"And Miss Granger?" Their eyes saw what time and apathy had made others blind to. When Snape and Malfoy had left England after their trials they thought she would be safe, happy. What they find when they return 10 years later makes them furious. This story is AU and totally ignores the epilogue. It has dark HP/RW, but are they redeemable?
Orange Can Be Such An Unbecoming Colour

This tenth anniversary celebration of the glorious victory of light over darkness was even eclipsing the previous year’s prestigious Hogwarts Yule ball.

Tonight’s gala event saw two spectators observing the festivities who had only recently returned to English shores after a long absence.

To the casual bystander everything appeared to be as it should. During the preceding decade, Harry Potter had married his childhood sweetheart, as everybody had expected. The couple now had three and a half potential students to run riot through the hallowed halls of their old alma mater.

However, to the eyes of the two recently returned wizards, one set piercing grey, and the other fathomless obsidian, it was unconvincing. Both men wore the ghost of a sneer on their lips, watching the lauded saviour of the Wizarding world whirling his pregnant wife around the grand Ministry ball room. They were seeing things from a very different perspective, looking at what time and apathy had made most people blind to.

The two well dressed gentlemen, sitting at their almost hidden table, also noticed Ronald Weasley appeared to be living the high life. However, further enquiry told them he was merely the goal keeper for the Chudley Cannons and had never even managed to finish his schooling, let alone bother to grow up. “He is an immature twerp who touts himself as an irresistible stud,” Draco Malfoy said sniffing distastefully.

“Of course that comes as no great surprise,” confirmed the raven-haired wizard, watching the redhead groping his leggy companion.

After surveying the general throng of couples, the two men glanced at their informer, puzzled. “And Miss Granger?” They’d been unable to spot her in the main hall. Draco pointed to an equally secluded corner across the room as he rose to invite his wife to dance.

The two shadowy faces took in the figure that had been pointed out to them. They were shocked to see her standing in the hidden recesses, alone, merely observing the proceedings.

While the Potters twirled, appearing free of care, and Weasley groped his way around the floor with the giggling airhead he was currently entertaining, the female third of the golden trio was grave. Her chin was held high with quiet dignity, but it was apparent she was now an outsider.

The elegant blond aristocrat and his raven-haired companion cast a curious glance at one another, before Lucius Malfoy murmured. “She was such a vivacious girl. This woman appears so quiet and reserved. Is that merely maturity?”

“Something tells me not,” Severus Snape intoned cautiously. He was still recovering from the lurch he’d felt in his stomach as he’d seen her; he hadn’t expected it to be so acute. “This is not how I envisaged her in maturity,” he continued adjusting his public facade to calm once more.

It was true that neither man had seen the object of their interest for ten years. How could they? They may not have intended to stay away so long, but had decided a long absence from England would be
in their best interest. At the time, their witch in shining armour, the lovely Miss Granger had agreed.

The two spies were now acutely aware that a significant change in dynamic had taken place, and they were sorry they had lost touch with the then young woman. She was obviously in a very different situation now.

Snape found his mind hurtling back to recall the post battle scene. Hermione Granger had saved both their lives in the course of the battle. First, as their duplicity was discovered by their fellow Death Eaters. Then secondly, and probably more importantly, when they were summarily arrested by the other side. The Aurors showed no mercy despite protests, and they were detained along with the other surviving Death Eaters after the battle, obviously they were now personae non gratae on both sides.

With her usual single-minded determination Miss Granger had led the campaign to have their freedom restored to them. Their legal team had been able to produce highly detailed evidence that both of them were well aware Hermione must have been painstakingly compiling on their behalf well before it was needed. It documented their loyalty and services to the side of light in incredible detail.

Even when the only thing left to incriminate Snape was Dumbledore’s murder, she had quietly stood and handed a letter from one Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore to Kingsley Shacklebolt, absolving the Potions master of the former’s murder.

Severus now considered. This may have been also her downfall, because it would have revealed to her idiot friends the fact that she had known of Albus’ plan and had kept it secret. Could this be why they’re no longer friends?

Pulling himself out of his reflections and nodding, Severus added, “Such a keen and astute intellect, she would have been capable of doing anything.” He glanced back at her. “I wonder what she does?”

Draco rejoined them after seating his very pregnant wife and instructing an elf to return with refreshments. “She is Hogwarts’ Arithmancy mistress, godfather,” he stated, handing each man a tumbler of Firewhisky. Both wizards saluted the younger man with their glasses in thanks.

The younger wizard’s eyes followed his father’s and godfather’s to the before mentioned woman, but he shook his head sadly, sighing enigmatically. “She’s still living in limbo, tied down by their narrow-minded idiocy.”

Then sitting a little straighter Draco continued. “We of Slytherin house and many in Ravenclaw do what we can for her, but I’m afraid to say our assistance sometimes merely exacerbates the problem.” His eyes were watching Potter with menace while he spoke. “This is what happens when idiots have too much power,” he stated, hearing his wife yawn again. “I am sorry but Astoria is tired; we are going to take our leave. We shall expect you both on Sunday night for Astoria’s birthday.” Bowing his head to them, he wished them a good night.

Lucius and Severus almost bodily prevented the younger wizard from leaving, before Lucius arrested his son’s progress completely with a hand on his shoulder. “Just a moment, son, what exactly are you saying?”
Almost in answer to their query, both men watched as Harry Potter deliberately walked over, and snarled something they couldn’t quite lip read at the object of their discussion.

To their shock then immediate pride they saw Blaise and Pansy Zabini move closer and flank the verbally accosted woman. Hermione stood dignified, yet stock still obviously absorbing with practiced ease the insult that had just been hurled at her. The Potter coward backed off on seeing the two Slytherins approach.

Draco explained their unasked question. “We can’t come out and support her openly. It’s ironic, but none of us are well connected or powerful enough to protect her, and for her sake we’ve learnt that it’s not wise to even try.”

Allowing Severus and Lucius to absorb this before he went on, Draco paused. “However you will see many Slytherins and Ravenclaws provide... err,” he pursed his lips, “interference when needed against the cowards. All they need is a rallying point.” His casual comment hit home immediately, seeing this he continued. “It is a sad fact that most Gryffindors who would offer her solace died in the final battle. She does have her prominent supporters; however, her tormentors are very sneaky.” He drew a long almost plaintive breath. “It is my belief also that both Shacklebolt and McGonagall believe she is immune now.”

Severus was almost breathing fire. “Why didn’t you tell us about this?” His seething breath should have melted the tumbler as he downed the last of his whisky.

Draco shrugged. “At the time it was out of your control as well,” he raised a pale eyebrow, “may be now though...” glancing at his wife politely trying to stifle another yawn. “We really must be going.”

Both men rose as Draco offered his arm to Astoria. Lucius Malfoy watched his son escorting the petite witch away. He hoped that Draco had been lucky enough to marry for love, although since his return he hadn’t seen any evidence of the passion he would have hoped for his only child.

*Perhaps he is just as much a victim of the responsibility that blighted me.* The blond aristocrat pondered this a moment. *His mother, bitch that she is would have seen him only marry the correct witch.* Lucius felt his stomach churn. *If that is the case, then he’s mastered the art of diplomacy just as well as I had to.*

Although there was a difference here, Lucius saw in Draco a burning desire to do the right thing, which was something he himself had never suffered from. He’d found himself straying from his marriage bed almost immediately. His father had curtly informed him that a suitable marriage and the production of an heir was his immediate duty, but what he did with his spare time and out of public scrutiny was his own business.

As much as he hated his father and his views, this was the best piece of advice he had ever been given. Of course it had been merely a strategic move on Abraxas’ part, nothing to do with care. It had simply provided the old man with what he’d wanted. To him, the fulfilment of responsibility was more important than anything. The old Death Eater hadn’t cared if it did consign his only son to a loveless existence, after all he’d told Lucius many times, “Love makes you weak son, plunder their charms and move on.”

Lucius’ eyes strayed to his ex wife and her latest toy boy. *She’s still very beautiful, but a cold conniving bitch that always seems to manage to come up smelling like roses.*
While in his self-imposed exile the year following Voldemort’s demise, his perfect pureblood wife had taken him to the cleaners, pleading irreconcilable differences. He watched her a moment, however as soon as he felt the start of the inevitable sneer forming on his lips, his eyes strayed back to Hermione Granger. Why couldn’t that have happened for the delightful Miss Granger? Perhaps they had underestimated the reaction of Potter and Weasley after all.

Surely the idiots who had made themselves so scarce during the Death Eater trials didn’t have that sort of power. Hermione should have been lauded for what she did, not this. He shook his head. Even from this distance he could see quite resignation to her fate in her stance and demeanour, something inside him shifted, it was an unfamiliar sensation. Could it be his conscience?

Glancing at the red-headed Mrs Potter, Lucius noticed she gave the impression of happiness, but his keen eyes saw more. She was extremely tense, there was a certain tightness evident in her face, as she watched her husband and brother slowly descend into drunkenness. Was that apprehension or perhaps even loathing? Severus’ voice brought his eyes and thoughts back to the table before he’d had the chance to question it further.

The Potions master was obviously past logical dissection of the situation, he was furious. “I must know the truth,” he declared. Lucius heard him sigh and saw his eyes narrow. The blond aristocrat knew what he was doing. Severus Snape didn’t even need eye contact any more to skim thoughts from idiots.

However, suddenly the raven-haired wizard swallowed hard and coughed like all the air had just left his lungs. The images swimming freely in their feeble minds had all just coalesced into a nightmarish picture, and he’d seen what had happened to the vivacious young woman who had been their saviour.

Lucius heard him croak almost painfully. “Oh Merlin Lu, they’ve made her suffer for helping us. We’ve robbed her of what she could have been,” he shut his eyes, swallowing convulsively. “That’s just not bloody fair. Life was supposed to be better for all of us,” suddenly Snape was slapping his empty glass down on the table and leaving their sheltered position.

This caused his friend to enquire with some concern. “Where are you going?”

“To start righting a wrong, watch our backs,” he replied heatedly.

“As always my friend, as always,” Lucius patted his arm as he passed, then watched him cut a dashing figure in his stylish black dress robes. The corner of Lucius’ mouth turned up, as he watched his friend skirting the dance floor to reach the other side and approach the subject of their observations. Bowing his head most politely and being as pointed as possible in showing the lady had his open support, Snape set about carefully starting to correct the problem.

Hermione had been watching Ronald make an idiot of himself yet again. This time complete with what could only be described as robes imbibed with a garish type of offensive neon, they were so bright and hideous. Maybe he’s slipped from goal keeper to team mascot, she considered.

The dress robes were a revolting orange which clashed terribly with his hair, and the only thing they lacked was the team name emblazoned across the back. Her eyes scanned across to the hot pink number the bimbo in his arms was almost wearing, and her lip curled minutely in disgust. Well there is something that clashes worse.
Shifting her eyes to Saint Harry and his wife, her mind went over a familiar conundrum for maybe
the millionth time. I just can’t understand how she could marry such a twat. Surely she knows what
he’s done to me over the years.

If Hermione was honest with herself she still missed Ginny’s friendship terribly, and couldn’t fathom
why she’d turned so resolutely against her.

Her mind continued to ponder. He’s got a bloody cheek insulting what I’m wearing. There’s
absolutely no difference in my dress and Ginny’s, except hers is crimson. Then realisation hit her, but
of course mine’s green. Hermione shook her head and snorted under her breath. Stupid idiot. Well at
least that’s all he’s said this year, no petulant scene of total nastiness. Looks like Ginny’s expecting
again, he must be aiming for the Quidditch team he’s always wanted.

The solitary woman, whose stylish ball gown of forest green silk with darker sequined highlights,
complimented the copious chestnut curls cascading down her back perfectly, sighed and silently
continued her contemplations.

Why have I fallen for this once more? Every time I swear to myself
I’m never doing it again. Why haven’t I learnt yet that these balls are no place for me? Every year I
live in hope he’ll be here. She huffed, why can’t I just admit it isn’t going to happen?

In her heart of hearts she knew it was getting more and more difficult to cope, but brushing the front
of her dress to stroke out imaginary creases she repeated her trusted mantra under her breath. “Never
let them see you’re upset Hermes.” I wonder how long I’ll have to stay so they won’t think I’m
leaving early.

Sighing she straightened her shoulders resolutely, but was drawn out of her thoughts as someone
arrived at her elbow. She shivered involuntarily as the longed for voice smoothed. “Good evening
Miss Granger,” and held out a pale long fingered hand. “Would you allow me the honour of this
dance?”

Hermione blinked several times willing herself to make certain she was not dreaming, before a smile
spontaneously erupted for just a moment on her serious countenance. “Professor,” she infused that
one word with such happiness. Then turning instantly nervous, her head shouting instructions to her.
Don’t hug him, but I want to hug him, dear God he’s lovely. Hermione cast a discrete glance at her
former friends. I hope this isn’t another trick, it couldn’t be. They wouldn’t be able to get this man’s
hair for Polyjuice. I’ll just be careful never the less, breathe damn it, breathe.

Severus was astounded by her smile, and how it lit her face making her already pretty features
positively glow, his own calm threatened to shatter completely when his heart lurched once more.

Gingerly she extended a shaking hand like she expected him to retract his offer. Or could she think
this is a set up, the little shits have done it to her before.

She smiled again when she saw he wasn’t going to, and gently accepted the offered pale fingers.
“I’ve missed you.” There are so many things you could have said, and this is the best you can blurt
out. She cringed internally and cursed her flustered mouth.

Good she’s decided to accept me, although interesting choice of opening line. However, Severus
nodded and chuckling replied. “Yes Miss Granger, I have also missed you,” and holding her in a
very precise grip, cautiously swung her out onto the dance floor. “You look very lovely tonight.”

Her only reply was a hesitant expression and an innocent little smile. Her happy brain was busy
chanting, *He’s missed me, he’s missed me.*

Severus suddenly felt tightness in his trousers from that little smile, but her expression made him wonder if she was still ascertaining whether he was genuine.

Then she managed a quiet, “Thank you,” and he was caught by her doe like eyes gazing longingly up at his face. *By Merlin she’s beautiful,* he caught himself thinking, and this did nothing for his dancing skills as suddenly he felt like he had a third leg. *Think of... oh shit... think of what? Trelawney naked, horrid scrawny bag of bones lying with her legs open, oh Merlin I’m blinded... Ah that’s better,* Severus gathered his thoughts having resolved his problem.

Severus understood Hermione’s hesitance from what he’d seen in Potter’s head and his own past experiences. After all one of James Potter’s favourite tricks for the amusement of his peers had been to set up someone lonely and isolated for a spectacular fall. So really it would come as no great surprise to find that his son had inherited his Father’s nasty little habit.

The raven-haired wizard wondered what he should say to the woman who fitted so snugly into his arms as they glided around the floor. His instincts told him he should say nothing. This was not the place to discuss this anyway. *I want her,* was the only thought flitting through his head at the moment anyway, as he gazed down into her lovely amber flecked eyes. This was followed by. *Down boy... you’ll have to wait.*

They were attracting many stares and whispers, as well as two very pointed glares. *Focus, you moron,* he chided himself. *You have to fix this, stop thinking with your cock.* His eyes strayed from hers a moment to the openly hostile glares from the Potter Weasley camp. Gracing them with a predatory sneer, he span Hermione out of their line of vision. *Arse holes.* This contemplation was instantly followed by. *I wonder how much longer I’ll have her to myself?*

Severus almost chuckled three dances later, when he felt a tap on his shoulder, “I do believe it’s my turn now old chap,” the Potions master turned to see the smirking visage of his blond friend. He wanted to scowl, but bowed and reluctantly released the woman in his arms to his oldest friend.

“Hello my dear, may I?” Lucius inquired offering his hand.

Hermione’s mind was spinning as fast as the dancers. “Thank you Professor,” she managed to remember, as Snape bowed his head to her.

“My pleasure,” Severus nodded tight lipped, and politely skimmed her knuckles with his lips before placing her hand in Lucius’ and stationing himself to watch, as his friend had.

Hermione noticed that Lucius was holding her in a little less proper grip than Severus had. “It’s good to see you both,” Hermione admitted quietly to her very able partner.

Lucius leaned forward a little. “I shall be very pleased to be back if it means that I get to dance more than once with you my dear,” his lilting tenor tickled her ear making her giggle. It was then that Lucius followed his friend’s example and paid his compliments to her tormentors. The two powerful and experienced Slytherin wizards left no doubt in even the dullest mind that the harassment stopped tonight or heads, Gryffindor heads to be precise, would roll.

The head of Slytherin house since the war had been Aurora Sinistra, and she had never been a rallying point for the past members of the Hogwarts Slytherin alumni. As soon as those present sensed the lead of the two most powerful Slytherin wizards in Britain, things immediately began to change.
For the rest of the evening, the two expatriates enjoyed dancing with Hermione almost in tag team, with both Blaise Zabini and Greg Goyle stepping up behind their leaders immediately and taking a turn around the dance floor with her. Even Anthony Goldstein joined their ranks.

Eventually the lady at the centre of their attentions looked ready to collapse. It had been Lucius dancing with her at the time, and he simply escorted her to their table and sat her between them, not really knowing or caring where she’d been before.

Hermione had never had such a pleasant time at one of these functions or for that matter any function. However, just as the evening was drawing to a close, Hermione suddenly froze. “What’s the matter my dear?” Lucius asked patting her hand and noticing it was trembling.

Severus snorted, a mew of distaste evident on his face. “If I didn’t know better, I’d say the ‘matter’ is bearing down on us like a big orange beacon as we speak.” Lucius turned from Hermione to look, and a sneer cracked his aristocratic facade.

Each man instinctively put fingers to his wand just in case, and they turned to face a very drunk and pompous looking fool. The redhead addressed Hermione curtly. “I see you’ve shown your true colours the first chance you got,” he slurred swaying dangerously as his arm swept around in an all encompassing hand gesture. “Sitting with these slimy bastards.”

Hermione looked mortified, but didn’t shy away. Her eyes narrowing angrily. “You’re drunk Ronald, and it’s obviously made you even more incredibly stupid than usual,” she asserted calmly.

Ron snorted, obviously unaware of the warning in her statement, and continued on his dangerous path. “Well I guess what we suspected all along is right. You are just a Death Eater’s whore,” his state of inebriation obviously having short circuited what little sense he possessed.

Rearing up, Severus drew his wand before stating coldly. “You Weasley, have never fathomed exactly how stupid you are, have you?”

Ron laughed. “You can’t talk...” he started before suddenly going silent. His brain seeming to catch up with his mouth and remembering this man’s reputation. They heard his tiny squeak of terror, just before he blanched. Hermione watched the exchange from under her lashes. She found it intriguing that his freckles didn’t pale in any way as his face drained of colour, like someone had pulled his plug.

This gave Severus his distraction, and he moved fluidly towards his quarry. Before Ron even knew what had happened, he found the Potion Master’s wand at his throat. “You should have listened to the Lady’s warning you pathetic little rat. After what I’ve witnessed tonight, I can see you’re obviously still functioning on the level of a five year old,” he hissed in his ear. “Now for your own good you will apologise to Miss Granger,” the wand point dug in a little deeper. “Do I make myself clear?”

Ron attempted to take a step back, now vainly hoping Snape wouldn’t be able to do anything here, but he was mistaken as the raven-haired Wizard took a corresponding step towards him. “I’m waiting, Weasley.”

People were starting to gather round. Lucius had also stood and was surveying the area, quietly taking in who was doing what. He counted at least eight hands going for wands and he knew who they were supporting.
In his drunken haze, Weasley misinterpreting the crowd as an audience and gained confidence once more. Thinking he had support, he backed off to what he felt was a safe distance. Taking a deep breath, he swayed before thrusting his chest out and continuing his gross act of stupidity. “I’ll never apologise to her, she’s a disgrace to Gryffindor, helping Slytherins,” he proclaimed for all to hear.

Unfortunately all this did was upset all the Slytherins present further and alert more people to his foolhardiness. The stupid man continued, his eyes narrowing nastily. “Well be warned. If you think she’ll be a good fuck you’re wasting your time. I’d say her cunt is all iced up and useless.” He then stood grinning spitefully in his stomach churning display of orange. It wasn’t until he heard the ripple of gasps and whispers at his disgusting remark that he started to look unsure.

Knowing that Lucius would have him covered, in a calculated move Severus sheathed his wand, aware from the crowd that the stupid red-head had just cut his own throat. However, he couldn’t allow Hermione’s honour to be abused like that and the Potions master lunged forward grabbing the suitably horrified drunk by the robe collar, Muggle style. “You’re a foul mouthed revolting little piece of filth. How dare you insinuate something so disgusting,” Severus seethed, scowling as Ron tried to take a step back.

Following him to stay in his face, Severus warned. “You and Potter will leave Miss Granger alone,” his coal black eyes burning into Ron’s. “If you don’t, you will be dealing with an extremely unhappy wizard who will curse first and ask questions later.” Pulling the now sickly green fool closer, and deliberately placing his mouth near the red-head’s ear, he continued in his trademark Professor’s menacing whisper. “Twenty something years as a Death Eater gives me an incredible arsenal of interesting curses, Weasley. So watch it.” To finish Severus pushed him away like he was flicking filth off his robes, which in his inebriated state landed Ronald hard on his arse on the floor.

Hermione had been attempting to sit in quiet poise through the whole scene. The more it played out, however, the harder it had been, and now she had her head bowed and tears were quietly spilling down her face, believing Ron had ruined yet another hope for her.

Severus returned to her side standing behind her, hands placed possessively on her upper arms to show where he stood. He deliberately leaned down to speak to her, watching Weasley out of the corner of his eye.

Lucius saw what Severus was doing and merely watched, although his hand was still on his wand. As the blond wizard suspected the little coward went for his wand as soon as he thought the Potions master’s attention appeared diverted.

Lucius heard a spell come from across the room at the same moment as a hex formed on his own lips. However, Snape’s nonverbal *Furnunculus* beat both spells.

A deep voice boomed, “*Expelliarmus,*” and Weasley’s wand clattered to the floor. Both men turned in the direction of the voice and saw Kingsley Shacklebolt, a scowl firmly fixed on his face, striding towards them, admonishing as he walked. “You and Mr. Potter assured me last time I caught you harassing Professor Granger that you wouldn’t do it again. Now I catch you about to curse a man who has already sheathed his wand to assist the woman you have just insulted,” reaching down the huge man pulled Ron to his feet by the scruff of his robes like a rag doll. “No more chances Mr. Weasley. You will now pay the consequences.”
Another set of astute eyes had seen everything as well. Pleased to be finally seeing evidence of a changing dynamic, she swept towards them to add her support. Instantly the voice of Minerva McGonagall cut across the scene. She glared at Ron. “Mr. Weasley, you are in a public place, how dare you make such a disgusting statement about one of my Professors, or anyone for that matter.” The Headmistress of Hogwarts had no patience left for him. Glaring at her former student she stated. “If I ever hear something that disgusting coming out your mouth again, I’ll take great pleasure not only allowing, but encouraging both Professor Snape and Lord Malfoy to wipe the floor with you. Now go find your hot pink piece of fluff, and leave.”

Her glare cut him down where he hung in Shacklebolt’s sturdy grip, his face a festering mess and his hair falling out in clumps. Ron found himself mumbling. “Yes Ma’am,” like the errant twenty eight year old school boy he was, his expression was truly ugly now. It only became worse as he belatedly noticed the Daily Prophet reporter and photographer.

“Actually Minerva,” his captor cut in, “I have other plans for Mr Weasley tonight,” the ex Auror Minister for Magic stated.

Shacklebolt turned to the two Slytherins and their weeping companion; Ron still dangling in his iron grip, now looking very sober. “Welcome home gentlemen. I had heard of your arrival but my secretary has apparently been unable to arrange a suitable time for me to greet you officially.”

Lucius drew himself up to his full six feet three. “Very interesting Minister. I for one have not been approached by your secretary.”

“Ah, that is indeed interesting, Lord Malfoy. Professor Snape, please accept my apologies,” Shacklebolt bowed his head. “My door is open to both of you any time it is convenient,” then to Hermione. “I am sorry this unpleasantness has marred your evening yet again, Professor Granger.” Giving Ron a little shake he continued. “If you will all excuse me, I have a pressing matter to deal with. Good evening all.”

As Kingsley cut a swath through the assembled crowd with Ron still hanging helplessly in his grasp, Minerva turned and also greeted the two men properly. “It’s good to see you after so long Severus, Lucius,” she bowed her head. “I’m happy to see someone finally able to stand up to those bullies. I hate to say it about one from my own house, but I am at my wits end with both of them. They really have proven themselves to be pitiful cowards,” Minerva stated quietly, glancing at Hermione. “Saying something that stupid and disgusting in front of two powerful wizards...” She shook her head and her eyes turned sad, “I am also sorry. As protective as I am of Hermione, I also thought the campaign against her had ended.”

Lucius and Severus took a quick look at one another then back to the still weeping obviously once more humiliated woman, an understanding passed silently between them. “Come my dear, I’ll see you to supper, or wherever you wish to go. Severus will be along in a moment,” Lucius said, pushing a conjured handkerchief discretely into one of her trembling hands.

Taking her other hand, he placed it in the crook of his arm. “Let’s find your cloak, shall we?” Lucius felt Severus press a vial into his hand as Hermione rose on shaky legs. Knowing it would be calming draught; he pocketed it and quietly escorted her away.
Severus Snape watched the troubled form retreating on his friend’s arm. He also saw several men discretely indicating their support for his fragile companion as Lucius moved passed them. The instant Hermione was out of ear shot, Severus rounded, cold eyes on Minerva McGonagall, hissing at her, “How the hell has this been allowed to happen?” His fists were clenched at his sides. “Has she had no friends for support until we arrived?”

Eyes narrowing irritatedly at his claims, Minerva spoke in a heated whisper. “I’m afraid our dear Hermione has paid a very high,” she added quickly, “and totally unfair price for her alliances at the end of the war. Both her former friends have made her life a living hell, and our hands have been tied. Albus’ portrait has been wishing to set the two of them straight in all this time, but they have been avoiding him. I suspect that is what Kingsley has in mind to force now.”

The Hogwart’s Headmistress relaxed minutely when she heard Severus sigh in frustration at what he’d discovered. “There is a core group of Gryffindors who have tried to help,” she continued. “I have done my best to shelter her at Hogwarts, and she is an excellent Professor, but she deserves much better. Mr Longbottom and his wife have always treated her as an extended member of their growing family, and dear Hagrid still dotes over her,” she smiled, but quickly quantified. “However, he is no Wizard and none of us possess the unique position that you do; to stand up to the two most vicious bullies I’ve ever met.”

This time she sighed tiredly. “They are merely cowardly thugs who most the Wizarding world still hail as all conquering heroes.” The Headmistress took a sad breath. “Kingsley is sympathetic as you saw. However, with that fool Percy Weasley as undersecretary - together with his younger brother and Harry Potter as lying defacto Wizarding demigods - too many people still believe the rubbish they spout. Especially when Potter uses his wife to command a similar, and wholly undeserved, position in society. Similar to the opposing one Narcissa Black still occupies.”

“Why did no one tell us of the situation?” Severus hissed through gritted teeth. He found himself feeling nauseous, as his thoughts whirled like the last of the dancers not exhausted enough to go home yet. How could this have happened? The woman, who had saved them, had bought that victory with the sacrifice of her own happiness. Internally, he was swallowing hard to keep the bile from rising in his throat as he waited for Minerva to answer him.

“The simple answer is that Hermione forbade us. Draco Malfoy has even pleaded with her on many occasions,” Minerva stated, her voice cracking slightly. Clearing her throat she continued. “But she didn’t want either of you to come back until you chose to.” Severus graced her with a disbelieving stare, and she added. “Of course, it is far more complicated than that, but that is not for idle ears.”
The Potions master found his eyebrow rising at Minerva’s words, but he said. “Oh, she’s a silly girl,” he shook his head and sighed. “After what she gave us... Minerva,” he thought a moment. “May I meet with you some time?”

“Oh course, dear man, any time.” Her eyes narrowed a smidgen. “Perhaps afternoon tea tomorrow, my office? The interviews should only take the morning,” she added almost slyly.

“Interviews?” Severus’ brow slid easily upward, appearing suddenly bored. Minerva knew that meant he was interested, but she hadn’t actually expected him to bite.

“Yes,” she said with a put upon sigh. “Unfortunately since you vacated the position, the post of Potions master appears to have become metaphorically cursed. I can’t keep anyone longer than a year.” Her lips suddenly thinned. “Although I had to dismiss the last one a week ago as just plain incompetent.”

His mouth slid into the semblance of a smirk. “Intriguing,” his only comment though.

Minerva’s opinion was ‘in for a penny,’ and she kept going once in her stride. “Then to top it all off, old Binns has finally disappeared off into the ether,” she stated, appearing to be further irritated. “Oh well dear boy, that’s my problem. I will wish you good night,” she said patting his arm.

“Good evening to you too, Minerva,” he bowed his head solemnly. Thinking to himself. Or was that Albus? He almost blew his cool facade when her eyes actually twinkled. Shaken, Severus went off to find his companions.

Arriving to collect his cloak, Severus saw no sign of Lucius or Miss Granger. However, this didn’t bother him, he knew the plans Lucius and he had made for after the Ball. Stalking to the apparition point, he disappeared with a crack. Trans channel apparition was always a tiresome experience, and he shook his head to clear it when he arrived outside Café Hugo. The quaint little coffee house crowd was starting to thin out for the evening, and his companions were easy to spot.

Standing momentarily in the door way Severus took in the delightful Miss. No, Professor Granger, he corrected himself. She looks very weary, Severus thought further while watching her gentle movements, and expressive amber flecked eyes as she talked quietly with Lucius. Why has no one seen just how lovely she has become? Fools.

Severus understood her far better than she ever could have imagined. It appeared to be his situation from school all over again. He caught himself, wondering yet again, why she had hesitated in calling for their assistance. After what she’d done for them. “Bloody Gryffindor pride,” he muttered, garnering a curious stare from a wizard who was leaving.

Fixing a small smile on his lips that didn’t reach his eyes, he walked over to them. “Ah, Severus,” his friend exclaimed, “we were starting to think you’d forgotten the way.”

“Never. Just a small distraction; my apologies for the length of time I kept you waiting, however, I believe my conversation with the Headmistress may solve part of our dilemma.”

Hermione spoke softly. “You have a dilemma?” Her inquisitiveness was soon followed by her head lowering, so conditioned by her treatment that she was wary of their reaction to her question.

“Only a trifle,” Lucius patted her hand. “Do not concern yourself with it. It involves long overdue payment to a good friend.” He turned to Severus and enthused. “I’m pleased you’ve made headway, I can’t wait to hear.”
“Indeed,” Severus smoothed, and immediately changed the subject. “So, is there anything you would like to do while here in Paris?”

It was the first time since Weasley’s outburst that either man had seen her face settle into one of the tiny smiles they had seen growing more confident throughout the later part of the evening. “Could we perhaps go for a walk along the Champs Elysées?” Her eyes took on a misty appearance. “Or Pont Alexandre III in the moonlight,” she sighed longingly. Then immediately looked startled, like she’d committed some crime and ducked her head. “Never mind,” they heard her swallow hard, “it doesn’t matter,” and her voice cracked slightly.

Severus, who had sat on her other side, took in her changed manner and gave Lucius a concerned look. The blond wizard spoke gently to the top of her head. “Of course it matters. However, I think it may be a little late for both tonight.”

Her head still hadn’t risen. “Possibly the bridge tonight,” Severus added, “and the Champs Elysées another time,” he suggested seriously. “Would that be acceptable?” They saw her chestnut curls bounce as her head nodded slightly.

Lucius had been watching the interactions between his best friend and the pretty woman who sat between them. Whilst she would be a pleasant diversion for me, Lucius thought, his eyes raking over her body. I’ve never done committed, and this one is definitely not the one night stand or casual sex type.

He had married for duty to produce an heir, nothing more, and he was fascinated by his friend’s reactions to Hermione. Lucius had never seen Severus take the lead like he had tonight, so this woman must be very important to him. He deserved to finally find someone like that, who could give him happiness, and all the things that go with it. The blond Wizard was brought out of his thoughts as her head finally rose, although he was quite taken aback by what she said.

“You know you are under no obligation to babysit me out of pity. I am aware that I’m not the kind of company you’d wish to keep,” her voice was tiny and unsure, but resolute.

“No,” Severus drawled playfully. “I suppose whisking you off to Paris for supper if wishing to have your company isn’t obvious enough, is it Lucius?”

“Apparently not, you’ll have to think up something better for next time.”

Severus shot Lucius a quiet glance hearing his use of the second person singular. He’d gleaned the impression that Lucius intended to pursue the lady for himself, and this had sharpened a sense of acute disappointment in Severus’ breast to a very nasty point.

Of course he would have kept the peace for Miss Granger’s sake, but the fact that his friend now appeared to be backing off. This brought a huge feeling of relief to the Potions master as he was met with a raised eyebrow. He nodded his understanding and happily took up the reins, as he saw their banter finally drawing a little smile of understanding from her.

“When you’ve finished your coffee, I believe you requested a moonlit walk across Pont Alexandre III,” Severus said, before adding. “You have chosen well really. It is just around the corner,” his mouth turning up into a genuine smile this time. Rising, he offered Hermione his hand to help her from her seat, as Lucius threw galleons on the table for their supper. Severus saw her to her feet and placed her hand possessively in the crook of his arm, holding it tightly to his body. His friend gave him an approving nod and fell in behind them as they left the café. Once on the street, Lucius
produced his cane from somewhere in his cloak, and wished them both an excellent rest of their evening, and took his leave.

The remainder of the evening was spent with Hermione and Severus making quiet conversation about the past decade, while slowly strolling the bridge of her choice. Despite the approach of summer, it remained stubbornly chilly even on the Continent, but not unpleasantly so. It was really a beautiful night, very clear and still.

Severus couldn’t keep his eyes off her as she shyly allowed herself to be encouraged by his lead. Every so often, she would coyly glance up under her lashes at him as she took in the beauty of the bridge, water, moon, stars, clouds and even the city lights. Occasionally he would place his arm protectively around her, in order to stop her to point something out before restoring her arm to his and proceeding further across the bridge.

The deciding blow to his heart had been struck, even before he’d escorted her to the dance floor earlier in the evening. However, when a distant bell tower melodiously rang midnight, the normally austere and sarcastic Slytherin found his heart twisting in his chest. The expression of unbridled joy on her countenance, as she gazed openly up at him with her expressive doe eyes, on hearing the sound wafting across the water of the Seine, made it plainly obvious to him that Hermione Granger wasn’t often allowed to enjoy something so beautiful, without some attached misery. Her normally sober escort found uncharacteristic tears pricking his eyes momentarily as well as an overwhelming urge to kiss her soundly.

Severus found his sense of connection with Hermione became more acute the further they strolled. Her eyes still took in everything, and her razor sharp brain’s synapse’s still fired with unerring accuracy. You just had to look very closely to see it now as it all happened on an introverted level. However, when you took the time to observe, it actually took your breath away.

They were having a quiet discussion about an obscure Potions text Hermione had seen in an antiquarian bookstore she frequented, when Severus noticed her starting to walk slower and slower. He found himself reluctant to end the evening, but could plainly see Hermione was tired.

“Well, I think I best get you back home.” The look of disappointment on her face was palpable but again fleeting, and made his heart clench once more.

Slipping down a side street, Severus led Hermione to an apparition point. “I’m sure it will be much cooler in Scotland,” he said and conjured a scarf for her, finding unexpected delight in placing it on her before occupying himself with his own.
When they were all attired for the Scottish highlands, Hermione stated softly. “I’m sorry, but I don’t know the jump point.”

“Don’t concern yourself dear girl, I do. Ready?”

Hermione instantly blushed, but nodded and stood quietly. However, she did jump a little when she felt his hands tighten around her waist. Severus found that even with the thickness of her cloak, his fingertips almost met as his hands encircled her tiny waist and he smiled quietly, envisaging the petite hour glass figure under her robes. Unfortunately, his thoughts awakened another opinion, and Severus found it necessary to concentrate on Trelawney again before he could move closer to her.

Hermione’s heart was thumping madly once more. She had noticed when she was in close proximity to her former professor, she became intoxicated by his cologne. Earlier, on the dance floor, she’d detected it, but now when that fragrance wasn’t mixed with anything else, it was even more overpowering. There was something dark and seductive about the fragrance of the man who now stepped closer to guide her apparition back to London. In the fragrance she detected hints of spicy flowers with woody leather and expensive tobacco.

Closing her eyes as they travelled, Hermione felt her head spin when they touched down in London, just as it had when Lucius had taken her to Paris. She heard Severus’ deep decadent baritone wash over her. “All right?”

Taking some deep steadying breaths she nodded, but this made her head lurch afresh, and her hand went to her forehead. “If I may be so bold,” her transporter suggested, “this will minimise your vertigo.” Quietly, Severus turned her to face him, placing his arms securely around her.

Hermione instantly felt safe and protected, and with her head cradled on his chest and inhaling deeply, she relaxed as much as she could in his proximity. “Here we go,” his delicious voice rumbled through his chest. Turning again, they were at the gates of Hogwarts.

Severus caught himself, still holding her, while he gazed up at the huge stone edifice. It had been ten years, but it suddenly seemed like yesterday, and he was struggling with all the emotions assaulting him.

He was brought back to reality feeling Hermione wriggling a little in his arms. “Oh, my apologies. Are you quite recovered?”

Hermione was flushing badly, but nodded. “Yes fine thank you,” she mumbled, attempting to sound detached. This was followed by a vain stab at appearing worldly. “It was very kind of you both to extend my evening with supper, and I enjoyed my walk very much. Thank you.”

Severus had switched from concentrating on swallowing down recollections of Hogwarts to further thoughts of kissing the woman in front of him. After he’d released her, he’d instantly wanted her back in his arms. He racked his brain trying to think of his next move. Finally he had a thought. Flowers! He conjured a bunch of the darkest velvet red roses. “For you dear girl. Traditionally, of course, these are given at the start of an evening. I did not have the advantage of being with you then, so I offer them now.” He thought Hermione was about to swoon.

“Thank you,” she stuttered, gazing down at them.

Severus took the unexpectedly offered opportunity of her disorientation to try and rein in the sensations now coursing through him. The next moment, he saw a lantern and heard heavy footsteps approaching from the top of the driveway.
Hermione turned on hearing the noise as well. “Oh, here comes Hagrid to collect me,” she sounded disappointed. “Minerva must have informed him when the wards told her we were here. I’d best go,” she drew a shaky breath, and gazed at her protector. “You have done so much for me tonight,” but suddenly she turned serious. “I really don’t want you drawn into this. You’ve only just returned,” she bit her bottom lip.

Severus took a further step towards her. “I have been remiss in my duty to you. I had no idea this campaign had been waged against you,” he took a deep breath, “but no more,” Severus asserted firmly.

Hermione looked at the earnest man in front of her, but her lip quivered. “They play dirty, sir,” she stated in a tiny voice as a tear slipped from her lashes. “And I don’t want anything to happen to you, either of you,” she corrected quickly. “Not because of me.” She drew the bunch of roses tighter to her chest.

Severus finished closing the distance between them and took her face gently in his hands. He used his thumbs to wipe away the tears. “Hermione, I ran with Death Eaters; they played a much nastier game of dirty tricks, I can guarantee you. Don’t worry about me,” he took a deep breath and his face softened further, his thumbs caressed her cheeks. “You go up to the castle and I’ll see you very soon, O.K? Please remember, this should never have started in the first place,” Hermione opened her mouth, but found his finger resting on her lips. “Hush little love. You did nothing wrong, and I am very grateful for what you did.”

Severus found himself wanting to kiss her, but again resisting until she said. “Yes, professor,” so sweetly and quietly. He smiled and leant towards her ear. “Hermione, don’t you think it’s about time you called me Severus?” He gave her a soft kiss on the cheek. Hermione swayed, but he caught her easily. She took it all in, her eyes huge, he smiled and felt her tremble. “Sweet dreams, darling. I will see you very soon.” Bending forward his placed a gentle but chaste kiss on her lips, and, making certain she was steady first, took a step back.

A very shaky Hermione Granger said. “Good night,” around what felt like a mouth full of cotton wool balls. She was certain she was glowing in the dark, she was so flustered.

They stood immobile for some time just gazing at one another, but finally Hermione forced herself to turn and her feet to walk over to the gates. Extending her hand out, the wards recognised her and the gate swung open. After a coy glance back at her gentleman watching her intently, she slipped through. Her over burdened brain was having trouble coordinating her legs as all the blood had rushed south, and she was consumed by a delicious wet throbbing. She wasn’t certain she wouldn’t swoon.

He kissed me. He called me darling... oh sweet mother of mercy, he kissed me.

The raven-haired wizard heard the resounding clang of heavy wrought iron, and watched the blue shimmer of wards coming up once more, then a moment later from the halo of yellow light in the darkness. “Allo ‘Ermyne, thems pridy flowr’s. Did yer have a nice time?”

It was a breathy voice that replied. “Oh yes, Hagrid, the best.” Severus heard her yawn. “Can I tell you tomorrow?”

“Yes, sure,” replied the rough but kindly voice. “I’m pleased yer finally ‘appy ‘bout sumpin. Did yer meet a fella then?”

The wizard, still standing exactly where he had been when she passed through the gates, strained his hearing to make out her words over the crunching of the gravel and the widening distance, but a dreamy voice rewarded his efforts. “No Hagrid, no fella,” Hermione gave a long suffering sigh to his simple assumption. “I spent the most marvellous evening with a gentleman I had given up hope of
ever seeing again. Two gentlemen really.”

“Well, I reckon I’ll send im a bottle of ol’ Odgens’ finest, jus fer the gift o seein you smilin,” the half giant chuckled kindly.

The very last thing Severus heard as the pair were swallowed into the night was the tinkling laughter of a very tired witch. “I think they might like that,” she replied before silence returned.
It was technically tomorrow morning. Severus was reclining with cognac for company, in the wing of rooms Lucius had commandeered for his use at Malfoy Manor. Draco was now Lord of the Manor, but was happy for his father to utilize the unused wing. Better still, it contained the extensive library Draco and his wife seemed to have no use for. These were the same rooms Abraxas had retreated to when Lucius married Narcissa. However, he had never allowed his son to use the title of Lord.

The Potions master had thrown off his regalia. His attire now consisted of black dress trousers, white silk shirt open to the middle of his chest and his long black silk tie, hanging loosely around his shirt collar. His long legs were stretched out in front of him as he lounged, ankles crossed, on a wide Slytherin green velvet recambier.

Severus had to admit he was happy here and assumed this was where he would live while they were in England. However, tonight as he’d landed at the gates of Hogwarts, he found that most of the negative recollections of the place were gone. He’d experienced an overwhelming sense of belonging and home when he’d seen the gigantic stone edifice.

Scoffing, he thought. *The orphans of Hogwarts; now there’s a dubious list.* Suddenly, he not only realised that both he and the Dark Lord were on that list, but Hermione was also. The Potions master wondered. *Maybe getting her away from Hogwarts might be a good thing,* he mused. *She needs options, Lucius and I have only opened up enough rooms for us.*

There were many more rooms available to them; he could have his own suite of rooms if he chose to. While he could invite Hermione here anytime he wished to. *Merlin, she could live here with me if I had a suite,* he thought, grinning obscenely.

The two friends had spent their first day here, debugging all Abraxas Malfoy’s still active traps. One of which contained the skeleton of a house elf. This explained to Lucius, why this wing of the mansion was so neglected. It had taken both men and a team of house elves sternly assured they would come to no harm, all of the five days since their arrival to make the place habitable.

The gentlemen had spent the last ten years calling various places home, both together and apart, while renewing their reputations abroad. Lucius had been intent on building up his depleted reserves following his settlement with Narcissa. Even with his hidden Swiss funds still available, his ex wife had put a hefty dent in his finances. Now, after nine years, Lucius still couldn’t say her name without snarling.

Severus, on the other hand, found many uses for his skills as a Potions master to bolster his already extensive resources. He had many patents to his name before the war, which he had strategically transferred in the hands of French solicitors for management before the final battle. Both men found their good reputations quickly re-established and preceding them everywhere they went throughout
Europe and Asia.

Now, ten years later, they were both known as honourable although - in Severus’ case snarky - academic philanthropists of great skill and influence and not for a stupid mistake they’d made as teenagers. Professor Severus Snape and Lord Lucius Malfoy were wizards who often donated their services to worthy causes, both Wizarding and Muggle.

The only place either man was still reviled was here in England. This explained, to a certain extent, why they had been so reluctant to return. However, both had also become curious about hints that they should come home embedded in correspondences from Draco.

Lucius had also been acutely aware that he hadn’t met either of his grandchildren. Scorpius was ten and his sister Adela was six, and Lucius was determined that the children would not fall prey to the beliefs of his ex-wife.

Gone were any pretensions of pureblood supremacy. Lucius Malfoy had pledged those ideals dead with Voldemort. He’d learnt to hate the influence a parent can have on a child, and how it can be twisted and manipulated so the child finds itself spouting the trash the parent believes, without thinking about it.

Severus looked up as the floo flared, and Lucius strolled out with his outer robes over his arm, wearing a very sated expression. He took in Severus sitting quietly. “You look perplexed,” Lucius drewled.

Severus snorted. “Honestly Lucius, I don’t know what to feel. I still can’t believe no one told us what was happening to Hermione.” He stared at his drink. “She is such a rare find and she’s being treated like dirt. The people who have been protecting her haven’t been able to stop the abuse. To tell the truth, after I forced myself not to give her a proper good night kiss and I came back here, all I’ve wanted to do was go find Potter and Weasley and tear the little bastards apart,” he growled menacingly.

Lucius listened as he got himself a drink and refilled Severus’ glass. The Potions master gave his friend a serious look.

“Minerva needs a Potions professor,” Severus stated out of the blue.

“That’s one way to get Hermione,” Lucius grinned. “Or you could just roger her senseless and convince her to marry you.” His grin became mischievous. “That would be more fun, wouldn’t it?”

Severus grunted. “You know, you’re never going to change, are you?”

“I assume that’s a rhetorical question,” Lucius purred imperiously, examining his perfectly manicured nails. “Why would I wish to change what’s already perfect?”

Severus chuckled. “There really is no limit to the Malfoy ego is there?”

Lucius smirked. “No,” he stated, one eyebrow raised as if this was a well known fact. Then he suddenly went still. “Although...” but didn’t finish the sentence.

The blond wizard sat in deep thought for a moment, then pursed his lips and ran the pad of his index finger around the rim of his glass. It made the pure ringing note of good crystal. “Seriously though, I take it you intend to claim the delightful Hermione?” he inquired finally, cocking an eyebrow.

“I think I made that abundantly clear tonight, don’t you?” Severus contemplated his own drink a moment. “I thought to start with that I was competing for her,” he raised an eyebrow.
Lucius tsked. “Now that would ruin a perfectly good friendship and cause a great deal of undue stress,” he stated plainly.

The Potions master watched his friend a moment, “Your charm failed you, didn’t it?”

Lucius could see the expression changing on his friend’s face. The aristocrat breathed out audibly, “Not entirely... but Severus, the delicious Miss Granger is rightfully your chance for happiness my friend. I will merely flit around the edges adding pleasure where I can, if you catch my meaning.”

“Mmm,” Severus droned thoughtfully. He drained his glass. “That is uncharacteristically honourable of you Lucius.”

“Severus, you wound me deeply,” Lucius smoothed, pouting.

“Indeed,” the Potions master barked a laugh, and then thought a moment. “However, I appreciate what you’re offering as well. We shall see.”

Lucius shrugged. reflecting a moment. A sly smile starting to twist his face.

“You’re up to something,” Severus accused.

“Possibly,” he smoothed before once more becoming serious. He lifted his eyes away from his glass to Severus. “This is the first time I have ever seen you take such an avid interest in a witch and one who appears to have long held desires for you.” Lucius smirked at Severus’ rapid intake of breath at the suggestion. Looking at the clock and sculling the rest of his drink, he continued. “Well, it’s frightfully late. If you plan to get anything done before your err... interview tomorrow afternoon, we should try to get some sleep.”

As the two intrepid protectors wandered off to bed, Hermione was still deep in contemplation. When she’d trudged sleepily to her rooms that night, her thoughts were lighter than air. Her knight in black armour had definitely faced down one of her bully’s.

She’d conjured a vase and water for her roses, and yawned, wishing, I hope I don’t wake tomorrow and find it was all a dream. Her reflections were loud inside her head and vibrated slightly, as things do when you’re tired. After sitting for some time just gazing at her roses, she started getting ready for bed.

Both her mind and body were humming as her thoughts revisited the sensations of Severus holding her tightly on the way here. Then his declaration of protection, and the sweet goodnight kiss he’d given her. Fighting the fastenings on her dress as she undid them all, she sighed in relief when it finally pooled like a green meringue on the floor around her feet.

There would be time in the morning to clean up if her elf didn’t finish up tonight. Right now she was shattered and very pleased she’d placed cushioning charms on the matching forest green shoes she’d found. However, no matter how tired she thought she was, her brain was too active to settle.

Stepping out of her dress, she observed her still very wet and needy body in her mirror and sighed as she rubbed her thighs together. Hermione was by no means prudish or frigid as had been suggested. She was a little disappointed that Severus had been such a gentleman with her, but on the other hand, she was also grateful he’d been so careful.

“So how do you think the fantasy would go if he had escorted me home, ay Mirror?” She arched an eyebrow decadently and smiling, slid her hand smoothly over her stomach and cupped herself through her soggy knickers.
Her imagination and inventiveness had been able to supply her with a substitute Severus a few years ago. The already charmed mirror had been enhanced with new spells of her invention, making it a passable likeness to her remembered Potions Master.

Said mirror had been watching her, exploring the limits of her soaked knickers, his face ghosting into view when she’d addressed him. Taking her body in standing in her low cut green lace bra, black lace, top stay-up stockings and forest green stilettos. The voice spoke to enflame her further.

It was a charade they often played together. “You’re looking very wanton tonight, my little dove.” Hermione gave him a coy smile. “Pull your knickers down and let me see your pretty pussy,” the customised mirror smoothed seductively.

Parting her legs a little and moaning longingly, Hermione hooked her thumbs into the top of her soaked green lace knickers. Slowly slipping them to halfway down her thighs, she revelled in the sensation of the material peeling off her soaked naked flesh. It felt so wicked to have her mirror instructing her to expose herself to it.

Once she was sans the scrap of lace and the cold air enveloped the moisture on her flesh, she shivered deliciously.

“Oh you dirty, dirt, darling little girl; you’re so wet. It looks like you want to have a very naughty time tonight,” the mirror murmured in the silky voice she’d imagined Severus’ bedroom voice to be.

She had taken a lot of time getting the nuance of his voice just right when she’d created this spell. The man could wield his voice to cut to the quick or smooth like silk; it was an amazing skill.

Hermione gave a contented sigh and nodded, thrusting her pelvis forward and peeling back her nether lips with her fingers, exposing herself fully to her watcher’s gaze. Using her longest finger she caressed herself, rubbing her clit and moaned longingly. “Good girl, now sit on your chair and spread you legs so I can watch you,” the mirror encouraged.

The lonely witch literally went weak at the knees, doing as she was told without further encouragement. Throwing her legs over the arms of the well-padded chair she’d transfigured to maximise her pleasure. She kept it in front of her ornate full length dressing mirror for just this purpose. Arching up, she pushed her dripping centre towards the mirror. “Beautiful,” he said in a breathy voice as Hermione shuddered and tensed, incredibly turned on by the proceedings.

“You’re such an exhibitionist, aren’t you, little dove? You love your mirror ogling your needy little cunt?” She moaned again, as the face in the mirror watched her puckering pussy avidly. His dark eyes appeared hooded with lust as he licked his lips in anticipation of her answer, and the inevitable next demand.

“Oh yes,” she moaned before groaning. “Lick me.”

“Open wider and come closer so I can reach you.”

It was a piece of spell work that Hermione would never tell Flitwick about, but she had charmed her mirror so a tongue could extend out from the flat plane. It was a very talented tongue, and it now came out to reach Hermione’s naked shuddering flesh.

Even though it was an extension of the glass and deliciously cold, she’d made certain it was also soft and felt wet on her, and she groaned longingly, “That’s a girl. Show your appreciation to your favourite mirror.” The tongue twisted and whirled in her sodden folds, licking and flicking at her swollen clit. “Good girl,” it crooned as she couldn’t hold back a guttural moan of pleasure.
The ministrations increased. “Move closer, and tease your tits for me,” the mirror demanded hotly. Hermione surged forward in the chair trying to impale herself on the dildo like tongue, the back of the chair pursued her so she was still supported.

Following his sensuous instructions, she hastily pushed the lace of her bra down to reveal her full breasts for his inspection. “Oh, very nice,” the mirror encouraged. “Move your lovely slit up and down.”

Hermione did as she was told, flexing her pelvis in a wild rhythm while twisting and pulling her nipples. She screamed in pleasure as the sensations shot through her.

“That’s a girl.” The mirror knew from experience she was close. “Come for me, my delicious little dove while I lick your pretty pink pussy.”

All coherent thought left her with those sensuously enunciated words, and she ceased moving and tried pushing her centre as hard up on the mirror as she could. The tongue lapped at her furiously, accompanying her grunting screams of delight as she flew apart. Panting and shuddering, Hermione sagged into the welcome support of the chair. The tongue extended to reach her, continuing to lick her in long flat languid passes while she squealed, squirmed and panted.

The mirror murmured obscene nothings to her as she was coming back to herself, and a further charm of her invention blew puffs of air over her still convulsing and shuddering flesh, prolonging her pleasure. “There you go my needy little dove,” the mirror announced as the charm finished. “Now you should be able to settle,” it smoothed, licking its lips again as if trying to taste her nectar still running in an obscene river down the mirror.

Relaxing further back into the chair, the mirror continued to study her actions as she lightly ghosted her fingers up and down her sodden slit, her thoughts again circling back to the subject that had made her all wet and needy to start with, the dashing Slytherin she’d so recently bid goodnight. “Still not settled love?” The mirror was watching her fingers, now pinching her clit lightly.

“No,” she said dreamily. “He’s so sexy,” her finger now rubbing in earnest. “I’ve loved him for so long, Mirror.”

“Is that why you’re in such a state?”

“Finally being in his arms tonight sent me over a threshold I can’t step back from,” her voice was almost lost in her activities. “Mmmm, I want him so much it almost hurts,” she moaned, throwing her head back and closing her eyes.

“Look at you; you’re perfect, teasing yourself to ecstasy. He’s a lucky man.”

Hermione’s only comment was a deep groan as her body tensed then fell easily over the edge once more from the voice in her ears, and the fantasy playing through her head of Severus’ pale fingers on her. Panting and shuddering she continued to moan and sigh, bringing her cum covered fingers to her mouth. She sat back relaxed in her chair legs still spread wide, languidly licking each finger clean.

“You are simply magnificent,” the mirror stated still watching her actions intently.

Finally her eyes started to grow heavy, and the motion of her tongue on her fingers stilled and her hand fell back to her thigh.

“Get up and go to your bed Hermione,” the mirror offered gently.

“Mmmm,” she sighed, stretching cat like in the chair and finally unhurriedly pushing on the heavy
mirror with her foot to help her up. Swaying tiredly on her high heels, she leant forward and kissed the mirror. “Thank you,” she sighed drowsily.

“My pleasure, little dove.” The face watched her wandless hand movement to make the remainder of her clothes slither off before she slid between her crimson satin sheets. As she mumbled. “Nox,” her substitute lover shimmered out of existence once more. Hermione was too tired now to worry that she was sticky. Her thoughts still whirling around the dance floor in Severus’ arms. Finally her eyes flitted shut, and the image of his face followed her into a restful slumber.

Severus had been in his luxurious bed in total comfort for about two hours now, but sleep was still eluding him. He looked to the empty space beside him for about the hundredth time. He’d never had the urge to share his bed with anyone. Any sexual activities he engaged in were definitely not of the continuing type, and he’d never even contemplated them in his own bed.

This was his sanctum sanctorum, his most private place. Yet all he wanted at this very moment was one curly chestnut head resting on the pillow next to him. He imagined what her luscious body would look like. Of course, once he’d done that he had a rather enormous problem. Sliding up the pillows, he glanced down at the tent in the bed clothes and sighed.

If he counted rightly, that was the seventh time Hermione had aroused him tonight. No woman had ever managed that since he was a teenager. In fact, he thought of himself as very hard to enflame. He only rarely felt the urge to pick up a woman or pay a whore.

Sharing women with Lucius to create a threesome on occasion for something different, and once even a quartet, but mostly he kept to himself. His friend liked to be watched, and both of them had voyeuristic tendencies. However, he’d never felt what was coursing unchecked through his system at the moment, and it truly amazed him.

Since entering adulthood, Severus had rarely found he needed to masturbate, as there was normally an abundance of available pussy on offer. He cackled sharply, after all he lived with the Slytherin sex god extraordinaire. Kicking off the bedclothes and bringing up the lights, he curled his hand around the rigid shaft, jutting proudly up from the thatch of black hair at his groin and muttered a lubrication spell. Hissing a breath in through his teeth in appreciation, his now slippery hand travelled from base to tip in a graceful sweeping movement.

In his mind, the face of the chestnut haired woman who had caused this problem swam irresistibly in his fantasy as he closed his eyes, cradling his balls gently in his other hand. He imagined her soft and delicate hand caressing him, and her sweet bow like mouth an inch away from the tip of his throbbing cock, licking her lips in anticipation.

“Oh, yes my little Angel, that’s a good girl. Open your sweet lips, and let me in,” he whispered, and whimpered as his traitorously vivid imagination supplied him with the details of those lips accepting his rock hard shaft. Severus shuddered deliciously as he imagined, sliding slowly into the warm cavern of her mouth, his hands buried in her wild tangle of chestnut curls in encouragement.

Soon the picture changed; he let his head drop back as he saw her, rising to mount his hips, lowering her beautiful body onto his. Enveloping him in her wet heat, as she ground down on his eager, needy shaft, she rode him hard, taking him over. In his mind’s eye, he toyed with her velvety breasts, cradling them lovingly in his long fingered pale hands, flicking his thumbs over her imagined hard dusky nipples.

Shuddering, his head pressed back, hearing her imagined, sigh. ”Severus,” as leaning against his drawn up thighs… an utter angel, riding him, keening for him, “I’m coming, oh my love, I’m,
“Hermione, my sweet... oh,” his panted, grunts of appreciation were becoming sharper. In reality, Severus felt his balls drawing up and tightening in his hand. His image of Hermione was so vivid as she stilled in anticipation, before pulling her arms up and wrapping them around her head adrift in her own shuddering ecstasy, and he was lost. His hand plunging madly up and down his cock, head thrown back, he felt the orgasm roaring down his spine, up through his balls and rushing out of him.

Severus managed to force his eyes open at the last moment to watch his cum erupting in hot strings onto his heaving chest, his feral groan of completion ripping from him in sharp grunts with every shot. He fell back, exhausted, breathless. “That’s a brilliant bloody fantasy,” he panted to himself. He hadn’t climaxed that hard or for that long in ages. And this is just my imagination.

Lying back against his pillows, he thought - while he ran his fingers absently through the still warm viscous liquid, tracing little circles on his belly with his spunk - of what Hermione would actually be like in real life. The thought made his now soft member twitch a new, and he obliged it by smoothing his unoccupied hand down to lovingly cradle his tool while he murmured to no one in particular. “Oh little angel, I think we’ll be perfect together. I’ll let you suck me while I eat out your sweet pussy.” These words had him hard again in no time, “I can’t wait to bury myself over and over in your hot little cunt.” He finally yawned but moaned as his hand tightened abound his shaft once more.

Picking up his wand with the other hand Severus muttered a cleansing spell and summoned the covers. Leaving his hand on his member, for comfort, he finally dozed off.
Hermione wakes the next morning and her mind starts working through part of how she got into the positions she’s now in.

Despite her incredibly late night, Hermione’s eyes shot open at six o’clock. As soon as she was awake enough to notice, she realised that all the lustre from the night before had definitely worn off. After attempting to get comfortable for a while, the Arithmancy professor finally realised she was not going to get any more sleep.

Sighing in exasperation, she pushed herself up in bed a little. A large knot formed in her stomach, as her mind instantly wandered back to Severus and Lucius. Severus had said he would see her very soon, and Hermione wondered exactly how long that would be.

He may have said that just to be polite. Her mood instantly sank lower. That’s probably more like it. Exhaling louder, Hermione sighed, and unable to find any of the comfort or peace of mind she’d had the previous evening, she felt her sense of desperation grow.

The Arithmancy mistress was well aware her movements were being watched in the Wizarding world. People were more than happy to gossip to Harry and Ron about what they’d seen her doing. Hermione knew her rooms were safe, so they were the only place she let her hair down, so to speak.

When she was outside the privacy of her quarters, she was well dressed and groomed, but serious and bookish. It had struck her more than once; she now resembled a female version of the Severus Snape she’d known as a student. Both he and Lucius wore their clothing like public armour. Then more thoughts flitted through her brain, giving her cause to ponder. I wonder what they’re like in private? Maybe Severus gave me a tiny glimpse of that last night.
It hadn’t taken Hermione long to find ways around the public scrutiny that merely buying an item of clothing could cause. She did something most wizards would have little or no knowledge of, she used the Muggle Internet. It was a wonderful tool; every time she was in London, she made certain she checked out her favourite sites.

Hermione ordered things online that she would never be able to buy in the shops. Especially Wizarding shops, where the far reaching, glorious Saint Harry and his idiot side kick may gather fodder for their seemingly endless ridicule. Then having a central London mail box also solved the delivery problem.

Her traditional teaching attire was often supplemented from vintage Goth sites on the web, as well as items from Madame Malkin to keep up appearances. The Arithmancy professor actually had a whole secret life that had kept her sane throughout this madness.

Hermione had long ago stopped wondering what her actual crime had been. She was fairly certain though that defending the two Slytherin spies was only her tormentors excuse for treating her so badly. Even if she took into consideration that they hated the two men, surely by now they should have seen reason.

This coupled with the jealousy that Dumbledore had entrusted her with information they knew nothing of, only further fuelled their hatred. Hermione shook her head. “What’s done is done, don’t try to work it out,” she cautioned herself, irritatedly.

Although, when she had been approached by Dumbledore in her sixth year, she’d no idea the repercussions of the task he’d set her would still be hurting her. The old wizard had trusted her, and she was very proud of that. Hermione had only been sixteen when, he, with Professor’s McGonagall and Snape had inducted her into the Order of the Phoenix.

Even then, Dumbledore’s hand was withered and black, and he was dying. Hermione had instantly recognised it as curse damage and wondered why more people hadn’t. One of the last conversations she’d had with the venerable old wizard had concerned her house placement.

He’d told her she would have done better had she been placed in Ravenclaw. Of course, this was something she already knew. What had surprised her was that he’d apologised for the hat’s thoughts that it had been necessary to place her in Gryffindor, to have her befriend the boy destined to slay the monster. More than once over the last ten years, she’d wondered if Albus had any conception that the boy who slew that monster would unwittingly turn into one himself.

Hermione wished she could get her mind back to its state of the night before. She irritatedly called for her morning coffee as her brain kept insisting on its dissection of her position. These thoughts followed her into the bathroom to pee, and she huffed before rearranging her pillows and climbing back into bed. It was times like this when she missed Crookshanks.

He not only listened, but she could hold him. He’d been a very comforting presence, but the old half Kneazle had slipped peacefully from this world, curled up on her lap last winter. She glanced at the spot he used to sit and sighed.

Only Minerva, Poppy and Hagrid knew he was gone. It had taken the two witches hours to manage to part her from his dead body when they’d turned up at her room that day because they hadn’t seen her out and about.

Minerva had called Hagrid to bury him, and the four friends had provided her much loved familiar with a proper funeral on the edge of the Forbidden Forest. Tears slipped from her eyes as she recalled it all. She had never thought to replace him, not ever having found a companion equal to
him. Yes, it’s definitely time to get up, Hermione decided.

Sitting trembling on the side of her bed, she wiped her eyes and finally remembered she’d assured Minerva she would make certain the accommodations and teaching equipment were prepared for the new professors.

She started with cleaning up what was left of the mess the last Potions professor had left. Now that the team of magical surveyors had finished making certain the integrity of the dungeons hadn’t been compromised in the explosion, and the castle had repaired itself.

By the end of the day both the History of Magic and Potions quarters may well have new residents, so this needed to be completed. The now anxious woman knew she was clutching at straws, so she didn’t have to admit to herself that she had allowed herself to want. Wanting merely led to hurting, it was a set pattern in her life. It was a pattern she wished with all her heart was different.

Without warning, a terrifying question entered her head. How much longer can I live like this? Hermione rose suddenly from the bed, frightened of the answer she knew was there. All her coping strategies appeared to be falling to dust around her. Life was spiralling out of control again. This depressing thought accompanied her to the bathroom.

Now showered and dressed, Hermione headed towards the Great Hall. As she approached, she heard the happy chatter wafting through the open door. However, the weak but still warm winter sun streaming through the huge front doors was beckoning her outside. Turning away, Hermione paused, hearing a petulant toddler’s voice state imperiously. “I hate her, I wish she would go back to Mummy’s tummy.” Hermione smiled wistfully, hearing Xanthie obviously not able to get on Luna’s lap because of little Alice.

Hermione heard Minerva admonish. “Xanthia Hermione Longbottom that’s a terrible thing to say about Alice.”

Next, a tearful wail meet Hermione’s ears. “But I wants Mummy.”

Finally, the listening woman heard a male voice come to the rescue. “Come on, Xanthie, you can sit with Uncle Bill,” the kindest Weasley she currently knew stated.

“Me wants Auntie ‘Mione,” the little girl cried, stamping her foot. However, still unseen, Hermione was moving quickly away and out the great front doors. She felt very guilty as she did, but truth was, at the moment, she couldn’t stand the fact that everyone had family but her.

A quiet sob escaped her. Why is everything falling apart this morning? Swallowing hard, she called an elf and requested another, stronger coffee. Summoning her cloak, she decided on a walk to try and settle herself before she had to face any of them.

The morning resembled the night before, crisp and clear. There was a layer of still frigid mist rising from the water to about knee height and hugging the ground as she meandered towards the lake. The fog swirled around her as her skirts and cloak disturbed it, giving the impression that she was emerging out of the mist as she found the path.

Sipping her coffee, the Arithmancy professor’s feet wandered of their own accord through the crispness of the morning. Even though it was late spring, it was still cold in the Highlands of Scotland, and the remnants of last night’s frost clung to the blades of grass and crunched under foot if her step strayed too far from the well worn path.

It really came as no surprise when she realised she’d stopped in the same spot she always seemed to
stop. Sighing, she dried her favourite boulder and cast a warming charm on it and herself. Being in her present mood, was bad enough without even thinking about the memories this spot brought to her.

Her brain defied her common sense yet again, and continued down it reflective path. It recalled in startling detail the reason she gravitated here so often. This was the last place she had stood with the two men who had reappeared last night, but it had been ten years ago, and just before they’d left.

The wizards from last night were a far cry from the two who had departed all that time ago. At the time, neither man was in good shape. Severus could barely speak and needed to finish healing after Nagini had attempted to rip his throat out. Lucius was still undergoing treatment to reverse curse damage, which had caused his joints to seize up and twist with arthritis.

Most people had had trouble sleeping after their experiences, and took the occasional sleeping potion. However, both spies had been seriously screwed up, and were completely unable to get any rest without Dreamless Sleep.

Though the three of them were more than mere acquaintances after their trials together, they had still been very formal with each other. Hermione recalled how they had come to feel comfortable around her. She knew they’d both been uncomfortable with her after everything she’d done for them... perhaps they felt guilty.

Growing up in the shadow of the Wizarding war, their treatment of her had always been harsh at best, which she suspected only made them feel worse now. Still, the pleasure she’d felt in their presence was something more than she could have ever expected.

Once the war was won, life had changed quickly. Harry and Ron had disappeared on an extended holiday, paid for by the Ministry. Hermione had been horrified when she’d found out. It had been the final blow to their already floundering friendship.

Then, especially finding out from Molly that the Weasley matriarch had been informed by her son and his best friend that she, Hermione, told them to invite Ginny in her place, Hermione had been livid; she hadn’t even known about the whole thing and would never have condoned it if she had. There was so much work still left to do, they shouldn’t have just disappeared like that.

The plain fact was that she had outgrown them. She was sick of picking up the pieces every time they decided to ignore the rules, and was frustrated and bored with their constant Quidditch chatter and gutter talk about the opposite sex. Nothing else appeared to exist in their shallow little, self absorbed worlds.

So, Hermione had pushed her hurt down and realised she was indeed better off without them. She had thrown herself wholeheartedly into realising Dumbledore’s task instead. The young woman recognized immediately that she could use her new found fame, not to whine for holidays or personal favours as they had, but to help her complete Dumbledore’s request.

Looking back up at the castle, Hermione recalled how she’d stayed at Hogwarts, the first night on the lounge in Minerva’s office. However, it wasn’t long before Minerva asked her if she would mind taking over brewing the vast amounts of potions needed for the injured in the magically extended Hospital Wing. The day after the battle, having no Potions master in residence meant no supply of new potions to replace those used, and the headmistress knew Hermione was a proficient brewer.

It came as a surprise when said headmistress had gone on to tell her she came highly recommended. “Who said that?” the stunned Hermione had asked, blinking.
The answer had astonished her even more. Minerva had laid a hand on her arm. “Surprisingly, Severus’ unguarded opinion,” she told her. It had apparently slipped out somewhere during the year Hermione was absent.

Nodding and still in shock, the Gryffindor witch had, in turn, requested she be able to call the undamaged dungeon class room and office home while she waited for more suitable accommodation to become available.

In those early days after the battle, Hermione had brewed Burn Salve, a pain potion, Dreamless Sleep, Blood Replenisher, and Skelegro, along with many others, literally by the bucket full while she put the final touches on the evidence she had gathered.

She had often thought of the two wizards, especially her former teacher. She recalled how much it had hurt her, to think of him probably in significant pain and weakness. There had been no medical aid close at hand for them, the vanquished captives. She should have hated them both, but she knew the truth of their situation, and looked past their treatment of her as the obvious act it had been to maintain their covers.

Her mind then delved deeper into the mire, and she summoned up how, when she had finally received word that she could visit the two arrested spies, the reality of their situation had been far worse than she could ever have imagined. That first day when she had been ushered into the black tiled corridor, the stench that accosted her nose had made her want to retch.

It brought the Final Battle flooding back into her mind, a potent mix of sweat, urine, blood, vomit and death. She scoffed to herself. *Any notion I had of waltzing into the Ministry and instantly having them freed had been immediately squashed.* Hermione had actually wondered if perhaps the officials had wished to forget about the occupants in the cages in that passageway, and were hoping they would just go away, or die or something, so they didn’t have to deal with them.

Her senses still reeled, remembering that stench. It actually smelt like the process had already started and nobody had given a damn. She remembered holding her chin high and closing her ears to the barbs assaulting her senses from the wounded caged beasts on either side of the hallway. Hermione had been directed to the very end cubicle. When she had finally seen her targets, tears had prickled her eyes.

It had taken great effort, but she had swallowed them down. The wizards she had come to see were still wearing the clothes they had been captured in. Both men languished, barely conscious and in obvious agony, on the hard tiled floor. Their wand arms manacled to the wall way above their head capturing their magic. Hermione remembered being horrified, and she’d marched straight into the new Minister’s office. Even now, as she sat on her rock, coffee mug clutched in her hands, tears of remembrance trickled down her cheeks at the memory still burnt indelibly into her brain of that wretched sight.

Still reminiscing, Hermione wiped the tears and barked a laugh at her audacity in getting their situation improved. She was nothing if not bossy back then. She’d used this gift, knowing it was something she did very well. Hermione had brought to bear every ounce of her influence to make life better for them. “When I was a guest of Voldemort’s torture chamber, I was treated better than you are treating them now,” she had ranted at Shacklebolt. “We won the war, but what good is that if it makes us bigger monsters than they were?”

Once he had let her talk herself out, Kingsley had escorted her back to the dreaded passageway and saw firsthand what was happening right under his nose. That had been her first victory. It didn’t matter to her that all of them had been rehoused with more dignity, but it meant the two men she had promised to help were now receiving medical attention, decent food, shower, and exercise privileges.
They had an iron cot each with a mattress, and instead of being shackled to a wall, they only wore a cuff on their wrist to contain their magic. However, that first day as she’d returned to the safety of her makeshift home, she’d vomited twice on the way up the drive. She had come here that day as well to let her tears for them fall.

When they were finally able to communicate with her without their pain taking all their attention, they had acted very stiffly towards her, hardly speaking. They were obviously embarrassed and confused. However, never once did she throw their situation in their face, or belittle them, and slowly they relaxed with her, especially after hearing what she’d demanded on their behalves.

Her eyes focused suddenly, after her ears registered a splash that pulled her from her thoughts. She raised her eyes from her introspective study of the contents of her coffee mug to see the giant squid frolicking in the deep water of the Black Lake.

She watched entranced for a moment, but soon her insistent memory tugged her back to her recollections. Their estimation had grown further as they’d repeatedly watched her holding her head high and enduring the taunts and barbs from true Death Eaters to come and visit them. They never heard a word in self righteous anger from her at the abuse in all that time either. Each time she came to see them, and they heard her speak quietly, with poise and dignity, their respect and admiration for her had seemed to grow.

By the time they had their freedom, the three of them had developed a guarded, but sincere friendship of a sort. Therefore, the day after they were released, when the men came to find her to privately give their thanks and tell her they were leaving for an undetermined amount of time, it had been comfortable.

Hermione looked up at the just budding tree. It had been spring then too, such a bittersweet memory. At the time, she had agreed with them that their plan was indeed an excellent one. However, the next day when she had returned to her tree, a great weight seemed to drop through her stomach. To a great extent it had been there ever since. She had realised she missed them, especially the raven-haired wizard.

Three days after the two Slytherins had departed, Harry, Ron and Ginny returned from their escape to who knows where. Nobody, least of all Hermione had expected the animosity the boys showed on learning how she had helped the two spies gain their freedom. It was at this point that her memories started to become too painful, and she brushed away a tear and tried for a change of subject. Finally, she gave up and hopping off her rock, strolled back to the castle.

It had been decided this year to mark the tenth anniversary of The Final Battle; there would be a week’s holiday for all Hogwarts students. It was unlikely to become a permanent fixture but it had come in handy, while the Potions classroom was being refitted. Hermione wondered if the Ministry had used the holiday as a way of getting out of rehousing Slytherin House while repairs were being made.

The small cluster of her fellow wizards and witches breakfasting around the table, set in the middle of the hall, did manage to pull her from her reflections, although only because Hermione felt a fresh pang of pain shoot through her.

Something more than the usual feeling that there was no one for her at the table was affecting her today, and it was cutting much deeper this morning. They all looked round as Hermione entered, watching her soberly walk towards them. Hermione saw Neville Longbottom hurry through the staff entrance.
Oblivious to her distress, he took great pains to greet his wife before gently stroking his newborn
daughter’s head as she slept in Luna’s arms. After scruffing and kissing Frank and little Xanthia’s
heads, he finally acknowledged everyone else. It was a lovely scene, but in her present state it only
made the pain more complete, and the misery much more profound.

Minerva graced the head of the table, her deputy - the diminutive Professor Flitwick - on her left, and
Poppy Pomfrey on her right. Bill Weasley, who was DADA professor and head of Gryffindor these
days, had already left. His wife, Fleur had moved back to France with their two children. Victoiré,
who was in her first year at Beauxbatons Academy, and her younger sister Angeline who was nine.

Bill was port keying out tomorrow to spend time with his girls. Of course Neville was Herbology
professor; he and Luna occupied quarters not unlike Hagrid’s close to the greenhouses. Neville’s
wife Luna, was now the sole editor of The Quibbler. Hermione was not certain Minerva actually
approved of the questionable publication being produced on the grounds of Hogwarts. However, in
order to keep the best Herbology Professor in Europe, she tolerated it.

Hermione’s eyes were just turning to Hagrid, when twin cries of joy erupted from the two
Longbottom children. “Auntie ‘Mione, come sit with us.” Frank vacated his seat and moved up one.

He needn’t have bothered because as soon as she sat, Hermione was engulfed in a slobbery kiss and
hug by Xanthie, who then bounced on her knee happily, chortling about pruning in greenhouse six
with Daddy yesterday. “Did you know, Auntie ‘Mione, that it’s bad to bangs a drum when baby’s is
asleep?”

Hermione smiled. “Is that why you went pruning with Daddy?” At her discrete inquiry, the little
head of blonde curls bounced in the affirmative. “Oh I see,” replied Hermione glancing at Neville,
coming to retrieve his daughter.

“Come on, sweet pea; let Auntie ‘Mione eat her breakfast,” Neville said gathering his family, before
continuing to the hall at large. “We’ll see you all tomorrow.” Farewells and hugs were exchanged
and the family left. They were flooing to Neville’s Grandmother’s for the day.

As the Longbottoms were leaving, Luna drew Hermione into a hug and in her own dreamy fashion
said. “Remember, it’s always darkest before the dawn, love,” she kissed Hermione’s cheek, and
skipped after her husband, leaving Hermione confused as she tried to force herself to eat most of the
piece of toast. It was then that Minerva quietly pushed the Daily Prophet in front of her. The
Arithmancy Professor took in the headline with wide eyes,

“Intrigue at Anniversary Ball!”

Under the headline was a picture of Kingsley taking Ron in hand, and an article wondering if Ron
Weasley had finally gone too far and should be accountable for his actions?

Hermione spread jam on her toast, but now she couldn’t quite manage to finish it. She pushed it
away, wondering what sort of trouble this would cause. The Gryffindor witch jumped when
Hagrid’s chair scraped on the floor as he got up. “Me ‘n Firenze be goin in da forest,” he announced
noisily, but stopping at Hermione’s chair, he patted her shoulder. “I’ll be jez fine, ‘Ermyne,” he
assured, before lumbering toward the huge front doors.

Minerva cast a look after him and turned back to her shaken companion. “He’s right you know,
dear,” she stated. “There’s a new wind blowing through the Prophet now Skeeter’s gone.”

“Yes, you’ll see; you have allies you’ve never known about,” Flitwick and Poppy added
encouragingly.
Hermione stared at her toast. “Maybe,” she said cautiously, but pushed her plate away. “I’m not very hungry.”

Minerva patted her hand. “Stop worrying; things really are changing.” Hermione gave her a half hearted smile and gave a second glance to the paper.

Minerva turned to Flitwick, knowing it actually would all work out this time. There really was nothing more she could say. “Well Filius, you said three applicants?” The genial Charms professor nodded, but didn’t seem happy. “Well, we better set up the hall for the interviews.”

Poppy sounded bothered when she finally spoke up. “So we should have a new Potions professor by this evening?”

“I’m afraid not, Poppy,” Filius cut in, “there are only three applicants for old Binns’ position, none I’m afraid for Potions.”

“Oh dear,” Poppy muttered under her breath.

Picking up on Poppy’s concern despite her own troubles, Hermione asked. “Why, are you running low on something, Poppy?”

“Just about everything; that last woman refused to brew for the infirmary,” she stated with a huff.

“Poppy, why didn’t you say?” Minerva looked even more irritated now.

“Because Minnie, you already had too much on your plate, and I had a store room full of backups at the beginning of the year,” she shrugged. “However, even handing them out sparingly they went quickly, and I couldn’t really ask Hermione to brew for me when there was a qualified brewer on hand, could I?” Turning to the woman in question. “I don’t suppose you could… I hate to take up your holidays. But, I really need to get my store room full before the students get back.

The two women had started pushing their chairs in. Hermione sighed. “Send my elf with the list, I’ll see what I can do.” She tried to smile but felt it fall flat, so she shrugged instead and thought, Great, just another painful reminder of a missing man.

“Merlin knows what this place would do without this girl, Minnie,” Poppy said, patting Hermione’s arm, hoping some praise might cheer her up.

“I hope we never have to find that out,” the Headmistress replied smartly, giving Hermione a tight smile before she grimaced and tried not to groan as she pushed herself slowly up from the table. “That just keeps getting harder and harder,” the elderly witch grumbled softly. Filius attempted to help her, but Hermione noticed he was having just as much trouble.

Hermione watched their discomfort and once she was outside the Great Hall, she questioned Poppy about it. “Why are they not taking something for that?”

“I’ve run out of Arthritis Potion, I even tried the Apothecary’s,” she shrugged. “But, they’ve all run out as well, something about a shortage of Aspen leaves.”

“Oh,” Hermione sighed, that would have been her next suggestion. “I’ve never made it. It’s a fairly complicated potion from what I’ve heard. I’ll have a look at it though, see if maybe I can…” her voice trailed off and her eyes took on a far away expression. Finally she shook herself. “I’m planning to check out Binns’ old room first. Then I’ll go to the library and get a book on medicinal potions, before attacking the Potions rooms.”
As they started walking, Hermione gave the Matron a quizzical look. “Who filled the store room last time?”

“The guy before the last one,” Poppy replied then laughed, “you know, the one who took on the long term position and dropped it for a cushy Ministry job the minute he found out what teaching children was actually like.” They reached the bottom of the stairs, “But he was at least an adequate brewer,” she added thoughtfully.

Hermione let out a hollow snort as they started climbing the stairs. “That sounds just like something Severus would say.”

The Matron sighed. “Mmm, I guess so.” She glanced at her companion hearing the slight crack in her voice. “You know, I miss him too,” the Matron continued sympathetically.

However, when she got no reply, the kind old woman rubbed Hermione’s arm and said quietly. “You know everything will work out.” Hermione shrugged dejectedly. “I’ll get that list to you,” Poppy finished, not really knowing what to say next.

They parted company as the stairway split. Hermione turned away, not trusting her voice and merely nodded. *Oh Poppy, not as much as I do, she brushed a tear away, Last night was the first time in a very long time that I’ve felt safe or wanted.*

Her eyes were a blurred sheen when she’d reached her destination. Thinking that it had been a one off encounter and he wouldn’t be back was starting to tear her apart. Really, all she wanted to do at this moment was go to her rooms, collapse on her bed and howl, “This day is just getting worse and worse,” she mumbled.

Hermione couldn’t bring herself to hope because she’d been disappointed far too many times. The misery from having hopes dashed was far worse than never admitting to wanting in the first place.
Unexpeted Surprises

Chapter Summary

While she's cleaning out the History of Magic rooms Hermione finds a stash of very interesting before unknown items, as continues to contemplate, she still can't bring herself to hope that Severus will keep his promise.

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer:-
(Huge sigh) I do not own nor earn anything from this story. The plot is mine and the mirror ;-)

Thank you to both FalconLux and Worrywart for their magnificent beta work. Falcon pointed out to me that the room Hermione sends Binns’ belongs to might be the Room of Hidden thing, however I thought if there could be a Room of Hidden things why not one for Forgotten things as well. Just make it through this chapter and the cavalry will arrive, I promise – there will be a delicious Potions master in residence by the end of the next chapter.

Squaring her shoulders and resisting the temptation to give in to her misery, Hermione sighed and turned to the door of the History of Magic class room. There were only the basic security wards, and the Arithmancy professor hadn’t expected anything more. She entered and surveyed the classroom at a glance, all seemed to be in order.

Moving through to the outer office, again everything was clean and tidy merely musty from lack of use. Professor Binns had died in the staff room and no one had cleaned out his personal effects. Because he was still an active staff member, he was entitled to the rooms, so they were left unaltered. Inspecting the sitting room, Hermione saw an extensive library which she had the urge to dive into and lose herself in. The avid bibliophile resisted, but couldn’t help perusing the titles as concession for her restraint.

Hermione conjured a box and charmed it to follow her. She was already through the sitting room, having only gathered a few unknown photos. The old professor’s private study was proving just as boring, and she quickly worked her way around the room to his desk without removing anything else to her box.

Absently picking up his reading glasses to place in the box, Hermione noticed they were sitting on an open book. She wrinkled her nose in disgust at the thought of leaving a book open like that and without actually looking at it she moved to close it. However, as she went to close it something made her pause, and what she saw stilled her hand and made her heart beat faster. Before the details filtered into her stunned brain, at first, the only thing she noticed was that the picture contained three people. Her mouth dropped open, as her brain caught up with what her eyes were unexpectedly looking at.
It was a very artful, probably early Victorian scene, containing a close up of a naked witch, draped over a velvet chaise lounge. She had a length of diaphanous cloth, draped decorously over her body. It ran down between her breasts like a sash and was secured at her waist with a length of green silk cord. The existence of which did nothing to obscure any of her delights from two partially clothed wizards. Her Admirers were wearing loose, white, open-necked silk dress shirts and black trousers. Standing to either side of her, the men had a hand loosely placed around one of her knees, as her thighs strained open. Their touch seemed to be adding a sense of intimacy, grounding the woman as all three avidly watched her fingers plunging in and out of herself.

Hermione instantly felt her body tense involuntarily. What a delicious scene, Hermione’s brain supplied. “Binn’s you old rogue,” she chuckled. Gazing at the picture for what seemed like an eternity before daring to look further. Finally she sighed and turned the page.

The sight of the next picture drew a gasp of pure desire from her lips, and she collapsed unceremoniously into the desk chair as she legs refused point blank to hold her up. She instantly had the urge to throw off her own clothes and dive into the illustration, wrestling the witch for the attentions of her wizards.

This time the wizards were doing the pleasuring, one had a goblet of liquid. The other was holding the witch’s nether lips wide open, for the first wizard to dribble the obviously cold and viscous liquid over the witch’s most intimate rosy flesh, which - for the observer’s pleasure - was convulsing violently. Hermione watched keenly as the golden liquid (which looked, for all the world like honey), hit the witch’s clitoris in what appeared to be weighted pulses, then teasingly trickled down over the shuddering flesh.

Hermione found her fingers automatically straying into her robes. The errant digits found their way under the completely soaked lace of her knickers into her slick folds. Before she’d realised what she was doing, she had already started circling her finger on her clitoris. Her legs falling open in the chair, she bit her lip in pleasure. Suddenly seeming to remember where she was, and snatched her hand away, uttering a tiny panicked yelp at her actions.

The now very flustered professor abruptly stood, snapping the book shut. She forced her legs to move; even if she was so turned on she could barely get them to hold her up. Her heart was thumping in her ears and her breath was coming in gasping pants. Seizing up the book, Hermione walked with purpose towards the door. She shrank it and placed it in her pocket. “And we all thought he was such a boring old fart,” she mumbled, her voice husky. Each step teased her higher, her thighs rubbed together so deliciously, she was forced to grab the door frame to steady herself as she walked through.

The fragrance of her own arousal made her clit throb almost painfully, as the images played again and again across the screen of her mind. The urge to relieve the ache she felt was almost overwhelming, but she was Hermione Granger and she had a job to do. Convincing herself not to feel guilty about taking the book, she headed into the next room. After all, she assumed no one knew about it, and she intended to study it carefully. It was possible this book might be the catalyst she needed for her solitary, but inventive sex life.

It hadn’t escaped her attention while riveted to the pictures, that the three participants bore a striking resemblances to her, Severus, and Lucius. The thing that shocked her on top of everything else, was that the thought of both of them doing things like that with her, aroused her even more.

She knew she loved Severus, had done for as long as she could remember and absence had definitely made that bloom further. She’d never been able to forget him - or get over him - and she’d definitely never even looked at another man.
However, she’d never regarded Lucius in that way, he was a play boy, and although attractive and very sexy. He was definitely not someone she’d ever considered as a sexual partner, mainly because he was a love them and leave them sort of guy.

A peculiar thought struck her, and Hermione wondered if on occasion being such good friends, the two Slytherins had taken a woman together. Hermione moved to the bedroom absently reflecting on the possibilities of this. Before soundly scolded herself for the thoughts, when another gush of her stickiness made her knickers even wetter.

Today was proving difficult enough, without feeling as if pictures were mocking her as well. Greatly confused and very aroused she vaguely wondered what she’d find in the old professor’s bedchamber. The answer was right in front of her as soon as she walked in, not even hidden.

While conjuring a smaller box it crossed Hermione’s mind to wonder who his partners may have been. “Seventh years maybe, other teachers or even prostitutes perhaps?” Carefully she wrapped the objects in the thick pieces of velvet and fur, along with the feathers and the book from her pocket. Then shrunk the whole box and placed it in her pocket. Hermione made quick work of emptying his wardrobes and such then called her elf.

“Yous is calling Loopy, Miss?”

“Yes, Loopy, take these two boxes to the Room of Forgotten Things. Then freshen these rooms adding the usual flowers and such, please.”

“Yes, Miss,” the elf bowed low.

As much as Hermione was a creature of duty, she knew she wouldn’t get anything else done without first having some private time, to rid herself of the arousal that was currently short circuiting her brain. Especially, if she was going to be doing something volatile, like brewing potions. “Loopy allow no one to disturb me for the next hour, keep Matron Pomfrey’s note until I call you again,” she instructed.

“I is understanding,” the little elf squeaked and disappeared with the boxes.

Warding the doors of the History of Magic rooms on her way out, Hermione left for her own rooms. She placed the once more enlarged box on the chair in her bedroom with shaky hands, but then sat on the edge of her bed, thinking. Nothing had gone right so far today. Even the find that had made her so aroused, had only frustrated her.

Lying back, she pulled a pillow down the bed for her head, but still did nothing to relieve herself. The picture in her head was mesmerising, and her hand finally undid the zip of her skirt and started creeping under. But she just couldn’t muster the required energy to go any further.

