

The Best Decision

by Southern_Witch_69

Hermione asks Severus to make a decision about their relationship. Will she agree with his answer?

Only Chapter

Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer:Not my characters...unfortunately!

This was written for a friend's birthday...CocoaChristy! It was on the fifth of February. Sorry this is late, doll.

"Severus, we can't keep doing this...sneaking around, I mean. People are bound to find out sooner or later," she whispered as she held him tightly, his spent and naked body still atop hers after their frantic coupling.

The sigh was long and tired. "We've been through this before," he began, "and we cannot allow our intimate relationship to become known."

"I..." She paused, uncertain if she should say what she felt.

"Yes, I know," he said after a long silence. "But it isn't enough."

Tears stung her eyes immediately. He knew that she loved him, and yet it wasn't enough for him, wasn't enough to encourage him to face the world. It was painfully obvious that her deep feelings were one sided. Oh, she was sure that he cared, but it simply wasn't the same. Could she carry on with things even though she knew she was headed only for despair? Could she continue to give him her heart and body for nothing?

A sob broke free the instant the answer came to her. *No. No, she could not and would not.*

"You are right," she murmured sadly, pressing her lips to his dampened temple. "It isn't enough."

As gently as she could, she slid out from beneath him and pulled away from the hands attempting to hold her. She quickly went about the business of retrieving her strewn clothing and repairing the buttons on her blouse.

"Hermione," he said softly.

"I've got to get back before someone notices I've been gone far too long." The bitterness was evident in her voice, but she no longer cared. He was astute if nothing and likely knew he'd hurt her with his words. There was no reason to hide it...or her anger.

"Don't leave like this," he said. The sheets of the bed rustled as he moved off of it, coming to stand behind her, placing his arms about her waist and his chin on her right shoulder. "I didn't mean to hurt you."

"Well, you did," she replied evenly, proud that her voice didn't break. This time it was her turn to sigh. "Severus, this is going nowhere. I can't keep doing this...as much as I want to." She turned to face him, mustering all the courage she had. "I love you, and I want a life with you. I don't care what anyone thinks about it. If you honestly don't want that or think that you will never want that, we have to end things, and it would be best to do that now before I get hurt too much... while we can still be friends."

"It isn't only your feelings I am considering," he said, dropping his hands from her body and stepping back.

"Oh, yes, I know you are thinking of your..."

"What of your daughter?" he asked heatedly. "She is whom I am speaking of, and you know that!"

"Veronica is will be six in two months. She's a mature girl for her age," she said firmly. "She has accepted her father's marriage and loves her half brother most affectionately."

"I am certain Weasley's new wife is much more... appealing than I could ever be."

"You are such a stubborn man! Didn't you see the way she smiled at you when you came over last weekend to retrieve those books? I don't think Ron's ever read her a story before." She bent over to push her shoes on before saying, "And I think she knows I fancy you. She's said..."

"Said what?" he asked, moving even farther away from her.

"Ronnie said that she wished I would remarry like her daddy did and maybe..." She chuckled nervously. "And maybe give her a little sister. She pointed out that you might want the job."

His form went rigid, his gaze became cool, and he turned to face the mirror, seemingly gazing at his reflection. He said nothing.

"Severus?" When she saw his head bow, she felt a pang of guilt. "I'm sorry. I'm not trying to pressure you, but I'm only trying to argue my point against yours." Locating her purse, she quickly grabbed it and moved to stand behind him, placing her cheek against the bare flesh of his back momentarily and then pressing a kiss against his shoulder. "I'm going to go to my flat first before going to the Burrow to get Ronnie. I don't want her to see me like this."

"All right," he said quietly.

"Look. This all came out wrong." Lowering her voice to hide her sadness, she added, "I meant what I said, and I'll give you time to think about things. Whatever you'd like. Really. I'll be good with it. Just be honest with me...and yourself."

When he said nothing in reply, she fled his chambers in defeat, wondering if she could live with the decision to end things with him *it's not right for me to keep on seeing him if it will only end in disaster. That would ultimately hurt my daughter as well. Maybe he's right.* Once in the clear of the castle's wards, she Disapparated.

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An hour and a half later, Hermione entered the Burrow's door, a small gift bag in her hand. "Molly?" she called as she opened the door. "Oh! Hi, Luna! I didn't know you would be here," Hermione greeted.

