

# Drowning

*by PlaidPooka*

Written pre-HBP. Two people deal with the stresses of ongoing war in an unconventional way which might prove to be their undoing.

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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A/N: This fic was written in response to the Unusual Places challenge for SH's Spring Faire Festival where it received a second place. It was beta read by the absolutely fantabulous Goblynn before she scurried off to have her snuggly baby. I'll warn you that it isn't as lighthearted as my usual, but I assure you that there are no fiery deaths.

Disclaimer: They are not mine; I only take them out to play.

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It never ceased to confound her, this trysting place. Indeed it was true that parts of the lake's shoreline drew such high traffic from young lovers--desperate to find a moment's privacy--that the lakeshore rivaled the Astronomy Tower as a wizarding "lovers' lane." Such was the lakeshore near to the castle. Only a fool would travel at night to the far side of the lake where the shore nestled betwixt arms of the Forbidden Forest. Only a fool...

Sighing to herself, Hermione acknowledged that she must be three kinds of fool to continue this dangerous affair. The dangers of the forest were second only to peril of the affair itself. Every single time Hermione returned to Hogwarts from such an encounter, she swore she would never go back, never face such humiliation again, never again allow herself to be so used. Then the week would creep itself toward the following Wednesday--their set meeting day--and, as the day approached, Hermione's resolve would crumble in the face of her raw need for release.

Despite knowing in her heart that what they did was wrong, even Hermione had to admit that she needed release as much as he did. Yes, it was wrong! It was cheep and tawdry; an animalistic rutting between two people who could scarcely speak civilly to each other in the reality of day. The whole situation drove her to distraction even as it kept her sane.

Sanity was a relative term, Hermione had decided. If her friends knew exactly how she spent her Wednesday evenings, they would certainly call her mad. Yet what could be called sane in this war-ravaged world? The campaign against Voldemort and his followers had reached a fever pitch. This was supposed to be her final year in school; Hermione wasn't sure what would happen to her education if the war ever ended. There were no classes at Hogwarts now. The castle and its grounds were a fortress of safety in a war-torn land. Students, professors, their families, and the inhabitants of Hogsmeade now resided within the wards. Hogsmeade had been taken by the Death Eaters and battles between the two forces occurred almost daily. On more quiet days, the Death Eaters were not lazy. Making forays all over Britain, they attacked anyone opposing them who had not made it to a safe haven either at Hogwarts or at Diagon Alley (which was protected both by the Ministry's Aurors and the Goblins of Gringott's). It was in one such foray that Hermione's parents had both been killed. Having to deal with such atrocities daily had numbed Hermione to the point that she could not even mourn them. If the war ended, would she be able to mourn her loss then, or had she lost forever the ability to cry?

It had been shortly after the death of her parents that the wanton copulation she mentally referred to as an 'affair' began. Unable to cry and so stressed by the war that she could feel the pounding of her heart vibrate through the mattress as she lay longing for sleep, Hermione had dressed haphazardly and wandered off into the night. No

longer able to care about what happened to her, she had walked far afield before the presence of another awakened her to how far around the lake she had traveled. He stood before her, darkly menacing even in his motionlessness. In a flurry of sudden movement he had grabbed her roughly, stuffed something foul into her mouth, and dragged her into the cold waters of the lake. Thinking he had finally run mad, Hermione was convinced he meant to drown her. Her struggles were ineffectual against his strength. It wasn't until she found herself deep under water that she realized she could breathe. Severus Snape had forced her into the water, he forced her into his arms, but there was no force about what happened next. Their mouths clashed together and they bit at each other as they tore at one another's clothing. Their coupling was fast and brutal; only the drag of the water which slowed their movements prevented the frenzied pair from doing serious damage to each other.

Back in her bed that night, Hermione had been completely and utterly appalled by what had happened--by what she had allowed to happen. Yet she had slept. Hermione slept that night, deeply and dreamlessly, as she had not slept for months. Perhaps that is the main reason that the following Wednesday found her re-tracing her steps around the lake. This time she had not been surprised to see the tall, dark man waiting for her when she arrived. He hadn't said a word. When he noted that she had brought her own Gillyweed, he simply turned from her and strode into the water until he disappeared into its inky depths. Following him slowly, Hermione had no indication he was even there until she was fully immersed and found impatient hands ripping at her clothes and then at her flesh. With hands as rough as his, Hermione tore at him. They fucked as frantically as they had the previous week and when it was over Snape had retreated from the water with his sodden clothes and disappeared without a word.