Eventually she gave up, and rolled onto her side. “My life’s pathetic,” she moaned. Now truly depressed, she finally hit rock bottom. Sliding off the pillow, she clung tightly to it and curling into a little ball, and sobbed her heart out.

_I can’t stand this anymore... I’ll leave, go somewhere else. Start fresh. I should have done that to start with. Maybe then I’ll find someone who wants me._ She desperately wanted to see Severus again, but she just couldn’t bring herself to believe she would. Crying for what seemed like hours she was all cried out when she rolled onto her back.

Staring at the canopy on her bed, she muttered in a snuffy voice. “Can I pull all the pieces together yet again, and keep working?”
The voice that answered her surprised her. “Of course you can, little dove,” the face shimmered into being.

Hermione rolled over to face her mirror, “But no one wants me,” she moaned.

“Oh, of course they do,” the mirror responded in a startling replica of Severus’ silky voice. Right about now, she was regretting making her mirror sound so much like she longed for lover. Although he does have a point, they did need her never the less. But was this as good as life gets, she swallowed hard.

Yes, they all need me but none of them fulfil my desires. That’s the part that hurts. I’m always needed for my skills and accomplishments, but never just for me. The troubled woman contemplated this for some time, finally she heard his silky voice again. “I know I’m an exquisitely crafted piece of furniture, imbued with the features and voice of the man you love, and I do have certain talents,” he suggested seductively. “However, one of them is not mind reading. You must talk to me my little one,” Hermione shivered at the sound of his voice.

Another tear slid down her cheek, and Hermione couldn’t help telling him, after all she told him everything. She blurted out her frustrations. “He won’t want me. I’m so frustrated.”

The mirror tsked. “Don’t think like that, things will work out,” he said reverting back to his normal function.

“Oh shut up,” Hermione said sullenly. “I’m so sick of hearing that.”

“Now is that any way to speak to your mirror,” he admonished. “Deep down you have to know he’ll come to you. You’re so lovely, he couldn’t help but want you. It’s only been one morning. You’ll see, he’ll be fixing you right up in no time.”

“That’s just it,” she looked up angrily, wiping at her tears, “I designed the spells on you to satisfy me because I didn’t have any alternative. That alternative walked back into my life last night, and now I’m terrified that he won’t want to,” she mimicked, “fix me right up in no time,” and she added privately, and find out about you, my confidant.

“Oh I’m certain he will,” the mirror continued. “Every view of you is exquisite. You should see some of the things I’ve seen over the years. I’m sure your gentleman will be around shortly.”

Hermione nodded sniffing loudly. Swinging her feet over the side of her bed, she sat there contemplating the floor.

“Come on, now what’s wrong, little dove,” her mirror inquired. Hermione looked up from the floor and remembered why it was she’d actually come in here to start with. “I found a book next door… while I was cleaning up.” She hesitated before continuing.

“Yes,” the mirror offered, in a knowing voice.

Hermione finally continued. “The pictures in it… really turned me on.”

“I see,” the voice dropped about an octave. “Would you like to show me how much it turned you on?” The face even raised an eyebrow as Severus would. Hermione nodded, but didn’t move. “Then come over here, my lovely girl,” he smoothed.

Hermione shuddered deliciously, and rose from the bed. “I love it when you ask me to show you, you know I do, but…” her head dropped, even as she moved closer.

“I know you do, little dove,” the mirror eyed her heatedly. “Why the hesitation?” Hermione
shrugged. “Then lift you skirts, my darling girl,” he requested, in an even more silky tone. “It will make you feel so much better. You know it will.”

Hermione felt a fresh gush of liquid, and shuddered. She knew the mirror was right again, and hastened to do as requested. Reaching down, she lifted the hem of her skirt as she walked to stand in front of the mirror. It was like a curtain rising, standing with her legs apart, only a whisker away from the face. She hooked her thumb into the elastic of her sodden knickers and pulled down, quivering in anticipation, on seeing her nether lips, literally dripping, in the mirror. The eyes of the face eagerly took in the picture. “Oh you’re so wet, you’re making a puddle.”

“Come to me,” he ordered. Now beyond thinking about reason, she took the last step, and squealed in delight, when without hesitation the tongue shot out and plunged straight into her wetness, to lap at her. Hermione’s knees shook while it thrust repeatedly in, out, up and circling her clit, soon she was keening.

She’d been so close anyway. The cold surface of the mirror felt delicious, and the action of the tongue became more frantic with her howling pleasure. Her mirror now offered some practical advice as she settled once more. “Things will work out, be more positive and get on with your day. Now go, have a shower and get changed.” Hermione, who was contemplating buckling at the knees, nodded. Still quaking in aftershocks, but appearing to find her reason, she went off to dispose of her underwear and clean herself.

Putting her long outer coat on over her clothes for the dungeons, she reflected on how she loved this coat. It was black, and had dozens of tiny black buttons. She’d bought it online, at one of those sites that will sew your own design. It reminded her of Severus’ frock coat. Calling Loopy, Hermione addressed the bowing elf, asking almost reluctantly. “Have you a message for me?”

The little elf snapped her fingers, and a two foot scroll of parchment appeared. “Oh Merlin,” Hermione groaned eyeing the extensive list. “She really has run out of everything.” Glancing down at the chair she picked up the box containing her illicit haul, but on further reflection put it back down. “Thank you Loopy, that’s all.”

Once the elf was gone Hermione collapsed back onto the side of the bed and looked at the list again. “There must be fifty potions here, this will take forever,” she mumbled sighing.

“Be positive, little dove. You can do this,” looking towards the face, still watching her, she nodded.

In an attempt to find her lost drive, Hermione nodded. “Yes I can. I’m a Gryffindor. I’ll manage, I’ve faced worse days,” she told herself, even if it did sound a little less resolute than usual.

“Yes, you have,” her mirror stated.

“Thank you mirror.” She watched the face in the mirror for some time, before nodding curtly once.

“As usual, little one, it’s my pleasure,” she pocketed the list, put on her cloak and left for the library.

Severus had awoken even earlier than usual this morning. He had never been this excited about something. A rather bleary eyed Lucius had joined him for breakfast at 7 am. The blond aristocrat had business meetings all morning. Severus knew not to disturb him until he’d imbibed at least one mug of coffee. He had always smiled at the huge mug Lucius used first thing in the morning, considering the delicate nature of everything else he used throughout his day. The Potions master estimated that the huge mug held the equivalent of three normal mugs of coffee. Lucius had found it on a business trip to America, where everything seemed to have a supersize
version as well a normal size. It had been his favourite morning possession ever since. Finally judging that his friend was awake enough to be receptive, Severus said over his own mug. “You know she needs a History professor as well.”

A pale eyebrow rose in answer, without even questioning who she was, he nodded. “Interesting,” he replied and went back to his paper.

Knowing the seed had been planted, Severus went back to his own contemplations. His mind had been very fertile this morning. It irritated him that he had to wait until this afternoon to go to Hogwarts. If the case had been different and the wards knew him, he would be there already. *I wonder how her day’s going?* He thought absently. *I’ll definitely have her move in here.* “Lucius?”

“Mmm?”

“Would you have any objections to me opening another suite of rooms?”

Lucius’ eyes rose from his Gringotts Review, and his eyebrow slid aloft. “No, why?”

“I think you know the reason.”

“Mmm, delightful,” his smile, tilted half of his mouth. “Be careful, won’t you,” his smile increased. “Take the side with the greenhouse that will be handy for you.”

Severus nodded in appreciation, and left to start. He heard Lucius call after him, “I’ll help when I return. Don’t lose any of my elves.”
The Difference Between Aspen and Willow Leaves

Chapter Summary

The same day as the chapter before. Now Hermione is in the Potions lab starting the Infirmary supplies. Things are still going wrong and one particular brew keeps failing. Finally, it all becomes too much. While she’s concentrating on her misery, someone approaches. She gasps when strong hands gently pick her up and cradle her close, "Shh, love, don't cry...

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer:- I neither own nor earn anything from this story, except the plot everything else is borrowed.

Huge thank you to FalconLux, who did an extraordinarily fast beta job with this chapter. I think she may be part Roadrunner she was so quick.

So, trumpet fanfare please. Here you go everyone – one sexy Potions master returns this chapter. I hope you enjoy, and please remember people, if you ask me questions in your reviews please sign in so I can answer them. Thank you.

Skipping lunch, Hermione’s new found, but fledgling confidence saw her though the refit of the Potions classroom furniture. It was now close to five in the evening; her jobs had taken her all day.

The Potions storeroom for the students had been demolished and would need restocking, as would much of the equipment. Hermione decided not to worry about that at the moment. There was a separate storeroom containing ingredients for infirmary supplies, and fortunately it had survived the blast unsathed.

The private lab and store room had also survived intact, although the latter stood emptied, presumably by the disgraced teacher, before she left. Surveying the extent of the devastation, Hermione shivered. It was a wonder no one was killed - certainly several had been injured, and the one who’d created the concoction that had exploded, seriously. Fancy leaving second years to brew unattended; the Arithmancy professor shook her head.

Knowing there was no need to scout these rooms for personal items, Hermione had merely told Loopy to do the same as she had done in Binns’ old rooms in order to get on with the potions. She was past the point of caring, and the tired witch was happy to delegate.

The stand-in Potions brewer had five successfully completed Potions in vials, and five more brewing. However, the Arthritis Potion had beaten her three times so far, and the fourth cauldron-full seemed intent on doing the same thing.

Her bravado had abandoned her once more, and she was now almost beyond reason. “Damn it! I just
don’t know enough to fix whatever it is I’m doing wrong.” There were tears of exasperation leaking from her eyes. It had been a confusing, emotional and exhaustive day. Hermione hadn’t thought to eat, so here it was a little past five in the evening, and she’d only had two cups of coffee and half a slice of toast and jam all day.

This time she found she truly was at the end of her tether. It never occurred to her that she was lightheaded because she hadn’t eaten, nor that she couldn’t see what she was doing because she was exhausted and there were tears streaming down her face.

Her hand hovered over the quickly spoiling potion and she placed the Aspen leaves into the mix. Only the ingredient she’d grabbed in her panic was Willow. As soon as they hit the mixture out of their correct sequence, it started spitting angrily at her. This startled her more and her brain went numb. All she could think was, *This didn’t happen last time.*

Hermione didn’t hear the door to the quarters open, or notice the quickly approaching footsteps. All she registered was the panic in her head. Suddenly, she heard violent bubbling, and her brain couldn’t cope anymore. Sobbing, she backed away from the cauldron, her head spinning as she slid down the wall.

Skilful black eyes assessed the situation quickly, and striding to the bench, he vanished the offending brew. He recognized each Potion’s identity and stage of brewing at sight, and walking from cauldron to cauldron, Severus saw to each remaining potion, all the while keeping an eye on the woman huddled, sobbing in the corner.

Finally, when he’d made certain nothing else would go wrong, the concerned master turned towards the woman collapsed on the floor. She was so caught in her own misery that she hadn’t even recognised his presence. Squatting in front of her, Severus gently grasped her by her upper arms and drew her to him. “You know, you may be the brightest witch of your age, my darling, but even you are only human, Hermione.”

Hermione’s rapid intake of breath between sobs told him her surprise, but it didn’t take long for her to revel in the offered comfort. Curling her hands into fists and clutching the front of Severus’ robes, Hermione buried her head in his chest and sobbed harder. “You know, you may be the brightest witch of your age, my darling, but even you are only human, Hermione.”

“Shh, love, don’t cry,” he encouraged, enclosing her tighter and resting his chin on the top of her head as he balanced precariously on his hunches.

“But everything’s gone wrong. Minerva and Filius need that Potion and I can’t brew it!”

Severus kissed her hair and chuckled at her ludicrous claim. “Although I can see ten perfectly brewed potions here as well,” he crooned into her ear.

This was all so surreal. Severus found his head spinning, having Hermione in his arms, along with the absurdity of this chain of events. Taking a steadying breath, his voice came out hoarse as he asked, “What was the potion giving you so much trouble?” It wasn’t quite possible to tell from the remnants of the ingredients what she’d been attempting to make.

“Arthritis potion,” her tiny and shaky voice replied. Drawing a shuddering breath, her voice still quavered as she whispered, “I didn’t think you’d come back,” and she snuggled further into him.

“Wild hippogriffs wouldn’t keep me away,” Severus confessed huskily, tightening his arms around her. Hearing her sigh and feeling his body starting to betray him, he desperately needed to order his
thoughts. The raven-haired wizard had been planning to ask Hermione to keep him company after dinner, but this was all so quick and unexpected. He didn’t want to scare her away with the strength of what he was feeling.

Severus had merely come down here after his meeting with Minerva to assess the damage to the classroom and see what was needed. Entering his familiar quarters, along with the overwhelming sensation of home that had enveloped him, he’d heard sobbing, and had, of course, investigated.

The last thing he’d expected to encounter was the woman who had been constantly on his mind ever since he’d said goodbye to her the previous evening. Getting to his feet, he pulled Hermione with him. “Well here’s what we’re going to do; you sit here.” He sat her at the desk, and conjuring a cloth, he wet it. “I’ll finish these potions, then that’s enough until later. You look exhausted; after you’ve had a decent meal and a rest I’ll assist you, and we’ll work out where you’re going wrong.” Hermione managed a shaky little smile, and nodded her head as he offered her the cloth for her face. She was craving his warmth back, but satisfied herself with the cloth at present.

“Good,” Severus proclaimed. Then turning away called. “Rook.”

“Sir!” The excited elf almost did a dance when he appeared, before remembering himself and bowing deeply. “Rook is being so happy to see you, sir. How can Rook serve his old master?”

“That’s quite enough of the old business,” Severus stated irritably.

“So sorry Master, Rook will be going to the kitchens and slamming his fingers most painfully in the oven door, sir,” the elf said earnestly.

“I would be much obliged if you didn’t,” Severus returned, flinching. He even heard a weak, snuffy titter of mirth from Hermione. Indicating the woman at the desk, Severus requested, “Please bring Professor Granger tea and a sandwich.”

“Yes sir, thank you, sir.” The elf was back momentarily with the requested food. He placed the items in front of the still disorientated and snuffling Hermione.

Severus had moved to her completed, cooled potions and was casting a discerning eye over one of the vials of calming brew. “You need to take this, darling girl, here” he held it out to her, then immediately went to one of her brewing potions to add the next ingredients. “Better?” He inquired, watching her as he stirred, Hermione nodded. “Very well, now eat!” His command made her shiver deliciously.

“I bet you haven’t had a thing since breakfast,” he scolded with a stern look. “If you had anything then.” She heard him mutter under his breath and had the grace to blush and give him a guilty look. “I’ll take that as a no then.” Shaking his head, he smiled. “You haven’t changed a bit, have you? You still get yourself entirely flustered and everything goes out the window.”

Hermione’s blush deepened, but she was gratefully munching her way through her sandwich, while Severus continued with his lecture. They had seamlessly fallen into comfortable and affectionate banter regardless of the ten-year gap, which had only seen them reacquainted last night.

Severus tended the next two potions while he talked and she ate. Finally he couldn’t stop the question. "What were you trying to prove here this afternoon, anyway?"

One potion was finished, as Hermione shrugged. “Poppy needs almost everything, look at the list,” she sighed. “She only let drop this morning that the last professor, she said with some distaste, wouldn’t brew for the hospital. I just thought I’d do as much as I could today, just in case the next
one refused as well,” Hermione added weakly. Severus’ expression became unreadable.

With the sustenance of food, Hermione’s mind was starting to click back into action. Although she was very flustered by this turn of events, she was extremely happy to see him. The Gryffindor witch watched him working in silence for a while, cradling her tea in her hands. Finally, her curiosity got the better of her, and blinking owl-like over the rim of her mug she asked, “What are you doing here?”

He immediately countered, “Well, I could ask you the same question. Imagine my surprise when I entered my new… err old quarters to find the delightful, but obviously exhausted Hermione Granger cowering on the floor of my private lab, while appearing to be running some obtuse Potions marathon,” he smirked at her.

Hermione stuttered. “Y-you mean you’re… but you hate children,” she asserted without thinking, before studying her mug of tea intently, uncertain if she’d said the wrong thing.

Severus laughed. Long gone were the days of the vindictive git who assassinated anyone daring to make a personal comment about him. He gave her a serious look then raising a raven brow he smoothed, “I find there are at least two reasons why I’m willing to submit myself to the dunderheads once more.” He saw Hermione blushing crimson, but listening avidly.

“One, there is an intriguing Arithmancy professor on staff here who fascinates me. I’m thinking closer examination of this witch may prove beneficial to us both.” This sentence was completed in a low purr that had Hermione flushing an even deeper shade of red while shivering in her seat.

“That’s very interesting,” she managed to counter shakily, even if her voice did sound about an octave too high. Watching as he completed the third potion, she cleared her throat, “And the second reason?”

He pursed his lips, then cocked his head to one side. “Oh, and an old friend was in need of a competent Potions professor, and I do owe her a great deal for preserving my sanity that awful year while I was the forced headmaster of what amounted to a concentration camp.”

Hermione couldn’t contain herself any longer and jumping out of her seat, rapidly closed the distance between them. “I’m so happy you’re back,” she gushed throwing her arms around his waist and nestling in close.

Severus chuckled, and enclosed her with one arm while he kept working. “I’m happy to be back if it means you keep doing this.” He watched a pretty blush spread on her face again as she coyly glanced up at him. Severus had never liked pink, but he now found himself loving this particular shade. Smiling in return, he squeezed her tighter.

The Potions master’s eyes became dark with desire; they hadn’t left Hermione’s while he spoke. Hermione suddenly realised what he was about to do, as his head started to dip. Reaching up her eyes fluttered shut. Their lips met for a delicious but all too brief moment. Hermione’s eyes remained closed, and his lips met her once more, this time softly coaching hers from their stillness. Severus brushed a path from her lips across her jaw to her ear, where she heard his hot breath whisper. “Does this development bother you?”

Hermione didn’t have to think about that. “No,” she squeaked, her knickers rapidly dampening again.

“Good,” his voice was a seductive purr.
“Why?” she managed.

Severus chuckled. “Because I intend to kiss you often… all over, and I was just making certain it was all right with you.” His pause had had the desired effect. He could smell her arousal; the heady musk was exquisite.

Their conversation had been a murmured one against Hermione’s cheek, and Severus now used this advantage to blow in her ear as he finished speaking. He felt her shiver and a tiny moan escape her lips. “O-oh y-yes, perfectly,” she stuttered.

“Excellent,” he stated, and pulled her possessively against him. He turned his attention back to tending the potions.

Standing nestled against the scratchy wool of Severus’ frock coat, Hermione’s mind was immediately flooded with what she’d seen in the images she’d poured over that morning, and her activities with her dirty bedroom mirror. Her blush was deep crimson and her knees went weak while her heart throbbed wildly in her chest.

Hermione fiddled with the buttons on Severus’ coat as she contemplated the thought that maybe, finally she might just have what everyone else, deliberately or not, had held over her. After what seemed an age, she chanced a glance from under her lashes at the man holding her. She found him intent on his work.

However, he seemed to feel her gaze and glancing down, smiled, making her knees go even wobblier. She instantly looked back at the buttons. Which made him chuckle darkly.

Any further contemplation was interrupted when the floo flared. The Potions master’s eyes narrowed as Lucius arrived in the doorway. “I just came down to see what you were up to, now I’m finished with Minerva. I can see you already have your hands full. I’d be happy to help you with that,” he grinned, knowing the effect his words would elicit. At Severus’ scowl, Lucius changed the subject and cackled, “Is there any whisky?”

“I’m sure, if there is, you’ll sniff it out. I should imagine the sitting room would be the place to look though,” Severus offered, snarkily.

Lucius took the hint and bowing his head, left for the sitting room, mumbling something about it not taking long for the bat to lodge up your arse again. This brought Hermione’s eyes back to Severus’ enticing dark orbs, and she wanted to grin at the death stare he was levelling at the back of Lucius Malfoy as the latter sauntered without a care into the sitting room. Hermione leant up on her tiptoes, and bravely pulled his head down for another kiss. Severus’ features softened in response to her gentle coaching, and willingly granted her request. “I personally think you’re completely charming,” she murmured against his lips.

Severus hadn’t really been upset with his friend, and Lucius’ comment hadn’t been meant to inflame, but Severus was still happy that Hermione had attempted to smooth him. “I thank you, my Lady,” he whispered in her ear. She giggled, as he danced her backwards towards the last potion, which he extinguished the flame under, finding it complete.

His hands now free, he turned his whole attention to her. Graceful, long fingers slid up into her mess of curls to hold her head steady while he softly caressed a row of kisses across her brow. Feeling her trembling in his arms, Severus smiled.

Hermione’s eyes were already closed when he lowered his lips to hers once more. Sensing his approach, she released a flustered gush of air, just before their lips met.
This caressed a currant of her sweet breath across his face, and he sighed. His lips hovered above hers. “Not too much for you?” His low rumble elicited a charming little squeak to the negative, and she shook her head minutely to make certain he understood, so Severus set about kissing her hungrily.

Now this was a revelation for Hermione, she’d never felt anything quite liked it, and quickly discovered she like it very much. His lips caressed hers, softly to begin with, testing and teasing. It didn’t take a genius to work out that she was completely inexperienced. But, he noted with pleasure, very eager to please. Severus decided however, after a few moments that further explorations needed to wait until they were alone, without a curious and probably randy Malfoy in the next room.

*The man certain is a slave to his desires, which in itself was not a bad thing,* Severus thought. However, he instinctively knew that what needed to happen at the moment, had to be without any input from Lucius; Hermione was his. If they decided to play with Lucius at some later date, then that’s all it would be, occasional playing.

Finally, he said, while planting kisses along her jaw, “I did promise I’d turn up to dinner to finalise agreements with Minerva, so they could have the contract drawn up, and you need a good meal.”

“Mmm,” replied Hermione, “but I kind of like this as well.”

Severus tightened his hold. “That goes without saying,” he kissed her brow. His hands now caressing languid strokes up her back. “Do you wish to freshen up before we go up?”

Nodding, Hermione sighed, and reluctantly left his arms. Glancing back at him as he turned to finish bottling the potions, she smiled and scurried out the door. Her only acknowledgement to Lucius, as she raced through the sitting room and into Severus’ bedroom, was a flustered squeak.

She was too fretful at the thought of him knowing what they’d been doing, and heard a knowing chuckle from the blond wizard, who was sitting casually in an arm chair, one ankle resting over the opposite knee. He saluted her with his drink as he watched her scurry past like a little dormouse, and none of this helped her composure.

Hermione spent some minutes in the bathroom wanting to pinch herself. How could things have changed so much in an hour? Grinning at her reflection, she was surprised to find this mirror seemed to be very ordinary. After splashing water on her face and patting it dry, the flustered witch released her hair from its clip and smoothing it with her fingers, remembered how Severus’ fingers had felt tangled through it.

If she concentrated really hard, she could still feel the echoes of his touch; she then pulled it back into as much control as she could. Hermione had long ago realised that her hair was actually quite nice. She’d grown to like her curls and now didn’t bother to try and straighten them. Finally, she went to the loo and cleansed herself thoroughly with a spell.

On walking back out into the sitting room, Hermione heard Lucius say to Severus. “… so I allowed the illustrious Headmistress to talk me into taking the position temporarily,” his eyebrow slid up to meet his perfect silky blond mane.

“Well, are you the new History professor?” Hermione saw both men turn to look at her; she hadn’t meant to blurt it out like that, and instantly went red again, but she would never have expected Lucius Malfoy to want to teach.

“Is that a question or an accusation, my dear?” Lucius chuckled.
“Oh, err a question. I’m sorry I didn’t mean to sound rude.” He saw her confidence start to falter, and quickly moved to rectify the problem.

“You didn’t,” he gave her a Cheshire cat grin. “Just think of it as my contribution to the glorious advancement of eager young minds,” he said with a dramatic, theatrical air.

Severus snorted. “Do you want to tell him or shall I?” he scoffed, encircling Hermione’s waist with his arms from behind; they both laughed.

“Oh shut up, you pair. Didn’t you say something about needing to be at dinner,” Lucius said, scowling.

“Mmm,” replied Severus, “I believe we did. You go ahead; we’ll deliver these to the Infirmary before we come.” He floated two crates from the lab, which he’d obviously packed while Hermione was in the bathroom.

As Severus helped Hermione on with her cloak, he couldn’t help the impulse to see that perfect shade of pink once more. “Did I tell you how much I like this coat,” Severus said and watched her colour rise again. He bent down and whispered in her ear. “How long have you had the fantasy of dressing like me, ay?”

Her blush deepened, and Severus pulled her hair aside to kiss her neck, as she mumbled something about seeing it online and liking it. “You’ll have to show me this Internet very soon, it sounds like a wonderful resource for items we might need,” he purred into her ear.

Her nervous little giggle made him chuckle darkly. “You are just exquisite; completely perfect. You know that, don’t you?” He turned her, placing light kisses on her neck and up to her mouth. Hermione plastered herself against him, and was soon sighing her pleasure into his mouth, which was music to his ears.

His lips felt so right and her whole world narrowed to what they felt like against hers. Severus ended their kiss when he felt her hips starting to buck lightly against him. *Damn responsibilities,* he thought hotly.
Looking around the empty halls as they left the deserted Infirmary hand in hand, Severus commented, “Are there no students here this holiday?”

“No,” Hermione said proudly, “each and every Hogwarts student, both future and present is now part of a functioning family.”

“How? Surely there are still war orphans?”

“Yes, but we’ve fixed that problem.” She glanced up to see him listening intently. “There are now three houses, one each in Londonderry, London and Edinburgh. The Creevey boys parent’s run the one in London,” Hermione mentioned out of interest. Severus nodded slightly in remembrance. “Each one was set up to cater for ten students, more in an emergency. So every single child finally has somewhere to go now over any holidays,” Hermione was smiling broadly.

“So you’ve set this up?” He was assuming by her demeanour and her history that this would be the case.

Hermione remembered only too well the pain and loneliness associated with being an orphan. After her parents had been killed at holiday’s end prior to her sixth year, every holiday after that was to be dreaded. You were either palmed off onto a Wizarding family or you stayed at Hogwarts; then in summer you had no choice but to leave.

She had long been determined that this scenario would cease. “Well,” she said shyly, “it was my initiative. However Kingsley, Minerva and Draco saw it through to completion, due to my position thanks to the Potter Weasley’s.”

Severus heard the seething animosity in her voice. Again, here was something fine she should have been praised for. Severus clenched his free hand. Those bastards are really going to pay once I’ve set the trap. He moved to place his arm around Hermione in unspoken comfort.
Hermione had obviously kept thinking as they walked. “I guess I shouldn’t care how it was set up, only that it has been.”

“How does it work with future students?” Severus asked, wishing there had been something like that when he was a child.

“We’ve adapted foster care laws from the Muggle system, but hopefully, with the use of protection charms, we’re removed the elements from them that allowed abuse.”

“That’s wonderful. You’ll have to tell me more about that later as well,” Severus encouraged as they walked through the doors of the Great Hall.

The only diners that night were Minerva, Filius, Poppy, Lucius, Severus and Hermione. When Poppy saw Severus coming through the doors, her eyes lit up and despite herself, she jumped up, pulling him into a bone crushing hug. “Don’t strangle me woman, I’m no use dead,” his velvet voice snapped, in apparent irritation, not moving to reciprocate the embrace, but still clutching Hermione’s hand possessively.

However, Poppy just grinned more. “It’s so good you haven’t changed,” she asserted gleefully, sitting back down. However, Hermione saw the tiny grin Severus was attempting to hide at the encounter.

She also heard Lucius sitting next to him say, “Your poker face isn’t as practiced as it used to be old friend. You’ll have to work on that,” and he cackled darkly when Severus graced him with a scathing scowl. “That’s better,” he responded, laughing harder.

Severus felt a hesitant hand pat his thigh, and he covered it with his own giving it a little squeeze before it could disappear.

Hermione knew telling Severus Snape that she thought his patent scowl - which hadn’t really frightened her since sixth year - was cute, was the wrong thing to do, so she remained silent. But he was cute, and sweet and thoughtful, with her anyway. In short, all the things he tried not to be. She smiled wistfully into her goblet of wine, as a thought popped into her head. *Of course maybe I’m biased.*

By the end of dinner, it was decided that Severus would have an assistant to help with the infirmary brewing. It became instantly apparent to Hermione who he had in mind for the position when he squeezed her hand. Their conversation about it consisted of him cocking an inquiring eyebrow at her, and her smiling and nodding. “There,” he said, “interview over; Professor Granger has just accepted the position.”

“Oh,” was Minerva’s only comment. She gave Hermione a curious glance and was treated to an unabashed grin, and several pieces of information fell neatly into place for the headmistress. This was a not wholly unexpected development and entirely welcome.

Pursing her lips in contemplation, said headmistress’ eyes took on a far away aspect, before saying, apparently out of the blue, “You know the quarters for the Arithmancy professor before Septima were always on the first floor. She moved them.” Minerva looked at Filius and Poppy, who both shrugged. “Mercy, I can’t even remember why now. Anyway my point is, this is the perfect opportunity to move them back if you so desired,” she suggested, before adding with very offhand flippancy, “You know, while the student body is acclimatizing to other changes as well.”

Hermione had grasped the significance of her suggestion, and trying to hide her blush, managed to get her brain to work. “Is that why I’m the only professor whose rooms are not aligned in some way
with their classroom?”

Minerva nodded, then smiling, she shifted her gaze to Severus. “The suite of rooms for the use of the Arithmancy professor side with the wall of yours, you know.”

“Indeed,” Severus deadpaned, quietly admiring a Gryffindor her attempted Slytherin air.

“The students are due back on the 6th of May, so that gives you five days to accomplish everything. Of course I will need a list of the equipment that needs replacing in the Potions classroom as soon as possible,” she drew breath, “and also the ingredients.”

“I will personally oversee that,” Severus asserted, cutting her off in all his glorious snarkiness, he couldn’t acquiesce to all of this perfect arrangement too freely.

“As you wish,” Minerva conceded, her mouth tilting up slightly to let him know she knew what he was doing.

Lucius had been very quietly listening throughout this whole exchange, and Minerva now addressed him. “The History of Magic position on the other hand needs no additional arrangements, and I’m certain you are wishing to spend as much time as possible with your family, so long as you’re in residence by the fifth,” she stated. “In the meantime, I will continue to advertise the position.”

It was Poppy who finally asked what everyone wanted to know. “So none of the applicants were suitable?”

Minerva exhaled noisily and rolled her eyes, but soon had everyone in stitches with her descriptions of the three applicants who had arrived hopeful for the History professorship. “The first one only appeared to be able to speak in Latin, which while novel, is far more annoying than old Binns was boring,” the Headmistress laughed as she spoke.

This left Hermione thinking, If only you knew, which led back to the thought she’d had that morning. Who were his partners? Then something dropped into place. Could Professor Vector have moved her rooms?

Her reflections were just progressing to wonder in more depth about this, when she heard Minerva say, “I don’t mind rumours when I know there’re not true, but if I can plainly see fangs, I’m certainly not going to hire that individual, especially if they can’t give me a failsafe guarantee of their feeding habits. It’s a school for Merlins sake!”

Lucius smoothed. “So you have no objection to Severus’ teaching persona per se?” His eye brow slid up as he turned to his friend. “Are you planning to revive the great bat of the dungeons routine?”

The opposite but equally enticing raven eyebrow sailed skyward. “Why, old friend; were you planning to steal it for yourself?” Playing the part to perfection, Severus thought for a moment, his eyes examining the ceiling and his finger tapping his pursed lips. Then chuckling he said. “Now let me see, you could be the silver phantom of the fifth...”

“There’s no need to continue, I apologise for insinuating you’re a bat, old friend.” Even though his voice was haughty, Lucius was smirking, as was Severus and a chorus of cautious laughter resounded around the table. Most had never seen this relaxed side of the two Slytherins.

“Well Hermione, I can see the remainder of the teaching year is going to be an interesting one,” Minerva laughed.

“Oh, it already has become that, Minerva,” Hermione said, sounding quite mysterious, and giving
Severus a tiny smile as he squeezed her hand.

It was soon after that that the comrades parted company for the evening. Lucius bade his new workmates a good evening and took his leave, returning via his rooms on the fifth floor to the Manor.

Severus indicated that he would send his elf for some personal belongings and spend the night here. “Well, we have a busy day tomorrow,” Severus rose from his chair and pulled Hermione’s out for her.

As they were walking across the entrance hall on their way, Hermione asked, “Would you mind if I had a look at the quarters Minerva offered me on the way. I take it the entrance is in the same hallway as the door to yours?”

He nodded. “No, by all means,” and he ushered her to the tapestry that covered the doorway to the corridor. The entrance, even though in plain sight, was covered by the wall-hanging and completely obscured from everyone but those who knew it existed. By allowing Hermione access, she could now see the door and a hallway where before there had been blank wall.

Severus was more than interested in getting Hermione moved closer to him. In fact, he had a screaming urge to ask her to move in with him right here and now, especially since he had been intending to split his time between here and the Manor to keep up with the business side of his work, and had spent all day before his arrival here preparing rooms there for them. But seeing her already confused and flighty mind, he thought better of the idea. Possibly giving her a little more time to learn to trust him wasn’t a bad thing, even if it did mean moving her twice.

Severus was drawn from his reflections by Hermione soft question. “Do you know what house Professor Binns was in?”

“Ay? ...Where did that come from?” Severus asked with a small chuckle.

“Well,” instantly turning red, “I found certain items while I was cleaning out his rooms.” She managed this in a whisper before losing her nerve in front of him.

“Items?” Severus inquired, his mobile brow sailing up yet again, as he opened the door to the vacant quarters for her with a tap of his wand. “What kind of items?”

Hermione was certain she was glowing in the semi darkness, even more when Severus commanded the lighting to increase. She couldn’t manage to tell him, and she was more than a little annoyed with herself for this and the direction of their conversation that she had initiated.

But Severus was having none of her embarrassment. “Well,” he smoothed, grinning. “I’ll say by your pretty blush that it is nothing dangerous.”

Studying Hermione’s bowed head a moment longer, he decided to test the waters. Leaning into her ear, his hot breath purred, “Could they have been items of pleasure, my lady?” Her answering squeak was all the confirmation the raven-haired wizard needed.

His grin became feral, but he managed to subdue his interest. “Ah,” he smoothed, “I see.”

He brushed his curled index finger along her cheek. “You blush exquisitely my love, even if there’s no need for it.”

Moving in ever so slightly before he spoke again. “Did these items, intrigue you perhaps?” Hermione was leaning into his touch as his finger journeyed around to her chin. Smiling, he watched her nod. “Oh, I see,” he breathed, and holding her chin steady, leaned forward a little and placed a
kiss on her lips.

Hermione was standing stock still now while he placed teasing kisses on her face. “So you were in charge of cleaning out old Binns' rooms were you?” He kept adding fuel to the fire; her answering squeak sent a jolt of pleasure to his crotch. “Did you offer the same service to my quarters as well?” The bright red and now breathless woman nodded. “So it’s you I have to thank for the beautiful roses in my new sitting room?”

Forced her eyes to meet his black ones, Hermione found mischief he hadn’t bothered to hide alight in their depths. “N-No,” she stuttered, “my elf, Loopy, brought them.”

“But you told the elf to place them there?”

Nodding she tittered, but soon sighed nervously. She wasn’t used to this much attention, and was feeling very nervy. She was now more than aware that her mirror was a pale comparison to the real thing. As aroused as her mirror could make her, this was all consuming. That voice, coupled with his finger stroking her cheek as he spoke, to the heat and fragrance wafting from his person. It all combined into a heady cocktail which left her breathless and... and utterly unable to cope.

As if Severus had read her thoughts, he stopped his attentions and placed his hand softly on her cheek to raise her eyes again. “You’re feeling out of your depth, aren’t you?”

Hermione nodded, and Severus listened carefully to what she started to say. “I don’t want to be, it’s just...” she instinctively placed her hands flat on his chest to steady herself as his hand kept her eyes on his face.

“You’re not sure?”

Gazing up at him willing him to understand; the Gryffindor witch forced her head to shake. “It’s not that either, just I’ve never had opportunities, I’ve never dared hope. You don’t know how long I’ve waited for...” she got flustered and changed tack. “I should be feeling shocked that this has happened so fast, guilty even, but I don’t. I’ve wanted you for so long, but I don’t know what to do...” her eyes searched his face again. “I’m not a proper woman, and I don’t know what to do... then I saw that book this morning, and my m-mirror, and the potion and... here you are.”

In the blink of an eye, it all became too much and tearing her face out of his caress, she stopped talking and gulped. She hadn’t meant to admit all that.

Severus had been letting her ramble in the hope he would gather information, which would help him understand where she was coming from. He’d almost stopped her when she’d began the last sentence, to contradict her, but now he was glad he’d waited a little longer.

He catalogued everything she’d said for later reference. She’d turned away from him, and he heard her sniff. Those bastards have really have done a complete job on her. He was seething under his ever present calm. But they’ll keep; my favourite part of the unofficial Slytherin motto is, 'Revenge is a dish best served cold'. Potter and Weasley are going to be freezing by the time I’m finished with them.

Severus took a moment to steady himself, he’d never felt the emotions that were presently coursing through him, and he wanted to tread very carefully to reassure Hermione that she was all right.

Putting his hands on her arms, Severus gently turned her. “Hermione, there’s no need for tears, love.”

As she allowed herself to be pulled against him, Hermione instantly felt safe. She revelled in the
sound of his voice rumbling through his chest.

Severus stroked her hair before he continued. “You’re confused, inexperienced and upset. I will never force you to do anything you’re not ready to do. But there are few women who are as much woman as you; just because you’re lacking in knowledge doesn’t make you less of a woman, angel,” he caressed a line of kisses across her brow. “You fluster easily, and that’s understandable,” he chuckled as his lips continued their exploration. “And blush beautifully, I like that,” kissing her cheek he brushed his nose along it. “But there really is no need to be so flustered, I will guide you. Now,” he said knowing they still had work to do. “You wanted to look at these rooms.”

Hermione lifted her head to look around. Severus saw her nod, but could plainly see a great tiredness descending on her. “Hermione love, will you trust me, allow me to direct you in whatever needs to be done?”

Hermione made an inarticulate noise that sounded very much like, “Mmmplique,” and winding her arms around his waist, finally allowed herself to give in, falling forward against his chest, utterly exhausted.

“Good,” he said rubbing her back for her. “Are you going to take the rooms?” She sighed and nodded against his chest. “Then let’s get your elf to work on the bedroom now, so I can tuck you in.” She lifted her head to protest, but his finger landed on her lips. “I’ll make the potion, you can help next time, and besides if you would like to assist me tomorrow, we’ll have a busy day. You need to get yourself organised here tonight, ay?”

“Loopy,” Severus called, shrugging out of his cloak, and still holding the sleepy Hermione with one arm, he likewise removed hers.

The elf’s ears stood erect when she saw her mistress against Severus’s chest. Severus recognised this as a sign of concern in the little creature. “Your mistress is taking these rooms in place of the rooms she currently occupies. Take care of it, starting with her bedroom, she is very tired,” he directed. Hermione stayed still, listening to him issuing orders and revelled in the feel of him against her, and the sound of his sonorous voice drew her deeper under his spell.

“Very good, Master of Potions, sir. Loopy is pleased to serve.” The elf left, to carry out his wishes.

It felt so good to finally relinquish control, Hermione couldn’t hold it back anymore. “Severus, I have waited so long to finally let you show me.” At this moment it was like ten years of exhaustion had just caught up with her. Having to be on her guard constantly was so tiring and surrendering that control to Severus, finally having someone she could trust with it, just saw her with no restrain left.

“I enjoy doing things for you,” he glanced down at her, before chuckling quietly and kissing her temple. “Relax and allow me to fix everything.”

Severus heard her sniff and suddenly the tears were back. “Oh Severus, I’m so bone numbingly tired, it hurts,” she sobbed. Using wandless magic, Severus vanished the covers on the sitting room furniture and started a fire. As he suspected the room was spotlessly clean, just unused.

Sweeping her up into his arms, he walked to the chair by the fire. Sitting, he nestled her in his lap. “Sleep my angel, I’ll hold you until your room is ready, and I’ll have an elf place a vial of Dreamless Sleep by your bed, should you wake and need it.” He was kissing away her tears softly, and she smiled even though her eyes were closed. “Then I’ll see you in the morning,” he whispered, “good night, dear heart.”

Hermione snuggled into his chest, all anxiety and that crippling weight in her middle suddenly gone.
She finally had someone she trusted completely. All she could hear was his voice, all she could smell was him; he was her home. “Good night, dearest Severus, thank you,” she mumbled sleepily.

It may have been his imagination, but he was certain he heard her breathe, “I love you,” but she was asleep.

The Potions master sat lovingly holding and gazing - almost in startled wonderment - at the soft and gentle woman, asleep in his arms. Finally, he tenderly placed her in her bed. He was just straightening from putting her down, when he heard a voice that sounded so much like him, it startled him. Spinning around wand drawn he looked into the half light. “She sleeps naked, and she’s a very beautiful sight,” the voice informed him.

Walking towards the sound, he realised it was her mirror. The face ghosted in. “Why do you look and sound like me?” Severus demanded in a quiet hiss.

The face glanced towards the bed and its sleeping occupant and chuckled. “She made me from the piss poor image I was, into this, and looking at you I can see what an amazing job she’s done.”

“Indeed,” Severus managed. This was a little bit of a shock for him. He suddenly remembered she’d said something about a mirror.

Seeing him apparently lost for words, the mirror offered almost slyly, “Go on, disrobe her, she loves being looked at, and she’s very beautiful. Her mirror knows all her secrets.” The face took Severus in, gazing back at the sleeping woman. “All the things she likes to do with herself, she does for me to watch, pretending it’s you.”

Severus felt his trousers tighten painfully. “You’re a very talkative mirror,” he admonished. “I hope you don’t tell anyone else my love’s secrets.”

“Never!” The mirror was obviously offended. “I’m only telling you because you’re the man she has been pining after for ten long years. I do not have the luxury of deeper emotions, so I speak plainly. However, I want you to know for certain that if you allow her to slip through your fingers, or don’t feel as she does, tell her now before this goes any further or it will be the end of her.” The mirror gazed over to her again. “I’ve become very attached to her, and that would be tragic.” The face met his original’s fathomless eyes. “Do you understand what I’m saying?”

Severus nodded, and the final missing piece fell into place. It was almost like this moment had been born of many years of his suffering, coming to terms with his failings, mistakes and upbringing.

The Potions master nodded. “I understand perfectly, but up until yesterday I didn’t know how she felt. I don’t wish to justify myself to a mirror, but I do feel the same as her. We have now some understanding of possession of each other.”

The face surveyed him calmly. “Well do as I ask, if you possess her. She’s exquisite; I assure you.”

“Can a mirror image be sexually aroused?” Severus asked suspiciously.

The image gave him a spicy grin. “I only possess the features she gave me, but remember, I’m her representation of you.” The mirror watched Severus’ features settle back to calm as he thought about this. “Remove her clothes my friend, let me see your reaction.”

“I think not. She can sleep in a night dress tonight.” With a swish of his wand, Hermione’s clothes slithered off as a night dress made its simultaneous appearance, neither Severus nor the mirror saw anything of her.
The raven-haired wizard raised an eyebrow to the mirror, and to his surprise, it smiled at him. “Yes, you’re right for her. You showed her respect.”

“Well I’m certainly over the moon that I have a piece of furniture’s approval,” the Potions master replied sarcastically. “I will only disrobe my witch in that way after I have disrobed her for our mutual pleasure,” Severus stated imperiously. Turning, he smiled as he kissed Hermione’s head. Right at this moment he didn’t care at all for his past sufferings if this was his reward. “You are exquisite. Your irritating mirror’s right there.” He kissed her again and looked back to the mirror. “What else has she made you capable of?”

“The mirror turned stony faced, having been denied his pleasure, even if he had agreed with Severus. If you won’t oblige me, then you can find out if she tells you. Good night,” it huffed and shimmered out of existence.

Severus chuckled wickedly. “I think you and I are going to get on famously,” he grinned when he saw the eyes reappear. “Good night. You must serve your mistress well if she created you to do so, because she is very talented.”

Severus was just turning away when he heard, “She likes being asked to display herself, and my favourite pet name for her is little dove.”

“Indeed,” Severus smoothed. He turned back to Hermione. “Good night, my sweet.” The woman in the bed sighed and squirmed as he gently kissed her lips.
Chapter Summary

After he leaves Hermione to sleep, Severus chats with Minerva, and plans how he's going to proceed. The next morning both occupants of the first floor hallway have unknown synchronicity in their routines, relieving of tension and generally getting ready for the day. This sees them leaving for breakfast at the same time, and bidding each other a heated good morning on the way.

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer:-
I neither own nor earn anything from this story. The plot and charmed mirror are mine, but everything else belongs to JK Rowling as Associates.

Leaving Hermione’s new rooms, Severus stared at the closed door a moment and sighed. He cast strong and convoluted wards before striding off up the hall. “Tempus,” he said as he walked. He couldn’t find it in himself at the moment to stalk, but he knew once the children arrived back at school it would come easily. Seeing that it was, in fact only nine p.m., he had time to make and deliver the needed potion before it was too late.

The quick walk to his rooms settled his thoughts into work mode. Skilfully collecting the ingredients from the store he set about preparing them, it didn’t take him long, before the brew was complete. While waiting, he’d spied the book Hermione had been working from that afternoon; it was still open to the page she’d marked. Casting an eye over the recipe she’d used, he shook his head. It’s no wonder the poor love couldn’t get it right; this book should be thrown out. Like so many others, it’s wrong, he pondered irritably.

He really had been hoping for a different outcome tonight. Maybe it wouldn’t have lead straight to the bedroom, but it would have allowed him to get to know his exquisite, yet enigmatic witch a little more.

Chuckling softly to himself, he thought of the mirror. Bloody cheek, telling me to undress her. Despite himself, he felt his cock stirring. This was made worse by what his vivid, and now randy, imagination provided for his enjoyment. Oh, to see what that mirror sees, lucky bastard. He absently rubbed his now straining erection. His eyebrow rose. I do know a spell; it would transfer… Mmm. No, that’s not the way to gain her trust. Besides I don’t think it will be long and I’ll be seeing the real thing. His hand increased its strokes. Bloody hell, I haven’t wanked this much since I was fifteen, he pondered. Releasing himself, he strode to the bathroom to relieve his problem before delivering the potions.

Freshened and strangely sated, Severus pocketed the two bottles of potion, then left to deliver them; first to a very grateful Filius, who insisted they share a glass of goblin made wine. Then using the old emergency password, he arrived at Minerva’s office. She greeted him by saying casually, “I really
should change that, shouldn’t I?”

“I suspect most people assume you already have. I imagine if the password hadn’t worked, I would have had to attach this to a rock surrounded by a cushioning charm and lob it through the window to you.”

Minerva’s eyes lit up, “Oh, Severus, thank you. How did you know?”

“You mean apart from the fact that you appear to be seizing up,” his eyebrow rose. She glared at him, and he huffed. “A little birdie told me, Minerva,” he stated playfully.

“Well, Merlin bless the little birdie.” Minerva looked behind him expectantly. “So where is she?”

“I was able to settle her; she’s currently asleep in her new bedroom.” Severus took a deep breath, exhaling it slowly in what sounded like a sigh. “How long has she been that tired, Minerva?”

The headmistress sighed in response and indicated that he should sit. Handing him a Whisky, Minerva started speaking, “It seems like she’s been running on high alert for so long now, she doesn’t seem to know how to turn it off anymore.” She took a sip of her drink. “If you’ve found a way to allow her to unwind...” she suddenly looked horrified. “Oh Severus, I am sorry, I didn’t mean to imply anything.”

“You can mean it however you like,” Snape said, almost distractedly. “I’ve nothing to hide any more. Besides, we’ve known one another too long. You already know, don’t you?”

The former Transfiguration professor sighed and watched him contemplatively for a moment. “As usual you’re right. I don’t need to tell you to take care of her because I know you will. But you must know that her experiences have left her very fragile.”

“Funny,” Severus sighed, “I’ve just had a similar conversation with a piece of furniture.”

Minerva gave him a quizzical look, but his only answer was a smirk. So she took a sip of her drink and eyed him, wondering if she should go on. She decided he needed to know. “She’s loved you, you know, probably since before your trial. That old coot,” she pointed with her thumb at the currently empty portrait of Dumbledore, “used her shamelessly when he discovered her secret,” Minerva’s lips tightened.

“For the greater good,” Severus mumbled sarcastically, saluting the words with his glass. It didn’t take long though before he was sitting almost morosely, eyes trained on the same drink.

“Yes, that always was his excuse,” she took a noisy breath of exasperation. “Although, to give him his dues,” she explained carefully, “he has been trying to corner Potter and Weasley for the past decade to set them straight.”

Snape snorted derisively, a hint of the old bitterness rising to the surface. “Don’t be so bloody naïve Minerva, what he did to all of us was reprehensible. The only reason he hasn’t set the idiot duo straight, is because it hasn’t suited him to do so.”

Hearing the hurt in his voice, Minerva ignored his jab and nodded in sad agreement, but decided to head back to her original line of thought in the hope of avoiding the Potions master’s considerable, and - she thought painfully - completely justifiable ire. He had been used, more cruelly than any of them. “I didn’t know anything about her feelings until the day after you left.” A glance and a lifted eyebrow encouraged the elderly witch to continue. “It had been her habit to centre herself every morning down by the lake. I used to watch her closely. She was under a great deal of strain, even before the nastiness with her former friends started. The day after you and Lucius left, I watched her.
She arrived as she always did, but there was something different in her stance. Her hands suddenly went to her mouth, and she collapsed into a sobbing heap.” Minerva cleared her throat noisily, and took a sip of her drink. “I got there as quickly as I could. She was inconsolable. I had Hagrid carry her to my quarters, and I called Poppy. The poor girl was completely broken,” Minerva sighed. “Her grief just kept pouring out of her, everything that had happened to her in those preceding two years.”

Minerva eventually looked at Severus’ horrified face, and guessing what he was thinking said, “I don’t think your leaving was the actual cause of her breakdown, it was merely the trigger for it.” She watched him take this on board, and calm a little. “But it was how I found out about you, and many other things that had happened to her the year she was absent from us. In the end, to stop her crying out for you, Poppy placed her in an induced coma.”

Minerva levitated the bottle to the table. “Finally, she woke one day calm enough for us to talk to her.” She paused to refill their glasses. “When her friends returned, I thought they would support her. Instead, they turned on her viciously, and apparently for only having served justice in freeing you and Lucius.” The Headmistress had tears in her eyes. “I’ve always wondered if it was more than that though, I have to questioned if even they are that bigoted,” Minerva said with venom. She suddenly cleared her throat, and after a small time of silence. “We almost lost her four times through that first year,” she said quietly. “There are only a few who know that.”

Severus was terribly shocked. “This is so much worse than I suspected. I skimmed thoughts out of Weasley and Potter’s heads last night, and that was bad enough. Actually, come to think of it, the intent behind their thoughts was very unsettling,” he pondered quietly, shaking his head. He didn’t say anything, but what he’d just thought had sparked his curiosity and begged further investigation. Right now though, his gut had just collided with his boots, and he felt awful. He was only consumed by one thought, which he voiced almost mournfully. “Why didn’t I see?”

“I don’t think you were capable of doing so at the time.” Minerva, for her part, was stunned that he was taking this so calmly. “You were coming out of the other side of possibly the worst year of your life. You couldn’t have fallen in love if you’d tried, or probably even recognised it for what it was. I think Hermione understood that, which is why she let you leave without saying anything. I don’t think it filtered into her brilliant brain what she’d done until the next day when she arrived at the last place she’d seen you.”

He considered his position a moment, scrubbing his hand over his face. Merlin help me, I feel like crying. That lovely woman had suffered so much. After digesting everything Minerva had told him, he commented softly, “It just makes her far more precious to me, Minerva.” He drew a shuddering breath, the emotion threatening to engulf him. “She’s amazing,” he acknowledged more to himself, but still loud enough for his companion to hear.

Minerva shook her head; his uncharacteristic declaration rattled her to her toes. “You’ve changed Severus; your demeanour has always been strict, but forced and uptight. Now it’s an internal calm that truly is peaceful and serene. You’ll be good for her.”

Severus snorted, “Well, not being torn apart by two equally maniacal idiots does tend to pacify a person, you know.”

“Oh Minerva, what Gryffindor clap trap,” he scoffed irritably.
Minerva shrugged and smiled, knowing he’d taken it on board.

Severus really needed to go somewhere quiet to process all this. “Thank you for the drink Minerva, I’ll wish you a good night now.” He rose and headed for the door.

“Good night, Severus. It’s good to have you back.” The elderly witch heard him mutter something cynical under his breath as he left, which she couldn’t quite hear, but smiled at it anyway.

Deciding on his once familiar track around the castle before he retired, Severus started walking. He had much to think about. So much had happened in twenty four hours. In a decade of absence he had rarely thought of Hogwarts, apart from thanking any deity that had caused it that he was shy of it. However, as soon as he’d seen it last night, he’d realised that this castle was the only home he’d ever known, and the old woman he’d just left was more of a mother to him than his own had ever been. Although, he guessed, that wasn’t really fair; his own had never had the chance to be a proper mother.

Reaching his favourite contemplation post, he rested his shoulder against the stone window frame and cast his eye around the lake. His gaze followed the path of the silvery moon, from the frigid depths of the lake, to the again cloudless pitch black sky and its resident diamonds. He eyes finally came to rest on the place Minerva said Hermione had collapsed.

He smiled wistfully; he may have managed to forget Hogwarts, but he certain hadn’t ever forgotten the woman who had saved him. At first, after the war, he’d resented her because he’d still seen her as the insufferable know-it-all student. Slowly he’d come to rely on her and her perseverance on their behalf. Eventually, before he’d been acquitted, he’d thought of her as a friend, something at the time he’d had very little experience of.

He sighed. If he really was honest with himself, he had cherished a Grande Passion for her for a long time. However, he’d expected her to be taken when he returned, snapped up - although he had always hoped, not by a Weasley - to merely become a baby making machine with her brilliance and spirit would surely have been a crime. But regardless of what had happened, he knew her fire was still in there somewhere, just waiting to be ignited once more.

Severus sighed, his breath leaving him in a white cloud now the temperature had fallen with the night. So how do I proceed? He muttered a warming charm before thinking, I need to marry her, make her secure. He nodded. Yes this is the right decision, even if I am teaching dunderheads again to make it all right.

He pondered more on that point. This is my opportunity to rectify things, I can teach now without the burden of prejudice. This time I can be fair to everyone. He thought of the sleeping woman. Oh, how I hated having to belittle her and push her away when she was a student. She was so brilliant, but if I hadn’t... his thoughts were becoming maudlin. I’ve hurt her just as much as anyone. The Potions master stared out across the tranquil scene. The dear love didn’t hold a grudge though, and what did she do? She fell in love with me. He shook his head and smiled, a real proper smile. That bloody mirror of hers. I can’t wait to see exactly what she displays to it. I have a fair idea I’ll enjoy that show immensely, he chuckled.

Severus stood there deep in his own thoughts for some time. After that he finally found his stride, and set off back to his rooms. Although -- it has to be said -- that his patented prowl didn’t work as well without the billowing teaching robes sailing along after him. Oh well, next week would solve that problem also.

Settling by his fire, Severus called Rook. “Go to my rooms at Malfoy Manor and bring some
personal items and a change of clothes.” Severus thought a moment. “Yes, that’ll do at the moment.”

“Very good, sir,” the elf squeaked.

The Potions master smiled at a very satisfying day, and yawning he cast off his current attire as he walked to bed.

When he pulled himself from his luscious dream, Severus found his hand already curled around his impressive morning erection. Stroking himself softly under the covers, he called for his coffee and hand still on his cock, he slid out of bed. Pissing feels incredible when I’m in this state. He glanced at the bathroom mirror, chuckling to himself.

Still teasing his proudly jutting member with soft, skilled fingers, he wandered back into the bedroom. Tilting his head to one side, he observed the big heavy oak dressing mirror standing obliquely to the corner, next to the wardrobe. I wonder what else Hermione’s mirror does? He stood absently watching his reflection, his hand still moving as he watched. Well there’s obviously no one in this mirror, or I would have garnered a comment by now.

He wandered back and climbed into bed, grabbing his coffee and leaving unfinished the delicious tingle of his carefully achieved level of arousal to enjoy while he drank his coffee. He would deal with it later in the shower. Agenda for today, he pondered. Order the Schools Potions supplies, and I need to buy Hermione something a little special I think.

In the bedroom down the corridor, Hermione had just woken after the best sleep she’d had in years. She became aware that she seemed all wrapped up in something. Looking down at herself she laughed, sleepily. “That dear man, he’s got a lot to learn hasn’t he?”

“I did try to tell him you slept deliciously naked, but he got all snotty and told me he wouldn’t disrobe you without your permission,” the mirror sounded most indignant, even if he was actually proud that his original had refused.

Hermione laughed joyously. “Is that so?” She abruptly stopped laughing and sat bolt upright. “He knows about you?” Her eyes narrowed angrily. “What have you told him?”

“Now, now, little dove,” the mirror placated, his eyebrow raised. “He wasn’t upset. He actually liked that name for you, by the way.” He gave her a wink, and Hermione bared her teeth. “He said he thought that he and I would get on famously, and he was impressed with your spell work.”

“Oh.” Hermione’s ire deflated a little, although she was still indignant that the mirror had revealed itself to Severus. She looked around. All her belongings had been moved, and the only thing missing was the man up the hall. Sighing, she called Loopy, “Coffee, please.”

As she wandered back from the toilet, she pondered the huge bath in these rooms. Smiling, she glanced towards her mirror; she saw the face quickly shimmer away when he spied her looking. Walking over, she purred in a breathy voice, “Oh. Mirror?”

Hermione didn’t want anyone else to know about her most intimate secrets. But she would have told Severus eventually anyway, and the mirror had saved her from having to explain the whole ‘my most intimate companion at the moment is a mirror’ concept, from scratch.

She cocked an eyebrow and smiled as an unusually stony countenance appeared, inquiring sullenly, “Yes, mistress?”
Hermione waited until she knew she had his attention, and standing with her legs well apart, reached down to her knees and slowly started bunching the material of the night dress up. As she got to the top of her thighs, she glanced back to the mirror. His dark orbs were concentrating intently on the slowly appearing flesh. “I’m sorry Mirror, I shouldn’t be upset with you.” She was now lifting the material up exposing her breasts to his view. Then she threw it off over her head, dropping the garment on the floor beside her and taking the last step towards the flat surface. She leant lovingly up against the cold glass, making herself shudder at the sensation, and then rubbed up and down the flat plane seductively.

The frame work of the mirror had deep curves carved around it. Lifting her leg gracefully, she hooked her knee over the wood of the frame as she muttered a cushioning charm. “Lick me,” she whispered huskily.

The mirror obliged without hesitation, although he murmured almost plaintively, “I thought you would only want Severus now.” The silky quality of the voice made her shiver as much as the tongue did, doing what had been requested.

Hermione groaned, “Don’t be silly, you’re actually part of Severus. I’m sure we can find ways to include you.” Clinging to the top of the frame, she moaned, “Oh yes, hold it just like that,” the mirror obliged and Hermione started flexing her hips, thrusting the tongue into herself in slow long strokes. She groaned once more when it stiffened into her favourite toy. Closing her eyes, she allowed the sensations wash over her as she thrust it in and out. “Oh that’s right,” her voice descended into a long ‘oh’ of pleasure, and she shuddered her release.

“You know over the years, I’ve grown very fond of you,” she murmured to her most desired play thing.

The mirror offered a spicy grin, “Oh I hope so, little dove.” The image cast his eyes over her naked body - now sagging leisurely by her leg against the glass - in a very approving manner before continuing. “You really do have the most exquisite little pussy I’ve ever seen, I’m glad I’ll get to keep seeing it.”

Hermione barked a laugh as she unhooked herself. Looking down at the piece of her anatomy in question, she stroked it and said, “Thank you. But exactly how many have you seen?”

“I’ve been a mirror in this castle for over five hundred years,” the countenance shivered and grimaced. “Some truly horrible ones.” He was avidly watching her parting her own to examine it more thoroughly in the mirror. His eyes were attempting to see up inside her as she did so. “Just beautiful,” he repeated.

Hermione tsked in sympathy, “Are you feeling better now?” She had dropped to her knees in front of her image and was stroking the face.

“Most certainly, little dove,” he gave her a rare smile. She couldn’t resist, leaning forward Hermione softly kissed him. Finally getting up, she wiggled her arse at him and climbed back into bed. Sitting purposefully on top of the covers, she watched the face taking in her body as she drank her coffee, legs still spread wide for her own pleasure. “Beautiful,” she heard him murmur once more before the image disappeared quietly back into the mirror.

Hermione almost choked up, she couldn’t wait until it was Severus lying on the bed with her murmuring such things. I will definitely invite him here tonight. Now, what do I need to do today?

Both occupants of the first floor hallway showered simultaneously, not that they knew this. Severus thought, as he thrust with abandon into his soaped and curled hand. I’ve never thought of charming
an object to relieve sexual tension; she certainly is a talented little darling. Looking down in concentration at what his hands were doing, he breathed to his soaped and rock hard member, “I can’t wait to feel her hot little pussy milking you,” and his soaped hand pumped harder.

Hermione for her part while in the shower was a little less active, having already started the morning in her usual fashion. Magic is so amazing. Smiling she glanced around herself. I think this shower recess is bigger than my old one too. She was currently soaping up in long languid strokes.

Their unknown synchronicity then saw them exiting their front doors at the same moment as well. Both heard the others door close and their eyes met. Images of their so recent tension relieving activities danced in their heads, and Hermione’s whispered words sprang forth, loudly in the stillness. “I missed you when you left last night,” she asserted softly, her feet were now moving of their own volition towards him. “Thank you for looking after me,” her gentle voice called to him like a siren.

“It was entirely my privilege.” His eyes were roaming her form as he moved to meet her.

Their first touch exploded inside both of them like firecrackers and breakfast was forgotten. “I don’t want to be without you again,” Hermione managed before her words were swallowed by his mouth.

“You won’t be,” Severus heard himself affirming, momentarily breaking their kiss. His voice contained far more conviction than he thought possible for such a sentiment. “I’ll not spend another night without you,” he pledged between more heated kisses.

His murmured velvet tones were going straight to the apex of her thighs. Hermione was in bliss. His tongue sought entry into her mouth, which she eagerly gave and their kiss deepened. All too quickly reason fled, and Hermione was pulling him so she was pressed against the hallway wall.

From somewhere Severus pulled some restraint, his mouth working its way round to the sweet spot on her neck. “We better get to breakfast.” He hated himself for saying such a thing, but knew it was the right course of action for the moment.

She kept kissing him, “Mmm,” she said, eyes were heavy with pleasure. “Can’t we skip it? I want you,” her groaned words and grinding hips even surprised her.

“Darling girl, I will not consummate our relationship against a hallway wall,” Severus said, definitively pulling away enough to catch her face in gentle hands. Hermione was about to object when he stroked her cheeks with his thumbs and continued, “You, my most beautiful creature, will not be taken like this, just because we were overcome by the moment.” Severus had moved back in to start planting kisses on her face. “You will be made love to in comfort and luxury for both our pleasures,” his breath and lips on her neck were driving her crazy. “Repeatedly,” he crooned into her ear, taking a raspy breath as he heard her groan of frustration. “Patience, my flighty little dove, is definitely a virtue, and patience you must have,” his purred words held such promise. Hermione found herself even more aroused, and couldn’t help it, she groaned when he called her the mirror’s name for her.

She blushed hotly as she inquired, “I believe you met an acquaintance of mine last night after I was asleep?”

“Yes. A most intriguing two dimensional individual, who looks and sounds exactly like me.” He happily watched her blush deepen beautifully.

Hermione saw his appreciation in his eyes, and had to ask, “Did you like him?”

“Very much.” His eyes were locked with hers. “I can’t help wondering what additional features he
may have been provided with?” His eye brow cocked in question.

“Well… um, I believe I would enjoy explaining and showing that you very much,” she gave a long look up and down the hallway. “But, even if this is a private hallway, I don’t want tales.”

“I whole heartedly agree. Well in that case,” he offered her his arm. She moved forward on very shaky legs. “Let’s get this day underway. We have a great deal to organise,” he continued.

“Oh?” Hermione questioned absently, “Minerva said we had until the fifth.”

Severus’ eyebrow rose jauntily. “My dearest woman, between the two of us the potions will only take two days at the most, even with frequent recreational breaks,” he smoothed seductively. His voice was currently pitched lower than she’d ever heard it and coupled with a significant look that she had no trouble deciphering his meaning. This of course made him chuckle at the resultant blush that stained her cheeks from his words.

“Oh,” she gasped, “you’ve got it all planned.” Then glancing up at him, she smiled, “Of course you have,” and her smile grew.

Severus had started ushering her towards the tapestry. “To the nth degree my angel; remember, we only have until the fifth,” he laughed as he pulled her closer. “You approve of my plan?”

Hermione’s head nodded furiously, “Oh yes, very much. I can’t wait to get to know you better.”

“Funny, I was thinking the same thing in the shower this morning.”

They’d stopped again. She looked longingly up at him in the half light. “Me too, well actually a little before my shower,” she breathed hotly.

Severus chuckled, “Breakfast,” he commanded, and she giggled as she started walking again.
How To Upset A Demigod

Chapter Summary

Severus and Hermione read about what Dumbledore's portrait said at breakfast, when the mail arrives it contains many wishes. Later they arrive at the Leaky Cauldron on their way to Diagon Alley. They meet Lucius, and stop for a drink. After his audience with Dumbledore's portrait Harry Potter is livid. He sees the friends and confronts them. A fight ensues and Hermione is injured, Severus retaliates, and it is all recorded by some Daily Prophet reporters having a quiet meeting. What will happen now?

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer:-
I neither own nor earn anything from this story, it is written purely for the fun of working with such wonderful characters.

It was another beautiful morning, the sun was pouring in the through the open great entrance doors as Severus and Hermione emerged from their hidden hallway. “Well, first thing this morning I must visit Diagon Alley,” Severus was saying as they discussed their days.

“Oh, me too,” Hermione cut in.

“Excellent we will go together.” They were entering the doors of the Great Hall, too busy trying not to smile at each other to notice the looks being cast their way as they approached. Hermione was well aware that the way Severus treated her was their private business, and no one else needed to know. She waited for him to show her how he expected her to act.

When they were seated, Minerva handed Severus the Prophet.

He looked at the front page, Hermione leaning in to see over his elbow. Today’s headline read,

Albus Dumbledore speaks!

“About bloody time,” Severus muttered to a stunned Hermione. She took the paper and started to read aloud,

'Sitting in his portrait in the Minister of Magic’s office yesterday, Albus Dumbledore finally broke his silence regarding the incident involving the split of the Golden Trio ten years ago. It has to be questioned if the further escalation during the Anniversary Ball on Saturday evening is the course of his unexpected admission. The former headmaster of Hogwarts informed this reporter that Hermione Granger had been on a covert mission for him during the last stages of the second Voldemort War. In addition to her other duties, she had been working under an unbreakable vow to him, to complete a mission and keep it secret. The task she had
undertaken involved clearing the way to freedom for the spies the former Hogwarts headmaster had utilized in this engagement. It was unfortunate, he went on to say, that her involvement had not been met with more support from her peers --or for that matter-- Wizarding Britain. The fact that the two men, who had both bravely danced with death as spies for The Order Of The Phoenix, were not given more recognition for their efforts was also unpardonable. After all, without people such as Severus Snape, Lucius Malfoy and Hermione Granger, Harry Potter would never have had the opportunity to rid the world of the menace that was Tom Riddle.

It is rumoured that The Minister for Magic, Kingsley Shacklebolt, escorted Ronald Weasley to Dumbledore's portrait on Saturday evening after the incident at the Anniversary Ball. Furthermore, and that he then summoned the head of the Aurory, Harry Potter, sat them both in front of the portrait for the former headmaster to enlighten them to the facts, concerning this case...'

Severus watch Hermione continue to read quietly, observing her once more stressed exterior, he mused, Damn the old Bastard, why couldn’t he have done this years ago?

His thoughts stilled as her eyes met his. “Why now?” It was a simple question.

Severus sighed and covered her hand under the table. “Because he has to be accountable, he knows Lucius and I are back, and he has to appear transparent.”

“Oh,” she gushed in a staccato burst of air. “That’s what I thought.” Hermione studied her empty plate contemplatively, “Do you think he knows the position he put me in?”

The raven-haired wizard knew the answer to that question would bring her no joy. He looked to Minerva, who tried for quiet resignation when she spoke. “Does it really matter, dear? After all,” the headmistress stated cautiously, “it’s all in the past now.”

Hermione glanced over at her mentor. “I guess you’re right.” She shrugged, but was looking back at Severus and squeezed his hand as his thumb caressed her knuckles under the table.

Severus was glad of the distraction when the morning mail arrived. It appeared that Wizarding Britain had been very busy over their breakfast, as literally hundreds of owls soared into the Great Hall. Eventually when the rain of letters and packages didn’t stop, Severus cast a shielding charm over Hermione and himself. Some of the packages that bounced off his charm broke open, and suddenly there were several love hearts hovering in the air around them with declarations of love and marriage for both of them, which made both professors, turn their lips in matching scowls and growl.

The other occupants of the table had to stifle their amusement when the obviously disgruntled pair rose at the same moment and started blasting holes in the offerings. “Bloody cheek,” stated Hermione, then looking at Severus she said, “It’s either famine or feast. What are we going to do to stop this?”

“We’ll give it the response it deserves,” he turned to blast more packages, “we ignore everything we don’t recognise.” Once they had disposed of all the foreign packages they both sat again. Severus poured Hermione a cup of coffee, then one for himself.

It was then that the pair became aware of the eyes watching them. Minerva cleared her throat, “Is there anything that either of you would like to tell us?”

The couple glanced at each other then turned to look at the rest. “No, I don’t believe I have anything to say,” Severus stated imperiously, “Do you, Professor Granger?”
“No, Professor Snape.” Hermione graced the table as a whole with an innocent look. “I can’t think of a single thing that might be of interest to anyone. Would you pass the toast please, Professor?”

“Certainly, Professor.”

So began a merry dance. Severus having hinted to Minerva, in a moment of weakness the night before, of some feelings for Hermione, and the Headmistress knowing that the Arithmancy professor’s feelings had remained unchanged, put two and two together. However, it seemed neither of them was going to admit anything now, in the light of day. Nevertheless, the elderly witch thought, *Time will tell.*

Hermione hadn’t entered Flourish and Blotts for many years. She had instead frequented the tiny bookshops on the fringes of Diagon Alley. The management of the well known bookstore had sided with the so called *Saviour* of the Wizarding world, and had been made very plain to her that her presence in their shop was no longer welcomed.

She had never understood why, because she was the only one of the three who had spent every last galleon she could save on books from their humble establishment. *How had they put it? Yes that was it. We are a family bookstore, Miss Granger.* At the time Hermione had had no conception of what they meant. Now, she understood it only too well, and she was starting to plan her revenge. The only thing that would have made it more perfect was if Lucius had been there as well.

She and Severus had apparated to the Leaky Cauldron, and much to her surprise, had immediately encountered exactly the person she had just been thinking about.

“Good morning to you both,” Lucius drawled, in his typical aristocratic style. He motioned for them to sit with him, “Some shopping?” His inquiry a casual one as his eyes took in their laced fingers and proximity to each other. “I see the pleasing change of dynamic is now public.”

Severus held his steady gaze. “I believe you may be correct,” the Potions master acquiesced, smiling at Hermione, although he immediately changed the subject. “Did you receive much post this morning?” he asked, his eyebrow sailing up.

Tom, the barman, hovered until they gave him their order. Once he’d left, Lucius leaned forward and answered, “My dear man,” his countenance displayed his almost feral grin, “enough to sink a battle ship,” he glanced a moment at Hermione, “If I may say so, there were some very interesting suggestions contained within it too.”

They had been sitting quietly for a while, just talking, when both men noticed a sudden change in Hermione. Severus felt her tense. then shuffle over.

Lucius saw the same action, and immediately looked around for the cause.

“Please let’s leave,” she pleaded.

Both men were now scouting the room, and then their eyes landed on what had to be the cause of her upset. Stalking towards them was Harry Potter, with his wife and three children trailing along after him. Severus turned to the obviously frightened Hermione, “We are on either side of you, don’t let him worry you.”

“Severus is correct, we will support you, my dear,” Lucius added, quietly patting her hand.

The three friends stood from their table in the utter silence that had descended and waited, as did the rest of the pub, eager to see what would happen.
They didn’t have to wait long, as Harry, acting like he owned the place, stormed over. Ginny could be heard timidly trying to dissuade him.

Potter pointed at Hermione. “I want to talk to you, Granger,” he growled.

“Well, I have no desire to speak with you Harry,” Hermione stood quietly and spoke with all the calmness she could muster.

“Well, you are going to talk to me. How dare you. I don’t know what you and these two did to get Dumbledore to say all that garbage,” he looked at Severus and Lucius like they were something he should wipe off his shoe, “but you’re not going to get away with it.”

“Harry come away, please Harry,” Ginny pleaded quietly while pulling on Harry’s arm.

He shoved her callously out of the way, and she over-balanced. Starting to topple, Ginny let out a startled cry. Lucius could see her desperate face as she tried to stop herself falling on her little daughter. He made a grab for her arms, and Severus bent down and snatched the now terrified little girl from behind her.

Harry hadn’t noticed the Prophet reporters having a quiet meeting, and before anyone knew it, everything had all been captured on film. Harry still didn’t see them as he came forward throwing more words, drawing his wand. “You bastards, get your filthy hands off my family.”

The two men had been making certain that Ginny and little Lily were all right and ignoring his tirade. Hermione was straightening the little girl’s clothes and reassuring her that Mummy was just here, and no harm had been done. Lucius was apologising to Ginny for grabbing her so firmly as he settled her in the chair he’d vacated. They were all so busy that none of them saw Harry as he turned on Hermione. “You bitch; this is all your fault. These bastards should be rotting in Azkaban, not accosting my family.”

Severus handed Lily back to her mother and was just turning towards the irate man, when Harry’s wand arrived in Hermione’s face. “This is how it felt when you did this to me, Mudblood,” he spat at her and sent a point blank stinging hex at her.

Both men heard the sizzle of a hex flying through the air, and Lucius just managed to get a shield around the shocked woman before it hit. However, because it was so close, some of the spell still penetrated, and Hermione staggered blindly into Severus, hands over her face with a squeal of pain.

The dark Wizard had had enough. Clutching Hermione possessively to him with one arm, his other hand fisted, and without a second’s thought, it connected brutally with Potter’s face - the Prophet reporters continuing to snap photos during the entire encounter.

The next voice they heard was a high pitched male voice. The voice sounded very much like Harry used to when he was younger, and they realised it was trembling with anger.

James Potter stepped forward, his arm around his young brother in comfort. After watching the whole spectacle, he could no longer keep quiet. “Dad, how could you?” He looked at his father sitting on the floor, knocked senseless, his glasses smashed and blood pouring from his broken nose. “You’ve just caused Mum to fall and almost squash poor Lily - not to mention the baby - and what you’ve done to these three people with your accusations.”

Harry was still very disorientated, but gazed at his son in disbelief. Fury lined every crevice of his face, but he was still too dazed to do anything about it.

Ginny rose, panicked. “No Jimmy, please don’t say that. Come here, I’ll take you all to Uncle
George.” The redhead kept casting fearful glances around.

Severus was trying to cool Hermione’s stinging face. She had buried her head in the crook of his arm not wanting to be seen with her face all swollen and distorted, and was trying valiantly not to cry. “Let me see, love; I’ll cast a cooling charm on it.”

Lucius came to stand in front of his friends, protecting them while they were occupied. He was listening avidly to the young boy speak, as was the gathered audience, including the Prophet reporters.

James looked at his mother. “No Mum, enough is enough. I asked Uncle George and Uncle Bill separately about what happened, and independently they both told me the same thing. Dad’s wrong; Professor Granger did a good thing. Neither of these men deserved anything but praise, and I have seen no evidence here today to change my opinion. This feud has gone on too long and we are all over it, it’s only Dad and Uncle Ron who seem to not get it.” The young boy looked at his mother, pleading for her to say something.

It was the sound of the quietly shaking middle child, Albus, speaking that finally made James lower his eyes. “Please, I want to go to Uncle George now; please Mum.”

Ginny was plainly frightened, and in an unsteady voice said, “Come here, both of you.” She still had Lily on her hip, and wrapped a protective arm around Albus as well, while James stood in front of her.

Lucius watched her glance (with little compassion) from her still senseless husband to Hermione, obviously taking in the red and swollen welt distorting her former friend’s face as she tried to hide it. She was about to move closer when his hand arrived on her arm. “Perhaps not now, Mrs. Potter. It may be best to just leave,” Lucius instructed.

Ginny nodded her understanding. “I’m sorry,” she said, her lip starting to quiver. “Thank you for catching me, Mr. Malfoy.”

Lucius merely nodded, but said gently, “I think you better go and concern yourself with your children’s well being.” Lucius didn’t call her by name again because he’d seen her flinch the first time he’d used her title. The aristocrat glanced in Potter’s direction, and then turned to James, “How old are you son?”

“Ten, sir,” James replied evenly.

“Ah, the same age as my grandson, Scorpius.” Lucius turned to the still jumpy Ginny. “Let’s hope this generation doesn’t make the same mistakes, ay, my dear?”

Ginny’s smile was small and quivering. To tell the truth, she still just looked plain scared, and Lucius was fairly certain it wasn’t of him. But she managed a reply even though her voice broke doing it, “No, Mr. Malfoy let’s hope not. Good day, sir.”

“Good day, my dear.” He bowed politely.

Lucius turned to Severus and Hermione, “Bring Hermione to the Manor. The shopping can wait until later.” He followed them to the pub’s floo, still watching Ginny tap the bricks, her wand hand shaking violently. He saw her move herself and her children safely into Diagon Alley and he turned away.

Giving Potter another look, Lucius found him getting unsteadily to his feet. The blond wizard watched him reaching for his wand, his face a mask of rage, and Lucius felt his own wand hand
twitched.

Severus felt the shielding charm erect, and a glance saw Potter advancing on them once more. Knowing it could only end badly if he engaged him again, the Potions master activated the floo, whispered a discrete spell to protect Hermione’s injured face, and sent her into the open floo.

Hermione felt like her face was on fire, but she followed Severus’ instructions with her eyes trained on the floor since she could barely see out of them anyway. He beckoned her to leave with a hand on her elbow, murmuring, “We’ll be there momentarily.”

Hermione had enough presence of mind to move away from the floo as she span out onto the heath in Lucius’ rooms, before collapsing in a sobbing heap. The tears hurt her more, but she couldn’t help it.

Back at the Leaky Cauldron, Severus and Lucius were being set upon by an angry Harry Potter. Both men knew better than to retaliate, so just kept deflecting his volley of hexes and curses. Finally the Potions master drawled, “I grow bored of this little game, Potter. I have better things to do.” The friends glanced at each other and strengthened their mutual shield, Severus turned away and span out of sight in the still active floo. He was quickly followed by Lucius, who locked it as he entered.

As Lucius span away he heard a yelled, “Cowards,” followed by an explosion, and the scene behind him went silent. The blond wizard would have laughed out loud had he not been travelling by floo. Floo travel was undignified enough without getting a mouth full of soot as well. The blond wizard’s mirth stemming from the fact that Potter, like Weasley on Saturday evening, had just cut his own throat and given them evidence enough to hang him.

Sobbing plaintively in a heap on the floor, Hermione felt gentle hands lifting her and cool fingers quickly removing her cloak then loosening her high neck line. Severus could see her face was hot and stinging again from her tears as he carefully lowered her to the lounge. “Shh little darling, don’t cry,” he smoothed. He removed his protection spell and added another cooling charm on top of the first one. “Your tears will only sting the burn, angel,” he warned. Conjuring a cold cloth for her face, he gently dabbed at her tears. “Accio Burn Salve and Pain Potion,” he stated, and a bottle slapped into his hand quickly followed by a vial.

Severus had administered the potion and was carefully applying the cream to the now shivering witch when Lucius arrived beside them. Swiftly transfiguring his cloak into a blanket for Hermione, he tucked it around her. “I’m so sorry I couldn’t have blocked more of that, pet. But I didn’t want the shielding spell to bounce off your pretty face and cause more damage.” He was standing behind the lounge holding her hand, stroking it as Severus worked.


“It’s starting to settle now, angel,” Severus said, stroking her hair as he watched the salve do its job. Hermione nodded and tried to smile at them, but her face was still sore and her lip quivered.

“I’ll get lunch organised for later,” Lucius stated, getting up. “You rest there, pet. I need to steal Severus for just a moment though.”

Hermione was reluctant to let his hand go, and Severus assured her he would only be within calling distance.

“This whole business is perverse,” Lucius stated as Severus now removed his own cloak and they were out of ear shot. “I remember the day Hermione put that Stinging Hex on Potter, it saved his
worthless bloody hide. If the Dark Lord had gotten hold of him, not to mention what the charming Bella could have done…” he sneered, but his words drifted off as he gazed back to Hermione laying with her eyes closed. “Do you think she’s all right?”

Severus was silent a moment, then said, “You know, I had a chat with Minerva last night,” the dark wizard was watching his love carefully, “Hermione had a complete break down after we left. Lost it totally. Minerva put it down to stress and…” Severus stopped talking.

But Lucius pushed, “And, what?”

Severus looked at his friend for a long time. “Regret,” he finally said.

Lucius’ eyes opened wide, “What, that she helped us?”

“No, no nothing like that,” Severus took a deep breath, “That she let us go away,” he finally said sadly.

The intake of breath Severus heard was very sharp. “Do you mean to say she loved you even back then, and she didn’t say anything?”

“Apparently,” Severus said, as he gazed lovingly at the lounge for a moment. “The abuse of her two idiot friends didn’t start until after her breakdown, and as you can see by today’s experience, they’ve broken her; she’s very fragile at times now.”

Lucius had been fixing drinks while listening to Severus speak. He finally patted his friend’s arm. “Well, now we are here, and I think both her tormentors have had a taste of what will happen to them if they persist, and better still, too many people have now seen the abuse for them to hide it.”

“I believe you might be right,” Severus replied, flexing his still painful hand.

“We are going have to be careful though, there are children involved, and the bespectacled idiot doesn’t seem to care about them. Did you hear what his son had to say? I was impressed.” Severus didn’t reply. “However, it’s also bothering me... do you think Potter is an abusive spouse?”

“I suppose it’s possible; he always has let his temper get the better of him. Look at the state he got himself into this morning, over nothing.”

Bill Weasley’s a professor at Hogwarts too, isn’t he?”

Severus nodded, “I think so, why?”

“I must check something. Pardon me, I wish to speak with Minerva.”

Lucius left for his study after saying, “Severus, take Hermione to your rooms, make her feel better. I think she’s waited long enough, don’t you?” He handed Severus two champagne flutes with something green like a Midoré mix in a pitcher, which the Potions master looked at dubiously, making his friend chuckle.

“Mmm, indeed,” was the dark wizard’s thoughtful comment.

“Lunch is in two hours,” Lucius didn’t wait for a reply doubting there would be one.
You're All I've Ever Really Wanted

Chapter Summary

Hermione's face is now fixed, and Severus takes her off for some private time, just the two of them.

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer:
I neither own nor earn anything from this story, it is written purely for the fun of working with such wonderful characters.

Severus wandered back to Hermione, deep in thought. His friend had posed some uneasy questions. Gazing down at his love’s now peaceful countenance, he noted that her sweet features looked almost back to normal, and she appeared to be dozing.

This was proven false though, when she smiled faintly as she felt the lounge dip. “Hello, my love,” she sighed, opening her eyes.

“Are you able to sit up?” Smiling more brightly at him, Hermione pushed herself into a sitting position in answer to his question. Severus happily returned the expression and handed her a glass. “Here. One of Lucius’ special lunch time mixes.”

Hermione was about to take the glass, when her eyes landed on his bruised knuckles instead. “Oh no, Severus darling, your hand!” Hers instinctively wrapped around his, one taking the glass and putting it on the table, the other guiding his black-and-blue, swollen knuckles towards her.

“It’s nothing, love, just the price of standing up for my witch,” he asserted, putting his own glass down.

Hermione brought his hand to her lips, and she softly kissed his knuckles while whispering a wandless healing spell. “Well it means everything to me,” she said when she’d finished. “You mean everything to me, Severus.”

Severus leant forward and gently captured her bottom lip between his. He felt Hermione shiver and pull him tighter against her, effectively trapping her between him and the lounge. Tightening his hold on her, Severus deepened the kiss just for a moment before shifting their positions, allowing his hungry mouth to devour hers. He soon felt the same urge for resolution he’d felt earlier. The one that had him pinning her to a corridor wall.

Hermione moved, without breaking their kiss, so she was straddling his lap, rhythmically flexing her hips against him. Her rubbing became more insistent, and he heard her voice in his ear, almost begging, “Severus, take me to your room, I want you,” she moaned, rubbing her core against his already prominent erection.
“My thoughts exactly, angel.” He didn’t need to hear that offer twice. Placing his hands on her backside, Severus slid himself forward on the lounge. His mouth worked its way round to her ear, and he murmured. “Wrap those beautiful legs around me, little angel.”

She groaned against his neck and scooted further up against his now desperate manhood. Hearing his hissed breath in her ear, only made her groan louder.

Without another word, he charmed the drinks to follow them and lifted her from the lounge. “Come with me. You’re right; it’s holidays and we deserve time to ourselves for whatever we chose to do.”

He walked with her to his bedroom, warding the doors heavily. Hermione pulled back and gave him a puzzled look. “Lucius, he loves watching.” Severus felt her shiver at this development, before he placed her on the huge bed. The drinks taking themselves to the bedside table.

Hermione watched him toe off his boots and then climb on after her as she scooted to the centre of the bed. “He does, does he?”

She definitely sounds intrigued by that possibility. Severus raised an eyebrow. “He most certainly does,” he gave her a tender kiss, “but I want you completely to myself right now, so he can go find his own fun.”

Severus sat back on his heels beside her, facing her. Leaning in, he stroked her cheek, “How does your face feel now?”

“Perfectly normal, and very kissable,” she murmured, a little coyly.

He laughed, “Does it now?”

Hermione nodded. “I love your laugh, it’s such a precious jewel of sensation.” Coming forward off the pillows, she captured his face in her hands, seeking his lips more firmly this time. “My mirror told me this morning that you wouldn’t disrobe me last night,” she gifted him with another kiss, “thank you for respecting me.” Planting a row of kisses towards his ear, she whispered, “The mirror is very cheeky; I bet he even tried to convince you?”

“He did, and I was sorely tempted, but I told him the first time I saw you naked would be for our mutual pleasure,” he kissed her for some moments, “and not just a sneaky look for your bloody randy mirror.”

Hermione laughed merrily. “Yes, I guess he is that.” She ran her finger over his bottom lip. “But he has served me faithfully over the years,” she took an audible breath, “I want you to know that I would have enjoyed knowing you had seen me naked, even if I was asleep.”

Her heated look went straight to his groin. “The mirror told me you would.” This time they kissed more heatedly.

“Severus, would you like to undress me now?”

“Most certainly, I would like that very much. I think layer by layer, slowly revealing you,” he purred, his kisses between words, designed to inflame her further.

It appeared to be working, her chest was heaving, and her breathing was already ragged. “Oh yes, I would like that very much... I want your eyes on me,” she all but groaned, laying back against the pillows to give Severus access to her. Hermione stroked his face and he kissed her hands as she did
Severus started on her jacket. “Even though the colour of this coat is definitely too Gryffindorish, it still has my many buttons.” He was slowly undoing each one. “Why do you like coats like this and the one you wore yesterday?”

Hermione’s answer was plain. “Because they remind me of you, my darling. Maybe it’s strange, but I felt at least some link with you while wearing them.”

As she stroked his face with both hands, Severus watched her expression change to frightened. “I was starting to think I’d been wrong to let you go, I couldn’t stop…” she cleared her throat, “You are the only man I’ve ever wanted.” Her gaze was earnest, but laughing breathily, she tried to make light of it, continuing with, “Does that make me obsessive?”

Severus had undone all the buttons and was helping her out of it. “No, angel, it makes you special.” He was kissing each piece of flesh he'd exposed as he undid her blouse. “It makes you single minded,” his mouth worked its way around to her ear, “and it makes you mine,” he breathed into it hotly. All the buttons were undone, and he pushed the silk open with knowing fingers. His breath caught in his throat at the sight of her red lace bra. Hermione arched into his touch as his hands ghosted over the contours of her breasts.

“Skirt next,” Severus insisted heatedly, his eyes sweeping her body hungrily. He was already standing, his hand offering to assist her up. Swinging her legs over the side of the bed she stood in front of him. As he undid the zipper, Severus was kissing and licking her exposed neck and shoulder. The skirt fell to the floor, and she heard him gasp as she took a step away from him. Her equally lacy red knickers were French cut; she also wore black stay up stocking and red stiletto heels. His eyes took in her long, slender legs, and followed her hands as she smoothed them over the perfumed thighs and up to push her breasts together.