"We hadn't planned on it, but something amazing happened," she said, beaming brightly.

Molly smiled and held a hand out to Hermione. "Come and sit with us, dear. What's that you've got there?" she asked, nodding to the small bag Hermione was holding.

"Oh, actually I was going to leave this here for you to give to Graham...from his big sister, of course. Veronica dotes on him." She looked around. "Uh, where's Ronnie?"

Luna cut in, taking the gift. "Thank you, Hermione. I appreciate that, and I'm sure Ron will, too."

Nodding, Molly said, "I'm so happy that we can all still get on like this." Tears were in her eyes as she gazed at both of the women before her. "My boy sure can pick good women, he can."

Hermione loved Molly and was glad that she was still treated as part of the family...even after Ron remarried and his new wife gave birth to another grandchild. "That means a lot to me as well." Clearing her throat, she looked at Luna. "You said something amazing happened?"

"Graham is walking now! Took his first steps earlier, and we wanted to show the family."

"Oh, that's great," Hermione said with a smile. "It's such a fun time for them."

High-pitched giggling pulled Hermione's attention away from the women before her. "Is Ronnie off with Ron and Graham? That sounded like her."

"Ron and the baby are in the living room with Arthur. We were just in here for small talk while the tea's brewing," Molly said before winking at Luna. "You'll find Veronica out back in the garden."

"Chasing gnomes, is she?"

"Something like that, yes," Molly said mysteriously.

Wanting to see what her daughter was about, Hermione went out back, following the sound of laughter. What she saw made her stop and draw a hand up to mouth in surprise. Severus was sitting on a bench, animatedly reading a story to her daughter and causing her to giggle with glee. Heart pounding, Hermione walked closer until she was before them. She was uncertain on what to say, so she decided to let him speak first. If he had come to her...in front of her family like this...it could only mean one thing. *God, I hope so.*

"Mummy!" Veronica said excitedly. "Look who's come to see me! And he's got my favorite book!"

"I see that," she said, reaching down to scoop up the excited girl. "You seem to be having fun."

"Uh-huh!"

When she scrambled down and sat beside Severus again, Hermione's eyes met his. "This is a surprise."

"I... I thought it might be," he said with a note of uncertainty in his voice. "After you left, I thought about what you said, and I came to the conclusion that we should do a little more talking."

"That's right!" Veronica interrupted. "He came to talk to me." She pointed to herself with both thumbs, a smug look on her face.

"Did he now?"

"Uh-huh. He wanted to ask me something very important!"

"Is that right?"

It was Severus who answered. "I told her that I fancy her mum and wanted to make certain it was all right with her, as I didn't want her to think I was trying to come between the two of you."

"And you know what I said, Mummy?"

"What, love?"

"I said that I'm glad he's going to come make you happy again! Happy like Daddy and Luna and Graham!"

"Will you be happy?" Hermione asked, though she knew that answer and could easily see her daughter's approval.

"I like Severus," she stated bluntly, adding, "and I like his books, too."

Grinning, Hermione knelt before her daughter and kissed her affectionately. "Thank you, but maybe you shouldn't call him Severus."

"He said I could," Ronnie said, casting a sideways glance at Severus. "Daddy lets me call Graham's Mum by her name."

"We've agreed that Severus is fine," he assured Hermione, taking her hand.

Veronica slipped down from the bench. "I'm going to tell Gran the good news!" Before Hermione could say anything to stop her, she sprinted off towards the house.

"Severus?" Hermione questioned, feeling her emotions threatening to overcome her.

He simply nodded. "I didn't want to be without you, and after you told me what she said... I had to see for myself."

"But are *you* sure?"

He graced her with one of his rare, broad smiles before leaning closer to press his lips against hers softly. Pulling back minutely, he whispered, "I am in love with you, too."

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**Southern's Notes:** My friend Christy enjoys a slight touch of angst, heartfelt moments, children in stories with this couple, and happy endings. I know she wouldn't mind a bit of PWP, but I thought this would be something better. I swiped the little girl's name (Veronica, Ronnie for short) from one of Christy's stories. Happy birthday to you, Christy. You're one of my closest friends and always around when I need you. I appreciate that more than you know.