Glimpses of a Life

by Scholastica

Summary

Severus Snape is dying. Iris Potter promises hope. Can the Girl-Who-Lived save both the Wizarding World and her former, formidable Potions professor? Or is there just not enough time?

Notes

Author's Note: This is a female Harry Potter story that takes place during the events of the Battle of Hogwarts.

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May 2, 1998
2.21 a.m.

Severus Snape was dying.

He knew it.

His neck, torn to a shredded mess by Nagini, was bleeding, hot sticky fluid that his weak, shaking hands couldn’t stop. Nothing could stop now.

*Not even magic*, his brain supplied in derision.
His wand…that amazing bit of cedar that had been his since his mother took him to buy it all those years ago in Diagon Alley – useless. Too far away; lost somewhere on the floor of that abominable shack and never for him to see again.

Never for him to use again.

And all his knowledge of potions…

If he had the energy, he would have cursed himself and his foolishness. He had known – known – the dangers of that foul serpent. Known the harm it could do to unsuspecting victims. He had even brewed the very antidote in case of such an occurrence; an antidote that was now locked safely, and unserviceably, in his office.

His eyes stung at the unfairness of it all. This wasn’t how it was supposed to be. This wasn’t what he had wanted. Not really, no matter how he had presented himself to the world. To be here, at the end, weak, helpless. Alone.

He had wanted atonement, yes, but this…

His eyes fluttered closed for a moment. Somewhere – he didn’t even know - the blood that was steadily flowing from him was undoubtedly starting to affect his coherence – a floorboard creaked. Was it the Dark Lord and his snake back to check on his much desired demise?

A small whimper escaped from him.

Stars, he had tried so hard to make it all right. The mistakes he had made when he was a younger man. The lives he had hurt.

A pair of emerald green eyes suddenly floated before him.

Those eyes. It was all for those eyes.

Eyes that had haunted him so much. Eyes that held him such a prisoner for so long. Eyes that he had longed to have look at him just as they were now…

Was this it? Was this the end? Was he staring at the eyes of Death?

“Professor Snape?”

Iris didn’t know what made her do it. Snape and her had never been friends. Never even been cordial with each other. Ever.

But when she saw him lying there on the floor of the Shrieking Shack, his whole body trembling as his hand desperately attempted to staunch the blood that flowed from the large wound in his neck, she felt herself moved in a way she had never been before, and she scrambled her way over to him.

“Professor Snape,” she said, slipping off the Invisibility Cloak she had been wearing and dropping it to the ground. “Professor –”

Snape’s eyes locked with hers and he reached a bloody hand out, grabbing desperately at her robes.

“Take…it….Take…it….“ he wheezed at her, the usual silky quality of his voice replaced with some strange and horrible rasping sound that shook her to the core.
And Iris watched in frightened fascination as a silvery substance suddenly began to seep from his body.

What?! Was that…?

Out of nowhere, Hermione appeared beside her thrusting a bottle into her hands. Without thinking about it, Iris immediately used her wand to siphon the substance into the container. When the bottle was full, she felt Snape once again tugging at her robes.

“Look at me,” he whispered.

Iris did, and her heart twisted in her chest as she stared into the depths of his inky black eyes.

Then, whatever that something was that brought her to him, also made her say as her hand drifted slowly to a spot above her heart, “Hold on. Just…hold on.”

Severus watched Iris Potter flee, her long dark hair swinging behind her. Close on her heels were the Granger girl and the youngest Weasley boy, like always.

Hold on, she had said.

Hold on for what, though? For her? For the Dark Lord to return and finish the job he had started?

He breathed in deeply through his nose, his air passages burning from the necessary function, and he felt a tear roll its way down the side of his face.

One year. It had been one year since he had seen that girl last. One whole year, but her name had been in his thoughts every day of it. How could it not have been? It was all for her. Everything he had done, it had all been for her.

And soon enough, she would know why; his pathetic life laid out bare before her.

And she wanted him to hold on?!

Severus dug the nails of his hand that wasn’t pressed to his bleeding neck into his palm, the pain of the action barely noticeable amidst all the other agonies.

Why her?! his mind nonsensically screamed. Why did it have to be that impossible girl to find him and see him at his worst?

He wanted to be repulsed with himself – with the fact that he had had to share his most private thoughts, most private secrets with her…with the daughter of…, but he found himself unable to as somewhere in the deepest part of his mind a small, traitorous voice whispered, But who else would it be?

