large maple trees that Hermione has always loved. I'm not an animal lover by any means, but her familiar has grown on me and I stop to scratch his belly as he contorts himself on the ground.

His shameless writhing musses the leaves and needles scattered at the base of the tree, and I suddenly glimpse the corner of a small, hardbound book buried beneath them. I pull it out; it is nondescript, a burgundy cover with the words "My Diary" written in gilded letters across the front. Naturally suspicious, I check the book for any hexes or curses, and am surprised to find that there is nothing magical about it at all. I open it and immediately recognize Hermione's handwriting. Crookshanks gives a soft growl, and I raise an eyebrow at him.

"I am a Slytherin, my friend. Never forget that."

And with those words I return to the house with the diary in my hand, prepare my lunch, and then begin to read about me.

~\*\*~

*Disclaimer: I own nothing that you could possibly want.*

*Author's Notes:*

*This story gets its title and plot line from the song "Diary" by the group Bread. They're a band from the 70's that I don't really know too much about, and I don't really like too much of their stuff. LOL. But this song has always seemed terribly poignant to me, and I found myself inspired. If you're not familiar with the song, please don't hunt it down just yet for the lyrics... It will kind of spoil the later part of the story for you. I'll include the lyrics in their entirety when the story is finished.*

*I originally intended this story to be a one-shot, but apparently I've got way too big of a mouth. So it will be at least another chapter.*

*Snake is a bit OOC in this story, but I hope I've kept him from being too squishy. His complete adoration of Hermione is essential to the storyline.*

*Humongous thanks go out to my hubby. Not only is he as fabulous as always, in a very heterosexual way, but he also bought me a laptop computer, so that I can now sit in the living room with him and our son and get more writing done without feeling guilty! You are a peach **and** a diseased maniac. Love ya!*

# Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 3

Voldemort, Harry and Ron are gone. Snape and Hermione plan to marry, but something doesn't seem quite right about Hermione. And then Snape finds her diary underneath a tree...

"I am a Slytherin, my friend. Never forget that."

And with those words I return to the house with the diary in my hand, prepare my lunch, and then begin to read about me.

~\*\*~

*I remember asking Mum once how I would know when I had found the right man. She told me, "Your worst day with him will be better than your best day without him."*

*I know now what she means. When we're together, I feel as though nothing can touch us. Invincible. Strong. Beautiful. Sexy. And sometimes, young... very, very young.*

*I wish Mum was here. Now, when I really need her to talk to.*

I grimaced slightly as I pinched a bit of chicken from my sandwich and offered it to Crookshanks. Yes, she should have her mother with her, I thought. Planning a wedding is not something that a young woman should have to do alone. I'm sure Miss Weasley helps her... when she's not pining away after any of the myriad of lovers she's had. But I doubt that it's the same as having a mother there to share this with.

*I dreamed of Ron again last night. I can't tell Severus about it because I know how much he despised Ron. I'm afraid he could ever understand what Ron meant to me.*

Sitting back, I thought about what she had written. She was wrong; I had never despised Weasley. Truth be told, I had never felt anything other than mild annoyance toward him. Frankly, he hadn't been worth the time. It must be said that Potter, while I harbored a deep, deep aversion to him, had gained a small portion of my respect... up until the day he walked away from Hermione. Weasley, however, had done nothing to impress me. I acknowledged that he had been a loyal friend to his comrades, but when you've seen people pledge their undying commitment to a madman, the concept of loyalty loses its luster. To me, Weasley was just another student, and though I never wished him to die, his passing mattered little to me.

I was angered, however, to think that Hermione would assume I wouldn't understand his importance to her. I knew that she considered him to be one of her best friends, and though I tried not to think about it, I assumed that he was her first lover. She was certainly not a virgin when I bedded her, and unless she had lost her innocence at a very early age, the only relationship I ever saw her in was with Weasley. Not that I normally concerned myself with the non-academic life of students, mind you, but Harry Potter and his circle of friends had for obvious reasons been an exception.

Did she think that I hadn't a first love of my own? More likely she assumed that she was it. I didn't understand desires to relive the past, so I was satisfied to keep my memories to myself and let Hermione have hers. We had never really discussed my previous relationships, but there were several. None of them compared to what I felt for Hermione, though, and from the words I was now reading, it was clear that she felt the same about me.

I spent the better part of the afternoon with the diary, drinking in the secret emotions and thoughts of the woman I loved. Although the first entry was dated only five months prior, the pages were filled with her small, precise writing, and my heart ached as I remembered a time when Hermione's voice would have been as verbose as this book.

