Pain is a Four Letter Word
by aussiemel

Summary

Hermione Life is not what it seems. What happens when she is discovered to be a cutter by Hogwarts most feared teacher?

Notes

Spoilers: Song Numb by Linkin Park, Shakespeare sonnet XXVIII
Characters: Hermione, Snape
Warnings: Dark, suicide, child abuse and rape, song fic, Slightly OOC.
Summary: Hermione Life is not what it seems. What happens when she is discovered to be a cutter by Hogwarts most feared teacher?

Don't read it. Flames will be ignored.
How can I then return in happy plight,
That am debarr'd the benefit of rest?
When day's oppression is not eased by night,
But day by night and night by day oppress'd?
And each, though enemies to either's reign,
Do in consent shake hands to torture me,
The one by toil, still farther off from thee.
I tell the day, to please him, thou art bright
And dost him grace when clouds do blot the
Heaven;
So flatter I the swart-complexion'd night,
When sparkling stars twire not thou gild'st the
even.
But day doth daily draw my sorrows longer,
And night doth nightly make grief's stranght
Seem stronger.
Shakespeare

I'm tired of being what you want me to be
Feeling so faithless

I Hurt.

I'm tired of my life, always living up to people's expectations of me.

People see me as the know-it-all Gryffindor, Harry Potter's best friend and side-kick, and I'm nothing. Not important, they never see me; they only see the bookish girl I portray myself as, But I'm more than that, more than books and learning. Under, it all I'm also a person, I'm Hermione Granger.

I'm just me, Hermione Granger.

Nothing special.

I didn't ask to be smart, it's just always come to me fairly easily and for that I'm always laughed at or mocked.
Sometimes I wish I was dead.

*Lost under the surface*

*I don't know what you're expecting of me*

I'm balancing on the edge of the blade.

I'm addicted to its sharp edges, releasing me.

Helping me survive in a world that no longer needs me.

The blade calls to me to make another cut.

I look down at my wrists; covered in the white criss crossing of past scars that hold witness to my addiction.

I could not stop, even if I wanted to.

And if they found out, my so-called friends, they'd make me stop, and I can't let them do that. They wouldn't understand that I need to cut myself, it's how I survive. No-one notices my cries for help.

I pick up my blade, my life-line, and make my first cut, pressing it down. I welcome the small amount of pain it brings to me. I savor the pain as the blade slides through the skin on my wrist, leaving the angry red line of blood behind; adding another line to the ever present pattern covering my wrists.

I can't continue being what you want me to be. I need to be me. To be Hermione.

Not the Gryffindor know-it-all. Just me. At least at home my family can recognize me; can recognize Hermione. They have no expectations of me; But even my family doesn't know me, not really. To them I'm their precious baby girl who can do no wrong. Yet they live in another world; a world without magic. No-matter how much they wish to understand the world in which I live they cannot; and somehow I think they never will.

They love me but they don't know me and it's just killing me inside.

I'm crying out for help; but no one is listening.

Help me! Please.

*Put under the pressure*

*Of walking in your shoes*

Looking around the dungeons I realize it was a pretty stupid place to do this, in Snape's dungeons. But I don't care. Snape is the only one who really sees me. I may be annoying to him, but at least he acknowledges me in some way other than mere tolerance.

Oh, I've no doubt that he hates me, but it's mostly cover; after all it wouldn't do for one of the Dark Lord's loyal followers to favor a Gryffindor, or even show some kindness to one of Harry Potters friends.

He is a complicated and mysterious man.
He seems to be someone who values intelligence above petty things like looks like most boys my age look for in a girl.

I'm expected, as Harry's friend, to stand by him as he battles the Dark Lord and his Death Eaters.

I only ever wanted to be a normal teenager; but ever since I entered Hogwarts and became Harry's friend my life has been anything but normal.

I'm only sixteen years old.

I never asked to be involved in a war.

Now that I am though; I don't think I can do it. I can't do it.

I never asked for it, can't someone older have the responsibility?

In a way, I pity Harry, who's shoulder this mostly rest's upon, but being the Gryffindor I am I feel I need to take some of the responsibility also; but since I did I can hardly breathe.

Who sends children in to fight the battles of full grown men? And expects them to live?

I feel like I'm set to burst.

I make another cut, and another, until my left wrist is crossed with many lines.

It helps me release the pressure, helps me survive.

[Caught in the undertow, just caught in the undertow]  
Every step that I take is another mistake to you

Snape only sees my mistakes; but at least he sees me and not the perfect girl everyone else believes me to be.

I'm caught up with my addiction.

With cutting myself.

Switching hands, I make a cut on the other wrist.

He would probably understand, unlike my friends.

They couldn't understand, they've never been brutally raped by their uncle since they were six years old.

Until I started Hogwarts I thought what was happening was normal, that it happened to every child.

What kind of screwed up person thinks being raped by their uncle is normal?

When we had our sex-ed classes with Madam Pomfrey I was sick with the knowledge of what my uncle had done. I couldn't stand anyone touching me for months after, to some extent I still can't, and on top of the rapes, I was beaten.

My friends never had to endure the beatings.

Next week I go back home to face my parents and dad's brother.
Uncle Stan has lived with us for as long as I can remember, 'it' has happened for as long as I can remember and no one ever cared enough to notice; not even mum and dad.

I love my parents and spending time with them, but with them comes my uncle, and I cannot stand another summer being near him.