Who else would possibly understand him?

…

No one…

Only her, the traitorous voice continued to whisper. Only that ridiculous, difficult…beautiful…Gryffindor girl.
The former Head of Slytherin House blinked his eyes, the action unbelievably heavy and wet.

*Delirious*, he thought. *I’m delirious*. And, *It’s the blood loss!* Never would he have thought such a thing about Potter otherwise. She is – was – his student. An arrogant, self-centered, unappreciative chit who had been the bane of his existence since she walked through the doors of Hogwarts as a First Year.

*Hold on?!* he sneered. He knew all about doing that; he had been doing it long enough. And he was tired of it.

Even still, as he stared blankly at the ceiling of the tired old room of a place that had appeared more than a time or two in his nightmares, he clung to that hope she offered with those two words.

Then he heard a door creak open.

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**Two Hours Earlier**

Iris walked up and down rows of piles of junk: old melted cauldrons; broken mirrors; moldy furniture; more books than she even thought existed in the world…

She was in the Room of Hidden Things and she, Ron, and Hermione were furiously searching for the bust of an old man wearing a shiny silver tiara – what she believed was the Lost Diadem of Ravenclaw and another one of Voldemort’s horcruxes.

“It’s around here somewhere,” she muttered to herself, her eyes raking every possible surface she came across in the rubbish-strewn mess. “Just have to…”

She stopped.

Her eyes lit upon a familiar-looking object, something that almost seemed to just call her to it. How did *that* end up here?! It wasn’t the diadem, but it was something else that could prove very useful.

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**2.42 a.m.**

*SNAPE AND HER MOTHER HAD BEEN FRIENDS.*

Those words repeated themselves over and over again in Iris’ brain as she drifted from one memory inside the headmaster’s Pensieve to another, watching the story of Snape’s life unfold before her like some kind of Muggle cinema film – a story, unbelievably, in which her own mother, Lily Evans Potter, had a starring role.

Had it not been for the fact that she had been the one to accept the memories from the Death Eater himself, she never would have believed it.

But it was true. All of it.

Snape and her mother had known each other! Not only that, but they had been friends from the time they were little children, playing together in a neighborhood playground before they ever set foot on Platform Nine and Three-Quarters. Snape in mismatched clothes with the same sallow skin,
same greasy, black hair she had always known him to have, and her mother, red-haired, green-eyed, and glowing in her young, carefree life.

And they had been happy. Both of them. Iris had never seen such delight on Snape’s face before. It was…

Unsettling.

But, at the same time, there was something there, in the back of her mind, something that prodded at her. Some recognition of what this was all about. And that feeling continued as she watched more memories play out.

Memories that all, in some way, revolved around her mother.

From the first trip to King’s Cross Station, to the eventual meeting with James Potter and Sirius Black on the Hogwarts Express, to the Sorting Ceremony and beyond.

The memories just poured in. Like a strange kind of tribute. And Iris was captivated – seeing her mother as she had never had the opportunity before – really understanding that she had been a living breathing person whose life touched other people’s. Especially Snape’s…

Until eventually they didn’t.

And she had to take the proverbial step back as she reached a scene she was only too familiar with. A scene that had forever changed how she had thought about her father. A memory that was, undoubtedly, Severus Snape’s worst one…

“I don’t need help from filthy little Mudbloods like her,” a young Snape shouted about Lily as he was taunted and bullied in front of half of the Hogwarts population by James Potter.

Iris cringed at the memory, just as she had the first time. Not just because of the word her former professor used to describe her mother, but at the whole terribleness of it. She knew, unquestionably, there was some kind of fall-out to it. There had to have been, right? Her mother had married her father after all. But what…?

She watched on – watched as Snape, in a new memory, had perched himself outside the entrance to Gryffindor Tower begging her mother for forgiveness, begging Lily for something she seemed no longer interested in giving, including her friendship. She was done with him…she had no room in her life for Death Eaters.

And as Iris watched her mother turn away from Snape to climb back through the portrait hole into Gryffindor Tower, she suddenly felt a sympathy for the boy – the man. To lose one’s closest – possibly only true – friend. To be left alone.

She knew that feeling. She’d felt it often enough in her life. Maybe not in the exact same way, but she had. She’d lost count of all the times Ron had walked out on their friendship for some petty reason or other.

