

It Happened in Slow Motion

by sdragon19

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: Before we get started, you should know that this is not a happy story. Read the warnings! I hope you enjoy this little plot bunny and please take the time to review.

It happened in slow motion, his body flying backwards into open space before landing with a sickening thud on the cold, damp ground. Severus hadn't seen it coming; the hex had hit him straight in the chest, but still he hadn't seen it, hadn't anticipated it. Everyone knows death will come knocking one day, and Severus had known that this day would be the one. The day Harry Potter faced the Dark Lord. He didn't know when it would come, the exact date of the final battle, but he knew he would never see the end. He felt he was born for this day, the day he would die as though it was his purpose. He had anticipated it; not in the usual way that one anticipates death, Severus had courted it. He did all that he could to call it to him. How he had wanted it, but now--now that it was finally upon him, how he wished it wasn't so.

He lay on the ground, bruised and broken, like a doll discarded by an angry child. He could hear the battle raging on all around him, but no one paid him any attention. It was telling that no curses were flying at him, the opposition knowing he was as good as dead, and his allies not caring one way or the other. His vision was blurred with pain and the darkness that precedes death. He struggled against it, his eyes darting around, looking for something to focus on. He didn't want this anymore--death. Despite the pain wracking his body, he didn't want to go. He wouldn't let himself slip away into that darkness. He tried to move, but his body wouldn't respond. Lying on his back, all that he could see was the cloudy gray sky.

Then it appeared above him, an apparition, an angel. Severus could see her lips moving, but he couldn't hear her. He looked into her brown eyes, full with tears, and he felt an unbelievable sense of calm--it was like he was home. She stroked his cheek with her fingers, and he longed to turn into her touch. To turn towards that warmth, but he couldn't. As he stared at her, he felt his body relax, the pain melting away, his fears dissolved. Severus knew in his heart that she was telling him it was all right, to just let go. He didn't want to leave her, this angel that came to him, but it was time. His birthright was upon him, and it was his duty to die, to let go of this life. He kept her face in his sight for as long as possible before the pain overtook him and his eyes fluttered closed.

Hermione watched Severus Snape fall, a wayward curse striking him in the chest with a brilliant flash of red. She should have felt elated, victorious as enemy number two was felled, but she didn't. She felt her heart stop as his body tumbled backwards. Her attention was diverted by a hex from a faceless Death Eater, and she narrowly avoided it by dodging to the side. Hermione whirled and aimed a curse back, hitting the Death Eater and causing him to collapse on the ground. Quickly she bound and disarmed him before spinning back around and searching for the spot where Snape had fallen. She spotted him lying in a heap on the ground twenty feet away. Her eyes briefly searched the battlefield, searching for anyone else who had seen the ex-Potions professor fall. Everyone was too deeply involved in their own fighting, and no one seemed to care that a man was lying there, injured, perhaps dead. She shouldn't have cared either, but she had to go to him. She was compelled as if an external force was drawing her to the spot where he lay. It seemed to take an eternity before she made it to his body as everything around her rushed past, but she felt like she was moving in slow motion.

Hermione resisted the urge to throw herself upon his body, not wanting to risk adding to his injury. She looked down into his face and could see his eyes still open, darting back and forth, but blank as though he wasn't really seeing anything. She felt a clawing begin in her gut and work its way up to her throat as she let out a howl of emotion. She tried to comfort him with words, nonsensical reassurances that she wasn't even sure he could hear. Her heart skipped a beat every time his eyelashes fluttered, fear gripping her as she waited for his black eyes to focus on her again.

Hermione knew he was going to die, there was no way around it--he was bleeding too profusely, and there was no way to get him anywhere safe, but still she couldn't bring herself to leave his side. She felt compelled to stay with him until he was gone, and she couldn't explain why.

She cried as his breathing became more and more shallow, as each time his eyes closed, they stayed closed for longer. Deep inside of her she knew that she was losing something important. She knew that with the last breath this man drew, something inside of her would die as well. She was mourning for something she never had the chance to have, for the loss of possibility. Reason had no place there as Hermione reached out one shaky hand and stroked her ex-professor's face. She followed the line of his jaw and ran a fingertip over his lips. She smoothed his hair back from his face and looked into his eyes. She hoped that she was bringing him some sort of comfort in his final minutes, but she couldn't tell.

She thought she saw his lips turn up just a bit as he breathed his last raspy breath, and his dark eyes failed to open again. Hermione felt the tears falling freely down her cheeks, but made no attempt to rid herself of them. She should have been glad he was gone, but she wasn't. She couldn't have explained it, but she knew that before he died her future, the future she should have had if not for this war. She laid down next to Severus' body and wept, ignoring the battle going on around her. Hermione was found there hours later, still weeping beside the body of Severus Snape.