Severus’ breath caught in his throat before he willingly buried his head between the eagerly offered mounds, his mouth following the contour of her bra. “You taste divine,” his voice rumbled against her skin. Her head fell back pushing her breasts further forward as her hands trailed up into her hair. Hermione moaned when he took the hint and pushed the lace cups out of the way, exposing her deliciously heated, rosy tipped flesh to his eyes and mouth. Both her hands quickly came back to hold his head in place when he took a nipple into his mouth and suckled.

Rolling the pebbled flesh around with his tongue, he heard her moan breathily, “I’ve never had anyone’s mouth on my tits, it feels wonderful.”

“No, little darling it is wonderful.” By this time her bra was gone completely, and Severus was lathing both cherry tips alternately with his tongue and fingers.

Sliding one hand down her belly to cup her, he moaned around a mouthful of breast. “Oohh, you’re so wet,” he said as one finger strayed under the lace.

She groaned, “Please, I want you to see.”

“Then lay on the bed,” Severus’ voice was husky and demanding. “Have you ever had a man’s tongue in you pussy, Hermione?” He gazed hotly on her as she presented herself on the bed, legs wide apart for his enjoyment.

“Only the Mirrors,” she groaned her hands caressing her own breasts. “But I always imagine it’s yours.”
The sight of her writhing on the bed while fondling herself, and then this admission had, his cock so hard he was surprised it didn’t break right out of his pants. “Ah, so I learn my alter ego has a wicked tongue then,” he said as he rubbed her through her knickers. “I will watch him lick you out very soon, my naughty little love.” She shuddered violently. “Off with these,” he commanded and the soaked red lace vanished. The sight of her naked, dripping slit had him quickly divesting himself as well.

“Oh, little angel, your pussy is beautiful.” Severus knelt on the bed between her legs just gazing, much to Hermione’s joy. Finally, he ran his index finger the length of her, and watched her puckering wildly, pushing her legs open as wide as they’d go. The first swipe of his tongue on her had her squealing her pleasure. He could tell she was so aroused she wouldn’t last long. He attached his mouth to her and sucked hard. Keening, she screamed as it sent her over the edge. Delving his tongue in as far as he could and feeling her delicious, tight velvet walls clamping around him, he licked her honey eagerly. In return, she howled at his ministrations, trying to thrash on the bed, but his strong hands held her in place.

*My God, it was never this good,* Hermione thought before her brain started to shut down completely.

He couldn’t help asking, “Is having *me* lick you better than pretend, then?”

The vibrations of his voice against her most intimate place were delightful; she panted and moaned trying to answer him, but words were lost. Severus chuckled wickedly, and all coherent thought disappeared as he sent her --howling and screaming-- into a second, more intense orgasm than the first, so powerful was her reaction, she saw stars.

This time Severus crawled up beside her and sat watching her, bouncing his rock hard shaft in his hand. “Tell me, my angel; have you ever had a cock in your lovely pussy?” His liquid silk voice enveloped her completely, as his hot eyes ate her up. “Talk to me my darling minx, tell me your secrets,” he continued, when she failed to answer him.

Hermione finally got her breathing under control and sitting up, started stroking Severus’ shaft lovingly. He encouraged her to explore it. Finally she said, “No, I’ve never even seen one before. You’re so big, it’s beautiful, so velvety soft, yet so hard.” She glanced up and took in his dark laughing, eyes watching her stroke him. “I’m not still intact; I accidentally got too enthusiastic with my dildo, but I’ve never had a cock.”

Severus was moved by her honesty, and shuddered as she kept stroking him languidly with one hand while holding his tool in the other, a little like you would a cat. He hissed a breath of delight, closing his eyes to savour the moment when her hand eventually slipped down to explore the softness of his heavy sack. “It feels so soft and delicate, like silk.” Her eyes were wide, and her pupils so dilated the cinnamon of her iris’ were almost gone. She traced one finger through the thatch of black hair and up the trail on his stomach. Suddenly she asked, “May I suck you?”

“Of course you may,” he sighed, forcing his eyes open to watch her lovely lips come closer. They closed around the head of his dick, and he hissed a breath through his teeth, heaving a rough sigh. “That’s right, little love, suck him, suck him hard.” Severus took himself by the base, watching her head bobbing up and down his length. “That’s my girl; Merlin you’re perfect.” She was in between his legs, and he was sitting up against the pillows, looking past her there was a mirror. “Hermione get up on all fours, there’s a mirror behind you. Spread your lovely legs and show me how you finger your pretty pussy while you swallow my cock,” he groaned, in a raspy voice.

Hermione groaned in the back of her throat and did as he asked. Her fingers sunk to her silky folds from under her belly, and soon she was sucking him with her mouth, moaning as two fingers slid in and out her dripping hole. “Oh fuck,” Severus groaned, “that’s it angel… oh fuck, suck me all the
way in.” His hips flexed on each of her down strokes. He forced his eyes to stay open, watching her avidly in the mirror. “Aahh, perfect, my sweet, lovely little dove,” he groaned throatily.

Suddenly he rose up, tearing himself away from her mouth. “Ah,” he groaned, “I can’t stand it.” He accioed his wand and whispered a contraceptive spell before placing it on the table and neatly rolling her onto her back in one liquid movement. Pushing her legs wide open he rubbed his cock up and down her slit. “Are you ready for me, angel?”

Hermione felt the head enter her body. “Severus I’ve been ready for you since my sixth year, make me yours finally, my darling.”

Hermione screamed in ecstasy as Severus fully seated himself in her in a single stroke. He held still a moment to allow her to become used to the feeling, and then started moving. Each time he thrust, Hermione thought she would die from happiness and literally yelled her appreciation to him. Soon she was moving to meet him each time.

“I’m not going to last long,” he panted hotly in her ear, “you’re just too delicious.” He was right; it only took seven more strokes and they both came with a strangled cry of bliss. However, Severus made good use of those seven thrusts asserting, “You’re mine,” over and over. Hermione reciprocated each time with pleasured groan.

Finally, they lay together in a heaving tangle of legs, with Hermione’s curly head on Severus’ chest. “It’s all I’ve ever wanted, you know,” she murmured, turning her head, she quietly littered his chest with kisses. “You’re perfect Severus. You’ve made love to me just how I imagined it would be. Mirror and I have often discussed it,” she said, finding one of his flat nipples, and lathing and teasing it with her tongue, making him groan, tightening his arms around her.

“Hermione, you are absolutely perfect. I love you,” his voice was resolute and brimming with emotion.

There was utter silence as she stilled her ministrations, her gaze lifting to his before she answered, “I love you, too,” and there were tears trickling down her cheeks, “oh, so very, very much,” her emotion completely overcoming her.

Deftly rolling them both, Hermione found she was under him. Rising to take his weight on his elbows, Severus took her face in his hands and let his mouth start to calm her. Placing tender kisses in her hair, he said, “Shh, it’s all right my angel, shh.” After asserting his claim once more, ”I love you, and you are mine,” his mouth found hers and they kissed hungrily.

Sighing, she opened for him immediately, and his tongue explored the warm cavern of her mouth, sliding gracefully together with hers in wild abandon. Like two dancers in a furious pas de deux, her moans of pleasure into his mouth, vibrated directly to his groin.

After their kiss, Hermione smiled at him, caressing his face. ”That’s all I’ve ever wanted, my love.” Looking deeply into his eyes, she slowly started exploring Severus’ scar striped back. She’d seen it in the mirror and wanted him to know it was okay.

She felt him tense, and kept her eyes locked on his face. Her eyes were wide open, and shining with tears again. “Do they disgust you?” His question was only murmured, as he turned his head away.

She began giving him tender kisses. “No, darling, they make me sad that you’ve suffered, but they also make me love you more.”

Severus kissed her again with more passion than he knew he possessed. This woman was accepting
him, scars and all, and his kiss in response was laced with the tenderness he felt.

The Potions master had never allowed a partner to touch his back before. He was not in the habit of disrobing completely in company either. The only other person who had seen it was Poppy Pomfrey in her capacity as a healer. Although he was thankful that she had shown discretion in the matter and never mentioned it to anyone. He refused to spoil his mood by remembering the other person who knew of his punishments in the line of duty, but had continued to send him for them. Hermione was different, he was certain that this was his soul mate lying under him, and again he wondered, How could I not have realised that until yesterday? This time it was right, this was for keeps. Hermione had suffered terribly, thankfully not in the same way as him, but she needed his total honesty.

His mouth met hers fiercely, both open wide, tongues duelling intensely. He could feel her hips grinding up against his quickly inflating shaft, but he wanted to play a bit. Working his wicked mouth around to her ear she heard, “Finger yourself again for me, I love watching your delicate fingers sliding in and out of that comely little hole.” Hermione moaned then shivered. Immediately writhing cat like on the bed before sitting up, she watched Severus jump to a kneeling position between her legs, and shuddered, hearing his growl and seeing his dark eyes trained exactly where she wanted them. Throwing her head back in ecstasy, she plunged her fingers into herself.

Severus watched mesmerised as her slight digits moved in, out, in, out. The squelchy noise they made was incredible, this coupled with the fragrance and her delighted groans, made him ache to be inside her once more.

After a little while her eyes met his once more. She began talking dirty to him, and he almost came just hearing her. “I love having my cunt spread wide open for you to see.” In between her words, she was panting and sighing from the action of her fingers.

“You’re a minx, my sweet little love,” his voice a mere purr, making her laugh gaily.

“Do you like watching me?”

“Yes, very much, I’ve never seen a witch who revels in her exhibitionism quite like you do.” She grinned at him. “This is so much better than anything I’ve ever witnessed in Lucius’ chambers,” he moaned, now stroking himself firmly.

“Oh, that’s so erotic… Severus I’m almost there; what else do you want me to do?” Reaching forward, he took her fingers away and fastened his lips around them. The sight of him lathing her sticky fingers with his tongue made her eyes smoulder. Allowing his tongue to come all the way out and carefully lick, he said, “Use my cock instead,” he commanded, around her fingers, and hissed as he felt her small hand encircle his girth, pull him into place then start sliding the head up and down her swollen rosy lips.

“Severus,” she moaned after a moment, “I need you inside me again.” She’d already positioned him at her entrance.

He pushed her back against the pillows, and took his now wet and slippery organ in hand before slipping back on top of her and claiming her lips again. All he heard as her mouth was engulfed by his was her husky moan of “I love you,” and he started sliding into her.

Severus kissed her and growled as he slid home. Suddenly words were flying out his mouth. Something he never thought he’d hear himself saying. “Marry me.”

Her answer was lost in the passion of another wild kiss as he curled his hands up under her and around her shoulders. Then pulling back, he thrust in harder.
They both stilled momentarily, but he knew he’d done the right thing. She felt better around him than anyone ever had or would, it was perfect. He started moving once more.

“Yes, oh yes, Severus,” Hermione answered, and moaned his name in long guttural sounds with each of his movements. “Faster.. arh harder,” she groaned, and had him slamming into her. When she was tottering and trembling on the edge of the abyss, her groans and whimpers became more insistent.

Severus’ murmured words sent her over, "Let go, little dove, I'm right here with you," he panted breathily into her ear. He felt her muscles contract and heard a low shriek that turned into his name as she came, clamping down so hard on him he had no choice but to follow her over the edge. Grunting his satisfaction in a string of oaths, his seed was thrust deep into her warm body once more. Not wanting to collapse on her and crush her, Severus managed to land beside her and roll, pulling her into his arms and up on top of his heaving chest. Once his breathing had returned to normal, he chuckled. “I just can’t get enough of you, one hour of frantic love making and my heart asks you to marry me.”

“Well, does your head want me to marry you as well?”

“All of me wants you to; will you?”

She grinned, “Yes, oh Severus, yes.” They lay there tiredly, kissing and caressing one another. Eventually Severus summoned the quilt and they dozed lightly for a while, Hermione had never felt safer or more content.
The Delicacies Of Slytherin Invitations

Chapter Summary

This chapter deals with lunch and their afternoon of shopping in Diagon Alley, and we start to see what shape revenge is going to take. Hermione manages to get her own back on Flourish and Blotts and a generally good (and sometimes teasing) time is had by all.

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer:-
I neither own nor earn anything from what you recognise in this story. (So sad)

Severus knew when it was lunch time because a scroll popped into existence and smacked him briskly on the head. “Shit,” he gasped sleepily, instinctively reaching for his wand in response. However, his hand paused as his eyes focused on the scroll, and he knew what the problem was. “Lucius,” he muttered, making Hermione sigh and open her eyes. He opened it and read as his lady blinked sleepily in his arms.

Dear Cruel Bastard,
Lunch is ready. I think I have heard you having quite enough fun; fancy warding the room and not silencing Hermione’s exquisite moans and squeals of delight. That was very mean spirited Severus. Regards
Thwarted and horny host.

Vanishing the note, Severus laughed. Hermione sighed next to him, and he moved so they were facing one another. “Hello beautiful,” he said, kissing her tenderly.

“What’s so funny?” Hermione asked between kisses.

“Lucius,” Severus replied. “He’s organised lunch.”

“And that’s funny?”

“No,” Severus cackled, “our host is just a little miffed at me,” he said, with an innocent angel expression on his face. The more Hermione looked at him suspiciously, the wider and more feral the grin became. “Oh all right, I may have, perhaps forgotten the Silencing Charm.”

“Oh Severus, that was a little unfair; is he really upset?”

“No, just miffed. He does it to me all the time. He knows it’s only pay back, and he better suck it up.”

“Oh,” Hermione said knowingly. “Slytherins,” she rolled her eyes. “Do we have time for a shower?”
“Cheeky,” he scolded as his hands started roaming over her giving her a sharp smack on the bum and making her laugh. He rubbed it better, gifting her with a quick kiss. “You stay right there a minute.” Severus slid out of bed and almost strutted over to a chest of drawers.

Hermione watched him with a grin on her face as he retrieved a small velvet box and walked back, his equipment at half mast.

“What are you grinning about?” he inquired, smiling back.

“The view,” she replied, waggling her eyebrows.

He cackled at her, “Nice is it?”

Hermione gave him a smouldering look. “As sexy as hell, actually.”

“Indeed,” he smiled widened, despite himself. “Would you mind terribly getting out of bed?” He offered his hand, and positioned her once she was standing, “Just here if you please, in all your glory.” Taking her left hand he gracefully slid down on one knee. “This is my Grandmother’s engagement ring. I would be proud if you would wear it.” Severus extracted the white gold ring from the box and slipped it on her finger. They both watched as it sized itself and then enveloped their joined hands in snakes of golden light.

“Oh, just like an unbreakable vow,” Hermione gasped.

“Similar, but without the sinister side effects,” Severus commented, kissing her hand as the ribbons of light slithered back into the ring.

Bringing it up in front of her face, Hermione gasped, “Severus it’s beautiful... emeralds and diamonds. It’s perfect, thank you.”

His gaze was roaming her body again. “You’re so lovely.”

Hermione went to kneel down with him, but he held her upright and pulled her to him, his lips planting wet kisses on her stomach. She enclosed his head in her arms and heard him sigh, “Merlin help me, I want to eat you again, you’re so addictive.”

His mouth was hovering against her mons, the tip of his tongue just teasing the top of her slit. She snickered and pushed herself closer. “Oh, no you don’t, cheeky; we have work to do.” Giving it one firm kiss, lathing it with his tongue Severus felt fresh wetness spreading between her thighs, but he slowly rose and embraced her. “I love you, Hermione,” and he claimed her mouth in a fiery kiss, which left her panting when it was over.

“And I you, my own,” she replied nestling against his bare chest.

Suddenly he lifted her off the ground and sat her on the side of the bed. “On your stomach minx, it time to reply to Lucius,” he growled playfully.

Her eyes watched him conjure parchment and a self inking quill. Crawling back onto the bed with them he knelt next to her. Steadying himself on one arm, he leant forward and whispered a spell. Hermione felt the bubbling of a cleansing spell, the sensation made her groan, as Severus’ mouth arrived on her licking, kissing and nipping her bottom and thighs. This had her opening her legs wide and lifting her backside off the bed, pushing it towards him. “Good girl,” he crooned, blowing on her exposed rosy flesh and making her squeal and shiver. He didn’t keep going, much to her disappointment, and finally rested the parchment on her and started to write.
Dear frustrated and Horny Host,
I am writing to you from my new favourite lap desk, Hermione’s naked derriere, which is still wet from my kisses. I owed you the Silencing Charm for the Renaldo twins. We will be out shortly after we have indulged in a decadent shower.
Regards
Cruel Bastard.

Rolling it up, Severus tapped it with his wand and it disappeared. Hermione’s bell like laughter resounded around the room as she saw what he’d written. “Oh you think that’s funny do you, little minx,” he gave her another playful slap on the backside. “Come on, into the shower.”

The chestnut-haired witch squealed playfully and rolled on her side propping herself up on her elbow. “You know, I wouldn’t have minded you being even more suggestive if you’d wish to.” He cocked an eyebrow at her. “After all it is Lucius, sex god extraordinaire we’re talking about here.”

Hermione watched as Severus looked at her. She could see him contemplating what she’d given him permission to do. She pulled him down into a kiss. “He’s your best friend,” she continued, punctuating her words with kisses. “You could say anything to him, and I wouldn’t mind.” She leaned in and whispered in his ear. “In fact I think he might enjoy the details.”

The Potions master’s face settled into a devious expression. “Are you suggesting I tease Lord Lucius with your ample charms?” His index finger was running down her throat and onto a breast, circling a nipple. His mouth twitched into a smile. “When did you become so Slytherin?”

His low voice set a ripple of goose bumps loose, up and down her spine. He laughed, and whispered, “What if he wanted to see those charms for himself?” Severus felt her quiver again and smile naughtily at him. His finger continued its solo journey down her body, and his mouth arrived on her neck.

Hermione’s head lolled to one side, allowing him to kiss and lick her neck while his finger arrived in her heat to pleasure her. She hissed in pleasure, “I’m yours Severus. I love you completely,” she asserted. Raising one leg to give him more access, she hooked her hand behind her knee to hold it up. His mouth was moving down to her breasts, as his talented fingers worked their magic. “There are many things I’ve never done,” she moaned, smiling at him, and rolled partly onto her back as his lips arrived on her navel. “I’m yours completely; I will never stray from you, but we both trust Lucius.” Severus pushed her completely onto her back, his lips now adoring her mound of Venus.

He blew over the glistening wet skin. “What would you have me tell him?” She watched his eyebrow sail up, as he glanced up at her from his task, “How sweet your pretty little pussy is?” He saw her eyes flare, “How much I love doing this?” He removed his slowly circling finger and swept his flat tongue along her from bottom to top, she shivered and convulsed violently. Severus chuckled, “Or would you like me to let him see and feel for himself?” his voice purred, their eyes met and she saw his heated desire to do so.

“If you felt comfortable doing that, I think a threesome with Lord Lucius would be fun at some point, I’m perfectly fine with it.”

“Intriguing. You are perfect Hermione, simply flawless.” He gave her one more languid lap, and ran his tongue up the mid line of her body. “I love you so very deeply,” he groaned, gifting her with a tender kiss. Glancing at the bedside clock, he whispered against her lips, “Now I’ll warn you, if we
don’t head for the showers, we won’t be getting to Diagon Alley at all this afternoon.”

“Oh,” she gasped, “no we won’t.” She was already rising from the bed, looking back at him propped up on one elbow watching her naked body move. Laughing she stood with her hands on her hips and admonished, “I thought we were having,” she paused, her finger landing on her lips in thought, “what was it,” her smile became wicked. “Oh yes, indulging in a decadent shower.” His eyebrow rose playfully, and she laughed joyously, watching him rise sinuously from the bed.

Severus prowled towards her, reaching where she stood grinning at him, in two of his long strides. Without warning he growled, and unceremoniously hoisted her over his shoulder.

“No,” he chuckled, giving her backside a light swat. “I obviously have to supervise to make certain every inch of you is clean, Professor Granger.” His chameleon voice shifted to suggestive. “And I intend to explore you most thoroughly for any signs to the contrary.”

“Oh thank you, Professor Snape, you’re such a Martyr,” she said, mock piously.

“Yes, I am, aren’t I,” he returned, in his best put upon voice.

Lucius was slouching decadently in his chair, twirling the stem of his wine glass in dextrous fingers, looking every inch the decadent bored Lord. One of his legs was hooked over the arm of the comfortable dining chair, swinging casually. It stilled as he looked up from contemplating his wine, to see two very smug looking individuals walking into the dining room. “I had thought only a small luncheon would be appropriate, however I reconsidered my decision and decided to make it more extensive,” he smirked decorously. “Given the length of your absence and seeming rambunctious nature of your activities,” the blond aristocrat smoothed. Severus seated a blushing Hermione at the table, totally ignoring his friend’s taunts. Lucius poured the wine with a lazy flick of his wand. “It is good to see that you are now completely healed, pet.”

“Yes, I feel as good as new.” Hermione smirked, took a sip of her wine, but her hand was shaky as she put it back down. Her mood quickly sobered though, remembering what had happened. “This is a worrying development,” she gave them both a serious look. “Neither of them have ever been violent before.” As she sat thinking about this, Hermione became aware that both her hands were covered. Each man had taken one to comfort her.

Lucius was first to speak. “We will not allow anything to happen to you, pet. Potter only received a tiny sample of the beast within our dear friend here this morning. He would be a fool to want a repeat performance.”

Her brow creased in worry. “That’s just it Lucius, he has proven himself a fool, time and time again.” Her head lowered sadly. “He was given a position ten years ago that he didn’t earn and it’s gone to his head, and now he thinks he can get away with anything.”

Severus linked his fingers through hers. “Perhaps that can be used against him; after all he is the only real threat. Weasley is merely a drunken thug with no real power, a hanger on, if you will; he always has been.”

“But, he has the power of Potter behind him.” Hermione looked around as if expecting to see someone else. “I must admit, now that I think about it, I’m surprised the Aurors haven’t been bashing your door down to arrest Severus for daring to punch poor, defenceless Saint Harry,” she said theatrically, wringing her hands and looking plaintive, and making both men smile.
“Ah well,” smoothed Lucius, “that’s partly because the Slytherin old boys club has been in action. While you two were in the throngs of your very vocal passion, this little blond duck has been very busy. Despite what some people might think, there are a great many honourable Slytherins who care very much for their world and their own. The Dark Lord years tarnished our reputation badly. However, several prominent members of the Wizengamot, and not just Slytherins, support not only your position,” Lucius gestured to Hermione, “but have been actively working behind closed doors towards Potter’s removal. Up until now they have not been able to keep witnesses to events.”

Hermione gave him a puzzled look, and he chuckled. “Anyone who stands up against him ends up mysteriously Obliviated. His well documented attack on us today, and Weasley’s on Saturday evening was like manna from heaven to them. Now they can build their case for his dismissal with firm foundations. Even if we all inexplicably lose our memory of the events, there was an audience, a reporter and photographer.”

Patting her hand, Severus added, “Maybe we’ve given him enough rope to hang himself.”

Hermione nodded, but sat quietly thinking about this for some time as she pushed food around her plate. Eventually, her wizard said, “You need to eat angel; what’s bothering you?”

“Ginny,” she glanced at both of them, “I’m worried about her and the children, especially James after what he said in front of his father and in public. It was only the fact that Harry’s eye balls were spinning counter-clockwise after you hit him.” She laid her hand on Severus’ and stroked it before drawing a breath. “Harry knocked Ginny out of the way without even a thought. I can’t help wondering, well... if he’s done that before.” She looked at Severus, then Lucius, “Do you think he treats them badly?”

The blond raised a thoughtful eyebrow, but patted her hand. “No, pet, I’m sure everything’s fine.”

The Potions master knew his friend, and was instantly aware that everything was far from fine. He suspected Lucius was protecting Hermione from this fact until they could do something about it. Severus turned Hermione’s hand over in his and laced their fingers together.

Hermione took an audible breath, obviously pondering further. “She did seem in rather a hurry to get her children to George though, didn’t she,” she added worriedly. Hermione had placed her fork down and looked at them both. “Maybe we should speak with George.”

Severus watched Lucius purse his lips. That’s one of his shows, Severus thought. He definitely is keeping something he’s found away from her, damn this mess infringing on us right now.

The blond wizard drew breath. “You were hardly in any position to judge, pet.” He saw her bristle slightly. “You were otherwise occupied.” He patted her hand. “But I doubt George Weasley would say anything even if there was a problem.” Hermione opened her mouth to protest further, but Lucius cut her off. “It’s family business Hermione. He may have been honest with his ten year old nephew about what happened, but I don’t think he’ll tell us anything about his sister’s private business, or perhaps even know about it.”

Hermione looked to Severus, “He’s right, I’m afraid,” the Potions master added, squeezing her hand. “Now eat, my love,” he commanded.

Hermione smiled at him, she had to admit she was very hungry. She sighed and took a mouthful. Severus watched her eating, his eye catching the glint of the diamonds in her ring. He bent over and whispered, “Shall we tell him our news then?”

The now sombre woman brightened to no end, and actually smiled. “Yes let’s, he’ll be the first to
know. That’s fair, isn’t it?”

Lucius was watching their interactions intently as Severus nodded and brought their joined hands to his lips to kiss hers. It was then Lucius caught the glint of the ring as it moved, and he gasped. “Is that what I think it is?”

Severus stood and helped Hermione up. He placed his hands either side of her shoulders. “Yes.” They exchanged a smile. “we’ve decided to marry.”

Lucius’ lips twisted upward in the semblance of a smile. “Which squeal of pleasure resulted in that offer then?” They knew he was teasing them because his smile was growing, and they both grinned at him. Severus wrapped his arms around Hermione and she wrapped hers around his.

“Actually,” Hermione smoothed, “it was a low growl on Severus’ part, I believe.” The three of them burst out laughing, and a blushing Hermione gazed amorously at her beloved.

Lucius stood from his chair and came over to shake Severus’ Hand. “Congratulations my friend.” He sounded truly happy for them. “I can’t say it’s a surprise to me, but it’s a little quicker than I’d thought it would be.

Lucius turned to Hermione, “And pet, you are so right for Severus,” he ran a finger over her cheek, and giving her a heated look, he glanced at Severus, who nodded and answered by moving his hands back to Hermione’s arms. Lucius received the gift graciously and gently enclosed her face with his hands. “You’re a very special lady Hermione, and Severus is a very lucky man.” He felt her trembling in anticipation under his hands. Hermione’s eyes were already closed when Lucius lowered his lips to hers, he smiled. “All right?” His breathed question made her utter a sweet little squeak, but she nodded.

Hermione was certain Lucius was a master at making women feel comfortable. She wasn’t exactly certain what she’d been expecting, but the tender, caressing kiss she got wasn’t it. It was by no means a chaste kiss, but it was gentle and very sweet. Wow that was some congratulatory kiss. I could get use to them both kissing me. I hope Severus goes through with inviting him to be with us.

Lucius heard Hermione sigh, and releasing her, he whispered, “You’re simply lovely Hermione, I’m looking forward to getting to know you better,” saying this he guided her back a step to Severus, “Thank you,” Lucius breathed looking at his friend.

Once Hermione found herself embraced against Severus’ chest with her lover’s hands stroking her body gently, she let out a breath she hadn’t realised she was holding.

Severus watched his love kissing his best friend, and even though he was very possessive of her, he felt no jealousy about it. He gave her a welcome back kiss. “Did you enjoy that, angel?”

“It was lovely Severus; I think all three of us will manage fine.”

This confirmed for Lucius that they may have already discussed fascinating new possibilities.

“Well, let’s see where it takes us, ay?” Severus replied for only her ears.

After the congratulations, they all sat back down and both men badgered Hermione, making certain she’d eaten enough.

In the mid-afternoon, the three of them headed back to Diagon alley to do their shopping. They each visited several shops, Severus not leaving Hermione’s side once. The Arithmaney professor had told
them about Flourish and Blotts over lunch and they visited there first.

Seeing Lucius and Severus, the manager came out fawning all over them, asking if he could help. Hermione stepped in between her two Slytherins from behind and met his gaze. “You’re the same man who ten years ago, told me not to come back. You have changed your tune.” She drew breath, confident in her bodyguards either side. “Well, I just wished to thank you. Because of you, I have found several smaller and much better bookshops to make my purchases from.”

Lucius chuckled at the look on the wizard’s face and continued the deed. “I take it, my good man that you are aware of who we are.” This was not so much a question, but a statement as Lucius eyed the nodding man scornfully.

“Oh, yes indeed, sirs. Welcome back to England, gentlemen,” the now nervous wizard simpered. His arm made an all sweeping movement. “Our shop is at your disposal.”

Severus’ eyes were colder than Hermione ever remembered seeing them. “We thought you might also remember the amount of Galleons the three of us have spent in your shop.” A cool twist of his mouth, slipped easily into a smirk.

Lucius took over the chase. “Unfortunately, now we have heard of your treatment of our dear friend and colleague here that fact will change. From now on, our business shall be completed elsewhere, good day, to you.”

In unison, they turned and exited the shop. No one was certain how the cage containing, *The Monster Book of Monsters*, ended up open, but pages flew like confetti as the two smug Slytherins escorted Hermione Granger into the street.

Lucius then went off on his own then to conduct his business, and Severus and Hermione visited the school’s apothecary supplier so Severus could place the order for the school supplies. The three of them met again at Fortescue’s for a late afternoon coffee, and then finally back to the Manor, after each having conducted their business and each having bought a birthday present for Astoria.

“Well, we better get back to our potions making,” Severus sighed, wrapping his arms around Hermione and resting his chin on her shoulder.

Taking advantage of this position he then blew in her ear. “Severus,” she squealed, laughing.

“Yes, my love, what is it?” His serious tone was perfect. “Do you have a need for something, something hard and hot perhaps?”

This was murmured into her ear in his beautiful voice, and all she could manage in reply was a groan. Coupled with the fact that he was discretely stroking her backside with said hard and hot object, it was all she could do not to collapse in a puddle.

Watching them closely, their host said, “Well, you two best go off about your *brewing*,” he raised a brow at them. “Although, from here it doesn’t appear that too much Potion making is going to get done.”

“You’d be surprised what I can work through Lucius,” Severus asserted, he voice muffle, as he occupied himself kissing Hermione’s neck.

“Mmm,” was the sceptical reply.

“I take it you have some distraction planned for this evening?” Severus’ still muted voice inquired.
“I certainly do,” Lucius smoothed, preening slightly. “Shall we meet back here at a civilised hour tomorrow, say eleven in the morning?”

“That sounds acceptable, Hermione?” Severus inquired.

“Uh huh,” she mumbled, leaning harder against Severus’ chest, her head resting back on his shoulder. She was concentrating on keeping her backside still because it wanted to grind into Severus’ teasing hardness.

“Will you two get out of here and stop prick teasing me. I’m only human, and you look amazing like that,” Lucius scolded.

Severus worked his lips around closer to Hermione’s ear and whispered, “Which in Lucius speak means tease me some more. What say we give him something to think about, my dear professor?”

Hermione’s eyes met Severus’ and she bit her lip. His smile turned feral, and his heated voice sounded in her ear again. “I’ve always loved it when you do that to your lip, it makes you look very sexy.” Her knees went even wobblier, and craning her head around, she sought his lips.

Lucius happily watched them exchange their heated kiss. From his vantage point in front of the couple he could see their tongues entwining; he then he watched Severus’ hands sweep up undoing her jacket and push it out of the way to caress her breasts through her silk blouse. He could plainly see the hard nipples straining against the fabric, and oh... those little buttons striving to do their job against everything. Lucius found himself egging them on. Surely one of them had to fail. He was certain it would be like a dam bursting. Once one went, they’d all go, and he longed to see the next layer of this very desirable woman.

The blond wizard had listened to their love making earlier, and their enthusiasm had almost driven him wild. Severus’ thumbs were flicking over her still enclosed peaks. Lucius knew they were doing this for his pleasure, and that thought made him heady with affection for his friend and the beautiful woman in his arms. The aristocratic wizard was pretty sure neither Severus nor Hermione realised how attractive they looked writhing against one another, seeming oblivious to him being there.

He cocked an eyebrow, wondering exactly how far Severus would allow them to go this first time. He was just contemplating this when ‘dam busters’; the button directly under the most duress from her straining breasts gave way. Lucius was instantly treated to the red lace of her bra. The sounds of their breathing and kissing was making him so hard, he felt like he had a pogo stick in his trousers.

Severus had felt the give in her blouse and now kissed around to her ear. “Shall I go further?” Hermione was about ready to buckle at the knees, but she moaned an affirmative.

Neither of them looked at their appreciative audience, they were careful not to acknowledge him in any way. Severus had a plan that would see them going back to his chambers the moment he deeded they’d given enough today.

His mouth engulfed hers once more; her groans became more insistent as Severus prepared for his next step. Pulling slightly on the material of the blouse, he made it look like it had opened accidentally, and most of the buttons gave. Severus heard a stifled cry from their host, like he had suddenly stuffed his fist in his mouth. “It’s time to floo to Hogwarts,” Severus murmured in Hermione ear. She nodded and he started backing them to the fireplace, his mouth still caressing hers, and his hands still teasing her tight little buds. They flooed away to his quarters, sliding out of the floo into his sitting room.

Severus turned the now giggling and giddy woman in his arms and held her back a little length to
examine his handy work.

“That was so much fun,” she laughed, her chest still heaving.

“It was the most perfect little peep show, my lovely. Now let me see.” Severus pulled the lace aside on one side and then the other. “Are you sure you’ve never done that before?”

“Only for Mirror,” Hermione admitted, trying not to blush this time.

His fingers started fondling the rosy tips once more. “Oh,” he murmured moving closer and planting tender kisses on her face. “I begin to see how you have had so much practice without participating.” Passing her lips with just a cursory brush of his, he started down her throat beginning his path of adoration down to the exposed delights.

Severus enclosed one of her pert rosy nipples in his mouth, and Hermione moaned. “Doing that with Lucius watching, made me wet as hell,” she stated, while thrusting her chest further forward for him to kiss and lick each delight in turn.

Then his hands were undoing her skirt. “Show me the evidence,” he demanded, his voice husky.

“Oh God, yes, Severus,” she moaned, in a long sighed hiss. His talented fingers made short work of reaching her core, and he slipped his longest digit into her.

“You’re right, you are, and by Merlin, you feel good.” Hermione gurgled wantonly. “You’re amazing; hold your skirts up,” he demanded, just as the clock chimed six. “Uhh shit, it’s time for dinner,” he groaned.

Hermione felt his fingers leave her. “Ohhhh, couldn’t we just...” his finger landed on her lips, “But you... I want to... we’re not finished,” she said almost petulantly, then seductively drew the digit into her mouth, making him smile at her wiles.

“Duty first, angel; we will continue this later.” His nimble fingers had started putting her breasts back in their lace confine and doing up her buttons. “Besides, we have news that needs to be shared.”

“Oh yes, so we do,” she grinned as he ran his wand down the buttons, adding a surety charm to each. “I’m not allowed to strain a button now then, ay?”

“Most certainly not,” his eyes were alight with playfulness. “After you, Professor Granger,” Severus gestured with his arm.

“Why thank you, Professor Snape,” she bobbed a curtsey on shaky legs and took his arm, cuddling in close. “I love you,” she affirmed softly, “you’re wonderful.”

Severus stopped and looked at her. “I love you too my perfect, little love,” he gave her a quick kiss and used a deflating spell on their kiss swollen lips.
Hermione and Severus return to Hogwarts for the evening, they are shocked to learn that everyone has been on tenterhooks waiting for them, having heard via the portrait network what happened that afternoon at the Leaky Cauldron. After dinner they retire to Severus’ private lab, but can they keep their hands off one another long enough to brew the potions?

Severus and Hermione were chatting quietly as they entered the hall hand in hand, suddenly chairs were scraping as the occupants leapt out of them. “Hermione, oh thank Merlin,” said an obviously relieved Minerva, “We’ve heard all sorts of things.”

The approaching stampede took the quietly conversing couple completely by surprise. Poppy was suddenly pulling Hermione into the light, “Let me see your face,” then she demanded, “Who treated it?”

“Have you finally taken leave of your senses, Poppy?” Severus growled, pulling Hermione away from her.

“But Hermione’s face,” she glanced at Minerva. “We heard…”

Severus caught on; he’d forgotten about that after all the more pleasant events of the day. “Oh, I did!” he stated in obvious irritation. “What in the name of Merlin’s hairy ba…”

“Severus,” Hermione cut him off swiftly, “Children,” she gave a pointed gesture down with her eyes and he saw two sets of eyes gazing up at him, their arms firmly around Hermione’s waist and leg. “Oh,” his breath escaped in the exclamation.

His face became even tenser when the littlest piped up, “Merlin’s hairy what’s, mister?” Her pale blue eyes were full of mischief.

Severus floundered a minute, Hermione thought Neville was going to have apoplexy that his daughter had dared question the terrifying Potions master. Severus appeared to think of something and crouched down, “And who are you, young lady?” His voice was kind.

The little girl let go of Hermione’s leg and puffed out her chest, making Severus almost lose this battle to remain serious, “I’s is Xanthia Herwmiome Longbottom, and you hasn’t answered my question.”
“Well, Miss Longbottom, it is a little known fact that the great wizard Merlin actually had a pet baboon.”

The curious three year old gave him a very astute look of suspicion, and he heard a wave of distinct titters from the other teachers, as she turned to her father, “Daddy do yous think that Auntie ‘Mione’s boyfriend is fibbing to me?”

Neville picked up his daughter, “No, sweet pea, if Professor Snape says it, it must be true. But you shouldn’t assume that the professor is Auntie ‘Mione’s boyfriend,” Neville’s voice stuttered. It was now full of admiration but very uncertain.

“Sowey, Daddy,” the little girl bowed her head.

A very pale Neville bravely took another step forward and offered his hand to Severus, “It is really good to see you again, sir.”

“You also, Professor Longbottom,” Severus turned and nodded to Luna, “Madam Longbottom.” Luna stood holding her baby daughter and encouraging little Frank out from behind her skirts, where he’d taken refuge when his sister had been so forward.

Severus felt Hermione’s arm weave itself around his and squeeze. He looked around at the circle of eager faces and said, “We are very sorry to have worried you all. We had no idea you would have heard anything. As you can see Poppy, Hermione is perfectly fine,” he smiled at his betrothed, “Possibly a little worse for wear emotionally, but it’s been a very diverse day.” Hermione leaned her head on his shoulder and he continued, “Today did however convince me of something important,” turning his head, he kissed Hermione’s curly head. Surveying the shocked and avid listeners once more he said, “It made me realise I couldn’t go another day without making this lovely woman mine, permanently.”

Hermione found her left hand being grabbed by a very excited matron, her eyes wide, “Oh Minnie look, isn’t her ring beautiful?”

Minerva was next to Poppy, in an instant she was taking Hermione’s hand. Then everyone was hugging Hermione, “We’re just so happy for you both,” the Headmistress asserted as Hagrid let out a howl of happiness.

Luna kissed her cheek and whispered, “What did I tell you, love.”

“I know Luna, I should have believed you,” Hermione hugged her around little Alice.

They were all finally making their way back to the table, when a little voice chimed merrily, “Sees Daddy I was right, Fessor Shwap is Auntie ‘Mione’s boyfriend, silly Daddy,” and she shook her mop of blond curls.

This broke everybody up. Even Severus couldn’t help laughing as they finally sat down to their meal. A very red faced Neville, sat his daughter in her chair, “Yes, sweet pea,” then aside to Luna, “I wonder if we have a Slytherin in the making here?”

Unaffected by it all as usual, Luna sighed, “That’d be nice wouldn’t it.”

Between Hermione and Severus they explained as many details of the incident at the Leaky Cauldron. The details of their subsequent ‘rest’ in the middle of the day for Hermione to recover though were sketchy.

Hermione then explained the shopping trip and the fact that they had only just returned to Hogwarts
to brew some more potions.

Minerva in turn told them that the floo at the Leaky Cauldron was now closed for repair, because Harry Potter had blasted it in his rage. He had made himself even more unpopular in the process, as several people in the gathered crowd had been injured.

“Then,” Poppy stated almost excitedly, “there was a brawl at Weasley Wizarding Wheezes.”

Minerva then took over telling the story again. “Now according to Albus, who spoke to the Fat Lady, who heard it from her friend Violet. Mathilda Blott’s portrait in Flourish and Blotts, said the entire Weasley family had descended on the George’s shop to break up a hexing match between Harry and George. Apparently,” Minerva continued conspiratorially, “Molly ended up taking Ginevra and the children with her, and Ronald appeared from nowhere taking Harry to settle him down.”

“It’s also said,” Poppy cut back in, “That Tom at the Leaky Cauldron was none too pleased at the display of the Chief of the Aurory in his pub, and is suing Harry Potter for damages to his premises.”

This conversation got them all the way through dinner, and now Severus and Hermione were in his lab, seeing if they could keep their hands off one another long enough to brew the further ten potions they had decided earlier they would complete tonight, before they went to bed. So far they were doing a passable job and were about half way through their task. Severus was pleased Hermione seemed to understand that while they were in the lab, there was to be no fooling around. It was just too dangerous. Not to mention painful if hot liquid spilt on sensitive bits. So they were working at opposite ends of the lab, each with five cauldrons lined up. Hermione had just finished the first of her potions, and was almost finished another. Severus had chosen five of the more complicated and hadn’t completed any of them yet.

Hermione kept casting longing looks over at Severus, who was working minus his frock coat with the sleeves of his white shirt rolled up. Her eyes kept wandering to how well his delicious tight bum so beautifully defined in his trousers. She wondered vaguely how defined the front of the garment was as well. Of course there was a perfectly practical reason why he worked dressed like this. It was very hot, what with the heating charm to counteract the bitter cold of the corridors, even at this time of year and larger communal areas, and the ten cauldron fires, it was almost swelteringly hot. Hermione mopped her brow with a conjured cloth, and decided to follow his example. She’d already shed her jacket when they’d come home, she now rolled up her sleeves and popped several buttons on her blouse.

In due course Hermione finished first, she soon had all the vials packed and labelled and was wandering over to Severus’ side to see what she could do. Seeing the intricate nature of his work she decided against doing anything to disturb his concentration. He had instructed three of the brews to stirs themselves, had finished one and was incanting over the remaining one. Hermione just finished filtering his completed brew and was dividing it into doses for him. She was almost finished this job when his arms encircled her waist, “Thank you,” he murmured, giving her a quick kiss on the cheek, before going back to his now two remaining potions. She noticed his eyes lingering on her substantially exposed cleavage, but he didn’t comment.

Finally all ten potions were completed. “You know I noticed this morning that the bath in my chambers is enormous,” Hermione said, stretching the kinks out of her neck, and sighing as Severus’ hands arrived there to finish the job.

“Indeed, what did you have in mind?” he inquired, kissing her neck.
“A bath of course, with plenty of room for play,” she looked around at him, and appeared to steel herself. “But first I have something I want to show you.”

“It’s a pity we don’t have a door directly between our rooms,” Severus mumbled thoughtfully. At that moment the room appeared to shudder slightly, there was the sound of stone scrapping on stone and behind them a door obligingly appeared in the wall.

Hermione gasped, “It really is an amazing castle, isn’t it?”

“It most certainly is,” Severus commented testing the door. “After you my minx,” Hermione smiled as she walked into her own sitting room.

Heading straight through into her bedroom, Hermione was carrying a book which she enlarged as she walked into the sitting room. Severus had organised wine and two glasses. He wordlessly asked as she came back in, “Mmm, yes please,” she smiled.

Severus followed her to the lounge with the wine. He cocked his head towards the book “What’s that?”

“I found it in Binn’s study yesterday,” she bit her lip, “I’m feeling guilty for having taken it, but it intrigued me.”

Despite her practical attitude to start with, Hermione turned beetroot red as soon as Severus took the book because she saw understanding lighting his face. He recited the French title before glancing at Hermione and saw how flustered she was, but ignored it. “Do you know what it means, my love?”

She shook her head, “Pleasures with those you love.” Seeing her blush, he took her cheek in his hand. “Where’s my brazen little exhibitionist? If the book turns you on, darling, which is of course its purpose, then show me your favourite pictures,” he caressed her cheek, “We will explore them together.”

She was very shaky, but managed to say, “I was hoping you’d say that.”

Severus flipped another page, “Was this the only book you found?”

“I must admit that I was so flustered by this one that I didn’t look, why?”

“Because I know these books, this one is part of a set,” he saw her become even more interested, “Each volume deals with different mode of sexuality. Severus was flipping casually through more pictures. This volume deals with trios and quartets of various combinations. There are other volumes exploring solo adventures,” he gave her a kiss on the forehead, “Which from what I’ve heard so far, you seem to have mastered without any book. Then there are two other volumes one on straight couples and the other on same sex combination.”

“How old are they?”

“They were created last century in France. The volumes are actually much more than mere artful pornography, they are very misunderstood and are in fact banned here in England as dark artefacts.”

Severus heard Hermione’s intake of breath, “Which, my darling doesn’t automatically make them so. Wizarding Britain became so prudish during the Victorian period, anything that wasn’t rated for general consumption is treated as bad,” his eyebrow rose, “No, they are I suppose, a little like a Wizarding version of the Karma Sutra.”

As he’d been talking Severus was examining a picture, Hermione saw his hand go to his crotch to adjust himself, she watched the movement. “Let me see,” she murmured leaning towards the book. It
was a picture near the back, Hermione took in the details, there were the same two wizards as she’d seen the day before, but this time there were two witches as well. The witches were in the middle and a wizard on either side, “Ohhh,” Hermione groaned curling up next to him, “I’d love to know what it feels like to do that?” She was intently focused on the tongues of the two witches plunging in and out of each other. Each wizard was pleasuring himself, while ravenously watching witches tongues buried deep inside each other.

Looking up from the picture, Severus asked, “That is a brave fantasy, my angel.”

Hermione blushed crimson, “I’ve never actually admitted that to anyone,” she said quietly.

“Really?” He kissed her heatedly, before murmuring, “What other fantasies do you have?”

Giving him a spicy grin, Hermione shivered, “Too numerous to mention, but that’s the only lesbian one I think I have. Mind you I may have told Mirror things.”

He cut her off, wicked grin playing around his features, “Ah yes, Mirror. I’d almost forgotten about him, come on.” He pulled her to her feet. “I want you to visit your mirror for me.” He was literally licking his lips in anticipation, as they started walking. “And don’t worry we’ll work on finding you a companion to fulfil your fantasy,” Severus smoothed.

“I guess that’s a long term project though, it would have to be someone we both trusted, like we do Lucius.”

“Yes, it will take some time I believe,” Severus gave her another heated, open mouthed kiss in the doorway, “But if my witch wants a wet pussy for her pleasure,” he groaned to her, making her almost incoherent with need, “Then I’m going to provide it for her.”

Tearing his eyes away from Hermione’s smouldering orbs, he looked dubiously at the mirror.

Hermione bit her lip, “I’ve never tried to coax him to play with another person present,” she supplied.

“Well,” he looked her up and down, “Allow me to prepare you for play,” a few intricate flicks and swishes of his wand and her skirt slithered off, her blouse fell open and her bra joined her skirt. His heated gaze ran the length of her, “There, now for me,” Severus tapped his head with his wand and shimmered out of view, although Hermione felt him take her arm, “Do you think this might work?”

“Oh I believe you’ve solved the problem.” He chuckled and encouraged her forward.

Once she was standing in front of the mirror, she revelled in the sight of her open crimson silk blouse, red knickers, black stocking and red stilettos. Running her hands up her body she pushed the blouse aside and ran her hands over her breasts.

The face ghosted into life, “Hello little dove, and what would you like tonight?”

“I just thought I’d spend some time with my mirror,” Hermione was shocked at how husky her voice sounded. She was much more turned on than usual, after their recent discussion and having Severus right beside her. “I told you this morning I’d still want you, that we would find ways to enjoy you.”

Hermione purposefully rubbed her thighs together and sighed, “Are you a needy, my little dove?” Hermione nodded and bit her lip, “Show me,” the mirror demanded, and Hermione quivered. Taking a step forward she reached down and pushed the crotch of her knickers aside to expose her already slippery pleasure centre to him, her heart thumping so hard her knees were threatening to give way. “Remove your knickers,” he demanded. “Sit in your chair and push your needy little pussy to me.”
Hermione moaned, and Severus watched as she stepped out of her soaked knickers and swung herself like a gymnast into the chair by the mirror. A leg gracefully cast over each arm, she wantonly pushed her core towards the mirror. “Open yourself for me,” he demanded further. “Ah perfect,” he sighed as her fingers peeled her lips open like a ripe piece of fruit. Twin pairs of dark eyes avidly took in her dribbling rosy flesh, and suddenly the tongue swept forward entering her in a twisting movement.

At the same moment an invisible mouth closed on one of her nipples. Hermione cried out both in surprise and pleasure. The tongue was plunging in and out of her while still twisting, and Severus was suckling first on one then the other breast. “Severus,” she moaned deeply and her finger slid onto her clit. The combination of the three sensations soon had her convulsing wildly towards Nirvana.

Hermione slouched back into the chair panting, “Did you enjoy that, Severus my darling?”

“I most certainly did,” his disembodied voice vibrated through her, before kissing her stomach.

“Show Mirror that you’re here, darling,” she caressed the invisible head she felt on her stomach, his eyes obviously still trained at the apex of her thighs. “I want him to see you.” Severus shimmered back into view, his inscrutable gaze lifting to his two dimensional counterpart’s.

Hermione’s eyes were on the face in the mirror, which smiled slyly and promptly started making demands, “I want to see him fuck you. Yes, I believe it would be educational for me to see my original in action. Have him sit under you in the chair so I can see his cock going in and out of your pretty cunt.”

Severus reared up to his full height and glowered, “You’re an upstart bloody piece of furniture, aren’t you?” he snipped.

Hermione laughed joyously, “Remember I created him to be just like I remembered you to be... well like I thought you would be like in this situation,” she picked up the hand resting at his side, and started to play with it, “I was actually pretty close. I love you telling me what to do in this context. It’s so masterful and you do it so well with that beautiful chameleon voice of yours.”

“Well I think it might be time for that bath you mentioned before,” Severus insisted, glaring at the mirror, “No mirror is telling me what to do.” Severus gave said mirror a fierce scowl, but when he bent down and picked Hermione up, his eyes and voice had softened, “Wrap your arms around me tight, angel.”

Hermione clung to him and he rose, “I didn’t expect you to give in to him, you know,” she murmured while sucking and kissing his neck as they walked to the bathroom. All he could think was, Thank Merlin for wandless magic. He filled the bath and allowed her legs to slither to the ground, disrobing them with a hand movement she watched him as he got in and sat.

Severus held his arms out to her, “Straddled my lap, sweetheart.”

“Oh yes,” she shivered as his hands grasped her around the waist and lifted her up in the water.

“Put me in the right place,” Hermione leant under her and positioned him, “Here we go my beauty, ride me.” Hermione groaned and sighed in delight when she lifted to her knees then sank back onto him, feeling every wonderful inch sliding into her. The water surged around them, gently lapping the sides of the tub. “You’re so beautiful, that’s a girl.”

She was starting to establish a steady rhythm. Severus was fascinated with the bounce of her breasts
into the water every time she slid down his shaft, combined with the mewling little grunt she gave. “Faster, angel,” he encouraged, his face contorting in pleasure with each of her movements. Soon she was slamming herself down the water splashing noisily around the tub, but Severus had charmed it not to spill. He was bucking up to meet her with each on her downward strokes.

“Oh Severus, so close,” she sighed, leaning further forward so every stroke caught her clit. The water felt amazing sloshing around their bodies. Severus reached forward and enclosed a nipple in his mouth and Hermione screamed, clamping down hard on him. The walls of her sheath convulsing and squeezing, Severus arched up and gave one more push before a guttural howl left his lips and he surged up into her one last time.

They sat there holding on another in the comforting warmth. Oblivious to anyone or anything, totally sated and relaxed. Severus stroked Hermione’s back in long languid caresses and lazily kissed her. She felt so good against him, so real, he didn’t want to get up, ever. But of course they’d end up wrinkled prunes if they stayed here too long. Gently pushing Hermione upright, he picked up the wash cloth. Feeling his spent member slither out of her, he chuckled and kissed her when she gave a little moan of disapproval. Severus caressed her body with the cloth in long languid strokes, softly washing away the cares and tensions of the day. She sighed blissfully, “Today has been like a dream come true,” she murmured softly.

“Indeed,” her dark eyed companion sighed. “How I ever live without you with me, I’ll never know. He laid her back against the other side of the bath, and began adoring her softly once more.

All Hermione could do sigh, letting the sensations wash over her. She had never known such tenderness existed, or that his man was capable of it. She pushed back a little and started to run her own hands over the planes of his body in return, but eventually water cooled and she shivered.

“Let’s get into bed so we’re more comfortable,” Severus murmured, she sighed and snuggled in further a moment, finally she rose and getting out, handed him a towel.

Drying each other, they were soon in bed cuddled up and speaking softly. Hermione asked, “The rest of those books, if Binns had them would they still be in his rooms?”

“No, when the elves tidy up, as we humans inevitably tell them to do. Anything that is not generic or Hogwarts issue goes to a special storage area only the Headmaster or Mistress can access.”

“How about past Headmasters?” she waggled her eyebrows.

“Well there’s a point, how ‘bout I take you there in the morning and we’ll see. Any contraband of course, will have to be stored at our rooms in the Manor,” Hermione nodded her understanding and Severus started kissing her gently. “The books are not that important anyway, Lucius has the whole set.”

“Of course he does,” Hermione laughed but a yawn slipped out at the same time.

“Go to sleep Angel,” he kissed her head.

“Good night Severus,” she leant forward to kiss him.

“Mmm, good night,” he returned.
Chapter Summary

This is a Lucius centric chapter. Our favorite blond is starting to realise what he is missing, and reacts badly to the knowledge, especially when his fantasies start working against him. This situation ends in a midnight dash to the Infirmary for a very drunk and maudlin Malfoy. Then a cheeky hallway encounter between Severus and Hermione once there friend is out of danger.

Chapter Notes

**Disclaimer:-** *I neither own nor earn anything from this story. (Damn!) Anything you recognise is the property of JK Rowling and Associates.*

**A/N:-** *In this chapter we start to delve a little into Lucius’ psyche (a dangerous place, no doubt). For those of you wondering when Ginny will return, that will be chapter 15 when our two Slytherins will finally be able to bring her to safety. Happy reading…*

At the Manor, a very pensive Lucius had just come back from his evenings activities. He’d performed, of course he’d performed, bloody little whore. She was just as bad as all the others. Was it merely the fact that she’d obviously just seen another man off before he’d arrived, or was it something else. He wondered into his Firewhisky if it was perhaps Hermione who had caused this feeling worrying his mind.

He really had enjoyed the teasing little show Severus and lovely little witch had entertained him with that afternoon. He was hoping that soon there would be a more intimate version of the same. *Am I jealous of Severus?* He took time to deliberate on the matter in his head. *I don’t believe so,* he pondered. *No, it was something else, or someone else.*

Even though his cock was now throbbing, remembering Severus’ deft fingers teasing Hermione’s tight nipples through her blouse, and he had to be honest and admit he’d hoped for more before they’d abruptly left, but wasn’t surprised when they’d retreated. No it was nothing to do with them, whilst he was planning to enjoy anything Severus allowed him to participate in, he felt no sense of jealousy toward either of them.

Severus was his best friend and closest confidant. They had supported one another through hell and back, he loved the man dearly. He also loved Hermione, although he hadn’t known her for as long. However, she had shown confidence in them when everyone else turned their backs. Been their guardian angel through the worst time after the final battle, how could he not love the brave little witch? Lucius knew exactly where his relationship with both friends sat.

No, something had changed for him this afternoon, but it wasn’t either of his friends. He started to feel it after the fight at the pub. Even though he couldn’t figure out what was bothering him, the enticing images of Hermione’s red bra kept playing through his head while he thought. He shrugged, *Oh well I may as well make use of them.* After all his cock was still looking for satisfaction, even
though it had been well used already tonight. Lathed and sucked by expert but cold lips. Buried in cool, albeit very well used French pussy, maybe it had been Emily’s usual aloofness tonight that had rankled.

In some ways the sophisticated French woman was very much like she-who-must-not-be-named. Willing to open her legs, but not commit to feeling you there. Why was this suddenly a problem? It never has been, that’s just the way life was for Lucius Malfoy. Opening his trousers his eager shaft sprang out, impatient for his attention. Nothing had changed so why was it instantly not enough, his hand became firmer, imagining the lace bra once more. It had only been a tantalizing glimpse, Why was it so important to him? He’d wished for more, I wonder what colour it will be tomorrow? His eyebrow slid up, and his hand pumped. Severus’ fingers were lowering the lace, allowing him to see, Oh so delicious, what colour would those delectable little morsels be? Lucius was now so caught up in his pleasuring he didn’t notice his fantasy changing.

The fingers fondling the bare nipples were no longer Severus’ but his own, and the witch writhing in pleasure under his hands, as much as he would like it to be was definitely not Hermione Granger. Suddenly his hand was streaking up and down his length. He came grunting harshly, in utter surprise. Shock did not even begin to explain the emotions racing through him at the moment. He just sat there numb, hand still holding his deflated manhood limply. How in hell... where the fuck... Oh sweet fuckin Merlin, I’m completely screwed. I’m not going to give in to this, “I can’t,” he moaned plaintively, “I’ll go mad.”

He looked down at his shirt as if only just registering he’d soiled it. A quick flick of his wand cleaned him and tidied this equipment back into his trousers. Standing on shaky legs Lucius summoned the Firewhisky, looked at the glass he filled it almost to the brim and drank deeply, but even the burn of the whisky didn’t dislodge the image swimming invitingly in his head.

Green eyes and flaming hair, The witch is breathtaking, but she’s so far out of my reach it’s cruel. Where the hell did that fantasy spring from? I’m just going to forget this ever happened. He gulped another mouthful of whisky and refilled the glass to the same level. I know... he looked around the room manically; taking more gulps of the amber liquid. Distraction. I need a distraction. His eyes came to rest on the cloak he’d transfigured into a blanket for Hermione that afternoon. It instantly reminded him of the only two friends he had. Being able to help care for Hermione this afternoon, had given him a keen pleasure he didn’t often experience. Somehow they were more complete with Hermione with them, what he had just imagined would make it all perfect.

But how? His confused and now very drunk mind couldn’t see past the shock, he clutched the now almost empty bottle to him like a cherished possession and stumbled towards the floo. Not capable of reasoning anymore, just knowing he didn’t want to be alone. Even in his drunken state, he shivered. How did I ever become this alone? Before he worked out that floo travel in his condition wasn’t a wise move he’d fumbled for the powder, unceremoniously dumping the whole container on the hearth, and then slurring, “Sevrus Snape’s rooms,” the fire flared emerald and he lurched in.

Severus and Hermione had been peacefully asleap for about two hours when the sound of the floo had Severus instantly awake. It had only been a small sound all the way back in his rooms, but after twenty years as a spy, certain things instantly have set responses. He sat bolt upright waking Hermione. The next sounds had both of them out of bed instantly. A crash and then a howl of pain that was even painful to listen too. They were both grabbing wands and bolting, robes slithering into existence as they moved. It was a charm of Severus’ invention that guaranteed you’d never be caught exposed, so to speak. Deep in his mind he knew the only four people had access to his floo. It was one of the things he included in his wards, and if one of those people was currently beside him, it could only mean an emergency. “You stay here Angel,” Severus tried in the doorway.
“No, whoever it is he’s hurt, you might need help,” she asserted, and pushed him forward.

It quickly became apparent who had launched themselves out of the floo and stumbled tripping on the coffee table. He would have been fine if he hadn’t been cradling the bottle. The smell of Firewhisky emanating from the invader told its own story. “Fuckin stupid bottle,” they heard slurred as they ran towards their unexpected guest. The lights obligingly raised themselves to reveal a horrible picture. Lucius was sitting in the hearth, now cradling a badly bleeding arm, complete with a large piece of bottle embedded in it. He look up at his friends, “I don think thath wos a good sthin to do,” and blinked, staring back in horror at his quickly escaping life force.

Severus sprang into action, “You bloody idiot, what were you thinking using the floo pissed,” he snapped, but reached his friend and placed a special stasis charm on his arm to stop the bleeding. Pointing his wand at the fire place he called, “Poppy!”

There was a lot of scuffling, but soon Poppy’s head arrived. Years as a Mediwitch had accustomed her to waking quickly. “What’s wrong?”

“Lucius has injured himself. I’m bringing him to the infirmary.”

“Right, I’ll be ready,” was all she said, and the head disappeared.

Hermione had been standing there blinking the whole time, seeing the proud aristocrat in such a dishevelled heap on the floor was disconcerting. Conjuring an arm chair Severus levitated his friend into it. Hermione provided her lover with his clothes, turning she placed a thick blanket over Lucius. Tucking it in around him she heard him slur, “I think you’re wonnaful pet, but I love her too…” he shook his drunken head, “I didn’ know I did, bu I do. It’s impssble.”

Hermione caressed his cheek, “It’s all right Lucius don’t talk, just rest, love. You’ll be good as new before you know it.” The quickly becoming disorientated wizard seized Hermione’s hand in his good one and laced his fingers through it. Letting him keep it, she looked at Severus.

He shook his head, “I have no idea what his talking about.” He took a breath and looking down at Lucius’ grip on Hermione’s hand said, “His not holding you too tight is he?”

“No, he’s fine,” she’d wanted to add, I think he’s scared, but decided it was probably best left unsaid.

Severus had accioed two potions, “Come on, you need this,” Severus held the vial to his friend’s lips, “I can’t give you anything for the pain until you’re sober.”

Lucius drank, “Fuck, that’s awful stuff Severus, can’t you at least improve the taste,” he muttered, almost instantly becoming more coherent.

Severus rose imperiously up into Head of Slytherin mode. “I keep the flavour of this potion just like that. It’s especially for dumb bastards who get morose, polish off a bottle Firewhisky and use the floo, too stupid on the whisky to realise they’re cradling the bottle like a baby in their bloody arms.”

“Oh... Err yes,” said a tiny voice, sounding for all the world like the contrite school boy to his friend’s snarky professor’s voice.

Hermione wanted to laugh, but she didn’t dare.

“No drink this and we’ll get that arm fixed.” Severus gave him the pain potion and started the chair towards the door as Hermione’s clothes glided onto her.
Severus had been going to tell her to go back to bed, but decided if she wanted to accompany them, who was he to say no. Besides he would definitely enjoy her company, and he didn’t think Lucius was going to relinquish her hand any time soon. Smiling he held out his, she returned the expression and took it. Hermione was now sandwiched between Severus and Lucius and regardless of the situation she found it quite comfortable.

When they arrived at the Hospital, unsurprisingly Minerva was there as well. Poppy smelt the Firewhisky and graced him with a disapproving look, but simply tsked and set to work. She soon had the arm set to rights and was bandaging the healing wound. Because it was so deep, she’d repaired the severed blood vessels then imbibed the whole wound with a spell that made it heal from the inside out. This process would take a couple of days to complete and even though there were medical grade sticking charms holding the wound together and an impervious over it, it was still safest to cover it. Of course this was also because it did look that pleasant either.

Severus and Hermione had been standing back talking quietly to Minerva. The Headmistress was always on for a good gossip, “What happened?”

Severus knowing this, simply replied, “Lucius found out he was not as indestructible as he thought he was.”

The three of them looked towards the first of the private rooms kept for adults, when they heard the Matron’s voice. “You will remain here tonight until I’m satisfied with that arm,” there was a slight pause, “There is no need to pull that face, mister,” they heard Poppy continue, “You only just missed your radial artery with that bottle, and thank yourself that you have quick thinking friends, the damage you did do would have lost you enough blood to cause serious harm if you’d been alone. Think of a night in my hospital as the lesser price to pay for your over indulgence.” The only thing missing from the end of her sentence was the young man admonishment, there were no more comments.

Poppy came bustling out of the room, “You may say good night to Mister Grumpy, if you wish,” she said looking at Hermione and Severus. They heard a weak ‘hmph’ from the little room. “As long as he’ll have someone to assist him for the next twenty four hours, you may pick him up in the morning,” Poppy instructed, “I’ve given him a sleeping potion so he won’t be awake for long,” the two professors nodded then walked past her into the room. “We’ll wish you good night,” the Matron said, as her and Minerva disappeared back to their rooms.

“Severus... darling Kitty,” Lucius slurred, sleepily.

Hermione raised her eyebrow to Severus, he leant in close, “I’ll wager that’s the sleeping potion,” Hermione nodded, and they walked forward.

“Severus will you... please,” he appeared to be fighting sleep, but was pulling at the hospital gown the Matron had fitted him with, a moue of disgust on his face.

Severus sighed and rolled his eyes, “What colour?”

“Green,” was the sleepy reply. Drawing his wand the Potions master transfigured the plain cotton gown into green silk pyjamas. Lucius sighed as he felt the luxurious fabric settle against his skin, “Ah... thank you,” he mumbled, and his eyes closed.

“Well darling kitty, it looks like we can go back to bed,” Severus murmured in a passable impression of Lucius, close to her ear.

“Mmm,” she nodded feeling his arms slink around her. Hermione snuggled in, but she was looking
at the sleeping blond pondering something, “I wonder what happened to make him go off on such a bender in the first place?”

“We may never know, by tomorrow morning he’ll be back to his usual flawless aristocratic self, with the nothing hurts me or gets to me attitude firmly back in place.” Severus had placed his arm around Hermione’s shoulder, she watched as he established additional security wards around the little room, and they started walking back to their rooms.

About half way Hermione stopped, “You don’t suppose it was us teasing him this afternoon?”

“No… candidly,” Severus turned around to face her, “I think he lives for moments like that,” Hermione gave him a puzzled look, sighing he continued, “Lucius has been running like a frightened rabbit ever since the divorce. Not letting anyone too close,” he pulled her close as they stood in the hallway, “We’re very lucky, I think we may be the only true friends the poor man has. Of course there’s Draco, but then you know what it’s like, that parent child thing is hard to get over, especially when you’re as emotionally dysfunctional as those two are.”

“Has he been known to drink like that before?” Severus nodded, “So what caused those episodes?”

“Women,” Severus replied plainly, “I don’t think he’s ever been in love with that one woman he’d do anything with or for,” he squeezed her tighter and caressed her hair, “To tell the truth I think he’s very lonely. He beds all these women, but he’s scared to be alone. That may actually be part of the answer, he came home and we were gone.”

“When he grabbed my hand tonight I got the distinct impression he just wanted the warmth of human touch,” she took a deep breath, “It’s really sad isn’t it?”

“Indeed, I guess it is. But he’s always hidden it well.”

“We’re getting maudlin, and I’m not sleepy anymore,” Hermione announced lifting her head off Severus chest. Out of the blue she glanced around, her face playful, “You know my most vivid memories of this hallway, when I was as a prefect, and catching couples up to all sorts. It seemed to be a favourite hallway. Why do you s’pose that is?”

Severus’ mouth twitched into a knowing smile, “It’s because the alcoves in this corridor are deeper than anywhere else. You can disappear into them almost completely, come I’ll show you. If you’re smart enough there’s no reason to get caught,” they disappeared into the closest alcove.

Hermione looked around, the space available was almost huge, “The problem is most people aren’t smart enough,” Severus nodded in agreement. “The most basic concealing charms would shut you in for as long as you liked.” Casting several charms to light, hide, warm and silence them, Hermione wagged her eyebrows, smiling she gracefully fell to her knees. “Well, professor, would you care to get up to some mischief with me then?” Hermione had also cushioned the flagstones, “Lean back and enjoy my darling, this is the perfect opportunity for us to misbehave in the hallways, there is absolutely no one around.”

While she’d been talking Severus had been watching happily as she deftly removed all obstacles between his hot flesh and her eager mouth. “I like the way you put things, my love,” he groaned when she smiled and licked him like a lollypop.

Lathing her tongue around the head, her eyes never leaving his, “Severus,” she sighed.

A breath hissed through his teeth was her reward as she licked him from base to tip, crisscrossing with her tongue up the length before her lips closed around the head. This was only her second time
at attempting this, but she was determined to do everything this time. Hermione liked the feel of his velvet covered steel running over her lips. The tart liquid that continually leaked from the tip was actually palatable.

Her head bobbed, he moaned, and his hands came to either side of her head, “That’s right, angel, hold your mouth just like that, “Ooohhhh, yes, that’s it… perfect,” his voice had descended into a groan and he was guiding her head swiftly back and forth.

Not once did he hurt her, she could hear his breathing becoming jerky. A glance up as she moved, and she saw his head thrown back and his eyes closed. “Ooohhh angel, so perfect.” He momentarily tensed, “Ooohhhhh… coming,” he panted and erupted. Her mouth filled with thick sour cum.

Hermione swallowed as fast as she could until she could control the flow. Yes this was wonderful, she could do this, she’d been uncertain, but Severus had loved it so much. She continued to lick him, determined to get every last drop. Finally his softening cock left her mouth with a pop, she sat back on her heels gazing up at his expression of bliss, “I think I enjoy making you come like that.”

“I’m pleased,” he panted leaning hard against the stone wall, “because that one of my favourite ways to come.” Severus reached down to help Hermione up.

Their mouths met in a heated kiss and he spun her around. “Wow you get your recovery times quick,” she panted caught by surprise.

Severus grinned and drew his wand, “Where you’re concerned my love, I have endless reserves,” she felt the wall behind her go soft and her skirt being bunched up around her waist. “Ah, you naughty little minx,” he crooned, “no knickers,” she grinned at him and he felt himself stiffen again beautifully. Reaching down he hooked one of her knees over his arm and straightened. Using his other hand he teased her entrance with his prick. “One favour deserves another, angel.” She groaned and their mouths met again, tongues exploring frantically as he pushed home. Her hands laced behind his neck and she lifted her other leg around his waist. Every time he thrust, she sank into the delicious softness of the stone wall behind her. Her groans of delight had his hips flexing wildly, they were both panting and groaning. Shaking, they both exploded, her heat gripping and squeezing his, sending him spiralling into the longest release he could remember.

He stood with Hermione pressed against the wall, panting, Severus could feel the chill starting to invade their little sanctuary, and then he felt Hermione shiver. He allowed her legs to slip to the ground and pulled her into a tighter hug rubbing her back, “Something tells me that we should save any further debauched adventures in the hallways until the summer holidays, when it’s warmer.”

Hermione giggled and nodded against his chest, “You’re probably right, although I don’t know if I can wait that long, that was fantastic.”

Severus laughed, “Come on little minx, home with you,” he slapped her backside playfully gaining a moan. “Do you like being spanked?” His large hand was rubbing where he’d just connected. Her eyes shone, “Well another time, we’ll have to experiment with that too. Right now I think we need sleep.”

Hermione was suddenly over come with tiredness, “Mmm hum,” she replied snuggling into his chest.
Chapter Summary

This is a look at our main couples on the next morning and their reactions to the Daily Prophet article of that morning.

Chapter Notes

**Disclaimer:-**

*I own nothing nor earn anything from this story. Everything you recognise is the property of JK Rowling and affiliates.*

**A/N:-** So our story continues, many of you have asked when Ginny will enter the story properly. Well we get a glimpse of her this chapter and the next chapter is very Ginny centred. The web is tightening around our scoundrels and our Slytherins are getting closer to their retribution. Please enjoy…

Much later that morning Hermione woke up in bliss, she was curled up and warm. Her lover behind her with his arms around her, and his morning erection was being gently thrust in and out between her legs along her already slick flesh. A sigh left her lips and she pushed back against her wizard. He nuzzled her ear, and then blew softly into it. Kissing further around his beautiful, rich voice said, “Good morning, Hermione.”

Hermione groaned and angled her nether regions to better serve the purpose he had in mind, “Good morning, Severus, my darling.”

His hand snaked over her hip to position itself between her legs, while his lips worshipped her neck and shoulder. She shuddered and had another attempt at capturing his member. This time she succeeded, and they both moaned as he slid home.

This unhurried, but passionate love making she was a participant in at this moment, was a revelation to Hermione. Severus moved achingly slowly, each stroke confident, deliberate and sure. She could feel that insistent heavy ball of sensation building, slowly and assuredly his heat claiming her. She was awash, consumed with sensation. This was perfect, sliding in, out, languorously stretching her each time, feeling her walls gripping his member with every delicious agonisingly slow stroke.

*This is… wow!* Her overcome brain struggled to think, and a cry left her lips as her body shuddered. *No,* she started chanting in her head. *No, don’t come yet; don’t let it be over yet, no,* but her
traitorous body trembled again. Then behind her she heard a hitched breath and she knew Severus was also close. It was exquisite torture, building and stoking the fire. But another stroke, one more pass over her little bud of pleasure and she was lost. Hermione hadn’t realised she could make such a sound as the ball of sensation tightened then finally exploded, tipping her over the summit of her pleasure. She hurtled towards her completion yelling his name as he never thought he’d hear it. After that he couldn’t hold on, breathing hard against her neck, he followed.

“That was simply perfect,” Hermione’s voice cracked. As his spent member slithered out of her she turned to face him feeling something wet on her cheek. Severus quickly ducked his head, “Severus please do not hide your tears from me, my darling. We are soul mates, you and I, and when you cry from the beauty we create together, I will cry with you.”

He tentatively raised his head, he’d never felt so exposed. This was disconcerting for him; he was used to having total control. But he let his love see his tears from the emotions created in their tender love making. “I love you,” she whispered and gently kissed the wetness away. Severus remained silent and swallowed hard as he watched reciprocal tears trickle from Hermione’s eyes. Words just wouldn’t work to explain how he felt at this moment. They lay there holding and caressing one another, until the call of nature overtook. Sighing irritatedly, Hermione said, “If I don’t pee I’m going to make a puddle.”

Severus was finished in the bathroom first. As Hermione walked back into the bedroom he was standing in front of the mirror, he glanced at her and laughed evilly. “Time to tease the mirror,” he said. Grinning, he grabbed Hermione’s hand to pull her to in front of it as well, calling, “Hey you, randy image of me,” his hands running over the witch he held. Summoning his wand from the bedside table, Severus transfigured the chair into a small day bed and settled Hermione softly onto it, she sighed.

“Yes Master,” Severus smiled at the mirror’s greeting, as he watched the face ghost in. The eyes panned down the Potions master’s body. Said mirror gasped, taking in the proportions of his original’s erect shaft. Severus smirked; he knew he was well endowed. This was confirmed with the mirrors comment, “Wow, I’ve never seen one that big.”

“And you are privileged to now,” the Potions master commented silkily, turning to his witch. “Open your legs, my beautiful dove, let the mirror see your delights.” Severus saw Hermione shudder, and instantly oblige, “Good girl,” crooned to her. He gave the mirror a devilish look then commanded, “Watch me take my pleasure, Mirror.”

His index finger slid from bottom to top of Hermione’s folds until it landed on her clit, where it started circling. His lips kissing hers hungrily, soon his mouth slid to her throat. His hot orifice paid attention to both her rosy tipped delights when he reached her breasts, before kissing down further, his tongue dipped into her belly button.

*God I love it when he does this,* Hermione sighed internally. Her legs straining wider in anticipation, her eyes studying his mouth as it hovered above her wetness, and she happily watched the very tip of the sinful tongue just teasing the top of her womanhood. “I can’t get enough of you, you’re addictive,” she heard him assert heatedly. A wave of his hand positioned the mirror a little more side on. He angled his head, his raven hair tickling her thighs.

Opening as wide as he could his whole mouth engulfed her and she squealed in delight. She felt his teeth scrap her mons then his tongue plunge inside her. “Oh my God Severus, that’s so delicious,” she moaned, and felt him grin against her. Groaning deeply she held his head in place, pushing her pelvis forward. His now ravenous licks and sucks coupled with his ragged heavy breathing had that...
amazing need building once more. Soon it sent her screaming over the edge. Every additional pass of his tongue making her convulse and sigh, “That was lovely.” she murmured, still panting and unable to move.

“Well it’s only going to get better.” Standing straight he took his tool in hand and started running his hand over it. Hermione gave him a salacious grin when she saw the direction of his gaze, then her eyes followed his hands. She watched him mesmerised, “Open your naughty little p…” but his sentence descended into a groan when her grin widen and her hands slid over her stomach to her slick flesh, and did just what he was thinking. “Merlin’s balls, I love you,” he asserted his eyes were hot and his hands moving rapidly. Her thighs were shaking violently once more, swiftly Severus surged forward as Hermione cascaded into her orgasm.

Panting, she finally said, “That was so dirty, I loved it.”

His eyebrow rose, and his grinning countenance turned to the mirror. “Was that dirty enough for you Mirror?”

When there was no answer, Hermione laughed, “I think he’s speechless, Severus.”

“Good,” replied the Potions master, grinning and offering his hand to Hermione. “We better shower and go fetch the beleaguered Lord Lucius before he hexes Poppy for caring too much. Hermione laughed gaily.

As Severus and Hermione finished showering, Draco had been awake for hours rubbing Astoria’s back for her and completely oblivious to his father’s accident the night before. Astoria had developed a crippling back ache three days ago. To tell the truth Draco was worried about his wife. The healer said it was the baby resting on a nerve and the pain would soon pass when the child moved again. It was shortly after this that the head had engaged, even though she still had two weeks to go, however the back ache had remained. He watched her now waddling to the bathroom, wondering if maybe they should say enough once this child was born. He was unsure if she would make it through the whole day.

The Greengrass’ were coming for lunch. His in-laws were haughty people with still dubious ideas about purebloods. Lucius had informed him of Severus and Hermione’s engagement, he was very happy for them. He was relieved for his lunch plans that his mother was also coming for lunch. It negated any awkwardness, because his father would not step into the same room as her. Therefore he, Severus and Hermione was coming for dinner. Oh fuck it. It would actually do all the bigoted prunes good to be exposed to Hermione. He was not going to make apologies for his friendship with the Gryffindor. She was the best example of a muggleborn being capable, and yes superior that he knew.

A tiny devious part of his brain wished they were coming for lunch, even if it probably would end in a hexing fest.

Astoria heard him chuckle as she managed to swing herself back onto the bed with only a slight grimace. “What was that Draco?” then groaning, she added, “This is the worst birthday, I’m so sick of being a beached whale.”

“It was nothing, and you are anything but a beached whale, my treasure.” He leaned across and kissed her head. Draco’s eyes watched his wife’s swollen belly move. Although he’d never admit it, he never tired of seeing evidence of the life he’d helped create inside her. Panning his eyes inevitable lower, Merlin I miss fucking. Astoria had been too uncomfortable for him to couple with her now for almost two months, he was so sick of secreting himself away and wanking so she didn’t feel guilty for denying him. He irritatedly pulled the sheet up over her sheer green silk negligee, “Wouldn’t want you to get cold,” he said. Simultaneously disappointed and annoyed that he didn’t have to look
at temptation anymore.

Breakfast arrived via one of his elves and Draco picked up the Daily Prophet, and chuckled as he read the morning’s headline-

**Are We All Being Deceived?**

However, his smirk slipped from his lips and his expression became serious as he started to read.

‘…The British Wizarding community is in shock this morning, and questions must be asked about the behaviour of the Harry Potter. After this paper reported on Sunday morning, the disgraceful behaviour of Ron Weasley at the Victory ball on Saturday night, it now appears that Harry Potter is being placed in the same category.

Yesterday in the Leaky Cauldron, this reporter witnessed the Head of the Aurory cast a Stinging hex at an unarmed Professor Hermione Granger. The witch in question had been having a quiet drink with Professor Severus Snape and Lord Lucius Malfoy, when Commander Potter approached the trio, accusations already flying from his mouth. The ranting wizard appeared to be oblivious to the wellbeing of others in his single minded determination to accuse Professor Granger of making Dumbledore lie.

This reporter is asking, after the assurances of Albus Dumbledore, as reported in this paper. Is Harry Potter the real deal? Yes, he rid the world of a monster, but has he taken his place? But most importantly, has Wizarding Britain backed the wrong wizards?

It has come to this reporter’s attention that the Minister of Magic confirmed yesterday afternoon that Snape and Malfoy are genuine, and have a long history of benevolence and charitable deed outside Britain in both Wizarding and Muggle enterprises.

Headmistress of Hogwarts, Minerva McGonagall was even more vocal, and I quote. “Being Dumbledore’s deputy for the entire second Wizarding war, I am in a unique position. I stated these facts ten years ago in support, at the trials of Professor Severus Snape and Lord Lucius Malfoy, and I will put it in plain language once again, for the entirety of Wizarding Britain to grasp. Having seen the error of their ways during the first rein of the wizard who called himself Lord Voldemort, both wizards approached Albus Dumbledore feeling they were in a unique position to assist in the dark wizard’s demise when he rose to prominence once more after the ill fated Triwizard Tournament of 1994. The Wizarding public must understand that in order to do that, the world had to believe they actually were Death Eaters. The actions of Mr. Potter and Weasley lead me to wonder if they are capable of understanding this basic fact, given their continued reprehensible behaviour and lack of care for their erstwhile friend.”

So there you have it wizards and witches of Britain, look at the pictures. Perhaps it is time to make a stand. The Daily Prophet will continue to keep readers up to date with developments as they happen…’

Draco looked at Astoria as he finished reading the article to her, “I hope father and Severus can fix this. Although, with Hermione now set to marry Sev, perhaps they will all just disappear back to France.”

Astoria patted Draco’s thigh, “No one would blame them if they did,” but she suddenly clutched her back and grimaced. Draco looked started and discarded the paper, “Another Braxton Hick, I think,” said the still slightly distressed witch.
Although Neville was reading the same article aloud to Luna, the Longbottom household was a very different scene. Frank and Xanthia always rose early. However, unlike the Malfoys, who had a nanny to take care of their children when they wanted some time alone. The Longbottoms were all in their homely little sitting room, which was alight with joy, despite their apprehensions at the news they were reading.

Neville was sitting by his cosy fire watching his family around him. He lowered the paper and swallowed thickly, seeing the sway of his wife’s luscious backside as she bent to place Alice in her bouncer after a feed, her milk enlarged breasts still swinging loose from her open blouse, as she came and plonked herself in his lap, “All right Nevie?” She’d seen his still pensive expression.

Neville nodded, “Yeh, just thinking, I hope it will be all right for ‘Mione now.” He suddenly realised how lucky he was, and stroked his wife’s cheek. “I love you Luna, we have a beautiful family,” he proclaimed earnestly.

“I love you too Nevie, and I’m sure things will work out now she got the Professor.”

The Potter residence was dark and almost empty. Ginny had not returned there after the fight at Georges. She and the children had stayed at the Burrow. Harry was still fuming, and as usual blaming everyone else for his predicament. He had company in his misery though; Ron was staying with him for support. Well at least that’s what he’d told his mother.

Ginny sat at the kitchen gazing out the burrow window at the snow. Her attention suddenly shifted back through to the lounge at the sounds of her children’s laughter. She smiled at her father, Charlie and George playing trains with James and Albus, while little Lily sat nestled in her poppy’s lap. Percy and Penelope were due for lunch, as were Ron and Harry.

The youngest Weasley was fully expecting her family to have more to say about the article in the Daily Prophet this morning. She was quietly relived that the world—and especially her family—were starting to see her husband and brother for what she knew them to be, and especially for what they’d done to Hermione. The pain in her head spiked with these thoughts, and she attempted to massage it away then changed subject.

She missed Bill; he was staying in France with the Delacours for this unusual break. She looked down at her stomach. Guilt overwhelmed her as she wished yet again that the child growing within did not exist. All it would mean after the birth was another round of fixing, to make herself into the perfect trophy wife again. She’d never told her mother the agony she endured each time Harry declared her breasts needed to be this size, or she’d put on too much weight.

Glancing again at her lovely children she wished life was different. She loved them dearly, but she’d always wanted a family life like she’d grown up with. For the life of her, she still couldn’t remember how she had come to marry Harry Potter. When he’d broken it off with her before he left that year, she’d been heartbroken. But as that year had progressed she’d recovered and moved on.

During her last year at Hogwarts, there had been several seventh years she had engaged with regularly. Even being subjected to Death Eaters and all the horror, hadn’t put her libido on hold, she’d found sex a very enjoyable release from it all. She hadn’t cared male or female, but then Harry, Ron and Hermione had come back.

That’s when her memories had started becoming hazy. Then there was Hermione, her best friend. When she’d tried to start her friendship with Hermione once more, both Ron and Harry had forbidden it, she had done as they’d asked, but still couldn’t remember why. From just before that holiday onwards, a getaway she couldn’t recall agreeing to go on, and coming back engaged when
she was unable to remember the proposal, she looked lovingly at her father, she knew he hadn’t been pleased.

Then the horror of what married life with Harry was, but up until now she’d never really fought it. Then that one kind act by a man who she should have hated. Taking a deep breath she wished things were different. I wish this headache would give up, Ginny watched her mother walking towards her with tea and a serious expression. This can only mean trouble. She’ll want me to go back, Merlin help me, I never want to go back. Maybe I should just tell her their dirty little secrets.

Ginny cradled her aching head in her hands, and glanced once more at the honest and loving woman who’d been toiling over her stove preparing lunch. I couldn’t do that to her. I just want to die.

“Thanks, Mum,” Ginny tried to give her mother a smile. But that was when it hit, it seemed to coincide with that last thought. The tea tumbled out of her hands as they both went to her head. Biting the inside of her mouth to try and centre her thoughts, she managed to grit her teeth and say, “It’s O.K. Mum, it’s only another migraine.” She blinked trying to focus her eyes. “I’ll go and lay down for a while.”

Molly looked at her deathly pale daughter, “Are you sure love, this is the third one you’ve had since you came here.”

“Yes Mum I’m sure,” Ginny managed around her pain, as she stumbled towards the stairs to collapse on her bed.

Hermione and Severus wandered into the Infirmary about eleven thirty. Neither of them had seen the paper, and they’d had breakfast in their rooms so the post hadn’t caught up with them either. Their attention was now taken by Lucius, who had well and truly had enough of all things medical and demanded irritatedly, “What took you two so long?”

His discontented tone made Severus smirk, and the Potions master gave Hermione a subtle wink. “Well let me see, first there was wake up sex, then morning sex, err shower sex and…” his voice trailed off looking at Hermione.

“Oh, you forgot after shower sex, darling,” she turned to Lucius whose expression had changed to amusement laced with perhaps lust, and Hermione smiled. “Which of course led to having another shower and more shower sex,” she finished, before inquiring, “Is your arm feeling better this morning, dear?”

The blond nodded dumbly as she walked towards him to kiss his cheek, “Good morning, Lucius.”

“Hello, pet,” he returned the kiss, “Severus,” they nodded to each other.

The Matron chose just that moment to appear, “Ah you’re here.” She took a breath, “The paper was extraordinary this morning, and good to see.” The three friends gave once another puzzled looks, which the Matron missed, and she continued speaking, “Now his arm will be fine, I’ve removed the bandage, but he should take it easy today.”

Hermione was having trouble stifling her laugh, at the look on Lucius’ face, finally he couldn’t remain silent. “Might I remind you, that I am still here, Madam, and further more that Severus Snape is not my father,” he stated imperiously, rising from the chair he’d been sitting in, in full aristocratic ire.

The three friends flooed straight from the Infirmary to the Manor, and there was a mad dash for the
Prophet which lay folded neatly on the table. Severus was quickest, swiping it up, he started to read out loud. Once he had finished reading he looked up at Hermione, and just pulled her face forward to kiss her. The paper was forgotten, he was so pleased, they were being supported, as he knew they would be. Their kiss grew more passionate and they became lost in each other.

Lucius had been sitting quietly watching them. Suddenly he had tears prickling his eyes. Their beautiful intimate play had just served to remind him of what he didn’t have, and why he was stumbling blindly out of Severus’ floo last night. Rising he said quietly, ”I’m sorry my friends, I find myself rather tired after that uncomfortable bed last night,” he was rather proud of the fact that he’d made it through that sentence.

However, his voice still contained a husky quality, and they both heard the sadness contain there in. Realising they had been exceedingly thoughtless and selfish, they both reached for him. Severus addressing his friend, “We’re terrible sorry Lucius we got carried away.”

“Mmmm,” his friend replied still not trusting his voice. Both Severus and Hermione suddenly noticed Lucius looking around, as if lost. The debris from his excesses had been cleared away by the house elves, but they heard him sigh, as if remembering what had caused his lapse in judgement. Finally he looked at them, his eyes sad, “I really am very tired.”

Hermione glanced from one man to the other. Lucius really did look exhausted, even if the Matron had given him a sleeping potion last night. She smiled at Severus who could see a devious plan forming in her mind. He nodded, so in her best bossy voice she commanded, “Come on,” both men looked at her. “We’re all going to lie down and have a rest. We had a late breakfast we don’t need lunch til later. So we’ll set the alarm for mid afternoon?” She had a wizard in each hand, “Whose room then?”

Lucius raised an eyebrow to Severus, “Bossy isn’t she?”

“Severus chuckled and sighed lovingly, “Yes, wonderful to hear, isn’t it?” He followed this statement with a frisky swat at her bottom, “We’ll go to our rooms, Miss Cheeky.” Hermione laughed merrily and led the way.

When they arrived she continued, “Shoes and outer robes off everybody,” as she got rid of hers and climbed on the bed. Severus you on your side,” she patted the space next to her. “Lucius come and put your head just here,” she indicated her lap. “I can sense you need to unburden yourself.” Nobody argued, Hermione watched as Severus warded the door and toed off his boots and robes. Lucius did the same with a little help from Hermione with his robes and coat as she knelt up on the bed. When she’d finished, Severus pulled her down and gathered her into his arms to cuddle. Whispering, “You’re a very special lady. This is exactly what he needs.” He kissed her temple and watched Lucius scoot in next to Hermione and after arranging his still slightly sore arm so it wouldn’t get bumped, he place his head carefully, exactly where she had indicated.