But he had always come back and she had always taken him back. Even if he could be a thoughtless, jealous prat at times. Because Ron was her friend. And deep down, she knew - she knew – he was a good person who deserved to be given another chance.

Apparently, Lily, however, had not felt the same about Snape…

The scene changed again, and Iris watched as Snape threw himself at Dumbledore’s feet on a
windswept hilltop.

“…He is going to hunt her down – kill them all –” Snape said to Dumbledore in a pleading voice; he was referring to Voldemort and the prophecy he had himself delivered to the Dark Lord.

Dumbledore, unimpressed with the young man, reprimanded him for his selfishness – how he only cared whether Lily died and nothing for the innocent lives of her husband and child.


Again, the scene dissolved into another. This time, Snape and Dumbledore were in the headmaster’s office.

Lily and James were dead; Snape was beside himself with grief.

“I wish…I wish I were dead…” Snape said mournfully.

“And what use would that be to anyone?” said Dumbledore coldly. “If you loved Lily Evans, if you truly loved her, then your way forward is clear.” Snape looked at him blankly and he added, “Help me protect Lily’s daughter.”

And Iris learned Snape had – had protected her – as more memories – more proof of his loyalty to the Light – to her – came rushing past her like a flood.

For Lily, the memories seemed to scream.

Always.

And Iris understood.

And just as she watched the last memory fade away, she prepared herself for reality to come crashing in again, but it didn’t, and another memory unfolded before her. Unintentional, she guessed, but it must have been on Snape’s mind right then when he had been trying to give her all the others, unable to fully control every thought that seeped its way out of him in his weak and diminished state, and this final gift Iris latched onto more than all the others.

5.19 a.m.

“Severus Snape wasn’t yours,” said Iris.

Her and Voldemort were circling each other in the middle of the Great Hall, the once majestic room in shambles, a site of misery and carnage. Scores of battle-weary onlookers crowded the place, but all was silent. Not that Iris noticed, however, she had eyes for no one except the twisted, loathsome creature before her.

They had reached it. The end. And now Iris was finding herself having to explain the crux of the matter.

Who Snape really belonged to. And who was the true master of the Elder wand.

“Snape was Dumbledore’s,” she continued. And to herself, so no one else could hear it, “And mine.” Because he was. Had been. Since longer than she could remember. And she owed that moment of her standing there to him as much as to anyone else.
And around and around her and Tom Riddle went, until the true ownership of the Wand of Destiny was revealed.

“...I am the true master of the Elder Wand,” the young woman breathed, her heart beating wildly in her chest as she knew the moment had come – the moment of truth – of who would truly be the one to survive this last test.

With dawn suddenly breaking its way across the enchanted ceiling of the Great Hall, Iris and Voldemort in one final showdown waved their wands, each casting a spell at the other. And with a great collision in the center of the area where they circled, the spells struck each other, and the Elder Wand flew high...high...high up into the air.

Then Iris, its true master, caught it deftly in her hand. While Voldemort, a victim of his own rebounded curse, crumpled to the floor in a pathetic sorry heap.

Tom Marvolo Riddle. Lord Voldemort. Was dead.

From all sides people crowded around Iris, voices calling her name, hands reaching out to touch her.

“You did it, Iris!” they shouted.

“We’ve won!”

“You-Know-Who is dead!”

People she had known for years. Some she had just met. Many of them friends. All of them, like Iris herself, survivors.

Survivor…

The word resonated deep within the girl. And suddenly she remembered something. A plea she had made just a few hours earlier.

Hold on.

Snape!

Any triumphant joy she had been experiencing since the Dark Lord’s demise skidded to an abrupt halt with the realization. How could she celebrate when a person’s life hung in the balance that she had the means to save?

She turned to Hermione, her ever faithful, amazingly brilliant best friend, there by her side as she had always been throughout the years, never once having turned her back on their friendship.

“I need your help,” she said quietly, her hand rising to her heart.

The bushy-haired brunette looked curiously at her for a moment, perplexed no doubt by the raven-haired girl’s sudden serious demeanor, then, without missing a beat, nodded her head. “Anything.”