Please don't send me back there!

*I've Become so numb
I can't feel you there*

I've become numb to the world around me, I'm on auto pilot just going along like normal.

No one notices.

No one cares.

Who would believe them? or me? anyway? They never have before.

When I was nine, I told my primary school teacher when she found my bruises, she told the child services who came to investigate, but they never found anything. Uncle Stan made sure of that. Once the investigation was over I got the worst beatings and rapes of my life. I was out of school for a month recovering. No one thought to check up on me. I never told anyone since. Telling only leads to pain and hurt. My parents never noticed, they were away at a conference for two months; when they returned I was too scared to tell them and they never noticed.

*Become so tired
So much more aware*

I'm tired of living with so much pain.

But with me just existing I notice everything.

I pull the blade through my wrist cutting slightly deeper than the last time.

*I'm becoming this
All I want to do
Is be more like me
And be less like you*

I'm numb.

I feel as if my world is crumbling around me; that the people I surround myself with: Ron, Harry, the other Gryffindors, that they don't see the real me.

I'm tired of everything.

I feel smothered.

Maybe Uncle Stan was right, maybe I am just a useless waste of space.

Only useful for a good fuck. He treats me like an unwanted possession.
Only there to be used, for him to relieve his frustrations with.

The summer holidays start next week.

I don't want to go back.

I can't go back.

But Dumbledore won't let me stay.

_Can't you see that you're smothering me_  
_Holding too tightly_

He says it's what's best for me. I'll be safe, protected.

What would he know?

Just another small cut...right here; I take the blade pulling it along my skin making a large cut about five centimeters long. I am, relishing the euphoric feeling the pain-filled cut gives me. It releases all the pain, the feelings of despair and loneliness that I feel.

My blade is my one true friend; it's always there and never judges me, just accepts.

_Afraid to lose control_

If others knew, they'd stop me. Tell me it's wrong to hurt myself, but they don't understand. They can't understand.

I'm alone.

My blade helps me stay in control of my life. Before my life was like a never-ending roller coaster ride.

It helps me stay in control.

It knows what's best.

'Cause everything that you thought I would be  
Has fallen apart right in front of you

If they knew their perfect Hermione cut herself; hurt herself.

Their illusions would be shattered.

They might actually see me, and not only what they want to see.

They'd lock me up like I'm crazy.

I'm not, crazy that is.

I just hurt.

And my blade eases my hurt; makes my life more bearable.
I move along; existing with everyone else, but not quiet living.

Every step that I take is
Another mistake to you

Why can't you just see me?

I make another cut, letting the pain and hurt seep out with the blood flowing freely down my arms.

I feel wetness slide slowly down my face.

I'm not crying. No, there must be a leak in the ceiling somewhere.

I don't cry.

Crying is for wimps, for freaks.

My uncle said crying needs to be punished.

Crying is wrong.

And every second I waste
Is more than I can take

Everyday gets worse.

It used to only be maybe once a week I'd feel the urge to cut.

To feel the release of pressure I'd get from the act.

Now I feel the urge at least every second of every day.

I look down. My arms are now covered in blood, my blood.

Tonight I've made several new cuts.

I already feel better; more like myself.

And I know
I may end up failing too

I feel light headed; I slipped.

Cut too deep.

And now I can feel my life slipping away slowly.
This was not how it was supposed to happen. I wasn't supposed to die like this.

Alone.

Helpless.

Scared.

"Help..." I try and call out for help. I didn't want to die, but my voice cracks and falls on deaf ears.

No one will hear my cries for help.

I'm going to die here.

In the dungeons.

But at least I won't have to return to home for another summer of abuse.

**But I know**

**You were just like me**

Snape should be by soon. He always catches me when I do something wrong.

He'll help me.

No... he hates me. No one will want me around now.

Footsteps. Yes, someone's coming. I'm not going to die.

They'll save me.

They'll save Hermione.

Not the Gryffindor know-it-all, she dies tonight. From now on I'm just Hermione.

"Granger, where are you? I know you are in here!"

Snape.

"Prof..." I try to call out to him. I've no voice left.

He'll leave me here.

Maybe I will die after all.

I slid bonelessly to the dungeon floor.

I've got no energy left to call out to him.

I laugh weakly. An ironic, slightly hysterical laugh.

I'll die and they'll realize they almost found me, almost saved me.

Almost.

Apparently my laughter must have been louder than I thought, as I see Snape come around from the
other side of the desk.

He sees me.

I'm going to live.

Maybe someone cares after all.

Even if it /is/ Snape.

Finally I succumb to the calling darkness and slip into unconsciousness.

*With someone disappointed in you*
Whispers

_Catch me as I fall_

Groggily I start coming back to myself, all I'm aware of is the stabbing, white hot pain shooting through my arms and the blackness surrounding me.

Maybe I'm in heaven.

I finally succeeded where my uncle failed, I killed myself and I wish I hadn't. What will my parents think when they discover what I've done? Will they hate me? Or will they take my uncle's side and believe him over me?

It's like a foggy blackness surrounding me that nothing can penetrate.

I can hear voices everywhere as if through a shield of fog; maybe I'm not dead after all, maybe Snape managed to save me from myself.

I groan loudly a sharp stab of pain shoots through my arm; the voices come closer, yet I still can not recognize anyone. Trying to open my eyes, I'm blinded by a brilliant white light. It hurts so much.