When Hermione started stroking his head like a mother would a child, she wasn’t certain it was the smartest thing she had ever attempted, but she wanted him to feel safe. He initially tensed, but after a shaky moment she heard him sigh, and then felt him relax a little, it was then she asked soothingly, “I don’t suppose you’d like to tell us what upset you last night would you?” her voice trying to put him at ease.

It took a little time, and some more stroking, but surprisingly he started talking, softly albeit, but talking never the less. “It’s silly I suppose, when I went to Emily last night, I saw that she’d only recently bid goodbye to another man.” His gaze glanced up to Hermione’s. “They all do it, one man after another. But for some reason, last night it bothered me, we still had sex but I couldn’t seem to satisfy myself with her. I left as soon as we were finished.” He drew in a shuddering breath, “When I
got here, well I was still horny,” he stopped talking for a moment and started drawing circles on the quilt with his finger. The room filled with silence, Hermione opened her mouth and drew breath but Severus stilled her. Gaining her attention with a caress, he shook his head.

Sure enough, Lucius collected his thoughts and continued while they listened quietly. “In an attempt to try and sate myself, I decided to use the lovely images of you two writhing against each other…” he drew shaky breath, “That exquisite red bra, it was lovely, pet.” He captured one of her hands still stroking his head and brought her palm to his lips. “I don’t think either of you realised exactly how utterly charming you look together.” His eyes lifted to Severus’ and he smiled wistfully. He thought quietly for another moment, “Anyway the thing that unsettled me happened next. I was imaging Severus showing me, well never mind,” pausing once more as he felt Hermione continue her ministrations. He rubbed her thigh gently in thanks, and continued, “At any rate I was all caught up in imagining, but the fantasy changed without me realising and it was no longer you, but someone completely off limits. She made me so hot I exploded almost immediately.” He yawned, so relaxed from Hermione’s continued stroking movements, “Well I panicked. The pictures in my head simultaneously enflamed and scared me. I don’t think this person would ever be assessable to me… or willing… ever. There is every likelihood that she hates me for past deeds committed in ignorance. I was confused that I’d imagined such a thing. Especially that it had made me so aroused,” he shook his head sleepily.

“So you drank a bottle of Firewhisky and flooed to my quarters?”

“Mmmm,” replied Lucius sounding half asleep.

Hermione gave Severus a no need to remind him look, and said, “Don’t worry Lucius.” She leaned forward and kissed his head, “Things have a habit of working out, love. Go to sleep and rest.”

Severus watched the blond wizard’s eyes close and his breathing even out, “You’re truly amazing,” he murmured into her hair.

“Who do you suppose it is?” Hermione was still stroking Lucius’ hair was they spoke quietly.

“He’ll tell us when he’s ready.” Severus gazed down at the sleeping wizard, “I’ve never seen him relax like that. You’re good for him, angel.” He gave her a heated look, “So how about showing me how good you are for me,” he cocked an eyebrow at her.

Hermione drew her wand, and cast a silencing charm around Lucius’ sleeping form. She continued stroking the silky blond head but offered her lips to her raven-haired lover. They shared a long and very languid kiss. There was very little else they could do without disturbing Lucius with Hermione’s movement, so eventually they both settled for a nap as well.
Rescuing His Damsel

Chapter Summary

Grave damage is inflicted on Ginny, and Severus is called on to save her, thereby opening the Pandora's box of horrors in his mind as well. Hermione and Lucius find themselves supporting him as he fights to regain his established demeanor after the rescue.

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer:-
There has been no shift in the universe, and I still neither own nor earn anything from this story, apart from the pleasure of writing it. Harry Potter and his world are the property of JK Rowling and her associates.

A/N:- Can we see balance slowly starting to be redressed? This is the chapter many of you have been waiting for, and even though Severus refuses to divulge more than a few tit bits of what he found in Ginny’s mind, some of the detail will come out in future chapters. It was also lovely to see the surge of sympathy in the reviews for Lucius in the last chapter. Please enjoy the next installment…

At the Burrow Sunday lunch was almost finished, and a very tense scene was about to play out. Ginny had forced herself back downstairs when Harry had arrived. The last thing she wanted was a private visit from her loving husband. Her thoughts about that made the pain spike. This wasn’t the first time the redhead had noticed that when she thought about not going back to Harry or staying here at the Burrow, the pain increased in intensity.

Thinking back through the years, she’d always put headaches down to stress. But could it have been something else? Trying to coordinate past acute pain with events was difficult, especially when her head currently felt like it was about to blow off her shoulders. Right now all she could do was fight the rising nausea and try and force food down her throat so she looked like nothing was wrong.

Molly placed her hand on Ginny’s arm and her daughter heard her voice sound in the murky depths of her suffering. “Perhaps I could keep the children for a few days, so you and Harry could have some time alone to resolve things?”

The red-headed witch wanted to scream, ‘NO’, but knew that would only make matters worse. “Perhaps,” she conceded. Molly took in the grin that spread on her son-in-laws face, and it unsettled her terribly. Contained within it was no pleasure, merely gloating, as his eyes narrowed, glinting with an almost evil intent. This was not the first time she had seen this. Glancing quickly at her husband, his concerned expression made her pause, she back peddled quickly, saying to Harry and Ron, “Then on the other hand, if you boys are still planning your Quidditch tour, perhaps Ginny and the little ones might stay here for a visit while you’re away.” The lovable matriarch watched as his eyes narrowed further. The look in them scared her, and she saw her daughter sway slightly and turn paler
then before.

Suddenly Harry’s eyes shuttered, he gave Ron an almost imperceivable wink, which made the corner of the red-headed wizard’s mouth turn up almost nastily. Harry then settled into the loving husband, this trickled through Molly like a frigid river at spring thaw. A truth was revealed to her. She may have been old fashioned and some would think simple, but she was not stupid.

Her only daughter was being manipulated and dare she think it, abused by these two men, and if she didn’t know better she would swear there was something else happening here as well. Would saying something, make Ginny’s suffering more acute? Molly could tell the pain was getting worse, but what was causing it. In the past when her daughter had come to stay here after the couple had fought, she had been plagued by the same headache, yet at other times she never seemed to get them. *We need this day to end,* the confused woman thought.

Then she heard Harry say in an almost mocking sympathetic voice. “Are you suffering after that Malfoy bastard grabbed you yesterday, Gin Gin?”

Ginny’s voice was like velvet steel. “No, Mr. Malfoy didn’t hurt me, Harry.” The look etched on her pain ridden features, was finally accusing him of ill treatment.

Seeing his world starting to topple, Harry lost it. “So, even you, my wife,” Molly saw Ginny cringe, “you’re supporting the Death Eaters now as well.” Everyone around the table was aghast at his accusation.

“Harry,” she tried weakly, “it’s just not like that. I’m grateful that he caught me, I would have fallen on Lily if he hadn’t.” She was in too much pain to fight with him now. That’s all her marriage was now, continual fights and pain, social engagements and being bound, helpless, whist being forced to watch her goading husband and his best friend bugger each other and laugh at her. At least the children didn’t know Daddy and Uncle Ron’s dirty little secret.

Harry had now stood from the table. “So I suppose you all believe the Prophets account of what happened yesterday?” He looked around the table accusingly.

It was Charlie who suddenly stood. “Actually the Prophets version was a little light on the facts,” he watched his brother-in-law start to smile nastily, thinking he had support. “It was much worse than they portrayed,” Charlie continued.

Harry and Ron looked pleased, and Percy sniffed, “Yes, Kingsley wanted me to make an appointment with Malfoy and Snape so he could welcome them home,” he snorted. “As if we want scum like that back in the country.”

Charlie turned to his pompous brother and whispered, “Shut it you twat, before you get yourself in trouble.”

Cutting off whatever reply Percy would have made, Arthur finally stood. He had been listening carefully. “Molly, Ginny, Penelope, please take the children into the front room.” The Weasley patriarch had seen something in Charlie’s expression that meant he didn’t support what Harry was asserting. He had seen this expression in many people over the years, people too scared of the repercussions to follow through with their thoughts. However, he firstly addressed Percy. “Charlie’s right Percy, you’re attitude is about to backfire on you. You have always been a little short on common sense. I am aware that you will attempt to relay whatever happens here to the highest bidder, you must realise that family business is not to be carried any further.”

Percy huffed, “Come Penelope, we’re going home.”
“No, Percy dear, I wish to help,” Penelope said carefully. She was busy assisting Molly with the children and Ginny. Percy huffed again, but stayed put.

Arthur now spoke, “Did you see what actually happened, Charlie?”

“Hey, hang on a second Dad,” Ron interjected, rising on the defence. “Aren’t we going to take Harry’s word? It’s always been good enough in the past.”

Arthur gave a long suffering sigh. “Son, too many times we’ve taken Harry’s word, and it’s turned out to be wrong.”

Harry blew, his wand already drawn. “You bastard, I brought respectability back to this family, by forcing myself to marry your daughter. How dare you not believe me!”

George came to his father’s aid in a moment, and soon the rash black-haired man found more wands at his throat. “How dare you make such assumptions and threaten our father,” Charlie raged. “This family was more intact and respectable before you came back that year, than it is now. I suggest you leave and sort yourself out.”

“Son, what you saw yesterday, was it reliably reported by the Prophet?”

“It certainly was,” he was glaring at Harry, who had risen up to his full height, and was looking defiant, despite knowing he was only a hairs breath from being unceremoniously expelled.

“The only thing the Prophet did was water the story down.” Charlie took a breath, “I had only just arrived at the Leaky when I heard my brother-in-law loudly approaching three people minding their own business. Something made me stop and watch. What ensued was brutal and callous. Harry demanded Hermione Granger speak to him.” Charlie looked around at his father and brothers. “She politely told him, she had no wish to, Ginny seemed to be trying to get him to stop, and he shoved her out of the way, she fell. Lucius Malfoy caught her and Severus Snape grabbed Lily out of the way, or she would have fallen on the child. He then accused them of manhandling his family.” Charlie’s eyes hadn’t left Harry’s as he spoke, until he turned to look at his father. “But the bit that really revolted me was him hexing an unarmed witch, point blank. He was the aggressor, Miss Granger had no warning,” Charlie said, as he explained the whole truth.

When he was finished, there was a deathly silence. Finally Arthur cleared his throat, “I think you better leave and think very hard about these events Harry. I know you have always maintained that Hermione Granger betrayed us all. I have never believed that to be the case, and have always regretted that for the sake of peace I bore not seeing the vital young woman I had come to think of as a daughter. Someone, who had no one else in this world to call family. I then watched her being denied everything she strived for, I’m pleased Minerva protected her from what I now realise was you.” The kindly Weasley drew breath, “You married my own daughter also against my better judgement. Your marriage has given us three beautiful grandchildren, but I can see that Ginny is utterly miserable. Over the years I have done a lot of listening and waiting, I know that now is the right time. I think you should leave.” George and Charlie were hunting him with their wands. Arthur’s eyes were sad as he turned to Ron. “And let it be stated here and now Ronald, even though you are my son and I love you, your behaviour has also been reprehensible. If you continue to support Harry Potter and neither of you change your ways, then you are no longer welcome here either.”

The ensuing standoff was heated on both sides, and neither Harry nor Ron would see reason. Arthur finally collapsed into his chair in frustration.

“You heard my father, both of you out,” George said.
Harry turned at the door and sneered spitefully. “Don’t think this is the end of it. I’ll have the last laugh. After all, I’m the one in charge of the Aurory you know. When your daughter’s dead Snape and Malfoy will be where they belong. I’ll have all the evidence I need, because it’s a dark curse that ails her. Don’t think you can cross me and get away with it.” He raised his wand, his eyes glittering with malice and he spat, “Afflicatio maximus.”

A bolt of magic shot through the house and there was a howling scream from the front room and the sound of children screaming, “Mummy, Mummy.” Harry looked at his father-in-law and laughed, “Fools,” he yelled, and both men turned, Disapparating before the hexes aimed at them connected, and leaving four horrified open mouthed men.

Arthur shook himself and rose. “Percy, call Minerva tell her what’s happened and ask if Poppy can come. Then you and Penelope to take James, Albus and Lily to your home ward it securely, and keep them safe. George, explain to your mother what’s happened, tell her we’ve gone for help and stay with her and Ginny. Charlie come with me.” Arthur already had his cloak on.

“Where to, Dad?”

“Malfoy Manor of course, it would take Bill too long to get here, and I think Snape and Malfoy are more knowledgeable anyway.” He sighed, “I only hope they’ll help us.” They were out the door and Apparating away.

At the Manor, Draco was having his share of family problems, but on a very much more trivial level. His mother had caused her usual upsets and the Greengrass’ had retaliated in front of the children. Narcissa had left in a huff as soon as lunch was finished and Astoria had gone upstairs to rest, her back ache getting worse. The rest of her family were just leaving when two panicked looking redheads approached the front door. Seeing the snotty Greengrass’ off the property, Draco turned and addressed Arthur. “Arthur, Charlie. What can I do for you?”

“We’re very sorry to disturb you, but it is imperative that we speak with Lucius and Severus as soon as possible. Are they here?”

Draco raised an inquisitive eyebrow, but nodded and called an elf. “Please inform Masters Lucius and Severus they are needed urgently at the main entrance,” he glanced back at the two almost terrified looking wizards “An emergency if you will, Arthur and Charlie Weasley wish to speak with them,” the elf disappeared. “Please, come in gentlemen.”

The words were only just out of his mouth when a sob sounded from upstairs. “Draco,” came his wife’s insistent cry. The blond man rubbed his forehead. “I’m sorry, but I think she’s in labour. I need to...” he was making to and fro movements.

Even in his distress, Arthur was his usual kind self. “Draco, go to your wife, thank you for your assistance, we appreciate it,” he assured him, “I’m sure we’ll be right from here.”

Draco nodded, and sighed in relief. “Thank you, I’m sure my father and Severus will be here momentarily, excuse me,” and he ran off up the stairs. He had just disappeared out of sight when Arthur and Charlie heard distant running footsteps.

Severus and Lucius had been shocked by the sudden arrival of a house elf, and especially when it delivered its message. The noise had woken Hermione, blinking she’d seen her bed mates hurrying into their outer robes and shoes. “What’s wrong?” she demanded.

“Arthur and Charlie Weasley are at the main doors. There’s a problem we don’t know what yet.”
Lucius looked kindly at her, “You stay here and rest, love, I’m sure we won’t be long.”

But her feet were already over the side of the bed, she swayed before righting herself. “No, I’m coming too.” Suddenly they were all running towards the front entrance of the house.

The expressions of alarm and panic on the faces of the pacing wizards waiting for them, took away any thoughts of civilities. “What’s wrong?” Severus demanded, he was clutching Hermione’s hand and Lucius was behind them. Arthur looked fearful seeing the three of them initially, he’d been unsure they would be accepting of them initially, he’d been unsure they would be accepting of them until Snape’s words sunk in. “It’s Ginny he’s cursed her, she’s in agony and we don’t know how…” he hadn’t even finished speaking.

“Where?” Lucius demanded, surging forward.

“At home,” Arthur offered, “We’ve called Poppy,” he added lamely.

They were all heading out the front doors. “Potter I assume,” Severus spat the name, the redheads nodded. “What words did he say?”


Severus grimaced, and gripped Hermione’s hand tighter. “We need to hurry. Go, we’ll follow.”

There were five cracks of apparition outside the Burrow, as they became sensible of their environment a shrill howl was heard from within. The men communicated with almost mono syllables, “Where?” Snape demanded. Arthur pointed, Severus and Lucius ran, Hermione trailing after them.

When they entered the front room, Poppy Pomfrey was watching Molly gravely. The Weasley matriarch had tears streaming down her face as she attempted to calm Ginny, and George comforted her.

Turning on hearing the rush of feet into the room, Poppy sighed, “Oh Severus, thank Merlin. I don’t know how to stop it, and her distress has started contractions, her body’s rejecting her baby. Hopefully once you have her stable I’ll be able to settle the contractions.”

Severus thrust Hermione towards Lucius and was on his knees next to Ginny, as Arthur pulled Molly out of the way and embraced her. Charlie and George were simply standing around looking helpless.

Severus told the afflicted woman every step of what he was going to do. “Ginevra, I need to find the spells inception so I can neutralise it. You will feel me in your head?” All Ginny could manage was a weak moan, “All right, hold as still as you can and no matter what keep your eyes open.”

Ginny was sweating profusely, and had vomited twice, looking at Poppy as she cleansed the distressed woman once more, Severus said, “I will be as gentle as I can be but you did bring anti-stroke potions didn’t you?” The Mediwitch nodded. “Hermione, keep both our brows as free of sweat as possible.” Hermione was instantly beside Severus.

They were both surprised when Lucius shed his outer robes as well and joined them. “You take care of Severus, and I’ll look after Ginevra,” Lucius advised.

Snape set to work, “Legilimens,” he muttered. It took almost an hour and a super human effort on Ginny’s part not to give into the pain. Suddenly Severus found what he was looking for and tiredly mumbled the counter-curse. Everything instantly went quiet without the constant panting and
moaning. However, they heard Severus gasp and say more words. Words that Poppy understood and she was ready.

Severus fell back tiredly on his heels and Hermione sank down beside him conjuring water. “Here love, drink this,” he was shaking so much she had to help him. Hermione wet a new cloth after vanishing the soiled one and wiped his exhausted face, she realised there was terror shining in his eyes, similar to what she’d seen there ten years ago. Stroking his face softly, she leant her forehead on his. “I love you, and you are safe with me,” she whispered, holding his face in her hands.

“Thank you, I needed that,” was his weak reply. Lucius helped him to his feet then kept an arm on him until he regained his strength. While Hermione had her arms around his waist and her head resting on his chest, desperately trying to let him know it was all right while they watched and hoped.

Molly and Arthur saw the true calm of serenity and fierce love between the man who had just saved their daughter’s life and Hermione, and the bond of friendship the three shared as they stood supporting Severus after what Arthur imagined must have been a terrible ordeal. “Thank you, Severus,” Molly said, grasping his still shaking hands. “Nobody else could have done what you just did.” Then turning to his friend, “Lucius; thank you,” Molly patted his hand. Finally she turned to Hermione, her eyes full of pain. “I’m so sorry Hermione,” she cried, “After all those two idiots have done to you, you still came willingly to help.” It was too much for poor Molly she was sobbing.

Hermione gave Severus a tight squeeze and looked up at him. He nodded that he was all right, so she drew Molly into a hug and comforted her. “There, there Mrs. Weasley, there was little you could have done, you weren’t to know. I really never blamed any of you, and it wasn’t Ginny’s fault either. I could see she tried her best to stop him yesterday.”

Poppy was now working on the unconscious woman, wielding every medical spell in her arsenal that she thought might help. “I think you managed to isolate the whole bleed Severus, well done.” The Mediwitch’s statement drew a gasp from the assembled family, and drew Molly back to her daughter.

Severus nodded tiredly, rubbing his forehead as Hermione’s arms enveloped him once more. This time he put his arms around her as well. “I only hope I didn’t do any damage, rifling through her memories so quickly.”

Poppy scolded him, “Don’t man, the way her blood pressure was rising we’re lucky she’s still with us. It has started to drop now, but I must still deal with this threatened miscarriage. She needs to be at the infirmary, Poppy looked around the room.

To everyone’s surprise Lucius was already lifting the limp form from the lounge. “Come on then, let’s go,” he turned to Arthur. “May I respectfully suggest Arthur, that you and your boys see to the safety of the children and anything else she holds dear, when Potter activated this curse, I believe he realised his family had become redundant.”

Molly wrapped a blanket around Ginny’s unconscious form, and Hermione replaced Lucius’ robes and cloak around him then drew it around Ginny as well placed a sticking charm to keep it closed while he apparated them. It was too dangerous to floo her to Hogwarts.

Poppy produced a sustaining potion to fortify Severus, then Molly and her Flooed straight to the infirmary. Severus and Hermione went with Lucius to make certain everything was all right, Hermione Side-Along Apparated Severus to help him conserve his strength.

Minerva looked up and stilled as the Floo flared. She’d been pacing. “Well?” she asked hesitantly, as
Poppy started setting up in case she had to deliver Ginny’s premature baby. “She’s still with us only thanks to Severus and his knowledge of dark curses, but not out of the woods yet I’m afraid, Minnie. Can you open the window when you see him and Malfoy approaching?” Poppy pointed to the balcony window adjacent to the entrance.

Molly was beside herself with worry, and started pacing in Minerva’s stead.

It wasn’t long and a powerful gale blasted through the Hospital wing as two wizards landed lightly. Lucius took off at a run to reach poppy and Severus placed Hermione back on the ground. “If it hadn’t been for the circumstances I would have enjoyed that Severus,” they heard her say as they approached. Poppy was so intent on her task she didn’t even think to scold Lucius for over doing it with his not quite healed arm.

Snape, as exhausted as he was after his energy sapping journey through Ginny’s mind and the effects of what he saw there, snapped straight into Potions master role. He’d seen some truly awful things in the young woman’s head. He hadn’t felt this nauseous since his spy days. Once he had Poppy’s list of requested brews, clasping Hermione’s hand tightly for comfort, they went off to make them. “I’ll have to collect some of the ingredients from the Manor,” he told her. “Will you start the cleansing Potion and the Blood Replenisher while I’m gone?”

“Of course, my love.” Hermione reached up and kissed him. She sensed something was wrong, he’d been shaking ever since he’d come back from Ginny’s mind, she reinforced what she’d said earlier, “I love you, darling. Don’t be long.”

Severus managed a little smile for her, “Sweet Merlin, I love you,” he declared and kissed her back, “I’ll be as quick as I can.”

Back up at the Infirmary Lucius stood back watching and not really wanting to leave. However, he suddenly realised it was only family there now and they might think it strange he was still there, so he quietly backed away. Going to the floo he stepped out in Severus’ chambers, “Severus?”

“Lab,” Hermione called, “He’s gone to get ingredients, how’s Ginny?”

Lucius sighed, “Still unconscious. Arthur, Charlie and George have just arrived with her children, and a little brown dog, all safe and sound.”

“Oh that’s good news,” Hermione said, trying to appear cheerful.

The trio had now done everything they could to guarantee Ginny’s survival, and were sitting in Severus’ quarters having their third night cap. They’d missed dinner, and Severus had been told when he’d gone back to the Manor that Astoria was at St Mungo’s, so dinner there had been cancelled. Draco had since sent his father an elf with a note saying they expected the baby before dawn.

It was now the wee hours of the morning, Severus had spent hours with Kingsley and a handpicked group of Aurors handing over memories of what he’d found in Ginny’s mind. It was decided that in order to keep them safe, they would remain with Minerva in the Headmistress’ office. All of them were due to attend a meeting in Minerva’s office the next morning. Severus suspected that a new Order of The Phoenix was about to be commissioned to deal with all the issues associated with Harry Potter.

He was now reclining with Hermione, with his head on her lap. He would never tell her what he’d seen in the poor woman’s mind. All he did admit to her and Lucius was that she’d been under some
form of the Imperious curse when she married Potter, and apparently no one had noticed. Then that it
wasn’t Ginny’s fault that their friendship had stopped, “Potter and Weasley forbid her to remain
friends with you. There is now enough evidence to have Potter sacked, lynched and thrown into
Azkaban, and definitely enough for a quick annulment of a bogus marriage. The poor woman will
never have to spend another moment worrying about Potter.

Severus contemplated quietly for a while before he spoke again. “I’m not certain that he’s not
suffering from a curse himself. After what he’s done to his wife and you, angel,” he caught her hand
and kissed it. “I get the feeling he’s been tainted by a powerful coercive form of dark magic. He
certainly needs help, Weasley as well I suspect.”

“I must admit the same thought has been running around my mind, but would we ever get the chance
to do that?” Lucius inquired, rubbing his sore arm. Severus shrugged.

Hermione sat there quietly thinking, “Do you think it was something we picked up during that year
away?”

“Possibly,” Severus agreed.

“Well why didn’t it affect me?”

“You’re Muggle-born, my dear,” was Lucius’ prompt reply. “Magic of that nature only affects half
and purebloods, unless it is more specific.”

Hermione looked slightly affronted but also confused, Severus sat back up. “It only shows the casters
ignorance, but it saved you, angel,” he took her face in his hands and kissed her.

She looked into his eyes, “So something activated it?”

He nodded, “Yes, no doubt the caster would have been a Death Eater, and it would have been one
killed in the final battle or immediately after. Because you said it was only after the battle that they
started to change.”

Hermione nodded, “Why would the caster have to be dead?”

“A sort of warped legacy if you will,” Lucius smoothed, “You know, making certain evil lived on,
all that rubbish.”

“Oh,” understanding finally dawned, and Hermione shivered.

Severus rubbed her arms, “Come on let’s get warm in bed,” he looked over at his friend, “Would
you like to stay with us?”

Lucius gave them a genuine smile, knowing exactly why Severus had asked. “Yes I would
appreciate that, thank you.”

“I could use a bath,” Hermione admitted.

“Actually I guess we all could,” Severus agreed as Lucius nodded. “A relaxing bath to sooth away
the worries of the last hours,” his voice washed over her, caressing her cares away, and in this state
she suddenly found herself overwhelmingly tired.

Hermione heard a strange noise she couldn’t quite place. It was vaguely like the sound the door had
made when it appeared, then the calming running of taps and fragrances wafting up to her, she was
happily enveloped in Severus’ arms and knew she was safe, so didn’t worry. The feeling of magic
rippling over her prickling her skin deliciously and they were naked.

Her eyes opened long enough to note that the bath was a round tub, and huge. “Lucius have you been tinkering with the fittings again,” she heard Severus say, as they settled in.

“Well it was rather small, dear friend,” the blond chuckled.

“You’ll never change,” his friend asserted, snickering quietly and then they were washing her. There was nothing, yet everything sexual about it, it was incredibly erotic. The men pampered her, their ministrations lulling her deeper into slumber as she relaxed like a rag doll against Severus.

Then while Severus bathed, Lucius held her in his arms. His eyes ate Hermione’s naked form up hungrily, but he was transfixed by the beauty he was allowed to hold and protect. As much as he wanted to have more intimate knowledge of this lovely witch, he refrained. He knew this wasn’t a sexual encounter, and it did his heart more good than anything any one could have devised to help heal the shattered organ. Severus covertly watched his friend from under his dark lashes. He saw the tears well up in his eyes, and murmured quietly, “Yes, she is perfect isn’t she?”

All Lucius could do was nod, his mind still racing. He nodded his head slightly and kissed the sleeping woman’s forehead. “Do you mind if I have a moment alone?” Lucius swallowed hard, his friend smiled as he took Hermione into the bedroom.

Hermione woke the next morning snug and warm between her fiancé and his best friend. She could feel Severus’ even breathing on her neck, and saw crystal clear grey eyes watching her. She looked towards him and whispered, “It’s Ginny isn’t it?”

Lucius took a shuddering breath. “You really are the brightest witch of your age, aren’t you?” Hermione smiled, and his hands came up to caress her face. “Don’t tell will you, I know it’s futile,” he swallowed, “but I can’t help it, although I know she’ll never want me.”

“You can’t possibly know that Lucius,” a sleepy baritone voice murmured.

Hermione leaned forward as much as she could, feeling Severus’ arms tighten around her. “Severus is right you know, but your secret’s safe with us dear friend, don’t fret. Did I for one moment think a few days after the Ball that I would be laying here, engaged to my soul mate? And yet here I am, anything is possible Lucius.”

“You’re a very special lady Hermione,” Lucius gave her a tender kiss. “I have many things to organise today. I’ll see you both at breakfast.” He kissed her once more and patted Severus’ shoulder, “Thank you,” he offered before sliding out of bed. A Slytherin green silk robe slithered onto his naked body. Another wand movement saw his cloak settle around his shoulders, and he strode out the bedroom door.

“Good morning, my darling,” Hermione murmured, turning over and taking Severus’ face in her hands.

Severus smiled slowly, “Hello,” their wake up kiss was slow and languid. “We better have our coffee and get started as well,” he murmured against her lips.

“Mmm,” Hermione replied still giving him gentle kisses. “Sorry I went to sleep on you last night, I didn’t realise how tired I was.”

Severus took in her apologetic eyes and inhaled deeply. “It was beautiful, Lu even choked up. He’s never had anyone trust him like that,” the raven-haired wizard caressed her face. “Even if you’d
planned it you couldn’t have made it better. We were able to worship you,” he kissed her, “wash every inch of you as you dozed peacefully.”

“Mmm, it felt very erotic, the feel of hands and cloth stroking me before I was properly asleep.”

Their coffee had arrived but neither wanted to relinquish their caressing hold on the other, their hands slowly mimicking last night’s caresses, repeating and enhancing memory. “I want you,” Hermione whispered.

“Oh angel,” Severus groaned and his mouth replaced his hands as his body surged forwards rolling her onto her back and balancing above her. “Waking up like this each morning is perfect, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” she panted, holding his head against her breast. “I wish we were married now, so we only needed one set of rooms.”

His mouth was now on her stomach, “All we have to do is set the date, my delicious, little love.”

Severus was dropping teasing kisses on her inner thighs, and tracing patterns with the tip of his tongue, going anywhere but where he knew she wanted it. He chuckled when she growled in frustration. “Do you have anything in mind?”

“Yes Severus, you putting that wicked tongue to good use,” she groaned. His laugh was deliciously dark as he teased the seam of her thighs a little more. Then without warning plunged his tongue into her, fluttering it. Making her squeal with delight, “Yes,” she panted between shudders, “oh yes.” Then he was pouncing. Hermione didn’t have time to miss his ministrations before she tasted herself on his lips and his shaft slid home. “Yes,” left her lips in a long hiss of pleasure. Her body arching up off the bed, “I love you.”

“And I you,” he proclaimed in a groan, as they lost themselves in each other.

Their love making this morning was heated, “Did we decide?” Hermione was panting, basking in the afterglow.

“Only on how much you like my wicked tongue,” still catching his breath Severus turned on his side to look at her, and leaning forward traced circles on her shoulder with the appendage to demonstrate. “Do you normally visit that mirror of yours every morning?” he inquired between licks.

“Usually, why?”

“Well you’ve been dreadfully negligent then, haven’t you? When did you last invite attention from my alter ego?” Hermione shivered as his voice scolded her.

“Yesterday morning,” Hermione replied.

Pulling her close he whispered hotly, “Well tonight I suggest we include him in our games,” his voice caressed her. “Perhaps Lucius would also find him intriguing also.”

Hermione shivered again, “Yes, I would enjoy that.”

“I can see that, you’re such a wanton little thing, aren’t you?”

“Mm hmm,” she grinned rubbing herself against him. After a moment, Hermione drew breath, “Do you think there is some way we could we add a charm so Mirror could follow us to the Manor, like the portraits are able to?”
“Well that could be your next challenge then, maybe in the summer holidays. Because we’ve still got about thirty potions to get through and Merlin only knows what else might pin us down today.”
Severus picked up his wand, cast a cleansing charm on them both and warmed their coffee.
Chapter Summary

Contained within this chapter is an explanation of what Severus and Lucius think is going on with Harry and Ron, and our intrepid threesome finally get together.

Chapter Notes

**Disclaimer:-**

*I neither earn nor own anything. The writing of this story is for pure pleasure of using the characters and setting. I will return them mostly unharmed and on the whole very happy once this story is finished.*

The morning did indeed prove to be a busy one. Ginny remained in a coma, her body taking time to recover. Poppy Pomfrey was certain that the damage had been contained by Severus’ well placed spell. The Mediwitch had managed to stop the contractions, and the baby appeared to be unharmed. However, Poppy was obliged to inform Molly and Arthur that she was unable to tell how much time would pass before the contractions would start once more, and she was uncertain what sort of damage may have been done to Ginny’s mind.

It was understood that once she was conscious she would need to have complete bed rest, in a stress free environment until the baby was born. Minerva had then been informed, and immediately deemed it imperative that Ginny and her children stay at Hogwarts. “I already have wards up to alert me to Misters Potter and Weasley’s presence because of their campaign against Hermione,” she told Molly and Arthur. “Ginevra will also be close to medical assistance, with Poppy able to check her progress everyday if needed.”

Arthur’s expression closed off, and then he sighed. “They really have been despicable, haven’t they? I feel so angry with myself for not having supported Hermione…” he swallowed hard. “If I had, this may not have happened to Ginny.”

“You can’t know that, Arthur,” Molly said gently, her tears never far from the surface. “We have all been blind.”

“And that is exactly what they wanted to happen.” The trio gathered around Ginny’s bed turned with a collective intake of breath on hearing the silky baritone voice. “Please don’t think badly of yourselves,” Severus continued. “I think there is powerful dark magic at play here, and it is being wielded by one who does not understand what he’s doing.”

It was a measure of their respect for Severus, that they all took the comforting words without question. This was regardless of the fact that the words were being offered by a mouth they were unused to hearing reassurance from. They knew this wizard was seldom mistaken, and even in their horror of what had happened to them, Molly and Arthur took heart.
Hermione squeezed Severus’ hand and smiled. She mused silently that even offering consolation he still wore his patent poker face, and she was glad to feel his hand tightly laced through hers. “How is Ginny, this morning?” Hermione asked quietly, still a little uncertain of her welcome. They had both stopped by after breakfast to see how things stood.

It almost broke her heart to see the pain on Molly’s face. She’d already lost one of her children, but now she had two more in the balance. The pain of motherhood was clearly etched on her face. Children are not supposed to die before their parents. Hermione considered that there was probably no greater tragedy to a parent.

Molly offered her a wan smile, and said, “Thank Merlin, she’s stable.” The Weasley matriarch had just placed her hand on Severus’ coat sleeve and opened her mouth to speak, when from one of the back rooms a sleepy cry was heard.

“Mummy?” Little Lily was awake.

Molly looked towards the room, sighing softly, “I’ll see you all later,” and she kissed Arthur goodbye and walked tiredly into the room. They heard her say, “Nanny’s here, angel.”

Lucius, who had been uncharacteristically quiet throughout this exchange, waited behind his friends for the Matron to check his arm. When she finally beckoned him forward, he went almost reverently passed Ginny’s bed, having trouble tearing his eyes off her slumbering form.

The blond aristocrat was told he could use the arm as normal now, but not to strain it for another twenty four hours. After this, the trio left Hogwarts to visit Lucius’ new granddaughter, Madeleine Augusta Malfoy at St Mungo’s.

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Kingsley of course had met with Severus the night before, and they were all to have a meeting with him later. The rest of the returning staff were told nothing about what had happened, and Ginny was quickly moved to alternative accommodation as far away from the general school population as possible. Minerva assigned the family a concealed set of rooms on the seventh floor, just past the History of Magic Rooms.

Molly stayed on to care for the children and Ginny. The Weasley men left to go about their normal business as if nothing had happened. This of course must have been difficult for them, and it was fair to say that when they finally got to have some sleep they all relived Ginny’s horrific ordeal and kicked themselves once more for believing Harry and Ron’s lies so easily.

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The Minister of Magic arrived for a lunchtime meeting. Hermione was currently sitting in the Headmistress’ office between Severus and Lucius. The room also contained Molly and Arthur, Percy in his role as undersecretary, George who had left his assistant Angelina in charge of the shop, Bill newly returned from France as soon as he’d heard, and Charlie.

Shacklebolt started questioning, “Has Ginevra regained consciousness yet?”

“No,” Molly explained. “Poppy is not concerned; in fact she has encouraged the comatose state until Ginny’s mind heals.”

Kingsley nodded, “Regardless I will wish to be made aware of when I may speak with her,” he added. “It was fortunate Potter was on leave when this happened. However, relevant people have been informed not to follow any orders he might issue in the interim, and to inform myself immediately, if either he of Weasley surfaces.”
While the Minister continued to speak with the Weasleys, Severus was watching the spaces either side of him, where he could see two person shaped shimmers. Narrowing his eyes and discretely casting a personal revealing charm. He got the shock of his life when Nymphadora Tonks and Remus Lupin were revealed, enclosed in the sheen of a disillusionment charm, they waved to him. He could hear by his intake of breath, that Lucius had done the same thing.

The Potions Master cast his eyes around the room. *It’s no wonder the poor girl ended up in such trouble. Look at them. None of them are taking any notice.* His attention was brought out of his recollections by a squeeze of his arm.

“What’s that?” Hermione whispered, she was obviously trying to sound braver than she currently felt.

Severus followed where her eyes were pointed. “It’s all right, angel, Lu and I know they’re there. They’re friends, I suspect they’re undercover.”

Lucius had heard, he leaned over and murmured. “I imagine you’ll be introduced later, pet.” His eyes shifted to Severus. “Minerva’s the only other one who seems aware they’re here. It’s no wonder Ginevra ended up in the situation she did, this lot couldn’t tell the difference between a Hippogriff and a Bowtruckle.”

As if hearing their whispered conversation, Kingsley continued. “I thank you all for meeting with me, I’m sure you’re anxious to get back to Ginevra and the children.” He glanced at the trio on the lounge. “I’ll be down with Minerva shortly.” Turning to his secretary, he dismissed him. “You go and visit your sister as well, Percy. Penelope’s already there with the children, isn’t she?”

Percy nodded; his displeasure evidenced by his sniff, although it was difficult to tell whether it was aimed at his wife or his employer. “Yes, she took some leave to help. But Minister, surely I am required here doing my job?”

Minister Shacklebolt shook his head. “No, I do not need your assistance to have a cup of tea with old friends.”

“Oh!” Percy exclaimed.

George laughed, “Come on Prece ya pratt,” and he grabbed him by the arm.

Once they were gone, Kingsley put a finger to his lips. The trio saw him casting strong privacy charms on top of the ones already in place, and the two agents scanned the office with their wands.

Near where Percy had been standing Tonk’s wand tip glowed red. Kingsley honed in and together they cast a Revealing spell then rendered Percy’s eavesdropping spell mute. “Well that’s just scuttled him,” Kingsley mumbled, sounding disappointed.

“Okay, all clear.” It was a voice Hermione hadn’t ever thought she would hear again, but as the pink hair came into view she realised she was wrong in that thought. “Wotcher ’Mione,” Tonks grinned, and opened her arms.

The usually stayed professor squealed, jumped up and ran to her friend’s arms. “You’re not dead.”

It wasn’t long and Minerva was out from behind her desk. “It’s so good to see you, Dora.” She hugged the younger woman as Hermione greeted Remus, who had already enthusiastically shaken hands with Severus and Lucius.

Severus’ prepared montage of evidence from last night was then discussed. “I hope it was detailed
“The evidence was fine,” Remus said, in his own quiet way. “It has signed, sealed and delivered Harry and Ron, case close.” The gentle looking werewolf sighed, obviously disappointed. “Do you know what curse they’re afflicted with? I have a few probable’s running through my mind, but how?”

“We will have to sit down with Hermione, and note all the occasions where the three of them interacted with Death Eaters, until we come across a timeline that gives us the answer,” Severus told them.

Remus smiled and nodded his head. “Kingsley, this is why we need people like Severus and Lucius as consultants. I have knowledge, but they’ve lived it, and also learned to control their dark sides.”

Severus gave a long sigh, “And it would be good to put that ill gotten knowledge to a good use for once,” he tried to smile, but it fell flat.

“We’ll research and find the curse, while you people are concerned with catching Potter and Weasley,” Lucius added.

“But be careful not to underestimate them, I think you’ll find they’ll be completely ruthless,” Severus warned.

“Duly noted,” Remus said, and both he and Tonks nodded.

“You’re correct, Severus.” Kingsley said, he watched a moment then drew breath. “There are few to be trusted in this venture my friends. Everyone in this room has a reason why I trust them. Everyone else is to be treated with suspicion until they have been verified.” He turned to Severus. “Would you perhaps have some already prepared Veritaserum?”

Severus sighed, “Only a little, certainly not enough for what I suspect you intend.”

“However, I would appreciate you allowing me to use what you have. I would like to verify the veracity of my senior personal as soon as possible.”

“I understand, Minister. You shall have it then,” Severus affirmed.

Kingsley drew a deep breath. “I also hate to add to your burden, but would you be able to prepare me a new batch, so I can question every member of his staff and weed out… trouble before it happens.”

“As you wish Minister,” Severus smirked. “It is surprisingly easy to taint, if you know how, isn’t it?”

Kingsley grinned a toothy white smile and nodded, “Precisely, it most certainly is. Thank you, Severus. Minerva will alert me when you make progress.” He stood silently for a moment, before drawing breath. “I had wondered whether forming a mutual rallying point once more would be a good idea. But it smacks too much of Albus’ control measures, so I’m just going to leave well enough alone at the moment. As I’ve said, I trust you all, and now I will wish you all a good morning.”

Tonight was their last night before the students returned, and the three friends had spent all day working. Hermione and Severus had managed to complete all the potions required by the infirmary. Lucius had actually rolled up his sleeves and helped by dicing and slicing, crushing and measuring. While they had worked, the two wizards had quizzed Hermione on her year spent on the run.
It wasn’t until they were almost finished and it was just about dinner time, that she mentioned the break-in at Gringotts.

It was then that a penny dropped. “The Lestrange vault,” Lucius exclaimed. He looked at Severus. “Remember, you were there that day. Bella bitch was harping on about ‘if anyone managed to get near that sword.’” Lucius shivered, as he cackled in a passable imitation of the evil witch.

“She said…” the Potions master’s eyes opened wide. “The vault would be protected with, The Evil Incarnate Curse.” Severus raised his wand to finish the last potion. “That’s the one she said, wasn’t it?”

“Yes, I believe she did.” Lucius’ eyes hardened at the memory of his mad sister-in-law, and he sighed. “It’s a time strengthened curse, isn’t it?”

Hermione’s head was swivelling backwards and forwards, like she was at a tennis match. “So, what does this all mean?”

Severus came up behind her and placed his arms around her waist. “What it means, if it’s true, is we are very lucky that Potter has only recently started to become violent.”

“Are you certain that’s what it is?”

“Try to think of when they started to change,” Lucius added.

“That’s difficult, there were so many times when the Horcruxes… it was like having him whispering things in your ear, awful things,” she shivered.

“I can imagine, I’ve had him literally in my head doing the same thing,” Severus said, with little emotion. “But try to think of a time when you didn’t have a Horcrux close, but they were acting as if you did.”

“So, both of them. Yes, it was after we ditched into the lake to get of the… no, we had Hufflepuff’s cup with us. Damn,” Hermione groaned. “We couldn’t destroy it Griphook took the sword. I destroyed it after we got to Hogwarts with a Basilisk fang. Then Ravenclaws diadem and Crabb being killed… no, I really didn’t have a great deal to do with them after the battle. They went back to The Burrow and I stayed here.” She groaned, “I’m sorry.”

“It can’t be helped, but it’s the best lead we have.” Severus kissed her cheek and released her. Standing clear, he commanded, “Accio maxima, Darkest of Black Magik Protection Spells.” An ancient and large tome sailed toward him through the open door. Turning with it still levitated by his wand, he placed it on the cleared bench and looked to Hermione. “Do not touch it.” His order was given in a deadly serious tone. Then he asked in a slightly lighter one. “Are you skilled in Occlumency?”

“Why?”

“One, you do not touch because it will burn you before sucking you into it, and two, books like this whisper things to you, things you’ll find yourself wanting to do if you listen. I don’t not want you exposed, if you cannot Occlude, it may be best if we take this back to the Manor and extract the information we need.”

“Test me,” Hermione said, not wanting to miss a new experience, but still a little concerned. “If you think I’m good enough, I will stay. If not, I will leave.”

“Well, that’s fair,” smoothed Lucius. “I’ll start, shall I?”
Severus nodded, watching Hermione not only steeling her mind, but her body as well. Both wizards took turns, and it was soon apparent Hermione’s mind was just as strong a steel trap as theirs. The Potions master nodded once more, “Set up the wards, Lu.”

When all was ready, Severus went to a locked cupboard and withdrew a padded box. “The book requires payment to open,” he said, to an obviously curious Hermione. “All you are to do is watch, you will not speak, you will not stop anything we do, and you cannot leave while the grimoire is open.” His eyes surveyed her steadily seeking her assurance. “Raise your Occumency shields, remain silent and just observe,” he reiterated, before turning to his task.

Hermione nodded mutely, she could feel the temperature of the room lowering as she saw them all start to actively Occlude. Eventually she had prickles on her skin, like the time she had accidentally walked through Sir Nick. Hermione watched as Severus opened the small padded box and withdrew the most beautiful silver dagger she had ever seen, then thinking of its purpose she grimaced a little.

Holding his hand above the book, he clenched his teeth and sliced. Once several drops of blood hissed when they hit then disappeared into the leather binding of the book, the clasp locking it shut jumped free. Lucius quickly sealed the gash in Severus’ hand, and Potions master used his wand to open the book.

Now she understood why Lucius had methodically gone around the room and secured everything. A chilled draft seemed to ruffle and tear at their hair and clothes like prickly little pins stabbing them as Severus turned pages with his wand.

Hermione then found herself being accosted by sensation; it tickled her softly, sliding over her skin as a lover’s caress, so seductive. But at the same time unsettling her dreadfully somehow, like whispers you can’t quite hear that annoy and taunt, like a Horcrux. The men seemed immune, but then Hermione thought they were far more experienced, and had known what to expect.

Severus was dictating a passage to Lucius, it was in Latin. The gist of what she heard told her that the curse urged the one afflicted to do its bidding or madness ensued. The good news was that if this was in fact was what was troubling her erstwhile friends, there was a counter-curse. However, the spell once placed, could only be removed by one of the same blood as the caster. Hermione wondered what that meant, as she became far more uncomfortable suddenly.

It was at this moment that she realised that the book was indeed sentient. Severus was closing it, having the information he required, and it was objecting. Hermione stopped thinking and focused her magical energy on helping her lover, because more than anything at this moment, she wanted the tickling prickles to go away.

With the three of them focused, the book shut, the catch snapped shut by Lucius’ wand and it was once more bound in its protective restraining spells. Severus then banished it back to its warded prison.

Hermione realised she was panting slightly and she felt exhausted, but euphoric, like an endorphin high when you’ve expended a lot of energy.

Severus came around the table, and placed his hands on shoulders. “Do you see now what a truly dark object is?”

She nodded. “What would it do to an unprotected mind?”

“The words mince meat come to mind for what would be left,” Lucius scoffed. He had conjured some dark chocolate. Breaking a piece off, he said, “Open pet, it will make you feel better.”
Hermione obligingly opened her mouth and he slipped the confection in, and then watched as he gave Severus some as well. Dousing the sconces, they headed into the sitting room.

“So is that the most likely cause of their behaviour?”

“Oh course it is entirely possible that it’s post traumatic stress from the horrors they’ve witnessed, or he may have just got away with too much, having been handed the keys so to speak of the Wizarding world.” He drew breath, and exhaled noisily. “It could be a combination, and yes, there is the slim possibility that it’s another curse. But this one sounds the most likely, considering your shared history.”

“So what do we do next?”

“We march up and inform Minerva. Then tomorrow, before the dunderheads arrive back we go to Gringotts and run diagnostic spells. If it turns out that this is the curse present. I think circumstantially anyway, we have our answer.

They were now back from seeing Minerva, and Severus drawled, as they shut the door. “I think it’s time for a little stress relief.”

Hermione grinned as his eyebrow rose. She wondered what he had in mind, and then remembered what he’d said that morning. She saw his mischievous look, and heard him say, “We never got to show Lucius your present,” his eyebrow rose, “or your mirror.”

“No,” her grin became wider, especially as Lucius blinked and gave her a most salacious look.

Severus wore a sly smile when he turned to Lucius. “Would you like to see my love’s special gift, Lu?”

The way Severus asked and seeing Hermione stiffen in pleasure; Lucius knew he was in for something special. “Most definitely, my friend,” he replied smoothly. “Where would you like me?”

“I think we should make ourselves comfortable in Hermione’s bedroom.” Severus called an elf, “Champagne, I think?” He raised an eyebrow and Lucius nodded. “Now, we will have to ask you to Disillusion yourself temporarily, her playmate is sometimes a little shy,” Severus drawled. “Go in and settle yourself on the bed, on the side closest to the dressing mirror.”

Lucius gave his smiling friends a look of suspicion, but acquiesced happily. They watched him shed his cloak and coat, and once he was Disillusioned, they followed his shimmering image into Hermione’s bedroom.

Hermione felt a pulse of anticipation between her legs knowing she was going to enjoy this, as they trailed along after him.

Once they were all placed, Severus smiled wickedly and pulled Hermione to stand in front of him next to the bed, turning her to face his blond friend Severus whispered to Hermione. “Are you ready, my love?”

“Oh yes,” she murmured, and slithered wantonly up and down his body.

“Yes, I see you are,” glancing up at Lucius he cast a non-verbal spell so they could see him, and Severus’ eyes flashed as he turned to the mirror. “Oh randy image of me,” he called, running his hands the length of Hermione’s body, and eliciting a longing moan from her.
They both heard the slight gasp from the bed as Mirror Severus shimmered into view. The likeness cocked a raven brow, and smoothed. “Good evening to you both, I see my dove is here to entertain me,” the image smoothed, his eyes taking in Hermione’s undulating movements against Severus’ body.

Severus set to work quickly, as her rubbing was having a distinct effect on his trousers. He slowly popped each button on her blouse and parted the material, remembering how her breasts had sat on top of the material of the bustier this morning when he’d put it on her.

Shifting the silk of her blouse to the sides, he watched his hands in the mirror as he caressed. Severus heard her moan when he then ran his hands over the lace and ribbons of the lacing down the front. Then up teasing her nipples a little higher for their viewer’s pleasure. Glancing up he could see the effect the sight was having on Lucius. “Reach back and kiss me, love,” he murmured.

Hermione groaned and did so, her cry of pleasure increasing when this made the breasts pop out of their flimsy holdings.

Severus’ answering chuckle made her realise this had been his intention. “Ahhh, take the skirt off,” Hermione whispered hotly, against his mouth.

The accompanying wicked laugh, made her stomach flip and a gush of wetness dribble onto her thigh. Squirming for purchase on Severus, Hermione tried to rub herself back onto his thigh. “Uh-uh-uh, my darling,” he scolded playfully and shifted. “I think you should allow your mirror a word, after all he may wish to show you how grateful he is that you’ve finally remembered him.” He turned a sly smile to his alter ego. “Isn’t that right Mirror?”

“Yes, my delicious, little dove, you know how much I value your visits. Allow your love to pleasure you for me.”

“Damn Severus, it’s been all day, I’m so hot,” she moaned, her voice husky with need.

“I would never leave you unsatisfied, love, have patience. Let our audience enjoy you.” Her tight satin skirt was slithering liquidly down her legs and pooling on the floor.

They heard gasps from both Lucius and the mirror, when their observers realised that the scrap of lace covering her sex was crotchless, and had little jewels hanging from the top where the lace split in two.

Hermione felt fingers in her sodden folds and she hissed a breath in relief, as Severus captured her mouth once more while circling her clit with his finger. Lucius seemed mesmerized watching her hips writhing in reciprocal circles with Severus’ finger, and then turning to observe the mirrors reaction to it all.

“Shall we tell mirror about our new friend?” The thick suggestion against her ear was answered with a deep moan. “I’ll take that as yes then,” he smoothed, and chuckled. “We have an extra playmate tonight, mirror.” Severus watched the face in the mirror survey the room. He cocked an eyebrow, “Would you like to meet him, Mirror?”

Severus walked over to the bed with Hermione. “Finite,” and Lucius shimmered into being as Severus sat up against the headboard and pulled Hermione onto his lap back against his chest. “Do you approve, Mirror?”

“Oh, most definitely, sir. Two of you to attend to my little dove’s needs, this is most excellent.”

Turning to his friend, Severus said, “You must taste Hermione, she’s delicious.” Severus had already
recommenced the work of his finger. There was no need for a repeat of that invitation. The blond wizard was in front of them in a split second. Severus chuckled and commanding further, “Lick her, she loves it, she’ll reward you one hundred fold,” his words had Hermione writhing on his lap.

Suddenly Severus’ hands were on the insides of her thighs shifting them wider. Hermione glori ed in the feeling of being so exposed, so wonderful. Her lover was displaying her for his friend’s pleasure and theirs.

Her pants and sighs at Severus’ words turned to a deep groan as she felt Lucius’ tongue lick her from bottom to top. One lick told her it was an organ just as skilful as Severus’ and she revelled in it.

“You’re correct as always my friend, never have I tasted a sweeter pussy,” and without further encouragement he buried his long tongue into her as far as it would go. The sensations of a tongue in both her sodden wet little cunt and another searching and caressing her parched mouth, had her keening sooner than she wanted to. Both men felt her legs begin to shake and soon her breathing hitching. They doubled their efforts, her own hands caressing her hungry nipples. Her cry as she came undone was feral in its qualities.

Once he had drunk his fill of her, Lucius moved higher and adored her breasts, while his fingers now delving where his tongue had been.

Hermione’s hands were holding Lucius’ head in place; her brain was so pleasured it had ceased to work. Eventually she was aware she was being shifted, Lucius had risen and Severus had placed her on the bed. Soon they were all naked. Some of her sense was returning and she looked to obsidian eyes for instructions.

“Up on all fours my angel. Lucius sit in front of her.” They both did as they were bid and Severus whispered in her ear. “You enjoy my cock so much I thought you might like to try Lucius.” Hermione moaned in reply and wet her lips.

Gazing at the equally spectacular phallues in front of her, Hermione took one in each hand and curling her hands stroked. “You are both beautiful. It is a prerequisite of a Slytherin man to have a perfect prick?”

They both laughed. “No,” Lucius chuckled, “I’ve seen some truly average one’s.” The men looked at each other and laughed, “Rookwood,” they said in unison. Severus went on to explain for Hermione’s benefit that the man in question had a penis about three inches long when fully erect.

Hermione continued stroking them both lovingly and sighed. “Well I’m glad both my wizards have better assets than that,” and she lowered her mouth onto Lucius, earning a hiss of satisfaction from him. Hermione was still running her hand up and down Severus’ length while her mouth was otherwise engaged. The dark man moved closer for her, and watched happily as she pleasured Lucius.

The lowering of Hermione’s head to reach Lucius’ cock, had sent her delicious derrière skyward, and while he watched her mouth moving on his friend, Severus’ index finger had sunk into her welcoming folds. Moving around without removing the digit, Severus got on the bed behind her.

Hermione shuddered at the feeling of Severus’ tongue running through her once again slick flesh. This combined with the taste of the man in her mouth felt delicious. Lucius tasted different to Severus, but was still just as delectable. Applying herself her head bobbed up and down over his length, she could hear his moans of appreciation and encouragement.

“Pet,” Lucius panted, “You’re amazing. Severus is a very lucky man, ooohhh.”
Severus took this as his cue and slid home, sheathing himself in one stroke. He grinned when it made Hermione shudder wonderfully and moan around her mouthful of Lucius. His one action had the effect of enflaming all three of them, and he started thrusting strongly.

The vibrations from the groans and sighs in the back of Hermione’s throat were sending Lucius closer and closer to his climax.

Without warning, Hermione felt strong hands fist in her hair and start shifting her head up and down.

“Ooohhhh yes, that’s right,” Lucius groaned. She initially tensed at his urging, so he crooned instructions. “Relax, pet,” he felt her fighting to do so, “That’s a girl. Swallow him, oohhh good kitty,”

This was something Hermione hadn’t reckoned on, as she felt Lucius pushing himself deeper and deeper into her mouth, thrusting up as he brought her head down. But as he instructed, and she relaxed, she found it didn’t hurt, or choke her. It actually felt amazing. She heard him say, “Ooohhh pet, I’m coming, love,” this groaned statement was followed by a gush of warm liquid down her throat, and a sated cry she would never have suspected the blond aristocrat capable of.

Hermione noticed that Severus had eased his thrusts while Lucius enjoyed his moment. Now he doubled his efforts. Leaning over her arched back, his hot breath arrived in her ear. “Did you enjoy making Lucius come undone, my angel?” His only answer was a moan of need. Snaking his hand under her belly Severus kept thrusting and his finger stimulated her higher.

It didn’t take long and her voice rose to a howl. Severus chuckled in her ear. “Now it’s your turn, I’m going to make you lose it completely, my love.” Suddenly his voice was gone and his hips were thrusting wildly. Her head was thrown forward and her eyes were closed while she panted.

Feeling a warm mouth arrive on her breast her eyes fluttered open again. “Hello,” a grinning Lucius said. She watched as he deliberately teased her nipple, flicking his tongue back and forth over it. It was just heaven, her eyes shut and she stilled as her release torn through her, enveloping her completely, but she shuddered more when she felt Severus fly apart behind her.

Feeling her collapsing, Severus grabbed her around the waist and drew her up to him. Scooting across the bed out of their way, Lucius made room, realising Severus wouldn’t have very much strength left either. He watched as if in slow motion the pair toppling forward panting and laughing joyously. He joined them, for the first time in a very long time he was somewhere where he felt loved and cared for.

Having already recovered from his orgasm, Lucius made them both comfortable. As their breathing returned to normal he offered both their glass of champagne. Then summoned a huge cut crystal bowl of strawberries and commanded it to hover in front of them while they ate. “First course in a naked picnic,” he commented, “Possibly the best I’ve ever envisaged.” He saluted them with his glass, “Thank you to both of you for allowing me to join with you.”

Hermione and Severus both laughed in reply. All three raised their glasses to each other, and both men kissed one of Hermione’s cheeks.

Once they had sat together munching on strawberries for a while, Lucius asked, “I wonder what a champagne, strawberry and Hermione Sundae would taste like?”

Severus grinned, and the mirror continued to watch, although everyone had all but forgotten about him. “Well there’s only one way to find out. Lay down, sweetness,” he said, giving her a kiss.
Of course being Slytherin’s they hadn’t played fair in the least. They knew the strawberries weren’t about to stick to Hermione delicious bits, so they added a temporary sticking charm to allow it to happen. The remaining strawberries obligingly hopping out of their bowl and blooming on her like a living bikini.

Hermione watched them cackling as they added the whipped cream they’d summoned an elf to bring. Squealing she clamped her legs shut in shock as the cold cream hit her. “Hey, that’s not fair you two.”

They merely chuckled and sat back to admire their work. “Explain to me exactly what’s not fair,” Severus’ silky voice asked, as he carefully filled her belly button with the remaining champagne. He knew his next move would silence her, allowing the bottle to slide to the floor he dipped his tongue into her navel, lapping at the fizzy drink.

As he expected she groaned loudly. “Severus,” his name finished in a decadent moan, and her legs obligingly fell open again, now pink and sticky with cream and strawberry juice.

“Well that solves that problem,” Severus smirked. “Would you like to eat from top to bottom or bottom to top?” His cocked his eyebrow at Lucius.

“I believe I would prefer bottom to top,” Lucius grinned lecherously at the writhing Hermione.

“These strawberries are tickling me Severus, oh and the creams melting,” she shrieked, laughing helplessly.

“You don’t say,” the Potions master answered mischievously. “Better stay still then and let us fix that problem for you.”

With that, both men started licking, nipping and kissing strawberries off Hermione. Lucius started in her left hip licked his way up her inner thigh. His tongue repeatedly dipping into her sex as he worked his way up, Severus did the same thing in reverse order, starting on her right breast. By the time they had reached the opposite ends, Hermione was writhing on the bed, desperate for someone to satisfy her.

Severus chuckled and plucking the last strawberry from Hermione, crawled back up the bed to feed it to her from his lips. “So you don’t miss out completely, my darling.” But she couldn’t manage an answer.

Then they reversed what they’d done the first time with the now very sticky woman, Severus looked to Lucius. “You sit as you were before, but be careful of that hand,” he warned, “I’d hate to have to explain to Poppy how you tore it open again.”

“Hey I’m fine,” Lucius replied and waited to see what Severus was going to ask of Hermione.

Taking Hermione carefully he arranged her over Lucius. “Guide yourself in and I’ll help her. I think we may have over stimulated her.” He heard Hermione groan as he lowered her over Lucius’ rigid shaft. “Here you go angel, can you manage?”

Hermione nodded and started moving, she was already well along the way, but she still reached for Severus’ cock. He was concerned she was getting tired. “No I want to,” she said, when he told her it was all right.

Getting her own way, she was riding Lucius while happily licking Severus. The fun didn’t last very long though and she keened having been already so primed. Groaning deep in her throat she quickly fell over the edge taking Lucius with her. But she went down sucking, and Severus followed just
from the look of complete pleasure on her face.

“That was so much fun,” she giggled, leaning back on Lucius’ legs her head on Severus’ shoulder. “I’m so relaxed I could sleep for a week,” she’d flopped off Lucius onto the bed proper.

“Well you have a nap, my love.” Severus kissed her tenderly and used a cleansing charm to get rid her and the bed of any stickiness. Lucius helped him pull the quilt up around her and they got in either side of her with the cheese platter and caviar hovering as the strawberries had. “Good job we cast an impervious on the quilt,” Lucius said, pouring the port. “Thank you both for a lovely evening,” he leant over and kissed Hermione who sighed, and rubbed Severus on the arm.

Severus nodded then laughed. “Yes it was pretty special, wasn’t it?” Both men settled down with their port and snacks. “It’s a pity we wore angel out,” he stroked Hermione’s head. “I guess she’ll get more stamina with practice.”

“Well really when you consider that she only started having sex yesterday, she’s amazingly uninhibited and brash,” Lucius said contemplatively.

Severus looked down at her lovingly then across to the mirror. “Yesterday may have been her first time with a living partner, but believe me when you see what she’s set up for solo enjoyment, you’ll understand why she’s so uninhibited,” Severus chuckled, and took a sip of his port. “We meant to show you tonight, but other more delicious ideas came to us.”

He took a deep breath. “After the abuse that’s been heaped on her so pleased she trusts us.” He glanced down at her, “She needs security and a sense of belonging.”

“Is that why you decided to ask her to marry you so quickly?”

“Mmm, that and the fact that no one has ever been able to make me feel what she makes me feel.” He took another quick glimpse of his sleeping love. “You know how hard it is for me to let go, with her it just happens, no thought required, and look I’m completely naked, showing all my scars, I never do that. She’s just perfect.”

Stretching out sleepily, Lucius sighed. “You’re very lucky, I’ve always wanted someone like that, but I’ve never found her.”

“You will, Lu, you will,” Severus yawned as well and banished the tray with the remains of supper.
The trio with Bill Weasley discover that they were correct about the curse. Hermione and Severus set their wedding date, and term resumes at Hogwarts. How will Lucius survive the seventh years witches who are--much to Severus and Hermione's amusement--eyeing him like a fine piece of meat.

Meanwhile Kingsley has sacked Percy, who has promptly disappeared, but who attacked his wife, Penelope? Bill rescues her and brings her to Hogwarts for treatment. What will she say when she wakes up?

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer:- I neither own nor earn anything from this story. The plot and anything you do not recognise is mine, but the wonderful world of Harry Potter is the property of JK Rowling and Associates.

A/N:- My sincerest apologies for taking so long to get this chapter posted, it has been a difficult couple of months for me, life interrupted my writing endeavours in a fairly nasty way, but everything seems to be getting back to normal again now.

Just a warning, there is a non-graphic mention of a suspected attempted suicide in this chapter. It’s only a short entry, and it’s only alluded to, but I like to warn people anyway. This chapter is only suitable for mature readers, as it also contains sexual scenes. I hope it’s worth you long wait, happy reading…

The ride in the rail cart down to the Lestrange vault brought back awful memories for Hermione. She was sorry now that she’d insisted on coming, but the opportunity to work with two reformed dark wizards and a former Gringotts curse breaker was too wonderful a chance to pass up. So, she wasn’t about to tell Severus just how much she hated trips down to the Gringotts vaults, especially this deep, she never thought she’d be back here.

Bill had organised this excursion after Severus had spoken to him at breakfast. Lucius had skipped breakfast for a business meeting in muggle London, but had met them at the bank at the allotted time.

Being a past employee of Gringotts, Bill was on good terms with the goblins, and being a curse breaker, he knew that the security present would still be active, especially seeing this vault had sealed itself after the break-in near the end of the war and now couldn’t be opened, Narcissa had tried several times and failed. So, it remained locked, because Andromeda had disappeared after the war.

Of course, the fact that it was locked didn’t stop them from working out what curses were present; the magical signatures could be called upon to do that. Thankfully it wasn’t possible to be affected by any of the security measures now when the vault refused to open. Bill suspected it was something to
do with the Gemino curse also still active on the vault. If the doors opened now, they would be swamped by useless copies of goodness knows what.

Hermione was eternally grateful that they couldn’t get in. She was having enough trouble, without the prospect of having to deal with memories of that day as well. She was currently jammed on one side of the cart between Severus and Lucius, with a death grip on Severus’ arm as they dipped and weaved along the track, face hidden in his coat sleeve, and her mutinous stomach threatening to expel her breakfast.

As they approached the Thief’s Downfall, her breathing started to labour, and her heart was thumping so loudly she wondered why it wasn’t echoing off the cavernous walls, even over the noise of the cart and the screeching of its breaks. Then they emerged from the other side of it, but this time there were none of the issues of last. The water didn’t affect them at all, and the cart was finally slowing.

The goblin in control of their expedition looked to them. The four of them clambered out and set to work. It was painstaking and dangerous striping away the echoes of the layered security curses. If one of them had been a recent Black relation it would have been much easier. As it was they had to fight with each layer to stabilise it.

Lucius and Bill had the least trouble as they had distant relatives who were black’s, so there was a little Black blood coursing through their veins, so they took on the hardest ones.

What Severus and Hermione lacked in blood relations they made up for in power. Hermione hadn’t until that moment actually considered which of the noble wizarding families had produced the squib that was her ancestor. “Perhaps I should research my family and find out who I’m related to,” she said, thoughtfully, wielding her wand on yet another layer of security.

“Chances are, you won’t want to know when you find out,” Bill scoffed.

Severus swore as a curse stung his hand, the magic sparking and crackling. “Well, I think it’s safe to say that the Prince family are not related to any of the mangy mutt’s,” he asserted holding his wand steady regardless.

“You’re very pleased about that, aren’t you?” Lucius smoothed, before unexpectedly drawing breath and saying, “A-ha, there it is.”

The distinctly bluish black glow signalled that they had found what they were searching for. It had been a little like peeling the layers from a cabbage or lettuce, and putting them back had to be done just as carefully.

All of them had lost track of time, and realised when they finally released the last layer that not only were they exhausted, but famished. Finally wiping his brow, Lucius pulled out his pocket watch and said, “My, it’s actually one o’clock. I think we’ve all earned a sumptuous lunch at my club.”

“Mmm,” Severus agreed, and sighed. “This is our last afternoon of freedom before the dunderheads descend upon us.”

Bill shook his head. “I’ll never understand why you two decided to take these professorships on; you’ve already escaped one, Severus?”

“I had my reasons,” Severus glanced at Hermione who seemed busy contemplating the ride back to the surface.

“Oh,” said Bill knowingly, “that is indeed an excellent reason,” he said as his eyes panned between
“Well, I for one have told her only until the end of the year, or she finds a suitable replacement,” Lucius added as they climbed back into the cart.

After what seemed like another age, they were back above ground and in Diagon Alley, and Hermione breathed a sigh of relief. She followed behind Bill and Lucius on Severus’ arm as the blond aristocrat led them up the swankier end of Diagon Alley and into an exclusive club.

As she walked up the Alley, the chestnut-haired witch was already noticing wizards tipping their hats to her, and witches smiling where there had been cold disdain for the past decade. So she made a mental note of each one of them, they were all such turncoats, and it made her blood boil that they were so spineless. It looked like she was in favour now. _Well bugger them all_, she thought. _Where were they when I was being persecuted?_

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When Severus, Hermione, Lucius and Bill returned to Hogwarts, they attended a meeting that had been arranged when Minerva spoke to Kingsley last evening.

This meeting was now in full swing. “Andromeda Tonks is probably the closest blood relation who could remove the curse from Potter and Weasley, apart from...” Severus eyes swung to Lucius when he heard the blond wizard stifle a growl. “Yes well, Andromeda would be the easiest blood relation for us to deal with,” he paused, “if we could find her. If not, either Tonks or Draco would be able to help, before we resort to trying Narcissa.” This time they all heard the soft growl.

Bill chuckled at the scowling Lucius. “Geez, Malfoy old man, ‘bout time you gave up on that grudge isn’t it?”

Lucius had mellowed a lot, but he snarled at Bill, “That’s enough of that old man talk, Weasley, _old_ man. I subscribe to the ‘revenge is a dish best served cold’ theory, and I’ll hold a grudge as long as it takes to bring the bitch down.”

“Oh well,” Bill laughed, “it’s your blood pressure.”

Lucius pouted and crossed his arms, although he knew Bill was partly joking, he had a little too much of the twins sense of humour in him, which left Lucius wishing he could curse him.

Ignoring the exchange, the conversation progressed. “Yes, I agree, and I know where to find Andromeda,” Kingsley said casually, taking a sip of the tea Minerva had provided.

Hermione was getting a little cross with all the cloak-and-dagger business. “Where?” she asked, irritately. Where’s Andromeda, she disappeared with Teddy after the war, didn’t she, and while I’m asking, I’d also like to know why Remus and Tonks are pretending to be dead to us?”

The Minister sighed, but answered. “Hermione, I asked them to disillusion themselves because of Percy, I’ve suspected for a long time that there was something amiss with Percy Weasley, and as you saw yesterday,” he paused, “I was right.” Then looking at Bill, he said, “No offence to your family intended, Bill.”

“None taken, Perce has always been a royal prat,” Bill shook his head.

This time Kingsley grimaced. “Mmm, I had no choice but to dismiss him. I had Remus and Dora already in position to tail him, I think he’s mixed up with our fugitives.”
The men and Minerva nodded, but Hermione wasn’t satisfied. “So, they’ve let all of us think they were dead? What about Teddy,” she interjected, starting to feel angry.

Kingsley smiled at her tenacity, but this time Minerva answered. “You know what the general British Wizarding community thinks of werewolves, especially after Greyback’s policy. They made the decision to leave if they survived the battle, so Teddy could start anew where he would not be ostracised for his father’s condition. As it is he lives a happy life and is home schooled by Andromeda; in fact he has a brother and a sister now as well. They all live near the lycanthrope community on the Shetland Isles, and Remus is now the alpha. They have so little to do with mainland English Wizarding society now that no one recognises them anymore.”

“Oh,” Hermione’s exclamation was short and breathy, her anger draining away.

After Hermione’s interruption, Kingsley took over the explanation. “I thought given their obscurity, they were the perfect choice to hunt down Potter and Weasley. Now, I really need to be going, there are many things to reorganise, and I’ll pass on all the information when Dora or Remus make contact with me again. How is Ginevra today?”

“There’s no change yet,” Bill informed him. “But Poppy assures us that she will wake up soon.”

Minerva’s countenance became serious. “I’ve changed the wards to recognise and repel Percy Weasley as well, even though I’m not certain he would harm his sister.”

Hermione was still thinking over everything she’d been told, suddenly she spoke up again. “What about Penelope?”

They all looked at one another, and realised that no one had checked on his wife. “I think I’ll go and check on her,” Bill stated, and rose to leave. *How could I not have thought of Penny?* he scolded himself as he strode to the floo.

Kingsley soon followed to return to the Ministry. As soon as they were gone, Minerva who had been sitting quietly listening to everything, changed tack. She pursed her lips and her eyes sparkled as she looked pointedly at Severus and Hermione. “So?” she demanded, “Now that we have that sorted out, what about a wedding date, you two?” and there was definitely mischief in her eyes as she suggested, “Perhaps Valentine’s Day, next year?”

As she’d predicted, Severus scowled at her and wove his fingers through Hermione’s. “Over our dead bodies,” he declared, before looking at Hermione. “There will be no bloody horrible frilly hearts or fat pink cherubs at our wedding, he stated categorically.

Lucius added his two cents worth. “But we could have a Spring Ball at the Manor.” He smirked, drinking in the scowls on both of his friends faces. “It makes perfect sense. We can have a private hand-fasting ceremony if you wish, then a Ball to celebrate.”

“No,” Severus said deliberately. “The hand-fasting must be public, I know we are both private people, but I wish the world to know that Hermione belongs to me, and I to her.”

“I agree, and we wish to have the hand-fasting soon,” Hermione agreed, covering their joined hands with her other one. “I would like our hand-fasting ceremony to be under my favourite tree by the lake, if possible.”

“On mid-summer eve,” Severus stated, “That is the perfect time for renewal and consolidating goals,” he said, squeezing Hermione’s hand.
“Perfect,” Hermione replied squeezing back. Tearing her eyes away from his dark orbs she looked to Lucius. “And a festival of celebration, where perhaps the wedding guest culminate the evening at Stonehenge to observe the sunrise?”

“Of course, my dear,” Lucius acquiesced chuckling. “That’s perfect, there all settled, it will be June 21,” he finished definitively, smiling kindly at his friends. “Don’t worry Minerva, we’ll organise everything,” Lucius insisted further, turning to the headmistress.

Hermione smiled, but then bit her lip, “That’s not too much work too quickly, is it?”

“Certainly not,” Lucius insisted.

The Headmistress watched Lucius carefully and saw the loneliness in his eyes as he said this so cheerfully. It was obvious that he was putting on a brave face for his friends. She could plainly see he was a completely lost soul. *He’d be horrified to think I can read him like that,* she laughed to herself.

She’d also watched him last night and realised he’d handled Ginny very tenderly for their shared history. Then she remembered that apart from flying and Quiddich, Ginny had loved History. So she decided to do a bit of Dumbledoreque meddling, and hopefully give two equally lost souls some direction. *After all they both have a common interest, and it will keep Ginevra occupied with something that wouldn’t over tax her, after all, we’re all adults here.*

Once she was satisfied the wedding plans were all settled and had refilled cups with tea and the plate with ginger newts, Minerva inquired, “Do you have everything organised in order to join staff yet, Lucius?”

“Almost,” he replied tentatively. “As you would be aware I have many ventures which require my occasional, but regular attention to keep moving forward.”

*He couldn’t have said it more perfectly,* Minerva thought. “Yes I was afraid of that, and it was very good of you to agree to help me out temporarily. I think therefore you should have an assistant as well.”

His eyebrow rose. “Do tell, surely you’re not suggesting taking the delightful Professor Granger off Severus,” he snickered gently.

“Get your own assistant,” Severus snapped possessively. Hermione knew he was being playful, but Minerva wasn’t quite so sure.

“Now now, gentlemen.” She turned her attention to the blond wizard. “Lucius did you know that Ginevra was the last student that I know of who pulled old Binns out of his ghostly stupor?” Lucius’ eyebrow rose, very interested in this development.

Hermione’s mind however, wandered somewhere else entirely as Minerva continued, “Had there been more favourable circumstances her last year. I think she would be the History professor now.” She paused significantly to allow what she’d said to sink in. “Well I was wondering when she is able, if you would allow her to become your assistant?” Another pause, “Provided she’s agreeable.”

“Providing she is agreeable, there is much merit to that idea. I will consider it carefully,” the usually arrogant wizard smoothed. While inside his unflappable exterior, Lucius Malfoy was doing a very refined version of a happy dance.

They were just saying their good-byes until later when a Patronus stalked into the room. “Inform Poppy, I’m bringing Penny to the Infirmary, she’s been injured,” and Bill’s voice melted away with
his wispy blue wolf.

Severus, Hermione and Minerva were instantly on their way to the Infirmary. Lucius had promised to visit his new granddaughter again, and didn’t think there was anything he could do anyway, so he floo’d straight to St. Mungos.

After Bill’s warning Minerva had done the same to inform Poppy. When they arrived, Bill was standing back while Poppy murmured healing spells. Severus took one look at the injuries and motioned Bill over to speak to him. “That doesn’t look self inflicted,” he said softly.

“I know, but I didn’t want to say. She was unconscious when I found her, she’s lost a lot of blood; the bath water was red.”

“I think I’ll ask Poppy to draw some blood for a toxicology screen,” Severus said. “I believe someone wanted us to think she was committing suicide.”

“It’s highly unlikely that she would bother over Percy. Penny and I would meet for the odd cup of coffee here and there, she was a smart girl, and Percy was always patronising her. She confided in me the last time I meet with her that she was planning to leave him, so I doubt she would slit her wrists over him.”

While the two wizards discussed the situation, to help Bill’s werewolf senses, Hermione started to Scourgify the air, and Minerva saw what she was doing and went to help Poppy by cleansing Penny’s body and hair.

After all was sorted, Poppy approached with a vial. “I heard all that and I agree, she’s been drugged before this was done to her, can you find out what it was so we can wake her up?”

“Certainly, Poppy.” Severus nodded, and without further words he turned towards the floo after clasping Hermione’s hand tightly to take her with him.

While all this had been happening, the students had arrived back at the castle and it was humming with noise and activity once more.

When they arrived from the Infirmary, Hermione and Severus went straight into the lab. They didn’t discuss this development, but they both knew it was something to do with Hermione’s erstwhile friends.

Severus was planning to start Kingsley special order of Veritaserum when they returned from dinner, and now they had this extra task. So, he was testing Penelope’s blood while Hermione cut and diced the first ingredients for the Veritaserum. She placed each one under a Stasis charm as she went, as well as watching the base for the potion condensing down in the cauldron it would reside in for the various stages over the complete next lunar cycle.

They were conversing quietly as they worked, both intent on forgetting what they had just seen. “Are you upset not to be head of Slytherin?” Hermione inquired as she carefully sliced ragweed. The stuff smelt disgusting and she’d utilized a Bubble-head charm to avoid the stench.

“No,” Severus stated emphatically, not looking up from his work. “I was offered the position, but I’m more than happy to allow Sinistra to continue in it,” he said, placing careful drops into a sample. “Damn it’s not that either,” he muttered. Taking a break from his work to stretch his back, he watched Hermione place the Stasis charm on the ragweed.

Going back to his testing, he tried another known sleeping potion, if it was this the blood would turn clear and not coagulate like all the other samples had. “Ah, finally,” he mumbled, “now I need to make,” he rubbed his forehead. “Hermione can you set up a number 6 pewter cauldron, I’ll be back in a moment.”
Hermione raised an eyebrow in question, but she did as he asked, she knew he’d tell her once he’d stopped thinking. He had the mumbliest thought processes she ever heard, and she adored listening to him.

He was back with an arm full of ingredients and they set to work. She loved working with him. She’d only ever worked next to him once while he was brewing an antidote for something he’d had to work out first. It had been a few days ago and little Xanthia had come across something unknown in one of the greenhouses. He’d worked out what it was and brewed the antidote, the little girl was still recovering, but she’d get better, and all because Severus knows his job so well.

It wasn’t a difficult brew and Severus tested it on the last of the blood. It must have had the proper reaction because he looked pleased. He really turned her on working like this, the power and knowledge he wielded so easily was incredibly sexy to her.

“I just floo this up to Poppy,” he said, placing the vial in his coat pocket and giving her a kiss. “I’ll clean up while you’re gone,” Hermione smiled, watching him walk to the floo.

It wasn’t long and he was back, he quietly slid his arms around her waist as she finished wiping the work bench down. “It worked,” he murmured. “Now Kingsley can find out what happened,” and without further thought, his lips arrived in the crook of her neck pushing his voice directly into her ear. “Now, perhaps we can have some time together, in peace.”

As he spoke his hands wandered from their perch on her waist and up to her breasts. Hermione felt herself start to throb with need more intensely and quickly pushed herself further into his wandering hands. “Severus,” she sighed in a long drawn out breath. “We still have an hour before the feast. Please I need you,” her voice descended into a lust filled whine, and her backside glided seductively over the evidence of his need.

He pushed that need into firmer contact with her sweet little derrière and groaned into her ear, as a thrill from the contact licked through him. “Come,” his heated breath crooned.

Hermione moaned, she would follow him anywhere when he was like this.

A quick wand movement sealed the entrances, he was having her all to himself and didn’t want any interruptions, Lucius and everyone be damned. He had enjoyed their encounters with his blond friend, and was happy to direct them when it pleased them both to do so, the same went for the mirror, but Hermione was his and the world would know that tonight.

Severus released her from her clothing, leaving her in her underwear, and guided her over to his desk where he levitated the papers off to a side cupboard.

He offered her his hand. “Hop up here, on the edge,” he watched her smile deliciously and open her legs. He took a moment to take in the wicked sight in front of him. He had turned all her knickers crotchless and she was now displayed in front of him wearing nothing but black stay-up stocking, a crotchless blue lace thong and cobalt blue stilettos.

Severus shivered; the fragrance wafting of her was intoxicating. He whispered a cooling charm on his finger tips and ran them up the inside of her thigh while releasing himself with his other hand. Hermione squealed and shivered violently, “That feels wonderful,” she groaned.

His eyes were fixed to her sex tensing and contracting in anticipation, Severus grazed his cool fingers over her bare pussy lips, pausing just a moment to flick her clit.

Hearing her whimper of disappointment when his hand strayed away again, his eyes flicked to hers and he saw her fighting the urge to grab his hand and bring it back where he knew she wanted it. Reinforcing his thoughts, Severus lent forward to her ear once more. “You’re cunt is exquisite, and I’m going to make you scream my name, my witch, do you think you would like that?” and he punctuated his sentence by blowing in her ear at the same moment as he brought his cock to her entrance and rubbed the organ seductively up and down her saturated cleft.

“Oh yes, Severus… please,” she groaned in reply. “Now, I’ve been longing for you all day.” She knew what he was doing, he was reaffirming that she belonged to him. The phrase ‘my witch’ was very pointed, so she freely offered what she knew he wanted. “Fuck me… please me. I am yours…” there was a pause as she reeled from the pleasure of his growl and the feeling of him filling her so perfectly. “All yours,” she continued in a broken voice, as pleasure washed over her. “Only yours.” “Yes, only mine,” his voice was hoarse with passion as he pounded into her. “Say it again, witch…
only mine.”
Hermione could feel her climax roaring towards her from his action and his words. Her voice was breathless as she told him. “Yours, I’m all yours. I love you, Sev-errrruussss… oh god… yyyeeessss,” and her screaming groan of completion was punctuated with his name like a prayer. His witch clung to him as he searched for his own release, her tight velvet walls milking and squeezing him. He kept thrusting and felt her start to relax around him before suddenly the fluttering start anew and he sensed a second orgasm starting to roll over her.
All Hermione could do was hang on to him. The world went away. The only thing she was sensible of was Severus, the sound of his panting grunts in her ear, the smell of him in her nose, and the feel of him filling her so perfectly. Another ball of sensation was tightening in her belly, twisting, like a rubber band tighten and she was unable to speak from the pleasure of it.
The only things coming from her mouth were guttural exclamations of pure ecstasy. The band tightened and tightened, further and further, dancing her closer and closer to her own personal Nirvana. The tightest suddenly snapped and Hermione yelled, panting, pure pleasure licking through her. She was only vaguely aware of Severus’ thrusts becoming erratic. The pull of her own pleasure rendered everything else mute.
Hermione saw Severus still when she forced herself to open her eyes and his mouth formed a perfect o. The tendons in his neck strained under the pressure of his unspoken yell, and she felt him pulsing deep within her, groaning with each spurt of his release.
In order not to collapse on her he flopped backwards into his desk chair, legs splayd out, useless, and his chest heaving like an athlete who’d just run a mile.
Unable to concentrate further than that, Hermione flopped back on the desk, her own legs slipping off the edge. She was unaware of how long they lay there, only becoming sensible when she heard Severus roll the chair back toward the desk; it had scooted back when he landed in it so heavily.
Somewhere in the time it took Hermione to recover from the pleasure induced stupor she’d fallen into, Severus had stripped down to his trousers. He spoke to her as he watched her eyes finally flicker open. “I’ve decided to take you to the bathroom now. Strip you naked and have you from behind against the shower wall.” He watched with eager eyes as the part of her anatomy right in front of him convulsed excitedly at his suggestion.
“Oh, I like the sound of that,” she said, pulling herself up in his arms and kissing greedily.
He chuckled. “Now do you indeed?”
“Oh yes, very much.” Grinning, she hooked her legs around his hips just above his long slung pants, and held on tightly around his waist.
“You’re a wanton little minx,” he enthused, and lightly slapped her luscious arse. Her response was to plaster she herself up against him and rub, making a tiny mewling sound.
She gave him a cheeky grin when he groaned in response to the feel of her wet centre against him. This only encouraged her and safe in his grip, Hermione threw her head back and stroked herself wantonly against him. “Oohh yes, that’s my girl,” he rewarded her with a smouldering kiss, his hand rubbing her backside before sliding between them to tickle her, then he finished carrying her into the bedroom and through to the bathroom.
Shifting his grip to hold her securely around the waist he smoothed, “Down you go, you delicious little temptress.” A flick of his hand saw the candles floating above her spark into life, and his eyes surveyed her. “You’re so gorgeous,” he asserted and he kissed her, trailing down over her throat and onto her breasts and making her breath hitch anew.
Their coupling in the shower was the opposite of the one on the desk, which had been fast and hard. This time it was slow, heated and deep, and the difference between the cold of the tiles against her front and the heat of the water and Severus’ slow and deliberate strokes against her back undid her...
quickly.

Afterwards they lovingly washed each other and finally, reluctantly dressed, although Severus was almost certain she’d creamed herself all over again when she saw him in full teaching regalia. “Oh my love, I’d forgotten how utterly hot you look in your beautiful billowing black. How am I going to keep my hands off you?”

“I’m certain we’ll find opportunities for you not to,” he offered, smirking and leaning forward he said, “May I add that I think you look far more delicious.”

She groaned, running her hands over the wool of his frock coat and the silk of the teaching robes to link around his neck, they shared one more, deep passionate kiss and then prepared to meet the entire population of Hogwarts for the first time as a united front.

The hall was full of chattering students as they approached the teacher’s entrance. Severus seated Hermione, and glanced down at the glint of the diamond in the ring she wore. He couldn’t quite believe it had only been a little over a week since the ball that had started it all. So many things had happened since then. He knew that Minerva would announce their upcoming nuptials tonight, and Merlin help him, he was actually excited.

No doubt it would feature in the Prophet tomorrow morning to, as again, the highly officious headmistress would have put forward the mandatory notice. Taking a deep breath he seated himself next to Hermione with Lucius on his other side.

Severus noticed the blond aristocrat watching the students wearily. “Perhaps this wasn’t such a good idea,” he whispered. “Those girls look like predators in sheep’s clothing.”

“Don’t worry, Severus is being examined in exactly the same way, and Neville and Bill always have been. They’re hormonal teenagers, randy as hell,” Hermione whispered.

“And completely off limits,” Severus added sardonically, seeing the look of interest that passed over his friends face.

“Now Severus, you surprise me. Like I would take advantage of innocent lambs,” his wounded tone worked perfectly with the look of mock innocence, which in itself was a monumental feat, even without the accompanying faultless pout as he watched some seventh year Ravenclaws giggling at his expression.

“I’m starting to wonder exactly who the predator is?” Hermione whispered to Severus.

Who smirked and whispered hotly in return. “Did you sit there all doe-eyed when you were a teenager?”

“Most certainly,” Hermione whispered back, her hand quietly wandering to his crotch and squeezing. “But I only ever had eyes for one professor.”

“Indeed,” Severus replied, covering her hand and urging it to stay.

Both professor’s watched on, like they were up to nothing as Minerva rose from her seat.

The headmistress opened her arms. “Welcome back, students of Hogwarts. I have several announcements before the feast commences.” Minerva glanced around the hall. “I think it is apparent from the chatter and giggling that most of you have noticed our two celebrities. Professor Lucius Malfoy will be professor of History of Magic for the remainder of the year.”
She waited while Lucius acknowledge the thunderous applause that greeted this announcement. “I am also very pleased to welcome back a professor who has returned to us after a long absence. Professor Severus Snape will be teaching potions.” There was another round of applause, as well as whistling and cat-calling this time.

After a time Minerva put her hands up for silence. “I have one more announcement. Professors Snape and Granger, would you please rise.” The headmistress glanced across at them. “I gives me great pleasure to announce that on June 21, at the height of mid-summer night, Professor Hermione Granger and Professor Severus Snape will be married, here on the grounds of Hogwarts school.

There was utter silence for a moment, and then the hall literally erupted with cheers. Hermione had never been the recipient of such joy. Even Severus had a smile trying to tug his mouth upwards. Many students shot stars into the air from their wands and some conjured flowers to throw. The seventh years started a clapping chant. Hermione remembered them doing this when Neville and Luna became engaged six years ago, and she knew what happened next. She was surprised they remembered, because the current seventh years would have only been first years then.

The noise was becoming deafening, and the other professors all looked at them expectantly. “Well,” prompted Minerva. “Kiss her; they won’t give up until you do.”

Hermione took a deep breath and saw Severus make a decision. The current crop of students needed a positive impression of him, they didn’t know him from before, in fact even the oldest of them had only just been born when the war happened. If he was truly going to change his teaching persona… so he gave in. He dipped Hermione across in front of him, and kissed her soundly. Everyone saw the sparkle of her ring in the candle-light as her hand rose up the cup his cheek.

The foot stamping, tinkling of forks on goblets and the cat-calls were deafening, especially when Severus released Hermione and summoned one of the conjured flowers—a full blown red rose—and offered it to her before he seated her once more. This caused every hormonal teenage witch in the hall to sigh, and guaranteed that Severus would have many sighing and swooning witches in his class the next morning, but at this moment he couldn’t bring himself to care.

“I think we made a good impression, don’t you, love?” he crooned into her ear as the food finally arrived.

“I have to say, that was one beautiful declaration of possession,” she returned. Then looking deeply into his eyes, Hermione whispered, “I love you.”