Iris looked at her gratefully, then grabbing a hold of the other girl’s hand, tugged her along beside her, scooping up her Invisibility Cloak from where she had dropped it earlier before her duel with Voldemort.
Behind them, Ron called out to the two girls, but Iris just waved her hand in a vague gesture and said, “Later, Ron. Hermione and I have work yet to do,” and she skirted her way around the mobs of people still attempting to swarm her with their praise.

She didn’t like excluding Ron, but what she wanted to accomplish – it was a delicate operation – and Ron had no experience with it.

“Where are we going?” Hermione asked, her voice breathy. The girls were running, Iris believing there wasn’t a moment to lose. And for all she knew, there wasn’t. So much time had gone by already.

Later – later when she had a moment to process everything – she would more fully register the many sights of death and destruction they passed on their path through the halls of the great castle, but until then she could barely give them a passing glance as she listened to her feet beat a slap-slap rhythm on the floor.

There just wasn’t time…yet.

“The Headmaster’s office,” Iris replied. “And then the Shrieking Shack.”

Hermione shuddered to a stop, nearly yanking Iris’ arm out of her socket when she grabbed it to halt her as well.

“The Shrieking Shack,” the brunette whispered, her eyes flashing with concern. “Oh Iris, surely you don’t think…”

Iris lifted her chin and gazed levelly at her friend.

“I do,” she said, her hand covering her heart briefly.

At least she hoped.

Then, reaching down into her shirt, she lifted out a delicate chain she had tucked safely there. Miraculously, against all odds, the thing attached to it, had survived for her to show her friend at present.

When she saw the item, Hermione’s brown eyes widened, her hand reaching hesitantly out toward the small artifact. “Where?” she breathed. “How? I thought they had all been destroyed…”

Iris regarded the time turner in her hand thoughtfully, then slipped it back inside her shirt where she felt it rest safely against her heart once again. “I found it in the Room of Hidden Things earlier.”

“And you’ve had it on you all this time?!?” Hermione exclaimed, her question loaded.

Iris looked down the hall, her eyes watching the streaks of sunlight that were slowly creeping their way down the yet darkened corridor. A sudden wave of tiredness swept through her, but she tamped it down.

There was still much that day to be done.

“It just felt right,” she said a moment later, and out of the corner of her eye she saw her friend purse her lips, but only briefly, however, as the sound of a sigh slipped from her a heartbeat later.
“And now you want to save Snape?” the other girl guessed.

“Yes.”

Hermione shook her head. “I can’t even begin to tell you how risky such an endeavor is. War going on aside, we don’t even know we can trust that,” she waved her hand toward the time turner. “We have no idea where it really came from or –”

“But it looks right, doesn’t it?” Iris cut in. “That look you had in your eyes when I showed it to you, you seemed to think so.”

“Appearances can be deceiving, Iris. Remember Riddle’s diary?”

This time it was Iris’ turn to shake her head. “It’s – it doesn’t feel like that. It feels,” she searched for a word, “benign.”

Hermione raised her eyebrows. *Benign?* She asked the question unspoken. Iris just stared evenly back at her.

A moment later, the former prefect’s shoulders drooped. “You’re going to try this no matter what, aren’t you?”

“Yes.”

Of course she was.

“But it’s,” Hermione hesitated, her face reddening, “well, it’s Snape.” Iris shifted slightly at this, but the other girl ignored her and plowed on. “And while I know you like to save everybody you can, Iris. Aren’t you doing something just a little reckless here for somebody who -”

“He saved my life,” Iris said bluntly.

Hermione froze. “What?”

“The memories he gave me,” Iris explained. “I – I saw some things.”

“I see…”

Iris listened as her friend took a couple of deep breaths. It was a lot she was asking, she knew. But as Snape’s pale and trembling, blood-covered form took shape in her thoughts, as well as the knowledge of all that he had done for her – for all the wizarding community – she knew she had to try. It was well past time to let bygones be bygones.

He had saved her. Now she needed to save him.

“Fine,” Hermione said, jolting her back, a determination lacing the brunette’s words she was grateful to hear. “We’re within the safe five-hour limit for travel. If you’re going to do this, I should probably be there with you. What do we need to do?”