"Light..." I gasp out in pain, "Hurts," I try talking further but nothing comes out, my throat is raw and dry, preventing me from further speech.

_Say you're here and it's all over now_

"Hush child. Poppy, dim the lights," A terribly familiar voice snapped out. I feel the darkness encroach on me and sigh in relief, I open my mouth to speak, and someone places a straw at my mouth instructing me to drink. I do so without question, the cool water soothing my dry parched throat.

I try opening my eyes again, this time there is little pain accompanying the movement. Everything is blurry. I feel my bed dip at the edge as someone sits down. Focusing my eyes I see the hospital wing slowly come into focus, the voices I heard earlier I recognize as belonging to Madame Pomfrey and Professor Snape.

"What... Happened?" I ask, my voice cracking and breaking on the last word.

Snape raises one of his eyebrows in question.

"We were hoping you could tell us that Miss Granger," He says, somewhat kindly. Well, kindly for him.

Suddenly it all comes rushing back.

The pain and despair.

The cutting.

The blood.

I thought I would die. I didn't, but I'll still have to go home and suddenly I wish he hadn't found me.
"I...I cut myself...I didn't want to kill myself, It was an accident," I start, my voice cracking as I speak, several tears running silently down my face.

"Why did you do it, if not to kill yourself child?" Snape asked softly, touching my face, forcing me to look at him.

"I can't go home," I gasp out, "I can't take it anymore," I say as more tears make their way down my face to fall gracelessly onto my pillow. "Pro...Professor Dumbledore wouldn't let me stay"

Snape looks confused, perhaps wondering why the perfect Gryffindor wouldn't wish to return home. Let him be confused, but I cannot go back; cannot face the pain, the humiliation that would come with returning home.

If it hadn't been for the laws surrounding use of magic in the holidays I would have been tempted to use an Unforgivable on the monster; but I couldn't risk being expelled and not being able to return to the school that had been my sanctuary. It just wasn't worth the risk.

No matter how much I wished to do it.

**No one's here and I fall into myself**

"Miss Granger, you cannot remain at the castle over the summer, it is not safe," Snape said, looking at me intently.

"I can't go home sir, my uncle... he...I just can't go home," I told him, my voice trailing off into nothing, but the more I told him the freer I felt. It was as if talking to my most hated Professor was to be my salvation, the way out of my despair.

"Tell me. Why do you not wish to go home and see your uncle?" Snape asked, shifting slightly on the bed.

So I told him.

Every detail I could remember from when I was six years old. The more I told him, the angrier he grew. I could practically feel the rage flowing from him in waves. By the time I had finished speaking I was sobbing uncontrollably, letting out the pain I had kept inside since I was a small child.

I felt him reach out, wrapping his slender arms around me and he held me as I cried out my sorrows, and I clung tightly to him as if my life depended on it, and in some ways I guess it did.

As I lay there sobbing in Professor Snape's arms I felt safe, something that rarely happened when I was around men, especially older ones. There was just something about him that made me feel safe and protected. So I clung to him, sobbing out my pain.

Finally I calmed myself enough to release my hold on Professor Snape, so he laid me back on my bed where I fell into a restless and exhausted sleep, with only my nightmares to comfort me.

**This truth drives me into madness**

*I see myself as I was when I was seven years old.*

*I was asleep in my bed, my parents were away for the weekend and I was left alone with Uncle Stan.*
I was terrified.

CREAK!

I heard the floorboard outside my room groan in protest as someone stepped on it. I huddled beneath my blankets trying to gain some comfort from them.

I whimper slightly as I see my uncle ease my door open, entering my room and shutting the door behind him.

"My little princess" he whispered walking toward me and sitting down on my bed removing the blankets from my body.

"Please! No" I whisper, fear clear in my eyes.

He ignores me, bringing his hands up to caress my unwilling body.

"Come princess, take off your clothes" He purred, kissing me harshly on the lips.

"No...No...Please" I cry, tears leaking from my eyes.

Ignoring my cries, he pulls my nightie from my body, then my underwear soon follows.

"Uncle Stan, Please stop!" I cry out sobbing harshly.

He ignores me, and I hear his zipper being lowered. He grins down at me, gently caressing my cheek as he positions himself on me. He kisses me again harshly, forcing himself into me.

I start sobbing with more force as he thrusts himself into me for several minutes before he collapses spending himself within my body. Panting harshly he withdrew. Tiding himself, he quickly left the room leaving me sobbing into the mattress.

Screaming and gasping harshly, I wake up, tears streaming down my face. Lying back down, I curled myself into a ball falling into an exhausted sleep. Never noticing the dark, imposing figure standing watch over me from the corner of the room.

I know I can stop the pain if I will it all away

The next morning I awoke to the face I'd become accustomed to since waking up in the Hospital Wing. Only this time he was accompanied by Professor Dumbledore.

"Miss Granger, how are you this morning?" Dumbledore inquired, his usual twinkle somewhat dimmed by recent events. I was somewhat saddened by the knowledge I had caused that response in the ancient wizard.

Ever since arriving at Hogwarts when I was eleven, I'd heard nothing but good things about the great Albus Dumbledore, I'd heard about how he'd defeated the great dark wizard Grindelwald and yet I'd always seen him as some grandfatherly figure, watching over all the children of Hogwarts. He seemed as if he was unbreakable, always with a twinkle in his eyes and a sweet in his mouth, and I'd never once seen that twinkle gone, it was always constant, yet with one stupid act on my part I'd caused it to all but disappear.