“And I you, my love,” he said quietly in return.
The Business Of School

Chapter Summary

It is the day after their very public engagement announcement. Severus and Hermione have different ways of dealing with the mooning students in their classrooms. Lucius discovers on his first day of teaching, that he hates it, however he is starting to find a place in the world. Minerva calls a midnight meeting and Kingsley Shacklebolt is the bearer of unexpected bad news.

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer:-
As usual, I own nothing but my plot and neither do I earn anything from this story. Harry Potter and his world remains the property of JK Rowling and associates.
A/N:- There is a lot of information in this chapter, I hope it’s not too much for you all in one go, it’s a bit of a consolidation before we move on.
Please note that at the end of this chapter (and once in the chapter before) Bill Weasley has not lost his mind, Ellie is a nickname for Penelope (well according to the website I researched it on anyway). I hope you enjoy…

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The next morning came quickly for everyone, and with it came lessons. Hermione watched her first class, and then her next, fidgeting and trying to watch her covertly throughout their lesson. The girls would blush, and she’d see them trying to whisper things to their neighbours then giggling excitedly. She rolled her eyes, but looking at the boys was worse, she saw them preening themselves. They’d just realised that she was a woman and not just a professor, Bloody hell, she thought to herself.

Eventually Hermione gave up trying to teach her seventh years, the class was made up of five girls, and as much as she didn’t want her private life bantered around the school. She realised that if she didn’t say something, the Hogwarts rumour mill would develop its own version anyway.

“Quills down,” she stated. “Each of you may ask me one question about whatever takes your fancy. If I wish to, I will answer it, and then perhaps we can get some work done.” She watched them almost jumping for joy in their chairs

Going around the class, Professor Granger was asked questions from why they had chosen the 21 of June for their nuptial date, to what coloured dresses she was planning for her and her bridesmaids, and further, who those bridesmaids would be. She was eternally grateful that no one had actually asked her any questions about Severus. Because those she would have refuse to answer. Perhaps they know that, she pondered. No, more likely they’re too shy, she chuckled to herself.

“Very well,” she said, and answered them in turn. “We chose the 21st of June, because it is mid-summer eve, which is a good time for achieving goals and renewal.” Moving on to the next question, Hermione stated, “The only thing I know about my wedding dress at the moment, is that it will not
be white. I do not like white. I have no intention of telling any of you who I will chose for my bridesmaids until I’ve spoken to those concerned first.”After this the class settled. It was only a small concession, but it seemed to help.

Down in the dungeons, Severus was having no end of trouble with doe eyed witches. As his sixth year Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff class left, one particularly ditzy girl almost swooned as she declared he was the most romantic wizard she’d ever laid eyes on.

“Oh, and have you had considerable experience with romantic wizards?” Severus asked conversationally, his raven eyebrow aloft. She shook her head airily. “Well, I suggest you keep your opinions to yourself, unless you have a yearning to find out how romantic detention with Filch is.” He quirked the raised eyebrow and the girl blanched.

Severus chuckled to himself as he sat back at the desk he hadn’t graced in over ten year. *I’ve still got it,* he smirked to himself, watching the next class of first years file in. *Mind you, if that sixth year class was anything to go on, I’m not looking forward to seeing how appalling the seventh years are,* he pondered.

By the end of the day, Severus Snape wanted the blood of the pervious Potions professor and perhaps the ones before that. Hermione had come down to his office after classes, and he was complaining loudly. “My NEWT’s class is worse than abysmal,” he stated heatedly.

Hermione, knowing how stringent he was, wondered if he wasn’t just exaggerating a tad, and pursing her lips, asked, “Are you certain you’re not.” He cut her off before she finished. “No I am not exaggerating,” he informed her further, pinching the bridge of his nose.

Hermione walked around behind his chair to try and unknot his shoulders for him. “I suppose they have had seven teachers in almost as many years,” she added thoughtfully.

He groaned longingly, and leant into her touch. “Oh, that’s nice, I need to relax,” he sighed.

Seeing her opportunity to get what she’d actually come for, because she had been wound as tight as a drum since their usual morning encounter. “And just how may I assist you to relax, my darling?” she whispered in his ear, her tongue sneaking out to lick the shell of his ear.

“You,” he stated. “In the back of my mind all day, I’ve seen you draped naked over my desk, it’s the only thing that’s been keeping me going.”

“You have… not kneeling between your legs?” her hot breath suggested, and she drew his ear lobe into her mouth, “or perhaps… both,” her heated whisper made him even harder than he’d been already.

“Oh yes… instantly,” and she was just about to oblige when Lucius stormed through the door.

“I hate teaching,” he asserted pointedly. “You’re all idiots,” he ranted. “The little ones hate me; the middle sized ones defy me and the older one… oowww.”

“Indeed,” said Severus, like it was obvious.

But Hermione was cackling, “Middle sized ones,” she laughed at him. “What the hell are middle sized ones?”

“You know, the ones in the middle,” his voice was full of exasperation and his hand movements
were almost manic as he tried to explain. It was only then that he took in Hermione on her knees in front of Severus' chair, he smirked, and his voice became instantly smooth again. “Lost something, pet?” He cocked an eyebrow.

“Actually, before you came charging in here like a demented fool, she was about to find something,” Severus groused.

Both Lucius’ eyebrows sailed up. “Well, don’t let me stop you,” the inference being clear. Severus gave him a pointed look, and he huffed. “Oh, well if you wish to be alone?” and before they could do anything he turned and was gone again, saying something about seeing how his new assistant was doing.

Hermione laughed, “He seems in a better mood.”

“Well I think Minerva’s actually handed him the chance for what he wants,” Severus commented.

“Yes, that was fairly intuitive of her, wasn’t it?”

“Indeed…” he smirked at her. “Now where were we?”

Hermione’s hand trailed up his thigh. “About here,” she giggled, rubbing him through his trousers, he groaned longingly. “But I think we should move somewhere more suitable, even if there are wards up that only Lucius can get through. Minerva’s the headmistress, and Merlin forbid, she should come charging in, especially if I’m on my knees between your legs, and you have an expression of bliss on your face. I doubt she would be very understanding.”

“Good point well put, my love. Let us adjoin to our quarters, and we can relieve each other’s stress.”

Lucius knocked on the door of the hidden rooms, and Bill answered. “Lucius,” he said, kindly, “Please, come in. How was your first day of teaching?” Bill laughed when all Lucius did was sneer and shiver. “I know how you feel; the first month was like that for me, it got better after that. Although, sometimes…” and he left the end of that sentence unsaid.

The experience deep in the Gringott’s vaults seemed to have cemented a friendship of sorts between Bill, Lucius, Severus and Hermione.

Lucius reflected on how he never thought that a Weasley would be speaking so casually with him. He only had limited tolerance for most of the family, but out of the men, Bill would have to be the easiest for him to get on with, closely followed by Charlie. The rest, well, the term acquaintance worked well. Then there was Ginevra, she was simply an auburn-haired goddess, and those clear green eyes, lovely. “How is your sister?” Lucius was uncertain whether to call her Mrs Potter, he certainly didn’t want to.

“Madam Pomfrey is planning to try and wake her up tomorrow, and there have been little movements of fingers and eyelids. She is very pleased with the healing so far, and the baby has not made any more attempts to see the world too soon.”

“This is very pleasing,” Lucius agreed, “and Mrs Weasley?”

“Penelope is doing as well as can be expected.”

“Does anyone know what happened yet?”

“No, she has said little since she woke, she lost a lot of blood and is still very weak.” Bill grimaced at
the memory of the sight of his almost dead sister-in-law in the bath, and the smell of blood, he cleared his throat. “They can only use so much Blood Replenisher in one go.” He looked sad, and shook his head. “Somehow, I don’t think this is going to end well.”

“I believe you may be correct,” Lucius granted, in an equally plaintive tone.

The blond aristocrat would have said more, but at that moment a very harassed looking Molly bustled in with the three children. “Thank you for looking after Ginny, B… Oh! Hello, Lucius.”

“Molly,” he replied, Lucius looked at James and nodded, he had taken quite a liking to this child. He could see such potential in the boy, and he for one was determined that it not be de-railed because of this experience. He actual surprised himself by realising the other night, that he would love the chance to nurture it, something he wished he had been free to do for Draco at this age.

“Hello, sir,” James replied politely, before his brother pulled him away to play.

“I’ve picked up the children from Luna, she’s happy for them to go to her again tomorrow, and Penelope will be here to help Ginny,” Molly went on.

Lucius wondered whether Molly wasn’t being a little pre-emptive offering the help of a witch who was recovering from the betrayal of her husband and who appeared to have been the victim of an attempt on her life.

Then his eyes settled on the youngest of the brood and his heart simply melted; she was obviously tired and needed bed. Her thumb was firmly lodged in her mouth and her eyes were drooping. Lucius had a strange sensation buzzing around his chest, like he wanted to protect something very precious. The same feeling he’d had when Draco was small, or when he looked at his grandchildren. Why did he feel such empathy towards these children? It was a question he couldn’t answer yet.

Molly was talking to Bill again. “I’ve got just enough time to bath Lily before I have to go home. Kingsley promised us an update, and I want to be there. Can you organise their dinner?” she asked Bill.

“Unfortunately, I have to supervise study hall.”

“Oh, well I guess…”

“Could I be of any assistance, I have no other responsibilities to discharge tonight,” Lucius smoothed. He could see Molly was almost at breaking point. You would have thought losing one son in that wretched war had been enough. But no, now she had two more sons and a son-in-law in the balance, not to mention a daughter-in-law, daughter and unborn grand-child to be concerned about. He felt something else inside him slip further into place, something that made his chest ache with pity for them.

Molly was just considering the offer when Albus came back in, James hot on his tail. “Nanny, I’m hungry and James told me to shut-up,” he asserted, hands on his hips.

“James Harry Potter, did you tell your brother to shut-up?”

“Sort off, ma’am, I told him not to bother you, that you had enough to do and dinner would be ready when it was ready.”

Lucius saw Molly swallow hard. “Oh,” she gasped. “All right, Albus, come with me. You and Lily can bathe together. Then we’ll see about food,” she quickly re-directed her thoughts.
Albus pouted at not getting his own way, but moved over to his grandmother.

Seeing that Molly seemed close to tears, and still wondering vaguely what was happening to him, Lucius suggested, “You go and do what you need to, Bill. I’m sure James and I can manage to get dinner organised by the time Lily and Albus are ready to eat,” he cast a look to Molly and he saw her nod a relieved head, and without further comment she left for the bathroom.

Lucius was in the process of shedding his outer robes and rolling up his sleeves as he said, “So, Mr. Potter what do your brother and sister like to eat?” He transfigured a tea-towel into an apron and looked at James.

But the boy’s eyes were glued to the dark smudged outline where his dark mark had been. “Is that why my father and uncle hate you and Professor Snape?”

It was such an innocent question, asked with such a desire for knowledge, that even though he wanted to, Lucius couldn’t scold the boy. He may have been a little more forceful than necessary skinning the potatoes, but as he put his wand back down after setting the knife to chop them, he nodded. “Yes, that is the greater part of the reason,” he stated honestly.

“But that was a long time ago. I heard from my cousin who lives in France that Malfoy Industries sponsor many Muggle and Muggle-born projects in France.” He smiled cautiously, “That’s what made me question what my father was saying about you.”

Yet again Lucius was impressed. This young boy understood why the projects he’d mentioned were significant, and he’d bothered to look into it to find the truth.

Lucius had finished preparing dinner while they had been talking and it was on cooking, he now put the kettle on. He actually knew his way around a kitchen quite well, and loved to cook, he found it relaxing. “Do you think your nanny would like a cup of tea?”

James smiled, “Yes, I think she might.”

Once Bill had returned that night, the dinner was cooked and the children had eaten it. James had showered, Molly had left for The Burrow, and Lily and Albus was being read a story by James, as Lucius watched on from the kitchen table.

Bill scooped up the almost asleep little girl and took her into her mother’s room to the cot set up beside Ginny’s bed. He came back out excited, “Ginny’s rolled over, and the Runes say she’s still okay.”

Lucius had longed to go into that room, but he was told by Molly that he wouldn’t need to, if anything went wrong Poppy Pomfrey would know. But he found himself sneaking a look in the door now as James and Albus went in with Bill to kiss their mother good-night.

Later, when he was back in his own chambers, so close to theirs, he felt somehow content. He had no desire to call on anyone. He went to bed that night with the image of Ginny’s sleeping form dancing through his head, and the promise of maybe something special in the future, tickling the very edges of his mind.

About the same time as Lucius was drifting into a peaceful sleep, Hermione and Severus were still talking. They had been interrupted before they’d made it to their rooms that afternoon. A deputation of students from the NEWT’s Potion class had turned up at Severus’ office. “After our class today, sir, well we started talking. We learnt more today than we’ve ever learnt in a single Potions lesson
during our whole schooling.” The speakers paused to meet Severus’ eyes. “Sir, our examinations are in seven weeks, and we’re all seriously afraid we’re going to fail,” the spokesman, a Ravenclaw, stated dejectedly. Severus watched his classmates all nodding in agreement, all looking concerned by this realisation.

Severus was already painfully aware of the abysmal results that had been coming out of Hogwarts in regards to his subject over the past several years. Unfortunately, he wholeheartedly agreed with the assumption, and he found himself feeling for these students. The OWL classes were no better, if he was going to assist one year, he had to assist the other as well. He cleared his throat. “Mr. Wright?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Mr. Wright, you and your companions,” and he looked around at the other concerned faces before him, “are correct in your assumption. However, I am planning to do my best to make certain that failure is not an option. You will be notified in class tomorrow of the measures I am planning to implement. I suggest in the mean time that you start a comprehensive revision of your first and second year work.”

“Thank you, sir,” Benjamin Wright said, with murmurs of the same coming from the other students. “Have a good evening, sir, ma’am,” he said, acknowledging Hermione.

After the students had left, Severus sighed and took Hermione into his arms. “We were just about to have a good evening. Now I’ll have go and see Minerva.”

“Well it would have been broken up anyway. I have study hall supervision with Bill Weasley this afternoon.” She sighed, “So, what are you going to do about the NEWT class?”

“Whatever I do, I’ll have to do it for the OWL class as well,” he said, pulling her closer.

“Mmm,” Hermione replied. “If I can be of any assistance, you can count on me, if one of us is going to be busy, we both should.”

“I like the way you’re thinking,” his head lowered to gift her with a languid kiss. “I’ll see you at dinner tonight.”

“I’ll look forward to it.”

That was now hours ago. Severus and Hermione had only just made it back to their rooms. Minerva had called both Severus and Hermione back to her office after dinner. It was now all set, there would be after dinner classes twice a week. One would be a tutorial and the other a study group. Brewing would be two hours on Saturday mornings. The revision of years one through five could be done with both classes together, but the last two weeks would see Severus working with the NEWT students and Hermione with the OWL.

It would be a lot of work, but if Severus had to sign off on these student’s results then he was going to make certain they did the best they could. Both professor’s were now exhausted. The holidays seemed a long way back, even though term had only resumed today.

They decided on a bath before bed. Hermione smiled remembering the night Lucius had made the bath bigger. It was almost the proportions of a small swimming pool when he’d finished. Hermione now sank gratefully into the padded softness of the sides, mentally thanking Lucius for providing it all. “Magic is amazing sometimes, isn’t it?” she sighed.

“Indeed,” replied Severus, exhaling happily as the warmth and softness enfolded him.
“Severus?”

“Mmm?”

“Lucius will be your best man, right?” Severus opened a lazy eye and nodded. “Are you having any other groomsmen?”

“I don’t believe I know anyone else well enough to ask them,” Severus replied, opening his eyes to look at her properly. “Why?”

“Well, now it’s been revealed that Ginny was forced to stop being my friend. I’m in a bit of a quandary,” Severus was listening, but his eyes were roaming her body hungrily. “Luna is my obvious choice for bridesmaid,” Hermione continued, “but I feel obliged to ask Ginny as well.”

“Ah, I see the need for the question now,” he said, being finished with looking he glided her towards him through the water so he could touch. When she was in front of him he encouraged her knees to grip his hips. “The number of groomsmen must match the bridesmaids.”

“Yes,” a grinning Hermione said, flexing her hips gently on his rigid shaft.

They both groaned as he positioned himself and she sank gracefully down onto him, but they kept talking initially. “Won’t it all depend of Ginevra’s health?” Severus said in a rush, before groaning again.

Hermione’s breathing increased to panting, especially when Severus’ fingers started adding to her sensations. Their mouths joined, and talking became difficult. “I guess so. It’s all very up in the air, isn’t it?” Hermione managed between heated kisses.

“Mm-hmm,” Severus replied, but his kisses became more demanding and hungry, and it became apparent that talking was no longer practical. After that for some minutes all that could be heard were pants, grunts and water slooshing about as his strong hands guided her movements on him.

Then finally, after waiting all day, their mutual release of tension was very vocal, and they clung to one another after their climaxes, panting and dropping kisses on each other.

Hermione whimpered when Severus’ now flaccid length slithered out of her. But he just kissed her again and whispered. “Let’s try for round two in bed, ay?”

She nodded, and once they were in the comfort of their bed, Severus propped himself up on one elbow, his head arriving over hers. “Now, for some more relieving of each other’s stress,” he murmured against her lips. Their kiss grew and Hermione coiled her arms up around his neck. They were just settling into their when there was twin whooshes from the floo, one sounding further away than the other.

“I don’t bloody believe it,” Severus seethed, snatching at the paper plane that was poking him in the shoulder. “Bloody hell, what time is it?”

“Twelve forty,” Hermione supplied helpfully, even if she was just as irritated by the interruption. “What’s the problem?”

However, she never got her answer, as at that moment a paper plane accosted her as well. “Look at that, you get your very own. My Minerva is very bloody efficient for this time of night,” he snarled sarcastically.

She read it and groaned. “This better be very good,” she muttered, rolling out of bed. A wave of her
wand clothed her, and she looked to Severus who was doing the same.

The office of the headmistress was slowly filling with her staff. Bill Weasley was sitting off to the side, looking slightly stunned and deep in unpleasant thought. Kingsley Shacklebolt and the two disillusioned unspeakables were in front of Minerva’s desk.

Severus and Hermione went and sat with Lucius. “What’s happened?” Hermione asked, quietly.

“They’ve found Percy,” Lucius whispered.

“So,” Severus muttered.

“He’s dead,” Lucius announced just as quietly, “and this has interrupted the first decent sleep I’ve had in ages,” he complained very softly, unable to hide his irritation any longer.

By this time Kingsley was clearing his throat, and the chatter slowly ground to a halt. He made the announcement to a stunned teaching staff, all of whom offered their condolences to Bill. Given the late hour, no one lingered but most were seen shaking their heads in disbelief as they filed back out the door. They all trudged back to the quarters, most probably now going back to restless or absent slumber, wondering if something nasty was about to grip their world again.

Bill was still sitting in the same attitude when they left as he had when Severus and Hermione had entered the office, and they bid him take care before they did so.

He remained stoically silent, and didn’t even show significant interest when Remus and Tonks shimmered into view after the last of the people had departed.

Knowing of their friendship, Minerva took Kingsley into her private sitting room for a cup of tea, while the friends talked.

You see Bill Weasley knew that the Lupins lived, and where, he had not been present at that first meeting last week, but was not surprised to see them now. In fact, he was very relieved; he had kept in touch with them over the years. Remus had helped him come to terms with the unpleasant little werewolf traits he developed after his attack those many years ago, and then when his marriage had failed, it had been to their sanctuary that he had turned.

It was Bill who had taken Lavender Brown to the werewolf community after she had been so badly scarred by Greyback in the final battle. She now lived in the sanctuary as a school teacher helping Andromeda educate the community’s children.

Remus went over and sat opposite Bill now. “He was already dead when I found him,” he said quietly. “There was nothing any of us could have done to prevent it.” Bill nodded once.

There was no greeting, and the sneer on his normally placate features was barely concealed. “It never occurred to me that this would happen to Percy. I’ve always known he was playing dangerous people against one another, but…” There was an echo of a snarl in his voice, and when his eyes rose to his mentor to say, “How?” Remus could see him fighting the wolf he never became.

Bill was a placid man he would never cause harm, but it was this darkness that Fleur found too much eventually, she wasn’t prepared for it to be a constant part of their lives, nor did she understand—and for that matter neither did he at the time—but the repercussions of only being part wolf were almost as bad as having been bitten properly. When she’d left him, it had almost broken him. If it hadn’t been for Remus and Dora he would have cracked, because as much as they tried, his parents and siblings couldn’t understand what it was to be part-beast either.
Remus told him in his quietly spoken way what they thought had happened. “We believe Penelope’s attack was a warning to Percy and he’s panicked and fled. This was what his aggressors had hoped would happen, because they could eliminate him cleanly, out in the open away from everyone.”

“Who could have done this? Surely not Harry and Ron?”

“We have no reason to think that it was either of them, it was too well planned and coldly executed. They thrive on angry energy; there is nothing rational about the type of harm they inflict.”

“No, we feel that he has crossed one too many people, and someone has finally put him in the… ‘diplomatic bag’, so to speak,” Tonks added. “It was an Avada that took him out.”

“Kingsley has placed it as a separate case, and it will be investigated by ordinary Aurors. That’s made it easier for us too, we can concentrate simply on finding Harry and Ron,” Remus said, then turning to Tonks he added, “And we better get back to that.”

Dora nodded, and smiled at her husbands, but looked back to Bill. “Yours and Snape’s messages will always find us,” she told him, squeezing his arm for comfort. “You have a trustworthy group here now. Take their support, if they offer it.”

Bill still couldn’t bring himself to show emotion, but he nodded. “I know, and I’m very grateful for that. Severus and I have already had discussions about the darkness within. He’s told me he’s been working on a potion similar to Wolfbane that will help in cases like mine.”

“That’s fabulous,” Remus said. “Severus and I may have had our differences in the past, but you can trust him implicitly. I think we’ve all learnt that,” he finished, as they rose. “Good night, Bill.”

Bill didn’t reply he merely nodded. It would fall to him to inform Ellie in the morning. Poppy had given her a sleeping potion tonight. At least they’d moved her into the hidden rooms earlier, so she was safely under his watch as well. He got up and tiredly made his way back there now so Poppy could go to bed.

Chapter End Notes

Notes :-
That certainly was a lot of information. There will be more juicy lemons in the next chapter, I promise. Poor Bill, he’s certainly got his work cut out for him, but I think Lucius may be angling to help him with it. I hope no body found the domestic scene with Lucius to… err, now what would be the word… well anyway. See you all next time :D
It was a sleepy teaching staff who collected for breakfast the next morning. Predictably there were several members missing, most notably Bill Weasley. If it hadn’t been for the fact that his students had OWL’s and NEWT’s in seven weeks, perhaps he would have taken some leave, as it was he thought that keeping busy was probably the best course.

Luna had arrived at the hidden sanctuary and collected James, Albus and Lily to take them to have breakfast with her, Frank and Xanthia, so the only people left were Bill, Penelope and the still sleeping Ginny. At seven o’clock Bill knocked on Penelope’s door. “I’ve brought you a cup of tea, Ellie?”

“Come in, Bill,” he heard and opened the door. He’d actually brought a tray with tea and toast for two on it. He was hoping that if he ate with her, perhaps they could both manage to force some food down. Placing the tray on the dressing table, Bill sat on the edge of the bed.

They had been friends for three years now, ever since his divorce really. Bill was uncertain when his feelings towards her had started to change, he only knew that being friends was no longer enough. Unfortunately, now was not the proper time to admit that.

“Ellie, something’s happened last night, and I need to tell you, okay?” He watched her still sleepy cornflower blue eyes open further in something akin to alarm. Sweet Merlin she’s beautiful, sitting there all sleep tousled. Her pretty blond curls cascading around her face and shoulders. Her clear creamy skin… oh my lord man, get a grip.

He shifted his position, and crossed the leg nearest to her over the other when he felt an opinion from further south air its views. This is your brother’s wife… and you’ve got to tell her he’s dead. This is no time to ignite your inappropriate crush on your best friend… and she is my best friend too. “Ellie,
it’s Percy,’’ he managed, before he heard a gasping sob.

“He’s not here is he?” she asked timidly, but grabbed Bill’s arm in a strong grip. “I don’t want to see him.” He watched her expression change and tears start to threaten.

“No, Ellie… no, shh.” Bill picked up the hand off his arm and placing it in both of his, he stroked it. “It’s nothing like that.” He looked down at their joined hands, “Ellie… he’s dead,” he told her after a moment.

“Oh…” she opened her mouth like she’d been going to say something more and then closed it again. There were silent tears starting to trickle down her cheeks. “I’m not crying for him,” she asserted wiping at them. “I’m crying for me, I’m an awful person,” she looked back up; her eye lashes wet and clumped together, “because I didn’t want him to come back, he’d changed so much the last few years,” she said as her tears increased, “that’s one of the reasons why I was leaving him.”

“I know,” Bill smoothed, “and you’re not an awful person.” He handed her a handkerchief he’d conjured. “The Aurors think what happened to you was inflicted by the same people who killed Percy.”

“What happened to him?”

“The investigators think it was the killing curse, and that it’s not related to the Harry Potter investigation.”

“So, why?”

“Oh I don’t know,” Bill sighed. “Percy was stupid sometimes in his diplomatic dealings. The Aurors think it was someone who took offence at being sold off to the highest bidder, they messed him up a fair bit before they killed him, I reckon he was associating with some dangerous people.” Bill hesitated before he asked, “Do you remember anything about your attack?”

Penelope shivered, “No, not much more than I told the Aurors. I remember going to have a bath. I knew Percy would want to go as soon as he got home. He always did, so I thought I’d get ready before he got there,” she glanced up at Bill, before adding, “I’ve always hated being rushed.”

Bill nodded, “Where were you going?”

“Another ministry function, something for the Russian ambassador, I believe.” She swallowed slowly and cleared her throat. “I poured myself a glass of wine from the open bottle that was in the cooling cabinet and got into the bath.”

Bill noticed that she blushed a little as she told him this, and he remembered pulling her naked body from that same bath, and laying her on the floor to heal her wrists as best he could. A wave of nausea hit him as he remembered the blood, but he was brought back from that recollection by her soft voice continuing.

“I remember feeling really heavy, and I couldn’t keep my eyes open. Even when I heard footsteps, I couldn’t open my eyes;” a little sob escaped her as she recalled what happened next. “It was like I had no control over my body, even when I felt someone holding my forearm under the water. I think they had gloves on… and then sharp pain at my wrists, one then the other and still I couldn’t move…” and she was crying again.

“It’s all right, you’ve said enough.” Bill patted the hand he still held. He wanted to do more, but felt really helpless. Anything past this was straying into dangerous territory, he had to keep telling himself this was his dead brother’s, wife. “They drugged you, that’s why you couldn’t react,” Bill
soothed.

He finally gave in after another moment, and took her into his arms. They both sighed, but after a time Penelope said, “I’d like to go home, Bill. If Madam Pomfrey says it’s all right, would you take me to my parent’s house, I need to be away from everyone for a while.”

“Sure, Ellie.” Bill closed his eyes, dragging in the scent of her through his nose so he would remember it. She was being wise, of course she was, it was too soon. “As much as I want you here with me, I can see you’re doing the right thing.”

“I know Bill… may I tell you that some time in the future,” she drew back and looked into his hazel eyes, “I’ll be ready to hear what you’re not saying. But right now, everything’s too raw, even if having your arms around me feels very right, it’s all wrong. I hope you understand.”

“Yeh, but if you ever need me… you know,” he watched her nod.

Penelope had settled by the time Madam Pomfrey came to check on her, and Bill was back in the kitchen. “I think you’re strong enough to spend some time up today. Have a shower and so forth,” the Matron told her, staying in bed under the circumstances will only make you more miserable.

This had tears snaking their way down Penelope’s cheeks again, but she nodded. “I know, poor Molly must be heartbroken,” she agreed. “Madam Pomfrey, I want to go to my parent’s home. Bill has said he will take me, if you’re happy for me to do that.”

The matron nodded, “Yes, physically you’re fine now, and time away will help a great deal. I’ll organise a supply of sleeping potion and recommend some people who might be able to help you,” Poppy patted her arm.

“Thank you, I appreciate that.”

xox

Molly bustled in while this was going on, it was obvious from her red-rimmed eyes she’d been crying, but she was putting on a brave face now, and was feeling that industry was the best cure for pain. “Where are the children?” was her first question.

“Luna Longbottom came and collected them for breakfast,” Bill replied.

They both watched Poppy Pomfrey shutting Penelope’s door and moving to Ginny’s. “I’ve advised Mrs Weasley to shower and get dressed but I wish to see her again before she leaves,” she said to Bill as she passed through.

Molly was asking Bill questions about Penelope as they followed the matron into Ginny’s bedroom, and there was much whispering and muttering. “She should be here with us,” Molly was saying, “she was Percy’s,” her voice faltered, “…wife.”

Bill sighed. “Yes, mum, and she’s just lost her husband, cut her a little slack. She only wants a bit of breathing space, you know as well as I do that their marriage was far from ideal. Just let her be, ay?”

While all of this was happening, Poppy examined the Runes floating above Ginny’s bed and drew her wand. She spoke a *Rennervate* type spell and they watched Ginny’s eyes flutter. She raised her hand to her forehead shakily and she whimpered. “The light,” she mumbled. Poppy dulled the light further, “What happened?” Her green eyes blinked vaguely.

This snapped Molly out of her Penelope induced diatribe. “Can’t you remember, Gin?” she asked,
instantly concerned.

“Not much,” she replied, she still hadn’t opened her eyes properly. “Really tired,” was the only other thing she mumbled, and closed her eyes again.

Poppy turned to Molly to try and soothe her. “Don’t worry, it will take time. The fact that she spoke to you and was not concerned about her environment are good signs, she’s apparently recognised your voice as she didn’t ask who you were.” She squeezed Molly’s arm, and turned back to her patient. Checking her vital functions, she then infused another thick nutrient rich brew directly into her stomach. “We’ll try again later,” she assured Molly.

While Molly was still stroking her daughter’s arm, Poppy moved back out into the living area. She was quite cheered to see a dressed Penelope sitting with Bill having a quiet cup of tea when she came into the kitchen.

xox

It was still relatively early for the rest of the castle. Severus and Hermione had sat up talking, as trying to sleep seemed futile, an oppressive mood seemed to have gripped the castle, even though most residents didn’t know the full extent of matters. Both were looking forward to getting away at the end of term.

Having been unable to sleep, they decided that an early morning walk to clear their heads was in order. As they wandered the well worn path around the lake, they failed to rest at the tree where Hermione usually stopped; even though it had become somewhat a favourite of them both lately. Instead they walked further around to a spot Severus knew they couldn’t be seen from the castle.

There was a small grove of trees here and at this time of year they provided a hidden nook were you could simply sit and watch the lake, or partake of any other activity with privacy assured by the greenery and a few simple charms.

Severus led Hermione to the lush grassy knoll of sweet smelling summer sedge. He cast a spell that allowed them to feel the luxurious texture of the grass but not the early morning dew or chill, and he sat her amongst it while he ensured their privacy. Stepping outside his established aura of protection, he summoned an elf and ordered coffee, fruit and toast. Figuring they could get another hour of alone time before they were required in their classrooms, Severus got straight down to business when he stepped back into their sphere of protection. They wouldn’t get another chance to be alone until this evening, and tonight after dinner was the first of their joint extra Potions classes.

While Severus was being so industrious, Hermione simply sat and watched him. She knew he was up to something, and seeing he was going to so much trouble to ensure their privacy, she was certain it had something to do with her being naked, or nearly so.

This morning, as had always been his habit, he went to great trouble to suggest to her what she might like to wear after their joint shower, and today it had all been things that opened down the front. She didn’t always take his suggestions, but often she did, because she knew his Slytherin brain was working out things to their best advantage.

With the direction of her thoughts in mind, she was not surprised to see him cast a stasis charm on their breakfast, shirk off his outer robes and frockcoat and come and kneel beside her. She was reclining propped up on her elbows, and she watched him with interest as his long dextrous fingers made short work of the buttons on her blouse and parted the material. He did the same with the front closures on her undergarments, and immediately lowered his tongue to her breast, flicking the nipple of one until it was hard and craning upward, begging for more attention.
Once he had achieved this he left his fingers to play with it, while he performed the same ritual on the other. His other hand was not idle either; it had started from the bottom buttons on her skirt and opened it up to three buttons from the top.

Once he had her laying all open in front of him, his eyes perused her languidly. “You are so beautiful all spread out for my enjoyment,” he commented heatedly.

His tongue then went back to work slithering down her body. Hermione arched up off the ground when his tongue took a broad swipe on reaching his goal.

She felt his tongue teasing her, just its tip flicking across her clit, like it had on her nipples. Her hips lifted off the ground again, and she grabbed at hand-fulls of the sweet smelling turf beneath her. The aroma of the bruised grass mingled with the other scents of summer around them, making a heady cocktail in the early morning air.

Severus chuckled wickedly as his witch came undone around his tongue, and as he listened to her pleasure he released himself so he could satiate himself within her welcoming body as well.

They both moaned when he plunged into her, holding himself still a moment to savour the feel of her around him, before withdrawing and thrusting back in once more. As he set up a steady rhythm, his mouth found hers again and he kissed her deeply. Their bodies singing with sensation, Hermione’s squeals of delight mingling with the sounds of the breeze and the birds. They both loved expressing their love outdoors when given the opportunity, and this morning especially it had made them feel refreshed and ready for a long day, after little sleep.

xox

The next week was very busy. Ginny finally woke completely, three days after Percy’s funeral. Poppy Pomfrey had said she might wake to the sound of one of them, and she’d woken spontaneously to the sound of Lily crying for someone to let her out of her cot.

It was Molly who happily discovered her daughter, on arriving at the infant’s cry. Her joyful gasp of Ginny brought Bill to the room as well.

The change in the Runes then also brought the Matron; she had a linking spell set on them with the second set in her office, and there was an alarm that detected any changes. Of course, Ginny moving around and managing, with her brother’s help to sit up a bit made the alarm go off and had the ever watchful Matron arriving to see what was happening.

This time Ginny was wide awake, and it didn’t take her long to start asking questions. She waited patiently while Poppy examined her, and gratefully accepted the cup of tea Molly brought her.

So it was with her children snuggled around her and her second cup of tea in her hands, Molly, and soon Arthur, started to fill her in on what was happening.

Ginny found it difficult to believe that she and her children were finally safe. It all seemed so surreal, and after the children had been sent out to eat their breakfast with their Uncle Bill, even more bizarre when she was told by her father what had happened to her, who had saved her and who had actually delivered her to the hospital.

“When can I see them?” was Ginny’s next question.

“We’ll see if we can organise something,” Arthur said.

“Great,” Ginny announced, “But I really need the bathroom and a shower.”
“Perhaps a bath this time, Gin?” her mother told her.

Any further discussion was then drowned out by little Lily crying excitedly from the doorway. “Mes too, nanny, mes too. Pease, mes bath with mummy.”

Molly nodded, and picked up the little girl who was still rambling on about baths, while Ginny tried to get out of bed.

The redhead found she was incredibly weak, “You know, I think making it to the loo is about all I’m going to manage at the moment anyway. I’m already tired again.”

She made it to the bathroom unaided, and while she was sitting on the loo, panting from her exertions, and while she had privacy she examined herself to take in any damage. Critically looking down the front of her nightie, she noticed her ribs were showing, and the baby which had been just over six months along before her problem, was now a very prominent bump.

Her breasts which Harry had always been very picky about were still perfectly formed, but looked smaller. She laughed quietly, suddenly realising when this baby was born she wouldn’t have to go another round with the painful body moulding spells she’d had after the other three children.

That had been so humiliating, she really hadn’t thought there was anything wrong with the way she looked, but she’d learned the first time that if she defied him, that defiance meant things got painful. She had never been a submissive witch, but her husband forced her to be, and she’d hated every second of it. Of course once she’d had James, he used the infant to keep her in line, instead of his flogger. If she did the wrong thing… she shivered, and flushed the toilet.

While she was washing her hands, she muttered, “Better not think too much on that, I always managed to keep them safe.” Although, examining her state of mind in general, all she found she felt, was profound relief. After having been told that Harry and Ron had been under a dark curse all these years; she was actually thinking it could have been a lot worse.

The scary part was that she wasn’t certain how much longer she could have kept James from his father’s wrath. He was getting very outspoken with regard to Harry’s offhand treatment of her and Albus and Lily, and she’d purposely left him with George after the incident at the Leaky Cauldron.

She sighed, she couldn’t believe she was a free woman again, or for that matter that she’d been coerced into marriage in the first place. Why hadn’t anyone noticed? ‘Mione would have; that’s probably why they stopped me from seeing her. They’ve been terrible to her, and still she came when I was in trouble. I want to see her as soon as I can.

She looked longingly at the bath. She definitely would be having that bath later, and a decent meal. All-in-all really, it could have been a lot worse she thought as she managed to make it back to the bed. Molly came back with a breakfast of porridge and toast, but she couldn’t finish it before her eyes were closing once more.

The same day Ginny had finally woken completely, the big news was that Harry and Ron had been sighted in Knockturn Alley, but had disappeared from sight when they had seen the Aurors approaching. They knew the Alley so well, after spending years arresting criminals there. They also most likely had people who were either willing to hide them, or that they were forcing to do so.

They seemed to have gotten wind that Ginny was still alive, because Kingsley had been expecting them to arrive at the Ministry grandstanding about how the two ex-death eaters had killed Ginny
So he’d obviously found out that she’d been saved. That information could only have come from one person, as far as any of them were concerned. So, regardless of who had killed Percy, he had been in contact with Harry and Ron and hadn’t told Kingsley. This had been confirmed by Remus who had arrived in time to see Percy exiting Knockturn Alley in a suspicious manner the night before his death.

Further inquiries had netted Remus his first clue, after lots of dead ends. A friendly contact had told him he’d seen two redheads and a guy with black hair and glasses in a heated argument at the back of the Slippery Witch, a seedy pub deep in the alley. However, when he’d followed it up the trail had gone cold very quickly.

So, this led to more questions of overlaps in the two cases, and Kingsley conceded that even though they now suspected that the Russian diplomatic party had had been responsible for the attack on Penelope and Percy’s murder, it looked like Percy was on the take with Potter as well.

The truth be known, he almost had to have been for Harry’s indiscretions not to have been noticed. Witnesses losing their memories and other such things would have had to have been covered up or buried in paperwork by someone.

xox

Lucius continued to come in and help with Ginny’s children, and was starting to become quite domestic. After that first accidental time he had filled in several more time, and now that Ginny was actually awake, he was over the moon, because they were getting on beautifully.

It was three days after the sighting of Harry and Ron when Ginny was strong enough to receive more than single visitors, then a full week before a meeting that included her erstwhile friend and Professor Snape could be organised, with their full schedule they were very busy.

Ginny was currently sitting with her legs up on the lounge, and even though it was a warm day, she was wrapped in a blanket. Her mother had left everything ready for tea, but she’d had to go home, and Lucius was sitting with Ginny while doing his marking. Ginny laughed at the look on his face.

He shook his head and sliced through another sentence with ruby ink. “Idiot,” he muttered under his breath, making Ginny laugh louder.

“You’re getting just as bad as the Potions master,” she laughed at him. Ginny had eagerly accepted the position as Lucius assistant, which he’d offered the day after she’d managed to stay awake.

She was already fascinated with him from the day in the Leaky Cauldron, and had hoped they would meet again, so this was perfect. It surprised her how quickly she had become very fond of the blond wizard. She sighed and looked back to him on hearing him speak.

“Who do you think showed me how to mark this twaddling bilge that passes off as an essay?” he cackled, and put a line through another sentence.

Ginny snickered at his comment, and thought back to their first meeting. She remembered how she’d accepted the assistant’s position. “Yes, Professor Malfoy, I’d like that,” she’d told him.

That was when he’d offered for her to call him by his name. “Lucius,” he’d smiled slightly, and her stomach fluttered in remembrance. “Please call me, Lucius,” he’d said.

Ginny returned the smile. “Thank you, Lucius. I’d love to be your assistant.”
Lucius bowed his head politely. “Wonderful, I’m looking forward to… working with you,” he smoothed.

At this point Ginny had blushed at the way he’d said, ‘working with you’.

He had chuckled, “Has anyone ever told you that you blush exquisitely?” his voice had smoothed. She’d shaken her head. It had been a long time since anyone had noticed she was a woman. She was pulled from her recollections by the door opening.

She watched Lucius straightening his papers as he stood. Ginny knew it was not going to be an easy meeting, but she hoped it would have a good outcome.

Hermione was very nervous, and had slipped her hand into Severus’ on the way to the rooms. As she’d expected, she found the comfort she was looking for as his hand squeezed hers in silent support.

Ginny watched Lucius greet his friends, a nod to Severus and a kiss on the lips for Hermione. She wondered about this, but didn’t say anything. Once they were all seated with tea and Molly’s boiled fruitcake, Bill left them, knowing he could trust Lucius to stay with Ginny while he finished his marking and then collected the children.

After initial silence, Ginny was first to try and speak, but she had no idea what to say. “I’m so sorry,” she finally blurted out. “I couldn’t help you. I never stopped wanting to be your friend, but I couldn’t.”

Hermione had been studying her lap. “I can’t tell you it’s all right,” she said slowly, and glanced up at her erstwhile friend, “because it’s not.” She had one of Severus’ hands in a death grip. “We’ve both been through hell, and I don’t know how to get over that.”

“Do you think we can?” Ginny’s voice was quivery. “I know it’s no excuse, but once James was born, he used my little boy against me, then Albus and Lily.” She had tears trickling down her cheeks, “I had to keep my children safe, ‘Mione. Please tell me you understand,” she pleaded. Lucius moved to the lounge to offer support to Ginny, and once he had her small hands in his, he did not want to give them up.

“I’m trying to, Gin,” Hermione replied, “it’s just hard… you know?”

Ginny gave her a watery smile. “Yes, I know it is, but we will try… won’t we?”

“Yes, Gin… we’ll try.” However, after she’d said this there was a pause, and Hermione gave Ginny a considered look before taking a deep breath. “But any reconciliation has to include Severus and Lucius unconditionally. I know you have accepted Lucius and I’m pleased, but we cannot move forward even a baby step if you harbour any of your former husband’s malice towards Severus. I’m not trying to make things difficult, but I want it plainly said. If you want me to be your friend, it’s both of us or nothing. Severus and Lucius have supported me unerringly since they’ve known about this situation, and I love them both...” she snuggled into Severus and reached over the coffee table to momentarily pat a smiling Lucius on the knee, “both… in different ways, but both.”

“I understand, ‘Mione, and I wish I could have also supported you.” She looked to Severus, nodded and smiled. “I thank you, sir. It is because of your efforts that I am still here, and that we know what is actually wrong with those who have caused us all so much pain.” Ginny sighed and stifled a yawn as she finished talking.

Severus nodded in return, and said, “I understand, but it’s silly if you call everyone but me by their
given name. You are on staff in a roundabout way, please call me Severus.”

Ginny smiled, “Thank you, Severus,” but her yawns were becoming more pronounced. “As long as you call me Ginny,” she added

Hermione watched Severus nod and even try to smile a little, but she also saw how tired Ginny had become, and said, “Thank you for the tea, but Severus and I have an extra class to prepare for now,” and they rose to leave. Hermione came around the coffee table and kissed Ginny’s cheek. “I’d like to assist in caring for you and the children, if you will let me. That would be a good place to start, wouldn’t it?”

Ginny nodded tiredly, “Yes, of course I’ll let you, thank you, I’d like that,” she said, looking relieved. “I’ll tell Bill when he comes back, and he can add you to the roster.”

Hermione and Severus then went off to their lesson preparations, and this left Ginny and Lucius alone. Ginny was really too tired, but she was determined to stay awake.

Lucius had also seen the exhaustion draining her again. “I think you need to rest now,” he told her. “Curl up there and sleep, I have some papers still left to mark,” he finished with a great deal of distaste. “These little heathens have appalling grammar and little interest in my subject, but I’ll continue to mark their abysmal efforts.” He gave a put-upon sigh, and Ginny laughed.

“Well perhaps when I’m able to stay awake for more than half an hour at a stretch I’ll take the odious job off you.”

“I can’t wait,” he grinned, starting to rise from the lounge before he was tempted to kiss her, like he’d been thinking about it ever since he’d sat down with her.

Her hand caught him before he’d straightened properly, “Lucius?”

“Yes, Ginny?”

“Thank you.”

“My pleasure, my lady,” and he playfully tapped the end of her up-turned nose lightly. “Now, lay that pretty head on the pillow and sleep.”

Ginny’s smile went with her to peaceful slumber, and when he heard Bill and the kids coming. Lucius quickly diverted his attention back to his work, instead of gazing at the witch he was quickly falling in love with.
Chapter Summary

Severus, Hermione and Lucius have an erotic evening. The next day Lucius and Ginny come to understanding about where they're going

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer- I neither earn anything from nor own anything from Harry Potter and his world. That is the property of JK Rowling and associates, I only claim my plot.

A/N:- After the last couple of purely informative chapters, I felt it was time to get back to the erotic adventure that I started out with. I hope you enjoy…

------------------------------------------------

Over the next few weeks the mood of the castle improved, and everyone was far too busy as the end of the year roared down upon them at breakneck speed to worry about anything else.

This particular evening, about three weeks before the end of term, Severus and Hermione had presided over their usual Potions tutorial. By the time they were finished, they both found themselves in need of some significant stress relief. They came back to Severus’ quarters to find Lucius sitting on the lounge perusing the book that Hermione had found in Binns’ study. He looked up and smiled at his friends as they entered.

“Exactly what are you up to?” Severus inquired, taking in the mischievous glint in his eye.

But Hermione’s eyes were focused somewhere else. She turned and leaned up to Severus’ ear. “You were saying you wanted something different tonight, my darling. How about we include our friend? We haven’t done so for a while,” she whispered. “I think he might be just as stressed as us.”

“Mmmm,” Severus replied softly, “We were going to include your mirror… but,” his eyes followed to where Hermione’s had rested, at Lucius’ crotch. Then he addressed Lucius. “Could it be that you are wishing some physical relief, my friend?”

Lucius sighed and after running his options through his mind, he decided to be honest. “It’s like I’m walking on eggshells all the time. I don’t dare touch her and I want to,” he admitted with an uncharacteristic grimace on his face.

Hermione came to sit beside him, towing Severus along by the hand and he sat on her other side. “Why don’t you want to touch her? I know she wants you. When I was there and you came to give her that marking to do, she watched your every movement with a look of longing on her face,” Hermione said patting his arm.

“You have at least kissed her, have you not?” Severus asked, looking around Hermione. He watched
in disbelief as Lucius shook his head. “This is very unlike you,” his raven-haired friend continued, “is there some problem?”

Lucius remained silent.

“Lucius, are you afraid of hurting her?” Hermione asked cautiously, but the blond wizard sat silent. Finally she asked again, “Lucius?”

He sighed in obvious exasperation and nodded. “Yes… damn it. I don’t know what to do with her.”

“Have you talked to her about this?” Severus inquired.

“No,” and Lucius got up and started pacing. “I don’t know how to approach her, I don’t know what’s happened to her with Potter,” he looked back to his friends. “Yes, I know incredible, isn’t it? Lucius Malfoy, sex god, afraid of talking to a woman, I’m turning into a sap,” he stated, shaking his head. To tell the truth, he was almost incredulous that he’d actually admitted it, even if they were his best friends.

Hermione glanced at Severus who was doing his level best not to cackle out loud, presumably for the ‘sex god’ comment, she rolled her eyes and sighed. Getting up, she arrested their friend’s pacing by standing in front of him and holding his arms. “Lucius, it means you care about her,” Hermione took a breath while that sank in. “You need to talk to her to find a way forward,” then Hermione thought about how difficult that would be under the current circumstances. When she finally spoke again, it almost seemed like a change of subject. “I wonder,” she glanced at both her companions, “what’s going to happen when Hogwarts closes for the summer?”

Severus drew breath, appearing to have his mirth under control. “That’s actually an interesting thought.” He walked over to Lucius and Hermione, smirking. He could help the tinge of sarcasm that crept into his voice, even if he was actually serious. “I’m certain that the great… sex god, Lucius Malfoy could open his heart and extend the security and seclusion of Malfoy Manor to the lovely Ginevra and her children,” the Potions master said, eyebrow raised.

“Then they wouldn’t be as cooped up,” Hermione added, throwing a glare at Severus. “The children would have a proper place to play,” she continued seriously, stifling the chuckle at her love’s comments. She knew he was joking, and so did Lucius.

They watched the light dawn in Lucius’ eyes as he thought about it. “And perhaps Scorpius and James could become friends,” he said, obviously thinking about fostering relations between the two boys.

Severus snorted a laugh, happily playing devil’s advocate. “Although I suppose you’d then have Molly to deal with. Do you want the Weasley Matriarch in your inner sanctum?”

“Severus,” Hermione scolded, and Lucius glared at him. The Potions master merely chuckled darkly, raised an eyebrow and turned Hermione, pulling her back against his chest.

This signalled the end of their discussion as Lucius watched avidly while Severus made short work of striping Hermione down to her underwear, which was see-through and left nothing to the imagination.

Seeing his friend’s interest, he finished removing the last of her coverings and whispered to Hermione, “Open your legs, my love; I think Lu might like that.”

Hermione moaned softly, she loved feeling this exposed under the right circumstances. She leant her head back on Severus’ shoulder, feeling his hands sweeping over her body, and could already feel a
moan building in the back of her throat as her arms went up to pull his head around for a kiss as she thrust her hips forward in a pointed invitation to Lucius as Severus fingers arrived and deftly peeling back the outer lips of her sex, exposing the rosy flesh to his friend’s eyes.

Lucius need no further enticement, and he arrived on his knees in front of her. She pushed herself further forward almost begging for his mouth to oblige her. The blond Slytherin chuckled and his tongue flicked out teasing her intimate flesh.

Severus moved his mouth to her neck and shoulder, so he could watch his friend as well. Then his voice rumbled a spell and his warm flesh contacted Hermione’s bare back and he heard her moan. He took a moment to bend his knees, aligning his member between her legs where he started thrusting in and out, stroking her perineum and in between her bum cheeks perfectly, with every pass.

Hermione loved the feeling of Severus stimulating her as his hands fondled, pulled and twisted her breasts. Lucius’ tongue was now licking her in big flat licks, like a lollypop, and swirling around her clitoris with every pass, but she wondered why there was a break at the end of each stroke. That was when—with a literal gush of wetness down her leg—she realised that Lucius was running his tongue over the head of Severus’ cock every time it appeared in front of him as well. “Oh god, that is so hot. Show me more,” she demanded in a moan, forgetting completely about her own pleasure. She didn’t think she had ever been so turned on.

Severus groaned at her words and allowed her to move out of the way so she could watch. Hermione’s knees almost buckled under her and she shuffled awkwardly to the lounge and climbed on, reclining back with one leg on the floor, and the other hooked over the back, fingerling herself and watching the show.

She watched Lucius taking Severus into his mouth, and seeing him still clothed, Hermione did him a favour and relieved him of his clothing; he sighed and set about pleasuring Severus further.

After allowing control for a time, Severus started guiding the pleasure. Watching himself disappearing and reappearing from Lucius’ open mouth, while the blond wizard’s hand worked towards his own satisfaction.

They both looked around on hearing Hermione’s groan of release, and they took it as an invitation to join her. She hissed in delight when Severus arrived and sank his shaft into her welcoming heat. Lucius took her fingers from her mouth and extended his tongue to finish licking them himself.

Wriggling forward, Hermione started licking the head of Lucius’ cock. He climbed onto the lounge to get closer to her, his knee on the outside of the cushioned seat and his foot balancing him on the other side of Hermione. Then he started pumping in and out of her mouth, as Severus watched his cock doing the same thing in her pussy.

The Gryffindor professor was in heaven, totally absorbed by the attentions of her lovers. She felt another orgasm tightening in her belly, that delicious ache begging to be released. All she could do was lay there and allow herself to be used, she was not capable of doing anything else. Her orgasm broke over her and she screamed in delight around her mouth full of Lucius.

This was more than the blond wizard could stand. Not wanting to choke her, but unable to stave off his own release he withdrew and aimed at her pretty chest, as her breasts jiggled with each of Severus’ thrusts. This in turn made Severus come as well.

They collapsed in a heap, Lucius twisting around so he sat on the edge of the lounge before sliding to the floor and Severus onto Hermione, where she managed to sling and arm around each man.
“That was amazing,” she panted, and moaned loudly when Severus started licking her breasts clean. “I didn’t know you two had played, you never have before,” Hermione said, happily watching.

It was Lucius who answered, “We used to on occasion, but that was before Narcissa found out,” the blond wizard smiled sarcastically; even though he was pleased he’d managed to say the name of his ex-wife without breaking the mood by growling. “She was such an uptight bitch,” he continued.

“However, we have rarely done so since,” Severus added, still content at his task.

“So did you go all the way?” Hermione had started circling her fingers on her clit just thinking about it.

Severus’ eyes rose from Hermione’s activities to look at Lucius. A slow smile spread on both their faces. “I can fuck both of you together,” he said, “we have rarely been able to do that,” and then looking back at Hermione he saw pleasure and interest lighting her face.

“What do I need to do?” she asked.

Severus leaned forward and kissed her. “You just lay there. You’ll see how it works,” he assured her, starting to get up.

Hermione noticed as Lucius took his place that the discussion had made them both ready again. Severus summoned his wand and performed a cleansing charm on Lucius’ back passage then a lubrication charm on his hands.

Lucius finished cleaning Hermione of the mess he’d made on her with long flat tongued licks while he waited. She watched his mouth then descend onto one nipple and bite gently, making a spark of arousal shoot through her, and another when he moaned at the feel of Severus’ fingers in him, stretching him.

Hermione by this time was arching up into Lucius wanting him in her, writhing under him. His head arrived over hers, “Patience, pet. It will be worth it,” and his mouth descended to hers. Their kiss was deep and hungry, and Lucius rubbed his aching cock on her, teasing her while they waited. She groaned into their kiss and working his way around to her ear, he said, “Here we go,” as he felt Severus starting to work his member in.

Once he was seated completely, Severus held still while Lucius sank into Hermione. He gave them both a moment to become used to the sensations and then he slowly withdrew. Lucius stayed still the first time, but then when Severus withdrew the second time, so did Lucius, then allowing Severus to push him into Hermione as he pushed himself into Lucius.

Hermione’s head arched back on the lounge, it felt amazing, and she was being watched by both of them. Her hands started sweeping her body, teasing her hard nipples and then alternating between that and playing with her clit.

Severus and Lucius watched as the look on her face twisted in ecstasy, and she started to pant, her hands still moving up and down her body. Her pants turned into grunts with every push and she heard Lucius moan deeply at the feel of Severus’ rigid shaft stroking his prostrate each thrust. None of them lasted long after this, Hermione screamed, diving over the edge as the tension bubble inside her burst, sending her world into coloured shards.

The delicious squeezing of her walls around Lucius had him gritting his teeth, he wanted to come when Severus did, and three strokes later that happened and Lucius allowed his orgasm to shoot forth. Knowing Severus would be exhausted; Lucius braced his arms to hold him up until he had
enough energy to remove himself.

Eventually, Severus managed to right himself, even though he was still panting like an athlete. He pulled his wilting member from Lucius and collapsed back on the end of the lounge, allowing Lucius to also disengage. Hermione happily crawled over to Severus and Lucius sat back down with them.


Lucius smiled at her. “As much as I’d like to I promised to help Ginny with the children’s breakfast in the morning. Bill’s spending the weekend in France; it’s his daughter’s birthday.”

“Perhaps you should think about using that to your advantage,” Hermione said, as he kissed her forehead and rose to find his clothes.

“Mmm, perhaps I should. Maybe we could find some time to talk.”

Severus and Hermione rose to bid their friend goodnight. “Thank you Lucius that was a wonderful encounter,” Hermione said against his lips. She then saw him turn towards Severus, she giggled, “Well aren’t you going to kiss him good night,” and she laughed giving Lucius another kiss.

The blond aristocrat smirked at her. “No, I’m not,” and he turned to Severus and pushed Hermione into his arms. “She’s a minx, Severus,” he laughed in reply.

“And I wouldn’t have her any other way,” Severus’ deep voice added, as he drew Hermione to him. “Good night, Lu. It was very pleasurable evening. I’d forgotten how much I enjoyed that aspect of our friendship,” he said, squeezing Hermione closer to him.

“Yes, I also had forgotten. Thank you my friends, good night,” he said and floo’d away.

Severus looked down at Hermione. “He’s right you know, you are a little minx.” He gave her a deep contented kiss. “And you are completely all right with this development?” he asked, pulling back far enough to look at her.

“Mmm-hmm, it’s different, but I find it very sexy.” She rubbed herself on him. “Of course you would only do that with Lucius,” she started to look a tad apprehensive.

“You certainly are a wonder,” he said, caressing her face. “I have never even thought of doing that with anyone other than Lucius, it’s a strange relationship we have, it’s almost exclusive, except for you. I can’t explain it beyond that, but it’s you I love,” he assured her. “I do have a certain… affection for Lu, but not the way I think of you. I love you with all that I am and I can’t think of life without sharing everything I am with you,” he told her. “Whereas with Lu, it is purely an added enjoyment, if it happens it happens, I do not miss it when it doesn’t,” he said honestly. His eyes glittered as he then whispered, “You own my heart and soul, I have come to realise these last months that I would die without you.”

Hermione thought she was going to dissolve into a puddle, this man knew his own mind. This didn’t surprise her, but she hadn’t expected him to be so honest, and this made her think of him as more perfect than before. “I love you so, so much, Severus. You mean everything to me, you always have,” she managed, swallowing hard. There were tears welling up in her eyes at the emotion she felt.

Severus groaned and kissed her deeply. Reaching down he swept her up into his arms. “You’re perfect,” he murmured against her lips, as he carried her to the bedroom. Placing her on the bed they instantly moulded together, their limbs entwining. Severus hissed a breath in contentment as he
eagerly sank into her welcoming flesh.

Bringing her legs up, Hermione locked her ankles around his waist, arching up into him as a sigh of delight fell from her lips at the feeling of perfect fullness. She knew he fitted her flawlessly, and they acted as one, she met each of his powerful thrusts, urging him deeper into her. Soon a litany of nonsense words was all that she could utter, as push for thrust and groan for grunt they became lost in the bliss of each other.

Severus was usually quiet in his pleasure, but this time as his thrusting became erratic and Hermione was crying her release around him, he couldn’t help joining in the babble of her partially finished sentences. “Mine,” he affirmed. “You are mine… love you… you’re mine.”

When they were both completely spent, Severus rolled off her and gathered her into his arms. “Perfect,” was the last word she heard in a murmured breath as they both fell into the arms of Morpheus.

xox

The next morning Ginny sat watching Lucius with her children. She loved how he interacted with them, especially James. The little boy had only ever had her father and some of her brothers as positive influences. Harry had never had much to do with the children, unless he wanted to use them for something.

To see her children being nurtured by, of all people, Lucius Malfoy amazed her. At the moment he had Lily on his hip and Albus tugging at his coat tails, and he handled them so well. Perhaps it was unfair of her, but initially she’d wondered at it, now it was a treasured part of her day.

I just wish he wasn’t so scared of touching me. There have been several times this week just gone when I’ve thought he might kiss me, but nothing. She was brought back to earth as the baby gave her a robust kick.

Poppy had given her a clean bill of health at her seven months check-up. Ginny realised exactly how lucky she was to be alive. If Severus… it still feels strange calling my former Potions professor, Severus, she thought, hadn’t been in my mind when the bleed happened I may well still be here, but I wouldn’t be as well off as I am.

“You’re quiet this morning.” Ginny heard Lucius’ voice beside her as he sat at the table and pushed a cup of tea towards her. “Is everything all right?”

Ginny was just thinking how to answer when there was a knock on the door. Lucius went to answer it. “Good morning, Lucius,” said a cheerful Luna.

The blond wizard was almost knocked over by James and Albus. “Auntie Looney,” they yelled as she came in.

Luna had encouraged their use of her pet name; the title of Looney had never bothered her. “Good morning boys, are we all ready?”

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“‘Yes,’” they yelled.

Ginny had got up to clean Lily off, so she could go too. “Waits a me,” the little girl said, as her mother placed her on the floor.

“How are you this morning?” Luna asked Ginny. Ginny gave her a stressed smile. Luna laughed, “You look like you could do with some serious me time,” she commented casually. “I used to get so
uptight what with hormones and being so uncomfortable, Nevie used to give me massages,” she sighed. “They were lovely,” she enthused. She turned away to say something to the children again and totally missed Ginny’s quivering lip.

Lucius didn’t though, and started hunting them out the door. “I bet Frank is impatient to play with Albus,” he said.

“Oh… oh yes,” answered Luna in her usual airy voice.

Lucius watched all three children kiss and cuddle Ginny and start to leave. They were just about out the door when little Lily pulled away from Luna’s grip on her hand and ran back in. She grabbed hold of Lucius’ leg, and hugged him. “Bye, bye, Papa Lu,” she said, her huge brown eyes staring up at him.

Lucius Malfoy thought he was going to melt, he cleared his throat softly. “Good bye little poppet, you have a good day,” he said, patting her head, his voice was so choked with emotion he could barely speak.

Luna came back and took Lily by the hand, by this time she’d seen Ginny’s tears threatening to fall. “Come on Lily, we don’t want to keep Xanthie waiting, she’s planning a tea party this morning,” Luna told her.

“Oh goodie,” Lily enthused and was happily led away.

When the door had closed behind them, Ginny collapsed at the table, sobbing. Without thinking further, Lucius was on his knees at her side. “Come on, angel. Tell me what’s wrong,” he encouraged.

When she started speaking it was a garbled mess of words and wild arm gesticulation. “It’s all right for her… I’m so randy, and I’ve got no one… and the baby’s kicking hell out of me… and I want you, oh Lucius, I want you,” and her sentence was cut short as her lips attacked his. “Please don’t push me away,” she pleaded, kissing him again. “I’ve wanted you for so long,” and she sighed. Her next kiss was more passionate, their teeth and lips clashed almost violently, and she had her fists in his hair. “Lucius… I ache for you… please touch me.”

Lucius was lost in the feel of her lips of his, her hands pulling his hair and the passion in her kisses. His lips and mouth rained hot kisses down on her lips and neck, as he said, “I want you too,” but with his words also brought some semblance of reason back to him that made him pull up. “We need to talk, angel.” He captured her face between his hands, and it was all he could do not to kiss her already well kissed lips again. Her mussed up hair was beautiful. “Come, let’s make ourselves more comfortable.”

Once he’d stood, his enflamed crotch was almost in her line of sight, and her hand came out to caress him through his trousers. He groaned, but scooted out of the way of her hand.

“I don’t want to talk, I just want you,” she told him.

He sighed, and started helping her up. “Yes, Merlin help me, and I want you. I’ve been fantasizing about you ever since the day at the Leaky Cauldron,” he admitted.

“Well, what’s the problem?” she asked.

Lucius rolled his eyes, “What is it about you Gryffindor witches, you’re so direct. There are several problems I can see.”
“We believe in taking what we want, and I can see you want me, and you kissed me back,” she told him.

“Yes… yes I did,” he sighed again, sitting her down on the lounge, “but you’ve just come out of a marriage you never chose to go into. You’re seven months pregnant with your ex-husbands child, still recovering from a life threatening brain haemorrhage and an attempted miscarriage,” he paused, picking up her hands and looking at her longingly, “and the truth is, as much as I would worship you, I’m afraid I’m far too old for you,” he added reluctantly. “Then there is also the situation with…” he sighed, not wanting to reveal too much too quickly. “There are so many things you don’t know about me.”

“You know if it makes it easier for you, I’ve suspected from that first afternoon tea we had together with Severus and Hermione that you three are sleeping together, you are aren’t you?”

Lucius nodded, but said, “Hermione and Severus are a committed couple. They are truly, madly and deeply in love. But just as Hermione said that day, I have a love for them both, and yes, on occasion we come together as a threesome,” he admitted quietly, uncertain of how she would take it.

“I knew it,” she crowed, and then giggled at the look on his face. “I would love to join in, and as for age, Lucius. You’re in your fifties and I’m almost thirty, so what. Age is just a number,” Ginny took a deep breath. “Although I do understand that I come with a lot of baggage and four children; that’s got to be a turn off.”

Lucius chuckled, “Actually, I adore your children, and that’s something to say. Each one of them has a place in my heart, even this little mite,” he rubbed her stomach, and was rewarded with a series of kicks. “Wow,” he gasped, “I didn’t get to feel that with Draco, in fact I didn’t really get to experience fatherhood with Draco, the poor boy was conceived out of necessity,” he admitted, “and brought into a marriage that should never have happened.”

“That’s not a great deal different to mine, is it? Well not when you think about it, anyway.” She took both of Lucius’ hands and held them. “I was bred with like a prize cow. My enforced job in the arrangement was to make things appear normal, be the perfect wife and mother, so nobody would suspect their secret.”

Lucius looked puzzled, “Secret?”

“Harry and Ron are lovers, they’re gay. Have been since Hogwarts, it’s the reason I broke it off with Harry to start with. It hurt a lot to start with, but I caught them at the Burrow once during our sixth year. They didn’t see me, I’m very good at hiding when I want to watch something, but I’d always wondered if Harry was gay, there just seemed to be something missing, and finally seeing the evidence made my decision for me.”

“So why did he force you to marry him?”

“Because of his position… and how conservative the British wizarding public is.”

“Other communities are far more open minded, why didn’t they just go somewhere else?”

“Harry had his sights on being the next minister of magic.” She shrugged and sighed. “Who knows how much of what he’s like now is the curse, and how much is just plain blind ambition? To tell the truth Lucius, I think his blind ambition would remain, he was lauded by this community, and that has blinded him. Although, now I’ve had a chance to think about it, I’ve realised that the curse has twisted him and made him do things that he would not have normally done to achieve his goals, like marrying me, and the campaign against Hermione.” Ginny shook her head, and drew a shaky breath.
“The really sad thing is that Hermione had no idea they were lovers, I asked her the other day.”

“That is really sad, considering some of the things they’ve done to her because of it,” Lucius conceded, but he had a question. “You said, ‘bred with, like a prize cow’, what did you mean?”

Ginny grimaced, and cleared her throat. “Whenever Harry decided it was time for a child to enter the perfect,” and she used air speak-marks, “family,” she cleared her throat again, and her lip quivered.

“You don’t have to tell me if you’re not ready to, angel,” Lucius told her, taking her hands again and running his thumbs softly over her knuckles.

“N-no I want to, you need to know, it’s just hard.” She took another breath, and started talking. “He would copulate with me. There was no pleasure in it for me; or him really, I don’t think. He was rough and simply rutted with me from behind until he came. He told me that not having to see my face made it easier for him. Once I became pregnant, they would go back to making me sit and watch them enjoying themselves. The stupid part is that I actually would have enjoyed it had I been able to participate, but the first time I so much as touched myself, they tied me so I couldn’t. That was the really nasty part of my marriage, being constantly unable to satisfy myself while they could, of course there were other things, but that hurt the most. I’ve been so frustrated all these years.” It was at this point that she finally broke down. Lucius gathered her into his lap, and he cradled her there, stroking her hair while she cried. After a time she settled, and they were both shocked to see that it was lunch time.

While he stroked her head and comforted her, Lucius made a decision, and once she was ready to listen he said, “I’ve never had a courtship I chose to have, and the witches after my marriage were purely for relief only.” Ginny lifted her head from his shoulder and their eyes met.

Her lip quivered, “Neither have I, I always dreamed of that special wizard and the wonderful wedding,” then she became a little hesitant. “Not that I’m saying this has to end a certain way.”

“If I am going to court you, my angel, you can be assured that I intend it to end in the wedding of your dreams,” he said, stroking her cheek. “But I think we need to take things one step at a time, at least until we’re settled.”

“Okay, Lucius, as long as we know where we stand,” and even though they were both still eager to do more. At present Ginny just snuggled back into his chest and they contented themselves with sitting and talking quietly until the rumbling of their stomachs got the better of them.
The day had started so well, the children had gone to the Longbottom household as they did most week days. Even though Ginny was now more than happy to take care of her children once more, her children spending time with Neville and Luna’s off-spring had become a bit of a habit.

Luna Longbottom seemed to have become an unofficial crèche for all the children, and it actually made sense that all those who lived at Hogwarts who were under school-age, should do their lessons, or if they were too young, just play together. Luna supervised James, with his school work and Frank and Albus with their preparations for kindergarten, while also keeping the three girls entertained.

It was a big commitment, especially the schoolwork part. The Muggle distance education had been Hermione’s doing, and whilst the Arithmancy professor helped where she could, she had a full teaching program of her own. She had organised the lessons for James and Albus when she discovered that Harry had stopped James from attending a Muggle school. “He should know of his Muggle heritage as well,” she had lectured to them all. Neville and Luna thought that it was an excellent idea, so Frank was included when there was talk of Albus also starting.

Before her curse incident, Ginny had been tutoring James at home; another example of what was expected of the perfect wife, and when she couldn’t do it anymore Hermione had organised the lessons with Molly and Bill’s approval. All the adults in the circle of friends also took James as often as they could manage, encouraging him to do things the others weren’t old enough to do yet. They were all concerned about stress over the breakup between Harry and Ginny with all three of the children, but especially James. So spending time with them all was the best way they knew of seeing how they were coping.

However, the boy in question seemed to be coping remarkably well, although he was often caught surreptitiously eyeing off the first years, and they reasoned that it was only natural that he was eager to meet other boys his own age.

If he had known what they were thinking, James couldn’t have agreed more. He had heard a lot about Scorpius Malfoy from Lucius and was overjoyed at the thought that he might get to meet him, because just maybe they could be friends, like Albus and Frank.
He had an idea that there was something he didn’t quite understand happening between his mother and Lucius, but he wasn’t worried about it. He had never really had a proper father figure and because Lucius treated him the same way as his Granddad and Uncles George and Bill did, but was around a lot more, he was happy to allow whatever happened to happen.

James had finished his lessons for the term, and he was free today. He had climbed the steps at the side of the big covered water tank that served the greenhouses, and was currently perched on the edge. He sat there leaning on the railing, hidden from view and watching Professor Longbottom teaching a group of first year Gryffindors and Slytherins far below.

It was a brilliant view from up there, almost as good as the one from the Astronomy tower. Auntie ‘Mione and Uncle Severus had taken him up there one night to see the stars, and that had been really smashing as well. They were both mega smart and they seemed to know everything about stars and stuff.

After that evening, James had curled up in his bed and quietly wished that his parents could have acted like Auntie ‘Mione and Uncle Severus did, and it wasn’t long after that that his mother and Lucius started acting a bit like that too, so he was very happy. On some level James had always known how unhappy his mother had been with his father. It escaped his ten year old brain why his parents had married in the first place.

He focused back on the class of first years. That would be him in a little under three months, and a thrill shot through him at that thought. Even his excitement over his birthday, which was only a little over a month away, was dwarfed by the hugeness of starting Hogwarts.

He wondered what house he would be in, his father and Uncle Ron had always told him bluntly that no Slytherins were any good. He remembered Uncle Ron saying regularly, “There’s not a witch or wizard whose gone bad that wasn’t in Slytherin.” Now James wondered about that statement, because both Lucius and Uncle Severus were in Slytherin, and they were nice. Uncle George said that Gryffindors were sometimes very loyal to their own house, it was part of their nature, and that he shouldn’t read too much into what Uncle Ron had said, but his uncle’s attitude had upset him.

He found it to be a bone of contention; all people had their good qualities and bad qualities. Certainly he knew many Gryffindors, but he was just as happy to know people who weren’t from Gryffindor. At the moment the only examples of people from other houses he had, were Uncle Severus and Lucius in Slytherin and Auntie Luna who had been in Ravenclaw, and an old witch who looked like a pudding with patched over-alls on, called Professor Sprout. She had come to visit when he was at the Longbottom’s last week and she was a Hufflepuff, that was the first Hufflepuff he thought his had met, and he was very impressed by her.

While James continued his musings high above the greenhouses, Lucius was on his way to see Ginny, as he had the morning free of teaching. He had now handed his resignation to Minerva, and at the end of term he finished teaching altogether because the Headmistress had found a suitable replacement for the History of Magic professorship and Lucius and the new professor were currently sharing the post until term finished.

It was now the last week of term and Lucius would have been more than happy to let the new teacher have the lot of it right away, but he had been asked to keep teaching the OWL and NEWT classes so they at least had some continuity before their exams. This suited him fine; he had really hated teaching the lower classes anyway. At least the higher classes, especially the NEWT class were there—well mostly—because they enjoyed the subject.
He put his mind back on track he didn’t want to think about teaching. Lucius now completely understood why Severus called them ‘dunderheads’ and he totally agreed with him. However, this morning he had better things to think about. Lucius had plans with Ginny Weasley. They had finally been given the all clear to become more intimate if they wished, and while the children were away was their best opportunity to do so.

At first Poppy’s advice had been that they should refrain from ‘too much excitement’ as the matron put it, even if she had given Ginny a clean bill of health weeks ago, she informed them that she had not figured that sort of activity into it.

During her last check-up Ginny had asked the Matron once more though, because the whole situation was starting to wear on both of them and she was becoming slightly desperate. There had been lots of kissing and cuddling, and also wandering hands, but Ginny was still being denied her longed for orgasm with that someone special because of concerns that anything further would start her labour again before it was time.

The only lingering problem Ginny had noticed from her ordeal was a slight limp in her right leg when she was tired. This was nothing really, and the general consensus was that it would go away with time. No, her biggest problem at the moment, were her pregnancy hormones - they were making her as randy as hell. While she waited slightly impatiently for Lucius to come, she squeezed her thighs together once again just trying to appease the ache.

Finally there was the sound of the front door being opened, and Ginny rose from her chair and smoothed her loosely tied silk dressing gown. Hermione had offered to lend her some lingerie for the occasion but she had said, “What’s the use, it wouldn’t fit me at the moment anyway.”

Hermione had nodded at the time and smiled. “Well in that case just wear your silk gown and surprise him at the door. Sev loves it when I do that.”

After that her eyes had taken on a dreamy glaze, and Ginny had had to smile as she said, “Hey, we were talking about your wedding, how did we get on to my lack of a sex life?”

Ginny smiled now remembering that conversation, and Hermione asking her to be her bridesmaid along with Luna. Now though, she had other things to think about, this was the moment for her and Lucius to finally be together. She had warded the floo so her mother wouldn’t arrive unexpectedly and interrupt.

Chuckling to herself, Ginny remembered bringing a ‘friend’ home at Christmas her last year at Hogwarts, and her mum almost walking in on them. *Merlin that feels like such a long time ago*, she shook her head as the door opened and she untied the robe. Her eyes locked with Lucius’ steel grey orbs and she allowed the silk to slide smoothly off her shoulders.

Lucius’ eyes slowly and deliberately took in the sight before him, the past few weeks had all been leading to this moment. He had not sought comfort with Severus and Hermione in that time, because that had felt wrong. If Ginny had to endure the frustration of wanting him and not being able to have him, then the least he could do was reciprocate. He had seen to himself in the shower this morning so he wouldn’t just explode in five seconds like a teenager, but the sight before him at the moment had him wondering if his efforts in that department had been for nought as he felt his body responding painfully to what his eyes were seeing.

Before him stood the witch he adored. Her floral silk gown hanging momentarily on her arms, before she shifted slightly and his gaze followed it as it then slid smoothly from her body and pooled liquidly on the carpet, and his witch stood there naked and ripe in front of him. She looked delicious.
“You are so beautiful,” he whispered as he started moving towards her, his gaze raking over her full ripe breasts and down past her swollen abdomen to the thatch of auburn hair at her apex. She looked wild, almost primeval in her elemental state, and he found himself shedding his clothes as he approached her.

In record time he was naked and it was her turn to examine him. Her eyes spend no time on the preliminaries; Hermione had already told her he was an Adonis under his clothes, no, her eyes headed straight for the already straining appendage at his groin and she smiled broadly.

She remembered Hermione saying that Severus and Lucius were compliments, he was light and Severus was equally dark. The Adonis and the Vulcan, they were perfect compliments, and seeing him now, his muscle and sinew moving as he graceful stalked towards her, she could see what her friend meant.

Then he was upon her, sweeping her up into his arms. His arms that had held her through her greatest pain, and were now going to help her experience the greatest joy, she shivered in anticipation and claimed his lips as they walked.

There was no awkwardness, considering it was there first time. Lucius carried her to the bed, keeping his eyes open so he could see where they were going. Placing Ginny gently on the quilt he watched her run her hands over her body sighing in pleasure. He had thought hard about how they were going to do this without the baby getting in the way, the obvious thing to do was take her from behind, but knowing her history and wanting her to see how much pleasure she was bringing him he didn’t want to do it that way, neither did he want to put any weight on the baby.

He had not coupled with Narcissa once she was pregnant; in that respect his obligation to grace her bed was at an end once she was with child. So, he had no experience in how to do this. The solution had not come easily to him either. He had never been a wizard who liked to relinquish control to the witch, so he hadn’t immediately thought of allowing her to be on top.

It wasn’t until Severus had seen him deep in thought a few nights ago that they had discussed the issue, and of course Hermione had overheard and laughed merrily. “Let her ride you,” she had chortled. “I know you like the witch under you, but it’s the obvious solution, she can control the stroke and the depth,” she told him calmly. “Severus enjoys it on occasion, don’t you, love?”

The wizard in question pulled his witch into his lap and nodded, in fact Severus enjoyed it much more than he ever let on. “Most definitely, try it Lu, it’s certainly a feast for your eyes.”

Both Severus and Hermione had known that Lucius was abstaining until he could be with Ginny, so they didn’t tempt him with an offer to stay, apart from telling him that after the content of the conversation if it wasn’t going to join them for the practical demonstration, then perhaps he had better find something else to amuse himself with, somewhere else.

A deep moan and gentle hands on his throbbing manhood brought him back to the present to explain what he wanted to happen. But before he could do that, Ginny’s tongue licked him from base to tip, and Lucius shuddered in pleasure. Especially when she followed this by almost pleading, “In… I need you in me, please Lu.”

Climbing on the bed to cover her carefully he kissed her deeply as he moved to lie on the other side of her. The taste of his pre-cum on her tongue made pleasure tingle through him, and once he was settled on his back he held out his arms to her. “Come, you shall have control. Use me as you tool for your pleasure.”

Hearing this, after so many years of being denied fulfilment made tears threaten to rise in her eyes.
Rolling awkwardly onto her hands and knees she went back to what she had started, taking Lucius deeply into her mouth. The exquisite pleasure she felt at his invitation saw her crying as she enjoyed his manhood.

Her body was aching for release and the baby was now very restless. It had started somersaulting and swooping around her stomach the more excited she got. This made Ginny uncertain, but she was also determined, and before she could deny either of them their release she got up and allowed Lucius to help her straddle his hips.

Unable to see down past her belly, she placed her hands on this chest and rubbed her saturated core on him, almost desperately. “Help me; I can’t reach around to align myself.”

Lucius’ hands were there in an instant, they skimmed through her folds gathering the slick moisture and spreading it over his cock as he place it at her opening. Neither of them could stop the groan of delight as Ginny’s body started to envelope him. Once she had seated herself fully, they both held themselves completely still, panting.

The first time she lifted herself and came back down, Lucius understood what Severus had meant about it being a feast for the eyes. His eager gaze moved from the look of pure bliss on Ginny’s face, down to the bounce of her full breasts and then as she rose up off him again, to where their bodies were joined. He watched himself appear from her body and then slowly disappear once more, and it was such an erotic sight he almost lost it then and there.

He decided that concentrating on Ginny’s face was the way to go, because after weeks of wanting without anything but a quick wank in the shower this morning, he was teetering on the edge already. He studied her expression, her plump pink lip wedged firmly between her teeth as she concentrated on feeling him, and it was at that moment that he saw that she was the same as him, she was trying to draw this pleasure out as much as he was.

The moment she stilled though and a deep whine started to build in her throat he knew she was close. Sliding his hand down under her belly he flicked her clit with a single finger, and she literally exploded around him, Lucius had never seen someone come so hard. The force with which her walls gripped him took him by surprise, and the pleasure was so exquisite that he had no choice but to follow her.

Lucius brought his knees up so Ginny could collapse back against them, knowing that she was utterly spent. She continued to sit on his rapidly deflating shaft, panting, with her chest heaving. Finally she managed to speak, and what fell from her lips was beautiful. “I love you,” she whispered.

Lucius made the effort to sit up and took her in his arms. “I love you too,” he told her. As he had moved his now deflated cock had slid from her and he helped her to lie down. Her legs still seemed to be useless, so he gathered her to him and he watched over her as she dozed for a time.

Eventually she woke and Lucius got up and made them some tea and toast. Coming back to bed, they ate and then settled down to kissing and cuddling, knowing that he would have to leave soon. They were startled from their now peaceful cuddle by a hare patronus darting into the room, and what it said filled both of them with terror. “I’m so sorry, but while I was feeding Alice, Xanthie and Lily seem to have had a disagreement. Xanthie has told me that Lily decided to go home and I can’t leave the others to find her.”

Lucius was instantly in action. “I’ll find her,” he said, accioing his clothing. He kissed Ginny’s forehead, and wiped away the tears that were already falling. “It will be all right, I’ll be back with Lily before you know it,” and he hurried for the door.
Once out in the hallway Lucius drew his wand. “Point me,” he commanded. It was a spell that had found him Draco once when he’d been lost, his son had been about the same age and Narcissa had managed to lose him.

As he followed his wand, Lucius ruminated on the lecture he was going to give Luna Longbottom. It also cemented his decision to move them all to the manor as soon as possible.

It was on approaching the greenhouses that he heard the crying of a small child. “Lily?” he called.

The crying paused momentarily as if she was listening, but then increased in volume along with a banging sound. He called again, and then he heard, “I is stuck, Papa Lu.” A warm feeling rippled through his chest as he realised that she had recognised his voice.

Now hearing the direction of her cries and hearing her little hands banging on the door, he said, “Don’t worry, I’m coming, poppet.” When he reached her, he found her trapped in a greenhouse. It looked like the door had closed after she’d gone in. There was also a shuffling noise that he couldn’t place, but as he opened it he noticed the Venomous Tentacula starting to reach for her that became unimportant, and he scooped the little girl up to safety and flung the door shut, warding it strongly. There would be more than words flying around over this. Who would leave the door of a greenhouse open like that, especially one that contained something that deadly?

Conjuring his Patronus with some difficulty, because he was so upset, Lucius sent a message to Ginny. Then turning his attention to Lily, he rubbed her back gently and told the sobbing child who had her face buried in his neck. “It’s all right, I’ve got you.”

“I was scared, Papa Lu,” she cried in a muffled voice.

Hearing the crying, several sets of footsteps could be heard approaching hurriedly obviously Luna had summoned more than one person to help. Once they had heard what happened, Hermione pulled Severus and Minerva aside and waited for everyone else to leave. “I don’t think this was an accident, after what happened to Xanthia a few weeks ago, let’s hide and wait a bit,” she suggested.

Once they were hidden, Minerva sent a discrete Patronus message to Kingsley to silently come to Hogwarts, Greenhouse six together with his company. As once it was quiet they had already picked out two disillusionment shadows.

“How did they get in?” Minerva wanted to know, I have the wards set to alert me if they try to approach the gates.

“I would say, that it’s not Potter and Weasley, and whoever it is, is probably under the influence of an unforgiveable,” Severus added, gruffly.

The two shadows started to move, thinking everyone had gone, just as three also disillusioned shadows joined Severus, Hermione and Minerva.

Severus filled in sketchy details and Remus and Tonks struck. Within a minute they had the two detained, and Severus apart from being right was also dipping into his meagre supply of Veritaserum.

The interrogation in Minerva’s office lasted only a few minutes, and they got the first decent lead they had ever had. There would be a stake-out tonight at the Three-legged Witch, a pub, deep in Knockturn Alley.

xox

Lucius hadn’t even noticed the impromptu pow-wow that seemed to be happening nor the results of
it. He was only concerned with the crying child in his arms. “Shhh poppet, you’re safe now. I will
take you back to Mummy.” The little head nodded, and Lucius held her tight as he walked back to
the hidden rooms. By the time he arrived Lily had fallen asleep on his shoulder. A fully dressed
Ginny was waiting agitatedly in the sitting room for them. Lucius placed Lily carefully on the lounge
with her head on Ginny’s lap, because Ginny belly was now too big to accommodate her daughter in
her arms. “The fool has left a greenhouse containing a dangerous plant open for anyone to walk in,
she could have been killed.”

“Oh no,” Ginny put her hand over her mouth, “Oh Lucius, not my little Lily,” she gasped.

Lucius knelt beside Ginny as she sat and stroked the sleeping child’s head. “Gin, I want to move you
all to the Manor. Now… today,” he told her urgently. “No uninvited guest can get in there the wards
are stronger than Hogwarts, and you will have everything you need.”

Ginny sighed, “I have to admit, apart from anything else it would be nice to see the sun again. I am
starting to feel like a prisoner here.” She was still occupied stroking Lily’s head quietly, and then her
eyes suddenly filled with tears. “You don’t think she was bitten do you?” Her tears were not ever far
from the surface at the moment.

“No, my love,” Lucius said, calmly, rising up to sit beside her, placing his arms around her and
kissing her hair. “She would have a high fever by now if she had been,” he told her.

“Of course,” Ginny sighed, “I’ll be glad when this is over.” She snuggled into her lover’s arms and
whispered, “Yes, moving is an excellent idea, but we’ll have to tell mum and Professor McGonagall
first.”

Lifting her chin around so he could see her face, Lucius smiled, and kissed her before he called his
head elf. “Open up the rooms we discussed, I and my four guests will be moving in later this
afternoon.” When the elf had bowed and left, Lucius turned to Ginny. “We have three days of term
left; I will only leave you to fulfil my commitments here. Then we will be free to do as we please,”
he told her. Ginny smiled and pulled his head around to her lips.

xox

Ginny’s offhand comment about wishing it was over wasn’t far from the wish of those assembled
around the Three-Legged Witch that night. Lucius had told Minerva his plan to move Ginny and her
children and the Headmistress had welcomed it, not knowing how she was going to keep them safe
over summer while the castle was closed.

She inturn had explained to him that it had been two interlopers that had caused the problem, and that
Neville and Luna felt terrible about what had happened.

Under those circumstances Lucius’ ire died in his chest, and before they moved, he escorted Ginny
and Lily down to collect the boys and talk to Luna and Neville.

So now, while Lucius, Draco, Astoria and their children were making Ginny, James, Albus and Lily
comfortable at the Manor, Kingsley had put together a tight-knit team for the surveillance job at the
Three-Legged Witch.

After what seemed like an eternity they saw what they thought were the two they were searching for,
leaving the pub. However, after casting a trial charm that Severus had told him about, Kingsley
discovered that Harry and Ron had tried to fool the Aurors. Kingsley had been able to see through it,
and he had sent his troops off with who they had caught and hoped that the real pair turned up before
the potion wore off the fakes.
Chapter Summary

Ron and Harry are captured, and Severus and Hermione have a disagreement (and then they make up) ;))

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer:- I do not earn anything from this story, neither do I own Harry Potter and his world, they are the intellectual property of JK Rowling and Associates.

A question was posed at the end of the last chapter, and perhaps it did need to be clearer in the narrative. The two at the greenhouses were hired by Harry to upset Ginny, and they chose to do this by hurting Lily. Remember, Xanthie was injured in a similar way a few chapters back, that time the two thugs got it wrong. Nasty I know, but remember they are under a vicious curse, and are associating with equally depraved people. The only element in this chapter that I feel may be a trigger for anyone; is the fairly tame description of the dark ritual that allows them to remove the curse from Ron, but if this is bothersome to anyone, you have been warned. Please enjoy…

See the end of the chapter for more notes

From last time:-

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oOo

Setting up Disillusionment and Silencing Charms, Kingsley and Tonks waited while Remus paced. Tonight was the full moon so it was Moony who was present, and unlike Remus his wolf was impatient.

Thanks to further improvements to the Wolfsbane potion, Moony was allowed out on nights like this, as the potion now permitted Remus to wrestle back more control over his facilities and the metamorphosis wasn’t as complete.

The new Wolfsbane Potion was still a trial version not available generally, but so far Remus had found it wonderful. The research that had gone into its development had also helped the youngest Lupin daughter, as she had inherited the Lycanthropy gene.
It was very rare for werewolves to reproduce, so little was known about what would happen, but in light of Darlia’s affliction, it seemed that Mendel’s laws factored just as reliably into this gene as they did for other traits, because Dora and Remus’ other two children did not have the gene.

In light of these new developments Darlia was DNA tested when she was born, and as a consequence she would never have to go through painful transformations like Remus had in his childhood. She could still function with her family and wasn’t locked away every full moon, even if it was still a burden for the small girl to be a werewolf.

It had been discovered that Lycanthropy was actually an infection, a little like some spider bites, once it was in your system you just had to live with the consequences. However, the Lycan infection attacked the DNA of its host, mutating it and causing a type of split in the matrix of the code of life.

Even people like Bill who had been attacked outside the full moon phase still experienced disruptions because of it, especially after having been attacked by someone of such dark intent such as Fenrir Greyback.

“Moony!” Tonks whispered sharply, “For Merlin’s sake, you’re making me sea-sick with all the pacing, sit down,” she snapped.

A low growl told her that he wasn’t pleased but he sat, then immediately stood again, his nose sniffing the dank air of the Alley. Without warning the huge werewolf sprang into life, howling as he bounded off over the slippery cobblestones.