*I know that I can never thank him for what he has brought to my world. I used to dread waking up in the mornings... Everything would come rushing back, and it was all I could do to keep from crying. There were times where I hoped that I wouldn't wake up at all. Now I can't wait for morning, for the dawning of a new day so that I can see him, touch him again. This, **this** is the love I've waited for.*

Her words shocked me. They were in such complete contrast to the quietly stoic affection that I had come to expect from her. **This** sounded like the Hermione I remembered: the passionate, lively woman that I yearned to see again. But why was she relegating these feelings to a book? Why not show me, tell me how she felt? She never hesitated to say the words, "I love you," but there was no trace of this fervor behind them, and I couldn't understand why. Did she fear that I didn't feel the same way? Impossible. I had asked her to marry me, for Heaven's sake! I had opened myself to her in ways that I'd never done with anyone else and proven with words AND actions that my love was genuine. If she still doubted me, there was nothing more that I could do.

Crookshanks pushed his head impatiently against my shin, and I chuckled. "Yes, yes, my friend. I've wasted enough time here, haven't I?" With a quiet groan I pushed myself from the chair ... damn, it was hell getting old ... tucked the diary into my pocket and made my way back downstairs to my lab.

~ \* ~

"Hello, Severus. Did you have a nice day?"

I glanced up from the report that I was working on and favored Hermione with a warm smile. "I did, my love, yes. And you?" I stood from my desk as she hung her coat in the closet and walked toward her.

"It was very nice," she remarked, her back still to me as she closed the door. "We got in the shipment of that new book I've been wa..." She never got to finish her sentence as I turned her face to mine and kissed her hungrily, my tongue tangling with hers as her arms hung loosely at her sides.

"Wow," she said when I pulled back. "What was that for?"

"I've been thinking about you all day today. I missed you."

"I've missed you too... but right now I have to use the loo. I'm sorry. I'll be right back." Extracting herself carefully from my arms, she disappeared down the hall.

I'd not been lying; I *had* been thinking about Hermione all day. Though I hadn't read any more of the diary, the words I'd taken in had played over and over in my mind, and I found myself surprised at the reaction they'd evoked from me. I felt myself curiously energized, excited... renewed. Though I'm no poet, it was clear to me what had happened; I had fallen in love with my fiancée all over again. Reading those extraordinary sentiments and hearing them in Hermione's voice in my head had given life to the dream I'd held for so long: that someday I would know what it was like to be loved by that intense and fiery young woman.

I knew now that I could bring her back. It would take time, which I had plenty of, and patience. Granted, patience may not be the first characteristic that you would associate with me, but I can be a most serene man... when it benefits me. And having Hermione in my life in any capacity was hugely beneficial to me. So I would, for lack of a better term, woo her again; or, more precisely, I would woo her for the first time. I had never approached her in a romantic manner; I had simply wormed my way into her life and into her bed. Now I would take the time to open myself to her, to let her know how much she meant to me so that she, in turn, would feel confident enough to speak aloud to me the feelings that were hiding in her diary.

When she returned from the loo, I had opened a bottle of wine and poured two glasses. As she sat on the couch across from me, I scooted forward and kissed her again, more softly this time.

"So, tell me about your day," I purred as I handed her a glass.

"It was fine," she answered. I waited for more, but she just sipped delicately and concentrated on the fire.

"Is Miss Weasley feeling better?" I finally prodded.

"A bit better, yes." She looked at me and smiled. "It's sweet of you to ask."

I nodded slightly, not wanting the conversation to become centered on her friends. "And how was your day at work?"

"It was actually quite wonderful!" She perked up a bit as she told me of the new books that had come in and the conversation she'd had with her managers. "They told me that they're going to allow me to implement the new inventory system I've been planning for the stock room."

"I certainly can't imagine a better candidate... You're the most organized person I've ever known."

"Thank you, Severus." She grinned, obviously pleased with the compliment. "It will save them an enormous amount of time. You should see the state of that back room right now. It's disgusting!"