Iris couldn’t help the beam that covered her face then. “There are some things,” she said, turning her feet in the correct direction to get them moving again, “in the Headmaster’s office. Things that will help us.”
Iris and Hermione stared at a medium-sized painting of a handsome English cottage set along a gently waving seashore. It was a peaceful thing, the little house with its white walls and open windows, curtains fluttering softly in the breeze; the white yellow sand that raced down by the water; the lush green grass in the garden where several varieties of brightly colored flowers bloomed in great numbers, amongst which a couple of deck chairs were situated for intimate conversations. A pleasant scene.

A little peculiar, however, tucked there in the headmaster’s office with all the other academic-minded materials.

“Quaint,” Hermione commented. “Reminds me of a place my grandmother used to let in Cornwall.”

Iris nodded her head in agreement. She actually quite liked it. It seemed so separate from her current reality of things. She wondered if it was a real place or just something the artist imagined in his head.

“That particular painting is charmed to display something personally catered to the headmaster’s liking,” a voice behind the young women said suddenly, as if in response to the girl’s thoughts.

The friends immediately whipped around and found the person who had spoken was a painting of one of the former headmistresses of Hogwarts, a Delphia Bigge.

“Er…right,” Iris said, having forgotten about the portraits that lined the wall for a moment, noticing that the one that housed Albus Dumbledore was currently vacant. “Thank you, Headmistress Bigge.”

Headmistress Bigge nodded her head and Iris turned her attention back to the ocean painting.

“So now what do we do exactly?” Hermione asked, the gears in her head clearly turning as she cast a critical eye at the enchanted image of the sea. “Unlock it somehow?”

“Yes,” Iris nodded, “with the password.”

“Which is?”

Iris reached out and ran a finger lightly down the side of the painting’s frame, her mind recalling the last memory of Snape’s she had seen in the Pensieve. Even without having heard the headmaster utter the password in the memory, she believed she would have been able to guess what it was anyway…

Replacing her finger with her wand, she tapped the image gently, her lips whispering a single word.

“Lily.”

A split second later, a click, like the sound of a lock opening, sounded from somewhere within the wall, and with curious eyes, the girls watched the painting swing softly open, revealing a safe worth of important items.

Like antivenin.

Iris immediately reached in and took the small bottle, cradling it carefully in her hand. Turning to her friend next to her, she said, “Grab anything you think might be important. Don’t worry about whether he’ll be angry or not.” She gazed down at the antidote in her hand solemnly. “He’ll just have to understand.”
“Last chance to back out if you want to, Hermione,” Iris said quietly.

The two girls were standing underneath the Invisibility Cloak in a small alcove of Hogwarts’ entrance hall as they waited for the opportunity to slip out the front doors of the school unnoticed; Lucius Malfoy, of all people, happened to be loitering nearby staring morosely out a window – what was he doing there? Iris wondered – and Hermione had her eyes trained on the one-time Death Eater in cool contemplation.

“What?” the brunette asked in an almost annoyed whisper, ripping her eyes from the tall blond man and narrowing them at Iris. “Iris, no, you know I’m in this with you until the end.”

Iris nodded, pleased with her friend’s determination. It was going to be a whole lot easier figuring out the time turner situation with her along. But still, she felt she had to say it. It was no small task they were undertaking. They were about to travel through time!

“Okay,” she said a moment later, looking over at Malfoy, “it might be time for a distraction then.”

“On three,” Hermione said, the time turner’s chain stretched to cover her and Iris both while they huddled underneath the Invisibility Cloak just outside the Shrieking Shack.

Iris’ heart beat furiously as she listened to her best friend’s voice, calm and precise. “One. Two. Three…”

The world fell away around them.

2.26 a.m.

They were in the Shrieking Shack.

Iris ran through the list of ingredients for Polyjuice Potion in her head to make sure they weren’t too early, then she and Hermione slid into the musty old room that other versions of themselves had just departed.

It was the same heart-wrenching scene as before that greeted her again.

Snape, lying in a growing pool of his own blood, stared blankly at the ceiling. His hand, while still clutching at his neck to staunch the bleeding there, seemed slower now in its movements, more sluggish. And his already morbidly pale skin…

She shuddered inwardly, feeling her own fair complexion undoubtedly growing ashen.

Time was running out.

Drawing upon every ounce of her Gryffindor courage that she could – she did just defeat the Darkest wizard of her time, after all, didn’t she? – she hurried over to the dying man and dropped down next to him.
“Professor Snape?” she said softly. Then, with more urgency, “Professor Snape!”

Nothing.

