

Under African Skies

by Somigliana

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Chapter 1 of 1

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The searing heat of the African summer finally dissipated somewhat as the sun sank low behind the densely-bushed banks across the river. Above the verdant Mupani trees, the gnarled, root-like branches of isolated Baobab trees formed eerie silhouettes against the pink-tinged, cloudless sky.

The witch formerly known as Hermione Granger sat on a broad wooden deck that overlooked the muddy river, now swollen with the seasonal rainfall that had fallen at its distance source—the sacred Lake Fundudzi, a magical place of legend in African wizarding circles.

She sipped from a bottle of ice-cold beer, watching the dusk merge into a sultry evening. As the shadows lengthened across the opaque water, a tree opposite lit with fireflies, reminding her of fairy lights and her voluntarily abandoned past.

She did not startle at the feel of a hand on her shoulder, but merely tipped her head backwards, smiling lazily. "You're back."

She frowned slightly and reached a bare arm up to pull at the pendant around the neck of the blond wizard standing behind her. As the chain slipped over his shoulder-length fall of hair and it changed to its familiar black pigment, she smiled again. "I hate that thing, you know."

He moved from behind her to sit in a deck chair next to her, winding the chain of the pendant around his long, slender fingers. "But wholly necessary, as evidenced by today's events." Lines of worry etched deeply into his face; lines that she had last seen years ago. She thought they had been long erased by time, peaceful solitude, and love.

She frowned. "What happened, love?" He had ventured into Johannesburg's wizarding district on his monthly trip to replenish their potions supplies and to purchase the latest wizarding books on offer.

"Potter was in Egoli Alley today," he said succinctly, the name falling from his lips reluctantly, his voice still edged with bitterness after all this time.

She caught the bottle of beer that had slipped between her fingers just before it hit the deck. "What's he doing here?" she gasped, panic rising sharply, leaving her pale beneath the slight sheen of sweat.

"Just a coincidental diplomatic visit, I think," he said slowly. "He left late this afternoon again."

"Oh, Merlin," she breathed. She felt the long-suppressed sense of guilt eat away at her soul again, warring with the wave of relief at his words.

He reached for her hand, turning it palm-up and entwining his fingers with hers. "We've been through this before, love. You could have stayed."

She shook her head. "There was no other choice, love, not really. My heart belonged to you."

Despite the evidence that Dumbledore's Pensieve had provided, Harry had never forgiven her husband. She'd made her choice. And now, her home was where her heart was—deep in the African Lowveld. It was a simple life, but not one that she would ever trade.

The wizard formerly known as Severus Snape smiled. “And what is a Gryffindor lioness without her heart?”

Author's Notes: Thank you to Gelsey for checking this piece for me. Originally written for a challenge at romancingwizard.

Egoli translates as 'place of gold' in Zulu.