He never spoke. Hermione had lost count of how many weeks she had stolen into the night like a thief only to return hours later humiliated and angry, yet strangely sated and able to sleep without tossing and turning. The place and time of their meeting never changed, though other details did. After Hermione had brought her own Gillyweed, she never again found Snape waiting for her on the shore. Alone, she would wade out into the water, fear and desire warring in her heart, never knowing when strong hands would grab a hold of her and drag her into his consuming embrace. Soon she grew tired of searching for sodden, torn clothes. Now, she wore nothing but a heavy robe on her walk and shrugged out of it before striding naked into the dark water. In time, even the dark water changed. She had heard that men were visually stimulated; perhaps her surly Professor had decided he wanted to see her as he ravaged her flesh. He wouldn't speak, so Hermione was unsure of his reasoning. All she knew was that--while he would still startle her by grabbing her in the darkness--Snape would then drag her down to where the plants glowed with a phosphorescent charm. At first it had been frightening to see the naked need and blunt, animalistic desire on his features. Soon Hermione had to admit to herself that being able to view his ragged hunger only made her desire him more.

Some things never changed. They would rut like animals, once, twice, sometimes even three times. When he was done with her, he would abruptly leave the water, grab his clothes and disappear into the forest without a word. Why would the stubborn bastard never speak? Even whores could expect an occasional "Thank you for your trouble" or "Same time next week?" Hermione would never expect him to give her the slightest attention while back at the castle in the light of day, but was one blasted word too much to ask of him before he disappeared into the night? Was she nothing more to him than a wet hole in which he could roughly pump his desire? No...that last wasn't fair...even if it was true. Hermione was many things but she was no hypocrite. She knew damn well she used Snape as ruthlessly and as unfeelingly as he used her. Yet she puzzled over the matter as she stood naked before her mirror early Thursday morning, healing the multitude of bruises marring her skin.

As the weeks turned to months, Hermione found herself wondering why his attitude bothered her. If it was true that she was just using the man for desperately needed stress relief, then why did his impartial manner offend her? Beginning to watch him covertly during the day, Hermione was surprised by what she saw. On the surface, Snape was much as he ever was, surly and unapproachable within Hogwarts', bitter and exacting in Order meetings, ferocious and determined in battle. Studying him more closely revealed much more. On Thursdays--after the aquatic coupling of the night previous--Snape was indeed much the same as always. As the week progressed, she could see signs of stress multiplying at a frightening rate. It started out as a stiffening of his already erect posture. Around Monday she would notice him beginning to pick ineffectually at his meals. By Wednesday morning he kept his hands clenched in tight fists if they were unoccupied. When she spent one such Wednesday helping him brew the potions that would re-stock Madame Pomfrey's stores, Hermione realized, with something akin to horror, why he clenched them so. Severus' normally impeccable brewing was marred by the trembling of his hands. Knowing that to speak of the matter would only tempt the volatile man's wrath, Hermione was nevertheless shaken by her observation. This man...this man she'd always considered to be unshakable...unstoppable...practically invincible. This strong man was obviously walking the knife edge of sanity just as she was...just as they all were. It made her want to weep, to curse, to scream down the rafters until this nightmare of a war was over. It made her want to take his trembling hands in hers and hold them tight until they stilled beneath her fingers. Biting back a sigh, Hermione did none of these things. Later that night, beneath the calm surface of the lake, if Severus noted that the woman in his arms clung to him with more passion and less insistent selfishness, he said not a word.

Eventually, there came a Wednesday when Hermione did not make her lakeside rendezvous. Severus did not wait impatiently for her beneath the cold water, for he knew exactly where she was and why she was detained. Deep in the dungeons, he was kept busy brewing the potion to counteract the curse which had felled her during a fierce skirmish at the Hogwarts' Gate that afternoon. Fighting at his side, Hermione had taken an errant curse and slipped bonelessly to the ground. Severus had moved to stand over her without a thought. Indeed, his continuing attack on the Death Eaters had become so intensely vicious that quite a few of them fled in terror, allowing Hagrid enough time to cart the unconscious witch to safety. Now, she lay gravely hurt in the infirmary while Severus brewed with hands so unsteady he could barely wield the knife he used to prepare the ingredients.

