

... It Tolls for Thee

by melusin

A series of 100 word drabbles, written for the Grangersnape100 Community, 'Hogwarts: A History' Challenge. This is the 'baby' fic I swore I'd never write.

Drabble Series

Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: All characters belong to JK Rowling (although, I'd be happy to share Severus on alternate weekends). No money has changed hands, whatsoever.

A/N: Much thanks to Wickedlywanton for the beta.

Hermione snuggled down into her snuggly duvet with Crookshanks curled up beside her. There was nothing like a good book at bedtime...

'Unhand me, Sir,' she cried. Lord Barchester-Bottomley's biceps bulged as...'

...And this was nothing like a good book. She threw it to one side in disgust and reached for her dog-eared copy of *Hogwarts: A History* instead.

This was more like it. The racy goings on of Salazar Slytherin and Rowena Ravenclaw made for far more interesting reading. She hadn't got very far, though, before her eyelids started to droop.

'That Salazar,' she yawned, 'was such a *snake*.'

~*~

Hermione awoke to the sound of her alarm clock, as she did at half-past seven each morning, and staggered groggily towards the bathroom.

'Bloody clock,' she grumbled in annoyance. It seemed ten times louder than usual this morning.

Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock.

Strange. She couldn't normally hear it in the shower. She closed the bathroom door to shut out the noise while she brushed her teeth.

Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock. It was as loud as ever.

This was really weird. She hurriedly dressed and left for breakfast in the Great Hall. The sound of ticking, however, went with her.

~*~

On her way there, she passed a group of seventh-year Gryffindors. The boys looked at her admiringly. The Quidditch captain, a tall blond young man, gave her a boyish grin.

TickTockTickTock... The ticking sped up.

'What the'

It happened again as she passed a good-looking Slytherin boy, then went off the scale as she walked by a quiet, rather bookish, Ravenclaw.

By the time she reached the Great Hall, she was convinced she had been hexed.

'Are you all right, dear?' Minerva asked.

Hermione glanced down the Hall.

TickTockTickTock...

'No, Minerva, I most certainly am not.'

~*~

Hermione explained her predicament.

'How old are you, now?' Minerva asked.

'I'll be thirty-one in September.'

'Ah. Then I think I know what's the matter.'

'What?' Hermione had to shout over the noise of the ticking.

'It's your biological clock, dear. It's time to breed.'

Hermione choked on her coffee. 'I beg your pardon? Did you just say what I thought you said?'

Minerva nodded.

'But-but that's ridiculous. There's no such thing.'

Minerva sighed. 'I'm afraid it happens to all of us, Hermione.'

'But, you don't have any children.'

'Ah, no. It didn't happen to me until I was forty-five.'

~*~

'That's not too old to get pregnant.'

'No,' Minerva agreed, 'but being an Animagus helped. You can't hear the ticking in animal form, which is surprising really particularly for a cat... Ahem, anyway. All I had to do was Transform myself when it got too bad and avoid Albus as much as possible until the Menopause.'

'I don't believe I'm hearing this,' Hermione said. 'Either you've gone bonkers, or I've slipped into an alternate universe or both.'

Minerva shook her head sadly. 'I'm sorry you had to find out about it like this. I wish I could have spared you.'

~*~

Hermione was suspicious. 'Hmm. Then, how come I've never heard about this before?'

'Well, I'm afraid not everything about the wizarding world is to be found in *Hogwarts: A History*. If you had spent some of your time reading Edwina Fluffy-Cuddlescombe's excellent publication *A Successful Career in Motherhood: Giving up your Aspirations Gracefully* for example, I daresay you would have been more prepared.'

Try as she might, Hermione could not think of a polite answer to that; besides, the ticking was giving her a headache.

'So, if I don't, er... breed, as you put it, what happens?'

'You go mad.'

~*~

Hermione had heard enough.

'If you'll excuse me Minerva, I've a dreadful headache. Have you seen Professor Snape this morning? I don't have any Headache Potion left.'

'Been and gone,' Minerva replied. 'I expect you'll find him in the dungeons preparing for his first class.'

'Thank you. I'll see you at lunch.'

Hermione left the table, the ticking changing speed depending on the desirability of every male she passed.

Minerva watched as Hermione charged out of the Great Hall. She picked up her copy of the *Daily Prophet* to hide her grin. The poor boy wouldn't know what hit him.

~*~

The ticking echoed as Hermione made her way through the dungeons. Feeling nauseous, she approached the Potions classroom.

'Good Morning, Professor Snape'

DOI-ONG.

'What the'

'Professor Granger, are you all right?'

'No, I'm'

DOI-INNG

'Can I help you?'

'Yes, keep away from me.'

'What?'

'Don't come any closer.'

DOI-ONG... DOI-ONG

'Whatever is the matter, woman?'

'First ticking, now sodding bells.'

'You're not making any sense.'

Hermione told him of the morning's events.

'Hm,' Severus said, trying not to laugh. 'Sounds like Quasimodo syndrome to me.'

'It's not funny!' Hermione shrieked as another peal of bells rang out.

