

Couplets

by Bambu

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Chapter 1 of 1

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These characters and the wizarding world of Harry Potter are not mine, and I make no profit -- other than personal satisfaction -- from playing with them.

Set One

Wind rustled through trees surrounding the vale he now called home. Before his exile, autumn had been his favorite season. Now it reminded him of her.

Dancing sunlight played tag amidst bronzing leaves, and he remembered how she would giggle -- that childish sound which abruptly became musical, womanly laughter.

He closed his eyes against the sharp ache in his heart. He would never have expected her to leave everything she'd fought for just to be with a broken, bitter, reviled man.

Yet when he opened his eyes to look at the small field, his vision was blurred by unshed tears.

~o0o~

"Point Me!" Her wand spun merrily.

It was a child's spell, one she'd learned years ago ... before the last of her innocence had been brutally sundered ... before long periods of hard-scrabble survival. She'd learned then that childhood spells could be modified.

She'd twisted this spell to suit her purposes even as she'd twisted his hair (meticulously preserved) around the end of her ebony wand. Once she'd carried a whippy vine wood wand, but she'd long ago ceased to be that girl.

Now she was a woman searching for her heart. She'd given it to him for safekeeping.

~o0o~

Set Two

Snow blanketed the ground and roof of his home. Writhing smoke curled from the chimney into the gloomy day.

Within the snug cabin he sat before the fireplace staring into the crackling flames, his mood a complement to the stormy weather.

He had found one of her hair ribbons that morning, hidden amongst his oldest books. Such a small scrap of crimson --it had brought him to his knees.

That life was over; faded memories which kept metaphorical demontors at bay.

He fingered the velveteen.

He should burn it.

It would be easier to throw himself onto a funeral pyre.

~o0o~

What was he doing in Alaska?

Her breath seemed to freeze in her lungs. It was akin to the coating on her heart.

He was out there . . . somewhere . . . close. Her wand had held steadily in one direction for a se'nnight.

She stared into the roiling cloudbank of an approaching storm. It reminded her of him, and it like him - hindered her progress.

Every galleon, every sickle she could scrape together funded her search, and she utilized each vacation, sick day, even floating holidays. There was only one week left of this year's allotment.

She could wait out the storm.

~o0o~

Set Three

Deft hands chopped fungi for a simple frittata she had once taught him to make. It was like hitting a bruise; sharply painful but re-affirming.

Why hadn't he asked her to accompany him?

Long fingers plucked sage from a small potted plant.

She was the golden lioness, beloved of their people; right hand to the martyred Boy Who Triumphed.

They never would have let her go.

He should have asked her anyway.

Pungent herbs and mushrooms scented the air.

Come spring he was going back. He'd wait on her parents' doorstep until he got her answer, one way or another.

~o0o~

The day dawned clear and crisp. It was the last day before she'd have to admit defeat and return to England.

She nervously paid her hotel bill.

At the edge of town she cast a series of quick charms, then she was aloft: Disillusioned and astride Harry's old Firebolt.

Her wand pointed the way, unwavering.

Hours later, she could no longer feel the broomstick, but in the near distance she saw smoke lazing toward blue sky.

A small beacon.

Its source was a snow-covered cabin in a vale surrounded by wild forest.

The ebony wand spun; her throat was tight.

~o0o~

Set Four

While savoring the aromatic egg dish he wielded a quill, calculating his meager savings. The total was far from encouraging.

Eyes of burnt umber stared unfocused at the fire, his mind racing as fast as a Snitch.

Then unexpectedly his wards -- the magical equivalent of a Muggle doorbell - were tripped. Within seconds he cast an Identity Revealing Spell.

Blood roared in his ears.

Christ!

It was her!

He knocked the chair to the floor in his scramble to the door, remembering himself enough to demand the password.

The response was wry, her voice achingly familiar. "It's Millicent Bulstrode's bloody cat."

~o0o~

She almost laughed with joy when she heard him demand the password. They had only ever needed one.

As she landed, stumbling a little, the door opened to reveal Severus Snape.

Her heart almost stopped.

He was different. He stood taller, his shoulders squared, his hair pulled back in a queue. God, she'd missed him.

Mouth dry, she kicked her way through the snow and he stepped onto the broad covered porch.

Neither spoke as she climbed the snow-dusted steps, the intensity of his stare holding her attention. She dropped the broomstick at his feet.