Her former teacher made no indication that he realized she was there, and for a heart-stopping moment she feared the worst, that she was too late, had waited just a few seconds too long, but then, with what she could only assume was with Herculean effort, he turned his dark eyes to her, and a mixture of recognition and disbelief flared within their depths.

“I – I’m back. No – no time to explain now. But I have something that will help you.”

And with the utmost gentleness, she moved his head into her lap and replaced his hand over the bite marks with her own. A breath later, she poured the contents of an uncorked vial Hermione handed her into the Slytherin’s mouth.

Severus felt the bitter-tasting potion slide down his throat, and Mercury did it hurt, and so did the next that swiftly followed it, but the pain was almost an afterthought, because his thoughts, his eyes, his very being...

It was all focused on her.

_Her._

She had come back.

He wasn’t alone...

“The spell, Hermione, quickly. If we can’t stop the blood…”

“I _am_ hurrying, Iris!”

Iris listened to the sound of pages being turned and words – spells – mumbled. Her friend was hastily reading through some scribbled text in the margins of a sixth year Potions book, one Iris herself had carried for a time, and one which she had recovered from the secret safe in the headmaster’s office: _The Half-Blood Prince’s copy of Advanced Potion-Making._

How and when Snape would have retrieved the book from where she had hidden it in the Room of Requirement, she had no idea, but hopefully it would be just the kind of luck they would need. And they needed every bit. She suddenly thought longingly of the bottle of Felix Felicis she had used the very last of just so many hours ago, but swiftly pushed the thought aside as she knew she had made the right choice to use it when she had.

Now, they would just have to depend upon the genius that was a sixteen-year-old Severus Snape.

She looked down at her lap then, unsurprised to see the man himself watching her intently; he had been doing so since the moment she arrived, his onyx eyes locked solely on her face. She had been almost embarrassed by it at first, but that feeling had passed quickly. And now it was with an absentness that the young woman reached up and brushed a strand of hair off his brow before gently stroking the rest of his scalp, the black locks slick with sweat and blood. Some part of her
brain wondered if any of what was happening was real – her with her previously much despised former Potions professor’s head resting on her legs and her hands wrapped around him in an almost intimate way – but she quashed the nonsensical musings down as she registered once again just how pale he was looking; and how cold he was. How serious their situation was.

“Hermione…” she said pleadingly.

The brunette looked up from the Potions text, her gaze resolved. “Yes, I – I think I’m ready.” She knelt down beside Iris and Snape on the floor and drew her wand. “I’m going to need you to remove your hand from his neck.”

As soon as her friend said this, Iris felt Snape tense beneath her touch, his gaze looking at her with helplessness and fear. “It’s okay,” she murmured, removing her hand as instructed and continuing her soothing caresses to his scalp with the other. “This is going to make you better.”

She hoped.

While the potions they had administered to him undoubtedly aided with curing him of the poison and pain and replenishing his blood a little, the spell, the counter curse to *Sectumsempra*, called *Vulnera Sanentur*, would hopefully help heal the large gaping wounds in his neck, the main source of his concerns at present.

Briefly the raven-haired girl’s mind flicked to sixth year when she and Draco Malfoy had had their disastrous confrontation in a boy’s bathroom. It had been Snape’s amazing spellwork that had saved the day then; faced with a similar situation now, Iris prayed it would again.

As she pondered over these matters, Hermione began tracing her wand over the wounds, a strange and hypnotic sounding incantation issuing from her lips at the same time. Moving her eyes from Snape’s inky gaze to his neck to better observe what her friend was doing, Iris, pulse racing, watched in fascination as the blood flow suddenly seemed to slow. The spell was working.

She released a breath she didn’t realize she had been holding and felt her eyes flutter closed for a moment in relief. She knew there was a reason her best friend was called the brightest witch of their age for a reason.

She kept any celebratory thoughts to herself, however, as the other young woman began the next phase of the spell. With this second part, a repeat of the same incantation as before, the wounds appeared to be healing, and by the third go-through, they were knitting themselves together. It was a success.

Snape’s spell, a counter curse to his own dark magic that he had created once upon a time, had saved his life.

Hermione, all business, handed Iris a small jar of dittany as soon as the last word of the incantation was sung. “Rub it into the skin over where the wounds were. It will help things heal a little better.”