That only added to my despair.

"Fine," I say, turning my face from the older wizard. I'd lost some of my faith in the old man
following the recent events, the only person I felt I could talk to and trust was Professor Snape. It's funny how just weeks ago it would have been the other way around.

While I'd trust Dumbledore to defeat Voldemort or countless other dark wizards, I just couldn't trust him with this. He couldn't understand just what it is that I am going through, only someone else with similar experiences could and while I wouldn't know one way or the other whether Snape has been thorough something similar, I instinctually know I can trust the man.

He's been through so much, He joined the Death Eaters as a boy and has spent countless years acting as a spy for the Order of the Phoenix, providing invaluable information on the Dark Lord, he's also been tortured by him repeatedly, if what Harry has told me is true, and I think it's for that reason he can understand me; understand my pain.

That's why I trust him, he may be a miserable bastard but after what he has no doubt been through I think he has earned that right.

"Why didn't you tell me child?" He asked with such sadness in his voice that I turned to face him. His face matches his voice, he looks so... so broken and I almost start crying again at the sight of such a great wizard reduced to that. As it is, a single tear slips down my cheek.

"I couldn't, no one would have believed me," I whispered, my voice cracking at the admission. Although Professor Dumbledore looks like I've just slapped him in the face.

"Severus is the only one who will be staying here the whole summer. You can stay with him if you wish. I shall be here periodically. Please feel free to speak to me when you feel the need. I have informed your parents you will be staying here for the summer?" Dumbledore told me quietly.

"Thank you Sir. When will I be able to leave the hospital wing?" I asked, looking directly at Snape.

"If nothing goes wrong, tomorrow morning, your things have already been moved to my chambers," Snape said, looking at me with an unreadable expression on his face.

"Ok," I say, drifting off to sleep again and, for once, I didn't dream.

_Don't turn away_

When I woke an hour ago I expected to see Professor Snape here like he'd been every day since I'd arrived, but he was conspicuously absent. It was an hour later, when I was dressed and ready to go, that he walked into the room, motioning me to follow him to the dungeons where his quarters were located.

Looking at Professor Snape as we walked, I was reminded of the fact that this man risked his life on a daily basis to undermine the Dark Lord and allow us to win in this deadly game we were playing.

Not paying attention to where I was going I almost ran into his back as he stopped in front of a portrait of Salazar Slytherin, muttering the password "Aconite" under his breath so quietly I was sure I was not supposed to hear him. Turning to me he gestured me forward into his private chambers.

As I entered the chambers of my most hated Professor, I realized they were nothing like I'd imagined them to be, lining the wall either side of the fireplace were two elegant book shelves that reached the ceiling, covering the walls with what must have been hundreds of rare and valuable texts. Before the fire were three chairs: two black leather winged back chairs and one well worn sofa that was Ravenclaw blue. Just beyond the main sitting room was a beautiful cherry wood dining suite.
The kitchen area was just beyond that. Gazing around I noticed three other doors that I assumed to be his bedroom, spare room and a private lab.

The walls and carpeting were done in rich blues and Greens.

"Miss Granger, your room is the door on the left, mine is on the right. There is a shared en suite bathroom so if the door is locked assume it is occupied and wait your turn and I will do the same," Snape barked out in his usual brisk tone. 'Well it appeared that his "niceness"has worn off,' I thought to myself.

**Don't give in to the pain**

I spent the remainder of the day locked away in my room, glad for the fact that I would not be required to go home and wondering at what my parents had been told.

Had Professor Snape told them what Uncle Stan had done to me? Told them I cut myself to feel the pain? That I did it to watch myself bleed?

What if they hated me?

With my thoughts running through my head, I started feeling depressed again, wishing again for the blade that was my freedom, but Snape had taken that from me when he'd found me in his classroom.

But now that I think about it, how had he known I would be there? And why, after six years of ridicule and harsh words, was he actually being kind?

I know I shouldn't cut myself but the more that I'm left to my own thoughts, the more destructive they become; I know it's wrong to want the things I do, but it is all I can think of at the moment.

Maybe if I just make a few small cuts no one will notice.

I won't be half crazed like I was on the night I almost died.

Died.

That's a word that I don't think of much, or if I do, never in relation to myself. How could I let it get to this point? No one knows me anymore.

*I don't know me anymore.*

As my thoughts swim, I feel my resolve cracking, tears rolling unrestrained down my face.

No!

I won't do it.

I can't do it.

But I *have* to do it.

Reaching over I grasp my wand firmly, suddenly feeling a strange calm wash over me I pull the sleeve of my muggle long sleeved shirt up my arm, gently placing the tip of my wand against the flesh of my inner arm; muttering a small cutting hex, I begin making a few cuts along my arm, relishing the feeling it gives me.
**Don't try to hide**

BANG!

I jump in shock as the bedroom door bangs loudly against the wall. Eyes wide with shock as I realize Professor Snape is striding angrily toward me. Finally reaching the bed, he takes the wand from my unresisting fingers.

"Silly Girl, you thought I'd let you go off alone without first taking some precautions, after what happened mere days ago?" He asked me with venom usually reserved for Neville Longbottom causing me to shrink back from him. At my reaction, I see what looks like regret pass through his eyes so quickly I thought I'd missed it.

