

Ever After

by minuet99

A glimpse into the best day in Severus' life

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Written in response to an article I read on Yahoo!News today. Thanks to Annie Talbot and Shug for their support, and Shug and Subversa for their sharp eyes.

It was the perfect wedding, one that Severus had privately dreamed of when he was younger. Before Lily Evans stomped on his heart and left him for James Potter. Before his life had been forever changed by the Dark Arts and the few happy memories that he had from his childhood were submerged so deeply into his psyche that he had near forgotten them. A perfect day - one he had never expected to have.

Minerva, Filius and Remus had stood by the sidelines and happily watched the attraction grow between the Headmaster and the Potions mistress. The road that led to today was far from smooth, but ultimately both realised that their lives were better with each other than without. Especially in the post-war wizarding world, those who had survived relatively unscathed treasured life more than all the Galleons in Gringotts.

Even Harry and Ron, Hermione's erstwhile sidekicks, had come around to the fact that she did indeed love the grumpy, sarcastic former bat of the dungeons who had amazingly survived the deadly bite of Voldemort's ophidian familiar. He had been saved through the attentions of one Harry Potter, who had returned to give him a proper burial only to find him clinging onto life by a proverbial thread. Thanks to the healing hands of Hogwarts' own mediwitch, Poppy Pomfrey, and her field deputies, Ginny Weasley and Hermione Granger, Severus Snape had miraculously come back to life, albeit reluctantly.

Severus had, unsurprisingly, been a poor patient. His will to live seemed to have escaped with all the blood he had lost in the Shrieking Shack. He had lain listlessly in his curtained-off cot and stared blankly at the wall, refusing to eat, drink or acknowledge any visitors.

Initially, he had been treated delicately, everyone tiptoeing around him and bothering him as little as possible. But time passed and patience wore thin, especially with one member of the staff. Finally, proving herself a Gryffindor to the core, Hermione had exploded at him one day. She ranted and raved and blew off a lot of steam. After she was done and had collapsed on a nearby chair, she was rewarded with a raised eyebrow, a miniscule smirk and a silent acquiescence to her demand.

Thus started a reluctant friendship. After he had regained his strength and a majority of his magic and was released to his dungeon quarters, he resumed his role as Headmaster of Hogwarts. He had offered the position back to whom he considered the rightful owner, but Minerva, never having been the same since those multiple Stunners, was content to continue serving as Deputy.

Hermione had continue to visit the recovering wizard, at first under the pretense of checking up on him and then later at his request. Once he had healed sufficiently for Madam Pomfrey or her staff to no longer nag him with their presence, he had found that he missed the presence of a certain Know-It-All who could almost keep up with him on a variety of conversation subjects: Potions, Charms, and Herbology. They'd spent many a late night debating the latest theories, not to mention shaking their heads over the latest fiascos within wizarding politics.

Somewhere in the last few months, the relationship had changed from friendship to a mutual attraction. Both being reluctant to admit it to themselves, much less to each

other or to others, they had hit stumbling blocks along the way. But together they discovered how to love and to let someone into a war-hardened heart. Surprising both Hermione and himself, he proposed to her one night when they were harvesting potions ingredients under the full moon. He didn't even have a ring but neither cared. However, from then on, he was determined to give the woman of his dreams and his heart everything she could ever want.

Hermione was a vision in diaphanous white dress robes. Holding onto a single element from her own dream wedding, everything else was wizarding in tradition, except for the colour of her robes. Minerva and Ginny had woven delicate white and red flowers into her magically-tamed brunette curls.

Seeing her walk down the front steps of Hogwarts to meet him at their handfasting was the most gorgeous sight. Of all the wizards in the world, she had chosen him. He still didn't believe it, even after the cords had been tied and the blessings had been given. He barely heard the low chuckle from the crowd when his bold Gryffindor wife took his chin in her hand, tilted his head down to meet hers and kissed him firmly to seal their union.

Their Muggle-style reception was held in the gardens of Hogwarts, attended by the surviving members of Dumbledore's Army and the Order of the Phoenix. A delicious dinner was to be followed by traditional dancing. His grinning, blushing bride had just returned from talking to her friends and dropped a formal curtsy in front of him while extending her hand in invitation. He allowed a small smile to grace his features as he nodded his acquiescence and stood to join his beloved on the dance floor for the customary first dance of the newlyweds.

Encircling her petite frame with his arms, holding her close to him as they danced their first dance was, for lack of a better word, magical. She raised her head from where it had been resting contentedly on his chest to smile widely at him, both from her eyes and with her lips. He felt like the luckiest man in the world. He was lightheaded with joy.

Or so he thought.

Suddenly, his grip on his bride tightened and then went slack.

"Severus, what..." Hermione gasped out in surprise as his legs went out from underneath him. Helpless to do anything else, she followed him down, managing to mutter a wandless Cushioning Charm before he hit the ground.

His neck and chest felt tight, and everything around him was painfully bright. He couldn't see much other than his wife, and perhaps that was because her distressed face was mere inches from his.

"Severus, please! What's wrong?!" Hermione asked in a panicked voice as she Summoned her wand. He could barely hear Harry Potter ordering someone to find Poppy Pomfrey and managing crowd control. He could sense Minerva's worried presence as well.

"Can't... breathe..." he managed to gasp out, his left hand weakly moving towards the scars on his neck - an unfortunate reminder of Nagini's attack.

His eyes closed briefly, and a single tear began to form. He knew what was happening, and he was powerless to do anything about it. He was dying. He had felt this way before, lying on the dingy floor of the Shrieking Shack. Of course, he *would* be taken on the happiest day of his life. But at least he had experienced it. He struggled to open his eyes again.

The world began to dim around him and tears overflowed from his eyes, trailing a wet path down his cheek.

This was it. This was the end. And he only wanted to see one thing before he died, the only woman he loved and who loved him in return.

"Look... at... me..." he managed to wheeze out, trying to reach for her with his uncooperative hands and arms. "Please... Hermione..." Hermione, who had been rooting through what sounded like a bag of phials, gasped and made a strangled noise of her own.

She leaned down over her husband and looked directly into his obsidian eyes.

"I love you, Severus. Please don't leave me. Not now. Not ever!" she said emphatically, tears dripping from her eyes onto his face. Their eyes locked together: mahogany and ebony. He could see the love in her eyes and hoped that it was reflected in his own, as well.

"I... love... you... Herm-" His hand, which she had firmly clasped in her own, went slack as life left him, and Severus Snape crossed through the Veil.

Turning back, the last thing he saw before leaving was his beautiful but distraught bride, lying across his body, her entire frame shaking with her sobs.

The article, which can't be reproduced without permission, was about a woman who had the wedding of her dreams in January and died an hour later during her first dance with her husband. She ultimately died of heart disease, though at the time, her husband and family, friends, etc thought it was due to her diabetes. Such a tragic story struck home and made me think of the Snape/Hermione pairing. I decided to turn the tables and have him die in her arms, rather than vice versa.