She carried on with an impatient toss of her head, and I lost myself in watching her. I took stock of all the little things about her that I seemed to overlook these days: the tiny ring of gold around the outside of her irises; her way of sweeping her hair back over her shoulder, only to have it tumble forward again as she gestured emphatically; how she would close her eyes happily after each sip of wine, her lashes casting longer shadows on her cheekbones. *Does she ever do this?* I wondered to myself. *Take a moment to look at me as though it were the first time? As if we were strangers, not a couple so familiar with each other that each movement, each word was taken for granted?* As she spoke I found myself more drawn to her than I had been in ages. *Heaven help me*, I thought. *This woman will be my wife.*

"Hermione?" I interrupted her, and the expression on her face belied her annoyance.

"Yes?"

"I love you." I wanted to tell her so much more, to put into words how lucky I felt, how amazing it was that a woman like her would have found a way to breathe life into a forgotten soul. I couldn't.

The look of frustration melted from her face, and her eyes softened. "I love you too, Severus."

Leaning forward, I took her hand in mine and raised it to my mouth. After placing soft kisses on her fingers, I unfolded them, and placed another kiss on her palm. I traced a finger up the inside of her arm and felt her shiver in my grip.

"I want to make love to you," I whispered before running my tongue along the tender skin of her inner wrist. Gathering her close to me, I breathed into her hair and kissed her neck.

"Severus," she whimpered, eliciting a hungry growl from me. I was suddenly impatient to feel her warm skin against mine, to hear her cry my name. I kissed her hungrily, eager to taste the sweet evil of her mouth. My tongue swept against hers softly, its sultry wetness bringing to mind other hot, moist places. As I ran my hand down her hip, pulling her tighter against me, she moved her mouth from mine.

"I'm sorry, Severus," she sighed. "I'm just very tired. It was a long day. Could we just go to bed?"

"Don't," I whispered, then ran my tongue along the gentle dip at the base of her throat.

"Don't what?"

"Don't hide your feelings from me anymore." I tried to capture her lips again, but she pulled back in my arms.

"What do you mean, 'don't hide your feelings from me anymore?'"

I stroked her hair softly. "I just want you to know that whatever you feel, whatever you think, you should feel free to tell me." Cupping her chin in my hand, I kissed her gently this time and then stood up.

"I do not enjoy discussing your past, Hermione. I think you know that," I said, walking toward the fireplace. "But I also do not enjoy seeing you so... *restrained* emotionally. Although I'm sure I'm the last person you would ever suspect would be concerned about a *lack* of overt demonstrations." I chuckled, expecting her to join me, but she didn't, and my laugh was small and brittle sounding in the room. Hermione, for her part, simply sat on the couch with the same perplexed look on her face.

"I want you to know that even though we have never discussed it, I understand how difficult things must have been for you when Mr. Weasley died."

The wrinkle on her brow creased even further as she stared at me and said, "Arthur?"

I was not used to making grand declarations of feelings, and having to spell out what I meant to Hermione, of all people, agitated me even further.

"No, Hermione, not Arthur!" I snapped. "I'm talking about Ron!"

"Oh!" she exclaimed as she finally realized what I was saying. Then, more softly, "Oh." Tears filled her eyes, and she put her hand up to her trembling lips. "Ron," she whispered.

I knelt in front of her, touching her cheek. "This is what I'm speaking of, love. This. I know that you have endured such pain in your life... so much more than you ever should have had to... and I know that it has affected you in so many ways. It's made you afraid to be as open with others as you once were; I can see it in you every day, and I miss the way you used to be. I want you to know that you can be free with me. I may not reciprocate the way that you would like, it's true... but please don't let that stop you from being yourself with me."

She was shaking her head before I had even finished. "Severus, I've *always* been honest about my feelings for you. You *know* that I love you." Taking my hand in hers, she continued. "Where is this suddenly coming from, this ..."

"Tell me again. Now." I didn't care that I was interrupting her; I felt as though I could make some headway with her, and I wasn't going to be sidetracked now.

She opened and closed her mouth a few times, giving me a quizzical look before saying quietly, "I love you."

I shook my head impatiently. "*More*, Hermione! For God's sake, now is not the time for you to miraculously become a witch of few words!"

"I don't know what you want me to say!" she spluttered. "You want to know how I feel about you, and I tell you that I love you, and you tell me that it isn't enough!"

"Tell me how much you bloody love me! Tell me that you can't wait for the dawning of a new day so that you can see and touch me again! Tell me that I'm the love you've

been waiting for!"

She stared at me in confusion for a moment and then stepped back suddenly as realization crashed over her.

"You read my diary." Her voice was low and hollow, and for a moment I was more frightened in her presence than I had ever been in Voldemort's.

"Yes."

"You had no right."