"I'm sorry sir...I," I start speaking my voice cracking and dying as I try to continue.

Why is it after a few kind words I can no longer take his usual venom, and I admit, if only to myself, I feel he's the only one who will ever understand me because he was the one who found me that night, stayed with me in the Hospital Wing, and in that time I feel we formed some sort of special bond; even if I'm the only one who feels it.

All I want is someone to understand and help me.

Please Professor Help me. I don't want to do this any longer.

"I will be keeping your wand until such time as I know you can be trusted with it. I expect you to come to me any time you feel the urge to cut yourself. Understood?" He asked me, his tone somewhat gentler than it had been before.

"Yes Sir," I reply as I watch him exit the room, shutting the door behind him, leaving my to another night of dreams I can not avoid.

Sighing, I lie down and close my eyes, falling into a, for once, dreamless, if not restful sleep.

**Though they're screaming your name**

The next few weeks went by rather quickly for me; I spent all my time in my room completing homework or reading some of the books from Snape's personal library.

I admit I was depressed; I missed my parents dearly and wished for nothing more than to go home and see them. But I can't go back to that house, and Uncle Stan would still be there waiting for me to close my eyes; haunting my waking and sleeping hours.

He called me his "little princess" and I hate him for what he did to me.

After the first week, I'd started getting to know Snape more and talking to him when we'd see each other, I discovered we were not as different from each other as we'd first thought.

He loves reading and learning like I do, the thirst for discovering new information always there.

He hasn't told me much about his childhood; but I get the feeling it wasn't happy. I've seen the scars covering his arms also. He cut himself as well.

Not that he'd ever admit that to me, he seems to be a very proud man and would not want anyone
knowing about any weaknesses he had.

He helps me all the time with my struggle, with my addiction to my blade. I've had the urge to cut several times since I arrived here and, except for the first time, I've not done it since; I just go to him and he holds me until I fall asleep or the need to cut leaves me. By some unspoken agreement we do not speak of those times the next day, but I know without him I'd be lost.

He helps me, and I pray he never stops.

Don't close your eyes

I think the worst thing about this whole situation is the dreams.

They're always there, at the edges of my vision, waiting for me to close my eyes, every night it's the same: I dream of what happened to me, of the rapes, of the beatings.

Each night, I stay awake until I'm so exhausted I can't stay awake any longer. I'm terrified of sleeping, because in the daylight hours I can suppress the memories almost forget about them, but the moment I shut my eyes and let sleep take me they all come rushing back, and every night I wake up screaming.

And every time I do, he comes and holds me till I sleep, and I wish he'd stay because he seems to be the only one who'll keep the dreams away.

All I want is to fall asleep in his arms as he watches over me keeping the dreams away.

My silent, dark guardian angel.

God knows what lies behind them

Screaming, I bolt upright in bed, gasping for breath and silently sobbing.

Why can't these dreams leave me alone?

Starting slightly as someone sits down beside me, I curl in closer to the warm body, crying silently as I remember what my dream was about.

Wrapping his arm around me I hear him hushing me, soothing me and trying to get me to calm down enough to talk. Finally I feel myself calm down, my sobbing subsiding to hiccupping breaths.

"Do you wish to talk about it?" Snape asks me. I look up into his dark ebony eyes and shake my head no.

"I...can't. Not yet," I tell him with a shaky voice.

"Have you suffered from nightmares like this since you started Hogwarts?"

"Sometimes, but I've only just started getting them bad again since I told you about what happened," I tell him, burying my head into his shoulder slightly.

"Ok, I will leave it for now but if they do not improve you will need to talk about it," Snape says, tilting my head up slightly so he can look into my eyes, obviously finding whatever he was looking for, he stands up to leave.
Wanting to thank him, I impulsively kneel up, kissing him lightly on the cheek. "Thank you, Professor," I say lying down again.

Nodding his head at me, I see his cheeks grow slightly pink as if he is embarrassed.

"Goodnight Miss Granger." And with that he retreats from my room, leaving the door slightly ajar.

**Don't turn out the light**

"Lumos," I mutter, lighting a couple of the torches that surround the room. Lying in my bed, I go over the events of the last few days in my mind.

I still can't believe I almost ended my life in my desperate cry for help; though I didn't wish to return and see my uncle, I know I could have gone about it better than I had; but I couldn't find the words to tell anyone about what had happened to me since I was a small child. I still can't believe the ease in which I told Professor Snape that first morning when I regained consciousness.

For some reason I felt I could trust him and I still do.

I know he is a spy for Dumbledore. Trying to gather information about You-Know-Who's plans. I don't know how he does it day after day.

Ever since the incident in his classroom I've started to notice him more: his mannerisms, his looks, his voice. For the past six months I've had a crush on him. Most would think me mad for even considering him like that, but there is just something about him that draws me to him.

I could listen to his voice for hours; caressing me like a lover. His voice is like silk: deep and smooth; and while he is not conventionally handsome, he is a fairly good looking man. Though even I'll admit his hair could do with washing a little more often.

I Shake my head at the direction my thoughts had taken.

Why must my feelings choose someone like him to fixate on?

Especially since he would never return my feelings.

Sighing, I roll over and close my eyes, trying to fall asleep and hoping the lights will keep the dreams at bay.

**Never sleep never die**

The next morning when I woke, I was dreading seeing Snape, especially after the revelations of my feelings for him.