~*~

'Drink this.' Severus handed Hermione some Headache Potion, touching her hand in the process.

DOI-ONG DOIN-ONG DOI-ONG DOI-ONG

'I can't stand much more of this. It's like having Big Ben chiming in my head.'

'May I try something?' he asked.

'Anything.'

Severus kissed her softly on the lips. It felt good. Very good. She twined her fingers through his hair, and the cacophony faded away.

Hermione broke the kiss and looked at him in amazement. He was smiling at her.

'But-but I don't even like you.'

His smile faded as quickly as it had appeared.

'Get out,' he said quietly.

~*~

'I'm sorry. I didn't mean'

Severus' face was like stone.

Hermione sighed and walked towards the door. The ringing started up again, and unfortunately, the further she moved away from Severus, the worse it got. She stopped and turned around.

'I thought I told you to leave.'

She moved towards him, feeling better with each step she took.

'Professor Granger,' Severus warned. 'Don't even ummph.'

'I thought I'd give it another go.'

'Unhand me this mmmph.'

'You're a good kisser.'

'Get off I am?'

'Oh, yes.'

'Ohhh... We can't...'

'I know. Shall I ward the door or will you?'

~*~

Forty Weeks later...

'Minerva, is she ?'

'Yes, Severus. She's in labour.'

'I've got to go to her.'

'What makes you think she'll want to see you after the way you behaved?'

Severus' face crumpled. 'You're right.'

'You love her, don't you,' Minerva said kindly.

Severus nodded.

'She's in the Hospital Wing.'

Severus ran as fast as his legs would carry him. He could hear Hermione's screams halfway down the corridor. He barged into the room.

'What are you doing here, you bastard? Sod off.'

'Hermione, I'm sorry. I am so sorry.'

'This isn't the time, Severus,' said Madam Pomfrey.

~*~

Hermione screamed as another contraction hit.

'Leave me alone,' she yelled.

'Calm down, Hermione,' said Madam Pomfrey. 'You need all your energies to push that baby out. And you,' she turned to Severus, 'are not helping, so leave.'

'All right, I'll go.'

'AAARGH.... Stay,' Hermione panted. 'Please.'

Severus sat beside her. 'What can I do?'

'Just... be there.'

Severus had never felt so helpless or useless in his life.

'I'll make it up to you, Hermione, I promise,' Severus said, holding her hand. 'But, for now OWWW.'

'Sorry, did that hurt?'

Severus nursed his crushed hand. 'No, not at all.'

~*~

Hermione and her baby daughter were having a staring contest.

'We have been given an old soul, Severus,' she said.

The baby gurgled.

Severus touched his daughter's hand with his forefinger. He had never seen anything so miraculous. The baby instinctively wrapped her hand around her father's finger and held on tight.

'She's got a grip like her mother,' he said. 'Have you thought of any names?'

'I was going to call her after my mum,' Hermione replied, 'but she doesn't look like a Jane.'

'Indeed not,' said Severus. 'My daughter is no Plain Jane.' He smirked. 'How about Esmeralda?'

~*~

Hermione laughed. 'You know, that's not bad. Esmeralda Granger. It has a... ring to it.'

'Oh,' said Severus quietly. 'Not Snape, then.'

'We aren't married, Severus.'

Severus nodded. 'Hermione, I have no right to ask, but would you mind if I played a part in... Esmeralda's life?'

'You're her father, Severus. Of course I don't mind.'

'And... I know I've behaved abominably, but would you give me a second chance?'

'"*I've given you my sperm donation, Professor Granger. Now, get out of my classroom,*" I believe you said.'

'Well, "*It's time to breed, Professor Snape,*" wasn't exactly very romantic either.'

~*~

'Any news from the Hospital Wing, Albus?' Minerva asked.

Albus tuned into the portrait grapevine. 'It's a girl,' he said.

'Lovely,' said Minerva. 'I'm just doing the announcement for the *Prophet*. She's the first baby to be born in the castle for five hundred years.'

Albus chuckled. 'A few minutes old and in *Hogwarts: A History* already. I predict a great future for that little girl.'

'How much does she weigh?'

'Is that important?'

'I've no idea, but people always ask.'

Albus tuned in again. 'Nine pounds three ounces.'

'A whopper.'

'And... Splendid, splendid,' Albus chuckled. 'Her parents are kissing.'

~*~

'You've certainly changed your tune.' Minerva snorted. "*Don't meddle in other people's business, you old crone*", you said. If I hadn't interfered, those two would still be dancing around each other.'

'I have to admit,' Albus said, 'that that Charm was a stroke of genius, even if it was strictly unethical.'

'Not really,' Minerva replied. 'Filius made sure the bells would only go off if Hermione found her most compatible mate. I didn't need a Charm to see that man was Severus none of us did, really except Severus, of course. Now, where was I... Ah, yes... Mother and baby are...'

~*~

Daily Prophet: Hatches Matches and Despatches

Hogwarts Castle: To Professors Hermione Granger and Severus Snape the gift of a daughter, Esmeralda, nine pounds three ounces. Mother and baby doing well; Father exhausted.

~*~ END ~*~