Iris did as she was told, and as soon as her fingers made contact with the skin over Snape’s formerly savaged neck, she marveled at the wholeness and smoothness of it. The spell really had preserved his life. She abruptly thought about how certain events had come full circle in a way. Like how if she had never received the Half-Blood Prince’s Potions book, she never would have learned about *Sectumsempra*. And as disastrous as it was for her to gain knowledge about the mechanics of that spell, she never would have known about its counter curse either. And if she
hadn’t known that, then the results in the Shack there tonight might have been different. Maybe not deadly, but different.

Truly, she was beginning to see how things did have a way of working themselves out for the better given time.

“He’s going to need further medical attention,” Hermione said bluntly, cutting into Iris’ meandering thoughts and handing her another vial of blood replenishing potion – thankfully which they had been able to procure several bottles of from the safe. “It’s most likely he’s suffered some sort of internal injuries to his throat. Possibly to his vocal cords.” She cast a critical yet concerned eye at Snape. “I’d say he’s out of the worst of it, but he’s definitely going to need some additional treatment.

Iris looked down at the man in her lap once again as she prepared to administer the potion to him. His eyes were still latched onto her, but they were painfully tired-looking; she imagined hers didn’t look much different.

“Would it be okay you think for him to rest a bit?” she asked, gently helping the person in question to tilt his head a little to take the potion she held. “I mean, we have some time yet until it’s safe to make an appearance again, right?”

Hermione looked at a watch on her arm. “Well over two hours yet.” The brunette stood up and started pacing around the small room, clearly mulling over the answer to Iris’ first question. It didn’t take her long to come to a decision, however, as she slowed to a stop after her third circuit.

“I think it should be fine,” she said, unable to fully disguise the small note of hesitancy in her tone. “As long as one of us keeps an eye on him.”

Noting her friend’s uncertainty, Iris immediately piped up. “I’ll do it,” she replied, a steel to her voice she wasn’t quite sure where it had come from. “I’ll watch him.”

Hermione stared at her a moment, considering. Iris raised her eyebrows at her and the other girl’s cheeks flushed a light pink.

“Sorry,” the brunette said a beat later. “That should work. And I’ll – I’ll help you. We can take turns.

Iris grinned. “Great.”

“You can rest now,” the girl said to him. She shrugged a thin jumper she was wearing off and tapped it with her wand; instantly it transfigured into a blanket which she promptly used to cover him with. Flicking her wand a second time, Severus felt the sudden effects of a warming charm. “I’m going to stay up yet,” she added, “so you don’t have to worry about anything.” She ran her fingers gently through his hair as if to reassure him.

Severus stared at the girl. It was becoming harder to do so, his eyes were feeling heavier than ever, and her continued caressing of his scalp was certainly not helping any either, but he had to look. He had to reassure himself that she was there. That he wasn’t alone.

That this wasn’t all a dream.

His body wanted rest – it craved it – but his mind was afraid. Afraid that once he closed his eyes,
he’d only open them to discover that none of what happened *had* happened.

That he would still be there, bleeding out on the dirty floor of the Shrieking Shack, alone, or worse, somehow still in the Dark Lord’s employ doing Merlin knew what while all the world still believed him a traitor. A murderer. An irredeemable monster.

This last thought kept his eyes burningly wide open and boring right into Potter’s bright green ones.

Those eyes.

He could spend a lifetime just gazing into their depths. How they haunted him. *How they saved him.*

Suddenly, a hand brushed gently at his brow again.

“Sleep,” the girl urged-whispered. “You have nothing to be afraid of. You don’t have to worry anymore.”

Severus wanted to shake his head. She didn’t know what she was talking about. He’d always have to worry. Had she lost sight of her senses and forgotten there was a homicidal maniac wandering the country looking for her?

The girl looked down at him, obviously oblivious to his thoughts, the barest hint of a smile touching her lips as she said, “All will be well.”

Severus inhaled through his mouth, deeply, almost as if he was trying to absorb the girl’s words into his very being. Perhaps he was.

*All will be well,* she said.

All will be well.

She leaned in closer then, strands of her long hair brushing his cheek, her red lips forming words that he just barely caught.

“He’s gone.”

And everything went quiet. Everything went still.

Severus exhaled.

Did he dare to hope?

The girl said nothing more but resumed her previous position and continued her ministrations to his scalp.

*He’s gone.*

Severus closed his eyes and gave himself over to the dark.

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