Climbing from my bed, I enter the bathroom, locking the door once I'm inside. Once inside I strip my clothes off; turning on the shower, I stepped under the spray, letting the water hit my back and work out the kinks.

It's hard to believe that only a few weeks ago, I almost died from something I did. A few years ago I never would have resorted to that, and while I was still cutting, I was always so careful that I never slipped, never cut too deep, but this time I saw red and I just couldn't stop. I was scared and alone and wanted to escape my pain and I was so mad at what my uncle had done to me that I just lost control; I couldn't stop, all I could see was a way to ease my pain and then I slipped and my whole
life changed. Now I'm at Hogwarts, living with it's most hated Professor.

And I can't say that I'm disappointed with that turn of events.

As the water starts growing cold, I'm pulled out of my thoughts. I turn off the water, drying myself off, I get dressed and exit the bathroom. Looking at my watch I notice it's only seven am.

Tidying the room up a bit, I go into the kitchen and sit down across from Professor Snape to eat my breakfast.

I'm frightened by what I see

"Good morning Professor," I say, grabbing a slice of toast.

"Good morning, Miss Granger," he replies in his sexy voice.

Oh god, I did not just think that. Professor Snape is not sexy.

"Can you call me Hermione please, sir, I hate being called Miss Granger," I say, taking a gulp from my pumpkin juice, avoiding his gaze as much as possible.

Raising his eyebrow in question he says, "Very well...Hermione, but if you are to be here all summer I shall insist in you calling me Severus."

I nearly spit my drink all over him; I certainly had not expected that. How am I supposed to get over this silly crush if he keeps doing things like that?

"O..Ok Sir...Uh I mean Severus," I stutter out.

With him, smirking slightly at my stammering, we finish the remainder of our meal in silence.

I study the man across from me with a silent regard. Why had I never noticed this man before? He's brave, sarcastic, he can be a bit of a bastard... Okay, a lot of a bastard though the events of the last few weeks have shown that he actually cares for the students placed under his care and not just his precious Slytherins.

His long black hair frames his well defined face well, it suits him, with his severe features and acidic voice. I don't know exactly when my feelings for him started to change; but now instead of dreading seeing him I look forward to it.

But somehow I know that there's much more to come

Every time I see Severus (I like how his name sounds on my lips) I start to get butterflies in my stomach, anticipating our time together. I no longer have to worry about him berating me or yelling, well that's not exactly true he's still him, meaning a sarcastic bastard, but I guess I've just grown used to it. I no longer fear him.

That night I went to bed the same as always, and woke up screaming yet again. As usual, Severus came into my room to comfort me, he held me tightly as I cried out my pain, just as I was starting to calm down, I felt him tighten his hold on me, hissing out in pain.

Pulling away from me slightly, he grasped hold of my chin tilting my face up so that he could look into my eyes.
Running his fingers gently down my face and wiping away the tears there he softly spoke, "I must go. The Dark Lord is calling me."

Looking into my eyes one last time he stood turning to leave, but at the last minute he turns to look at me and I can't help myself, I run to him clutching him in my arms, before tilting my head up and kissing him fully on the mouth. I honestly don't know why I did it but I know I'll never regret it. I think at first he was too shocked to do much other than stand there, but the longer I kissed him the more he relaxed into the contact. After a few minutes he was kissing me back enthusiastically. Sighing with regret he broke the kiss, pulling away to look into my eyes, obviously finding what he was looking for, he caressed my face one last time before turning and fleeing the room, returning moments later dressed in his Death Eater robes. Then without another word he turned and exited the rooms and Hogwarts returning to his master's side.

Once he was gone I fell to my knees sobbing uncontrollably on the floor.

What had I done?

Would he become distracted by the kiss? Would Lord Voldemort know?

Did I just sign his death certificate?

Oh, God what did I do?

**Immobilized by my fear**

I was scared.

No...Terrified would be more accurate, It had been three days since he'd left. After he'd left and I had composed myself I ran all the way to the Headmaster's office to tell him what had happened, of course I did not mention the kiss we had shared... some how I don't think the Headmaster would see the kiss the same as I did.

Dumbledore was there, and he basically told me in that way he has not to worry, that this sort of thing happened often. I wanted to just scream at him.

How could he be so callous about someone's life?. Especially this someone's life?

Oh god! What if he's dead? What if he never knows how I truly feel?

Three days after he'd left and still no news from him, and I could feel all my pain, all my despair rushing back to me. I wanted my blade back. I needed the release.

In my panic , I started searching Snape's apartment for something sharp that I could use. I'd nearly turned the place upside down, when I finally entered his bedroom. I'd never been in his room before, but at this moment I was in too much pain to take much notice of anything other than my objective.

After nearly an hour of searching I found a small dagger in his night stand, it was intricately carved with his name along the blade and several precious stones on the hilt. Reminding myself to look at the beauty at a later date, I climbed onto Severus' bed. Holding the dagger in my hand, I drew my sleeve from my arm and brought the blade to the skin there, being careful not to cut too deeply.

Pulling the blade along my skin, I hissed at the sensation it caused, relishing it and repeating the action again and again until both my arms were covered in thin red lines.
Feeling suddenly exhausted, I lay back on the bed falling into a deep sleep waiting for Severus to return.

And soon to be blinded by tears

I quickly come awake as I feel someone grab my arm, shaking me awake lightly. Groaning softly, I open my eyes to see Severus sitting on the bed beside me, looking at me with an odd look on his face.