And then she slapped him.

~o0o~

Set Five

His head snapped to the side with the impact of her hand. Part of him exulted that she'd touched him while another part called him a perverted sod.

She was panting, her breath puffs of steam; tendrils of hair encrusted in ice had escaped her hat. He'd never seen anything so beautiful.

He rubbed his face and said ruefully, "I suppose you think I deserved that?"

"You did."

She shuddered and he felt like a brute leaving her in the frigid day. "Would you like to come in?"

Her eyes flashed before she brushed past him and entered his home.

~o0o~

A cheery fire blazed in the large fireplace of the one-room cabin. Under a loft was an open kitchen and in one corner stood a small table with a chair knocked to its side. Everywhere she looked were piles of books.

Involuntarily she smiled.

Stripping off her heavy outerwear, Hermione crossed to the fire then turned to look at him. Her handprint blossomed on his pale cheek and his eyes were on her.

He'd once, briefly, been an open book to her. Now it was difficult read his expression.

She bit her lip, her emotions roiling. "Am I actually welcome?"

~o0o~

Set Six

Without thought or deliberation he crossed the room in two strides and pulled her into a fierce clinch. "You don't know?"

Her arms embraced him like bands of metal around a cask of preserved Billywig stingers, but her voice trembled. "You left. You left me behind."

There were new lines around her mouth and fatigue smudged her eyes. Guilt clawed at him. "I couldn't ask you to come with me."

"Why not?" She tilted her chin.

His words were dry as dust. "It wasn't appropriate."

"Appropriate?"

He closed his eyes. "I was exiled. How could I ask you to come?"

~o0o~

She wrenched herself free of his embrace and stared into the fire. His obvious lack of faith was excruciating. "I had no idea you thought so little of me. I thought we had enough . . . er . . . I thought we would have a life together . . . after the end."

His voice was low. "That's not it. I didn't know how to ask. For so long my existence was precarious I didn't hope for exoneration. I thought you'd decide I was a transient phase."

"I see." She imagined her trampled heart lying on the floor, bleeding out. "You didn't believe in me at all."

~o0o~

Set Seven

He felt like a seventh year, all awkward angles and stammered words. He restrained the impulse to reach for her. He loathed these sorts of discussions. Other than Albus Dumbledore he'd never had one.

"How stupid of me." She shook her head. "You didn't want me enough."

"No! That's not it!" He clenched his fists. "I couldn't believe I was worth living in exile for."

Her expression triggered an epiphany.

If she had left him, given the same circumstances, he would've hated her. She, in turn, had every reason to hate him.

The thought was worse than an Unforgivable.

~o0o~

As if a glamour had dissolved, his every emotion crossed his expressive face, clouding his blackbird eyes.

She recognized, *knew*, this wizard. "Would you have wanted me to leave *you* without a word?"

"You've every right to hate me, Hermione." His head bowed.

Comprehension then exultation raced through her. She took a step; his head snapped up. "I don't hate you, Severus."

A pine bough crackled in the fire, the scent of burnt resin filling the air. He eyed her cautiously.

She touched his reddened cheek delicately. "I came to find my heart. I gave it to you years ago."

~o0o~

Set Eight

Somehow he'd lost the ability to muster sufficient disdain for his incipient happiness, and he was amused that after everything they'd said she now looked nervous.

Perfect front teeth clamped on a plump chapped lip.

"How did you find me?" He leaned into her, palms slick with anticipation.

She glanced through her eyelashes, captivating him. "Guile and cunning."

He laughed then. It was rich and heartfelt, and her answering smile lit the room.

"A witch after my own heart." He cupped her face. "Tell me everything."

She pressed closer. "It will take awhile."

"I have nothing but time."

"Excellent."

~o0o~

Reminding her that this was real life, not some subconscious imaginary conjuring, her stomach growled. She blushed.

"When did you last eat?"

"Yesterday. I was too nervous today. I was supposed to depart tomorrow."

Abruptly his arms dropped and his voice was like a whip. "Was this a game?"

"No! Severus, no." Reacting instantly, she captured his hands. "I'll send an owl giving my notice."

His eyes met hers. "Do you mean it?"

"I meant it before you left. Nothing has changed except I'll need some reassurance that you want me, that I'm welcome to share your life."

