

Pain Divided

by minuet99

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: For my dearest Bambu, in the time of her loss.

Severus Snape stood ramrod straight at the mantle, the offending parchment crumpled in his fist. He ignored the tell-tale skittering across his skin as the wards were lowered. There was only one other who knew how to dismantle them. Hermione Granger burst into the door of their flat with unusual urgency. He could hear her footsteps clatter down the hallway and skid to a halt in the doorway of the darkened sitting room. The curtains had not been opened, only a crack of sunlight peeked through the heavy fabric.

He could not, he would not, turn and look at her. He was afraid that if he moved, that he would no longer have control over his actions. Everything that he was feeling inside would be unleashed. He did not want to be weak, especially in front of her. He wanted to be alone. But he could not find the words to tell her without offending her.

"Oh, Severus, I just heard," Hermione said softly, as she approached him. Snape's head bowed. She reached out and touched him on the shoulder. He flinched automatically and she withdrew her hand as if she had been burned.

"Please... don't..." he managed to rasp out, his voice hoarse and pained. He cringed, Snapes did not show emotion.

She reached out to touch him again, and this time let her hand linger, running down his arm, soothingly, and this time he did not reject her. She embraced him from behind, wrapping her arms around his chest, pinning his arms to his sides, her head nestled into his upper back. The parchment dropped from his hand, all but forgotten. It caught a draft and fell into the crackling fire and was gone in seconds, only a wisp of smoke betrayed its existence.

"It's okay, Severus. It's okay to let it all out. There's no one here but me." Snape relaxed slightly into her embrace and then his knees buckled. Hermione silently invoked a Cushioning Charm as they both fell to floor.

Even with the Charm, the impact still jarred them both enough for the internal stopper holding in Snape's emotions to be disturbed and he began shaking uncontrollably. A harsh sound erupted from his throat. He momentarily marveled at how any sound could come from his throat as it was tight enough to feel like he might cease to be able to breathe.

Without warning, tears poured forth from his eyes, burning trails of hot wetness down his cheeks as he keened, finally feeling all the emotions he had bottled inside. He cried not only for his current loss but for previous losses. All these emotions poured from him and he could not control them even if he had wanted to. Hermione wrapped herself even tighter around him, managing to shift them, so he was turned, pressed into her chest. She rocked him slowly and made soothing noises. Harsh sobs wracked his entire body, and he struggled slightly to take hiccupping breaths.

He had never felt so helpless, so pained and yet so relieved. The release was incredible and it felt as if a proverbial weight had been lifted off his entire person. Hermione

continued to hold him, it seemed like forever, until he had no more tears to shed. He felt like a shell of a man, his body twitching occasionally as he regained control of his diaphragm. He sniffled inelegantly and raised his head and eyes to meet hers.

She looked down at him with a tear-stained face but all he saw was love, acceptance and compassion. He was surprised to see that she had shed tears on his behalf. It wasn't her loss.

"It was my loss, too. Severus. Your pain is my pain." She answered his unspoken question quietly and squeezed him a little tighter. They spent the rest of the afternoon in front of the fire in the somber drawing room, both holding each other and being held and finding comfort despite all the pain they both felt.

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