In that instant, as she glared at me righteously with fire in her eyes and an unfamiliar disgust in her mouth, I felt completely lost. I held no secret, no power, nothing that she could want from me. I was nothing, and she was everything.

"Yes," I replied again, simply.

Looking away from me, she took several deep breaths and then spoke again.

"So you know."

I had known that she would be angry at my intrusion of her privacy as would anyone with half a brain yet I hadn't imagined her being so upset at my discovery of her most furtive emotions. Distress, perhaps embarrassment, yes... but anger? It didn't quite seem to fit.

"Yes, Hermione. I know."

As quickly as a moth passing its shadow over a light, all passion left her face. In time, I would remember that moment and wonder if she had learned it from me.

"Severus, I'm sorry..."

"I know you are," I answered, crossing swiftly to her and putting my hand on her arm, ignoring the way she flinched. "But you don't need to be sorry, Hermione. I just want you to understand that you don't have to hide these feelings from me!" At her look of confusion, I continued. "As I said before, I am not a man who is comfortable with showing my affection openly. That doesn't mean, however, that I would reject you showing yours. I love you for what you are, Hermione. I'm not looking for someone like me... even *I'm* not that masochistic. If you love me as much as you say you do in that diary, please know that I would love for you to tell me."

There was no sound in the room for a period of time, save for the crackling of the fire. Just as I was composing another way to get my point across in my head, Hermione spoke.

"Severus, did you read the whole diary?"

"No," I admitted, immediately wondering what further words of praise she had written about me in the unread pages. "I believe I left off somewhere in March."

She nodded, her eyes now focused on a point outside of the window. I strode behind her and carefully enfolded her in my arms, my chin resting on her head.

"I don't expect a change overnight, Hermione."

Setting her hand softly on mine, she sighed deeply. "Severus?"

"Yes?"

"Take me to bed."

And so I did. Our lovemaking that night was slower, more intimate and more romantic than I remembered it having been before. Hermione touched me sensuously, almost reverently, as I covered her body with mine. When I slid inside of her, she whispered my name over and over, her lips, tongue and hands rushing over me as though trying to leave no inch of my skin untouched, and when I stiffened and bucked, coming inside of her, her name a strangled groan escaping my lips, her eyes never left mine, almost as if she was trying to commit the moment to memory.

~\*~

The next morning, before she left for work, she quietly asked if I was planning to finish reading the diary.

"Yes," I said honestly. "I'm curious to see what else you've written about me."

She looked at me solemnly for a moment, then raised her hand to my cheek and said, "Well... I'll see you tonight, then."

"Enjoy your day," I murmured, leaning down to kiss her softly. "I love you."

"I love you, too, Severus. I always will."

I smiled at this little extra response. *Well, I thought to myself, she's already starting to make an effort. This is going to go better than I had hoped.*

I worked for several hours that morning on an experimental binding potion that I was trying to perfect for one of my clients. I wanted to go back to the diary, but I was determined to wait until lunchtime and read while I ate, as I had the day before. When the potion had reached a point where it had to simmer for some time, I decided to make myself a sandwich and resume my reading.

I took my lunch outside this time, to my seat on the porch that I so enjoyed. I'd never told Hermione how much that spot meant to me, but most of my affection for it stemmed from memories with her: sitting on my lap, kissing me softly; perched next to me in a chair of her own and reading quietly as dusk approached; sipping her tea and debating one topic or another with me as her eyes raked the grounds looking for Crookshanks. I'm sure that she thought I enjoyed the privacy of my morning ritual, sipping my coffee on the porch, but I doubt that she ever would have guessed that I spent most of that solitary time thinking about her.

I read slowly, leisurely, enjoying the warmth of the sun on my neck. I could hear Hermione's voice reading aloud the words on each page, and I found myself formulating responses to her in my mind, as though we were in the midst of conversation.

*For a long time I didn't want to allow myself to think about the future. I wasn't sure there would even be a future for me... for any of us. Now I find that I'm constantly looking forward. Forward to when we'll be together again, holding each other, able to touch and revel in the presence of the other.*

I know, my love; I look forward all day long to your return. It is when my heart feels most at home.

*I know how lucky I am to be in love with such a man and to have him love me back. It doesn't matter that he is not perfect... He is perfect for me, and I realize now that without him, I am not me.*

It's true, isn't it? I find it more and more difficult to remember a time when we were not together, when you were not the driving force in my life.

