

Firewhiskey Lullaby

by michmak

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: Written almost two years ago. Original author's notes at end of story.

She had left him, just like he always knew she would.

Of course, the knowledge that he had been right didn't sooth him instead, it made him want to lash out and break something. Her, perhaps. He wanted to break her as she had broken him.

Deep in the secret recesses of his heart, the small part of him that dared to believe had finally died.

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He remembered her soft voice the first time she had told him she loved him remembered the way she had smiled at him as she spoke. He had looked at her in shock, feeling the disbelief creep across his face even as her words seemed to fly straight to what little heart he had. A part of him a very small part had warmed at her words. She loved him; *someone* loved him.

He remembered sneering at her then, afraid to open himself up to what she was offering. "*What do you mean, Miss Granger,*" he had hissed at her. "*You don't know me at all. You are a foolish girl, mistaking pity for a far stronger emotion. I refuse to become a pawn in your little pretence.*"

He had been unable to scare her away however. She came to him, every day, and told him she loved him. Eventually, despite his misgivings and his fears that allowing himself to love her back would destroy him, he gave in to her. He never told her he loved her back, of course. To do so would be madness. But he did let her into his life and into his bed. Eventually, he even married her when it became obvious that she would settle for nothing less.

He scowled at the empty bottle of fire whiskey and quickly found another, opening it roughly and swigging directly from it.

The deceitful little slut. He had known all along she was lying to him that one day, she would wake up and realize that she had made a mistake when she married him. She would realize she hadn't really loved him at all and she would break her vows to him and leave him. Even five years of marriage had failed to convince him otherwise.

He knew what he was and what he was not. He was a Wizard too old and bitter and jaded for a beautiful young witch like her. He was not a man who would ever learn to believe otherwise.

The whiskey burned his throat and the back of his eyes as he swallowed. He choked against the heat and blinked furiously to hold back the liquor-induced tears for there was no way that she would be able to make him cry. He was better off without her.

Marriage to her had made him weak. He had forgotten the lessons he had learned as a boy that it was better to be alone and self-sufficient; that he could trust no one to treat him gently. He remembered these lessons now, and cursed himself for ever forgetting.

How could he have come to rely on her so thoroughly? How could her gentle voice and sharp intellect and gentle hands have made him forget himself? How had she managed to seduce him so easily?

Was it the feel of her legs wrapped around him that had made him forget; the way her hot core milked his essence from him when he fucked her? He shuddered at the remembered taste of her nipples against his tongue, the silky feel of her naked skin sliding against his, the mewls and moans that would spill from her as he reveled in the pleasures of her body. He wondered, if he went to their bedroom and buried his face in the sheets if he would still be able to smell her essence. He almost rose to his feet to do just that before he realized that he wanted to forget and sank back down into his chair with a broken curse and ran his free hand over his face in despair.

Just two nights ago, he had licked her tangy flavor off his fingers. Just two nights ago, she had screamed out she loved him as her body had shattered and pulsed and battered itself against his own. Just two nights ago...

He could not even taste the fire whiskey anymore. It didn't seem to be working anyway instead of making him forget, it was forcing him to remember.

How many times had she told him she loved him where he hadn't responded? How many times had he choked on the words of devotion that had risen, unbidden, inside him? How many times had she smiled at him sadly when he refused to answer in kind and whispered that she understood?

How many times?

The palms of his hands were clammy, his heart pounding in agitation as he remembered her letter to him. Ripping it to pieces and throwing it in the fire had done nothing to destroy it her words were branded on his soul.

'Severus, I need time. I don't think I can do this anymore I am not strong enough to live like this, day after day, year after year. I have tried so hard, my love, to make you understand how I feel. I have worked so hard for your trust. I have always thought that eventually you would believe me when I tell you I love you and respond in kind. And even if you never did, I thought just being with you would be enough.

But it isn't, anymore. At least, I don't think it is. I need to know that I am loved, Severus. I need to know that I am more than just someone you exist with something more than just the woman you fuck; that I am more than a convenient body.

I'm leaving because I need to think. I don't know when I'll be back.

I love you

Hermione'

It was his fault she had left him his inability to express his emotions his failings as a man. She had lasted far longer than any other witch would have, in the same situation. Whether this spoke of her tenacity or love for him, he couldn't say. All he knew was that she had left him, taking away the little pieces of life she had given him with her. He didn't know where she had gone, and even if he did he would not have followed.

She wanted words he could never give her, no matter how he longed to be able to. She was better off without him. He was broken, and had always been so, for far longer than he could even remember. And although she had made a valiant effort to fix him...well.

He had given up on trying to hold back the tears and realized with jaded amusement that she had made him cry. He could admit that, now. It wasn't the fire whiskey burning his throat. It wasn't because of the fumes in his eyes. It was because of her she had left him and in doing so had broken the heart he had always denied was there.

The idea of a life without her long and empty and silent held little appeal. He was used to her now; had come to rely on her presence at his side. He cursed himself for not making more of an effort to keep her there.