Recovering slowly, Hermione was distressed by her forced inactivity. After the second day of her recovery, she was released from the infirmary, but cautioned to do nothing more strenuous than reading. Forbidden to join in the fighting and not allowed to help with the Potion master's brewing, Hermione was almost at her wit's end. It was not only her own uselessness which agitated her; Severus Snape seemed to be falling apart before her very eyes. His hands trembled all the time now and not even the ex-spy could hide it from his compatriots. Though none were brave enough to mention it in his presence, hushed whispers followed in his wake wherever he went. If that tough bastard fell, who would be next? Potter? Dumbledore? Snape may have felt he had little effect on his fellows, but the undeniable proof of his infirmity had the morale of those fighting for the light at an all-time low. Watching the week progress with growing despair, Hermione determined she must do something to ease him; not only for the war effort, but also for the man who had stood over her as she lay helpless. Managing to act on her decision was easier said than done. The one time she had ventured to his dungeons, he'd told her in no uncertain terms that she had no business being there until she was well enough to help him brew. Then the insufferable man had slammed the door in her face.

By Wednesday's dawning, Hermione was determined to make it to the rendezvous point. Though still weak as a kitten, her will was as strong as the lion symbolizing her house. Her friends would never understand the situation; they would be of no use to her. While she briefly considered swiping a broom from the Quidditch shed, Hermione decided the ensuing flight--with her lack of flying skills--would be more draining than the walk itself. Gathering her courage, she resigned herself to walk and left the castle a full two hours earlier than was her habit. Even with the extra time she allotted, the many stops she required to rest and gather her strength caused her to be an hour late by the time she neared the meeting place. She constantly berated herself for even attempting the journey so soon after her injury. After all, it was doubtful that Severus would bother to show up. Surely he assumed she was still too ill for such a venture. Even if he had stopped by, there was no conceivable way the impatient man would have waited so long past the accustomed hour.

It was with complete shock that Hermione turned the last corner and stumbled to a halt. Severus Snape sat before her on the cold ground. His normally impeccable posture was nowhere to be found as he sat in a defensive ball; hunched forward to rest a weary head on hands which shook despite the tight fists he had made of them. Indeed, waves of random tremors seemed to attack his whole form. Hermione must have made some small sound of surprise, for the man curled on the ground suddenly exploded into movement. Standing to face her, wand drawn by a shaking arm, Severus also froze in shock. It was easily apparent the startled man had not expected her arrival...so why had he come? Looking a trifle lost as he stared at her, a flurry of emotions flickered over his features before he managed to school his expression into his usual scowl. Shock, worry, desire, and a long moment of indecision all took their turn. It was a testament to exactly how much the continuing war affected the spy who normally hid much more dangerous things with ease. At last, managing a scowl at the young witch who stood staring at him, Severus replaced his wand in his robes. Returning her gaze, his mouth opened as if to speak before he stubbornly snapped it shut.

Without a word, Hermione stepped up to him, her eyes still locked with his as she took possession of his hands. She clutched them tightly in her warm fingers until the fists at last relaxed and the trembling stopped. Offering him half of her Gillyweed, as they chewed and swallowed Hermione stepped out of her heavy robe. She unfastened his as well, slipping it from his shoulders, before once again taking his hands and leading him beneath the cold surface of the lake. Their coupling was not gentle; in fact, it was more frenzied than ever before. Now that she'd gotten him in the water, Severus was insatiable, taking her in her cunt, her arse, and twice in her mouth before at last releasing her to stride from the water and disappear. After his departure, Hermione lay wrapped in her robe on the desolate shore for a long time before she made her slow journey back to the castle. Alone in her room, when she stood naked before her mirror, wand in hand, she was amazed to find not one bruise marring her pale skin.

Time passed as the war continued. A major victory was achieved when the forces in Diagon Alley were at last able to overtake Knockturn Alley. The Death Eaters had been dependent on Knockturn Alley for both food and potion ingredients. With this important resource cut off, it was only a matter of time before their forces were weakened. In the meantime, the skirmishes surrounding Hogwarts continued. When Hermione recovered and returned to the fray, her Wednesday night diversions grew even more

important to her. News of the fall of Knockturn Alley found Hermione walking to her assignation with a much lighter step than normal.