Kingsley and Tonks knew he had picked up a scent trail so they followed. “I hope it’s not just some bloody cat,” Tonks muttered under her breath as she started running. “Moony seems more agitated tonight than usual,” she added louder, so Kingsley could hear.

“I’m sure it’s just the stress,” Kingsley said, already starting to puff from the exertion of running to keep up with the huge wolf.

Of course, it was unusual for the Minister of Magic to follow his special agents around. This case however, was personal and he wanted as few people as possible to know what was happening.

Neither got to comment further as Moony suddenly leapt and brought down a lanky wizard trying to keep to the shadows of the Alley, the wolf pinned him to the ground and stood over him growling.

The prostrate wizard was screaming abuse at his captor, seemingly unaware of the danger he was in as he continued to flail his arms and legs and squirm around.

Seeing her husband’s control about to snap, Tonks’ sharp cry of, “Moony!” brought him slightly back to his senses, well enough to have him fighting the blood lust anyway.

Growling deep in his throat, Moony backed off, and Tonks constrained and disarmed the struggling wizard. Dragging him into the streetlight which was murky at best in this part of town, and seeing who they had caught, Tonks set her features into work-mode when she saw a very defiant and livid Ron Weasley glaring back at her.

“How dare you let a fuckin’ werewolf near me,” he sneered at her. “You’re all mad, you are, barkin’ mad.”

By this time Kingsley had caught up, and Tonks had put up a Silencing charm on Ron. She turned to Kingsley who was trying to catch his breath, and grinning slightly at his distress, scolding, “Kings really, you need to get fit, mate.” Then serious once more, she inclined her head towards Ron. “Where do you want him?”
Kingsley only thought for a moment while he caught his breath. “We march him out of here so word gets back to Potter, and then,” he glanced around, and then from Weasley to Tonks. “Do you have any holding cells free at the community?”

The witch sporting her trademark hot pink hair nodded. “That’s a good idea.”

“Can we organise the ritual for tomorrow?” he asked her.

Yes, that’s doable, Mum’s nervous, but she’s prepared,” Tonks told him. “I’ll contact the others.” All this time Ron’s mouth had still been moving soundlessly, and Moony had been glowering at him. The werewolf suddenly became silent and his features abruptly changed. Tonks felt her mate move closer to her and wrap himself around her, she knew these signs well and she looked back up to Kingsley. “Moony senses a threat, we need to move.”

It was as Kingsley was opening his mouth to answer that they heard the howl, and it was closer than they expected. “Okay move now,” Kingsley told them, taking Ron by the arm. “If we need to apparate out, I’ll take Weasley to the meeting point.”

Tonks nodded, and they started to move. They had only made it a few streets when a howl sounded in a different direction. “There’s more than one of them,” Tonks whispered.

“Yes, this is getting too dangerous, apparate,” he told her.

“No, you go first; you are aware of what we must do.”

Knowing she was right, Kingsley nodded, and without another word apparated away with Ron. As soon as they were gone, Tonks slipped into her Animagus form, which of course was the compliment to Moony and they ran.

In her wolf form Tonk was not clumsy like her human counterpart, and they streaked back towards the howling to circle back on the rogues. This was another side to them, and it was a large part of their lives. Aurors caught dark wizards and they could both do that, but they were more specialised than that because they had a unique set of talents, they also caught renegade werewolves. It was a top secret project that had been a long time in the making. After the second Voldemort war, it was realised that there were many Lycans who followed Greyback’s example and deliberately placed themselves were they were certain to come across humans after they transformed. Any Lycan who was living in Knockturn Alley was suspected of being like this. The fact they were in a dark community didn’t make the crime any less serious, and they had to be brought to justice.

xox

Kingsley landed at their usual transit point between the mainland England and the Lycan community where Remus and Tonks lived. He pushed Ron into one of their inner holding cells and stood back watching him. Locking the cell, Kingsley lifted the Silencing Charm and unbound the redhead while he continued to observe him with an eyebrow cocked.

“Where am I?” Ron wanted to know. Kingsley’s features remained set in stone. “I demand to be released.”

“No!” The minister said, flatly. “That is no longer an option for you, the demanding stops here.”

“You have no evidence, you have to let me go,” he ordered hotly, ignoring what Kingsley had said.

The ex-head of the Aurors had no patience left. “Every time I have had to let you go, I have regretted
it,” Kingsley snarled. “But this time, it’s not only about your misdemeanours and foul deeds, this time it’s about a curse that is affecting and we need to fix you.”

“What do you mean fix, you can’t touch me… I-I’ll get Harry…. I’ll…” he seemed to suddenly lose his train of thought and he scowled. “You can’t do this, y-you have no right. Those bitches deserved everything, we didn’t do anything wrong. They are both Death Eater fuckers,” he accused, and his voice was starting to sound frenzied.

“You’ll do nothing, now shut your mouth or the Silencing Charm comes back,” the dark wizard warned. Ron glowered at him but only muttered under his breath after that.

Kingsley had just turned to go and sit at the table in the centre of the room, when there was a large commotion outside the room.

Ron startled badly and was up at the restraining charm. “What the fuck was that?” Then there was a blood curdling howl and the rattling of chains. “Harry?”

Kingsley heard Ron’s frightened voice. It was just loud enough for him to hear, and a nasty suspicion of why Ron had been out in a werewolf infested part of the alley dawned in his mind, but he forced himself to dismiss it at the moment, as he had no proof.

It is the lot of most dark wizards eventually, Kingsley pondered, waiting for Tonks to come and tell him what was happening. If you lay down with dogs you get up with fleas, he thought further as the door opened.

Tonks looked tireder than normal as she came into the room. She just looked around and walked to the tiny kitchenette. “I’ll make some tea, we can’t do anymore now. The second one escaped while we were perusing the first,” she said, and sighed quietly knowing she wouldn’t be able to sleep now until the morning.

“Where’s Moony?” Kingsley asked, walking over to her, and keeping his voice down.

“He’s with the werewolf we caught, there’s something different about this one. He smells familiar even to my wolf, and he doesn’t appear to be just suffering from Lycanthropy,” she shrugged, “of course being a dark wizard, it could be anything.” She sighed again as she pulled three mugs from the cupboard. “We won’t know until the morning, but for some reason Moony wanted to stay with him, I don’t understand but I’m sure we’ll know why in the morning.”

It was now very late. “I need to go to the Aurory and sort out the pair we caught earlier,” Kingsley said, draining his mug.

“You go,” Tonks told him. “I have some paperwork to keep me awake.” She glanced over at Ron, who seemed to be quiet now.

“Don’t underestimate him,” Kingsley warned. “He has periods like that, but then it turns.”

Tonks nodded, “I won’t, don’t worry.”

xox

The next morning was busy for everyone, but it also held a few surprises that was were going to have serious repercussions.

Severus, Bill and Lucius all received owls asking them to prepare to assist Andromeda to remove the curse on Ron, as he had been captured that night. The owl had been waiting for Severus when he
and Hermione woke up, and as usual she was reading over his shoulder. “I want to come,” she declared.

“No, absolutely not,” Severus stated unequivocally, and he said it so vehemently that Hermione’s eyes narrowed and he prepared himself for an argument. He had noted with great joy lately that her former fire was returning as her confidence grew, but this time he had to deny her for her own good. Of course he didn’t expect her to understand that, and he suddenly realised that this might be their first big fight.


Severus rose from his desk and tried to take her unyielding body into his arms. “Yes you are, and I enjoy that very much, but you are not coming tonight and there are many reasons why.”

Hermione didn’t stop to hear them though, glaring, she pulled herself away from him and stalked back to her own quarters, slamming the connecting door violently.

Severus grimaced as the door slammed, there was nothing he could do, he wasn’t going to give in, and she really couldn’t go. He hoped she would calm down later and he could talk to her, this thought filled his mind as he distractedly went back to preparing himself for the last day of lessons for the year.

It bothered him all day that Hermione seemed to be avoiding him, she appeared to be in a real snit, and he wasn’t impressed. Then when he received a second owl from Tonks with some startling news he really would have appreciated her quick mind to help him sort out the problem it presented to him, but he was unwilling to makeup to quickly, not only was he truly annoyed at her juvenile behaviour, but her safety was paramount in his mind. Not only did he not want her to face the twin morons, but a greater danger was that as a Muggle-born the curse they were removing would likely attack her before anyone else.

She had been perfectly safe at Gringotts as they were only identifying the curse, peeling back layer upon layer until they found it, they were not disturbing anything. Even when she had stayed while they found the counter-curse she was in no real danger. However, this was not just a matter of closing one’s mind to attack’ this could end up being a physical attack that they might not be able to stop.

The fact was that long standing curses like this that were allowed to fester unchecked, tended to take on some aspects of sentience, and they aimed themselves to hurt the original hate that had created them. As the Voldemort wars had been blood wars, so that hate was predominantly toward Muggle-born magical people. He was used to fighting such things, and as a half-blood he could easily turn it away, but Hermione, the one thing that was most precious to him.

No, she must not be too involved; it was too dangerous for her. However, that night it hurt him terribly when she sat on the other side of Minerva at dinner—she hadn’t come to the hall for lunch—and ignored him. At the end of dinner he had tried to speak to her before he left with Bill, but she only gave him the cold shoulder.

Once Hermione had watched Severus and Bill leave she went to rise, as she did a hand arrived on her forearm. “Come to my office, we need to have a little chat,” Minerva said from beside her.

“I’m really not the best at the moment,” Hermione replied, she had been planning to go back to her room for some more sulking, how dare he deny her, she was not some child that he could order around.
“No, I grant that you’re not, and even though I would hope that you would come willingly, I will have no hesitation in pulling rank, young lady,” the Headmistress told her in no uncertain terms.

Hermione sighed, “Very well.”

As soon as they were in Minerva’s office she made them tea and sat Hermione down. “Now, would you care to explain to me why you are being so childish?”

“Childish?... Me!” Her tea cup rattled loudly as she set it on the table next to her. “He refused to let me go,” she announced. “I’m my own person, I will go where I please, I’m not having some man tell me what I can do, or w-where,” she stated vehemently.

Minerva sighed, “Hermione, it’s wonderful that you’re standing up for yourself again, but did you ask Severus why he refused to allow you to accompany him?”

The wind in her sails seemed to just disappear. “No,” she gasped.

“Then I suggest a research trip to the library for you,” Minerva finished quietly, “because you have obviously forgotten the nature and intent of truly dark curses, especially ones that have been playing out as long as these one’s have.”

“Oh,” it was more a puff of air than anything. Hermione started to think back to destroying Horcruxes and some of the other dark objects they had encountered over the time before the end of the war, and she paled. He had not wanted her to go for her own safety, because this was a dangerous operation, especially for her. She remembered how the Chamber of Secrets had tried to drown them after… “Oh dear, I’ve been very selfish.”

“Yes you have,” her companion replied softly, patting her hand. “Especially in light of what he found out after breakfast,” Minerva continued.

Hermione was instantly alert and worried. “Why?”

“They actually caught both Mr. Weasley and Mr. Potter last night.”

“What?” Hermione cut across her. “The note Severus received this morning didn’t say that,” she asserted.

“No, it didn’t,” Minerva saw Hermione’s puzzled look. “That’s because they didn’t know that they had captured Harry until this morning.”

Hermione’s brow furrowed further, and she started thinking critically about it, but she still couldn’t come up with an answer. Looking to Minerva for clarification, “What?”

Minerva gave it to her, before she had asked. “Tonks and Remus captured a renegade werewolf in Knockturn Alley last night…” she paused before going on, “This morning they discovered that they had actually caught, Harry Potter.”

“Oh,” Hermione gasped, she hadn’t been expecting that. “Umm, thank you for telling me. I think I’ll go back to my quarters now and wait for Severus to return,” and she rose mechanically and wandered to the door. Turning just before she left to say thank you again.

“You’re welcome, child,” the Headmistress replied.

xox
As the night wore on Hermione couldn’t settle, she tried reading and that was no good. She tried playing Solitaire, but she only lasted two hands before that held no interest for her either.

Her mind refused to settle, she wanted to know what would happen and how it would work. She assumed that Bill and Lucius had gone also… “Oh why, did I have to be so stupid?” she groused, sinking down into her bed dejectedly.

“Are you actually asking me that?” Severus’ voice asked her.

“Severus!” Hermione sat bolt upright. She had left the connecting door open, so she would hear him return, but she hadn’t heard anything yet. Her eyes scanned the doorway, but there was no Severus. She hadn’t actually spent a lot of time in this room for months now. Flopping back down onto the bed, the first tears slid from her eyes.

She hadn’t spent time here because she was always with Severus. A thought slipped into her mind, “What if something goes wrong and he doesn’t get to come back? I will have lost him, and our last words were in anger,” she raged.

“Don’t cry, little dove,” the voice said again.

Through her tears Hermione looked to her mirror. She’d actually forgotten him, and this thought made her even more miserable. They had meant to come and include him, but it had just never happened. Even the time they tried to, they really hadn’t. “Oh, hello Mirror,” she managed.

“Don’t worry about it, little dove,” but to Hermione what it said sounded like empty words, there were no strong arms around her as they were uttered and there was no hot breath caressing the tiny hairs around her ear as he placated her with his delicious velvet voice.

Hermione Granger realised at that moment, exactly how much she loved Severus Snape. Since that moment when he had picked her up off the floor of his private lab and comforted her, nothing less than him in his real corporal form was ever going to be right for her again.

xox

The three wizards had arrived at the Lycan community. Severus was tense, he hadn’t liked leaving Hermione on the terms he had left her, but he had a dangerous job to do. They were met by Kingsley, Remus, Tonks and Andromeda.

There was no greeting from any of them. Lucius who said, “Let’s get this over quickly, Ginny has had a bad backache all day, and I’m wondering if it’s almost time for her,” then glancing in Dora and Andromeda’s direction when he heard their gasps, he added, “Molly is with her.”

“I agree,” Severus cut across them before they could start talking about it. His mind flitted momentarily to the witch waiting at Hogwarts, but the steel trap of his Occumency shields didn’t allow that for too long before they rose in a business-like fashion.

“What is required of me first?” Andromeda asked nervously, following Severus’ lead. She had never been a witch for fighting or dark magic and this was all very confronting for her. Of course they had briefed her on what would happen and what she must do, but she was very well and truly out of her depth here.

Severus could already see her steeling herself. He spoke quietly, but coolly, “I require a donation of blood for the Potion I must brew,” he stated, without emotion. He heard her gasp, but continued to ready himself. “Once you have given me the final ingredient, you best practice the counter-spell, it needs to be perfect,” he suggested further.
Her curt, “Oh,” made Severus shake himself.

He made an effort and spoke kindly. “I’m sorry to sound so unfeeling, Andromeda, but this type of magic is most distasteful to me now, and the only way I can get through it is to be cold and unfeeling.”

“I understand, Severus,” and she patted his arm, “This is just very daunting for me, I never understood my sister’s interesting in all this.”

“Bella was mad, Dromeda,” Lucius added, trying to placate her unease. “She had a very twisted take on everything and as for Narcissa...” he gestured with his hand for her to believe what she wished, and left that sentence unfinished.

While this was all happening, Bill was studying his brother. He felt awful that this was happening to his baby brother, and worse that none of them had seen it. The trouble is that over the years it had been gradual and you tend not to notice, he shook his head as if to clear it.

Severus set to work on the Potion, and their attentions were all arrested when, having it well on the way, he withdrew the silver dagger from its case. He turned to the witch who looked so much like her demented sister that it was startling, and without preamble he said, “This must be willingly given, Andromeda. So if you have any doubts about it, now is the time to work them out.”

The soft sound of the bubbling potion base was the only thing to seeped into the silence, but finally Andromeda nodded her consent and Severus indicated that she should give him her wrist.

Tonks came forward to support her mother, and holding her wrist over the ritual goblet, Severus heard her gasp at the sting as he made his skilful incision, allowing her life essence to trickle down the dagger and off its point into the goblet. It was a slow process, one because it was what the potion required, and two because he didn’t wish to damage Andromeda too much. He finally healed the cut and momentarily placed the offering on his workbench before he withdrew two potions from his robes.

With a nod of thanks to Bill, Tonks allowed Andromeda to sit back into the chair he placed behind her, and Severus tended her. A Calming Draught and a small amount of Blood Replenisher saw her looking much better very soon.

Remus was watching on stoically, he cast a glowering glance at the two in the holding cells. They had had to add another general silencing spell to the area because of the abuse being hurled at them by the pair. They were now almost demented, it seemed that this curse had been active long enough so that when they started to be defied, it started to fight back urging them to give in to it.

Finally, Severus announced that the potion was ready. “Weasley first,” he ordered.

In the end that had to chain Ron to keep him still, he snarled and foamed like a rabid dog, pulling and twisting, lashing out at them. They could not restrain him magically because they needed an open entrance for the counter spell. It had been Bill who finally lost his temper with his brother and chained him spread eagle between the ceiling and the floor.

By this time Charlie Weasley had arrived, it had been arranged for Charlie to take Ron to Romania with him after the curse was removed, this would give him the opportunity to recover without the press finding out and with the support of his family.

They forced the blood laced cleansing potion down his throat and Andromeda started chanting the words of the counter-spell. After the third incantation those present saw his body stiffen, and a
terrible cry tore from him as the chains rattled when he pulled tighter on them.

They were all familiar with dark magic, and the echo of the beast that rose up from Ron Weasley didn’t faze them, all wands worked together to contain it, and Andromeda’s words changed to the containment part of the spell. They forced the squalling, snarling entity into a receptacle made from soft clay. Lucius handed Andromeda a dagger, the blade of which was fashioned from a basilisk fang, and she wielded it perfectly. It was a Malfoy family heirloom, and he had made a special trip to Gringotts today to retrieve it for tonight.

Once the foe was vanquished, Andromeda slumped forward, supporting herself on her arms, as Lucius carefully cleaning and re-sheathed the dagger. Dora and Remus helped her to a chair as Ron’s brothers attended to his slumped form.

Bill released Ron from the chains and they placed him on a bed they transfigured from a chair. They waited for him to wake up, this gave Andromeda a chance to regain some of her energy, and finally Charlie took what appeared to be a very frightened little boy in a man’s body away. He knew they had a hard road ahead of them, but at least it was a healing road.

Severus observed the scene dispassionately; he was concerned that the easier of the two removals had taken so much out of Andromeda. He quietly took Lucius, Remus and Bill aside. “Andromeda is not going to be able to cope with this next ritual on her own. Potter has additional darkness within in the form of his wolf.”

“You’re right, his wolf will hold onto the demon,” Remus added, thoughtfully.

The raven-haired wizard looked at his friend, knowing that what he was about to ask was not going to be received well. “Lucius we need Draco, and,” Severus paused, “Narcissa as well, and quickly. The potion will only remain viable for another two hours before we will be forced to repeat the whole process.”

The narrowed gaze and intake of breath from Lucius was enough to have Remus and Bill take a step backwards. Lucius glanced once at Tonks giving a shaky Andromeda a cup of tea, and his countenance took on a fierce light, and became unreadable as he stared momentarily at the wizard who was causing them so much trouble. Finally, the blond wizard set his mouth, nodded once, turned and left.

Chapter End Notes

A/N2:- Now that’s rude!! Don’t say such things about your author… . I’m sorry everyone, but I had to end it there. I want a full chapter to deal with Harry, and Ginny’s baby arriving, and Hermione and Severus making up (makeup lemon alert), as well as the wedding. That should be worth the wait, yes?
Deliverance

Chapter Summary

The curse is removed from Harry Potter, Ginny has her baby and Hermione and Severus make up ;-)

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer:- I neither own nor earn anything from this story. Harry Potter and his wonderful world came from the mind of JK Rowling, but I love borrowing her characters and playing with them for a while.

Lucius strode out the door without a backwards glance; he had become so exasperated by this situation and the trouble it was causing him that he even forgot about his dagger. The Apparition barrier was only a short walk and he reached it quickly, the length of his stride indicating further his ire. This was followed by a resounding crack of Apparition that told anyone who hadn’t already worked it out, just what kind of mood he was in.

When he arrived into his sitting room at the Manor though all thoughts of everything else left him as a terrified two year old attached herself to his leg. “Papa Lu, I scared,” she cried, her big tear stained eyes fixed on his face so far above her, and his indignation just melted away.

Lucius instinctively pulled the little girl up into his arms at the same time as he heard Ginny’s deep groan of pain from the bedroom, and his eyes went to his daughter-in-law who was—he had to admit —valiantly trying to settle the children, looking for answers. Another moan echoed up the hall and it dawned on him as to why they were so frightened, they were remembering the night their father tried to kill their mother with the Obedience Curse.

The action of rubbing Lily’s small back and shushing, to comfort her was at odds with his words, as he hissed at Astoria, “Did no one think of putting up a Silencing Charm when this began?” He watched understanding arrive on the witch’s face and she reached for her wand. “It’s too late now, you silly woman.”

His control slipped a little further and he was livid again. The thought of talking to Narcissa had been bad enough, but so many other things were also rocketing around his mind. *Why had this night had to interrupt what they had planned for the delivery of the baby? It feels like another punishment from the wizard we’re all trying to save. Ungrateful little shit! I hope he rots in Azkaban,* Lucius thought.

Mentally shaking himself again Lucius put Potter firmly out of his mind, and tried to wrestle some control back once more. He had to keep his head; there was more than Potter relying on him tonight. He was primarily worried about Ginny and the baby, even though they were out of the danger zone, the baby was still a few weeks early. With this in mind he resolutely blocked all thought of Harry
Potter out of his head, Ginny and her children needed all his energy and concentration now, and now he was here he was going to give it to them.

He had only gone with Severus tonight reluctantly, and because Ginny had assured him that the backache she’d had on and off for days was only false labour again. He had hoped that it was, now that he realised differently he fought for composure. He had wanted to be here for the whole experience, not just the end.

It was then that he noticed his daughter-in-law glowering at him as well, Lucius sighed silently and realised he also had to placate her. He didn’t care about her per say, she was an air-headed fashion plate, and he had little time for her, but she was the mother of his grandchildren, and Draco obviously cared deeply for her. Just quietly, she reminded him too much of Narcissa, even if she had given Draco a whole family, and not merely an heir.

Besides he needed things to go smoothly at the moment, so he steeled his dwindling reserves of patience and mollified her. “Astoria, I am sorry, but this night is becoming rather trying. Would you inform Molly I am here so she can come to the children, and then tell Ginny I will be there momentarily?”

Lucius waited for the witch to shot him a final glare as she rose to leave. He watched her gather herself up and stalk from the room, then he squatted in front of the lounge with Lily still clinging around his neck. James was sitting stiffly, trying not to let his fear for his mother show, and he was encouraging Albus to do the same thing. The brave boy had his arm around Albus but his little brother’s lip was quivering violently all the same.

A strange thought entered Lucius’ head as he saw how adapt James was at comforting his siblings, and it unsettled him. He couldn’t help wondering exactly how many occasions had called for James to play the grown-up before tonight.

Shaking himself internally to focus his mind again, Lucius placed a comforting hand on Albus’ knee, and said, “Having a baby is a very loud event, little man, but I assure you that your mother is perfectly safe, and soon you will have a brother or sister. Look, here comes Nanny now, I’m sure she’ll tell you the same.”

Molly gasped as she realised what was happening, and she quickly added her reassurances to Lucius’ words, before prising a reluctant Lily from around his neck and sitting between the boys, with her little granddaughter cuddled up in her lap. The kindly redheaded witch settled all three of them and while summoning a book to keep them occupied, she indicated silently that Lucius could leave them to her now.

Quickly stopping in his study and getting an elf to summon Draco, Lucius explained the problem at the safe house. After some initial hesitation on Draco’s part, Lucius sent his son away confident that he would convince Narcissa to help. He even fashioned a Portkey for him, so they could arrive at the generally unknown destination as quickly as possible. He then penned a quick message to Severus and sent his best elf with it before taking his place beside Ginny.

Out of all the things that were happening tonight, this was by far the most daunting for him. He had never had anything to do with birthing a baby, even if he did understand that it was the custom for fathers to be present, he hadn’t been when Narcissa had Draco. His ex-wife hadn’t wanted him there for the birth of their son, but Ginny did wish him present, and he was therefore determined to be there for her and for the child he had already started to care for, even though it wasn’t his.

Lucius had always wished for a large family, a house filled with children so to speak, but Narcissa had point blank refused after Draco. She told him that the only offspring required of her was his heir,
and she was having no more.

All this was at the forefront of his mind as he took the last steps into the master bedroom. Then his mind wandered back to the one single pointed nodded as Molly took control of the children, and he relaxed ever so minutely more. Molly and Arthur had been dubious about their daughter’s relationship with him to start with. Statements like, “He’s too old for you,” and, “Do you really think this is wise?” he been bandied around. They had settled a little, but he still felt like he was on probation, right up until moments ago when Molly’s single nod allowed him to believe he was finally being accepted.

As he entered the room, Lucius heard Poppy Pomfrey say, “Very well dear, now push.”

Looking at his witch, his heart clenched as he saw that she was covered in sweat. He could see the pain and exhaustion in her eyes, he had never felt so helpless, because there was nothing he could do to cure the problem, it had to run its course. “What do I do?” he asked dumbly, absently conjuring a wet cloth to sponge Ginny’s brow.

It was a general question, and Ginny didn’t answer him with words, she just took his other hand in a death grip as another contraction hit and then proceeded to squeeze harder while she pushed. Somehow her bruising hold seemed to centre him, and he put everything else out of his mind to concentrate on her.

Having already had three children, it only took seven pushes for a head topped with red hair to appear. They purposely hadn’t found out the sex of the baby, wanting it to be a surprise.

Another push and a round of encouragement from Poppy and Lucius and the head was out. “One more push, dear,” Poppy said, already cleaning the fluid out of the baby’s mouth with a gentle cleaning spell.

Ginny gave another push and fall back onto the bed, exhausted, but the hard work was done, and the room filled with the sounds of a squalling infant. Poppy held their child aloft before placing her on Ginny’s stomach and pronouncing their new daughter, a little underweight but perfectly healthy. Poppy used her wand to bandage the cord stump, and then clean both Ginny and the baby, as Ginny tiredly hushed her daughter her eyes fixed on the tiny child.

xox

Severus understood why his friend had opted not to return, apart from the fact that once he found Ginny was in labour and he wouldn’t have left, Severus knew Narcissa’s presence would be something of a trial for him if he had returned.

The raven-haired Potions master glanced at the cool elegant blonde witch who was in deep discussion with her sister. The question of why she would help was tickling at the corners of his mind, but, after pondering this for a few moments while he made the final preparations, he decided it didn’t matter, the sooner they got this over with the quicker he could get back to Hermione.

Severus observed the cause of all this trouble as Remus and Bill brought his unresisting body to the position they had dealt with Weasley in. Kingsley had doped Potter with a strong sleeping spell; after discussion, the thought was that his unconscious mind would release the curse easier.

Candidly after all the trouble the wizard had caused them, Severus was only doing this to bring everyone’s suffering to an end. The way Potter had slighted them all over the past ten years he really didn’t deserve their help. He had been an arrogant little toerag, just like his father when he was younger, and Severus wondered exactly how much of his current behaviour was actually the results
of the curse. The raven-haired professor went quietly about his preparations keeping his opinion to himself.

Andromeda and Tonks had taught Narcissa and Draco the incantation required, and all four of them now joined hands around the hanging form as they set about freeing Harry from the curse that had caused them all so much trouble.

They were right, Harry’s wolf made it far more difficult to release him from the demon in the curse. In his meticulous preparations, Severus had anticipated that this exorcism would generate the same magical side effects as the grimoire produced the night they actually identified the curse and opened the evil book seeking the counter-curse.

This time instead of the curse smoothly lifting from the soul of the afflicted, as it had with Ron Weasley, it tried to attack anyone without blood of the Black family running in their veins. Severus constructed an impenetrable wall around himself as he oversaw the proceedings.

He watched Lupin suffer as Mooney tried to wrestle control of the normally shy professor’s conscious mind, and Severus guessed that it was because it was still almost a full moon. Harry’s wolf called plaintively—even though he was unconscious—trying to summon assistance from other werewolves, hence the suffering of Lupin, who realised what was happening and had to fight off his own wolf.

After almost half an hour Andromeda was finally able to plunge the dagger into the clay vessel containing the captured demon. They were all windblown and physically and mentally exhausted

Severus left those responsible for Harry Potter to deal with the rest, he matter-a-factly retrieved everything he had brought, including Lucius’ dagger, and stalked out without another word to make his way back to Hogwarts. He wanted no further part in the exercise, they had cured the problem, but he had only agreed to do it because he knew he was the best qualified person to do so. He had no desire to ever have anything further to do with either Potter or Weasley.

Severus knew that even though there was likely to be other werewolves outside the barrier, he left with his wand drawn and the single-minded determination he was famous for. He sensed forms in the dark, but none approached him, and he was soon gone with a resounding crack.

It was now extremely late, and he was exhausted as well as entirely uncertain of what was waiting for him when he returned. He knew he had to make it up to Hermione in what was left of tonight, because after he had left it struck him how very callous he had been today. He should have made a point to try and explain everything to her; after all she was only just regaining her confidence. It was natural that she would jump to the conclusion that she was being rejected when she heard the word, ‘No’.

As tired as he was, his heart clenched at the full realisation of what he’d done, and he hurried back to his quarters. Seeing the open connecting door, Severus quickly stored the dangerous ingredients and the dagger away safely, and shedding his outer robes as he walked, he strode through into Hermione’s rooms looking for her.

His heart tightened seeing her asleep, fully clothed and hugging a pillow, especially when he noticed that the item was still wet with her tears. She had fallen asleep crying; now he felt like a complete heel. As he stood there watching her, a voice behind him chastised, “About time you turned up.”

Severus’ shoulders stiffened, and without turning he answered in his silkiest voice. “Remember you are made of glass, my friend, and glass is very easily broken.”
There were no more comments, and Severus moved towards the bed, kneeling beside Hermione’s sleeping form. He brushed the curls off her face, and soon replaced the gentle movement of his hands with his lips.

She began to stir and sighed, “Severus?”

“I’m sorry, my love. I was callous and stupid, this morning. I should have tried to explain why I didn’t want you to come.”

Hermione had now rolled onto her back and had her arms wound tightly around his neck. She captured his lips in a sleepy but steamy kiss. “No Severus, I should have been more understanding, it’s just when I hear the word ‘no’ I still don’t react well to it.”

Severus watched her lip tremble slightly before she stilled it with her her teeth after this statement. It was enough to have him climbing into the bed on top of her, holding himself over her as he gave her a longer kiss. “No, I shouldn’t have said it like I did, I just wasn’t thinking,” he crooned to her as he broke the contact.

This time as Hermione’s eyes drifted back open after his heated exploration of her mouth she sighed, and simply whispered, “I love you, Severus,” and lifting her head she moved in for another kiss.

Severus’ mouth turned up at her declaration, and gave her what she wanted; making short work of their clothing as he did so.

As soon as Hermione felt their skin meet, she moaned and melted into him, opening up to allow him settle between her legs.

“I’m sorry… I love you too,” his voice rumbled close to her ear, dropping kisses around the delicate shell as he spoke. He started licking and nipping at the sensitive patch of skin just under it while his hand slithered down between them. “Oh, so ready for me,” he murmured, when his fingers encountered her warm wetness.

His hot breath tickling her ear and his fingers were driving her wild, and Hermione shivered delightedly. “Yes, only for you,” she responded in a husky, passion filled whisper, rocking her hips against his hand in an effort to get him to move faster and go deeper.

Severus slipped his longest finger inside her, as his eyes watched her react to his invasion. He loved taking in Hermione’s responses to his ministrations in this situation. He heard her breath hitch and felt her arch up even closer to him.

Her message was understood and without further words, he wasted no time adding a second and then third digit to his explorations, and as he did so, his mouth started its journey down her body, capturing a nipple in his mouth. His tongue teased and lathed the bud until it was pebbled peak, and then he licked a wet trail across to the other to do the same.

Hermione’s hands had gone to his head to hold it in place, but soon slid elsewhere, travelling over his back and down to massage his buttocks, before moving around his hips and grasping his weeping length in her hands.

As he worked her already heated body into a frenzy, Severus thrust gently into her hands, bending his spine more and more to keep contact with her hands the further his mouth moved where he wanted to go.

Finally, he was mentally weighing up the pros and cons between moving down further and losing the contact with Hermione’s delicate fingers that were doing a magnificent job of teasing him, or
staying right like he was but missing the opportunity to explore his favourite place with his mouth.

After some moments of indecision, the results were taken out of his hands when Hermione groaned deeply and he felt her clench tightly around his fingers. More than anything he realised he wanted to be inside her, and surging up he sank his throbbing length into her.

Hermione squealed in delight, and wrapped her legs around his back, trying to drag him in further with her heels.

There really was nothing as good as being sheathed inside this witch, Severus had to stifle a groan of pleasure at the feel of it. He slowly withdrew and did it again, and this time the groan did leave his throat. “You feel so good,” he moaned.

Hermione whimpered in answer and urged him to move again.

Slipping his hand down while he kept moving Severus pulled one of her legs from around his waist and up over his shoulder. The change in depth and angle had her quickly moaning her approval, and all else was forgotten as he sank repeatedly into her welcoming heat.

There love making was slow but heated, they had not connected in this way all day which was unusual for them, and they realised at this moment how much they had sorely missed each other.

Severus lifted himself up so he could watch himself disappearing repeatedly into his witch’s tight channel, as if he needed to recalibrate himself with this act. “I am home,” he panted, watching as Hermione arched up into him and her voice rose in ecstasy, as another orgasm tore through her.

The pulling and squeezing of her pussy around him, made it too hard to draw this out any longer, and Severus stilled momentarily before his guttural groan signalled his climax as well.

He collapsed on Hermione, and she welcomed his weight pinning her to the mattress. “I missed you today,” she panted, as they recovered their breathing and lay boneless in each other’s arms.

“And I, you,” Severus replied after a time.

“Is the deed complete, are we rid of them?” Hermione asked, studying his face as she absently ran her fingers through his hair.

“Yes, they are both released from the curse, Potter was more complicated though.”

“Why?”

“He has recently been infected with lycanthropy.”

“Oh,” was Hermione’s only comment. She tightened her fingers in his hair and dragged him closer for a kiss. “I love you, Severus,” and then peacefully dozed off.

Severus lay there holding his witch, and going over his day in his mind while he tried to close his thought processes down. He didn’t blame her for not being interested in Potter at all, it was then that he realised he had forgotten to tell her that Ginny was having the baby. Oh well, that will be a nice surprise for the morning, he thought and closed his eyes as well.
A carefully worded press release appeared in the Daily Prophet the day after the curse had been removed from Harry Potter and Ron Weasley. The headline announced - “Stress Forces Chief of Aurory into early Retirement,” and there was an assurance that the information had come straight from the office of the minister of magic.

The article attached informed the British wizarding public that… “After many years of faithful service to the wizarding community of Great Britain, Chief Auror, Commander Harry James Potter, Order of Merlin, first class, has gone into seclusion at an unknown location. Mr. Potter is said to be suffering severe stress, and was not available for comment. The question now, is who will take the reins of the Aurory to protect us all from dark wizards. Minister Shacklebolt has declined to comment further after the release the statement.

However, never fear witches and wizards of Britain, this reporter for one will keep you informed as updates are available, and I have many questions for the minister and Mr. Potter. These questions are even more pertinent because Mr. Potter’s long-time best friend Mr. Ronald Weasley has disappeared as well after being dropped from this year’s Chudley Canons line up, could there be a connection?

Furthermore, the document discretely filed earlier this year by persons unknown, citing Commander Potter’s marriage as unlawful, after his wife also all but vanished from society, has been proven in front of a recent full Wizengamot sitting to be genuine. Nobody has explained that either, it has been stated by neighbours of the now abandoned Potter household that Mr. Ronald Weasley had more or less lived with the couple and their children, and once Mrs Ginevra Potter had left, he remained with Mr. Potter, and all Mrs Potter’s things were retrieved by her father and three of her brothers. There are also many questions begging answer as to the mystery surrounding Mr. Potter’s brother-in-law’s murder…”

“It’s a good job they don’t know the whole truth,” Severus commented, as Lucius huffed, stopped reading and put the paper down on the breakfast table. Severus sneered, “Of course no matter what happens some fool will end up making Potter a bloody hero because he was under a curse.”

“Mmm,” the blond wizard replied thoughtfully, covering Ginny’s hand and giving it a squeeze. He knew how much Severus disliked Potter, but had thought of something more immediate. He took a
deep breath, knowing what he was about to say would not be well received. “I don’t think going to
Madam Malkin’s this morning is a good idea, not in the light of this article.”

Quickly seeing Lucius’ point, Severus added his voice to that statement. “No, neither of you will
have a moment of peace once the media recognise you,” he told Hermione, stroking her hand across
the table. “Especially you Ginevra,” he finished looking towards the already narrowed eyes of the
red-headed witch.

Ginny looked intensely annoyed; her hormones were still running wild, and the ‘baby blues’ were
making her very emotional. “So even though it’s over, I’m still a prisoner,” she snapped, pouting.

Lucius was quick to encourage her around the table and onto his lap before any of them could add
another word.

Hermione and Severus watched this scene, and after a moment of thinking, it was Hermione who
came up with a possible solution. “Well, I still need to have my fitting. Do you think Madam Malkin
could be prevailed upon to come here? All three of us could have our fitting here,” she said,
squeezing Severus’ hand across the table.

Lucius reached a hand out and patted Hermione’s arm. “Smart thinking, pet,” he told her. The blond
wizard then turned back to the witch on his lap. “Would that solve the problem, dearest?”

Ginny nodded, and added excitedly, and it was fairly obvious to all but her, without thinking, “You
guys and Draco could organise entertainment for the children, since Astoria’s away visiting her
mother. That would give us girls the chance for a proper get together,” she offered enthusiastically.

“Actually, that wasn’t what I had in mind,” Hermione told Ginny carefully, already seeing the
thundercloud building over Severus’ head, they had already discussed the problem of children. With
Draco and Astoria’s children and the Longbottoms as well, there was almost an even dozen, and
while they would be wonderful company for any children they might have at a later date, all at once
they were too much for Severus en masse at the moment.

The Potions master glared at the redhead. He was going hiking in the highlands; he had been looking
forward to it ever since he’d made the plan when he knew Hermione would be occupied with her
girl friends for most of the day, and he wasn’t giving it up to mind other people’s snotty nosed brats.

Getting up, Hermione came around the table to stand between Severus’ legs, knowing what her
soon-to-be husband might say to the over emotional Ginny. Out of the two of them Severus was the
one struggling the most with their change of circumstance now that the year had finished, and
Hermione was intent on giving Lucius time to make Ginny see what she’d just blurted out, before
Severus’ inevitable cutting comment made it all blow up.

Hermione’s fingers busied themselves smoothing Severus’ brow, and then her lips followed her
fingers. “You’ve already got your day organised, and Lu will make her see reason, don’t worry,” she
murmured close to his ear, and then she snickered. “And did you know, I have plans for you before
you go.”

Severus knew what she was doing, and he let her. “Oh, have you indeed, witch?” his beautiful voice
turned low and seductive. Hermione shivered and kept teasing him with her lips, ignoring the other
couple. She knew they were probably deep in conversation anyway.

Her teasing quickly became too much for Severus and he pulled her head down capturing her lips in
a heated kiss. “You’re a minx, my love,” he told her when the kiss ended, “However, I am interested
to know what you have in mind?”
“I was thinking…” Hermione whispered close to his ear, as she straddled his lap to continue kissing him, but just as she was about to speak again, they heard the sound of running feet, and this made Hermione groan internally.

It would be different when Severus and her had a family, but in this setting where Severus, Lucius and her had been so intimate with each other, it was hard now, especially with nannies running around after children everywhere and it was the impetus that made her say to Ginny, perhaps a little harshly, “Severus has already planned his day, because he knew I would be busy, and the nannies are employed to mind the children, Gin,” she stated reluctantly removing herself from Severus’ lap.

They heard Lucius whisper something else to Ginny and then a huff from the redhead. Glancing across at them as she sat back down, Hermione saw Ginny pouting and Lucius still whispering in her ear.

Neither Severus nor Hermione begrudged Ginny and Lucius the family they seemed to want, but living at the manor was difficult for them now Ginny and the kids were there, and they had told Lucius last night that they were looking for a place of their own, where they would live during school holidays from now on. He had understood, and told them that they were still welcome at the Manor anytime.

They knew circumstances changed, and they had to move on. They hadn’t told anyone yet, but they were actually planning for their own family at the moment as well, their bonding ceremony on Midsummer eve would be the most potent time for them to conceive a child, and they had been preparing for it now for months.

Back in the breakfast room, Hermione was seating herself back in her chair when Ginny commented somewhat contritely, “It’s okay Severus, I had forgotten that you were going Potions ingredient collecting, and that Lucius has also planned a day away; he and Draco are taking Scorpius and James to a Quidditch match in Birmingham.”

Hermione was relieved that Ginny had seen sense so quickly. Her friend was sometimes a little irrational, and especially so at the moment.

It wasn’t long after that when Nanny Cummings could be heard telling the boys they needed to walk into breakfast like little gentlemen and not a herd of hippogriffs. By the time the older witch arrived, ushering James and Albus before her and with Lily on her hip, the two couples were once more the picture of decorum. Good mornings were exchanged and the boys had their breakfasts placed before them.

They looked on as Nanny Cummings was trying to get a protesting Lily into her highchair. It was Lucius who solved the problem, saying, “Lily, would you like to see Xanthie today?”

The little girl stopped complaining about wanting to sit in a big chair and looked at the wizard she now considered to be her father. A smile blossomed on her face, and she nodded. “Oh yes, Papa Lu.”

“Well, if you sit in your highchair and eat your breakfast all up, I’ll see what I can do,” he told her.

She was instantly compliant, and her nanny had no more trouble. Albus then asked, “Will I see Frank too?”

“Yes,” his mother said, then looking to the Nanny. “There will be three more children coming for lunch today, you know the Longbottoms?”
“Yes, ma’am it will be no…” but her answer was cut short when the magical baby monitor alerted her to the fact that Lucy was awake and would need feeding. Nanny Cummings glanced back out the door, but Ginny got up from the table. “Don’t worry, I’ll go,” Ginny said. The nanny nodded and sat down with the three children to have breakfast.

Severus watched Ginny pull Lucius up as well, so they could tend Lucy together and he rose at this point and walked around to Hermione. “I think breakfast has just finished,” he whispered to his witch. “Let’s go somewhere more private.”

Hermione snickered, and nodded. As soon as they were out of earshot of the breakfast room, she pushed Severus against the wall. “Our bedroom, now, I want to ride you like a prize stallion, my love,” she all but moaned in his ear while stroking his already hard manhood through his trousers. “Gods you make me hot,” and she whimpered, before telling him, “If I have to go all day without you, then I need you, right now.”

Severus lifted Hermione’s leg up and she wrapped herself around him, clinging to him while he in turn snickered in her ear and started nibbling on her neck.

Hermione was soon panting, her head thrown back as Severus sucked on her neck. She had managed to wriggle her skirt up as well, and was currently very engrossed on rubbing her crotchless pussy on his erection. “Oh,” she moaned.

Severus groaned deeply and gave Hermione a playful smack on the backside in the hope that she would be still long enough for him to take them to her commanded destination, but it didn’t have the desired effect of stopping her, she only moaned wanting another smack. “You little minx, will you hold still a minute,” he scolded, “How am I supposed to walk when you’re making my legs want to collapse under me. When she merely snickered, he decided to try walking anyway because his trousers were becoming far too uncomfortable.

Hermione continued rubbing herself on him, and they made it as far as the hallway that led to their bedroom before she wanted more. “Oh Severus, stop,” she panted, “I need you in me right now.”

Severus groaned, and pushed her against the wall, where he pinned her so he could get more friction on his cock. Hissing a breath he fumbled with the buttons to release himself from his trousers, and a smile started to bloom of his face when Hermione moaned and lined him up without too much trouble before happily sinking down on him with a sigh.

“Keep walking,” she demanded, lifting herself on her arms as she clung around his neck so she could once more sink down on him as he kissed her, their tongues battling.

Severus hissed another breath through his teeth at the feeling of her squeezing him so perfectly, and they made it to their bed. Severus used the last of his strength to lower them to the bed, and then muttering, “Divesto, Silencio, Tutus,” their clothes fell away, the door locked and a well placed silencing charm activated and Hermione sighed. They were in their own space, and blessedly alone.

She arranged her knees either side of Severus’ hips and placed one hand behind her on his thigh so she could keep rising and falling on him while leaning back enough so he could see where they were connect.

Hermione knew he loved watching himself appearing and disappearing from within her, and she was so close, she was already shaking as she brought her finger down and started flicking her clitoris back and forth as it peeked out from the top of her sex. Almost as soon as she touched herself she exploded around him, groaning deeply.
Collapsing on Severus, still shaking, she murmured, “Wow.”

Severus laughed and shifting his weight, easily rolled them over without losing his contact with her. “Prepare to up that wow to something more amazing,” he chuckled, and drove into her once more. Within three of his strong thrusts Hermione’s head was thrashing back and forth and her mouth was a perfect ‘o’. She arched her body up to meet his and her groan started to rise into a low whining sound that kept rising in pitch.

Wrapping his hands around under her shoulders, Severus was able to move into her more deeply, and this time when she came it was at the crescendo of her wailing groan, and he plummeted over the edge with her. They lay there panting like two athletes for some minutes.

Finally Hermione said, “You’re right, that was beautiful… magnificent, it truly surpassed wow anyway.

Severus laughed, “Just wait until I get you to our new house, when we find it. I’ll have you on every surface I can find.”

“I wish we had somewhere we could move right now,” Hermione moaned.

“We’ll start looking tomorrow,” he told her.

“Mmm,” she said, running her fingers through his chest hair, before kicking her leg over him and grinding down.”

“Oh, ready for round three, are we?”

“Mmm-hmm,” she murmured.

xox

Lucius knew he had some things to arrange very soon this morning, but Ginny was very clingy at the moment. So he waited patiently before he could go to his office to organise for Madam Malkin to bring herself and her entire entourage to the Manor ballroom for a private fitting for Hermione and her two bridesmaids. He was also planning to invite Madam Delacour, so the three witches could have some beauty pampering as well, and he hoped Hermione would remember to floo call Luna to change the venue.

Finally he watched Ginny changing Lucy after burping her, and he sighed, waiting for Ginny to return, as he reflected on how Severus was becoming used to having Ginny in their immediate circle, Lucius knew the raven-haired wizard was slowly accepting her.

His best friend was not one to trust easily, especially where his and Hermione’s happiness was concerned. Lucius understood that, but he was hoping that once the circumstances were right, the four of them could engage with each other together on occasion.

Then the thought of both Ginny and Hermione naked in front of him sent a shiver through him, and he closed his eyes a moment to savour the image. He soon realised that images such as this were not a good idea, because all sources of relief were denied him at the moment.

He was now in a monogamous relationship, and this was what he wanted, but he hadn’t thought about what he was going to miss while Ginny’s body was healing, and until this very moment when he was sporting the most savage erection he’d had for sometime it hadn’t bothered him.

Looking down at the offending appendage straining for freedom from his trousers, he wondered if
wanking in the bathroom while Ginny was in the next room was an option. He was still thinking about this and about to finally rise and visited his bathroom, when the feel of gentle hands stroking his enflamed member brought a hiss of pleasure from his lips.

He looked down to see Ginny had quietly knelt between his legs and was rubbing his crotch. He opened his legs wider and smiled.

She nuzzled him, rubbing her cheek along the hardened length. “This must be very difficult for you,” she murmured against him. “You’ve always been able to find satisfaction.” She rubbed him again as she started undoing his belt. She’d only undone the top three buttons when the head of his thick, engorged prick appeared in the opening.

Ginny loved Lucius’ cock. It was massive, the biggest and thickest one she’d ever seen, and even though she had not been taking notice these past couple of weeks, she now found herself literally salivating as she pulled him from his open trousers.

Wasting no time, she pounced, taking as much into her mouth as she could. “I’ve missed this,” she told him around a mouthful of him, but all Lucius could do was moan at the feel of the vibration. She moaned in reply, “Let me assist you.”

Lucius exhaled loudly in pleasure as he watched her head bob and she took almost all of him into her mouth. Her ability to do this—girth and all—still astounded him. She started a steady rhythm, her eyes never leaving his.

He had never found anyone who loved this act as much as he did, and the only thing that would make it perfect was if she was naked when she did this. However, at the moment he understood why she was not, and soon he started panting as she carefully took him all the way down her throat. It felt amazing and Lucius wanted to prolong it as long as possible, but he could already feel the tell-tale signs that he was getting close. All he could manage was a grunt in warning soon after as with a yell he erupted down her throat.

Pulling Ginny up onto his lap he kissed her deeply, tasting himself as he did so. “Thank you,” he murmured.

Ginny smiled, “No reason why we both need to abstain. Besides, it won’t be long,” she told him thoughtful, “I’m almost back to normal.”

Lucius grinned at the look she gave him, but scolded, “Oh no you don’t, we’re waiting the whole six weeks.”

“Oh, Lucius,” she started kissing his jaw. “We could play,” she murmured hopefully.

“Yes, we could.” he watched her yawn. “But right now you need a rest. I’ll wake you before I leave,” he told her.

Knowing he was right, she bowed to his judgement and wandering over to climb into bed. She had to admit she was very tired still.

xox

It turned out that Madam Malkin couldn’t come until the afternoon, so Ginny hosted a ladies luncheon on the grand terrace. This was her first official function in her new home and she was very proud of herself. With the assistance of the head elf she had planned the meal they were now eating and everything else down to the table arrangement.
The three friends had just finished their starters of salt and pepper squid, and they were about to move on to the main course when out of the blue Luna asked Ginny, “So did the Aurors tell you who it was that tried to harm our girls?”

Now Hermione wasn’t certain in Ginny’s current frame of mind if this was a good topic, but she listened nevertheless.

“Well,” Ginny said conspiratorially. “Kingsley told Lucius that the two men who got into Hogwarts were just paid grunt. Harry,” and her lip curled in distaste, “knew he couldn’t get in undetected, because of the campaign against ‘Mione, so he sent two hired muscle men. The men admitted under Veritaserum that they mistook Xanthie for Lily the first time.”

“Oh,” said Luna becoming engrossed by the story.

Sitting quietly and toying with her fish, Hermione thought they were being very flippant about the whole situation, after all it was an attack on their daughters they were talking about. Surely they should be showing more concern. She must have tsked without knowing it, because suddenly she became aware that both witches were looking at her.

“What was that, ‘Mione?” Ginny asked, blinking.

“Well, it’s just that both of your daughters were attacked because someone wanted to get back at you,” she said to Ginny. “I think it’s quite shocking, even knowing what Harry has done to me over the years. That he could order someone to harm his own daughter…” Hermione shivered as her sentence stalled. “May we talk about something else, please?” she asked after a moment.

However, Hermione didn’t feel settled again for the rest of the afternoon, she had her fitting, and declined the beauty treatments. Taking her now completed and paid for dress she went back to their bedroom to wait for Severus to return. Finally, after she couldn’t settle, she actually went back to Hogwarts knowing he would stop by there first to store the ingredients he had collected.

She still couldn’t believe that her friends could be that flippant over the safety of their children. The way Ginny was telling it, it was simply a piece of gossip she had heard, which she was passing on to Luna.

When Severus finally returned, he looked tired, but said, “Well, this is a pleasant surprise,” and he kissed her. It didn’t take him long to see that she was troubled. Once in a while something happened to bring out the troubled witch he had been reintroduced to at the anniversary ball. “What’s wrong?” he questioned.

He stood back against his work bench arms folded listening, as Hermione proceeded to paced in front of him, ranting about what had happened that afternoon. “…It ruined the whole afternoon for me, how could they talk about something that serious as though it was nothing?” she finally questioned him.

Severus arrested her progress and brought her into his arms, and then he said, “Well, Mrs Longbottom has never been what you would call a conventional witch. She seems to allow the world to just roll over her, and well, I believe that your friend Ginevra has survived her experiences intact because she thinks about things on a lower level than you do.” Severus heard her gasp, and he quickly added, “I’m not saying she’s not smart, but that night when I was in her head searching for the genesis of the curse, I saw that she had seen some truly awful things thanks to her husband, but she had always seen them like a third party. I believe it was her mechanism for coping.” he kissed Hermione’s head, “Don’t be too hard on her. Otherwise she may have been as…”
“As screwed up as I am,” Hermione said, with a hollow laugh.

“Are you still that screwed up?” he questioned.

“No,” she replied, looking up at him, “but sometimes… it’s weird.”

“I know, sometimes my past comes back and beats me up as well, but I have a special witch now, and thinking about her helps me to cope when that happens.”

Hermione smiled, “I know how you feel; you do that for me too.” She reached up and kissed his lips. “We make a good pair, don’t we?”

“We certainly do,” he kissed her back. “So come, witch, help your special wizard to store these ingredients so he can take you to bed and do sinfully wicked things to you.”

Blushing, Hermione slapped his chest. “Severus!” she said, and then added unexpectedly, “Perhaps I want to do sinfully wicked things to you as well. I haven’t seen you all day.”

Severus chuckled, and patted her backside. “I fully expect you too, now to work, my love.”

xox

After the removal of the curse, both Ron and Harry had been taking full advantage of their respective sanctuaries. Molly and Arthur Portkeyed straight to Romania to be with Ron, and the Lupins—while not condoning Harry’s behaviour towards his ex-wife or Hermione—had taken him into their fold.

Nothing further had been heard of them, and all of those who knew the circumstances hoped they could all put it behind them now and move forward. Even the children did not miss their father, because they hadn’t really known him that well. This was quite sad when you realise that a teenage Harry Potter’s greatest wish had simply been for a family of his own.

In a way Harry Potter still was that teenager, his mind, sullied by the curse had stunted, remaining the impulsive and idealistic mentality of his youth. Nobody had ever questioned Harry Potter’s brazen passion, because it fitted so well with the stereotypical Gryffindor warrior. The wizard in question had hidden his more twisted deeds from the wizarding public, and so his public reputation appeared to be intact.

His private one though, well that was another question, and alarm bells started to ring for Remus and Tonks when he incinerated the same Daily Prophet that Lucius had calmly read from that same morning.

Kingsley was duly called, and questions were asked. This also made Harry cross, Why should I answer his questions? he wondered. It hadn’t dawn on him that he may have done wrong, all along he had been protecting the honest citizens from filthy Death Eaters, and no matter what anyone said, he was just never going to believe that people like Severus Snape and Lucius Malfoy could be anything but blights on society.

When he stated as much to Kingsley, the minister swallowed it without saying a thing, but when he was leaving Kingsley suggested to Remus that a guard be placed on Harry. “I’ll come back tomorrow with a healer and we’ll see what can be done, perhaps we need to settle his mind a little, because the way he’s speaking at the moment, I’d hate to think what he’ll do when he finds out that Ginny and the children are happily living at Malfoy Manor.”

“Yes,” Remus agreed, “And Severus and Hermione’s wedding is certain to be top news first thing next Sunday. He scans the Prophet like he’s looking for something every morning,” the sandy-haired
wizard added.

“That is troubling,” Kingsley replied. “Maybe we need a Legilimens to see what’s going on in his head?”

“I think Severus is the only one who is skilled enough for that job, and I wouldn’t like your chances of getting him to do it.” Remus thought a moment, “Although he agreed to facilitate the removal of the curse, so maybe?” Remus watched Kingsley nod as he accepted the cup of tea Tonks offered.

“What about, Weasley?” Tonks asked, having listened to their conversation while she was making the tea.

“Thanks, Tonks.” Kingsley exhaled and took a sip of tea. “I’ve been in contact with Charlie, several times actually. Ron Weasley is not doing well, he is filled with so much remorse for what he’s done that he has retreated into a shell. Charlie has enlisted the assistance of a gypsy witch he knows, and of course his parents have just Portkeyed out to support him, and only time will tell there, I think.”

The three of them drank their tea in silence after that.
Three Becoming Four

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I neither own nor earn anything from this story. Harry Potter and his world are the intellectual property of JK Rowling and associates.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The next week flew by, taking all the occupants of Malfoy Manor along with it. During this time Severus and Hermione had been house hunting, and finishing preparations for their nuptials.

The couple had searched long and hard for a suitable residence, and they had failed to find anything. Hermione was getting stressed about it, and the children constantly under foot were still difficult, and Severus just wanted some private space.

Well, they hadn’t found anything until today. Severus had been in need of some Valerian root, and hadn’t been able to find any suitable plants in the garden. Lucius had been puzzled about this but told him that he remembered a hardy clump of the plant deep in the woods behind the manor, and he suggested making a picnic of the occasion.

Despite it being years since Lucius had seen it, they had easily found the plant and Severus had harvested what he needed and sent it back with his house elf. Hermione and Ginny had wandered further into the forest, following the winding path while Lucius and Severus had stopped at the plant.

After the ingredient was collected the men went in search of their witches. They found them gazing into a clearing containing a moderate sized two story cottage, and arrived in time to hear Hermione gush, “Isn’t it just perfect.”

“It’s a wreck, a long time since anyone has lived here,” Ginny stated, turning her head on the side and furrowing her brow, as if that might allow her to see something different.

“Oh no,” Hermione told her friend earnestly, “It could be fixed up. I wonder whose it was?”

Severus looked at Lucius and his blond friend nodded. “Yes, this is a splendid solution. Just far enough away for you, but I still get to keep you.” The blond wizard smiled. “It’s the old gamekeeper’s cottage, from the thirties, when father kept a wizard gamekeeper on the estate. I’d forgotten about it, but it could be fixed up and renovated for you two... any other’s that may wish to join you in the future.” Lucius watched a slight smile blossom on Severus’ face, so he walked forward and slung an arm around Hermione’s waist pulling her towards him. He kissed her hair and said, “If you want it, pet. It’s yours and Severus’, our wedding gift to you both.”

Hermione’s excited eyes met Severus’, and he nodded. They had found their house. It was just about perfect, just far enough away from the manor for some privacy but close enough and perfectly secure. “You’re amazing. Lu,” she crowed, launching herself into his arms, “Thank you,” and she kissed him heartily, but suddenly turned towards Ginny wondering if she might be miffed.

Ginny was just watching calmly, but her eyes were alight with interest. Hermione was uncertain of
this step, but reached her hand towards her friend, and stepping forward gave her a peck on the lips. “Thank you, to both of you,” she murmured.

Severus knew that Lucius did not expect him to act the same way, but convention made him approach Ginny and quietly kiss her cheek. “Yes, thank you to both of you.”

Hermione watched Severus offering the same thanks as she had and she grasped him as he withdrew from Ginny’s personal space. “Can we stay here tonight, love?”

Severus laughed, “We’ll let’s see what kind of state it’s in first, shall we?”

The four friends walked forward into the yard, and into what turned out to be a charming—already furnished—sitting room. It had mullioned windows and French doors at the back leading out onto a still well—if quite overgrown—backyard.

“Oh, it’s beautiful,” Hermione told them. “This is exactly what I’ve always wanted.”

On closer inspection, they found that it was mostly only tatty from neglect, and Lucius summoned a party of house elves and set them to work cleaning and airing. He led his three companions out into the backyard and they set up their picnic under the cover of the willow trees next to the small pond.

Hermione took it all in before sitting on cushioned rug that Lucius had just provided for their comfort. She grinned around at Severus, who sat behind her and pulled her close, and she looked out over the waterlily encrusted pond which was currently inhabited by two swans and a male mallard duck. The duck was keeping close to the bulrushes at the side as if he was patrolling them, and Hermione suspected that they may be privileged to see duckling on the pond soon.

After they had had their lunch, the two couples lay in the shade of the willows in their own little sanctuary. Hermione was cuddled up beside Severus looking up at the canopy of green. “Remember that morning by the lake in spring?” she asked him suddenly.

Severus chuckled deeply, “Mmm; that was a delicious encounter.”

“Pray do tell,” Lucius murmured, his languid grey eyes looking almost green in the filtered green light of the trees.

Severus smiled, noticing that Ginny was asleep. “I found a nock by the lake years ago, and I’d always thought it would make a wonderful love-nest, with some privacy protections added of course.” His eyebrow sailed up as he glanced at Hermione. “And I was right, it may have taken over twenty years to prove the theory, but my lovely witch looked exquisite only adorned by the morning dew while lying in deep luscious clover.”

“I bet she did,” the blond wizard smoothed seductively. Merlin I miss the intimacy we used to have together, he pondered, but then glanced down at the sleeping witch curled up to his side, But now I have a proper family, and that’s very important to me. Just keep remembering how much you hated being alone, he thought, as he watched Severus roll on top of Hermione and start undoing buttons as they kissed.

The Potions master glanced at his friend to ascertain how far he could go in their current circumstances, and found Lucius watching the progress of the developing tryst with eager interest, and there was already a prominent bulge present in his trousers, Severus’ eyes flicked down to it and he smirked. “Yes?”

“Oh, yes indeed,” Lucius replied running his free hand down to cup himself, “Do as you please,” he drawled, his eyes following Hermione’s hand.
So, Severus happily went back to his activities, without fear that they would be going too far. Hermione had spent the almost unspoken conversation between the two wizards stroking her wizard’s clothed erection while she watched and listened to their words.

She was wearing a cotton sundress which Severus quickly had the front undone. Lucius had been aware that she’d had nothing on under her dress from when she had hugged him earlier. He watched her creamy breasts spill out before him as Severus moved down her body, mouth attending to her left nipple and one hand pinch her right one while the other hand was already busy pumping three fingers in and out of her lovely bare pussy.

Lucius remembered that lovely bare cunt, it was one of the best examples he had ever seen, in all ways equal to Ginny’s, and he had enjoyed supping on it on the occasions that he had been privileged enough to be with them. He watched avidly now as Severus shifted Hermione's leg down and allowed him to see what his fingers were doing.

“Tell me what you want, my little dove?” Severus crooned, around his mouthful of breast.

Hermione was panting, her hands were running up the sides of her body and through her hair, fanning it out on the ground, like a halo, and she moaned, “Ohhhhh,” and arched her back. “So close, ohhh Severus, please... just make me come.”

Severus licked a trail down her stomach and his talented tongue had only just flicked her clit when she exploded around his fingers. Removing his fingers he drank down her essence eagerly as he undid his trousers. It didn’t surprise him that he also heard Lucius doing the same.

Pulling his pants down to his knees he took in his witch. “Beautiful,” he murmured, seeing her lying there writhing and wanton in her naked glory, as he stroked himself for her pleasure. He knew that she loved watching him masturbate, and he glanced at Lucius, and saw that he also had his thick cock in his hand.

It didn’t seem to bother Hermione that Ginny was present, but then both men knew that she loved displaying herself, and the tentative kiss between them earlier had also cemented Ginny’s place in their foursome. The fact that she was asleep at the moment also made it illicit in some way too. “Severus, please... I need you.”

Severus smirked and lined himself up, entering his witch in a single stroke, making them both groan softly.

Lucius sighed. He had missed this type of interaction with them, and he quietly brought himself to completion watching Severus taking Hermione at a passionate but lazily decadent pace. He couldn’t wait until they could include Ginny in their games, Severus had told him once that Hermione had a desire to experience a woman, and Lucius knew that Ginny would be interested. His witch had already told him that she was bi-sexual, and he had seen her watching Hermione’s body. She had provided some interesting adventures to his Pensieve collection as well, bless her.

He had also allowed her to see the interactions between himself and Severus and Hermione, and she had been very interested. She had especially loved the encounter where Lucius had been licking Severus’ cock each him it appeared between Hermione’s legs. She had asked him after they had experienced that memory if he and Severus had every gone any further. To which he had admitted that when they were at school they had been lovers, but hadn’t once they had left school.

Despite her history, she had told him that she wanted to see them together one day. Lucius felt her move beside him, and then he felt her hand curl around his still exposed shaft.
Glancing around, Ginny took in the aftermath of the scene she had missed. “What you been doing while I was asleep?” her still drowsy voice asked.

Severus and Hermione were now dozing together in a post-coitus stupor, and they were still in a state of undress, in fact Lucius was pretty sure that they were still joined.

Ginny now perused their naked bodies, and started pumping Lucius’ cock in her hand. “They’re just as beautiful as us. Why didn’t you wake me?”

“But you were up to Lucy twice last night, and you needed your sleep, and besides it was a good introduction for them to having you present as well,” he crooned close to her ear.

For some reason that actually made sense, but she was horny and she was sick of the ban on them expressing their love. “Lu, I’ve missed fucking,” she said, writhing up against him.

“I know you have, love, but only a few days to go. In fact it will be the night of the wedding, and you are safe because you’re breast feeding.* Are you upset that I watched them and didn’t wake you?”

“No, I know you’ll show me later. I know Severus is not quite comfortable with me yet, and besides we couldn’t have participated any further than you did with my mess of a body at the minute,” and she squirmed against him. “Lucy must be due for a feed, I’m rock hard.”

Lucius kissed her forehead in thanks for her understanding, and then sighed at the actions of her hand. “Your body is beautiful, not a mess, and you expressed for her before we left.”

“Mmm, but I’m still hard and sore. Can you take us home?”

“Certainly,” Lucius glanced at the still dozing couple and then tightened his arms around Ginny.

xox

At the Lycan community Remus Lupin was becoming more concerned about Harry Potter’s state of mind by the day. Finally, after he had taken measures to ensure his own family’s safety he summoned Kingsley Shacklebolt. Although Harry had not threatened Andromeda, Dora or any of their children, Remus was now starting to wonder if having him here was wise. The quiet werewolf had filled Kingsley in on his concerns before they had met with Harry, and alarm bells were now clanging loudly in his head as he watched Kingsley actually considering the demand.

“I want my children,” Harry told the minister without preamble.

“Perhaps a visit can be arranged,” the minister said, not wishing to acquiesce, but for some reason feeling unable to deny Harry completely either. “However, I’m not certain that their mother will,” he never got to finish the sentence.

Harry all but growled, making Remus bristle as well, and he slammed his hand down on the table. “I don’t care what that bitch wants, she only ever had to look good and be quiet.” He saw a glance between Kingsley and Remus, and it made him suspicious. “Where is she anyway? Where has she taken my children?”

“Ginny is not your property, Harry,” Remus told him in his usual quiet way. The wizard’s attitude was shocking his host.

“Yes she is,” he answered, “My plan was going well until those two Death Eater bastards came back. “Now I’m stuck here with no wand in the back-docks. If she’s emptying my vaults I’ll kill her.
I want statements, the deeds to the houses,” and he slammed his hand on the table again. “I want my children.”

There was such anger in his words, Harry had always been angry, he had a right to be to start with, but now it seemed that malice was all that was left.

Remus glanced and Kingsley and saw that the minister was to some extend being taken in by Harry’s petulance, and suddenly he understood why this situation had gone on for ten years. That was something both he and Dora had struggled with, how Harry Potter could have been allowed to get away with what he had been doing, for ten long years.

They hadn’t understood how that could happen, but Remus saw now how things were, and it was the same reason why Harry hadn’t been put straight into Azkaban for his crimes. The minister of magic was pandying to him, just as Fudge had when he was a teenager. Shacklebolt appeared to be using the Lycan community as a safe house for Harry Potter, so he didn’t have to deal with the problem.

What Kingsley doesn’t seem realise was that Harry still had the mind of a passionate seventeen year old. The curse he had been under had not allowed his mind to grow to adulthood. Then for ten years the same curse had urged him to do the basest and debauched acts, and he wondered if there was any semblance of the Harry he had grown to respect the year he taught at Hogwarts left.

The cruel part was that everyone was a victim here, even Harry. He had been under a powerful curse, and it had stunted any good that was in him. Really, Azkaban was not the right place for him either. He needed to be somewhere where he could get assistance to recover, and perhaps he needed some memory modification to help that. Then Remus looked at Kingsley, and it looks like we need to make sure that our minister of magic is still loyal as well.

The meeting only ended in a stalemate, and Kingsley returned to the mainland and apprehensively headed to Wiltshire and Malfoy Manor to see if he could broker a deal.

xox

“I’m not saying that, Lucius,” Kingsley assured him. “But, would a visit on neutral ground hurt?”

“Yes, I will not subject Ginny or the children to it. None of those children have had a male role model, they have been brought up entirely by their mother,” Lucius stated.

The minister of magic turned to Severus. “What if you as an accomplished Legilimens were to ascertain that his mental state was stable enough,” he suggested.

“You must be joking, why would I want to do that? Listen to what Lucius is saying, no means no. Neither our witches nor any Potter children are going to be subjected to something that may well put them at risk. Potter’s little tantrums have caused my fiancé much trouble, and I will not subject her to any more worry over the little twerp.”

“Personally, I cannot fathom why he is still at large. Should he not be incarcerated in Azkaban?” Lucius questioned.

“If we did that, we would have to bring it to the public’s attention,” Kingsley tried, knowing who he was dealing with here, and aware that his argument was significantly flawed. He rubbed his face.

“Why is he getting preferential treatment, anyway?” Severus wished to know. “If it were a common criminal, there would be no leniency.”
“This is true, but we do owe him something.”

“Pardon me, Minister, but bullshit,” Severus stated curtly. “Voldemort was so far up his own arsehole by the time of the final battle that Tinkerbell could have disposed of him,” Severus watched Lucius nodding in agreement as Shacklebolt glanced at him. “What Potter did was not that wonderful, and he only did it because the Prophesy told Albus Dumbledore that he had to. Prophesies are not definitive, you know? So don’t give me any crap about what he did. I was a spy for twenty fucking years... we both were in the end. I have had to bow and scrap, kiss the tails of that disgusting wizard’s robes, and what did I get for my trouble? I was thrown into a rotting cell half dead and left there in the hope that the neglect would finish the job before they had to spend money on a trial for me.”

Severus was right on his high-horse now, and all the bottled up anger was flowing freely. He pointed to a place outside the room. “You people have let Potter run roughshod over everyone for ten years, you stood by, knowing he was making life impossible for Hermione, and all because she help Lucius and I. No one lifted a finger to help her other than Minerva and Hagrid, and I assure you minister if Harry Potter causes anymore trouble, I will curse first and ask questions later, do I make myself clear?”

Kingsley nodded, “Perfectly, Severus. I am sorry for how you... and you, Lucius were treated at the end of the war. It was wrong, but chaos was rife at the time.”

“Oh, and that makes it all right?” Lucius said, now joining the argument.

“No,” Kingsley replied tiredly, “It does not make it all right.” He sighed, as they continued to stare him down, and finally he took his leave. “Good day, gentlemen.”

Neither wizard offered any words on Kingsley’s exit from the room. Once he was gone, Severus looked to where Lucius was standing next to the French doors, resting his forehead on the cool glass, and he heard his friend say, “I will not allow either of those fools anywhere near our witches or the children,” he muttered.

The raven-haired wizard came over and squeezed his friend’s shoulder. “No, we won’t,” and changing the subject, he chuckled, “I better prepare the potion I was planning on brewing after I collected the Valerian this morning.”

Lucius smiled despite his mood. “This morning took on a decidedly delightful twist, didn’t it?”

“Most certainly,” Severus smiled. “Your gift was very generous, my dear friend, thank you.”

“Severus you are my best friend, and Hermione has become very special to me, if I can’t give things to the people that I love, what use is all my money?”

“You made Hermione very happy,” Severus drew a deep breath. “Are you content with the direction your life is taking?”

“Oh course,” but Severus saw him stiffen slightly. “Why do you ask?”

“It’s just that while I was watching you this morning, I thought I saw something like resignation in your eyes, do you wish to talk about it?”

Lucius sighed, and poured them both a drink from the carafe beside his chair. He motioned for Severus to sit opposite him. “I am happy,” he said, levitating a tumbler towards Severus. “Very happy. Ginny is a wonderful girl, but I do miss the freedom to engage with whom I please when I please.” He paused and took a sip of his whisky. “Then I remember what it was like when I was so
alone, and I never want to be like that again.”

“Do you mean how we were before you settled down with Ginevra and acquired a new family of four children?”

“Yes and no. I always wanted a large family, I hated being an only child, and now I have my wish and it’s wonderful, but I would be lying if I said I didn’t miss the easy camaraderie that you, Hermione and I had.” He sighed again, “It’s probably the lack of intimacy right now that’s got me, I’m sure things will be fine.”

“What, aren’t you doing anything?” Severus asked, shocked.

“Of course we are, but there’s a difference between playing around and serious fucking.”

“True, very true,” Snape agreed, nodding, “and you’re right, you’re a creature of instant gratification, you’ve never had to wait before. It will be fine once you’ve overcome this hurdle.”

“Yes, I’m sure you’re right.” Lucius thought silently for a moment. “So, is there anything else we need to organise for Saturday?”

“No, I believe everything is in place. Mrs Longbottom has been a wealth of information concerning Mid-summer festivals and Hermione has been lapping it up. I must admit though that I will be glad when it’s over, it seems like this has been building up for a long time, and I just want to settle down with Hermione.”

“And that you shall, my friend; that you shall.”

Chapter End Notes

*I know it is an old wives tale about not being able to get pregnant while you breast feed, but I know that it sometimes works for people. I know people that it has and hasn’t worked for, but imagine that it does always work in the wizarding world.
Even if they were too busy to actually reside in their new home yet, Hermione and Severus took the time to move their belongs from the manor it. They named their new home, Wood Cottage, and Lucius included the aptly titled property into the ancient wards that protected the manor and its grounds.

The cottage had up until they took possession of it, only been under the more cursory protection of the estate, but seeing his two best friends were going to reside there, he now placed it under every heavy protection that the manor was afforded.

It hadn’t taken Draco very long to hand over the lordship of Malfoy Manor and it’s ground to his father once more. He had little interest in the day to day running of the estate, and in fact Astoria and he preferred living in their London, Park Lane property.

By the time Severus and Hermione had everything settled it was the night before their wedding. The nuptials were actually taking place on St John’s eve, the day before Midsummer, and what had originally been planned as a huge affair for the wedding itself had now been streamlined.

It was still taking place under the couple’s favourite tree at Hogwarts, but in the end the guest list only included their closest friends and acquaintances and there would be no grand Malfoy sponsored ball. Both Severus and Hermione thought that the reception should be entirely in line with the Midsummer celebrations.
The day of the wedding dawned perfectly. There was mist rising from the lowest elevations as the sun rose, and this wafted out onto the Black Lake heralding the dawning of a balmy day. The birds and bees were happily going about their business, and the area set aside for the ceremony that night was a picture of beauty.

Severus and Hermione had moved back to Hogwarts late the previous evening, and were now just waking up in their respective beds on their wedding day. It seemed that Hogwarts was a traditional castle, and it had closed the connecting door between their apartments before they returned, and taking the hint they had done the right thing by the ancient castle, and spent the night in their respective beds.

Mirror Severus was watching Hermione stretching as she woke. It reminded him of old days when she awoke alone and he would see the covers fall away revealing her lovely body to him as she stretched before getting up.

He could not complain, only yesterday Hermione and Severus had perfected a spell that allowed him to move around with them. So whether they were at Hogwarts or Wood Cottage he was there with them. This was not a luxury that most mirror images had, and it indeed made his existence more varied, and he felt valued because he was exclusively theirs.

They had included him in several more encounters over the months of their courtship, and he had found his original to be a fair, if somewhat possessive man. Although he appeared not to mind his blond friend participating in their carnal adventures with them, just as he didn’t mind his mirror image doing so.

Hermione Granger was a worthy witch, she had suffered much, and she deserved all the trimmings of a real life, and the mirror found himself to be happy that she finally had his original and that they were taking this step to bind themselves to each other today.

As he continued to watch her, he pondered a conversation he had heard recently about the aim of their wedding night and the possibilities it held because it was being held as part of the Midsummer festival.

It was said that Midsummer was the best time for a magical couple to conceive a child, and of course Hermione—with Luna’s help—had completed copious research about magical people being bonded on a night such as this, and she had found several ancient fertility spells along the way.

This festival was essentially all about renewal and fecundity, so the act of procreation was often the sought after result of such a night. In fact any witch of child bearing age had to be very careful participating fully in this night, as if receptive, she would be especially susceptible to being with child by the morning. There were several exceptions to this rule, and both her bridesmaids were happy to participate fully without the worry that they would conceive again so soon.

One of these exceptions were breastfeeding mothers, they could participate fully in the ceremony safe in the knowledge that no child would be conceived. A witch’s magic was bound to the earth and her body tighter than a Muggle woman’s is, and the earth recognises that she is already nurturing a child from her body, and will not drain her too much by allowing her to conceive again before she is ready.

The mirror had heard Severus and Hermione discussing this and knew that they had decided that this would be the best moment for Hermione to conceive their child. Neither of them aspired to catch up with any of the other participants in the ceremony, but, they knew that her biological clock was ticking and children were something they both agreed they wanted.
His eyes turned to the wardrobe. Hermione had not opted for a traditional Muggle wedding gown. Her gown was a calf length white embroidered cotton and lace dress. There would be no veil and because it was an outdoor wedding she had opted for ballet flats.

The mirror would not see her adorned for her wedding as all the preparations were happening by the lake in small pavilions on the grass. “Good morning, my little dove,” he said, as he saw her finally making a move to rise from her bed.

“Hello, mirror,” Hermione replied, her voice still full of sleep. “Are you looking forward to the move to Wood Cottage tomorrow?”

“Yes, it will be nice to be able to see new things.”

“So the spell is working well?”

“I haven’t tried more than moving to the bathroom mirror to watch you shower last night.”

Hermione grinned at him. “Naughty mirror,” she teased, standing in front of him well aware of where his eyes were lingering. “Why don’t you try seeing if Severus is awake?”

This brought his dark eyes up to her face, “Very well, but I think I would rather stay and watch you.”

“Ask Severus to come over, and you can watch us both,” Hermione told him, waggling her eyebrows.

The mirror left immediately and she continued into the bathroom. It was still early and she was missing Severus. She may have spent the night alone, but surely they could sneak a little morning delight before everything started.

She was just cleaning her teeth when she felt her wards shift as Severus came through the front door. When she returned to her bedroom, he was lying in bed with his hands laced behind his head as he watched the bathroom door.

Hermione’s eyes instantly shifted to the tent in the sheet and lust curled tightly in her stomach as she smiled and started walking towards him.

Severus observed the beautiful smile that curved her lips as she approached him, and his thoughts went to her transformation since they had been reacquainted. From that awful ball where she had been accosted by the Weasley oaf, to the confident and brave witch she was at this very moment. It astounded him to think that it had only been not quite two months, and yet it felt like years they were so comfortable together.

He watched her climb onto the bed and prowl towards him on her hands and knees with a cheeky grin on her face. “And what would you be up to, madam?” he questioned silkily, with a smile twitching around his lips. “I thought the idea was that we didn’t see one another before the wedding?”

Smiling impishly, “I have always understood ‘the night before the wedding’ to mean just that. The night before, nobody said anything about the morning of the wedding.”

“You are becoming very Slytherin, my darling.”

Her grin increased and without another word, Hermione grabbed the sheet and slowly, teasingly pulled it down the bed. The soft material grazing the head of his engorged manhood as it moved felt
wonderful and Severus gasped as Hermione avidly watched its progress.

Her eyes opened wider and her smile grew when finally the sheet fell away and his magnificent length was revealed to her in all its splendour. It literally made her mouth water, and she shuffled forward preparing to take him into her mouth.

Severus chuckled at the look of desire lighting her face, and brought his hands down from behind his head. He grasped himself and started stroking. “You want him?” he asked, his voice low and seductive.

Hermione nodded, her eyes glued to his hands fondling himself, and she moaned at the sight. “Severus,” she sighed.

“Are you wet for me, my love?” he inquired in the same low voice.

“Ah huh,” and she bit her lip as she moaned her reply.

“Show me,” he commanded.

Hermione shivered, she loved it when he was like this, and she knew exactly what he wanted. She eagerly clambered up onto his chest so she was facing his manhood. This was one of their favourite positions, and leaning forward she supported herself on one arm as she took his shaft with the other hand. Once she had, she wasted no time in taking the head into her warm mouth, and she smiled when she heard Severus breath out noisily, the hot, exhaled air tickling her inner-thigh.

His hands skimmed up her body leaving her to pleasure him. On the journey they stopped to massage her breasts, caressing and rubbing her nipples then giving them a firm squeeze before moving on. His hands then traced the dip and curve of her waist, before coming around her buttocks and parting them so he could better see her private glories.

The sight his eyes took in was exquisite. Before him were all the places he had learned made her squeal with delight when his tongue teased her, and pulling her closer he engulfed her with his mouth.

As predicted she did indeed squeal around him, making him fight not to thrust up into her mouth it felt so good. His tongue and mouth worked her, licking, sucking and probing until her ministration on him dissolved into limp mouthed groans and moans that vibrated the length of him.

Severus chuckled to himself when she started twirling her hips and rubbing herself on him in time with the thrusts of his tongue and his gentle rocking up into her mouth. It wasn’t long after this that she stilled, and a low wail started in the back of her throat. It rose up more and more as he concentrated on the bundle of nerves at the top of her sex. Shortly after this she snapped and screaming gibberish she bathed his waiting mouth with her sweet musky nectar.

Collapsing into a panting heap on him, Severus carefully rolled her off, and watched her sighing and lightly caressing herself with her dexterous fingers to prolong the shudders that followed her orgasm. “Fill me,” she muttered, opening misty eyes to look at him.

Grinning, Severus flipped her back over, so her hips were in the air and lined his member up. “Beautiful,” he told her as he buried himself into her in one stroke. Her finger kept rubbing and she was soon groaning and panting her second orgasm.

Severus thrust strongly through it, holding her hips in his strong grip, and pulling her against him with each of his thrusts. His grunts and her squeals mixed with the pungent aroma of sex and filled the chamber. Holding himself back he pushed her to a third release before he finally gave in to his.
They collapsed in a sated heap, with Severus still moving gently to prolong both of their pleasure. They were lying happily entwined this way when the sound of the floo drew their attention.

“That could only be one person,” Severus muttered, darkly.

They heard it again, “And chief bridesmaid,” Hermione added.

They both looked up hazily as the door unceremoniously opened and Lucius and Ginny were framed there. “I told you they would cheat the system,” the blond wizard said, without looking away from the bed.

“What do you want, Malfoy?” Severus snapped, lifting his head a little further off Hermione’s back.

“You, my friend. Now put Pet down. You can’t have her again until after the hand-fasting.” Lucius was quick, he stood in front of Ginny and the hex slid harmlessly off the shield he erected. “Dear dear, Severus, mustn’t hex your best man,” he teased. “I might remember that time with the one-eyed whore when I give my speech tonight.”

“You wouldn’t dare,” Severus growled.

Hermione and Ginny were both giggling helplessly at their antics

“Oh, but you know I would,” Lucius replied, smoothly, striding into the room. “Come on man, we have things to do, and places to be. You need to shower,” he encouraged, handing him his robe and standing over the prostrate couple.

Severus muttered obscenities under his breath, and rolled Hermione over, kissing her passionately. She whimpered, and murmured, “See you at the ceremony, love.”

Once the men were heading out the door, Ginny came in and said, “You too, we’ve got lots to do today as well.”

Hermione groaned and mock pouted at her friend. Her eyes had been on Severus’ muscular backside as it disappeared into his robe. “Aren’t they amazing,” she murmured, seeming to forget the very debouched eyeful she was giving Ginny as she lay on the bed her back arched looking at their retreating backs

“Mmm, we’d make an amazing quartet, wouldn’t we?” her redheaded friend answered her eyes not leaving Hermione’s assets, her mind was full of the view she had just had of Severus’ cock.

“Would you like that?” Hermione asked, starting to push herself upright.

“Yes, looking at Severus’ deflated manhood tells me it’s the same size…”

“As Lucius erect, yes, they’re both stallions.”

Ginny thought a moment. “Have they ever played Hermione sandwich?”

Her eyebrow rose thinking about that as she saw Ginny licking her lips watching what was trickling out of Hermione, and the idea of her friend’s obvious thoughts about it, didn’t shock her as much as she thought it might. In fact she found herself moving her legs apart a little more. “No,” she answered, seeing Ginny’s eyes flare as she exposed herself more to her. “Have you ever been double dipped?”

“Yeh, but before I was married,” she shook her head, “Everything was before I was married.”
Her eyes were still on Hermione glistening pussy, and the brunette witch thought that she had better get into the shower, because she was uncertain about the desire that Ginny’s heated looks were starting to infuse into her stomach. Hermione was fighting with herself not to allow what her friend so obviously wanted to do, but she wanted Severus and Lucius present when anything happened between them, so she rose and went to shower.

xox

After breakfast Hermione, Ginny and Luna started their day collecting St Johns wort and bringing it to the area for the others to work with. They had collected as much of the delicate yellow flowered bush as they needed, as well as all the flowers they wanted for themselves.

It was now three in the afternoon, and Arthur, Hagrid, Neville and Kingsley were erecting a maypole. The minister of magic was still not popular with Severus and Lucius after their encounter days before, but he had been invited and neither wizard saw the point in excluding him at this late stage. It would have caused more questions to be asked than were necessary.

Molly, Minerva, Dora, Penelope and the Lupin children minus Darla were sitting in a circle making the many St. John wort wreaths, mostly for decoration and for the children to wear, but also many that would be thrown on the bonfire later that night, for luck.

Because it was a full moon tonight, Remus and Darla had stayed home much to Dora’s disappointment. Andromeda had stayed at home with them so that Dora could attend the wedding. She didn’t get to do very much where she could be seen by people, and this seemed like the perfect occasion as everyone knew her here.

Severus, Lucius, Bill, Charlie and Draco were having a wonderful time constructing the bonfire. Once the maypole was up Hagrid had been put in charge of placing the logs the men were levitating from the forest, and together they had constructed a huge Midsummer bonfire in the clearing beside Hagrid’s hut. This is also where the banquet following the hand fasting was to take place.

It had been a hot and sweaty day, and even though traditionally on Midsummer, ritual bathing happened before sunrise, the wedding party cheated a little and did it at sunset. Ginny and Luna bathed Hermione, for the ceremony in a secluded glade near the lake Hermione was charmed when merwomen arrived to add their blessings, on the occasion of her nuptials while she floated on the flowers Ginny and Luna had woven into a bed. This awe was increased a hundredfold when they also saw centaurs and unicorns stop at the edge of the forest on the other side of the lake and bow to them.

This was an incredible honour, and although she had not seen it, she somehow knew that they had done the same thing to Severus. He had always been their protector while he had resided at the castle years ago, even in the very dark times he had found a way for them to remain in their territory and they obviously remembered this. They knew—better than any human—the true value of a person’s heart.

Since it was the summer holidays, all the guests were staying at Hogwarts for the night, so no one had to worry about getting home. The children in the extended group had aligned themselves pretty much by age. Neville had taken Frank, Albus and Adela Malfoy into his care. Molly was caring for Lucy, Lily and Xanthie, while James and Scorpius were with Astoria, but little Madeleine Malfoy had remained at home with her nurse.

As Hermione and Severus had their final preparations added to them, it was a special night for two other people as well. Tonight was the night Bill and Penelope had chosen to reignite their friendship. They were aware it was not a year since Percy’s death, but they started the night as two friends.
walking arm in arm to the ceremony, and had agreed later to sit with the Potter, Malfoy and Longbottom children when it was time for them to sleep.

Severus and Hermione were having a silent hand-fasting ceremony, their magic would speak for them and Minerva had agreed to be their bonder. They were allowing one photographer who would give one photo and details, the couple had approved of to the Daily Prophet, but The Quibbler had been granted the full story.

They were both very private people, and felt more comfortable this way. The witches and wizards they had chosen to witness and to participate with them were all like minded, and would be content with the type of bonds chosen by these two powerful wielders of the magic arts.

As the full moon broke the horizon the men pointed their wands and carefully ignited the bonfire, and the drums and flutes the Filius Flitwick had charmed to play, called the participants to the ceremony in merry rhythm.

xox

Seeing the bonfire light and hearing the rhythm of the drums, Hermione’s heart started to race. This was it, this was the moment she had been waiting all this time for, that she had thought not three months ago would never come. She was about to become Mrs Severus Snape, and she was being handed her bouquet by Ginny, who leaned forward and kissed her. “Your dream is about to come true, love, let’s go find our wizards.”

Luna kissed her other cheek. “I knew this day would come for you, be happy, Hermione.”

The three witches came out of their pavilion and Hermione found herself standing opposite Severus, as he had just stepped out of the pavilion opposite. He looked amazing in black trousers and an open necked white shirt. His hair was secured by a leather tie at the nape of his neck and he was smiling at her. She hadn’t managed to get to talk to him all day and she felt the need to hug him now. “I love you,” she told him as her arms coiled around his waist.

He wrapped his arms around her protectively in return, “And I you, love, you look angelic,” and he kissed her forehead.

She chuckled and took his hand. Lucius offered his hand to Ginny and Draco his arm to Luna and they walked towards the bonfire. Filius had been busy all afternoon, and it was his charmed fiery torches that illuminated their way now. The guests cheered as they saw them approaching.

Leading the way up to the tree where the bonding would take place, they saw Minerva with a rare relaxed smile and her wand drawn ready. The stance required for this type of bond was a little different to the unbreakable bond hand grip. For this bond the parties still faced one another, but held their hands vertically instead of horizontal with their wands in between, and then they twisted their hands between them and stepped as close as they could to each other so the bond linked their hands and hearts.

The other members of the wedding party also participated in the ceremony, holding their wands aloft so that the tips were pointing to a fixed zenith over the heads of the couple. As the spell is recited by the bonder, their magic trickled down over the couple.

