

Forest of Dean

by ferporcel

Hermione knew exactly who was behind the bright silver Patronus that met Harry in the Forest of Dean. Post-DH. One-shot.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: Not mine! It's all J. K. Rowling's.

Warning: "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" spoilers.

Beta reader: Annie Talbot – thank you very much!

A/N: A missing scene from chapter nineteen, "The Silver Doe". I hope you enjoy it! :0)

Hermione woke up to Harry's voice.

"No. Come back!"

She rose from her bed and saw the bright silver light that still shone strongly from the Patronus withdrawing from the stall. She saw Harry hesitating to follow, but finally deciding to go after it. Hermione stepped outside in time to see Harry disappear in the pitch black of the night.

She heard the crackling of broken wood coming from her right.

"Professor Snape?" she called. The woods ahead were silent again. "I know it's you. Please come forward and show yourself." Her voice came out not commanding, but a little unsure, tinged with the hope she felt.

Another moment passed before a shadow materialized in the shape of a tall man. He approached her slowly.

"Go back inside, Miss Granger," he told her.

She released an audible sigh of relief upon seeing it was really him, that she hadn't been mistaken in her judgments. After the first time Harry and she had spoken to the portrait of Phineas Nigellus, her view of Hogwarts' new Headmaster had changed considerably. The bits of information they'd gained from the portrait, together with all the new knowledge she had on Dumbledore's life and ways from Skeeter's book, had been enough to rekindle her faith in a man she thought lost to betrayal.

But here he was. Professor Snape had come to their aid, confirming she had done the right thing when she slipped their hiding location to Phineas' portrait.

"Did you bring the sword?" she asked.

"Potter should have it when he comes back," Snape told her and stepped further into the weak light coming from inside the stall. "He must not know I'm involved."

"I know," Hermione assured him. "He needs you at Hogwarts... Professor Dumbledore does, I mean."

He looked intently at her face and then nodded. "And in the Dark Lord's good favor."

Hermione was overwhelmed with feelings. It was so reassuring to know a powerful wizard like Severus Snape was again working with them to defeat Voldemort. He continued to study her face, as if searching explanations to many questions.

"I knew Professor Dumbledore couldn't be wrong about you," she offered in answer.

He nodded. "You're a very clever witch."

Hermione smiled with his compliment. She wanted to say so many things to the brave wizard in front of her, but no words could express her gratitude. In an impulse, she flung her arms around his neck and hugged him.

"Thanks you for helping Harry," she said softly, "for helping us."

Hermione felt strong arms wrap around her – Snape was welcoming her hug. She felt strangely comforted by his gesture, content to be exactly where she was. The realization that Snape was still loyal to Dumbledore made her think about him more often, about his delicate position, the loneliness of his mission.

She raised her head slightly, enough to take in his face. He had his eyes closed, and his expression was one Hermione had never seen before in those angular features. She felt special for being granted his trust in seeing him so unguarded. She lifted a hand from his shoulder to the side of his face, and he leaned into her touch, never opening his eyes.

How starved for understanding and acceptance he must have been. Hermione caressed the cold skin of his cheek, completely bewildered by the man holding her. She moved her other hand to his face, tracing his eyebrow, sliding down his nose, delineating his lips. Hermione was fascinated.

She placed a soft kiss to the side of his mouth. He sighed, parting his lips. She didn't know why, but she placed another soft kiss, now on those blue lips. He answered the soft touch and raised a hand between her shoulder blades, holding her more firmly against himself.

The kiss deepened, and Hermione was slowly forgetting where she was, who was there with her, who she was.... She offered the comfort of her mouth to his tongue, to this starving man. She caressed his face, his hair, his tongue. And even when their mouths parted, Hermione still offered her admiration, her trust, her loyalty to the man slowly opening impossibly black eyes to look down at her.

Snape stepped out of her embrace, leaving her to the chill of the night more pronounced after the loss of his warm closeness.

"You're a very special woman."

"You don't have to do this alone," she told him.

"I must be sure he has the sword. Take care, Miss Granger."

"Keep safe," she called after the quickly withdrawing figure, watching as he blended with the shadows he was so familiar with.

Hermione stood where he left her for some long minutes, until it was too cold to remain there. Her head was spinning with thoughts and new feelings, and she looked for the protection of her blankets, wanting them to bring that warmth back.

Harry found her there when he came back to the stall, carrying the sword and accompanied by one Ronald Weasley. The moments she'd shared with Snape made accepting Ron's excuses for walking out on them even more difficult.

Hermione would remember the older wizard's kiss every night before she let sleep take over, and she would ask to whoever listened to her prayers to keep Professor Snape safe.