Reaching the seemingly deserted bit of shore, it took Hermione but a moment to retrieve her mouthful of Gillyweed and slip out of her robe. Pausing halfway into the water to give her gills time to form, Hermione wondered briefly what she would do when her current supply ran out. It was getting more and more difficult for her to find a supplier due to the war. As the cold water slipped over her head, all such mundane thoughts slid from her mind. Half swimming, half walking, Hermione journeyed farther into the depths. As the water grew rapidly deeper, she gave up her footing on the bottom and swam slowly into the darkness. This was the part of their weekly ritual which she hated. She was still adjusting to her gills and swimming into blank nothingness. Would this be the time he didn't come and she would swim until she got lost in the dark? Far worse than the fear of becoming lost was the fact that she never knew when he would strike.

Suddenly, a hand wrapped tightly around her ankle. No lover's caress, the sudden grasp felt like the attack of a Grindylow. Not able to stop her shocked shriek, the bubbles of her cry swirled silently around her head as she looked down at what had grabbed her. The darkness of the water did nothing to allay her fears; it wasn't until she felt his hands climbing up her legs that Hermione knew she was not in the hands of a Grindylow but something far more dangerous.

When his hands reached her waist, Severus drew her so tight against him that she could scarcely breathe despite the help of her gills. Wrapping his legs around hers like bonds, Severus clasped her arse in both hands as he ground his already erect cock against her. One hand trailed up to the back of her head and his lips made a short, fumbling trail across her face to search out her mouth in the darkness. To Hermione it seemed he completely surrounded her...trapped her in the cage of his limbs as he ravaged her mouth greedily. He plunged his tongue so far into her throat she would have choked in any situation but this. It was as if he wanted to shove it into her mouth as deeply as he would later plunge his cock. His rough desire only fueled her own. Hardly taken aback by his forceful actions, Hermione clasped him just as tightly. Her hands scratched up and down his back as her tongue began to battle his own. Dropping one hand down to the cleft of his arse, she plunged two fingers into his anus with neither warning nor preparation. Stiffening at first, Severus was soon riding her fingers as he writhed against her. Impatient with the preliminaries, Severus loosened his grip enough to position his cock and plunge it into her heat. Soon Hermione was impaled again as his fingers plunged into her own arse. They hung suspended in the watery darkness with no leverage but the muscles of their own limbs--they bucked together, their movements further slowed by the drag of the water around them. It was as frustrating as it was glorious, this slow yet violent fucking. Hermione was never sure if it was the skill of Severus' body or the strangeness of the situation itself which drove her so quickly to the edge of passion. When Severus sandwiched a hand between their pumping bodies to harshly pinch her clitoris, Hermione tipped her head back and screamed her release. The bubbles flew from her mouth to swirl around them, tickling their flesh. The bubbles added to Hermione's excitement and she quickly came again as she bucked both forward onto his cock and backward to press into his questing fingers. Her head tipped back once more, and as she presented her throat, Severus bit down on it sharply. His hips twitched erratically as he pumped his seed deep in her depths. Though they were shrouded in silence, Hermione could feel the vibration of his groan of release. Compared to the cold of the water surrounding them, the heat of his come seemed to burn her as it spurted against her inner walls. At last, overcome with wanton sensation, Hermione went limp and senseless.

When Hermione regained her senses, she found herself being dragged deeper into the depths of the lake by her ankles. As they neared the bottom, the glow of the plants he had charmed allowed her to see him for the first time that night. His eyes were sharp and hungry and his cock was already hard and twitching with need. Grasping her by the shoulders, Severus paused a moment to sweep his eyes over her naked flesh before he abruptly bent her face down over a shelf of rock. Roughly spreading her cheeks apart with both hands, Severus plunged his cock into her arse. Draping his body against her back, he held her down as he thrust into her over and over. Finding leverage in the rocky lake bottom, his firmly planted feet gave him speed and force he had not been allowed in the waters above. For a time, he continued to hold her there as he pounded into her arse, enjoying both the feeling of the tight channel twitching around his cock and the selfishness of the position. When he felt Hermione trying her best to thrust back against him despite her almost complete immobility, he reluctantly changed their position. Without withdrawing his cock, he pulled her up off the rocky shelf and spun her slowly until he could lean against the rocks himself. As he began to thrust into her again, Severus wrapped his arms around Hermione until he could reach her cunt with both hands. While the fingers of one hand began to dance over her clit, he plunged his other hand's fingers deep into her channel. At this point he slowed his strokes into her arse. Hermione knew that he loved being able to feel with his fingers the head of his cock through the thin walls separating her two channels. Thinking about that...about him feeling himself...stroking himself through her very flesh was enough to send Hermione into another shrieking orgasm. The quivering of her arse around his cock coupled with the kneading of his own fingers through the walls of her cunt sent Severus into his own release as silent bubbles streamed from his gaping mouth.