*There are times when I sit back and look at him and try to see him through the eyes of another woman. It is then that I realize how physically handsome he is, in a completely unbiased way!*

That may be going a bit far, my love. While I may have accepted that you, for some ungodly reason, find me attractive, I know that is not the general consensus. And I am fine with that, as long as you continue to see me the way you do.

*I love his whole body, but I am most infatuated with his face. The way his mouth quirks up when he's trying not to laugh, the gentle slope of his nose, the way his hair falls into his eyes... oh, those eyes! They are what entice me the most. I've always known they were fascinating, ever since my first year at Hogwarts, but I didn't realize just how amazing they are until much later! I can lose myself in them. They're such an amazing shade ...*

No.

Oh, gods, **no**.

~\*\*~

**Disclaimer:** Everything creative is JKR's. Everything sick and twisted is mine, all mine!

**Author's Notes:**

As always, I need to apologize for the delay in updating. This story rattled around in my head until I had to get it out, but while I had the beginning and end all planned out, the middle proved to be rather evasive. Plot bunnies... damn wascally wabbits!!

This story gets its title and plot line from the song "Diary" by the group Bread. They're a band from the 70's that I don't really know too much about, and I don't really like too much of their stuff. LOL. But this song has always seemed terribly poignant to me, and I found myself inspired. If you're not familiar with the song, please don't hunt it down just yet for the lyrics... It will kind of spoil the later part of the story for you. I'll include the lyrics in their entirety when the story is finished.

Snape is a bit OOC in this story, but I hope I've kept him from being too squishy. His complete adoration of Hermione is essential to the storyline.

Props to the hubby, as always. We suffered a bit of a personal loss around Christmas, and ... as usual ... he pulled me through it. And, being as four of my six cats are snuggling around me as I write this, I'm gonna throw a shout-out their way, too... big thanks (in age order) to Chunks, Skittles, Cartman, Schmooze, Smitty and Pandora. You guys rock! Now stop puking on the rug.

## Chapter 3

*Chapter 3 of 3*

Voldemort, Harry and Ron are gone. Snape and Hermione plan to marry, but something doesn't seem quite right about Hermione. And then Snape finds her diary underneath a tree...

*I love his whole body, but I am most infatuated with his face. The way his mouth quirks up when he's trying not to laugh, the gentle slope of his nose, the way his hair falls into his eyes... oh, those eyes! They are what entice me the most. I've always known they were fascinating, ever since my first year at Hogwarts, but I didn't realize just how amazing they are until much later! I can lose myself in them. They're such an amazing shade*

No.

Oh, gods, **no**.

~\*\*~

*of green.*

~\*~

My mind, sharply honed from years of secrecy and covertness, wasn't nearly capable of handling the myriad of emotions that flooded through me.

Nauseating disbelief.

Ferocious anger.

Debilitating fear.

And strangest of all an almost mollifying sense of relief because so much of it made sense now. So many little signs and clues that I had chosen to justify...

*When I first kissed her in the snow, it wasn't a snowflake that she wiped from her cheek.*

*She cried when we first made love and when I asked her to marry me... because I wasn't him.*

*The evenings out with Miss Weasley. She was with him.*

*All the times that she looked at me sadly... all the times that she didn't want to make love... all the words in the diary...*

All of it him.

None of it me.

~\*~



I was sitting on the couch when she returned home that evening. I don't really remember when I sat down there, no more than I remember what happened after I dropped the diary. I was vaguely aware that the room was darkened and cold; I had allowed the fire to die out at some point.

I don't know if Hermione was surprised to find me sitting there in the dark, but somehow I don't think she was. I heard her walk softly across the floor and sit down in the chair across from me. I continued staring at the same spot on the floor that had been holding my attention for Merlin knows how long.

"I'm sorry," she said after a few moments.

I couldn't bring myself to look at her. If I did and saw the sadness that I heard in her voice, it would mean that this was real.

"Severus?"

"How long?" I asked, unaware that I was going to say anything until it was already out. My voice was raspy and foreign to my ears.

"Last winter. Just after Christmas."

"How?"

"He came back," she answered simply.

Anger began to burn in the back of my throat, like a swallow of a particularly harsh drink.

"So he walks back into your life after leaving you years ago with no word, no goodbye and to you that is sufficient reason to destroy our relationship?"

"Severus..."

"You **bitch!**" I hissed, finally looking at her. She flinched visibly at my words, but held my gaze.

"You lied to me."

"Yes."

To her credit, she never once tried to make excuses.