The colours were amazing, Hermione saw them all reflected in Severus’ dark eyes, and she was mesmerized, totally unable to look away. That was when she felt it, her magic and Severus’ rising up and entwining together, it must have been beautiful because there were many gasps and ohs from the assembled witnesses.
This was it, they were bonded, and as Hermione lost herself in the kiss Severus was bestowing on her to signal the end of the ceremony, the sky erupted in a maze of lights and sounds. Gasping at the beauty of it, they looked behind the string of Filibuster fireworks to see a madly grinning George Weasley, completely in his element.

Later that night as the bonfire started to die down, and they had feasted, danced and drank their fill, all the speeches were over and the children put to bed with their allotted minders. The couples, wandered off into their own little sanctuaries while their elders kept guard at the bonfire. This was the sacred part of the night where the bridal couple united as one.

Of course it was not limited to just Hermione and Severus, anyone could join in the ritual in their own coupling.

Severus had taken the lead, sweeping Hermione up into his arms and turning for the forest. He was allowing his feet to wander where they liked, he had his witch in his arms and she was gazing at him in the light of the full moon with lust filled eyes. When he felt his feet sinking into luscious moss he carefully lay Hermione down between the roots of an ancient tree.

His witch looked up at him, her amber-flecked eyes misty and soft. She was more than a little tipsy and come to think of it, so was he, but they were finally alone after a busy day where they had been bonded for life. He caressed her face, “I love you,” he whispered in his deep seductive voice.

“Oh Severus,” and her hands skimmed up to cup his cheeks. “For so long I thought this would never be, but here we are, and I love you too. Make love to me,” she told him, pulling his head down to kiss him.

Her dress conveniently only pulled on and off over her head, its only other securing feature was a thick ribbon around her waist, which was easily undone. She wrestled the garment up while they kissed, and then allowed Severus to take it over her head and discard it next to them.

His shirt and trousers quickly joined the dress and he kissed down her body, lingering on each part. First her neck and collar bones, and then her breasts making her gasp and pant as his mouthpleasured her.

Hermione pulled his mouth back up to hers and they kissed deeply, as she fumbled, trying to line him up with her. “In, in,” she mumbled urgently, as they kissed.

Severus chuckled at her attempts. “You’re drunk, my love,” he told her, and quickly sank into her welcoming heat, effectively cutting off any further comments from her as she groaned and arched her back.

For his part, the Potions master was just pleased that he had not been too drunk to perform, and even though he didn’t last long, neither of them cared. They had a lifetime together to explore things further, and indeed the rest of this night.

In a surprisingly similar situation, Lucius Malfoy lay covering his witch. The last ten minutes reeling through his mind, buzzing in his ears and putting a smile on his face. He glanced down at his naked witch gazing up at him and then to the finger he had just placed the ring on. “I love you,” he whispered, and started kissing her neck again.

She lazily slid her arms around his neck and thrust her hips. “I love you too,” she kissed him, “I still
“work,” she murmured, “and we didn’t have to wait the whole six weeks after all.”

“No, we didn’t,” Lucius agreed, “and I’m glad.” He started kissing down her body, instinct took him to her breasts, and he heard her moan deeply, but he pulled away realising what he’d just accidentally done.

“No,” she demanded. “It’s okay, I want you too.”

Lucius gazed in wonder at her, and her ripe and rounded body in the moonlight looked delicious, especially her breasts. They were big and the impossibly huge nipples turned him on no end. He needed no further invitation, he couldn’t say he hadn’t wanted to taste her, and the tiny tang he had just accidently got had piqued his curiosity.

Curling his tongue around the nipple as she watched him, he squeezed and sweet nectar flowed into his mouth. He instantly loved it, and he could see it turned her on seeing him doing it. Her hand slithered over her still slightly rounded tummy and into the wild thatch of auburn hair covering her pussy. She fingered herself as she watched him suckling at her breast.

Lucius loved the fact that she kept the hair at the apex of her thighs. It suited her to do so, just as he thought it suited Hermione not to. The blond wizard was finding himself lost in the moment. He reached for his cock and started pumping, but Ginny stopped him.

“Swap positions with me, I want to ride you.” She licked her fingers clean as they swapped positions.

They both hissed in pleasure as she sank down, impaling herself on him, and before she started moving, she offered him her other breast. Lucius thought he was going to lose it right there, what she was sharing with him was so intimate, and he knew that he had done the right thing asking her to marry him impulsively tonight as he had come inside her for the first time in a month. It all felt very right.

xox

As the evening at Hogwarts finally closed, and several sated couples covered themselves and erected protective charms for the night in their forest beds. In another part of England entirely there was a gunshot and a rampaging werewolf fell to the ground dead.

It had been a Muggle farmer who had mistaken the giant wolf for a dog as it clawed at his front door. Ministry officials were called to investigate by the undercover Muggle-born contact in the Muggle Police.

The question was how a werewolf came to be in Ottery st. Catchpole, and without the protection of the Wolfsbane potion on the night of the full moon.
The Morning After

Chapter Summary

What happens the morning after the wedding

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer:-
I neither own nor earn anything from this story. Harry Potter and his world are the intellectual property of JK Rowling and associates.

A/N:- For the sake of this story, I am assuming that since a werewolf (eg Remus Lupin and Fenrir Greyback) could be killed in JKR’s original story (and it’s a safe bet that it was not by three silver bullets) that it is permissible for me to kill a werewolf with a Muggle shotgun. Well that’s my justification anyway.

The new summer’s day dawned perfectly at Hogwarts, and couples who had spent the night with mother nature awoke with the sun, and as it rose higher it saw them stumbling back towards the castle and to their beds or family.

The farm house of the Burrows family, just outside Ottery St. Catchpole was a hive of activity, and had been since shortly after midnight. At first, Fred Burrows thought he had shot a very ugly dog, and he had called his friend the local constable to see what he thought.

At first Constable Owen Parsons thought his friend was having a lend of him, and arrived to investigate, they were both shocked to find in their torchlight that it wasn’t exactly a dog lying the pool of blood on the front porch. This was also about the time that Aurors arrived, having been alerted by a significant spike in the magical atmosphere near Ottery St. Catchpole.

When they arrived, Constable Parsons was just reporting in, “It’s bloody huge, Alf, and the ugliest… it looks like it walks on his hind feet. You know I’m not a superstitious man, but it’s a full moon, you
don’t think…” He didn’t get any further, as he was hit with an Obliviate, and when he came to, he was told to drive back to the station, that his friend had been playing a joke on him.

The Obliviate team was currently modifying the Burrows family’s memories, and a team of Unspeakables had been called to identify the body. This process proved to be more intense than they had all thought too, because as the pull of the moon waned with dawn, they got a terrible shock when the sheet was pulled back.

“That’s Commander Potter,” one exclaimed, and a wider sweep of the area sent Aurors to investigate further as soon as the sun rose. This search had them looking for members of the Weasley family, when it was found that the werewolf had stopped at The Burrow first, before his blood lust had driven him to seek out other prey. The Weasley house was trashed, but apparently there had been no one home, so the raging beast had continued on to the next door neighbours, quite a ways down the road, and that is how he met his end.

xox

At Hogwarts, Kingsley Shacklebolt was just coming down for breakfast when a ministry elf interrupted his progress. “You is required in Ottery St. Catchpole, sir. Acting head of Aurory, and chief of Unspeakables is needing you,” and the elf handed him a scroll before popping out.

Arthur and Molly were coming down the stairs some way back, but they heard what the elf said. “Oh Dear,” Molly said, “I wonder what has happened.” They both knew that they were not the only magical family in the area.

They were surprised though when Kingsley turned to them, and he was quite pale as he said, “Arthur, Molly, you should go home, there will be Aurors waiting to speak to you,” and in answer to their questioning looks he said, “There has been some trouble at your house last night.”

“What’s happened?” they both asked.

“I am not willing to divulge that at the moment, I need to investigate this more thoroughly. I will speak to you later this morning.” He turned and started down the stairs once more without another word.

Molly and Arthur were still looking at one another when they heard. “Mum, Dad,” and saw Ginny and Lucius coming in the front doors, having just come back from the forest. “Look!” She was
holding up her hand as she came towards them with a huge smile on her face.

Shaking herself, as she realised what her daughter’s raised hand and excited words meant, Molly managed a smile, “Oh Gin, that’s wonderful.” However, the statement came out flat.

Ginny’s eyes narrowed, “Can’t you just be happy for us?” she all but yelled.

Lucius was taking a more reasonable approach, he had seen the look on Shacklebolt’s face as he passed them without more than a nod on his way out the door, and he recognised the looks on Molly and Arthur’s faces as distress, and it wasn’t at their news, they had been stressed before Ginny had said anything. He placed an arm around Ginny and said, “Love, I don’t think we’re the problem.” He saw this make Ginny look more closely, and he heard her gasp as he continued, “Is there anything I can do to assist?”

It was Arthur who managed to speak. “Thank you, but we do not know enough about what we’ve been told to say yet. We need to go home and find out what’s happened.” He then seemed to realise what Ginny had just announced. “And congratulation to you both,” he shook Lucius’ hand. “You have taken wonderful care of Ginny and the children, and I am happy to welcome you to the family, Lucius, but we will celebrate later.” He took a deep breath and glanced at Molly. “I think we better go home and find out what’s happened.”

Molly nodded at him. She smiled at Lucius and kissed Ginny’s cheek. “We really are happy for you. We’ll talk later.”

Ginny nodded, and managed a smile, and the couple watched them going down the stairs. They greeted Hermione and Severus who were coming up, and disappeared out the doors.

“What’s wrong with them?” Severus asked, as they drew level with Lucius and Ginny.

“Something’s happened at home last night,” Ginny said.

“They were talking to Kingsley Shacklebolt when we came in,” Lucius added, and the two wizards shared a concerned look.

“We’ll lets go and shower and meet back in the Great Hall,” Severus suggested.
“Do you think you know what’s happened?” Hermione asked, still yawning, snuggled under his arm.

“Not really, but we might be needed.”

“But surely you two want to start your honeymoon?” Ginny asked, blinking at them.

“We have the rest of the summer, Gin. If Severus thinks that your parents will need assistance, then I’m happy for us to go there today.”

“I agree,” Severus added.

They were so caught up with what had happened, Ginny and Lucius almost forgot to tell Hermione and Severus their news. The two couples were just parting when Lucius whispered to Ginny, “We didn’t tell them.”

“Oh,” the redhead gasped, and turned. “Look!” she said wiggling her fingers to show off her diamond ring, “Lucius proposed last night.”

“Well done, both of you,” Hermione said, hugging and kissing Ginny and then Lucius.

“Yes, congratulations,” Severus added, shaking Lucius’ hand warmly, and then looking at Ginny.

“Go on, love, give her a hug,” Hermione whispered in his ear, “She’s going to be one of us now.”

Severus gave his wife a stern look as she nudged him towards Ginny, but he stepped up and embraced the redhead. “Congratulations, my dear,” he told her, with his eyes on Lucius to see his smile of approval, and he gave her a peck on the cheek before he drew away.

xox
After what Kingsley Shacklebolt had just seen and been told at the scene of the crime he headed straight for the lycan community, concerned for Andromeda and the Lupins. He decided that he would make certain that everything was all right before telling Dora what had happened. As he apparated from the half-way house to the island, he was feeling sick to the stomach.

This was his fault, and he hoped there were no more casualties. *Why didn’t I put Harry where I should have as soon as Dora and Remus told me they thought he was becoming secretive and obsessive? Damn, I hope he hasn’t injured anyone, or worse.*

Kingsley knocked on the Lupins door, and a very tired looking Andromeda answered. Foregoing the usual greeting he said, “Is everything all right?” This was at the same moment that he noticed that she had a black eye and her arm held close to her chest.

“Harry’s gone, after he blasted me, I don’t remember anything. I’m sorry Kings, I don’t know where he is.”

“It’s okay, Meta, come in and sit down. Are Remus and Darla all right?”

“Yes,” she hissed in pain as she shut the door. “I checked on them when I came too. I don’t know where Harry is though.”

As Kingsley led her into the kitchen, he noticed the scorch mark on the wall opposite and the rubble from an obvious Blasting Curse. “I know where he is, but I’m not certain I understand why,” Kingsley told her.

Getting up again, Andromeda filled the kettle, one-handed. “Why, where is he?”

“Sit down, Meta. I’ll make you tea. You need that arm seen to,” he told her.

“I’ll go to the healer once Remus is awake,” she said dismissively. “Where is he?”

Kingsley sat her back down, he knew she meant Harry. “He’s dead,” he said cautiously.

“Oh?” Her brow furrowed. It was true to say the Andromeda had not taken a liking to the wizard,
and perhaps it was a little petty, but he had never even thanked her for the trouble she had gone to to save him from the curse he was under. Not to even mention some of his comments about her resemblance to her oldest sister, or the fact that she saw him as a threat to her family. “How?” she asked, obviously troubled by this news.

“Muggle shot gun.” Kingsley flopped onto the chair opposite her, and continued, “Meta, Harry had a full transformation last night, and a Muggle farmer shot him as he was trying to break into his house.” He glanced at the rack of now empty Wolfsbane Potion vials on the kitchen counter. “Could he have had a bad batch of Wolfsbane?”

“No,” she shook her head, “It’s the same batch that Remus and Darla took and their rooms are not showing signs that they fully transformed. No, Snape is always very meticulous, any other Potions master, and I might consider it, but Severus Snape is very specific to detail.”

“This is true; I do trust Snape’s ability. Did you see Harry taking his doses?”

“No, but I don’t see Remus taking his either. I know Dora makes certain Darla takes hers, but it’s once she’s in bed, and Remus usually takes his in the bathroom, so he’s not in front of Teddy and Jack. We do try to make the household as normal as possible for the children.”

“Yes, I understand that,” Kingsley replied, “So, you don’t know whether Harry took his or just flushed it down the sink.”

“Unfortunately, no I do not,” Andromeda replied, yawning. “Was anyone else injured?”

“No, the Weasley’s were all at the wedding, so there was no one home.”

“Thank goodness,” she sighed, but then became a little troubled. “Oh, the wedding. Does Dora know what’s happened?”

Kingsley shook his head, “No, but I guess she soon will.”

“That’s a pity, she gets away so infrequently and I was really hoping she would have a great time.”
“She did, her and the boys were happy every time I saw them last night. Teddy seems to have made friends with James Potter and Scorpius Malfoy.”

“Has he just, I guess he’ll be wanting to go to Hogwarts now,” she laughed.

“He did seem quite mesmerised by the place,” and Kingsley smiled in remembrance, he downed the last of his tea. “I need to get back at it.”

Andromeda got out of her chair awkwardly. “Thank you for coming to check on us, Kings. I’m sure Remus will be in to see you when he wakes.”

Sure, bye, Meta.”

“Kings,” she replied, walking him to the door.

Kingsley gave the witch a kiss on the cheek. They had known one another for a long time now, and had been friends for many years. “Get that arm looked at,” he said before turning and apparating away.

xox

At The Burrow, Molly Weasley was looking at her kitchen in disbelief, it was trashed. Oh it was fixable, and her fingers itched to start the job, but it was a complete mess. The Aurors had allowed them in to look, but they weren’t finished collecting evidence so the couple weren’t allowed to touch anything.

“Molly, I’ll take you back to Hogwarts and come back. You can have breakfast with everyone else,” Arthur encouraged.

Molly nodded mutely at him. What has caused this? her mind asked, “W-what h-happened, young man?”

The young Auror standing guard at the door, shrugged, “I don’t know, Madam Weasley.”
“Where is Minister Shacklebolt?” Arthur asked.

The Auror looked confused, “I don’t know, Mr. Weasley.”

Molly could see they weren’t going to get any answers here. “Okay, I’ll go back to Hogwarts, I can’t stand just looking at this mess,” she said to her husband. Arthur turned to come with her. “No, it’s all right, love, I can apparate myself to Hogwarts.”

xox

The Weasley matriarch used the time it took her to climb the drive way to the castle to settle things in her mind. Her kitchen looked like a rampaging hippogriff has been through it. Well maybe not that, but some wild animal, definitely. The door had been torn to pieces by what looked like claws.

It was then that her mind went into overdrive, *Arthur and I have equal control over the wards on our home. The only people who can come and go without us feeling the shift, are family members, had either of us felt a shift in the wards last night?* She smiled, *Well we did both become quite merry,* she raised an eyebrow remembering, *and we slipped into the forest, but we still would have felt it.*

Molly chuckled quietly, remembering Arthur’s attentions last night. *The young people would be mortified to know that we made love as well,* she thought, a slow smile spreading momentarily across her face. However, it was obliterated the next moment when her brain realised that if neither of them had felt it, then it had been a family member who had done this. *But all our family were here last night… well except Ron… b-but he’s in the care of Vadoma in Romania.*

She was puffing slightly as she made it to the top of the drive, and took a break before she continued up the stairs, it was as she looked out over the front lawns of the castle with its monument to the fallen from both Voldemort wars that she thought of the only other person it could possibly have been. “Harry,” she sighed. “But how?”

Her reveres were interrupted by the sound of boots trampling the path she had just walked, and she watched as Kingsley Shacklebolt approached the castle with a bevy of senior Aurors in tow. He nodded to Molly, “Is Arthur still here?” he asked.

“No, I came back alone. What has happened, Kingsley?”
“We are about to relate that,” Kingsley replied, his tone very serious.

“It was Harry, wasn’t it?” Molly asked, “And don’t think of putting me off. I have a right to know what happened at my house last night,” she told him.

Kingsley sighed, and nodded, “Yes, it was Harry… but that’s not the whole story. We need to go inside, Molly, I’ll send for Arthur. We don’t need to go through this more than once.”

“Very well,” she nodded.

“Sturges, will you have Mr. Arthur Weasley summoned, please?”

The Auror, Sturges nodded once, and sent a Patronus type message to Ottery st. Catchpole.”

“Good,” Kingsley said, watching the streak of blue head off down the drive. “Molly,” and he indicated that she should go ahead of him.

As they entered the Great Hall with Molly first, members of her family including Ginny and her grandchildren started towards her. However, when they saw Kingsley and Aurors following, all but the children stopped.

Molly happily greeted her grandchildren, but the mask dropped as she looked back to her children and extended family.

Kingsley had been using this time to see who was missing and locate Dora. Regardless of Andromeda’s wishes for her daughter to stay as long as she wished at Hogwarts, Kingsley knew that his friend needed medical assistance, so while they waited for Arthur to arrive he approached her. He also noticed that Severus and Hermione were missing, well that was only to be expected, they were on their honeymoon after all.

While the Weasley’s were gathered around Molly, Kingsley motioned Dora outside the hall. “There has been an incident at the community,” he told her quietly.
It took all of her training not to react to this news. She simply asked, “Who?” already suspecting the answer.

“Harry,” Kingsley admitted. “It seems he hadn’t been taking his Wolfsbane Potion.”

She sighed, “I did wonder as much.” I had tried to watch him after I went into the bathroom after him one night and the drain was smoking slightly. Damn, I should have been more diligent,” she asserted.

“No, this is not your fault.”

Her astute dark eyes came up to Kingsley’s. “They said Ottery st. Catchpole, was anyone injured?”

“Before he transformed, he knocked Andromeda out. It appears that he was intent on getting where he went while he was still in his right mind.” He scoffed, “Whatever that was.”

“Is Mum all right?”

“She’s a bit shaken, and has an injured arm. She said she would go to the healers once Remus wakes.”

“Right,” Dora scoffed sarcastically, “and you believe her? Kings, how long have you been friends with my mother? Seriously, I think you need a holiday.”

Before Kingsley could answer, a panting Arthur Weasley arrived, and he took the opportunity to change the subject. “Ah, Arthur.”

“Kingsley,” the redheaded wizard nodded.

“Okay now everyone is here, I think it’s time I told you all what’s going on.” As they entered the hall, he found that Hermione and Severus were present; having arrived via the teacher’s entrance.

Luna and Neville Longbottom—sensing something serious was happening—had conveniently taken all the children, babies included, out on an acorn hunt into one of the walled gardens whose centre
piece was a huge acorn tree. The seeds were a sought after Potion ingredient and Neville often collected them. He presented Teddy, Jack, James and Scorpius with a bag each, and he took Frank, Albus and Adela with one bag and Luna helped Lily and Xanthie, with the three sleeping babies in their prams being levitated behind her. They had just started out when Draco and Astoria arrived to assist them after finding out what had happened. They didn’t say anything but simply started helping.

Back in the Great Hall there had been gasps when Kingsley revealed that Harry Potter had been a werewolf, and then disbelief when they were told what had happened. Hermione and Ginny were seated between Severus and Lucius, and both were utterly speechless.

Out of all the people present these two witches had borne the brunt of the idiocy and they could not bring themselves to be distraught about the wizard’s demise. In fact they had their hands laced tightly together in a show of support as their wizards formed a bodily shield around them.

It was just after Draco had whispered to his father that he and Astoria would take care of the children for the day and left. That they then watched Molly, who had endured so much as well, try to rally everyone. She shrugged Arthur’s arm off and linked her hand with his. Raising her morning pumpkin juice she said, “To the little lost boy I found trying to find platform nine and three quarters,” and tears ran freely down her cheeks.

Hermione still couldn’t bring herself to feel anything; all she could think of were images of some of the vile things that Harry and Ron had done to her over the ten years since the demise of Voldemort. The tricks and pranks that they had played, and the letters and lies. No, she was most certainly not going to just martyr Harry Potter. “I need air, Sev,” she whispered.

“Me too,” Ginny agreed.

The two wizards pulled them up off their chairs. “Excuse us please,” Lucius said on their behalves, and with their arms still around their witches, and the girl’s hands still linked, the four of them walked from the hall.

Instinctively Severus made for the lake and Lucius just kept following, he turned into the little hidden alcove that he and Hermione had shared for a very different reason more than once in recent history. “No one will find us here unless we wish them to,” he told his companions, sitting down on the grass and pulling Hermione into his lap.

Lucius followed his example, and he then said, “What are you thinking, love?”
“It feels surreal,” Ginny replied, resting her head on his chest, “but scary as well.” She sat up and looked at him, “He deliberately placed himself where he thought we were before he changed. H-he was planning to kill us all,” she managed, only choking on a sob in the last few words.

“Thank goodness we were all here last night, and oblivious to his plan,” Hermione added, as she rested her head on Severus’ shoulder, and watched Ginny finally coming completely undone. She thought back to the conversation she and Severus had after the last dress fitting, where she wondered at Ginny and Luna’s attitudes. Now she watched her best friend breaking her heart over the fact that her ex-husband had had murder on his mind, and she understood what Severus had said that night. Skimming over things was her coping mechanism, but it was not possible to skim over this, it had hit her fair in the face.

Finally, tears started over her lashes, but they were not for the monster that had been slain, they were relief that it was finally over. He could not hurt them anymore, and it was sadness for the children who had and would never know their birth father, and the unbidden image of the little boy she had met on the Hogwarts express who had turned into a monster without knowing it.

Severus held her as she too gave into her tears. Not like Ginny who was inconsolable, thinking about how her family could have been harmed, but quietly, and still only feeling relief. Wiping her eyes, she moved out of Severus’s embrace and offering him her hand she shuffled over to Lucius and Ginny on her knees. Reaching over she pulled Ginny down next to her, after conjuring a supply of pillows and indicated that Severus and Lucius should join them.

The four of them stay cuddled together and eventually Ginny quieted; she had cried herself to exhaustion. Casting a Muffilato so they would disturb her, they started discussing the situation.

“I suppose the little shit will be buried a hero,” Severus said.

“Mmm,” Lucius agreed. “They’ll spin some rubbish about him having been undercover, or something.”

“Yes, killed in the line of duty,” Hermione scoffed. “Are we going to go to the funeral?”

“No, we’re bloody well not,” both Severus and Lucius stated in union.

“You two have a honeymoon to occupy yourselves with, and I intend to relocate Ginny and the children to the continent for the summer. You are both welcome to base yourselves with us if you
wish,” he added.

“Thank you, Lu,” and Hermione rubbed his arm that was draped over Ginny and disappeared down between their stomachs. She glance around at Severus, “But I think we need some alone time.”

“Perhaps we’ll catch up with the pair of you during the last week,” Severus added, with a raised eyebrow.

Lucius nodded, and rested his head back down on the pillow, smiling. “We’ll look forward to it,” he murmured.
Thoughts And Perspectives

Chapter Summary

Everyone's thoughts from their different perspectives on Harry's death

Chapter Notes

There is a scene contained in this chapter that scores a ten on the cute-o-meter, I hope I haven’t taken ‘Papa Lu’ too far, but I couldn’t resist writing it. The image of Lucius Malfoy changing a nappy and then… well you’ll see, it was just too priceless to leave out. Please enjoy…

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The headline read, ‘Harry Potter Dies A Hero’, and Minerva McGonagall slammed the Daily Prophet down beside her cup. “How dare they!” she seethed to Filius, who was sitting beside her.

The diminutive professor took a sip of his tea, as calm as usual. He didn’t ever seem to change. “We always knew they would, Minerva. He was such a popular public figure; the general public would not have accepted anything less, and they are not to know what really happened, that would not serve any purpose.”

“Well it’s just plain wrong, and I’m not going,” she huffed.

It was true, both The Daily Prophet and Kingsley Shacklebolt martyred Harry Potter, and a huge Ministry sponsored funeral was planned for him. It was to be in every way as impressive as a Muggle state funeral, and none of the people who respected Hermione attended.

Severus and Hermione were of course nowhere to be found they were enjoying their honeymoon in parts unknown. True to his word, Lucius had taken Ginny and the children to his French estate for the summer, and Draco and Astoria were visiting Narcissa in Tuscany.

Back at Hogwarts Minerva McGonagall gave no comment for her absence from the funeral, and the Longbottoms followed the headmistress’ example, making no comment about the passing either.
Anyway they were currently away on a long planned holiday to Australia, with Augusta in tow.

Hagrid was torn, as he often was. He had loved the little boy he had rescued from the hut in the middle of the ocean all that time ago, but he could not countenance the man he had become. Of course he supported Hermione, but he mourned the loss of Harry Potter, the boy he had known terribly. His way of handling the grief was to disappear into the depths of the Forbidden Forest. He more than anyone knew that dark forest’s secrets and could keep himself safe amongst them. Nobody was certain if he would actually come back, but they did know he would be safe.

Of course Molly and Arthur attended, and Charlie brought Ron home for the occasion. Bill and George were a different matter, and they couldn’t understand why their mum and dad were bothering. Charlie may have brought his brother home at his mother’s request, but he knew the truth and he also refused to attend.

Like Hagrid the Weasley parents had loved and cared for the little boy who had been so lost, and the kindly couple mourned that loss in their own way. Arthur was currently sitting at his kitchen table, he saw a flicker of some undefined emotion flit across Molly’s face, and wondered not for the first time, if his wife had actually expected everything was just going to be suddenly all right.

Then Arthur turned his eyes to his own lost boy. Ron was a very changed wizard, but now he was back under his mother’s watchful eye he was starting to thrive again. Shaking his head with regret, Arthur still couldn’t believe that none of them had seen what was happening. Hindsight had since provided both Arthur and Molly with all the signs they would have needed to see what had been happening, but at the time there had been reasonable explanations for everything.

They had believed what the boys had said about poor Hermione. They realised now that they shouldn’t have, and regretted terribly that they hadn’t seen through the smoke screen. He sighed, *Well it was too late to be thinking these things now*, he thought, and patted Ron’s hand.

Ron had been sitting at the kitchen table silently. Even though he was much more settled now he was home, he was still filled with remorse, and they were taking each day as it came. He was generally quiet, so they were unprepared when he spoke. “Please, Mum, I want to stay at home now.”

Molly and Arthur exchanged glances, and Molly sat down on the other side of her son. “Ron, do you realise what you did while under the influence of that curse?”

“Umm, some of it I think, but most of…” he grimaced, “It was like a little voice in my head, tellin’ me what to do.” He turned large blue eyes to his parents, “I fought it to begin with, really I did,” he sighed, “but in the end, it was just easier to do what the voice urged you to do, because it became
louder and more urgent the more you ignored it. Much worse than having that bloody necklace around your neck, that year we were on the run,” he drew a deep breath. “That year seems like just yesterday, I can’t believe ten years has passed.”

“Well son, the professor told us that in many ways it is very likely that you think it is just yesterday.”

Molly got up and made tea for them. “You’ve lost ten years, and I could not see Ginny or Hermione wanting anything to do with you.” Molly sighed, “Could you understand why?”

Ron sighed, “Yeah, I guess I can,” and he chuffed a toneless huff, “and both of them are now attached to the two wizards that Harry hated so much.” A tear slid down his cheek, “I can’t believe what I did to ‘Mione,” and his cheeks flamed, or what Harry and I used to do in front of… never mind.” He tried to blink his tears away. “I did truly love Harry, I would have followed him into hell…” he wiped at his eyes. “I guess I did, actually.”

After admitting this Ron got up from the table and walked out to the swing in the backyard. He sat there swinging slowly as he thought. **Harry’s gone; he never really had a chance. At least I had a happy childhood, and maybe that will get me through this. The Dursleys abused Harry, and Harry became the abuser. You know a great deal of this rests squarely on Dumbledore’s shoulders. Surely he knew what was happening to Harry, but he didn’t stop it.**

Then a strange thought entered his head, **I wonder if Snape knew? Would that have changed things? I wish I could ask him, hang on, I can. Well, once they get back from their trip… bloody honeymoon, yuk, fancy ‘Mione doing the dirty with Snape, and he shivered.**

However, that small thought planted a seed in Ron that grew, one that could possibly help him through this. **I will start asking questions, and I will bloody well learn the truth, I’m not going to lose any more. I’ve lost ten years, and the most important person in the world to me, yes I truly did love Harry, but I’m not going to let the war bash me up any longer. I have several people—and especially Hermione and Ginny—that I need to face and do the right thing by, and I am bloody well going to do it.**

With this new resolve firmly anchoring him, Ron got up from his seat and went to get his broom. **I need to good fly to clear my head, I wonder if Charlie will come?**

xox

The Lupins had the advantage of no longer being known, so they did not have to concern themselves with which side their loyalty sat on, even though they supported Hermione. Besides with Teddy
finally about to start Hogwarts—be it a year late or not—they had made the monumental decision to return to mainland Britain, so while all the attention was on the funeral, they were quietly occupied moving their family to their new home, and making a member of their extended family a part of their family.

The community no longer needed their guidance, and with Severus’ improve Wolfsbane Potion, they felt that they could safely return. They were still going to work for Werewolves and be involved in the capture and classification of rogue weres, but they reasoned that they could do that just as well from a base in Scotland as at the Lycan community.

*Thank Merlin our duties for Kingsley have finally come to an end,* Remus thought as he relaxed in his yard watching his family. *I’m such a lucky man.*

Their whole undercover operation had culminated in a huge raid, netting a mystery underground organisation that had slowly been gaining more of a foothold on the goings on in Knockturn Alley over the years.

Oddly enough it had gone by the acronym of DA. When it had first appeared the Aurors had thought it to be an offshoot of Voldemort’s Death Eaters, but no one seemed to be able to pin anything on anyone. It had been just after the end of the war and Kingsley knew he had the perfect pair to investigate it, because everyone believed them to be dead. Kingsley had recruited Dora and Remus for his new official spy network.

After seeing what Dumbledore had been putting Snape and Malfoy through with no official paper trail to assist them, he was adamant that that would never happen again, so as part of his reforms he started and advance section in the Aurory so that everything could be validated. He suspected that there were at least two other spies that Albus had used that went down for their crimes when they shouldn’t have, but there was nothing to say otherwise. Snape and Malfoy had only escaped because Hermione had stood up for them.

So the final battle was used as the catalyst for Remus and Dora to go into his service. They were both seasoned fighters, and they were actually surprised that no one questioned their ‘deaths’, but they had trusted Shacklebolt, he had revived them post battle, and they had disappeared undercover.

*Who knew that our investigations would all come back to the boy-who-had-lived?* Remus sighed. *The war had a lot of hidden costs,* and he pondered this as he took a sip from his bottle of beer.

*It was fair to say that Harry had hidden his involvement very well, and it wasn’t discovered that he was the head of the organisation, until he and Ron had fled The Burrow after Harry had tried to kill*
Ginny. Then, things had started to grow exponentially.

However, that was when he made his first mistake as well, he had Percy disposed off. His men attacked Penelope to make it appear that Percy had found a dead Penelope and had killed himself over it. Nobody thought of Bill intervening and saving Penelope, or that Percy—prat extraordinaire—would have kept a dossier of incriminating evidence, and once we found that, well everything fell down like a pack of cards, with every level of the organisation leading to the next. The truth was that Percy was up to his ears in the corruption and he knew too much. Remus shook his head. The tangled web we weave.

Then he chuckled softly still watching his family from his comfortable lounge in the shade in his new backyard. In some weird way Percy has ended up the hero in all of this, wonders will never cease.

His eyes then came to rest of his eldest son, his electric blue hair was easy to pick out of the laughing and playing group of children and Dora. Teddy’s incredibly excited about the prospect of going to the same school as we did. Headmistress McGonagall had agreed to take him into second year, although he’ll be sorted with the first years.

He’s already made two new friends at Hermione and Severus’ wedding, and for the first time in his life, he’s spent his summer corresponding with other people, as well as spending time with Rolf, but even with his new friends I’m still glad that Rolf will be there as well.

Rolf was a war orphan, and also the newest member of the Lupin family. They had finally adopted him officially after fostering him together with another family in the community since his birth.

He had been infected with Lycanthropy while still in his mother’s womb. His mother had had the misfortune to be a play toy for Fenrir Greyback’s twisted mind just before the war had ended. The poor boy’s father had been killed and his mother, a Muggle-born witch, had lived long enough after she was set free to give birth to Rolf, but had died soon after from the impact of a curse she had received during her ordeal.

Remus had often considered the sick mind of Greyback during his introspections about Harry, while he was trying to reconcile the monster that Harry had become with the sweet boy he had known at Hogwarts, and remembering the evil werewolf reminded him that there had been more pure forms of evil in the world.

The kindly ex-professor only had to look at Rolf to see that. Greyback had been a truly twisted individual who delighted in other people’s suffering. Fancy making a heavily pregnant witch watch her husband’s murder and then infecting her so her baby would be born a werewolf and then letting
her go to live with it. At least Harry had been driven to his acts by the whispering of the curse he was victim of.

Remus didn’t agree with the things Harry had done, but he could see that the wizard had had little choice in the scheme of things. His anger had always been a problem for him, and the curse used it to make him hurt those around him, whether that grudge was justified or not. The more he cared for someone the more he hurt them. Thank goodness he was impartial about his children, although in the end, he did send someone after his daughter, this thought made Remus shudder.

His eyes then turned to the dark head of hair that hid amber eyes behind a long fringe. Werewolf children were still rare, and Rolf would be the first since Remus himself to attend Hogwarts, and I bet he’s just as excited as I was, Remus smiled.

There have been so many advances in treatment for Lycanthropy since I was a child, and while werewolves were still marginalised, they were more accepted. Rolf is a trail blazer in that respect, Minerva and Poppy have set up a private area in the infirmary to deal with the monthly issues of housing a werewolf. My new son will not be hidden like I was, and definitely not trekked to a stinking old shack to endure his change alone. While Severus’ skill as a Potions master has negated any risk to the other students. The new Wolfsbane Potion he has developed is working well.

Remus closed his eyes and smiled. Life’s turned out better than I would ever have imagined.

xox

For their part Hermione and Severus started their life together, they were currently in Venice. The sound of the water lapping on the ancient building was drifting through the open casement. So far their honeymoon had been pure bliss, a continual trail of luxurious hotels and bed and breakfasts, and only each other to occupy them.

Hermione shivered as Severus’ long fingers ghosted over her naked skin. His digits left a trail of goosebumps in the wake, and she moaned longingly, “Please,” she implored, opening her legs further and encircling his waist with them. “Please… now.”

His silky voice arrived in her ear, “Now, what, darling?”

“Please, you in me… noowww,” she whined, when he started rubbing himself up and down her eager cleft.
“So wet, my love,” he teased, and then slowly inched his way inside. “Is that what you wanted?” He heard her hiss in pleasure, and he smiled. “I love you,” he whispered.

“I love you too… Oohhhh, faster,” Hermione commanded, making Severus chuckle even more wickedly as he continued his torturous pace.

It was her muscles deliberately clenching around him that changed his mind, “You minx,” and he kissed her as he started thrusting in earnest, and her agreement filled the velvet night.

xox

In France the Malfoy family had put their children to bed, they were resident at Lucius’ French estate in Bordeaux, and Lucius could only wish that they were currently engaged in the same activities as Severus and Hermione.

Not tonight though, at the moment he was pacing at the foot of their bed with a small screaming bundle perched over his shoulder. This was the third night in a row that Lucy had had wind and Ginny was exhausted. They had decided that they wanted to be more hands on with their daughter, so that meant being up when she was up. Also with what had just happened to her ex-husband, the couple thought that the children might not want the nanny around.

Lucius remembered that Draco used to get wind as well, but his nanny used to deal with it, never Narcissa. This time he had wanted everything to be different, but he was dog tired. He could hear Lucy’s tiny stomach rumbling, and he was pretty sure that even though he was patting and rubbing her back that the wind had gone too far down to come back up, it would have to go all the way through now.

So he kept walking, and finally he heard the noise he was waiting for, unfortunately the relief came with a smell that indicated the Lucy needed changing as well. “No wonder you had a tummy ache, mon petit ange,” he crooned as he headed for the change table.

Several gentle cleaning and a strong banishing spell later together with some powder, and the tiny girl was already falling to sleep again. Just to make certain, the blond wizard cradled her in his arms and after glancing at Ginny to make certain she was asleep he sang his adopted daughter a lullaby.

“Golden slumbers kiss your eyes,
Smiles await you when you rise.
Sleep,
Pretty baby,
Do not cry,
And I will sing a lullaby.

Cares you know not,
Therefore sleep,
While over you a watch I'll keep.
Sleep,
Pretty darling,
Do not cry,
And I will sing a lullaby.”

She smiled at him, and her blue eyes closed as her tiny thumb went into her mouth, and soon her breathing deepened into that of restful slumber and he gently—albeit reluctantly, even in his exhausted state—placed her in her crib.

Tiredly climbing back into bed he felt a pair of warm arms curl around his middle. “Thank you,” Ginny mumbled, and kissed his bare shoulder.

“I thought you were asleep,” he murmured, sounding a little nervous.

“I was, and I didn’t hear you singing our daughter a lullaby.” Ginny snickered and nuzzled his shoulder. “You have a beautiful voice, darling. Get some sleep.”

xox

Lucius and Ginny had only just got back to sleep and Ginny heard, “Mum,” from beside her. “Mum, I had that nightmare again.”

It was James, ever since he’d overheard Luna and Neville talking about Harry being a werewolf, the poor boy had been dreaming that his father was coming to get him. Ginny stumbled out of bed and went back to his room with him.

The only way he could get to sleep again was for one of them to sit with him until he did. She tried to smile but just couldn’t coordinate her mouth, she was too tired, and she stroked his head watching him fall back to sleep.
Lucius had told her that Severus could safely section off the memory if it didn’t stop soon, and she truly was considering it at the moment. She was very pleased that Albus and Lily were really too young to take much of what was going on in.

xox

Back in that room in Venice, Severus and Hermione were now up for their supper. They were sitting opposite one another in a bubble bath, and their feast was hovering on a tray between them. “How are we ever going to go back to normal after this?” Hermione snickered, rubbing her foot up and down the outside of his calf as they ate.

“We can have special midnight feasts every night, if we want,” Severus replied, raising a raven eyebrow.

“Well, if I’m,” and she patted her stomach. “That might have to change, we mightn’t have the opportunity.”

“Do you think you are? I did notice that you’ve stopped drinking alcohol.”

“Severus, I wouldn’t find out and then not tell you, love. I’m not sure when you can find out. I know that Muggle women have to wait until they’ve missed a period. I’m not certain about witches.”

“It’s two weeks, I believe,” Severus told her.

“Really, well what’s the spell?”

Severus grinned and summoned his wand. Holding it over Hermione’s abdomen he murmured words she didn’t quite catch, but didn’t care when her stomach glowed blue.

“What does that mean?” she all but squealed, excitedly.

Severus laughed, “It means that in eight and a half months we probably won’t be able to have our
“Oh Severus, I’m pregnant!” The tray obediently flew out of the way and water went everywhere as she launched herself at him.

“Yes, you’re pregnant,” and he happily accepted her into his arms.

“Is the blue significant?” she asked looking up at him.

“No, that spell turns blue if you are and nothing happens if you’re not. Now I think we better get some sleep.” Severus banished the tray back to the outside of the door and helped Hermione up from the bath. He towelled her dry, kissing her stomach as he knelt to dry her legs. “Off to bed with you,” he laughed, and started drying himself.

Soon they were curled up together sound asleep. In fact it was just at the moment that Ginny also crawled back in beside Lucius, there would be a lot of sleeping in done if they could get away with it; after all they were on holidays.

Chapter End Notes

The lullaby is called – Golden Slumbers, if you want to listen to it.
Lucius had been waiting for Severus and Hermione to come home as he wished to host a ball before the school term commenced to celebrate his engagement to Ginny, and finally, they were arriving tomorrow.

Privately he was hoping to celebrate another event as well, he had missed his best friends more than he wished to admit, and so had Ginny. The morning of Severus and Hermione’s wedding he had watched his fiancé’s roaming eyes, and the sight of her almost licking her lips while watching a naked Severus and Hermione had been delicious. The fact that Hermione had not been bothered by the redhead’s blatant perusal of her body had just added fuel to his fire.

His witch was as fiery and passionate as her hair. Her sexual appetite was extensive and he adored the times they spent together. He had never met anyone before who fulfilled him quite like she did, and a stab of anger went through him once more at what she had suffered in her previous marriage. I will never forgive those two cretins for robbing her of those ten years.

This made his thoughts turn to Hermione, or what they did to, my pet sweetheart, which in some ways was worse. They broke her; Ginny not broken, just angry, but I think my pet will always be very fragile now. A genuine smile curled his lips. We will care for her and meet her needs, and Severus adores her, but we will have to be careful with her. He took a sip of his drink, still smiling. I’m happy that she thrives in our protected environment though, but I’m also glad that this year will be her last at Hogwarts. Severus promise Minerva a year, and they will both spent this next six months training their replacements, and she will be out of there just before the baby is born. She needs a complete change to help her recovery.

His current reflections also made Lucius remember Severus mentioning to him ages ago one of Hermione’s fantasies, and his scheming brain was already working out the logistics of an encounter between the four of them to make certain Hermione got her wish. We are so lucky to have this arrangement between us, nothing hidden and everything enjoyed, we’re as close as friends can be. Then there’s Ginny, my sex goddess and naughty little minx. His free hands slid over the prominent bulge in his trousers and stroked it as he thought about his witch and what she might have installed for him.
It was a warm evening and he had previously undone and untucked his shirt to take advantage of the cool breeze. He was standing on their balcony overlooking the greenhouses and rose gardens. They had already said goodnight to the children, and Lucius was now waiting for Ginny to arrive with a surprise for him.

Lucius frowned and his hand stilled remembering Ginny laughing as she told him about her shopping trip today, which had been punctuated with another round of Daily Prophet interference.

*Ever since they saw us together at Sev and Pet’s wedding, the cretins have been hounding Gin. She doesn’t seem to care though. I guess she’s used to it, having been married to Potter. They would never dare approach me, and there’s been all kinds of rot printed about us. Maybe I should warn them off Gin as well. He snickered into his drink, although she does seem to enjoy teasing them. Fuck them, they can bloody-well wait for their story,* and he went back to considering his little redhead spitfire.

The promise in his witch’s voice as she had disappeared into the bathroom and the current directions of his thoughts saw him leaning against the pillar of the balcony throwing back the last of his Firewhisky and pushing his swollen crotch up against the cool of the stone balustrade in a slow rocking movement. *I wonder what she’s bought this time?* He cocked a pale eyebrow in thought.

Hearing a soft noise behind him he turned to find Ginny standing in the doorway. She was wearing a sheer, white, georgette baby doll with pale blue ruffles around the edges, and her killer legs ended in matching white stilettos.

“Hello,” her throaty voice said, “I see you’re amusing yourself.” Her eyes were sparkling watching the discrete rocking of his hips and the action of his hand.

Lucius’ eyes took in her body encase in the lacy material and he all but growled. “You look amazing.”

She snickered, “I’m glad you like it. I talked Luna into one as well,” and her face took on a thoughtful expression. “I wonder how she’s getting on with Neville?”

The blond wizard smirked. “I do not care about Neville Longbottom’s sex life,” he stated, in a husky voice. Taking a step towards Ginny, he allowed his hand to ghost over the smooth material as he watched its progress. “Not when my angel is standing before me looking so edible.”

His witch had been working hard to regain her body’s shape after Lucy, but Lucius actually liked her voluptuous curves, but he respected her right to have her body how she liked it. He praised those glorious curves every chance he got and right now as they were displayed so perfectly. “Beautiful, simply lovely,” he murmured and his mouth started on her jaw near her ear and kissed its way along her neck, over her collarbone and down her sternum. Lucius chuckled onto her skin and his teeth took the end of the bow holding the material together and pulled.

Ginny just watched his progress with heated eyes as the material parted and he licked a line back up to her lips. He tasted like his Firewhisky and she deepened the kiss further to enjoy a taste forbidden to her while she was breastfeeding. Her hands parted the cloth of his shirt and pushed it from his shoulders before skimming down to rub the evidence of his desire.

They had both been so deprived lately, what with poor James and his nightmares and Lucy with her colic; they hadn’t had any time to themselves for weeks.

“Bed, now,” Lucius groaned into her mouth, as still kissing her he started dancing her backwards towards their bed.
As they walked Ginny undid his trousers and slipped her hand inside, feeling his hands teasing her as well. Sensing the bed behind her knees she allowed herself to fall backwards, pulling Lucius down with her. “In,” she encouraged, bucking her hips. “I need you in me, now,” and she moaned as he slid the scrap of soaked lace from her body.

“Don’t I get to enjoy you first?” he asked, watching her as his fingers ghosted up and down her slit.

His voice slid over her like silk, and that with the feel of his fingers had her panting, but she wanted him inside her. “Later, Lu… please, before we’re interrupted. I couldn’t stand it.”

He placed a kiss on her stomach and quickly standing he rid himself of his trousers. His heated grey eyes watched her lying on the bed, her legs wide for his view and her fingers running up and down her body in place of his. “Hurry,” she panted, arching her back.

He had to admit she had a point; he was ready to burst as well, and he knew he wouldn’t last long, but he wanted their encounter to last as long as possible. “Shhh, love, in good time, the waiting will make it even better.” Getting back onto the bed, he knelt between her legs, and even as he burned to be inside her, he drew the torture out. Kissing down her stomach, he licked and kissed a trail down though her wild auburn curls, already soaked with her juices and he buried his tongue deep inside her. “Merlin you’re amazing,” he murmured against her, loving her shriek of pleasure at his actions.

He could already feel her tightening around him and only one pass over her rock hard clit with his tongue and she howled, bathing his waiting mouth with her sweet liquid.

Drinking her down Lucius grinned against her. He knew what her orgasm would do to her, and he was not disappointed as he kissed back up her stomach when he saw the sticky white milk leaking from her lovely breasts. He started licking at it as she writhed and groaned beneath him. This witch was sex on legs, from the top of her redhead to the tip of her painted toenail.

He knew there wouldn’t be much milk left, she had yet to produce more after feeding Lucy, and he would never dream of doing this if Lucy needed the milk but he loved the taste of it. It was another sweet liquid that she produced, and it was only temporary, so he was going to enjoy it while he could.

Using one hand to line himself up at her entrance he supported himself on the other as he simultaneously entered her and closed his mouth around one of her nipples, and if it was possible, he hardened even more with her moan for pleasure.

It seemed an impossibly short amount of time before he felt Ginny start to tighten around him again. She was panting and meeting his every thrust, and the look on her face as he swapped breasts was beautiful. Her mouth was a perfect ‘o’ and a deep groan signalled her next release. Her sheath tightened in ripples around him, pulling and squeezing, almost sucking at him, and he couldn’t hold back his pleasure anymore. With a groaning shout he buried himself as deeply as he could and allowed bliss to take him.

“I love you,” Ginny whispered, as she snuggled tiredly into his side, her breathing still elevated. “Thank you, you were right, it was better not to rush.”

Lucius took a deep breath, “And I, you,” he whispered, “Now, we best get some sleep in case we are disturbed before the end on the night. His glanced once through the open door where little Lucy slept and he smiled quietly in contentment.

xox

The newlyweds had only just arrived on the doorstep when they were engulfed by people. All the
children were talking together, telling about their adventures in France, and the two couples hugged and kissed each other enthusiastically.

“I have missed you so much,” Ginny told Hermione as she pulled her friend into the family room. “How was it?”

Hermione giggled, “Perfect,” she sighed, her eyes instantly going to Severus’.

“You’re not telling secrets are you, love?” her husband scoffed.

“Never,” Hermione grinned happily leaning back against him as he walked forward.

“And how’s little Snape,” Ginny asked, patting Hermione’s still flat belly.

“Doing just fine as far as we know,” Hermione responded.

“Mmm, doing just fine if you like throwing up every morning,” Severus replied, caressing his wife’s stomach as he kissed her neck, making her giggle.

“Well yes, that’s not much chop, but it means everything is right, doesn’t it?” Hermione relaxed as she watched Ginny nod.

“They say that the more awful your morning sickness is, the healthier the baby will be,” she told her friend, pulling both her and Severus into a hug. “I really have missed both of you guys.”

They all sat down and Hermione enlarged a big bag she’d had in her pocket. “Presents,” she announced, and she instantly had two children sitting in front of her and James standing behind them looking so grown up. The boys said thank you, and took off with what they received, but Lily climbed up on Severus’ lap with hers and he helped her open it. Then when she looked at the lovely kaleidoscope puzzled, he instructed her in its use and told her she would have to be very careful of it.

The little girl nodded happily and went back to turning it as he had shown her to view the pretty colours as she sat back against Severus’ chest. Then without pausing in her perusal of the patterns she said, “I love my present Auntie ‘Mione, thank you Unca Sev.”

Severus had sat beside Hermione and watched animatedly as the children’s eyes lit up with their presents, but his heart melted as the two year old made herself comfortable on his knee. It was a wonderful feeling having a child trust you and Severus found that he couldn’t wait until he had one of his own to dote over. He looked at Lucius happily cradling Lucy in one arm and he suddenly appreciated his friend’s happiness. He carefully leant over and whispered to Hermione, “Do you know exactly how happy you’ve made me?” and he kissed her. “May I tell Lucius what we got him?”

“Of course, love?”

Severus grinned at Lucius, knowing he would love what they got him. “We just happened to pass through your favourite cognac region in our travels, and there will be a delivery of a case for your cellar in the very near future.”

This brought an extra dimension to the smile to the lord’s face. “Ah, thank you my dear friends.”

Hermione turned to Ginny, “And for you, love, we bought this,” and she handed her friend the carefully wrapped bottle.

“Ohhh, it smells exquisite,” Ginny gushed, after opening it, and she jumped up and hugged them.
The very next morning a letter arrived at Wood Cottage from Molly Weasley. The letter was addressed to Hermione, which considering its contents was a fairly sneaky thing for a Gryffindor to do. Purely by chance Hermione asked Severus to open it for her, as she was currently positioned in front of the toilet bringing up the cup of ginger tea and the dry toast Severus had made for her.

“What is it?” she asked, glancing at his stony expression as she finally managed to rise and head for the basin to clean her teeth.

“Bloody Molly Weasley,” Severus seethed. “After all we’ve done for her. How could she be so insensitive?”

“She’s an atypical Gryffindor,” Hermione told him. “They don’t think sometimes, why, what does she want?”

“In essence, she thinks you should just let bygones be bygones and forgive her prat of a son for any damage he has inflicted on you.” Severus was pacing now, up and down the length between the bath and the doorway of their bathroom. “Just like that,” he threw his hand into the air in a ‘hey presto’ movement to illustrate his feelings.

“Oh,” Hermione huffed, but her arms instantly wound around her small frame, and her eyes becoming hollow as this request made her withdraw into unwelcome memories.

This made Severus even more livid, but he fought it and overcame his anger. Sighing heavily he gently pulled her against him. “Don’t worry, little one. I will not allow him anywhere near you. He was warned the night of the ball exactly what would happen to him if he ever approached you again, and now he’s in his right mind, he should understand the meaning of my warning only too clearly.”

They stood together for some time with Severus quietly reassuring Hermione. Finally she spoke, “Do you think that I should…”

“You should do nothing you do not want to do.” Severus kissed her head and rested his chin on it. After a break of silence he pondered aloud, “I wonder if Ginny received a similar letter. We’re due up there now,” and he carefully pushed her to arm’s length for a moment so he could gauge her frame of mind. “But only if you’re feeling well enough, love,” he added.

“I’ll be fine, Sev,” she assured him, trying to smile.

He stroked her cheek and kissed her. “Well, we can formulate a response between the four of us, and Lucius and I will deal with it.”

“I love you,” Hermione told him, and pulled his head down for another kiss.

“I love you too, now you have your shower and I’ll make you some more tea and toast so you have the strength to walk up to the house.”

Up at The Manor, Ginny had not received a letter, but an early morning floo call from her mother.

“I thought it might be nice to have a whole family dinner tonight. Allow Ron to catch up with everyone. He hasn’t even seen his new niece yet, and I’ve sent an owl inviting Hermione and Severus they don’t appear to have the floo connected…”
She didn’t get anymore out because Ginny erupted. “You what? Mother, how could you?”

“How could I what, dear?”

“Do you have any conception of what happened to Hermione or me? He was one of the perpetrators. No, I’m not playing happy families for anyone,” and she cut the connection. Ginny’s eyes narrowed as she looked to Lucius who had been listening, away from the floo. “I’ll be having words with my mother if she’s upset ‘Mione.”

“You and me both,” he stated. “You’ve both suffered enough, any ideas she has of us just accepting that little cretin back into our circle ends here and now, today,” Lucius told her. They were lucky it was early and none of the children were awake to hear them.

Severus and Hermione heard them long before they arrived on the terrace. The French doors were open and as they came through the doors, Severus said, “It looks like Ginny received an invitation as well, love.”

Lucius spun around on hearing his friend’s voice. “How dare she ask this of our girls,” he hissed, but as soon as he looked at Hermione’s still apprehensive eyes his face softened. “Come, sit down, my pet, you shouldn’t be upsetting yourself in your condition. We must look after my new godson or daughter.”

However, it was as he was walking toward Hermione that Lucius saw Ginny run past him and envelope her in a hug. The two wizards watched their witches giving one another comfort, and despite the situation their hearts clenched seeing the women they loved caring for one another over their mutual hurt. They both started speaking in teary, muffled voices.

“You should be more upset than I am,” Hermione managed, “you had to live with them. I only had to endure their occasional attention.”

“Shh, love. What they did to you was far more public and far-reaching. They ruined your career, your friendships… prospects of love.” Ginny was listing off what they’d done when she heard Hermione sniff.

Hermione wiped her eyes and pulled out of the hug. Taking the step to where Severus and Lucius were standing with Ginny by the hand, Hermione slid one arm around Severus and their joined hands around Lucius. Ginny caught on, and entwined her arms around Lucius and Hermione as Hermione continued, “I let the wizard I wanted go,” and her teary eyes looked at Severus. “But I got him and his best friend back, and now look, we have you and the children as well,” and she hugged them all.

This had the effect of calming them all, and the men kissed both witches on the forehead. “We’ll work it out together,” Hermione finished, looking at all of them.

Lucius was happy that Hermione was thinking so positively, and he worked with that and did what he does best, he organised them. He indicated that Severus should sit at the table, and he took Hermione’s face in his hands and kissed her. “My brave little petal, well said. We are all here with you to help you deal with this,” and he sat her on Severus’ lap and watched his friend pull her protectively to him.

The two wizards were watching one another, their eyes locked. “You and I should go to, The Burrow today and tell the boy how it will be, we need the upper hand,” Severus stated, caressing Hermione while he spoke.
“I agree,” Lucius said, “but we also need to make certain that he has some binding that keeps him in his place, because we will encounter him periodically, and he is never to come within speaking distance of our petal here,” Lucius caressed Hermione’s head as it lay on Severus’ chest.

This statement set Ginny off again. “Oh no! If he wants to stay here in England, we’ll continue to see him at family events. Merlin forbid, we’ll have to invite him to our engagement party and our wedding,” she stated snarkily.

Lucius pulled her into his arms and kissed her soundly to make her stop. “Sweetheart, we knew this would come up eventually, we just need to manage the conditions of his stay.”

“I’ve already warned him that we could very easily put our old robes on once more, just for him. He took my meaning clearly, and I saw the terror in his mind as I planted a little something extra there.”

“When did you tell him that, Sev?” Lucius cackled.

“At the ball in May, and he almost wet himself. Notice he didn’t do anything to Hermione after that night, I used his reaction to me,” Severus smirked sarcastically. “Every time he thought about Hermione in an unkind manner, he wet himself.”

“Was that also the night that you started to suspect they were cursed?” Hermione asked quietly, they had never discussed that night past working out who had cursed them.

“Yes, I sensed something in his head, but it took me a while to work out what it was.”

“I’m going too,” Ginny suddenly told them unequivocally, and then looked to Hermione, concerned that her friend was still so quiet.

Hermione’s brow furrowed, realising that Ginny was watching her. “I don’t… I don’t ever want to be near him again,” she whispered, and Severus pulled her closer.

“You don’t have to, Pet, we’ll sort it out,” Lucius said, reaching for her hand and squeezing it, as he noticed that Ginny did the same thing.

It was then they heard the thunder of feet coming towards the breakfast room. “Now, this discussion is at an end until the children have eaten and left,” Lucius warned.

Everyone nodded and readied themselves for the onslaught. Hermione slid into the chair beside Severus, but he kept her hand in his, and Lucius and Ginny took their places as well.

After breakfast Lucius floo called The Burrow and said they wished to step through. Molly acquiesced and soon they were standing in her kitchen. Severus and Lucius went first, and stood like two sentinels while Ginny arrived behind them. Lucius knew it was Ginny’s right to be here, so he had not argued with her, although he was concerned about what they needed to discuss, it could very easily destroy her relationship with Molly.

Hermione was spending the morning with Nanny Cummings and the children. They were going berry picking, and Hermione had promised Severus a blackberry pie for dessert tonight. He was happy that she seemed to be bouncing back; she was not up to this.

“You didn’t bring the children,” Molly said.

“Mum, the children do not need to know what a deviant their father was. It would only upset James
and frighten Albus and Lily, hearing some of the things I suspect we need to discuss,” Ginny stated coldly.

“What do you mean?” Molly asked, and then looked at everyone still standing. “Please, sit everyone, I’ll put the kettle on.”

“No, I think we would prefer to stand, this is not really a social visit,” Severus stated soberly.

“Well, if you’re going to start with that attitude, poor Ron does not stand a chance,” the elder redhead told them. Ginny snorted and Molly’s eyes narrowed further. “Your brother didn’t really do anything to you. It was Harry who upset you.”

“Will you listen to what you have just said,” Lucius said. “Her ex-husband tried to kill her, he didn’t just hurt her.”

“Do you actually know what has happened to Hermione and Ginny?” Severus inquired, as he quietly looked into Molly’s surface thoughts as she glared at him. They told him what he already suspected with her reaction to Potter’s death; she was truly ignorant of the facts, so he informed her. “I seriously doubt that Hermione will ever recover from the abuse she received at the hands her former friends. Regardless of the fact that they were under a curse, they mentally, emotionally and physically abused my wife for ten years while most others stood back and allowed it to happen. If you are truly interested in finding out the truth I’m certain that Minerva will enlighten you, but Hermione is off limits.” Severus’ eyes suddenly narrowed, and he looked towards the lounge room door. “Weasley, I know you’re around the corner listening,” he called sternly. “Your thoughts are so loud I can hear them.”

Ginny’s head whipped around at Severus’ words, and she stalked into the lounge room and they heard a body smack against the wall. “Not so tough now I’m not spelled and Potioned up, are we Ronikins,” they heard Ginny’s angry voice. “Have the guts to at least face us, you say you’ve changed and you want answers, but you’re still sneaking around,” and her wand fired off a compulsion spell making him marched into the kitchen. “What’s it like having it done to you?” she asked, referring to the spell they had forced on her often enough.

She pushed him into a chair. “Mum, I didn’t want to have to do this, but you need to know how I was treated in my marriage to my brother’s lover.”

Molly gasped, and a sad Ron sighed. “Harry.”

“What do you mean… l-lover? He gave you four children.”

Ginny span on her mother. “Just because he was gay does not mean he was impotent. During the ten years of my marriage, I had sex with my husband exactly nine times in order to conceive my four children, and each time I didn’t fall pregnant the first time he beat me for failing to do so. There was nothing remotely pleasant about the act itself, it was merely rutting. They kept my wand from me and I was drugged and bound by coercion spells, but the worst part… the absolute worst part was that he and Harry were a couple. I was merely their front, the perfect trophy wife.” She slammed her hand down on the kitchen table, “They would tie me up so I couldn’t touch myself while I watched Harry bugger Ron every bloody night,” she threw her hand in Ron’s direction. “The bastard told me that was my punishment, for what I still do not know. I suffered to be Mrs Perfect Potter, mum,” she used air quotes, “and you never even noticed. I think dad did, but he’s never here is he. Well there you have it the overview of my marriage from hell, and now you want me to just play nice like it never happened,” her voice cracked, and she felt Lucius and Severus step up closer behind her.

Molly was just gaping at her daughter, she slowly turned to Ron. “Is this true, son?”
Ron had tears running down his face, and he only nodded. “I’m sorry, Gin, I was hoping you could see past it,” he whispered.

Ginny looked at both her mother and Ron, “You were what!?!” She closed her eyes to calm herself. “Time… time is going to be the only cure for this. Stay here if you like Ron, but do not expect us to treat you like nothing happened, because lots happened, and none of it was nice.” Ginny walked over to her mother, who looked gutted yet again and she pulled her into a hug. “I’m sorry, Mum, but you had to know. I never wanted to tell you, but I just can’t do this right now, it’s too fresh, and I don’t think ‘Mione ever will be able to do it, Severus is right, they’ve broken her. Just leave it ay, and we’ll do the best we can.” She turned away and offered Severus floo powder. “Of course, you’re still welcome anytime you want, Mum. See you soon,” and they were all gone.

Lucius, Ginny and Severus arrived back at Malfoy Manor, and Severus left them to themselves, wandering off to find the berry pickers.

Lucius knew that Ginny would dissolve any minute, and he took them straight into their bedroom. “Tell me what you need.”

“You, just you, Lu. Stay with me, let’s spend the rest of the day in bed."

Lucius smiled, “I was hoping you would say that. Do you wish to have a bath first?”

She smiled at him, “No, I just need to curl up with you.”
Hermione and Ginny spent some quality domestic time with the children while Severus and Lucius are away on business. The next day Ginny is attacked in Diagon Alley while out on errands, and the wizards have a plan to see justice is served.

Since the newlyweds had returned from their honeymoon, Lucius and Severus had gone back to their normal routine of travelling to France once a week to oversee their European business interests. This had become their usual practice when Severus wasn’t at Hogwarts, and today was the first of these trips since the wedding.

In order to fit everything into one day, the two wizards put in extra hours for their board meeting which meant it was well into the evening before they returned. Board meetings did not interest either of their witches, and it is suspected that they didn’t interest the wizards either, but business was business.

In the past, Hermione and Ginny had spent the day shopping while their wizards were busy, but today the two witches had opted for staying at home waiting for their men to return while they used the time as a girl’s day… and night. The two witches had spent the day picnicking with the children in the woods and tonight they had shared an evening meal with them and Hermione was currently helping Ginny bath three very tired children.

Of course James had a bathroom adjoining his bedroom for his privacy, and he had already bid his aunt and mother good night after dinner.

Hermione was now watching Mrs Cummings collecting a clean Lucy from her hovering, safety position in the bath, where Ginny had supervised as Lily and Albus helped wash their little sister. The nanny dried and dressed Lucy before placing her in her crib and charming her mobile to spin around playing its lullaby while the infant waited for her mother to come and feed her before sleep.

Lily insisted that Hermione be the one to dry and dress her, the novelty of having her aunt there at bath time was just too great for the little girl. After she had dried, dressed and tucked Lily in, she had allowed herself to be coerced into reading three stories, the third of which she didn’t get to finish.
Smiling Hermione kissed the head of the sleeping little girl and quietly closed the door.

Walking back up the hallway, the chestnut-headed witch was trying to contain her excitement. She couldn’t wait to be able to share such a scene with her own child, and she absently rubbed her stomach as she walked. She met Mrs Cummings returning from the bathroom with a wet Albus wrapped in a towel.

The nanny said, “Madam is feeding Lucinda, she said to tell you to go in, good night, Ma’am.”

“Oh, okay, thank you, Mrs Cummings. Lily’s asleep, she flaked during her third story,” Hermione smiled.

Hermione’s statement alerted Albus to the fact that there was the possibility of his aunt reading him a story and the little boy stopped and pulled on her arm with one hand, his other one occupied with holding the fluffy towel around his chest. “Auntie ‘Mione could you read to me too?” he asked.

“Of course, Albus,” Hermione replied, happily. “Shall I help you dress too?”

The two witches watched him as he pondered this. Albus was a pretty child; he had curls of Ginny’s red hair and his father’s emerald eyes. Finally, he grinned at them, before solemnly stating, “No, Papa Lu says that Nanny must earn her keep, so she better dresses me. I don’t want her to get burned.”

“I think you might mean fired, Albus,” Hermione corrected, trying to keep a straight face.

“Oh yes,” and he looked at his nanny, “Sorry.”

Hermione smiled at the look in Mrs Cummings’ face, and the Gryffindor witch followed them up the hallway.

By the time she had read Albus four stories and the little boy had fallen asleep, she was sure Ginny would be finished feeding, but when she got to the door of Lucy’s room, Hermione could still see Ginny, sitting in her usual feeding chair.

The chestnut-haired witch became quite engrossed watching Ginny happily feeding her daughter. It was something special. Eventually, her friend saw her and looking up from her baby she smiled. “Make yourself comfortable, I’m almost finished.”

Sitting down on the lounge in the room, Hermione curled her legs up under her and sighed. “I’ve had such a wonderful time helping you with all this tonight. I can’t wait until I have my own to do this with. I will happily retire and devote myself to doing so twenty four seven,” she stated happily.

Ginny snickered and brought Lucy up over her shoulder for a burp. “Yes, I never tire of doing it. I can understand now how mum ended up with seven of us.” She cocked an auburn eyebrow and asked, “How many are you and Severus thinking of having?”

Hermione smiled. “We’re thinking of two.” They were both silent a moment, before Hermione ventured further. “If you’d had a choice how many would you have had?”

“I don’t know,” Ginny shrugged, “I don’t think I’d like to emulate mum, but I would like to have at least one with Lucius, but we haven’t even talked about that yet.”

Hermione laughed. “Love, if you have two more children with Lucius you will only be one off your mother’s tally, you know.”
Chuckling Ginny said, “I didn’t think about that. Well maybe I will overtake mum. Did you know that Lu always wanted more than one child?”

“Yes,” Hermione nodded. “The night he broke up with that French witch he was seeing… oh, I can’t even remember her name now.” She was thoughtful for a moment. “Well anyway…” she shrugged, but something else clicked into place in her mind. “You know I think that was the night he also realised he’d fallen for you. Sev and I had gone back to Hogwarts and Lucius came crashing through the floo at two in the morning, pissed as a parrot. He tripped over the coffee table and landed on the bottle of Firewhisky he was cuddling.”

Ginny eyes opened wide. “He never told me that.”

“I doubt he remembers much of it.”

“Was he hurt?”

Nodding, Hermione tutted, “Men,” and she nodded her head. “Well, of course the bottle broke and embedded itself in his arm. The three of us had a very blurry eyed trip to the Infirmary, and he cried all the way. It was cruel to see him so miserable, well, anyway, it was through all of that that I found out—Sev probably already knew—that among other things he was upset that he didn’t have the huge family that he always wanted.”

“Oh, my poor love,” Ginny cooed. “Well, I’ll give him as many children as he wants because I love big families as well.”

Hermione laughed, “Well, you came from one. Sev and I were both only children. While we want to have more than one, because we’ve both expressed the opinion that being an only child sucks, we’re unsure how many we could manage.”

“You know, you adapt,” Ginny laughed. “I thought that when I was pregnant with Albus, but after about two weeks everything just started to slot into place. The same happened when Lily arrived and this one is easier still because we have Mrs Cummings now.”

Hermione watched in silence, as Lucy fell asleep while she was being burped. Ginny placed her in her crib and applied some monitoring charms and some more to herself before doing up her top.

“May I ask what charms you just used?” Hermione inquired, curious.

“Oh, just some stuff mum taught me. You know; one that alerts me if Lucy wakes up, a drying charm and a charm that vanishes any milk that might leak because I’m not wearing a bra.”

“Oh, I don’t know any of this,” Hermione lamented.

“Don’t worry, sweetie, I’ll help you when Snape junior arrives,” she snickered, patting Hermione’s tummy. “Do you know if it’s a girl or a boy yet?”

Hermione shook her head. “No, we want it to be a surprise.”

Ginny nodded, and threaded her arm around Hermione’s waist as they walked to her private sitting room, where they made themselves comfortable and Ginny ordered them some refreshments.

“I hope Sev is as hands on as Lu is when our baby arrives,” Hermione said, as Ginny handed her a glass of pumpkin juice.

The redhead witch snickered, “I’m still having a hard time equating the Severus Snape I know
now with the foreboding Potions professor I knew through school, but I’m sure he will be a wonderful dad. He certainly seems to be looking forward to it.”

Hermione smiled, “Yes, he is,” and she took a sip of her juice. “Did Harry and Ron ever help you with the kids?” she asked, out of the blue.

“No, they thought that was women’s work, and of course they were in a relationship themselves. I don’t think…” her voice faltered. “I was their beard, the perfect front to his dream. He didn’t care about me or the children… Well, unless one of us did what he considered the wrong thing. Then we all knew about it.”

Hermione noticed that Ginny’s eyes went hollow as she remembered her former marriage, and the chestnut-haired witch suddenly felt bereft for her and shimmying forward pulled her into a hug. “I’m so sorry, love,” she told her, “You didn’t deserve what happened to you.”

“Neither did you,” Ginny said, pulling back a little to look at her. “But look at us now.” She sat back against the arm on the lounge and beamed at Hermione. “Have I told you exactly how happy I am that we’re friends again?”

“No, but I think I get the idea,” Hermione grinned in return.

xox

It was now close to nine o’clock and they were still discussing the children and indirectly, their wizards, while they gave one another pedicures. “I could have strangled Luna talking about bloody werewolves in front of the kids. Sometimes I wonder where her brain’s at, you know?”

“Mmm,” Hermione replied, remembering her thoughts the day of the dress fitting before the wedding. “Is James all right now though?”

“Yes, the nightmares seem to have stopped, well at least he hasn’t had one since we came home.”

“Well, that’s good, poor little man,” Hermione sympathised.

“Yes, I feel sorry for him, I guess he’s the only one who will remember his father. Although I think he was growing to hate him, and that terrified me. Do you remember that day at The Leaky Cauldron, when Harry hexed you and Severus snorted him?”

“Do I! That Stinging Hex hurt,” but then her smile turned misty in remembrance.

“What?” Ginny asked, forgetting her line of thought at the look on Hermione’s face.

“That was also the day Severus first ‘comforted’ me,” and she waggled her eyebrows. “The aftermath of that attack was absolutely amazing.”

Ginny laughed, “I thought I was going to swoon when Lucius caught me. I just wanted sink into his arms and stay there, even then.” She shook herself, obviously fighting the feelings that were rising in her. “Then when Severus punched Harry,” she smiled at Hermione. “No one had ever stood up to Harry Potter, but our wizards are not ordinary wizards, are they?”

Hermione nodded, “They certainly are special.” Then noticed that her little denim skirt had ridden right up as she’d been moving her legs around in the process of getting her toe-nails painted, and she was currently giving Ginny an eyeful of her tiny lavender lace thong, and the thought of her friend’s eyes feasting on her made moisture start to gather in the before mentioned garment.
Severus had been very appreciative of this little denim skirt earlier, although when he had been there I had no knickers on under it and I was up a ladder in the library. She thought back to their morning encounter. Yes, he had been very receptive, and she smiled quietly thinking of the orgasm his mouth and fingers had given her as she hung on the ladder wantonly pushing her pussy onto his mouth.

While she would never consider wearing this skirt in public, however the Manor, just as much as their cottage was home and Hermione found her heart beat speeding up remembering their play before Severus had left this afternoon. She was suddenly consumed with the thought of opening her legs further and pulling the crotch of her knickers aside to allow Ginny to see what she was obviously already imagining.

As they silently finished their painting task, Hermione couldn’t help wondering if it was just her pregnancy hormones making her so randy. Why am I feeling so insatiable today? God, I’ve had sex twice already, and my brain’s still consumed by it all. Then this also made her remember the long look and the amorous rub on the backside Lucius had given her that afternoon while he held Ginny in his other arm, saying goodbye to her, before he and Severus had left. She had been in Severus’ arms at the time, and he had only chuckled at his friend’s attentions to her, there were no secrets between the four of them.

Ginny pulled her out of her thoughts, by asked excitedly out of the blue. “Would you be my bride’s maid?”

Hermione beamed. “Yes, it would be an honour,” but then she bit her lip, and glanced down at her stomach. “How soon are you planning to have the wedding?”

Knowing where Hermione was going with her question, Ginny asked, “When is Snape junior due? You were married Midsummer, so…” and she counted from June on her fingers. “Err, so middle of March,” and then she got a wonderful smile on her face. “Lu and I could do what you and Sev did; after all we were engaged on Midsummer at your wedding. Would you mind?”

“I can’t see why we would, ours was a brilliant wedding. It was a great way to get married.”

“Fabulous, I’ll talk to Lucius about it.” She leaned forward and grabbed Hermione’s hands in excitement. “So, what are you going to wear to my engagement party?”

“Oh… oh yes, I thought I would wear a dress I picked up in France. What are you wearing?”

Ginny grinned. “I think we need to do much shopping before we decide that.” Then their attention was arrested as they heard masculine voices approaching the room. The redhead squealed as Lucius and Severus walked through the door. She got up and ran to her lover, stopping to give Severus a peck on the lips on the way before jumping into Lucius’ arms and engulfing him in a passionate kiss as her legs locked around his waist.

Severus chuckled and slid by the kissing couple to reach Hermione. They had always had a different approach to their zealous companions. It was more smouldering; their eyes locked as he walked, and Hermione smiled. On reaching her he leant down, capturing her lips, and they both sighed happily into their kiss, as it quickly became just as heated as the couple in the doorway. Without breaking their kiss Severus sat on the lounge, guiding Hermione up onto his lap.

She eagerly straddled his legs and sat, sighing as his mouth started to work its way from her lips down the column of her throat. “I’ve missed you, tonight, love,” he whispered as he continued to work his lips on her neck.

“I’ve missed you too,” Hermione groaned, encouraging his head lower. She saw him raise a
questioning eyebrow as she all but forced his face into her cleavage. “Severus, I feel so… so in need,” she said by way of answer.

“Well, far be it from me to complain,” he smoothed in that sinful tone he knew she loved. He was well aware of what his voice did to her, and watched her shiver as her face twisted in pleasure. “This is exactly the welcome we needed after such a boring day,” and his eyes glanced over Hermione’s shoulder at Lucius, spinning Ginny around so she was up against the wall.

Severus was nibbling and kissing as far down as he could reach, at the same time as he slipped a hand under her skirt. Pulling her knickers aside, he ran a finger up and down her sodden pussy. “Oh, you are, aren’t you? Randy as a little bunny all slick and ready,” he crooned, sliding the same finger inside her.

Hermione groaned, deep in her throat and started riding his finger. She felt him add another and she threw her head back and pulled her top up, almost disjointing his nose in the process. “Ahhh… Severus,” she demanded.

He only laughed at her and obliged, his eyes eagerly watching her pleasure, and hearing Ginny moaning loudly from up against the door, accompanied by the pictures on the wall rattling in time as Lucius thrust into her.

What an excellent idea, Severus thought, as he started undoing his belt. He loved it when they were almost completely dressed but Hermione was riding him. They both hissed as he replaced his fingers with his cock, and his witch grabbed hold of his shoulders and started rising and falling on him in earnest.

For a time all that could be heard in the room was heavy breathing, rattling pictures, squealing witches and grunting wizards. The whole cacophony reached the peak of its crescendo, first with the couple against the wall and secondly with the pair on the lounge.

Lucius managed to get himself and the still aloft Ginny to the lounge following their coupling, where they collapsed next to the similarly panting Severus and Hermione.

Sitting there side by side, both witches were still impaled on their lovers, and both had their heads resting on his shoulder, Hermione on Severus’ left shoulder and Ginny on Lucius’ right, allowing the two witches to watch one another.

Both witches were bare on top, only wearing their skirts below, and Ginny’s fingers started wandering. “You’re so beautiful,” she whispered to Hermione, and her finger traced her friend’s forehead, cheek and then lips. “All I could think about earlier while we were giving one another pedicures was seeing what you were hiding under that scrap of lavender lace.”

Hermione smiled and brought her tongue out so that the tip teased Ginny’s finger tip. “So are you, I was thinking about showing you,” she murmured in reply, giggling lazily.

Seeing where this was going, Lucius and Severus shifted slightly so that their shoulders were touching.

The witches only giggled at the knowing move, and leaning further forward, they stuck their tongues out to play. Ginny licked Hermione’s lips, and Hermione, Ginny’s.

Ginny moaned, and sat up straighter on Lucius. She started rocking her pelvis in circles and took Hermione’s face in her hands, pulling her head to her. Their kiss grew in fervour and soon both were being guided up and down again on their partner’s once more rigid members after watching the girl’s
display of passion.

That was as far as they took their playing this time, becoming engrossed in their men once more, and soon the four of them sat, sweaty and sated on the lounge.

This time when they had recovered from their activities, Lucius suggested a moonlit swim to relax and revive everyone. The four of them wandered out to the pool in their various states of undress and removed the remainder of each other’s clothing before they quietly sank into the water to cool off.

xox

The next week was a difficult one. There had been several small things that blighted it, but also a serious one that had left Ginny quite shaken. Without thinking—she had always done it when she needed to—she slipped into Diagon Alley to pick something up that she wanted.

None of them had realised while they had been away that a lot of bad feeling had been stirred up, and her absence from her ex-husband’s funeral had not been taken well. The way the funeral was reported by the Daily Prophet meant that this among Potter supporters—and it appeared there were many—these emotions had festered, because the wizarding public remained generally misinformed about the circumstances surrounding Harry’s life and death.

It seemed that Shacklebolt’s smoke-screen had been a complete success, and neither of the couples had spent much time out and about since their returns.

Lucius hadn’t foreseen Ginny taking an unscheduled trip to Diagon Alley, or he may have advised against it. None of them were aware that emotion over the demise of the wizarding world’s ‘saviour’ was still running so high. These feelings spilled over when people saw Ginny—who they believed had dumped Harry, regardless of the lack of information—alone and walking out of Flourish and Blotts as bold as brass.

Of course she shouldn’t have gone by herself and especially while Lucius was away in London for the morning, but she hadn’t thought anything of it. However, now, hearing the intent in the voices of the witches surrounding her, she was shocked at their accusations. The redhead glanced at the front of her brother’s shop up the road but knew she couldn’t make it that far as the insults and accusations started flying at her thick and fast.

No matter what she said in rebuttal it just seemed to incense them further. They obviously firmly believed that she had sold herself to the devil and made an unholy pact with Lucius Malfoy, even if they didn’t know the circumstances.

“It’s not like that,” Ginny pleaded, tears stinging her eyes.

Of course they didn’t listen to her and her world suddenly span out of control as one witch spat at her, before telling her, “You’re an unfit mother.”

Another slapped her. “Poor Harry, he’s children deserve better than you.”

“Slut,” someone else added.

“You don’t deserve his children,” and Ginny sank to the ground and yet another witch kicked her.

By pure chance Severus was also in the alley this morning. He saw what was happening and stalked forward through the gathering crowd.

Dazed and confused Ginny only vaguely heard him disperse those around her with his famous scowl
and infamous icy voice. “Idiots, get out of my way,” he barked and then she felt him pull her upright and against his chest. Everything was spinning and she sagged in relief as she felt the pull of apparition take her.

When they landed in the front of Wood Cottage, Ginny let her tears start. She glanced up at her rescuer and saw Severus looking at her with an angry but concerned expression. “You silly witch, why did you go to Diagon Alley alone?”

Through hiccupping gasped breaths Ginny said, “The new Bumper Bear book came out today, I wanted to get it for Albus before it sold out,” and she collapsed against him, sobbing. The Potions master enclosed her tightly. “Shhh, don’t cry, love, you’re safe now,” he told her. He had grown very fond of this witch over their time together.

It was at this point that Hermione heard the noise and came out to see what was going on. She took one look at the scene before her and panicked slightly. “What’s happened?”

Severus related how he had been in the alley ordering the school’s Potions supplies when he had come across Ginny just outside the entrance of Flourish and Blots with an angry mob of deluded, misinformed dunderheads accosting her and screaming insults at her. Handing Ginny over to Hermione, Severus took a deep breath and sent a Patronus message to Lucius before he followed their witches into the cottage.

“Come on, love. You’re safe now,” Hermione encouraged, as she led her still shaking friend in and sat her on the lounge. Severus collected some Potions and returned to help, at the same moment as they heard what sounded like a gunshot outside and Lucius ran into the cottage as the sound of his alarmed apparition was still echoing in their ears.

All traces of his usual grace left him and he landed on his knees in front of Ginny. “Are you all right, my love?” He held her at arm’s length and examined her. There was an angry red hand print on her cheek and several other bruises forming, where she had been kicked and jostled.

Severus told his friend what had happened and Lucius instantly saw red. “We’ll go straight from here to the Aurors,” but he knew they needed more than that. He tried to think of a solution as he held her, watching Hermione and Severus treat her injuries while tears continued to stream down her face.

Once he was happy that his witch was settled enough, he handed her back to Hermione and pulled Severus aside. “Fuck Shacklebolt, he’s no better than that idiot, Fudge.” He glanced back at Ginny still taking comfort from Hermione. “And this brings up a more immediate problem. I cannot in good conscience allow James, or for that matter perhaps even Scorpius to attend Hogwarts if this is the extent of the public’s perception of the situation.”

“Indeed, the boy’s will not be safe there, even with Hermione and I there as well.” Severus looked loving at his wife, “Perhaps Hermione shouldn’t go back either, she does not need any trauma, especially not while she’s carrying our child.”

Lucius nodded, “I agree, but I believe I may have thought of a way to guarantee their safety though, but it will take some time, and perhaps it is also a way for Ronald Weasley to earn some of his redemption with our girls,” he smoothed.

Catching on quickly Severus smirked. “That would take out Shacklebolt as well.”

“Mmm, yes it would,” Lucius gave Severus his best sly smile, “and not only him,” the blond wizard whispered, and then answered his friend’s raised eyebrow with a riddle. “Which, gold digging bitch, of our former acquaintance has recently been seen on the Minister of Magic’s arm?”
“Oh Lu, several birds with one stone, well done.” Severus smirked, “That old Slytherin saying, revenge is definitely a dish best served cold, is a good one, isn’t it?”

“It most certainly is, come we have some arrangements to make.”

Lucius walked back to Hermione and Ginny. “Will you two be all right for a few hours, we have some things to attend to?”

“I’ll take care of Ginny, and we’ll walk up to the manor when she feels up to it,” Hermione said, still allowing Ginny to rest against her.

“Good girl, pet,” Lucius said, and gave her a kiss. He then sat down next to Ginny, and took her into his arms.

Hermione rose to give them some privacy, and went to Severus who was watching from the doorway. “What are you going to do?” she asked, coming into the circle of his arms.

Giving her a kiss, Severus said, “We have a plan, don’t you worry about us. You and Ginny have a nice bath and relax before you head back to the manor.” His lips travelled to her ear, and he whispered, “Then once you’re relaxed start preparing a list of questions that you’d like to fire at Weasley. I’ll explain further tonight,” he continued softly as he saw Lucius approaching, and he smiled, whispering, “Later, my darling,” rubbing her backside. “Have fun together, and with that list,” he finished suggestively.

“Oh indeed, yes, pet,” Lucius enthused, catching on to what his friend had said. “And good thinking, Sev, that will give us a head start,” he agreed, patting Severus’ shoulder as they left the girls to themselves.
**Disquiet**

Chapter Summary

The aftermath of Severus rescuing Ginny in Diagon Alley. However, not all goes as planned. Molly meddles and Ginny listens to what she says and it all ends badly.

Chapter Notes

**Disclaimer:-** I neither own nor earn anything from this story. Harry Potter and his world are the intellectual property of JK Rowling and associates.

Lucius and Severus left the Aurory after speaking to the new witch in charge, Susan Bones. She was someone who had worked hard to stay beyond reproach, especially after her experiences in the war, and had indeed proven honest in Shacklebolt’s measures after Potter’s disappearance. She had been promoted to her new position as department head just last month.

After being present at some of the more important Veritaserum interviews Severus knew that this witch was not a Potter supporter. She may have started out as one, but Potter had cured her of that by his attitude. This was something that bothered Severus, he actually wondered if Potter—in his work as an Auror—had found an undetectable form of Imperious Curse, because Shacklebolt had sat there and listened to person after person come forward and denounce Potter, but he had still protected him.

Bringing himself back from his thoughts, he looked at his former student. The dewy face that Severus remembered from her school days was gone; she had suffered too. Now there was hardness and tenacity present in her expression. He listened as she said, “I’ll come and speak with Ginny when she’s feeling up to it, perhaps this afternoon?” and he saw Lucius nod.

Severus’ eidetic memory for faces came in very handy when identifying the witches involved in the attack. He named three out of them because he remembered them from Hogwarts. The others he left Pensieve records of so that Susan and her staff could follow it up.

xox

Then it was on to the Burrow, where luck would have it, Molly was not at home.

“You want me to what?!” Ron squeaked, he was still reeling from what they told him had happened to Ginny, and now they wanted him to spill the beans on Harry?

“You vowed and declared not a week ago that you wished to make a difference. Here is your perfect chance,” Severus told him with his usual detached coolness.

“Are you, or are you not a Gryffindor?” Lucius queried. “Your sister and her children will not be safe here in England unless the true story comes out, I think it’s the least you can do after the pain
and suffering you have been party to causing her.”

He actually had the audacity to pout and look petulant. “I’m still a bit angry at her for what she said in front of mum the other day.”

“None of which was untrue,” Severus offered, smoothly.

“How do you know, Snape?” Ron sneered.

“You forget that I have been inside your sister’s head, I have seen exactly what she has endured at the hands of you and her ex-husband. Not to mention the reason why I was in there to start with,” he took a step towards Ron. “Curing a curse placed there by the same ex-husband.”

Ron opened his mouth to speak, but Lucius cut him off. “There is nothing you can say in defence of Potter’s actions; he had meant to kill her. He was mad, we know, we’ve seen that kind of madness before,” the blond wizard stated soberly, his steel-grey eyes fixed on Ron’s brown ones. “The darkness had consumed him.”

They all knew who he was speaking off. “But Voldemort was just an evil git. Harry wasn’t…” but his voice trailed off as he realised that his best friend and lover had been that cold and calculating towards the end, even towards him. Despite his resolve to find answers and make a difference, Ron was finding it all very difficult. He flopped unceremoniously into a chair, and sighed. “What do you want me to do?” He was looking up at them with resignation written in his eyes.

Severus and Lucius looked at one another and then they sat down opposite the redhead.

xox

While all this was going on, Hermione had taken Ginny into the kitchen at Wood Cottage. She had the kettle on the stove and she looked at her friend. “What say we have this in the bath, try to relax a bit?”

“I would like that,” Ginny agreed as she watched Hermione prepare a tray with tea and biscuits.

“You know, you are as special to me as Lucius is, and what we have between us all is something unique, much more than mere friendship,” Hermione told her, smiling gently. “I’m so glad you were not seriously hurt.”

Ginny pulled her into a hug and sighed, resting her head on Hermione’s shoulder, letting her friend caress her arms and back for comfort. Hermione remained quiet and turned back to the kettle when it boiled. Once the tea was prepared they walked towards the bathroom, the tray hovering along in front of them.

They had just made it up the stairs when a slightly puffed voice called out, “Ginny?”

“Mum,” Ginny muttered in surprise, turning around.

There stood an anxious looking Molly in the doorway of the cottage, red-faced and puffing. “Are you all right, Gin?”

Seeing Ginny becoming hesitant at this development, Hermione took charge. “Molly,” she said, and sent the tea tray to its destination, placing a stasis spell over it. She turned Ginny bringing her back down the stairs. “How, are you?” Hermione asked Molly, offering her a peck on the cheek.

Hermione frowned when there was no recognition forth coming, and glanced at her friend again.
bothered Hermione that Molly often ignored her presence, and she wondered why, but dismissed her concerns this time. She knew that although things were not rosy between the two redheads she recognised that Ginny needed her mum at the moment, and she was hoping that Molly’s arrival heralded a new start for them. The fact that Molly had obviously heard what had happened and come looking for her daughter, told Hermione that the situation wasn’t as bad as Ginny thought. “Come to the lounge, I’ll go and make some tea,” Hermione said, moving forward towards the lounge.

