

Badges of Honor

by acciobook7

This was originally written as a serial drabble in response to the grangersnape100 challenge, "DE Fluff." I have modified the drabbles to form one straight story, and so some of the sections are now slightly more or less than 100 words.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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"Neville! No!"

Severus bolted upright from his antiquarian wooden chair, nearly leaping over his desk at the sound of Miss Granger's panicked shout.

Just as he'd reached the center of the room, approximately three full table lengths away from the object of his pursuit, he saw the explosion.

Severus had been substituting for Professor Slughorn's Potions class. It was only supposed to be for one day. Apparently the man had an "obligation" that could not wait, a monetary scheme, no doubt.

At the sound of Hermione's initial cry the surrounding students had backed away from Granger and Longbottom's shared workstation.

Severus had been the closest to the devastation and had subsequently been thrust backwards by the force of the explosion. As the smoke cleared, he righted himself from the floor and made his way toward what he was sure would be two lifeless bodies.

Longbottom, fortunately or not (he couldn't decide which), had been thrown backwards during the explosion as well, rendering him generally unharmed.

His eyes searched the ground for Miss Granger. He found her resting under a black puddle of robes mere inches from his feet.

She was lying face down on the cold stone floor, her woolen robes covering her completely.

He bent to pick her up and stopped suddenly, noticing the hazy, green smoke emitting from underneath her torso.

"Longbottom!" he snapped. "What ingredient did you add to your infusion of wormwood?"

The boy stood there gaping stupidly at the inanimate girl at Severus' feet. "Now, Longbottom!"

"A-conite, sir."

Good Gods...

"*Protectum.*" Severus encanted, pointing his wand first at one hand, then the other. A sheer material that looked something like latex coated his palms, and he reached

down to pick up the unconscious *know-it-all*.

He flipped her over to find that the potion had all but drenched her.

He spelled her robes off accordingly, leaving her clad in her usual school uniform and jumper.

He scooped her up into his arms and nearly flew out of the room, not sparing even a glance for the blundering imbecile responsible.

Halfway to the hospital wing, Hermione regained consciousness and began howling in pain. "It burns! Professor, please!"

"It will be all right, Miss Granger." He soothed her as best he could. "We are nearly at the hospital."

His reassurances seemed to soothe her, and she reduced her cries to soft whimpers for the remainder of their journey through the halls.

"Poppy!" Severus shouted as they entered the hospital wing.

"Professor, please!" Hermione cried. "It *burns!*"

Severus laid her on the nearest bed and spelled off her shirt and jumper, hoping to alleviate some of the scorching.

He gasped as he stared down at her chest. Her flesh hadn't been burnt at all. That wasn't what shocked him, however.

With the potion-riddled material gone, the burning sensation ceased, and Hermione relaxed. She tilted her head back on the pillow and closed her eyes, catching her breath before opening them again.

When she saw him staring at her, she shifted uneasily.

She removed the pillow from behind her head and used it to block his view. Tears filled her eyes, and she hung her head sideways, looking away from him.

"Miss Gra..."

"It's disgusting, I know," she said coldly. "That doesn't mean you need to stare at it. I know what it looks like. I see it every day..."

"How..."

"You know how, Professor. You were there."

"I have no idea to what you are referring, Miss Granger."

She bit her lip, restraining its quivering for a moment before continuing. When she spoke, her voice was little more than a whisper. "Dolohov."

As far as he was aware, all injuries from the battle at the Department of Mysteries had been mended by Healers that very night. Clearly he had been mistaken.

"It's disgusting," she sneered, though more at herself than at him. "I haven't worn anything but turtlenecks since the battle, you know. At least that way I don't have to see the horrified looks on their faces."

He studied her through narrowed eyes. Here before him sat the brightest witch of her age, and all she was worried about was what her classmates would think if they saw her scar.

Severus waved an open palm at the hospital door and it slammed shut, its locks sliding into place.

Hermione finally looked up at him, startled by the noise.

"P..."

"Show me again," he told her authoritatively, leaving no room for discussion.

She smirked at first, perhaps believing that he had grown a sense of humor. When he made no effort to retract his statement, her eyes widened in shock.

"I can't just..."

"Remove your pillow *now*, Miss Granger."

Her arm quivered significantly as she moved the feather-filled barrier to the side of the bed, revealing her bare torso.

He gazed indifferently at the disfiguring scar, wondering how she had managed to keep it a secret for as long as she had. The scar spanned at least two centimeters wide and formed a giant X across her chest and midsection. The disfigured range of flesh began on her upper arms below the shoulder and ran downward over her breasts. It crossed just below the sternum and finished mere inches above each hip. It was ghastly.

Severus raked his eyes over the atrocity, cringing inwardly as he saw what the monstrous curse had done to the flesh that used to form her areolas.

The mangled excuses for nipples were not a normal, rosy pink, but a dull flesh tone that more closely mirrored the skin on the rest of her body. There were really no longer any 'nipples' to be found. The skin merely softened a bit around the center of her breasts. The only true sign that the afflicted areas had once formed tips was that they were slightly bunched and bore goose bumps due to the frigid air in the hospital wing.

She had hung her head once more, this time watching her lap through tear-clouded eyes.

Severus reached out a lone finger and gently prodded her chin upwards. The young woman stared at him with a quivering lower lip and watched as he took a solitary step back from her.

She looked on in confusion as he proceeded to unbutton the cuffs of his jacket. He kept constant eye contact while he removed his robes and undercoat, stopping briefly before continuing on to his high-collar, white oxford.

Her eyes widened as he removed the last of the clothing from his upper body and dropped it to the floor. He could almost see the questions forming in her mind.

He could feel her eyes raking over his body, drinking in each and every scar. Which would she analyze first?

Bellatrix's scar was, of course, the most prominent. Poppy had once told him that the scar had sliced not only through skin, but also through muscle and even bone as well. That scar was the deepest and certainly the most noticeable.

The others were all pretty much the same. They had all come from curses, all earned after his decision to join the ranks of Voldemort and, subsequently, the Order. They covered his chest and abdomen almost completely.

She seemed to forget all modesty as she rose from the bed and made her way toward him, raising her hand to within inches of his skin. She halted and looked up as if to ask "*may I?*," and he gave her a wane nod in the affirmative.

She traced every scar with her dainty hands, leaving no inch untouched, no area unexplored, before stepping back and looking up at him brightly.

"Every scar is a badge of honor, Miss Granger," he told her. "Wear them proudly."

"Do you?" she asked.

"Do I, *what?*"

"Wear yours proudly?"

He considered her for a moment.

"Some of them," he answered honestly.

"Do you ever feel ugly?" she asked, shying away slightly.

"Because of the scars? No. Do you?"

"Every day."

"Then you are not as intelligent as I have always thought," he said, causing her eyes to snap up toward his own.

"Miss Granger. Though I will never admit to saying this, you are beautiful, intelligent and cunning. You are, by far, the most desirable girl in this school. If I were twenty years younger, I would be following you around like a lost hippogriff."

She smiled.

"If your classmates are too stupid to realize these facts, which I'm quite certain they are, then bollocks to them."

She giggled as she looked into the mirror angled behind him, coming to peace with her recent change in appearance.

He pointed his wand to the clothing on the floor, and it replaced itself on his body, though he opted to fasten the buttons manually. Once dressed he summoned a hospital gown and handed it to Hermione.

"Sir?" she asked, now fully covered by the paper material.

"Yes, Miss Granger?"

"Thank you."

He smiled and nodded. "You're welcome."