When Hermione caught her panting breath--a strange sensation indeed when one is using gills--they were still joined together. Knowing if Severus was finished he would simply leave, Hermione waited to see what would happen. When his softening cock slipped from her arse and still he made no move, Hermione turned in his embrace and wrapped her arms around him. They often clung to each other like this while they rested between rounds. There were no caresses, no soft looks, no gentle kissing. They simply clung tightly together as if each was afraid the other would disappear.

After a time, Hermione felt Severus remove his arms from around her. His hands twined into her wild hair as it drifted around their heads like a bizarre water plant. When she felt him pushing on the top of her head, trying to guide it down his torso, Hermione knew exactly what he wanted. He wanted her mouth. It was her only orifice that he hadn't fucked that night and his wordless request did not surprise her. Knowing that this was a completely selfish request on Severus' part--for he very rarely reciprocated--Hermione nevertheless allowed her head to be guided to his rapidly hardening cock. In truth, the novelty of giving a blow job while being able to breathe through gills was enough to insure her compliance. During the long days which stretched between their trysts, Hermione used the memory of his cock buried impossibly deep in her throat to fuel her desire while she frigged herself senseless.

Grasping him firmly by the hips, Hermione took but a moment to admire his erection before she opened her mouth and swallowed his cock to the root. At first he let her set the pace, but it wasn't long before he was pumping his hips, driving his cock fast and deep into her throat, pulling her to him by the hands that remained wound tightly in her hair. Hermione knew that she could never manage this on land, yet here in the water he could take her mouth as roughly as he wished and cause her no harm. As he thrust, she hummed around his length, knowing that he coveted the soundless vibration.

Just as Hermione felt his rhythm change, just as she realized he was beginning to pound his way to completion, Hermione suddenly choked. She couldn't breathe! Releasing Severus' hips, her hands flew to her neck--no gills! Water began rushing into her mouth between his thrusts. Hermione's arms flailed wildly as she panicked; terrified that Severus wouldn't recognize her distress while he was so close to orgasm. In fact, she barely noticed when he stopped fucking her to suddenly push off of the bottom, yanking her towards the surface by the hands which were still tangled in her hair.

Even when they reached the surface she couldn't breathe. Her lungs burned in pain. Though she hadn't lost consciousness, her eyes were wide and staring and her body limp as he dragged her onto the shore. Severus dove for his wand. Turning her onto her side, he voiced a quick charm. The water in Hermione's lungs was expelled violently onto the ground. He rolled her onto her back, his face hovering over her, his dark eyes beginning to panic as her lungs still refused to cooperate.

"Not like this, Hermione. Not like this," he murmured to her. Then his voice got more forceful as he nearly shouted, "Breathe, Hermione! Breathe, damn it!"

As if only awaiting his sharp command, her lungs at last filled with a ragged breath. New pain flared in her chest as she fought for each intake of air. To her shock and embarrassment, Hermione's third breath came out as a strangled sob. Soon she was sobbing piteously, still fighting to catch her breath as tears ran down her already wet face. Helping her to sit up, Severus then sat close behind her. He wrapped his arms firmly around her and eased her back so she could rest against his chest. Whenever her sobs threatened to rob her of air, he would murmur into her ear.

"Breathe," he reminded. "Breathe, Hermione."

At last she was calm. Severus helped her up and dressed her in her robe with an uncharacteristic gentleness. By the time they were both dressed, his manner had returned to its usual disdain.

"From now on," he snapped, "you will only use Gillyweed that I have personally supplied you with. Have I made myself absolutely clear?"

"Yes, sir," she said simply.

That night Severus silently walked Hermione back around the lake. He stayed by her side until they approached the lawn surrounding the castle before slipping silently away into the forest.