"Well," I snarled, "apparently he was able to help you get over Weasley in a way that I was not."

"Severus, Ron and I were never a couple."

I glared at her. "Stop lying, Hermione. Just stop it! Gods, woman, haven't you lied to me enough?"

She was shaking her head before I finished speaking. "No, you don't understand, Severus. Ron was a... a cover. For us... Harry and me." I stared at her, understanding but not believing. "We knew that I was in enough danger as it was, just being Harry's friend. If anyone had known that we were..."

"Don't," I groaned.

"I'm sorry," she mumbled again.

"So all that time that everyone believed that you and Weasley were... together... it was really you and... Potter." My stomach churned as I said his name.

"Yes. No one knew except for Ron and Ginny."

"And then he just left you." I stood up and walked to the fireplace, staring down at the orange embers burning faintly underneath the ash. "He just up and left you, isn't that right?"

"Yes, but "

"No." I turned toward her and cut her off quickly. "I don't want to know what ridiculous reason he has given you for *abandoning* you, Hermione. I don't want to know what asinine drivel he dished up to get you to forgive him, and I most certainly do not want to know *how he lured you back into his bed!* By this point I had strode over to where she sat, leaning down to thrust my face into hers. "What I want to know is why you have continued to lie to me for all these months and pretend that you were going to marry me when you were **fucking HIM!**" I saw spittle fly from my mouth and land on her cheek, and for a moment it took all of my willpower not to draw up a mouthful of saliva and spit properly in her face.

She had pulled back from me instinctively, but now she looked at me pleadingly and softly answered, "Because I still intend to marry you, Severus."

Shocked, I stumbled backward and sat heavily on the couch. "You *what?*"

"If you'll still have me, of course," she quickly amended. "I love you, Severus."

I stared at her in disbelief. Did she honestly think that I would stay with her, marry her hell, did she think I would even *touch* her again now that I knew that she had been unfaithful to me? And with Potter, no less!

Rage had been simmering deep inside of me since I had realized that Hermione was writing in her diary not about me, but about James Potter's son. With that awareness came the further realization that history had repeated itself; I was losing Hermione to the son now, just as I had lost the mother to the father all those years ago.

I was mildly surprised to find that I wasn't nearly as angry at Potter as I was at Hermione... I almost expected it from him, but her act was one of ultimate betrayal. I wanted to lash out, to strike her, to hurt her as badly as she was hurting me. I'd been looking for an impassioned Hermione for ages; Now that I'd found her, her passion was directed at another... an act that I wouldn't have thought possible from a Gryffindor.

"How can you possibly say that you still love me?"

"Because it's true."

"And what do *you* know of *truth?*" I spat at her.

She sighed, and I remember a flare of shock at her audacity. *Oh, do excuse me*, I thought. *What nerve to expect you to explain yourself!*

"I don't really know how to make you understand this, Severus, but I do still love you. I never stopped loving you. I didn't realize before... well, before all of this... that it's possible to love two people at the same time, but I do. And I still want to marry you."

"Whom do you love more?"

"It's not like that," she explained, shaking her head. "I love you in very different ways. I can't..."

"You said that he is the love that you've been waiting for," I reminded her, my mouth bitter with her words. "That doesn't sound as though there's much question in your mind."

"Oh, Severus," she moaned, dropping her head into her hands, "I wish you'd never read that diary!"

"Really?" I sneered. "You seemed awfully careless about where you left it lying about. If I wished to psychoanalyze you, I might think that you wanted to be found out."

"I didn't. Maybe I did... I don't know. I've been telling Harry that I have to stop seeing him. I know I do."

The part of my heart that she had awoken twinged at the pain in her voice. I looked at her sitting there, her head bowed and shoulders slumped, and I realized that things would never, ever be the same. I would never be able to look at her again without knowing that she had lied to me, ruining the life that we had planned together. Never again would I hold her and think about our future, looking forward to a lifetime of peace and contentment.

On the heels of that, the understanding that I would never hold her again, period.

"Oh, gods, Hermione... *why?*" I could not keep the anguish from my voice as I covered my face with my hands.

"I'm sorry. I'm so, so sorry!" she sobbed. "We can work it out, can't we, Severus? Please, tell me that we can try."

"No." My voice was no more than a whisper; harsh, grating air pulled from my body. "No. The thought of you being with him sickens me! I can't stand to look at you anymore, Hermione! Get out! **Get out!**"

"Severus, *no!*" she cried out, running to kneel before me. "No, please don't!"