~o0o~

Set Nine

He crushed his mouth to hers, devouring her lips in a possessive declaration. Freeing his hands from hers, he threaded long fingers through her hair, angling her head for a deeper reassurance.

Moments passed.

Tongues rediscovered sensitive places, tasting the flavors of mushrooms and eggs and sage.

When they broke apart his breathing was ragged and his voice husky. "Is that welcome enough?"

Before she could answer her stomach growled again.

He laughed. "Perhaps if I feed you?"

"Hmmm?" Hermione seemed focused on his mouth.

Unexpectedly a bubble of sheer vanity rose in his chest and he kissed her again.

~o0o~

"Will you tell me while I cook?"

"Certainly." She told him about the past three lonely years while hungrily watching his every move. His graceful movements fed her starving soul. He chopped mushrooms and whisked eggs.

"This Valentine's Percy Weasley told me you were across the pond. Only he thought it was Canada."

"Weasley?" He heated the pan before glancing at her, one brow raised in query.

"Surprising, isn't it?"

"Indeed."

"He credits you with saving his wife's life."

"He would be correct."

"I know." Gladness filled her when he placed her dinner on the table. He'd remembered her recipe.

~o0o~

Set Ten

Hours later, they were seated side-by-side on the sofa facing the fireplace.

"... and then I saw the cabin."

Remorse bit him hard. "How can you forgive me? How can you be here?"

Her eyes gleamed like amber in the firelight. "It's easy now that I know you still care--"

"Jesus, Hermione. You know it's more than that."

"I love you, Severus. I have for a long time, but you've never"

"I've never said the words to anyone." The expression on her face was revealing. He swallowed hard. "But if I were to say them, it would be to you."

~o0o~

Tears welled in her eyes.

He pulled her onto his lap, and she felt his voice resonate. "I've little practice baring my . . . feelings."

"The word isn't poisonous," she scoffed, then sobered. "I'm sorry. It has been for you, hasn't it?"

His eyes were closed, mouth set in a grim line.

Abruptly she straddled him, holding his saturnine face between her hands. "I'm not playing. I love you. Whether you say it is immaterial. If you want me permanently," her voice broke, then his eyes met hers with overwhelming intensity, "or even for a short time --"

He latched onto her mouth.

~o0o~

Set Eleven

When the kiss ended her hair was wildly disheveled. He'd never wanted her so much, even that first time. "If I could bind you for eternity, I might."

Her fingers trembled as they traced his lips, their touch igniting a surge of white-hot heat in his groin.

"All right."

"You'd be willing to make this official?"

Hermione sucked his left earlobe into her mouth, little teeth nibbling just the way he craved. Then she murmured, "Today, if possible. You've made me wait three years to start our life."

"Tomorrow," he said, practically growling. "We have other plans this night."

~o0o~

Hermione moaned when his hands shifted her hips. His need was a hard bulge at the apex of her thighs and she could barely think.

He was hers. He was -- his hands were touching, gliding, slipping beneath the lace of her bra.

Her head bowed at the exquisite sensations of calloused fingers on satin-smooth skin, nipples contracting under the onslaught of his knowing, once-familiar touch.

"Oh, yes! Severus! Here or . . . the bed?" She stuttered and ground her hips against him.

His voice was dark and deep, and it reminded her of nights past. "Here. Now."

~o0o~

Set Twelve

He savagely pulled her jumper and t-shirt off then practically ripped the bra from her torso.

Too long. It had been too long.

She stood abruptly before slipping off her jeans and knickers.

Much too long.

Golden light gilded her pale skin.

He shucked his own clothes swiftly, without care.

The aroma of her desire was as seductive as the Dark Arts and he slid to his knees before her. His hands found their way to hips and breasts, his long nose nuzzling the curls protecting her most intimate places.

"Severus," she moaned.

It felt as if he'd been reborn.

~o0o~

Her fingers threaded through his hair, finding, releasing the ribbon containing it. She'd waited so long, through anguish and doubt. She started to shake.

"Hermione?" He raised his head, dark eyes searching hers.

"I love you," she whispered before folding to the floor, meeting him on equal ground.

He groaned while pulling her possessively closer. She kissed him.

Within seconds, she was on her back and he was poised above her. "Are you sure?" he asked.

She growled and cinched her legs around his arse. His chuckle was a caress and she snarled, "Now, Severus!"

And then they were one.

~o0o~

Fin