"Severus!" I gasp out, flinging myself at him, hugging him tightly. At first he remains stiff and unresponsive then slowly he relaxes, returning the embrace "Oh, god I thought I'd lost you," I tell him, burrowing my face in his neck, letting my tears escape down my face in relief.

"Shhh, It's ok, I'm back. I'm not going anywhere," He soothes me, stroking my hair lightly.

"I was so worried," I tell him, turning my face so that I could see his eyes. Looking at him, I saw something unknown in his eyes, it looked familiar but I couldn't place it. He looked into my eyes searching for something, what I don't know, but it seemed as if he'd found it for the next thing I know, he bent his head down to mine, placing a soft kiss on my lips before pulling back to look into my eyes.

Wanting more of the contact, I reached up placing my hands behind his neck pulling him in for another kiss. Just before our lips touched he spoke: "We can't." Looking into his eyes I realized that he wanted this as much as I did, so I ignored his protests and brushed my lips against his, kissing him softly. Deepening the kiss, I brushed my tongue against his bottom lip, asking and gaining access, I slipped my tongue into his mouth slowly exploring it's depths.

Hearing his soft gasp, I open my mouth letting him slip his tongue in and explore. Gasping for breath I slowly break the kiss laying my head on his shoulder. Groaning in pain at the position he'd been seated in, he stretched himself out beside me on the bed so he was laying beside me, holding me.

Glad that he's finally back, I allow myself to succumb to sleep.

I can stop the pain if I will it all away

In the morning, I woke first feeling safe in Severus' embrace. I move slightly so that I can see his face, he doesn't look any different than before he left, but since he was at a Death Eater meeting who knows what sort of torment he suffered. I look at his sleeping face and wish I could see him like that more often, peaceful; its as if he suddenly loses ten years from his appearance when he's asleep, and to me he looks handsome like that.

I smile as I remember the kisses we shared, I'd been sure he'd reject me, how could a man of his stature want me? A sixteen year old girl who hurts herself. I love him but maybe he doesn't feel like that about me, I mean after a couple of kisses I can't expect declarations of love.

Hearing a soft groan, I realize he is waking up. "Good morning, Severus," I say, tilting my head back so I can get a decent look at him.

Looking at him like that, I feel like a stampede of hippogriffs are running around in my stomach, but when he looks at me I feel like my heart is set to burst. "We need to talk," he murmurs quietly, reaching up and rubbing at his eyes sleepily.
"No we don't. I like you. A lot, and obviously you like me too or you wouldn't have kissed me, and before you say it, I don't care that you're my teacher or about the age difference, I just want to be with you."

"I could lose my job if anyone found out about this," He said, rolling onto his back, turning his face slightly to look at me.

"I know, but we can keep it secret until I graduate, unless you aren't willing to take the risk," I ask hesitantly.

Sighing, he pulls me close, so that my head is neatly tucked beneath his chin. "You are worth the risk Hermione, but why would you want to be with me? I am an old man, I was also a Death Eater, I have done things that would give you nightmares, I do not wish to start something you would later regret," he speaks softly, stroking my hair as he speaks.

"I don't care about all of that. I knew all of that when I first kissed you. I would never regret starting a relationship with you Severus. I want to be with you and if I have to wait until graduation to tell anyone I will so long as I still get you," I say gently placing a small kiss on his chest.

"As long as you are sure?" He asked, tilting my head up so he could look into my eyes.

Nodding, I answer "I am." Seeing the truth of my words, he leans down kissing me softly on the lips, sealing out fate together.

**Don't turn away**

Once we got out of bed, Severus left to see the Headmaster. He had to report what had happened at the Death Eater meeting, I'd been so glad to see him yesterday that I'd not realized he'd come back uninjured, which was a miracle in itself giving how long he was gone. As soon as he left, I started to feel guilty about why I was in his bed in the first place.

The Dagger.

I'd betrayed his trust and cut myself again, when I'd promised him I wouldn't.

If he knew, would he still wish to be with me?

But he knew about the cutting before we got together so perhaps he would.

I know I'll have to tell him the truth, and just hope he will not turn his back on me.

**Don't give in to the pain**

He returned to the rooms an hour later. Gathering up my courage, I told him what I had done.

That I had cut myself again.

After I had promised him I wouldn't.

Though where I had expected him to look angry or hurt or even betrayed I saw none of those emotions on him, the only thing I saw understanding and acceptance.

"I know, I saw your arms and the dagger when I returned last night," Severus replied, taking a seat
beside me on the lounge, pulling me close to him.

"I'm sorry I know I promised you I wouldn't do it again. You must think I'm weak," I said, not daring to look him in the face.

"Shhhh, you have nothing to apologize for, and you are not weak. You are one of the strongest women I know. I knew you would likely do it again, I didn't expect a complete recovery overnight," He said, grasping my chin lightly in his hand, tilting my face upwards, he placed a gentle kiss on my lips.

"You mean that?" I asked.

"Of course. I do not say things I do not mean," He told me, pulling me against him more firmly.

After our discussion we spent the remainder of the day talking about Severus' childhood, my childhood, as well as anything else we could find, by the time we finished, I felt as if I knew him as well as I knew myself.

**Don't try to hide**

That night as I lay in bed I thought over the day's events.

Severus loves me, or at least cares for me. He wouldn't have kissed me otherwise.