I stared down at her, and images rose unbidden to my mind. Hermione, her back arched beneath Potter's sweaty body... Potter kneeling behind her, his hands grasping her hips... Hermione's hair spilling over his lap as her mouth...

"NO!" I wailed, pushing her away from me. "No, Hermione! I can't!"

The room was quiet except for her soft sobbing. I thought of all the nights that we had spent in that room: quietly reading in front of the fire; talking late into the night; making love on more than one occasion, the flames lighting up our glistening skin so that we seemed to make each other glow. I remembered one winter night during a blizzard, when Hermione surprised me with a picnic dinner on the floor. My eyes burned as I realized that now she would be doing small acts of love such as that for Potter.

And just like that, it came to me.

She didn't want to leave. I didn't have to let her go.

I could still win.

"You will not see him again," I stated coldly, my back to her. "You and I will marry, as we had planned, and you will NEVER see him again."

"Yes, Severus."

"You will not speak of him in my presence. And if you wish to see *Miss Weasley* again, it will be at our home, under my supervision."

"Yes. All right."

I walked back over and stood in front of her. "You must understand that I cannot trust you to keep your job, correct?" At her nod, I continued. "You will give your two weeks notice tomorrow. For those two weeks, I will place a tracking charm on you, to make sure that you go nowhere except the bookstore and back. Is that clear?"

"Yes." She looked up at me, her eyes puffy and red, her skin pale. "Severus..." She reached out to touch my face and I stepped back.

"One more thing, Hermione: You will not share my bed until I am prepared to allow you back into it."

I left her standing there, alone.

~\*~

The day of the wedding could not have been more perfect if it had been charmed to be so. At least, that is what I heard guests say repeatedly as I walked through the crowd. I did have to agree that it was a truly spectacular setting. The ceremony would take place in a small clearing in the woods, and the trees were in the full splendor of their fall foliage. A white trellis was set in the clearing, decorated in climbing roses of varying shades of pink, yellow and peach. The sky above was a clear, cerulean blue that only amplified the red, gold and orange of the forest.

I stood off to the side for a few minutes, watching Molly Weasley as she mingled amongst the others. She was in her element, acting as Hermione's surrogate mother, making sure that all of the last-minute preparations were ready and that everyone was having a good time. She looked happier than I had seen her since she had lost her husband and son.

From the corner of my eye, I saw the Matrimony Wizard approach the trellis, signaling that the ceremony was about to begin. I quickly hurried over to take my place.

Hermione had chosen Ginny Weasley to be her only attendant, and she walked slowly down the aisle, the emerald green robes she wore setting off her crimson hair and fair skin. She smiled confidently toward me, her eyes shining with obvious pleasure for her friend.

And then I saw Hermione.

She glided down the aisle on the arm of Bill Weasley, and she took my breath away. Her robes were an iridescent champagne color, her hair loose and flowing around her shoulders. Tiny peach-colored flowers were woven into her curls, and she carried a small bouquet of tiger-lilies and pink roses. Her cheeks glowed, her eyes sparkled, and the smile on her face would have been worth fighting another war for.

I couldn't take my eyes off of her as the ceremony proceeded. I heard the words that the Matrimony Wizard spoke, but nothing reached my line of vision except for the woman in front of me. When it came time for her to recite her vows, I took in every line of her face, promising myself that I would remember the moment forever. And then it was my turn.

I listened carefully to the words that I was to repeat, and then I looked at Hermione and opened my mouth.

She never heard me, of course. I simply whispered them under my breath as Harry held her hands and spoke them aloud.

In the end, you see, I hadn't been able to do it.

I wanted to keep her with me, to make her love me more than she loved him, to win this battle with Potter that I felt like I had been waging nearly all my life. But when it

came right down to it, I could not. I thought of her growing older, the light gone from her, being little more than a slave to me. As much as she claimed to love me, I knew that it would turn to resentment, and she would go through her life bitter... unhappy... and never be the Hermione that I had wanted so desperately to revive. I realized that keeping her with me would be even worse than losing her.

When it came right down to it, I loved her too much to make her stay.

The next morning, when she had awoken on the sofa near the fire, I'd been sitting near her. She had looked at me with a measure of sadness in her eyes that hadn't been there before, and I'd known that I was making the right decision.

As it turned out, Hermione had instilled some Gryffindor courage in me after all.

Leaning forward, I had brushed the hair back from her forehead. "Go, Hermione. You don't belong here."