Stumbling to his feet, he lurched to his private potions stores, roughly pushing aside bottles and vials until he found what he was looking for. The room was spinning. He wondered if he had finished all the fire whiskey, or if there might still be a bottle left. He supposed water would work just as well, but the alcohol would hide the taste better.

Where in Hades did Hermione hide the liquor? He banged roughly into the door frame, but ignored the blood that poured from his nose. What difference did it make now? If he had to tear apart their quarters, he would find something to drink.

Books fell from shelves, chairs toppled. He tore through their armoires first his and then hers. Finally, when he thought he could bear it no more, he found what he was looking for - the last bottle of fire whiskey the one he knew Hermione had been saving to celebrate their tenth wedding anniversary. Sentimental Muggle girl. There was no need for it now.

He opened it gingerly and set it on the floor between his feet, before allowing himself to slide down and join it. The small vial from his potions cabinet was removed from his shirt pocket. With a sneer, he dumped it into the fire whiskey and swished it about.

Her frocks and robes lay on the floors surrounding him. He took a swig of alcohol and pulled the one nearest him to his face, pretending that the soft velvet was her skin. He took another pull on the bottle, and another.

The room was still spinning, faster now brighter. His broken heart was pounding in his chest, each thump an agony of pain. He felt like he was burning, going up in flames or going to that special place in hell he'd always known was waiting for him the place without her. He buried his face against the fabric of her dress and sighed as her beloved scent enveloped him. His fingers were stiffening now, clutching the velvet like claws.

His heart

his heart

his heart...

"I love you, Hermione. I'm sorry..."

* * * * *

He was buried underneath the whumping willow. Hermione had insisted, in one of her rare moments of lucidity. It had been Albus who had found him, lying stiffly on the floor by their bed, half buried in her dresses. He hadn't left a note, but everyone knew he had killed himself. They couldn't understand why, however.

But his wife knew.

And she blamed herself.

* * * * *

She had left him, just like he always said she would.

Of course, she hadn't left him forever. He had never even indicated in her letter to him that she had left him for good. But it was obvious he thought she had.

'Stupid bloody bastard', she thought to herself. 'How could you do this to me? Were you trying to teach me a lesson? Was it your intention to break me?' Perhaps it was.

Deep in the secret recesses of her heart, a small part of her railed at the thought he had done this to hurt her, before it fell silent as the rest of her. She had only meant to be gone a little while to think things through...just a little while.

Why did she need his words, when she knew she had his heart? It was there in the way he touched her, the way his fingers would stroke absently through her hair while they read on the sofa in front of the fireplace.

Every time he spent his seed inside her and buried his face in her hair; every time he sank into her and kissed her; every time...every time...

She was a foolish and greedy woman, demanding he give her words when he had already given his heart and his body and his soul.

She hadn't understood this at first, of course. Only later, after it was too late to do any good. After she had lost him.

The fire whiskey glowed liquid amber in her glass and she swished it around, inhaling the fumes as the tears streaked down her face. She didn't think there was enough alcohol in all of Wizarding Britain that could make her forget him, and she didn't even want to try. Picking up the small vial she had placed on the table near their bed, she gently removed the stopper and poured it into the remainder of her drink.

"Severus," she sighed, as she drank the bitter liquid down, "I promise I'll never leave you again."

The End

A/N - Okay, I'm a bitch and this is cheesy angst and I realize this. I apologize. However, I've been trying to work on the next chapter of Finding His Voice, and also Walking Into Bars and I've hit a bit of a road block. Mostly because of a damn video I saw with Rick Schroeder in it, all grown up and looking surprisingly sexy. The video was for the Brad Paisley / Alison Krause song '**Whiskey Lullaby**' a very sad, very romantic little paean to misunderstandings, mistakes and lost loves, and it made me cry like a baby. I particularly loved the line 'He put the bottle to his head and pulled the trigger...' and, of course, because I'm an obsessive freak, I wondered how the underlying story in the video could be applied to Snape / Hermione.

I ended up with this story. * Sigh * Sometimes I scare myself.

WHISKEY LULLABY

She put him out like the burnin' end of a midnight cigarette

She broke his heart he spent his whole life tryin' to forget

We watched him drink his pain away a little at a time

But he never could get drunk enough to get her off his mind

Until the night

1st Chorus

He put that bottle to his head and pulled the trigger

And finally drank away her memory

Life is short but this time it was bigger

Than the strength he had to get up off his knees

We found him with his face down in the pillow

With a note that said I'll love her till I die

And when we buried him beneath the willow

The angels sang a whiskey lullaby

The rumors flew but nobody know how much she blamed herself

For years and years she tried to hide the whiskey on her breath

She finally drank her pain away a little at a time

But she never could get drunk enough to get him off her mind

Until the night

2nd Chorus

She put that bottle to her head and pulled the trigger

And finally drank away his memory

Life is short but this time it was bigger

Than the strength she had to get up off her knees

We found her with her face down in the pillow

Clinging to his picture for dear life

We laid her next to him beneath the willow

While the angels sang a whiskey lullaby