I love him and I wish we did not have to hide our relationship but there is no way I would willingly get Severus into trouble which would undoubtedly happen if our relationship was discovered.

I dreaded going to sleep, so far I had been plagued with nightmares and I did not wish for them to return. Pulling my dressing gown around me I got out of bed to find Severus. Looking about the rooms I shared with him, I finally found him in his bedroom.

Entering the room I called out to him softly "Severus?"

Grunting softly he rolled over, opening his eyes to look at me.

Coming into the room more fully I sat down on the edge of his bed, reaching out to brush the hair out of his face, finally I worked up the courage to ask him what I had come in for.

"Severus? I...Can I stay in here with you tonight? I can't sleep...and I don't want to keep relying on the Dreamless Sleep Potion," I told him, waiting anxiously for his reply.

"Hermione..." He started, looking into my eyes.

"Severus please, I don't want to do anything, not tonight. I just want to sleep. The only time I ever get any sleep is when you're with me," I pleaded with him.

"Very well, as long as this is what you want," He said, pulling back the covers for me to climb into the bed with him. Smiling slightly, I took off the dressing gown and climbed into bed with him. Turning to face him I cuddled up close, resting my head on his chest I closed my eyes.

Wrapping his arms around me he kissed me on the head before closing his eyes and drifting off to sleep, smiling I kissed his chest before following him into sleep.
Though they're screaming your name

Waking up the next morning I propped myself up on an elbow, silently observing Severus as he slept. He looked so peaceful in his sleep, the lines of wear and stress on his face smoothed back to reveal the flawless skin beneath it. Seeing him stir slightly I murmur "Good morning" to him, watching as he opens his eyes to look up at me as I lean over him to give him a kiss.

"Morning," He replies, leaning into the kiss, now more awake he rolls me beneath him looking deeply into my eyes, seeking permission to continue which I readily give him.

"Make love to me Severus," I tell him keeping my voice soft.

"We shouldn't," He starts leaning forward, letting his forehead rest gently against my own "But I don't think I could stop," He finally finish's.

"Good, because I don't want you to," I reply, letting all the love I feel for this man shine through in my gaze.

Don't close your eyes
God knows what lies behind them

Sighing softly he nods slowly, leaning in to kiss me deeply. Moaning softly, Severus settles his weight over me gently, running his hands down my Side, slipping up and under the tee I wore to bed. Sighing, I reached up to caress his cheek and neck, before reaching down to lift the shirt from his body, pulling away only long enough to complete the task.

Soon we were both completely naked, kissing and caressing each other. Severus was the total opposite of what I'd imagined him to be in my fantasies, instead of the firm, slightly rough treatment I'd imagined, he took his time, making sure to be gentle and careful.

In other words, his caustic personality stayed well away from the bedroom for which I was grateful. After everything that I'd been through since I was a small child I honestly didn't think I could handle the rougher treatment.

Sighing, I had my hands roaming freely over Severus' body as he gave me the same treatment, kissing me starting at my neck and working his way down, over my collar bone to my breasts. Gently he took one of my hardened nipples into his mouth, sucking hard causing me to cry out with pleasure.

He was driving me mad with lust and need. I wanted him so much. I can not believe that this is the man I once hated, he picked on my friends and I constantly, yet I have now grown to care for him deeply.

Looking up into his eyes I silently urge him on, nodding to me he pulls my legs higher making room for himself between them, once that's done he enters me gently, taking extra care not to hurt me or scare me, especially given my previous experience with sex.

"God Hermione," Severus grunts out between parted lips, beginning to increase the speed of his thrusts. Looking into my eyes, I feel him reach down between our bodies and gently rub my clit causing me to cry out with pleasure.

As I come down from my climax he increased his pace before finally coming deeply inside me.
Don't turn out the light  
Never sleep never die  

Severus rolls to the side so he doesn't crush me. "I didn't hurt you did I?" He asks, looking deeply into my eyes.

Rolling to my side I face him. "No you didn't. I love you," I said, ducking my head slightly at the admission. Grabbing my chin he tilts my face toward his kissing me softly on the lips, causing me to sigh in contentment. "I'm glad you're here," I say softly, "You make the nightmares go away".

"I'm glad I could be of service," He replies in his deep baritone voice.

Fallen angels at my feet  
Whispered voices at my ear  

As I drift back off to sleep, I smile softly at the thought that the man beside me is one I chose to be there and that no matter what happens in the future, nothing can touch me while I am at his side.

I no longer crave the sweet embrace of eternal sleep, but I want to live out my life with him by my side. I just hope that he feels the same way.

Death before my eyes  
Lying next to me I fear  

I don't know what will happen when the school year resumes, but I know that I'll be alright. We'll figure something out so that we can be together.

She beckons me shall I give in  
Upon my end shall I begin  

Death used to be something I craved; I just wanted all my pain and suffering to end, but now I have turned my back on it. It is no longer something that will happen soon but something in my far, distant future.

Smiling in my sleep I snuggle closer to my new lover.

Forsaking all I've fallen for I rise to meet the end  

I know now that with Severus at my side, helping me heal the wound's my uncle inflicted, I'll survive the journey through life with only a few scars on my mind and body to show for it.

Finis

I hope every one has enjoyed the fic. This is the final chapter as I can't think of anywhere else to take it. Thank you for the patient wait for this chapter. And to all that reviewed, you made it worth finishing.

Thanks, Aussie Mel
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!