We had held each other and cried, and when she'd reached up to kiss me, I had wound my fingers in her hair and committed her taste, touch and smell to memory. Later that morning, as I'd stood with her at the door to the house, feeling a pain in my chest that I knew would never completely fade away, she had placed another kiss in my palm, folded my fingers around it and said, "It was never you, Severus. There was nothing that you lacked, nothing that you didn't give to me. It was just supposed to be Harry."

And so it came to pass that I stood there in the clearing that day; not under the trellis as I had thought I would be, but off to the side; a trespasser looking in. Though Invisibility Cloaks are notorious for distorting the wearer's view, mine was specially charmed that day to allow me to see in crystal clarity the woman I loved marrying another. I looked at Hermione's eyes as Harry spoke to her, and I put every trace of feeling that I had left inside of me into the words I quietly mouthed.

"I, Severus, take you Hermione to be my wife."

*Holding her in my arms as we danced...*

"I will be faithful to you and honest with you..."

*Her laughter ringing through the house...*

"...I will respect, trust, help and care for you..."

*The touch of her hand on my cheek...*

"... I will forgive you as we have been forgiven..."

*Every kiss...*

"... I will try with you to better understand ourselves and the world..."

*Every smile...*

"...and I promise..."

*Every thing I'll never get a chance to tell her...*

"...that I will love you forever."

I looked away when they kissed.

When the applause had died down and the music started back up, I knew that the ceremony was over. I turned for one last look at Hermione, and although it could well have been my imagination I swear she turned back and looked directly at me. Smiling sadly, she mouthed, "Thank you."

And then she was gone.

~\*~

The house seems much larger, much quieter. I still do my work and enjoy my reading. I go out occasionally, usually for dinner with Minerva, and even went so far as to adopt myself a cat; an ornery, ugly old black tom that I named Nox. Life has continued on.

I think of Hermione every day, and I hope that she is happy. I know that there will never be another woman in my life. It is not a dramatic, sweeping statement; rather, it is a truth I feel deep inside what remains of my heart. Trying to give myself to someone else would be no fairer than keeping Hermione here with me would have been.

Maybe someday I will reach a point where I can invite someone to my house... perhaps for lunch, or even just to talk. Maybe we will walk the grounds, and I will show them the different plants and herbs I grow for my potions.

And if they see the chair on the porch, and ask me why I no longer sit out there, I will see her face, and I will smile.

You see, she was the love that I had waited for.

THE END.

~\*\*~

## LYRICS

*I found her diary underneath a tree.*

*And started reading about me.*

*The words she'd written took me by surprise*

*You'd never read them in her eyes.*

*They said that she had found the love she'd waited for.*

*Wouldn't you know it, she wouldn't show it.*

*When she confronted with the writing there,*

*simply pretended not to care.*

*I passed it off as just in keeping with*

*her total disconcerting air.*

*And though she tried to hide*

*the love that she denied,*

*wouldn't you know it, she wouldn't show it.*

*And as I go through my life, I will give to her, my wife,*

*all the sweet things I can find.*

*I found her diary underneath a tree*

*and started reading about me.*

*The words began to stick and tears to flow;*

*her meaning now was clear to see.*

*The love she'd waited for was someone else not me.*

*Wouldn't you know it, she wouldn't show it.*

*And as I go through my life, I will wish for her, his wife,*

*All the sweet things she can find.*

*All the sweet things they can find.*

"Diary" by Bread

Disclaimer: Not mine. Not yours, either.

Author's Notes:

This song has always seemed terribly poignant to me, and I found myself inspired. Although I've included the lyrics, I highly suggest you find a copy of the song and listen to it... the music and the singer's voice make it all the more powerful.

Snape is a bit OOC in this story, but I hope I've kept him from being too squishy. His complete adoration of Hermione was essential to the storyline.

I, too, was lucky enough to find the love I'd waited for; thankfully, I was also his. I don't tell him that I love him nearly enough. And I swear to God this is true as I sat here at work, typing that last line, an arrangement of 36 beautiful petite roses were delivered to my desk, with a very lovely card from my hubby! It's not even a special occasion... he just wanted me to know how special he thinks I am. \*sigh\* Back off, ladies! He's **MINE!** The wedding vows I used are very similar to ours a combination of traditional Lutheran vows and our own creations.

I hope you've all enjoyed this story. I apologize if I haven't responded to your review, but I swear that I read and cherish every single one of them. Thank you!

And now, back to "To Be a Hero!"