

A Tree Called Life

by Demeterschild

The war is over and the 'good guys' have won. Hermione is alone as she contemplates her feelings.

A post-DH fic inspired by the poem 'i carry your heart with me' by e.e. cummings.

One

Chapter 1 of 1

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Her friends would kill her if they knew. For her lies, for her betrayal, for her complete and utter hypocrisy. But that hardly mattered. Oh, yes, they would argue that she was the Head Girl, Hermione Granger and the so-called 'brightest witch of her age' and shouldn't even condone such behavior much less participate in it. But perspectives change; things like that hardly seemed to matter in comparison. Love shifts the paradigm.

Clutching the letter to her breast, Hermione turned her face up to the sun. The war was over, people were celebrating *Still*, she thought loathsomely). The weather itself seemed to be rejoicing in Harry Potter's second defeat of the evil Dark Lord. She tried to ignore her instincts when they mentioned that things usually come in threes. She hardly wanted to ruin anyone's holiday by being cautious, after all.

In her head, all she could hear was a constant recitation of those who were lost. It was almost a liturgy *and nearly as long* she thought with a sense of ill-humor. That was something of his that had rubbed off on her. The strange ability to laugh at the things that made you want to cry. Sometimes she scoffed at her own cynicism, sometimes she wished for her innocence, but mostly she thanked him for giving her the tools she would need to live. He had given her so much.

She remembered every detail of his face. She remembered everything that would make any logical person set him aside as plain. Ugly, even. She wouldn't hear of it. Every time they had lain together she would take the opportunity to trace his features, every sharp line, every new wrinkle. He would just stare at her, bore into her with those obsidian eyes, and she would try to soak up every last bit of him.

She wished desperately for tears to come as she approached the little grave, but all she felt, all she ever felt, was an emptiness so vast it seemed to suck all other emotions away. The pain was palpable, nearly physical, and all she could do was stare at the marker, locking gazes with a man who wasn't even there.

A week had passed, two, and Hermione had finally given up. His body had disappeared from the spot where they had left it. Harry, in his newfound admiration of the man (Hermione wanted to tear him apart for the sheer audacity of it) had insisted on continuing the search. He had wanted to give Severus Snape a hero's burial. In her role as the left hand to the boy-who-lived, she had quietly acquiesced. Meanwhile, she had taken the kohl black stone from around her neck and Portkeyed to a place no light wizard had been in a long time. Looking about, she had found a tea-cup in the kitchen and carried it out to the backyard. Clearing away a piece of ground, she had placed it down and lifted her wand. A few flicks and swishes saw it promptly transfigured into a grave stone, obsidian, like his eyes. She hadn't bothered to mark it as no one would know it was there but her. He would like it that way.

That night, she had turned to exit through the kitchen and hazarded a glance around the room. Her eyes had lit upon a book and a letter sitting primly on the table. As she had gone nearer, she realized it was for her.

Hermione,

If you are reading this, it is likely something has happened to me. Most likely, my many insurances have failed and I am buried somewhere deep under the earth. Do not mourn excessively over me. It wouldn't be proper or seemly, and you know I've never been able to stand your infernal tears. (She laughed lightly.)

I know our time together was short and decidedly inappropriate. I only thank Merlin & Salazar that I managed to keep you safe, for you must be if you are reading this letter. I thank you for every moment, Hermione. Do not ever believe that I was forced or coerced into romancing you or that I did not (The ink blurred as if he had left the tip there for a long time.) love you. I did. I do.

That said, you must move on with your life. You know the mistakes I have made; your ties to the dead will become chains that will shackle you to your guilt. Don't let anyone have the satisfaction. Move on. It is not a request. (I shall find a way to take points from beyond the grave. I'm sure Albus has done it at least once.) (She laughed again.) Get married and have children, even if you must marry that foul Weasley child.

The book is yours, along with the table that it sat upon, the house that it sat in and the land that it sat on. All of it is yours. Do with it what you will. (Do NOT give it to Weasley.)

I can hear Potter. Weasley. Minerva. You. They were not lying when they said these walls have ears. It is the end then. I shall go and serve my purpose. For Lily and for you.

I love you.

-S

It was then that she realized the tears were flowing. She wanted to beat him for trying to make her laugh at a time like this. Instead, she folded the letter, took the book and went back outside. Clutching the letter to her breast, Hermione turned her face up to the sun. The war was over, people were celebrating. Time to go out and join them.