She looked back at Ginny as she followed; she did truly appear to be a little dumbfounded at this development. Hermione pushed Ginny gently towards her mother, whispering, “Let her fuss over you, Gin, you deserve it.”

“H-how did you know where to find me?” the redheaded witch asked after what seemed like an age.

“Violet Cummings told me you were here, and how to get here.”

“Oh,” she muttered, distractedly, but allowed her mother to pull her into a hug.

Seeing this, Hermione turned and went into the kitchen, thinking that maybe Molly had been too distracted to acknowledge her.

xox

When Severus and Lucius returned, they found Hermione busy in the front garden, determinedly stabbing at weeds with her little garden fork. She was wearing a look of someone greatly troubled, and when she saw them, she rose up and ran to Severus.

“Hello, sweet,” Severus said, taking her into his arms and sensing that something was bothering her intensely. He kissed her, but she remained silent.

“Where’s Ginny, pet?” Lucius asked, concern touched with a hint of steel in his voice.

Severus’ eyes narrowed at his friend, but he waited for Hermione’s explanation. Hermione kept hold of Severus’ hand and turned to Lucius, offering him a kiss of welcome as well. “Ginny’s inside, Molly’s with her. They have been talking now for almost an hour, I thought they needed some mother, daughter time she I left them to it.”

“Oh,” they saw Lucius’ face visibly relax. He took Hermione’s face in his hands, and kissed her again. “I’m sorry, pet; I must have sounded abrupt before.”

“That’s understandable, you left Ginny in my care,” and she smiled slightly, and brought her other hand up to cover Severus’ arm that had just slid around her waist.

Lucius thought that she was very hesitant in her attitude, and this concerned him, but he answered her honestly. “I was more concerned that she might have gone off thinking she was all right despite your concern.”

“I would not have allowed her to do that either. I had taken up Severus’ bath idea and had decided to keep her here and occupied until you returned. However, Molly came before that and she has occupied her.”

“You’re a good girl, pet, a very special witch,” Lucius told her, kissing her forehead.

She tried to smile at him, but he noticed that she was also holding tightly to Severus. “I have cold drinks ready under our willow trees,” she told them, in a decidedly quivery voice. “You can tell me all about what you’ve been up to,” but she bit her lip. “Although, I guess you’ll want to go and sit
Severus noticed her distress also and he tightened his arms around her. It was only natural that this incident would make her feel insecure, but he wondered if something else had happened as well.

Lucius stroked her cheek. “You know that we,” he motioned between himself and Severus, “would not let anything happen to you, or Ginny. Ginny only ran in to trouble because she went off on her own without one of us with her.” He watched Hermione nod, her lip still lodged in her teeth. He smiled slightly, “I’ll see you both when she’s finished talking to Molly,” he said, taking a step towards the house.

Severus nodded and started leading Hermione around the back. She had become even quieter. Banishing his heavy robes, and transfiguring his shirt and trousers into a tee-shirt and old soft, somewhat holey jeans as they walked, he didn’t loosening his grip on Hermione, just encouraged, “Talk to me, little one.”

She sighed, but remained silent as they walked, and when Severus sat down in the shade and pulled her into his lap, she buried her head in the crook of his neck just taking comfort from him. Her thoughts were all jumbled, what had happened to Ginny had scared her. She hadn’t thought about it while she was comforting Ginny, but when she started weeding the garden her brain began reflecting on it. Then there was Molly’s attitude towards her when she had arrived, like she still didn’t exist.

Taking a deep breath Hermione crumbled, “I can’t do it anymore,” and she sniffed, “No matter how many times I think I’m over it, somebody always manages to bring it back to the surface. I’m torn, Sev. I don’t think I want to go back to Hogwarts, but I don’t want to be without you if I retire early and you go back,” and she hiccupped slightly.

“Shhh,” Severus encouraged, tightening his arms around her. Internally he cursed yet again the damage that had been inflicted on his beautiful wife. “If you do not go back, then we will relinquish our rooms there completely, and I will only go back as a day teacher. I promised Minerva a year, so I will give that to her. She will understand if you need a break, besides I can find her a competent replacement easily before term starts back.”

Hermione looked up at him with teary eyes. “Are you thinking of Matilda, from Prince Potions?”

He smiled at her. “As astute as ever, my love,” and he kissed the end of her nose, making her giggle.

“I think she would be perfect for the job,” Hermione said, snuggling back down and wiping her eyes. “She’s ready for a change.”

Matilda Mason had just turned sixty and she reminded Hermione of a slightly younger and taller, dirt-free Pomona Sprout. Her family were grown and her Muggle-born husband had died in the war. Hermione had taken an instant liking to the witch. The first time they met they had hit it off like a house on fire, and now they talked—often going for coffee or lunch—every time she visited the Arithmancy department of Severus’ company, the headquarters of which were in Paris.

“You know, once we’ve finished having babies, I think I might like to do something like Matilda’s job in your company,” Hermione mused after several minutes.

“Our company, sweet.” Hermione’s head came up. “As my wife you own half now,” Severus reminded her, and kissing her he told her, “And in time whatever job you want is yours, however, at the moment I am most content for you to concentrate on just being Madam Hermione Snape, beautiful, pregnant witch.”
“I love you; you know exactly how to make me feel secure,” and she attempted to snuggle in closer to him, even though she was already against him.

This made him chuckle, as she wriggled closer. “And I you, sweet, you’ll become more confident.”

“I hate how things can still un-nerve me.”

“Mya, it took time—many years in fact—to recover from the damage my childhood, schooling and early years as a Death Eater caused me, and that’s not even mentioning what Albus bloody Dumbledore inflicted on me.” He kissed her head, and smiled down at her. “Then along came this gorgeous, feisty Gryffindor witch. I fell in love with her at the absolute worse time in my life and even after all the horrible things I’d said and done to her, she saved me. You,” he gave her a longer kiss. “You, my darling girl were the beginning of my salvation, and then my friendship with Lu was my saving grace. Once we were away from the torment in England we helped one another out of the prisons we had put ourselves in.” Their kiss this time was longer and more heated. “I never forgot you though, you were always there in the back of my mind, and I’m intensely sorry that I did not come back before I did. You did not deserve what happened to you, and you were completely powerless to prevent it.” He took a deep breath. “What I’m saying, sweet, is that the only thing that will cure you is time… and probably distance, don’t fret, we will do this together, and we will do whatever makes you comfortable now. Our baby’s wellbeing… both of you, is far more important to me than anything else.”

“Oh, Sev, that was beautifully said,” and she pulled his head down to meet hers. Hermione never tired of kissing Severus. She loved everything about it, from the taste of him and the sexy way he breathed while he was kissing her, to the sweep of his talented tongue in her mouth and the little groans he stifled in the back of his throat.

After a breathtaking kiss, Severus brushed his lips across hers. “You know,” and he moved back a little so he could see her. “The fact that only a few people realise the extent of your suffering is actually a blessing, we can take a step back now and just help Lu from the background.”

“Why do you think no one but Minerva, Luna, Neville and Hagrid ever worked out what was happening.” She bit her lip a moment, “I mean Kingsley, used to… well what he did never did much. It was like he was only shaking his finger at them.”

“That’s exactly what he was doing; they had a strong repelling charm on you. That’s why most people didn’t see you, you were invisible to them, only witches and wizards who had an abstract perception, like Mrs Longbottom and Hagrid, or those who were stronger magically than the caster were immune to its effects.”

“Oh,” Hermione said in a huff. “So that explains why people didn’t react when they insulted me, and why I could never get a job outside of Hogwarts.” She sighed, “And why Neville used to know I was there, but often seemed to look straight through me. Molly still does, she looked straight through me again today.”

“Mmm, that’s typical Molly I’m afraid, she’s like a dog with a bone, especially where one of her children is involved, and her recognition of you will fluctuate. The same with Mr Longbottom, his magic fluctuates with his level of comfort in a situation, so yes, that’s quite possible, and Shacklebolt?” Severus sneered, “Well, he’s not a very strong leader, regardless of his bearing and confidence. His words would have rolled off Weasley and Potter, like water off a duck’s back. In fact, if you’re not working next term I have a project for you now that the mirror project is complete.”

“What?”
“I want you to research different types of cohesion spells. I believe that Shacklebolt may have been subject to something like an Imperious Curse. Would that interest you?”

“Oh yes,” Hermione said, as some of the sparkle came back into her eyes. “Also, we need to take a trip to that room to see if the rest of those books are there. We still haven’t done that.”

“Books?”

“You know the erotic ones from Binn’s office.”

“Oh yes,” he laughed. “What made you think of that?”

She shrugged coyly. “A small sideways leap of my brain, when you mentioned research.”

“You are incorrigible,” he laughed.

They sat in silence for a time, but then Hermione said, “Not even Dumbledore’s portrait could speak to them once you and Lu started making waves on my behalf.”

“Sweet, a portrait has no magic anymore, so the curse made them ignore even the most powerful wizard they knew.”

She pondered all that they had discussed, and finally said, “But the children I taught could see me.”

Severus’ brow furrowed slightly, and he looked into the distance, obviously thinking. Finally, he said, “I’m not so sure about that one. It could be a child’s acceptance of things that adults tell them are real,” he shook his head. “I’m not sure, Mya.”

“You think I was like Father Christmas to them?”

“Perhaps, as I said, I’m not certain.”

“It’s all very sad really, isn’t it? And not just for me,” she added, but then her brow furrowed. “But how come, after Bellatrix died, the curse didn’t die with her, like most magic does.”

“Because it was tied to the house of Black, therefore Narcissa, Andromeda and even Draco and Dora perpetuated it without knowing. That’s why they had to be the ones to cure it. I could facilitate the cure, but they had to cast the counter-curse.”

“Oh…” she snuggled back into the crook of his neck. “I think you should kiss me again,” she murmured, changing the subject.

Severus grinned and lifted her chin, making her smile and giggle as his mouth came down to hers again.

When this couple focused on one another it was a wonder to behold. Hearing that it was quiet when they approached, Lucius cleared his throat to herald them before he and Ginny stepped through the weeping branches of the willow that hid them from the rest of the world. It was merely a courtesy, he knew they were free to enter, it wouldn’t matter what their friends were doing they would do it in front of them. There were no secrets between their quartet. He glanced at Ginny, Or so I thought, she very standoffish all of a sudden.

Severus opened an eye lazily when he heard Lucius, and they ended their kiss. “I know, list,” the raven-haired wizard said, placing one last kiss on Hermione’s lips and encouraging her head back down to his shoulder.
Hermione smiled at the gesture and started nibbling his ear. Severus steadfastly ignored her as he watched Lucius sit in the two seater lounge next to their chair. Severus thought he looked troubled, and he stiffened when Ginny curled up next to him. There was something wrong, and Severus gently pulled his head away from Hermione’s attentions, although he was glad that she was so caught up in him that she had missed the signs. “Later, my love,” he whispered, and rubbed her backside softly. He just hoped that he could keep her oblivious; she didn’t need any more upset.

He then set about playing host and served them all with a cool drink with a swish of his wand, to try lighten the mood, which seemed suddenly very full of tension.

After wiggling her backside into Severus’ crotch in retaliation for him stopping her ministrations on his neck, Hermione turned to Ginny, and asked brightly, “How did it go?”

The redhead nodded. “Yeah, fine,” was all she said.

Severus could have sworn that she had sneered at Hermione, and sensed that the problem centred around the redhead somehow, and he wondered what was going on. She usually didn’t hold things back. His eyes flicked to Lucius’, and he saw that he still hadn’t relaxed and there was a minute furrow in his brow now as well.

Hermione still didn’t seem to notice, although she was very distracted at present, and Severus listened as his wife started the discussion they needed to have.

“We all agree that our major priority is James well-being,” she said, “So we need the public to see that even if they don’t like us, that the children have no blame in things.” Hearing an almost inaudible scoff, Hermione quickly looked at Ginny, “And I’m not saying that you do, but people are stupid sometimes, and I’m not sure they’re going to believe what Ron says without evidence. It was like Skeeter’s book, ‘The Life And Lies Of Albus Dumbledore’, people just didn’t believe most of it, because Dumbledore was such a hero to them. I think we will find the same thing will happen with Harry Potter.

“Of course you’d know, wouldn’t you,” Ginny said, her smile just a bit too quick, and there was a hard edge to her voice.

Severus rubbed Hermione’s arm. “That’s a very good point, love,” he commented, narrowing his eyes at the redhead.

“I think that the easiest way to make him safe would be to enrol him somewhere else,” Ginny then announced. “I am heartily sick of the English attitude. May be it’s time to move somewhere else and just forget difficult people,” and her eyes lingered on Hermione.

What the fuck? Severus thought. She was Mya’s friend earlier, and now… He cast a silent, Legilimens and slipped into her mind, after having such extensive access to it while he cured the curse he knew just where to enter so she wouldn’t notice. What he saw startled him. Molly was telling Ginny not to trust Hermione. That there was something sinister about her, the redhead was telling her daughter that Hermione was a freak, not normal, and that she thought that she was all together too attached to Lucius. That there was something weird going on there, the stupid witch had said, you mark my words. His mind repeated its earlier epitaph, and he slipped back out, but he had to fight the anger that he felt rising up in him. Merlin help the silly little bint if she repeats any of that trash to Mya… I’ll kill bloody Molly Weasley, she always was an idiot, and after everything we’ve done for her. He sighed quietly, and Ginevra’s not much better, he pondered. As far as I’m concerned she could never be one of us if she could think this about Hermione so easily.

Hermione heard his sigh and looked up at him with a questioning look. He tightened his arms around
her and forced a quiet smile to his lips as he kissed her temple and they heard Lucius’ next comment.

“You are forgetting, love, that James finally has friends, and we have worked hard to make him feel secure. All that work will be undone if we up and move him somewhere else.”

Ginny looked up at Lucius, anger in her expression. “Of course you wouldn’t think my idea was any good, we have the money, I don’t see the problem.”

Lucius’ expression changed to confusion, and then hardened. “I am merely being practical,” he told her, sitting up even straighter. “I think the measures I have taken will be enough. I have set it up so that several well known people will corroborate Weasley’s story, via the use of Pensieve records, so people will believe him.” Lucius told them, before taking a breath and looking back at a still belligerent looking Ginny.

Severus wondered briefly if perhaps on top of what her mother had said to her, if the girl had hit her head this morning, because she seemed to be going out of her way to be petulant and childish.

Trying to steer the conversation back to its subject, Hermione asked quietly. “What do you think would be the best thing to say first, Lu?”

Lucius’ eyes turned to Hermione, she looked so damned vulnerable again, and he wasn’t certain of what Ginny was up to, but she was way out of line. He smiled slightly at her in encouragement. “Practically speaking the things that would most quickly alienate Potter from the wizarding population’s good books are slips that he was a werewolf, and that Shacklebolt covered this fact up.”

Hermione was quick to then say, “But haven’t the Lupins got an adopted son starting with Teddy this year who’s a Lycan? We have to word it in such a way that it doesn’t put the fight for werewolf rights back. Minerva has worked so hard to get things organised, and he deserves the chance to go to Hogwarts. Mrs Creevey is also excited because Ester will be going to Hogwarts the year after.”

Ginny sat bolt upright, her eyes flashing dangerously. “Are you saying that some kids we don’t even know are more important than my James?”

“No,” Hermione exclaimed, shocked that Ginny would think that. “All children are just as important as each other; you can’t say one has greater needs than another. We should protect, nurture and care for every one of them in the same way, that’s the whole premise of the homes I’ve set up. All children need caring adults to be there for them.”

Ginny’s eyes were narrowing further. “I still think you are saying that James isn’t as important.”

“I’m not,” and Hermione huffed, but Ginny had the typical pig-headed Weasley nature, she retaliated with nastiness and accusation.

Hermione’s expulsion of air was like a red flag to a bull. “Oh you’re such a smartarse, miss-I’m-always-bloody-right. You’re just a freak!” the redhead spat, only realising her mistake after the words had left her mouth, and seeing her closest female friend crumble under the remark. Only then did she realise exactly how wrong her mother had been, but the damage was done.

Severus had heard enough, and he intervened swiftly; no one upset Hermione when he was around. “This conversation is at an end. I do not know what has gotten into you, Ms. Weasley, well I do actually,” and he sneered, “But I will not countenance anyone speaking to Hermione like that; we are supposed to be friends, therefore I will not hex you, but I will offer you a piece of advice. Moderate your language, you know the circumstances, and you also know Hermione’s views on werewolves and the rights of magical creatures, and that she would never place one child in front of another.
Don’t you think it’s about time you grew up, or is this as grown up as a Weasley gets?”

As he was talking, Severus rose from his seat still holding a shocked Hermione close to him, and he apparated them both away.
Ginny huffed; she had forgotten how short tempered Severus was, and also how protective he was of Hermione. *Hermione and all her problems, we mustn’t upset delicate Hermione*, she mimicked in her head, and then her mouth tightened. *Well screw him, if he wants to play the greasy git. I was the one attacked here, I don’t need them. Hermione’s just a precious princess anyway*, she thought, still in a raging temper.

It didn’t dawn on her that she had been thoughtless and cruel, especially after Hermione’s care of her this morning. Ginny was simply too angry, she was starting to feel trapped again. What her mother had said to her this morning made perfect sense, and it also confirmed a casual comment she had overheard Luna say to Neville the day before when they had all been picnicking in the garden.

How dare they think that Severus and Lucius looked natural and comfortable talking with Hermione. This coupled with her mother’s observations, well, the more she thought about it, the more she came to realise that not only was Hermione attached to Lucius… *her* Lucius, but Lucius was also very attached to Hermione.

They never talked like that when she was with them, and this made her as jealous as hell. He had been smiling and laughing with Hermione and Severus while they were talking, and they were so bloody focused on each other. She forgot about all the other things that they had done together, all the lovely times they had spent just the four of them, and what they were meant to mean to one another as the little green-eyed monster burst from within her and demanded her attention.

She glanced at Lucius and saw him scowling, so she glared right back. *This is all their fault, how dare they be upset with me.*

Lucius had sat there listening to what Ginny had said, and he was livid. He watched her with a scowl
on her face, and he wanted to know what was happening, because he did not blame Severus one bit for the words he had said. In fact he totally agreed with him. *Severus does not tolerate childish behaviour period, especially in adults. He had never seen eye to eye with she-who-must-not-be-named, aka Narcissa Black because of the witch’s petulant nature.* Lucius sighed. *When Ginny and I got together, I already knew how to handle a bad tempered witch because I had been married to Narcissa for so many years.*

The thing is though, at first Ginny had been very amenable. How could she do this, Hermione is the sweetest creature, fair and rule abiding to a fault. She has been dealt an awful hand by life, and she’s fragile now. She doesn’t need to be set upon by anyone, but especially by someone she considers a friend. Why has Ginny done this? I’ve heard her make a few off-handed comments lately, but she’s never been outright hostile, and his temper suddenly got the better of him and he turned on Ginny.

“What the hell made you say such things?” he asked her, desperately trying to stop himself from full on yelling at her. *Even if she has been the one who had been hurt, she has no reason to take it out on pet. She was only been hurt this morning through her own pig-headedness. I told her to wait until I got back and we’d go together, or to get the nanny to pick the book up.* He looked at her glaring at him. *And I came running when I received Severus’ Patronus. Left the new supplier hanging, I’ll have to close that deal next week now, then she behaves like this.*

He was pulled from his thoughts hearing, “I’m sorry, Lucius.”

Still watching, he could see tears arriving in her eyes, but he was too angry, and they were not tears of remorse. He had been married to Narcissa for too long to fall for this. “What the deuce good is that now. It is not me that you have offended,” but his tone of voice left her in no doubt that he was seriously displeased regardless.

“What do we do now?” she whispered.

Getting up Lucius straightened his robes. “The same thing we were discussing before your acid tongue got us into trouble.”

“M-my acid tongue, I didn’t mean anything by it.”

“You accused pet of being a freak, and after everything she has been through… and done for you.” He drew what he hoped would be a calming breath, but it seemed to make little difference, especially when Ginny flew at him.

“What about the things I’ve been through, the things I’ve suffered. All you care about is Hermione ‘I’m so perfect’ Granger,” she ranted.

Lucius’ brow furrowed in true puzzlement. “Ginny, what has brought on this tirade against Hermione?”

She only huffed, seeming to become more enraged. “It’s me you are supposed to be caring for, not Hermione. How was I supposed to know that she was upset?”

“It shouldn’t have made any difference whether pet was upset or not, you shouldn’t have said it, and I do care for you.”

“Yet you were all worried about Hermione,” Ginny scoffed.

“Ginny, what has gotten into you, I could plainly see by the way that… Hermione,” and he emphasised her name, “was curled up in Severus’ lap when we arrived that he had been comforting
her. Your experience this morning was bound to bring her demons back as well, and you go and say something like that to her.”

Ginny’s eyes flashing with anger. “Why do you always call her, pet?” she snapped. Anger was the way Weasley’s handled things they didn’t understand. “You do think more of her than me,” she asserted, in challenge.

“Don’t be bloody ridiculous, I have always called Hermione, pet. Even during the trials long before I got to know you, it’s just my nick-name for her.” He was now officially livid; Ginny was being short-sighted and childish. He saw her sneer at him and he snapped. He lifted a pale eyebrow and there was ice in his tone. “I am going and inform your brother of what we require of him—for James’ sake—and I will set up the meetings. Then I am going to make certain pe… Hermione is all right.”

“There you go,” and she threw her hand around in an all encompassing gesture. “It’s always, bloody, Hermione,” she seethed. “What about my hurt, what I’ve endured?”

“Ginny, I love you. We are going to be married, I do not understand why this is a problem all of a sudden. Perhaps you should start to act your age and realise that we all care about you and want the best for you,” and he sighed deeply. “You hurt someone very dear to us just now without cause.”

“Well, she’s very dear to you, anyway, she’s always hanging around with you,” she accused.

“I don’t understand what’s going on here. You knew that Severus, Hermione and I were very close before we started our romance. Since we have been together, I have never excluded you, and you were more than happy even sharing kisses with Hermione the other night in your sitting room.”

“Well, things change, and how about that first day we spent under the willows?” she snapped, crossing her arms under her breasts.

“You were exhausted, we had both been up all night with Lucy, I let you sleep.” he roared.

“You should have woken me,” she yelled.

“I don’t understand; where you’re coming from. What changes from being so intimate with both Sev and pet that you enjoyed being screwed, against a wall in front of them?” he heard her scoff, and his anger revved up a notch. “And don’t tell me you didn’t enjoy it, because I was there, I heard what you were screaming in ecstasy.”

“Well, I’ve just come to realise things,” she spat at him.

“What bloody things, nothing has changed. You had better work on your apologies and your grovelling skills because I know Severus better than anyone, and he will not let you near Hermione now until he is assured that you will not upset her again.”

Her eyes flashed with anger. “Well, screw him,” she yelled. “In fact, fuck the lot of you. You always take their side, and I’m sick of it.”

“They are my closest friends, Ginny, and I also thought that Hermione at least was yours, now I’m not so certain.”

“Well, things change. I don’t need you. I’m sick of you all, I want freedom. I’m going home… t-to mum, she understands me,” and she threw his ring at him.”

He wasn’t justifying her behaviour by trying to talk her out of it. “As you please, Ginny,” he stated
calmly, and bowing his head to her as he caught the ring and apparated away, leaving her standing there seething.

xox

Severus had apparated Hermione and himself into their cottage where he warded it before walking through the floo to their rooms at Hogwarts. He knew that Lucius would most likely turn up here later looking for them, but he was damned if he was going to allow that dunderheaded idiot of a redhead near Hermione again.

He walked them straight into their bedroom and placed Hermione down, she seemed to be in shock, she hadn’t become distraught, but her silence was worrying, and she was just clinging to him. “What can I get you, angel?” he asked, starting to remove her dress and shoes to make her more comfortable. He kissed each piece of flesh as it was exposed to his eyes, and she moaned slightly and clung tighter, but otherwise remained unresponsive.

“Just you,” she said, finally, winding her hands up into his hair and starting to kiss him. “Lay with me, Sev, I want you with me,” she whispered.

“Very well, love,” and he shed his own shoes and tee-shirt, undid his jeans, and placed her under the sheet while he climbed on their bed on top and allowed her to snuggle in.

About an hour passed with Hermione curled up against him, stroking the hair on his chest. Finally she went to sleep, being pregnant was very tiring on her, and it didn’t take much for her to go to sleep at the moment. He was just dozing himself when the floo flared. Disentangling himself gently so as not to disturb her, Severus quietly padded out into the sitting room.

A very worried and slightly flustered Lucius stood there. “Is pet, all right?” was his first question.

“What do you think,” Severus replied, coolly.

Lucius pinched the bridge of his nose and rubbed his forehead. “I do love Ginny, but she can be very thoughtless and shallow on occasion. You know she has insecurities too, don’t you?”

“Are you trying to convince me or yourself of that?” Severus smoothed, his raven eyebrow rising. “She’s going to turn into a harridan, just like mummy,” he sneered.

Lucius sighed. “She threw her ring at me, and told me I think more of Hermione than I do her.”

His sneer increased. “An idea placed in her head by the very same mother.”

“How do you know that, Sev?”

“How do you think, man? I was curious as to why she was acting as she was. This is not the first time lately.”

“What else did you see?”

“That’s not important at the moment, Lu. The important thing is that you need to work out what you really do feel, and then perhaps we can talk about it.”

“She’s gone back to her mother.”

Severus actually cackled. “And imagine how pleased mummy’s going to be that she’s just thrown away her chance to be Mrs Lucius Malfoy.”
“Yes,” Lucius actually managed a smile. “That will be an interesting conversation, won’t it?” Then he sobered, “This morning really has stressed her out,” he added.

“Yes, I know that, but that’s no excuse for her treatment of Mya, she called my wife a freak. We have spent months building Hermione’s confidence and she was starting to feel more secure, and that stupid bitch tears all that work down with one sentence.” Severus was officially ranting now. He was pacing and throwing his arms around to illustrate his points.

“She was hurting as well, and that mother of hers took advantage of that. I listened to some of the dribble sprouting from her mouth this morning.” Pausing, he sighed, “I also saw how upset pet was when we returned this afternoon. I should have anticipated what might happen, but I didn’t know what they had been discussing before I arrived. I thought the conversation abruptly changed when I sat down.”

“And now Mya has to live with the results.” Severus drew a deep breath, and thought about how uncertain his best friend’s life had just become. “I’m not blaming you, Lu,” and he dragged his hand up through his hair.

“I know,” Lucius agreed. “I’m sure this is all a storm in a teacup, but she’s done some serious damage. She’s going to have to get over whatever has done this to her, and apologise.”

“Did she take the children with her?” Severus asked, pouring them both whisky, and seeing a look of panic cross his friend’s face, he added, “Perhaps you should see about the state of affairs, and work out how best to go forward,” Severus suggested.

Lucius grimaced, “Mmm,” and he sighed again.

Severus walked forward and laid a hand on Lucius’ arm. “See how it stands, we’re here for you when you need us, and you’re ready to talk.”

“Yes,” was all Lucius offered, and took a sip of whisky.

Their conversation was cut short by the appearance of a face in the mirror above the fireplace. “You better get back to my little dove, Severus, she’s having one of her nightmares,” Mirror Severus told them.

Severus strode back into the bedroom and saw Hermione tossing and turning in her sleep and muttering under her breath. “No… Sev… no… Don’t go. NO!”

“It’s the one where everyone leaves her,” the mirror supplied.

Lucius, who was standing in the doorway, looked to the mirror. “How many different ones does she have?”

“They are all variations of the same thing, but some are more distressing than the others. This is the first nightmare she’s had since Severus and little dove started sharing a bed,” the mirror told him, and they watched on as Severus tried to wake her without frightening her more.

As Lucius quietly backed away from the door and went to the floo, the blond wizard was shocked that what Ginny had said could bring forth such a reaction from his petite friend, but then he knew well that your own personal demons were peculiar things, and the strangest things set them off.

Lucius floo’d away knowing that no matter what happened next a trust had broken today, and it was something that he was very concerned about, because their merry little band had been very fractured by it. He hoped as the sound of Hermione’s cries and Severus’ comforting still echoed in his ears as
the floo took him that it was something that they could recover from.

xox

When Lucius returned to the Manor that afternoon, he discovered that Ginny was gone, but James and Albus were playing with Scorpius and Adela under Draco’s watchful eye and Lily and Lucy were in the nursery with their nanny.

The elder blond wizard was greeted by his son with a hissed statement under his breath. “What the f-u-c-k is going on. The redhead stormed in here like a thunder cloud a bit over an hour ago and snapped at me to mind the kids for a minute when her boys ran to greet her, and I haven’t seen hide nor hair of her since. The boys were already playing with Scorp and Del, but it’s the principal.”

Lucius’ face pinched. “If you need to go, I’m here now,” he told him.

Draco’s eyes narrowed. “What’s going on?”

Sighing Lucius said, “To tell you the truth, I don’t know. Ginny went to Diagon Alley by herself this morning and was set upon by deluded Potter supporters. Severus just happened to be passing and apparated her back to their place. He called me, and we left her with Hermione while we went and put certain precautions into motion. When we got back Molly was there and Hermione was outside in the garden by herself. She had been upset by the whole incident as well, but neither of them noticed that. Well the long and short of it is that Molly told Ginny that Hermione was too attached to me, and that she shouldn’t stand for it.”

“So she’s upset Hermione, hasn’t she?” Draco huffed. “Oh Father, how could you let that happen, Hermione has been so happy lately.”

“I know… I know,” he sighed, “and Severus is livid. He blasted Ginny with both barrels, as the Muggles say.”

“So, is the wedding still on?” Draco inquired.

Lucius heard something in his son’s voice that made him pause. “Would it be a bad thing if it was?” he asked.

Draco sighed. “Father, my mother hurt you badly. Ginny is like her in many ways, yet different.” He huffed a breath and seemed to think about what he was about to say for a moment while watching the two older boys helping the younger children with their toy brooms. “Don’t get me wrong, I like her, and it’s your life to do with as you please.” He thought a little longer. “I’ll always try to be there for you, but…”

“Exactly what are you trying to say?” Lucius cut in, and his expression closed off a little. “You know she has been hurt as well.”

Draco looked back at the children. “I know that Ginny was abused and almost died. It took a long time for her to recover, but she never seems to want the children around unless it’s for ‘show’.” He used air quotes. “It could be because of her dysfunctional marriage, where they were put on ‘show’ so to speak, but even though they do not appear to want for anything, she almost treats them like they are a chore. Well, before you hired the nanny anyway.”

“Yet, she told me just last night that she would like another child with me,” Lucius stated, becoming a little irate with his son.

“Father, that could also be a manipulation, if she is truly jealous of Hermione it could be her way of
trying to make you want her more.” Then seeing his father’s expression darken further, Draco held his hands up in submission. “I do not want to see you hurt again.”

Lucius sighed, “I know, son, and you’re right, but this is all hard to take in so suddenly.”

Draco’s brow furrowed, and he wondered if he was doing the right thing, but he kept talking. “Actually, if you think about it, I believe it could have even been anticipated. See, I have an advantage over you, I remember her from school. She worked her way through most of the blokes in the senior years, even a couple of Slytherins as well as some of the girls, during the year the Potter was absent. She was not a slut, so to speak, more a true hedonist, and then when Potter returned he basically locked her up and threw away the key. Now, she’s free from that, and she’s recovering from the hurt. I think she’s torn, she is angry that she is tied down by the children now;” he held his hands up again. “In loving moments she is telling you one thing… Mother used to do it, remember. Let you hear what you want, but at the same time she’s using your attachment to Hermione to express her anger at her situation. I have no doubt that she loves you, but she is also torn between what she has and what she missed out on having.”

Lucius smirked. “That’s quite an insight, Draco.”

“Well, it’s easy for me. I’m looking at this from the outside in. You did not see it coming regardless of how in-tune to people you are normally.”

Clearing his throat, Lucius murmured, “Mmm,” and then sighed. “I have some important decisions to make, excuse me, son. Deliver the boys back to Violet when you need to leave.”

“Yes, Father.” Draco watched his father wandering off to his rooms. He knew that Severus and Hermione would always be there for him, and he hoped that he wouldn’t turn his back on them, in some misguided attempt to placate the Weasley woman. He needed to pull her into line or set her free, and neither of those options were going to be easy.

xox

Lucius sat in his study thinking. Ginny did not return, and he only left his study at the children’s bedtime to wish them all a goodnight. At which time he also told them that their mother was having a small break. He consulted with Violet Cummings as well, and he found that she had fed Lucy with a milk substitute, something Muggle that Hermione had told her about, and that she now kept in the nursery for emergencies.

Walking to his chambers he pondered, How could I not have seen this coming? How could she not come back? The change in his witch had almost given him whiplash, it had been so sudden. Certainly there had been a few problems with the children lately. James and his nightmares, Lucy and her colic, but he had watched her feeding Lucy, and talking about giving him another baby at their wedding, just like Sev and pet, and she had looked so contented.

She even told me that her and pet had talked about it all. Yet, she goes and does something like this that ruins everything. Draco was partially right when he said the children are a chore to her. She is quick to anger over the smallest things, but he had no doubt that she loved them.

Lucius knew that both Severus and Hermione would stick with him without question, but how could he make this work and keep Severus and Hermione in the relationship that they had, which in itself had taken a beating since he had been with Ginny. He knew that they were more than friends, and he had hoped that being such a pleasure seeker, Ginny would fit right into their trio. He was certain that it had been working out that way.
Tonight was his third day without Ginny, and he knew she had left the Burrow, very soon after she had arrived, and this made him think that Molly had not been as supportive as Ginny had thought she would be, but she had not returned to the Manor. Today had been Ronald’s big interview with both the Prophet and the Quibbler, but she still had not bothered to show up for that either.

She appeared to have abandoned them all, but Lucius was non-committal when Ron enquired after her. He was certain that if he said that she hadn’t come home, then his mother would no doubt insist that the children go to that awful house they called home.

Lucius knew exactly where his wayward witch was. He was the keeper of many wards, and he knew that she was in France, at their villa. Unbeknown to her, he had the head house elf at the villa reporting to him every evening, as well as his finance goblin from Gringotts. He was willing to give her space, but he was annoyed that she hadn’t contacted the children; they did not know where their mother had gone apart from what he had told them.

He had decided on going to confront her, when his floo flared and Severus walked through and looked around.

“She’s not here,” Lucius sighed, standing up.

His friend looked back at the still open connection and said, “Come through, Mya.”

Hermione still looked tentative as she came through, but she walked straight to Lucius and wound her arms around his waist. “Are you all right, Lu?” she asked, quietly.

“I’m fine, pet,” he kissed her head. “How are you?”

She tried to smile, but only half pulled it off. “I’m okay,” she replied airily. “I’m going to retire,” she told him.

“Going to be a lady of leisure, ay?”

Severus snorted, “You must be joking, she already has three research projects earmarked,” he laughed, coming up behind Hermione and winding his arms around her from behind.

Lucius pulled back a bit and looked down at her. “Ah, so you’ll be needing my library again.”

Her lip was instantly captured by her teeth. “Am I still welcome there?” It was a quiet question, and a very stoically asked one.

“Of course you are still welcome there, darling girl.” He took her face between his hands, “You are always welcome, I hope both you and Sev think of here,” and he gestured around him, “as a second home.”

“But Lucius, we were getting on so well, what happened?”

He gave her a chaste kiss on the lips. “Do not worry about it, pet. Your major project at the moment is producing my godchild.”

“Don’t patronise me, Lucius Malfoy,” and her brow furrowed, even as she chuckled at him.

Severus dropped a kiss onto the junction of her shoulder and neck. “That’s my girl,” he murmured, “you tell him.”
“I’m not trying to patronise you, pet.” Lucius sighed and inhaled an uneven breath. “I’m just trying to protect you.”

“I know, thank you,” Hermione said quietly, and rested her head on his chest. She closed her eyes and snuggled into him feeling Severus instinctively pulling tighter against her on the other side. Oh god, I didn’t realise how much I missed just having them both to myself. Being sandwiched between them like this, Hermione thought, wiggling just a little bit. It’s simply perfect.

Lucius had never begrudged Severus having Hermione. The aristocrat could see that they were meant for one another. He had always been happy with the occasional encounter with them, but he realised that regardless of everything he missed what they had had between the three of them.

His mind raced as they stood together so intimately. I’ve been fair to Ginny, has she appreciated this?... I doubt it... Do I miss her?... I know I will miss the children terribly if things go wrong. Is Ginny just as damaged by her experiences as the witch currently in my arms? No. Ginny and Hermione are totally different people, and while Ginny has been very badly treated in her marriage, she has the confidence to overcome it. He sighed, And apparently the nastiness to make other people suffer for what has happened to her, as much as I hate to admit it, Draco’s correct there. What’s happened to Hermione has simply broken her.

Now the big question is, what do Hermione and Severus think about all this, and really, should I be concerned about what they thought. Shouldn’t I love Ginny unconditionally, and be happy just to be with her if she doesn’t understand my friendship with Severus and Hermione?

The thing that annoys me more than anything about this whole situation was that I had been certain that she did understand the dynamics of the four of us, and had not only accepted them, but was happy with the situation. This meant that she’d had one brain snap and thrown everything away so easily. This one fact upset Lucius more than he wanted to admit.

I opened my heart, home and bank account, accepted her at probably the lowest point in her life, yet she threw this all back in my face, without a second thought. ‘Fuck you all,’ she had screamed, over-reacting to the nth degree. There had been no need to say those things, no need to be so easily swayed by her mother’s talk, and definitely no need to be so immature. It begs the question, did she want to be swayed by her mother’s talk? Surely not. She does have a mind of her own, she has demonstrated that numerous times. Certainly she has a tendency to pout if she didn’t get her own way, but she had never been this petulant.

However, those thoughts made him pause, as he felt so safe with the two people he trusted implicitly, and after thinking about what Draco had said as well, he needed to start talking. “You said we could talk,” his eyes met Severus’ dark gaze.

The Potions master tilted the corner of his lip up, and nodded, “Perhaps a walk to Wood Cottage, where we will not be disturbed,” he suggested.
Anger Is Followed By Action

Chapter Summary

Our threesome are beginning to become reacquainted, only beginning mind.

From last time:- However, those thoughts made him pause, as he felt so safe with the two people he trusted implicitly, and after thinking about what Draco had said as well, he needed to start talking. “You said we could talk,” his eyes met Severus’ dark gaze. The Potions master tilted the corner of his lip up, and nodded, “Perhaps a walk to Wood Cottage, where we will not be disturbed,” he suggested.

Chapter Notes

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The long summer evenings allowed daylight to linger for longer at the moment, and dusk was only just starting to settle as the trio meandered down the path in the cool, teasing breeze.

As they walked, Lucius found himself relaxing more with every step they took away from the Manor and his problems. Before Severus had arrived in his study tonight, the blond wizard had received some more intelligence from his staff in France, and up until that point he had been planning a meeting with Arthur and Molly Weasley to see what could be done to best assist Ginny.

However, he had just reviewed this plan in light of the information he had received and was now in desperate need of the counsel—or at least the listening ability—of his best friends, as he was determined that there would be no misunderstanding of his intentions.

Lucius Malfoy was a consummate Slytherin and as such he was used to ignoring his contempt and disdain for the more overt members of Gryffindor house, but Ginny was now just confusing him with her antics.

Lucius glanced at the witch walking beside him. My sweet pet, she’s different to them all, her intelligence sees her through, even if those bastards destroyed her normal Gryffindor brashness. She was only just learning to trust people outside our trio and her small group of friends again when this happened.

A spike of anger shot through him once more at what he hadn’t seen coming, and he felt Hermione tightening her arm in his slightly in response to his glance at her, and after reciprocating the gesture with a kiss to the top of her head he sighed softly and took in the last of the honey bees collecting their bounty from the sweet smelling flowers in his beautiful garden as he tried to calm his mind once more.
As they ambled down the path through the manicured lawns and flower beds, Hermione realised that for the first time in a while, she felt completely at ease between her two wizards. *As much as Ginny and I were friends… correction, I thought that we were friends,* and her anger stabbed at her once again, *Bitch!*

Hermione had become very annoyed with Ginny after her initial shock about the incident had worn off and especially after she had that nightmare; she hated those dreams. *I opened my heart to that witch, and it’s frightening to think that before Molly turned up I had been heading for quite an intimate bathing experience with her. There’s no use pretending that I hadn’t been about to allow her to do what it was obvious that she had wanted for some time now, because I had been, and it would have cemented her place in our lives further.*

She glanced at Severus who also appeared to be deep in thought. *Knowing that my darling had not been completely at ease with Ginny’s inclusion in our games, but was allowing me to explore a new side of my sexuality, one that has fascinated me for a long time, well, that makes me think that not even he anticipated what happened three days ago.*

The whole situation now made her feel very uncertain, and all Hermione could think about was how pleased she was that Molly had interrupted them. She tensed in anger again thinking about how much more hurt she would be feeling right now had she been intimate with Ginny, and then had the redhead say those things.

Hermione had discussed it with Severus in great depth, and he had told her what he had seen in Ginny’s mind when he had used Legilimency skills, and while she had been intending to share the bathing experience with Hermione, it would have only been a superficial pleasure for her, and he believed it would not have stopped her saying the things she did. *I needed to hear that to make me start to look at this differently, and that’s when we started to see things that had been there before, but we hadn’t put together.*

It left both of them in no doubt that what had happened would have been inevitable at some point, even if it hadn’t been three days ago. Severus shrugged it all off, having never really been attached to Ginny, but it made Hermione feel very used, and they both knew that Lucius was hurting badly.

Another thing she had realised when they dissected it all was that she had never felt at liberty to show affection to Lucius with Ginny around. *Considering how close we were before Ginny moved to the Manor, once she was there both Sev and I backed off completely. It was after this point that Severus realised that it was not just the constant presence of the children that had been getting up his nose; he had never really been comfortable with Ginny just being included in our once intimate circle. Severus felt that her presence had broken apart what we had formally had; and he was right too.*

Hermione sighed, thinking about it all, and walking now with an arm linked through each of her wizards, she found herself very happy that she didn’t have to worry about what she said or did at the moment. She pulled them both closer glancing sideways at Lucius, and then she cuddled up to his arm. “I’ve missed this freedom,” she told them, and in response, they each slung an arm around her shoulders. She laughed, “It also seems like we haven’t lost our co-ordination either.”

Both men chuckled at her comment, and gifted her with a kiss on the side of her head as they entered the wood that surrounded the Cottage. The cottage was only a short walk from there, and they were soon approaching it. “It’s a lovely evening shall we recline under the willows?” Severus asked, as they walked through the front gate and into their well kept garden.

“Yes, let’s,” Hermione replied, and happily pulled them both towards the small lake. “I’m going swimming to cool down,” and she shrugged off their arms and turning to face them started
unbuttoning her dress, almost dancing backwards as they continued forward. It didn’t take long for Lucius to find out what Severus would have already known and that he suspected from when she had hugged him in his study; their little nymph was not wearing anything under her dress.

Seeing them watching her, she smiled impishly, “I’ll leave you guys to talk,” she told them, tossing the garment on a chair as she passed it, before turning away from them and bending down to remove her sandals, and in the process giving them a very enticing view peeking out from in between her slightly bent legs.

Severus erected privacy and insect repelling wards, as both men watched Hermione wiggle her bum at them and walk towards the water, leaving them standing there uncomfortably hard and longing to go after her.

The Potions master was pleased that Hermione was so animated, But damn her teasing, he thought as he adjusted the crotch of his jeans. He was still livid that the two closest people in his life were being put through this turmoil, and he did feel slightly vindicated that he had never given in to the redhead’s come-ons. She had taken to giving him kisses whenever the four of them were together, but he only accepted them so as not to make a scene. He knew that Hermione had long wanted to explore her sexual boundaries with a female encounter, so he kept the peace for her sake, especially after Lucius told him that Ginny was eager to allow her to. Then he heard his friend’s voice, and he focused on what he was saying.

“Is that safe?” Lucius asked, his voice slightly husky while his eyes were still fixed on Hermione’s peach-shaped backside. He flexed the fingers of his right hand as it itched to stroke the evidence of his arousal from the scene just witnessed. “It is not uncommon for Grindylows to inhabit such bodies of water.”

“It’s safe, I’ve warded every inch of it,” Severus responded, his gaze still fixed on the same sight. When she had disappeared into the water, he seemed to shake himself. “Come, Mya is wise giving us time alone. She is still very angry over what has happened,” and Severus indicated the small lounge as he was speaking.

As Lucius sat, it struck him just how much he had missed the intimacy of their trio, especially Hermione’s impulsiveness in front of them. Striping off and teasing them before sashaying into the water like it was the most natural thing in the world to do, but only for them. He knew that she wouldn’t have done it in front of anyone else; that whenever Ginny had been present Hermione had held back her natural urges where he was concerned, and had still been fairly coy in front of Ginny.

It was realising just how all of this had impacted on Hermione that had made him seethe, and then to be given the intelligence he had received earlier that evening from his head house elf in France, well that had finished it, there was no going back now.

Severus’ voice cut across Lucius’ thoughts and prompted him to speak. “So?” the raven-haired wizard inquired.

Lucius’ brow furrowed, and he sighed. “These last few days have had me re-evaluating things I thought were set in stone,” he told him quietly. “I would have been content with Ginny. While I had discovered that it was not perfect, I was willing to remain faithful to her, and she came with a family, something I had always wanted.” He paused for a moment, but continued easily. “The sex was amazing, and she was a passionate little fireball but…” and he shrugged, “but, I missed what the three of us had, and now I realise that when we were together the sex was better, and even though I am still being faithful to her, my informants tell me that it is not the case from her side.” He drew a long breath, “She has celebrated her new freedom full at every opportunity.”
“Mmm,” Severus commented, and his mouth tightened slightly as he watched Hermione’s form floating on the lake for a moment, before he nodded, “Go on.”

The blond wizard smiled as his eyes lingered on the same thing. “In hindsight I can see that Ginny was not as happy and well adjusted she appeared. I think it may have started out that way, but as things settled into normality she yearned for the things she had before her marriage, and especially when she inherited the entire Potter-Black estates.”

Severus chuckled, “Yes, it gave me no small amount of joy that her useless brother of hers got zip. It was good of Potter not to consider leaving a will. It would have played out very differently if he had,” and he grinned broadly, before clearing his throat. “But I digress; you mean you were her knight in shining armour?”

“And the lustre started to wear off.” Lucius cut in, grinning at the former and nodding in agreement at the latter comments. “Perhaps something like that anyway, I do not believe that she is expecting me to want her back, after all she did—is still doing—a very thorough job of displeasing me, and I do not even consider that it was purely Molly’s words that influenced her.”

“I know you’re right, I also saw in her mind that while Molly put the words into her head, it was she who grabbed them with both hands. It appears that the witch had been thinking about freedom for some time, and even as she told Mya the night we were at that board meeting in Paris that she would give you as many children as you wanted, she seemed to be only doing so because she thought you were more attached to Mya than you should have been.” Severus thought about what he was saying a moment, but then shook his head. “I’m sorry; I can’t explain that any clearer. The working of some female minds eludes me completely.”

Lucius nodded, “Yes, I know what you mean, I can see now that she did seem to be leaning towards pet because she thought that by being friends with her that she could somehow become closer to me.”

“Yes, I believe so,” Severus replied. “It doesn’t make much sense though.”

“Ginny told me that she wanted us to have a baby together the night before this whole blow up, but I took it with a grain of salt because when she was pregnant with Lucy she hated how her body looked, and even though she told me how she loathed how her ex-husband made her have permanent body sculpting glamours after each child, she was contemplating the same thing again after Lucy.”

It was then that he thought back to before the first time they were intimate, and how he had promised her that their courtship would end with the wedding of her dreams. “I did honestly intend to marry her, but it appears that she is a creature of the moment, and that her desires change like the wind.”

Severus chuckled softly and looked at Hermione still gracefully floating around in the lake. “Some Gryffindor witches do seem to live in the moment, don’t they? Mya’s more loyal than that though,” and he smiled.

“Mmm,” Lucius replied. “I was only just thinking that on the way here. She is the most exquisite creature,” he took a deep breath and focused his mind again. “But because of the children, I need to make some concession.” He saw Severus’ features harden a little, so he added, “I am not planning to ask her to reconsider our relationship; she has rejected what we had… me,” he corrected himself, “too thoroughly for that. I do have feelings for Ginny, I had planned to marry her after all, but I have realised that I may have been a little hasty in that plan, besides there are other developments that have me so livid I can barely speak of them.”
Severus inclined his head in recognition and raised a raven eyebrow in interest, but remained silent, simply allowing his friend to speak.

"Imagine if the charade had continued until we were married.” He drew breath. “She threw everything I had given her back at me too quickly for her to have had the deeper feelings that sustain a marriage. I cannot understand why I didn’t see it for what it was?"

“Mmm,” Severus agreed, “She certain has me rethinking my ideas about the potential deceptiveness of Gryffindors; perhaps she was more Slytherin than we thought.”

“Perhaps, but now, I need to find a way forward that does the best for us.” His steely grey eyes rose to Severus’ dark ones. “You and I, my dear friend, need to form a plan that has our best interests at heart; especially pet’s, and one that provides in the most stable way for the needs of the four children I appear to have just gained.”

“I believe that you have always put the children’s needs first,” Severus offered, and watched Lucius nod. “What do you propose?”

Getting up from the lounge Lucius started pacing, and finally he started speaking again. “The children will not be made pawns between the pair of us, as far as I’m concerned by leaving them with me she has abandoned them,” he stated vehemently, and looked back to his friend. Taking a deep breath Lucius added, “She has taken herself to my villa in France.” Then his expression closed off, but after seeming to suppress his anger again, he spoke once more. “And apparently since his exposé in the British press, her useless brother has joined her there,” and his voice turned into a growl. “I had been at least sympathetic to her, but I will not allow her to stay on my property after this.”

“Quite right,” Severus added.

He watched as Hermione dove under the water again. “Fancy inviting that cretin, one of the ones who hurt her,” he reined in his anger, “back into her life,” he saw Severus about to open his mouth, “And yes I have had her checked covertly for coercion spells, and there are none,” he spat and nodded towards the lake. “Her jealousy of pet is my main concern now,” but then his eyes turned to Severus and they had softened. “Although, perhaps she should be jealous of both of you, my dearest, beautiful friends.” He came back to sit down and his hand came over to clasp Severus’ hand, and squeeze it momentarily.

Severus smiled, but the flicker soon turned serious, even as the unspoken understanding registered with both of them. “Lu, know that no matter what happens Mya and I are here for you, you are our main concern, and if Ms. Weasley, or her idiot of a brother ever approach Mya,” and his dark eyes shifted to his wife floating languidly in the water again. “I will tear them apart without a second thought,” he snarled, fighting with his anger as he took a cleansing breath.

Lucius had expected this, and he said, “I understand, Sev.”

Severus inhaled slowly. “No matter which way this goes, it will be difficult for you though, my friend.” Severus said, and his brow furrowed.

“I will rely on Violet Cummings to handle everything, that witch has already proved herself to be an amazing asset. I have already moved back to the master’s chambers now that Draco and Astoria have decided to reside permanently in London.”

Nodding Severus was silent a moment, but then asked, “So, access will be arranged through Nanny Cummings as well?”
“Yes,” he replied.

Lucius sat up straighter. “I am certain there will be some awkward moments, but I will make certain that I am from home when her or her mother come to visit.” He suddenly looked almost lost, and sighed deeply as he glanced towards the lake. “Severus, I… you and pet mean the world to me, would you…”

Knowing where this was heading, Severus interrupted him. “Let us deal with this first,” he said squeezing Lucius’ knee lightly, “before we discuss any perceived futures, shall we, if only for our witch’s sake. I will not have her unnecessarily stressed.’

The blond wizard nodded, and he sighed, his gaze coming to rest on the witch in question as she walked back towards them, with tiny rivulets of water still cascading over her creamy skin. Reading between the lines of Severus’ statement told Lucius everything he needed to know, and that satisfied him at present. He couldn’t help thinking that Hermione did indeed look radiant; he knew that pregnant witches did seem to look this way. However, she also looked utterly exhausted as well. These last three days had been harder on her than anyone.

Severus welcomed the wet witch into the circle of his arms as she straddled his lap, and lay against him. “You’re all wet, love,” he grumbled, but he didn’t push her away, and actually laughed when she shimmied against him wetting him further. “Minx,” he murmured, slapping her bare bottom lightly.

“Mmm,” she murmured, but her attention was on Lucius. She reached out to cup his cheek with one hand. “Have you two formed one of your brilliant Slytherin plans?”

They both laughed and filled her in on the pertinent facts watching her nodding as they did. Then sitting up straight, her eyes met Severus’. “We are going with him, aren’t we.” There was no question, and they could both see the steely resolve on her face.

“I’m not expecting it to be an easy meeting, pet,” Lucius informed her copying her earlier move of cupping his cheek.

She took a deep breath, making her breasts rise enticingly, and seeing both her companion’s eyes lower to them, she pushed them further forward. “I am determined that we will go for your support, Lu,” she said, smiling at their attention, but then adding seriously, “What kind of friends would we be if we didn’t?”

“Mya has a good point there,” Severus said, cocking an eyebrow. “But I do not want you over stressing yourself, love,” he continued turning his head back to her.

Stifling a yawn, she said, “I won’t be, I know you will both look after me. We are still on holidays, and it might be nice to have a day in France again.” She turned to Lucius, “If you wish to confront Ginny alone I’m certain there are many places we could wait while you do.”

“That is true.” Severus agreed, “I’m assuming that when the witch arrived without you that your wards did what they used to do to Narcissa,” he continued, as he watched Hermione shifting so that she was straddling his right leg and Lucius’ left.

The blond wizard shuffled closer to his companion to make it easier for her, and smiled as he replied, “Yes, there are too many treasures in that house for it to be subject to a cranky witch’s whims.” He watched as Hermione placed her head on both of their shoulders and his arm came around to cradle her there just as Severus’ did the same thing.
Both men knew what she was up to being as brazen as she was, and they both ached to touch her, but there were a number of things that stopped them. Lucius wanted to be able to go to see Ginny tomorrow standing unblemished on the higher moral ground. Severus didn’t want to tease his friend by taking advantage of Hermione’s impertinent position, and both noted that she was actually dozing while they were observing her.

Finally, Severus said, “I think it might be bedtime for you, angel. You’re having trouble keeping your eyes open.”

Hermione forced herself to sit up straighter, and was about to disabuse them both of that notion when her traitorous body chose that moment to declare her tiredness in a jaw breaking yawn, and any defence she may have come up with crumbled in the face of evidence to the contrary. “Mmm,” she murmured, and just snuggled back into their necks. “I want to have a bath with you two, like we did that night at Hogwarts?”

Severus raised an eyebrow at Lucius, but saw Lucius shook his head. He conveyed his understanding and pushed Hermione forward a little so they could stand.

Lucius turned Hermione—a very luscious and naked Hermione—to face him, and with much regret he told her, “Tonight, my sweet pet, I have to say no. I wish to be able to face Ginny with a clean conscience tomorrow. You go off for your bath with Sev.” He watched Severus placing her dress back on her for warmth.

However, as soon as she had her arms through the arm holes, Hermione wound them around Lucius’ waist.

Severus watched as she just hugged him for several moments, but then she looked up and slid one hand up into his hair, inviting his lips to hers.

“We’ve missed you so much, Lu,” she whispered against them as she started kissing him.

The Potions master had also worked out that his feelings for Lucius were deeper than he had told Hermione in their conversation before they were married, and they had discussed this along with everything else.

The trouble was that he had known that once they admitted to each other that they actually want to be in a proper, full time relationship with Lucius that Hermione wouldn’t be able to stop herself saying something to him if the chance arose. At least she hadn’t blurted out everything, and he was actually pleased to see some of her confidence returning. Sighing he closed the distance behind her, and whispered in her ear as she kissed Lucius. “Regardless of that fact, you are incorrigible, my little angel.”

With some effort, Lucius pulled back from her. “Yes, Sev is correct, and I love that you are as you are, pet, but just this once I cannot stay.” He held Hermione in one arm and leant forward to grip Severus’ shoulder, before smiling wistfully and rubbing Hermione’s bottom while still looking at Severus. “I’ll leave you with your little minx, Sev. Will you both come up for breakfast tomorrow?”

Nodding, Severus replied, “We will see you in the morning, Lu,” and gathered Hermione into his arms as they watched Lucius incline his head and apparate away.
The next morning Lucius reclined in his bed watching the sunrise through the balcony doors, he could not sleep any longer. It was going to be a long day today, and he was feeling fairly unsettled. Calling for coffee, he started examining why he felt that way.

He decided that apart from the obvious looming confrontation with Ginny, the main reason was the way he had left things with Hermione and Severus last night. He had wanted to stay with them, and he had felt more comfortable than he cared to admit being with them last night. It was like a stress he had felt for a long time had left him, and he hadn’t realised that he had been treading on egg shells, until he suddenly wasn’t anymore.

Last night was the first time in months that he had felt like himself, and it had been without Ginny. He knew he still loved her, and he would have been willing to sacrifice the specialness of his relationship with Hermione and Severus to keep her, but after her defection he would not be taking her back, no matter what happened. It scared him a lot that he would have married the witch only for her to do this.

He also recognised that every time she was doing more damage with her petulant demands, it was him making all the sacrifices. Then to have her throw him away like a one would discard something they didn’t care about, a newspaper or a chipped coffee mug it was too much. Apart from anything else, did she have no feeling for her children? She had appeared to care for them, but if you looked closely—as he had these last few days—Violet did the bulk of the work, and his anger started to
build anew.

Flinging back the covers he grabbed his trousers and stalked to his gym, come duelling suite. Fighting always sharpened ones senses and he had a state-of-the-art duelling facility. Sealing the room he engaged the safety and set the spells.

Half an hour later and he sank to the ground a panting, lather of sweat, but the endorphins now coursing around his system and the excising of his anger saw his mood greatly improved.

Heading for his bathroom he glanced at the clock in the hall as he passed. Seven thirty, Hermione and Severus would be here soon.

xox

The three companions landed in the private apparition parlour of the French villa on the other side of Lucius’ security wards. Ginny had only been able to access one wing of the estate, and Lucius chuckled as they walked through the barrier, *That was something that must have really pissed her off.*

He beckoned Hermione and Severus to make themselves comfortable and he went to find Ginny, reasoning that she would still be in her chambers; she was never an early riser, well not a happy one anyway. He passed another obviously occupied room; it was amazing what he could feel through his wards. He covertly locked the doors and warded the windows of that room until he was ready to deal with the occupant, the ginger menace inside was probably still sleeping anyway.

Pausing at the door of what used to be—not after this—his suite, he recognised two forms in the bed—his bed—and one had fiery red hair. Drawing his wand he used it to open the curtains as he announced his presence by slamming the door back against the wall. A non-descript looking wizard, sleepily flew out of the bed grabbing at his wand.

“*Expelliarmus, Incarcerous,*” Lucius snarled, and then looked to a heavy-eyed and obviously naked Ginny blinking at him. “Hello Ginn,” and he cut a glance to the wizard on the floor. “Is that the best you could do in your attempt to wipe me from your mind?”

Her eyes instantly narrowed. “What do you want?” she seethed through her teeth.

“Well for one thing, I want you and your ingrate brother out of my house. Now, dismiss mister tiny prick here,” and then Lucius looked at the wizard cowering beside the bed, “On second thoughts, I’ll deal with him. *Confundus, Portius,*” he commanded, and Ginny watched as her bed-mate popped out of existence.

“What have you done with him?” she demanded.

“Why do you care?” Lucius asked, sneering. “Now pack your belongings before you come down to the front parlour.”

This got her out of bed. She stood quickly talking in stuttered words before seeming to get her head together and she started sashaying towards him with her body on full display to him, knowing the usual effect it had on him. When she reached him she walked her fingers up his lapel. “But Lu, you’re here and well, I’m here and we could go to bed...” she glanced up at his stone-faced expression, and tears started. “Oh Lucius, I’ve missed you so much. I want to try again,” she pleaded.

He disentangled her from his coat and cleared his throat. “What you are doing is trying my patience. Now do as I ask and we will discuss this like adults, I have a solution to propose that I believe...
encompasses everyone’s best interests.” He started backing out of the room, but she followed him.

“I really have missed you, can’t we go to bed?”

Lucius gave her a look of disbelief and pointed his wand. She squealed as the spell shot past her and hit the bed. “Incendio!” he’d growled deep in his throat, and watched as the bed combusted. “On no account will I ever sleep in that bed again.” Then he looked back at Ginny cowering slightly. “I would never hurt you, how could you think I would? But do you realise what you’re asking me?” she blinked at him slightly stunned, so he clarified. “You wish me, the wizard you were going to marry to take you back without a word of apology for your disgraceful behaviour, and further more abandoning my only true friends and you wish me to lay with you.” His lip turned up in disgust. “In a bed you have just risen from that is soiled with another wizard’s bodily fluids?” He looked her up and down, “And you ask me to make love to you while you are also dirty with another wizard’s semen,” he waited for her to comprehend, and when she didn’t react to his words, he whispered, “Then you truly are the whore that I hoped you were not.”

His fire safety wards suddenly doused the burning bed, at the same moment as Ginny’s slap connected with his cheek. Lucius didn’t even flinch. He simply looked from the smoking remains of the bed to Ginny. “You have one hour. Now, get organised.”

xox

Down stairs Severus and Hermione were listening. Severus had cast an amplification charm and they heard the whole encounter. “Oh poor, Lu,” Hermione whispered, and she was silent for a moment before she also took pity on Ginny. “And poor Ginny, it’s obvious that she’s sick, I think she has been effected by the curse on a deeper level than we suspected.”

Severus nodded in agreement. “It’s just like Mya to take pity on her, but I don’t think she deserves it, he thought, saying, “Unfortunately, I expected as much,” and he looked out towards the stairs. “Although that doesn’t make dealing with it any easier.”

“Is there anything we can do?”

“No, I believe that Lucius has done the best thing possible by bringing in her father and brother into the solution. Thank Merlin we managed to keep Molly out of it,” and he grimaced. “Her family will do the best for her.”

He had just finished saying this when Lucius stalked back through the door. Hermione hurried to him and enveloped him in a hug. “Oh Lu, look at your cheek...” and he hissed a breath as she gently ran her fingers over the mark. “That’s awful.”

“That was expected, dearest pet,” he said, looking down at her as she rested her head on his chest and gently lifting her chin to see her face. He gave her a soft kiss and glanced across at Severus. “I hadn’t meant to deal with her so harshly, but when she wanted me to lay with her in a bed sullied by a replacement, while she was...” and he hugged Hermione to him, drawing strength from her comfort. “Well I just lost it,” he told them both over the top of Hermione’s head, in a voice full of emotion.

Severus walked over and wrapped his arms around both of them. “Au contraire, mon ami, I think you handled the situation as well as you were able given the circumstances,” and he whispered a healing spell against Lucius’ flaming cheek.

The room quickly became charged with an emotional energy begging for release, and this made Severus take a step back from them. Someone had to keep their head until this was finished. Over
breakfast the three of them had discussed who would be coming and why, and the raven-haired wizard had realised that he was the one who would have to keep things on track, because both of his partners were emotionally tied to the outcomes.

So any shows of strong emotion between the three of them at the moment was just not something that would make for a smooth meeting with several people that none of them trusted completely. So when he’d felt himself contemplating kissing Lucius—something he hadn’t done since they were in school—he decided that these new sensations needed to wait until they were in their own sanctuary with no chance of interruption.

Seeing Severus still able to think rationally, Lucius smirked at him and held Hermione at arm’s length. “Now, if this gets to be too much for you, then all you need to do is tell Sev and he will escort you to another part of the house.”

“I’ll be fine, Lu. This is my opportunity to finally get even with Ronald,” she smiled at them.

“That can only mean trouble,” Severus put in jokingly, kissing her shoulder and smiling at her. “Remember, we’re right here with you, and that you are totally protected.”

“I will,” she said, gifting Severus with a kiss before turning back and treating Lucius to the same experience. After a moment of enjoying the closeness, Lucius started extraditing himself from her offered comfort and started pacing. “The legal team, and Bill and Arthur should be here soon.” He sighed, and looked at Severus and Hermione with his expression for once, an open look of troubled concern. “I can’t be fairer than this, can I?”

His companions watched on, in sympathy, they both took in the slight tremor in his hands as he ran his fingers through his hair, and finally Hermione stilled his hands and kissed them. “No, we must remember it is like an illness,” and she stroked his cheek. “But you also have a right to be angry too, Lu.”

He’s far more upset by this than he’s letting on. Mind you, Severus thought, and he has a bloody right to be. She has revealed herself to be something more like a monster than the witch he worshiped from afar. He glanced at Hermione still fussing over Lucius. I did think right from the beginning that Mya would be good for both of us.

They heard the front door, and then footsteps approaching the parlour. An elf arrived with Bill and Arthur Weasley behind him. Greeting were exchanged and the elf was sent scurrying back to the door when there were further knocks after he had delivered Lucius’ ordered refreshments, and the legal team Lucius had put together of his trusted business associates and employees arrived.

With everyone assembled and much shuffling of parchment, they were only waiting for Ginny to come down. Eventually, when she didn’t, Arthur said, “Point me in the right direction, and I’ll go and get her.”

Lucius went with him to the head of the stairs and pointed out the room in question. Arthur entered the room where Lucius had confronted Ginny earlier and saw her, dressed but sitting on a chair, staring out into the garden. He took in the burnt bed and the scattered belongs, and she turned teary eyes to him when she heard him approaching, “Oh dad,” she cried rushing to him. “I’ve thrown everything away.”

Arthur accepted his daughter into his arms. “Gin, you’re acting just like you did when you were fifteen. Oh what a petulant little thing you were,” he said, kissing her head.

“I d-don’t want to be by myself, but I’m not sure I want Lucius,” her eyes turned even sadder.
“Although, I do know I don’t want the children.” Then hearing her father’s gasp, she added, “I tried to want them, but I just…” she took a shuddering breath.”

“Shhh, love, you’re just confused.”

“He called me a whore,” Ginny cried.

Arthur’s eyebrow rose, but he decided on the truth. “Mmm, Gin there were many ways you could have handled this. The way you did it was probably the worst, but regardless of his anger, I believe that Lucius and his team have put together a solution that will benefit everyone. You need to listen to what they have to say, Bill and I are hear for you, so don’t worry.”

“But mum wants me to get Lucius back, she told me…”

“Your mum was shocked at what you’d done. You know she never reacts well to surprises like that. Now dry your eyes and get organised.”

xox

Walking in to a parlour full of people was not something Ginny had expected and especially seeing Severus and Hermione on either side of Lucius, and of course she reacted badly to it. “You bastard,” she spat. “What’s going on here?” She threw her head in his companion’s direction. “And what are they, doing here?”

Lucius’ nostrils flared, and he stood. “I do not believe that name calling is required. As I told you earlier, we are resolving this like adults. Hermione and Severus are here to support me.”

“I bet they’ve been supporting you well since I’ve been gone. It was just what you wanted, wasn’t it?” she accused. “I was all alone, and you had everyone.”

“You were alone by your own actions, Ginny. I did not push you away, none of us did.”

She continued to stare him down, but Lucius wasn’t budging, and finally, her father encouraged, “Come on, Gin, sit down, love,” and he sat her in a chair next to Bill.

“Right,” said the leader of the legal team, “May we get this underway, Mr. Malfoy?”

“Certainly,” Lucius indicated, taking his seat again between Severus and Hermione.

Surprisingly, with her father and brother’s encouragement, Ginny listened as the solicitors explained Lucius’ instructions and she actually started to see that she would be better off afterwards. The children would be loved and cared for in a nurturing home, and she would have both access to them and her freedom. The only thing I can’t have is Lucius, she thought, and it looks like he had moved on anyway. Mum is right this is all Hermione’s fault, why did I not see that before, I befriended her, and the greedy little slut just wants both wizards for herself, and I’m not too keen on her being around my kids.

However, it was as her eyes came to rest on Severus’ that she realised that he had just heard every word she had thought, and he was looking straight at her challenging her to mention it. Ginny was aware that her wiles had never worked on Severus Snape, and as the solicitors droned on, she decided in a moment of rational thought that it was best to leave well enough alone on that score. Let bloody Hermione have them both, they’re both old men anyway, although they were both hot naked, and I did want Hermione’s body as well, but it’s not worth being tied down when I can have my pick and my other responsibilities are taken care of.
Bill was to be caretaker for the Potter/Black estate so that the money and investments would last to be handed on to Ginny’s children in years to come, because in the short time she had been parted from Lucius, Gringotts had registered an amazing amount of cash flowing out of her accounts. Even though the children being adopted by Lucius would want for nothing in any case, they also deserved their inheritance from the father as well.

In the end, Ginny signed the papers without reading through them just to get it over with. Bill took his sister to her new house—something she didn’t know she actually owned—just across town. The solicitors left with all their paper’s signed and went back to England to file them with the ministry.

The Potter children had been declared war orphans and then adopted by Lucius. Ginny learnt that she would have access to them through Violet Cummings whenever she wanted, but they were to remain living at Malfoy Manor at all times for the period of the next ten years or in James case until he attained the age of seventeen.

Lucius and Violet had already worked out the logistics of these visits, and the house wards would tell Lucius when Ginny was present. The manor was big enough for him to avoid her, and her access—like it was here—would be limited. She would only be able pass into the nursery area and children’s garden.

As Bill escorted his sister to the house that he had purchased for her, he reflected that in a way he saw Ginny as the epitome of the petulant teenage girl, not unlike his own daughter Victoiré. Ginny had suffered the effects of the curse just as much as Ron and Harry had, but from a different perspective, and it wasn’t until she was pushed that the symptoms showed themselves.

In a way until she had moved to the manor she had been sheltered from everything, but after Lucy’s birth she just didn’t bounce back. What everyone thought were just her hormones running wild after the birth of her daughter was actually the beginning of her starting to rebel against the confines of a new baby, a new relationship and all the demands that they placed on her.

The eldest Weasley was certain that had she gone to Lucius about all this before it boiled over there would have been a different outcome, but she had listened to their mother. Bill was still angry with Molly, while he knew that his mother was still reeling from all the changes in their lives recently, he did not understand why she had set Ginny against everyone.

Bill watched Ginny smiling and skipping through her new house, and he shook his head. I wonder if she will ever regain the time she lost under all those controlling spells. He was also angry with himself for not seeing what was happening to her, but during the start of it he was not around. Too busy trying to hold my own marriage together, and look where that got me, he pondered.

xox

Back at Lucius’ estate, all that remained for them to do this morning was to evict one Ronald Weasley. Arthur stayed to take him away, but understood that Hermione needed closure from the one wizard left who could provide it.

Severus and Lucius went to get him. Severus laughed at the primitive wards he had thrown up against them when he had realised what was happening. They snapped after one flick of Severus’ wand, and the men opened the door. He was standing in front of the bathroom door, and made to race inside but Lucius reached him before he did. “You really are a little weasel, aren’t you? Draco was correct about you all those years ago that’s something that hasn’t changed.”

“Let me go,” he squealed. “I’ve done everything you wanted.”
“Is that so, Weasley?” Lucius said with no emotion. “Then you came and invaded my home by taking advantage of your sister,” and the blond wizard started to stare him down.

Severus quickly grew impatient; he wanted to get this over and done with. “Enough talk,” he snapped. “We need you to do one more thing before you leave,” and he smiled nastily at the redhead.

“W-what’s that?” Ron stuttered, and both Slytherins were surprised to see that he seemed to be genuinely frightened of them.

“Hermione wishes to speak to you, you’re not the only one who wants answers you know,” and Severus picked Ron’s wand from his fingers and commanded, “Now march, Weasley.”

Hermione swallowed nervously as she heard the footsteps coming down the stairs, and as they entered the parlour she got shakily to her feet. She was not certain that she had the stamina for this, but she had to try.

As Ron walked into the parlour with her wizards either side of him, Hermione realised that they had come full circle. He was now the one who was terrified, and she found that she couldn’t treat him as he had treated her. She saw Severus hand Arthur Ron’s wand and her former friend just stood there waiting for her to do something to him.

Hermione hardly recognised him as the wizard who had insulted her so thoroughly at the anniversary ball. She thought of the times she had dreamt of doing awful things to him, to both him and Harry. Now it just didn’t seem to matter anymore, she had the moral high-ground, and all the power.

She was about to tell Severus and Lucius to throw him out when she realised that there was one thing she did want to do. It had felt so good when she had done it to Draco all those years ago, and it would be the perfect punishment.

Stalking forward with deliberate steps, her hand started to curl into a fist as she walked. “You are a little worm, Ronald Weasley, and you disgust me,” and before he knew what had happened her right hook hit his jaw.

Ron whimpered, and stuttered, “I fink she’s boke my nose,” but no one else said a word, and finally Arthur just moved forward and collected Ron off the floor, ignoring his bloodied nose. He bowed his head to the three of them and silently moved to the floo.

As they span out of sight, Hermione seemed to start breathing again, but her euphoria soon left when she realised that she had not only broken his nose, but also her hand. Mind you she was still grinning around her tears, she had stood up to her tormentor and she had beaten him up.

Hermione was engulfed by two wizards. “Show me your hand, Mya,” Severus urged, and while he was fixing her hand, Lucius was casting a spell to make certain that the baby was all right.

“I-I, d-did it,” she managed, and then she was jumping around like a maniac. “I did it, I stood up to him.” Her eyes were wide and her tears were still flowing.

“I’ve fixed your hand, angel, why are you still crying?” Severus asked.

Hermione wiped her eyes, and cried, “I’m simply happy.”

“Happy?” they chorused.

“Yes, I’m married to you Severus, and I love you deeply,” she gave him a deeply satisfying kiss, and
turned in his arms to face Lucius. “I also love you, Lucius, in the same way, and the three of us are going to be together.” She revelled in the sensation of Severus holding her against him while she kissed Lucius. “I’m pregnant, and now I’ve just punched Ronald Weasley, what’s not to be happy about?”

“Well I guess when you put it like that,” Lucius said, scooping her up from the floor. “Come along, my loves, I believe we need to enjoy the remainder of our day.”
Rules For A successful Triad

Chapter Summary

Hermione, Lucius and Severus have an encounter that bonds them further. Ginny realises with the help of Violet that she had to grow up, and we welcome the baby.

Chapter Notes

**Disclaimer:** I neither own nor earn anything from this story. Harry Potter and his world are the intellectual property of JK Rowling and her associates.

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**A/N:** Now, as is my usual practice, I’m warning you that there will be a scene near the beginning of the chapter between Severus and Lucius that may not be everyone’s cup of tea. Of course Hermione is there as well, but our wizards take a little time to become reacquainted with one another in a more carnal sense. So if this is not for you, please read around it.

Hermione found herself being placed on a huge bed, in a magnificent room. Propping herself up on her elbows she looked around and waited to see what would happen next. She would have been blind not to see the look Severus and Lucius had given one another just before the confrontation with Ginny this morning. It had been blatantly obvious to her that her two wizards were thinking about snogging one another senseless, and she wondered how she could encourage them, but before she could think of anything Lucius leant down and captured her lips.

They kissed heatedly for some moments, and as he pulled away he stroked her cheek softly. “Beautiful pet,” and he gave her another softer kiss. “Darling, will you be happy to watch us a moment?”

“Yes,” she replied, stroking his face, and she glanced at Severus watching the tender scene that should have happened last night, and she smiled. “I’m eager to see you both connect properly.”

“Thank you, it’s been a very emotional morning in more ways than one, hasn’t it?” and he watched her nod and relax back against the headboard as he turned to Severus. “Sev,” and the one word was infused with such emotion.

Severus looked about ready to explode, and he answered by swooping in and claiming Lucius’ mouth. Their kiss was almost brutal in its intensity as their mouths started devouring each other’s while Hermione watched the development avidly. They thoroughly explored one another’s mouths, their tongues battling, and their hands exploring and groping at clothing.

When they parted they were both panting slightly and Lucius’ fingers flew to the many buttons of
Severus’ robes as his mouth found more territory to explore down the column of his throat. Urgency soon overtook his efforts with the buttons and he wandlessly vanished the garments, and his mouth started to work its way further down his lean, pale body.

While she was watching this, Hermione slithered out of her own clothes and came up behind Severus caressing and massaging his back and shoulders while Lucius continued on his journey down his torso.

Momentarily working his way back up to Severus’ ear, Lucius whispered, “I want you in my mouth,” and he gave him a hard kiss. “Oh dear Merlin, Sev, I’d forgotten how much I enjoy having you.”

Severus’ only answer was a soft grunt of assent as his hands undid his trousers and wrapped around his cock, stroking it as he watched Lucius drop to his knees before him.

As soon as Lucius’ mouth engulfed his aching manhood, Severus hissed a breath through his teeth and stood there with his eyes closed savouring the moment. “Oh shit, that’s good,” he groaned huskily, and he stumbled back allowing Hermione to guide him to sit on the bed.

Hermione’s hands wandered over his torso while Lucius pleasured him, and his own hands reached for Hermione as he planted his feet on the floor and lay back. He felt Hermione shuffle backwards to give him room, and once he was lying he urged her forward.

Taking his hint she crawled forward so her now aching pussy was over his face and she lowered it to his mouth. The first swipe of his tongue made her squeal and she leaned forward to give him better access. She saw his hips start to flex and Lucius accept his control of the situation and allow him to thrust up into his mouth.

Lucius adjusted his position so he was more over Severus and Hermione saw his hands go to his trousers undoing them to release his own raging erection, and as he grunted in time to Severus’ thrusts he stroked himself.

Hermione reached around with one hand and cupped Severus’ balls, rolling and squeezing them to add to his pleasure, even as her own release was roaring down upon her. Her deep throated wail signalled the ball of tension breaking in her stomach and Severus’ thrusts became more desperate hearing her satisfaction.

Almost as soon as her orgasm hit her she felt Severus tense and he groaned into her convulsing flesh, sending further spikes of pleasure rocketing through her, as she collapsed in a sated heap on him. Lucius rose with some urgency once Severus had come, and still swallowing he disappeared behind them while the two of them lay there in a post-orgasmic heap.

They felt the bed dip behind them and then Lucius pulling Hermione back to him, she happily allowed him to move her off Severus and waited for what she knew was coming as she felt Severus languidly latch onto one of her breasts which were now at his eye level at the same time as Lucius slid inside her.

The sensations that both of them were sending through her saw her quickly losing herself in their ministrations again, panting and moaning her pleasure, especially when Severus reached back and found her clit with his thumb as well. After only two more thrusts Hermione screamed and convulsed around Lucius, squeezing him until he came with a yell of his own.

Pulling themselves onto the bed properly and turning so they were all the same way up, they cocooned Hermione between them, and stroked her body as her eyes closed hazily, utterly content.
“I love you, both. We’ll be good,” Lucius told them offering a kiss to both, “the three of us together.”

Severus nodded. “I also love both of you,” he affirmed, doing the same, but then chuckling softly. “This has been right in front of us all these months and we’ve only been skirting around it.”

“Perhaps it had to play out this way so we could see the truth,” Hermione suggested, dreamily. “And by the way, that was amazing,” and rolling one way and then the other she kissed both their cheeks. “I love you guys,” she told them completing the pact between them.

They lay there holding each other for some time, but as reality filtered back in Hermione pulled back and stroking Lucius’ cheek softly, she asked, “Lu, are you all right? Can we offer you comfort over this morning?”

“Yes, do you want to discuss what happened this morning?” Severus added, sliding his arms around and cupping Hermione’s breasts in his hands while he kissed the juncture of her neck and shoulder, but his eyes were looking at Lucius watching him as he did so.

Severus saw Lucius licking his lips with his eyes flicking between their eyes, the rosy nub that he obviously wanted to taste, and Severus flicking his thumbs back and forth as he continued to massage and play with them.

“Talk to us, Lu,” Hermione murmured, unconsciously arching her back and moving her breasts closer to his mouth as she pushed up into Severus’ hands while he continued to tease her, but also resting her hand softly on his cheek.

Lucius smiled. “You are so beautiful, pet, and you don’t know how much I wanted to stay with you two last night,” he told them out of the blue.

Hermione smiled in return, but it was Severus who answered. “Yes, she certainly is,” and he gave her another kiss on the neck, “and we understand why you didn’t, Lu.”

Hermione moaned at his increasing ministrations, making Severus smirk. “Mmm-hmm,” she added, “but I think you’re upset at your reaction to Ginny’s slutty offer, aren’t you?” She watched him nod. “Don’t be, any one would have reacted the same.”

“Yes, but I know she has an illness, I should have been more… I don’t know… more compassionate maybe?” he told them, finally unable to resist and reaching forward to lick one of the nipples from in between Severus’ fingers.

“Mya’s right,” Severus added, watching Lucius’ tongue coming out to flick at the pebbled nub and by extension licking his fingers. “Illness or not, the request she made in her desperation to trap you again was revolting to anyone with any taste.”

“You are right,” Lucius nodded, looking up at Severus from his task. “But perhaps burning the bed was a tad over the top, I liked that bed,” and he glanced up, giving them one of his patented smirks. “And that’s all I have to say about it, I think it’s time we concentrated on us.”

“I believe you’re right,” Severus said, urging Hermione to roll onto her back, “You lay back while we explore you, angel,” he told her, slipping his arm from underneath her.

Hermione moaned when Severus’ mouth claimed her other nipple and she opened her legs wide, hooking her left leg over Severus’ hip and her right over Lucius’. They took the hint, and their fingers ghosted over her stomach and started stroking up and down her soft wetness. They suckled and licked and she cradled one head in each hand running her fingers through their hair while she moaned her pleasure to them.
Someone stopped stroking her—it didn’t matter who—and started flicking at her clit, while the other set of fingers were exploring inside her. In and out, in and out, and her legs started shaking; it felt like heaven.

Feeling Lucius shifting, she opened her eyes and saw that he’d joined Severus at the one breast and in between licking and sucking, their mouths were meeting and doing the same thing to each other’s tongues. It was so hot, Hermione groaned deeply, watching her wizard’s now completely occupied snogging each other again with her tit in between.

Listening to the delighted grunts and moans over her, and feeling their hands still teasing her, made her almost crazy with need. “Make me come..., please... someone,” she groaned. “I need you both,” she demanded. “I’m just so hot... p-please!” and she seemed to be becoming delirious with need, and they stopped snogging and glanced at one another.

“Angel, it’s all right,” Severus assured her, seeing her brow furrowed and her body quivering. “Shhh, and you’ll have us, but...” Lucius added, “but pet, I think that while you’re pregnant we should not try both of us in you at once,” he stated with an air of concern.

Severus nodded, “Yes, I agree,” he added, but when she gave them a questioning—somewhat desperate—look, he continued, “But we could piggyback. It will just take a few seconds for us to get ready.”

Hermione nodded and pulled Severus down for a kiss while Lucius first moved to his ear and then behind him.

“I believe I had the pleasure of being inside our girl last time, so it’s your turn this time,” Lucius told Severus, “You keep our darling happy, while I get you ready,” he whispered close to his ear, running his tongue around the shell of it after he’d spoken.

“I intend to,” Severus murmured back against a giggling Hermione’s mouth, and turning his head away he smirked before licking his way around to her ear. “How would you like my hot cock your delicious little pussy while Lu fucks us both?” and he started licking her ear, pulling the bejewelled lobe into his mouth and tugging on it with his lips.

Feeling Hermione nod and hearing her whimpers of want, Severus licked a trail over to her her mouth again as he heard and felt Lucius mutter a cleansing spell followed by a lubrication spell to start preparing him to accommodate his shaft.

Inexplicably, as he grabbed his cock and started sliding it up and down her slit, teasing her entrance and then her clit while he continued to devour her mouth, his mind travelled back to the ball where they had first been reacquainted. He remembered having idle thoughts of the three of them together as he danced with her that night.

So much had happened in that small space of time. He had found his perfect home, and he groaned as he felt Lucius’ fingers inside him rubbing and stretching. Then he felt the head of Lucius’ cock nudging the same spot and he was being stretched deliciously around Lucius.

He watched Hermione writhing in pleasure under him and he started sliding into her, hearing her moaning as he did so. Then suddenly they were ready and they all held still a moment savouring the sensations coursing through them.

“Ready?” Lucius asked, and he felt Severus push back against him in answer, and he started to withdraw to push back in again.
It only took them a few strokes and they were working together, and Hermione was groaning in delight under them and gripping the bed sheets.

Both wizards were able to watch her as her face twisted in primal pleasure and she started to lose herself in it once more.

From his position Severus bent slightly and took one of her nipples into his mouth, and sucked on it to enhance her pleasure further. Even as his body shook and started to quiver with the amazing sensations pickling through him each time Lucius stroked into him and by extension stroked him into Hermione he kept concentrating on her pleasure. It didn’t take long and he had the urge to come, but it was only as he felt Hermione’s walls fluttering and then clamping down on him that he gave in to it and letting go of her breast he roared into his own orgasm in tandem with her.

Lucius couldn’t believe how wonderful this felt, and when he heard both Hermione and Severus expressing their pleasure, he tightened his grip on Severus’ hips and started pounding into him, racing towards his own release.

Bracing his arms, Severus managed to catch the sweat slick Lucius on his back and hold him there until he could disengage. When he flopped down beside them, Severus rolled off Hermione to do the same on the other side and the three of them fell into a sated doze.

xox

During the days where all their personal drama had been taking place, the story of Ronald Weasley’s experiences with Harry Potter also hit the press. This was one of the reasons that Ron had sort refuge with Ginny in France; he had no stomach for further questions on the subject, and apart from the fact that his sister was living in the lap of luxury and he thought he should too, especially after he became used to it while living with Harry.

The story instantly became the hot topic that everyone was talking about, and there were many people for and against the claims, and as Ginny had found out some of them were quite passionate in their defence of their hero.

However, according to Lucius’ advisors the whole exercise had done its job, and he was happy to send James off to Hogwarts with his now best friend Scorpius, besides they had placed protection charms over both boys and Severus would be there most of the time until things settled down.

At the Welcoming feast Severus and Hermione sat beside the new Arithmancy professor. Martha was taking on years two through four and Hermione was still teaching five through seven, well until the baby was born anyway. They decided that once little Snape had arrived they would see what Hermione was able to do.

Both Hermione and Severus watched happily as the boys were sorted. Scorpius into Slytherin, and James into Gryffindor, while Teddy and Rolf both became Hufflepuffs.

“I hope this will not harm their friendship,” Hermione whispered to Severus.

Severus looked at the happy boy laughing and talking with his fellow Gryffindors and then turning to wave at Scorpius, and the little blond boy waving back. “I believe that they are well adjusted enough to make this work,” he told her.

The following months proved that he was right and that there had been progress on house unity because Scorpius and James remained firm friends. They sat together in classes, and the other students just accepted that they were friends. Well, except where Quidditch was concerned in that
sector there was a fierce rivalry.

Privately Severus suspected that the Malfoy and Potter names had something to do with the fact that no one questioned a Slytherin and Gryffindor being best friends as well. Both names were still looked up to, even if they had been pulled through the mud, and he was pleased to see that this was the case.

xox

As had been planned, Severus and Hermione remained only as day teachers, returning home each night to Lucius and the children. They all lived in the manor, but wood cottage was not neglected, it became the adult’s hideaway and they all quickly became a well oiled machine.

The children had initially missed their mother not being at their beck and call, but they had endured the brunt of their separation before the agreement had been reached, and they had Violet; she was their constant carer, and nothing really changed in their routine.

The only child Lucius said anything to about what had happened between him and his mother was James, and he hoped that Ginny spoke to him as well. The day after they returned from France, Lucius had taken James for a walk and he gave him an edited version of what had happened. How his mother had gone away because she needed a break, but that she would still be coming to see them, and that she would always be their mother.

James listened attentively, but his eyes had been sad, and finally Lucius found out why.

After several more steps James stopped walking and admitted, “I’ve never had a proper father, and I wanted you to be my father,” and he pulled his lip between his teeth when it threatened to quiver. “I know that father and Uncle Ron were awful to mother, but sometimes I hate her, she is so selfish… but this time I thought she might be going to do the right thing.”

Lucius placed a hand on the boy’s shoulder. “James, legally I am your guardian, and I would be happy to also be your father figure, your mother has signed the guardianship of all four of you over to me. I do not know if knowing that helps in any way.”

James had suddenly smiled, “Yes sir, oh yes, it does,” and without warning James hurled himself into Lucius’ arms.

Curling his arms around the boy’s back Lucius squeezed him for a moment and then drew him back to arm’s length. “Not only do you have me, James, but Violet is staying as your nanny and I would hope that you will think of Severus and Hermione as part of our family as well.”

The young boy did not need to know how important Lucius’ partners were to him yet, and hopefully the other children would just accept the three of them being together as time went on. Triads were rare in the wizarding world, but Lucius knew of two others just from the people he knew, so there was a distinct possibility that the children would encounter—and hopefully befriend—other children at Hogwarts who were from a similar situation.

He thought as they walked that perhaps he should instigate friendships with the other people who were part of a triad that he knew. He glanced down at James apparently processing everything as they walked and he disappeared into his own ponderings. He hoped that Hermione and Severus would want to make their relationship official some time in the future as that would make it easier for the children.

Of course there would always be the bigots who did not accept their lifestyle choice as the right one,
but if there was one thing he had learned over the years it was that one type of life style did not apply to everyone.

xox

Ginny did stay away initially, but as was her job, when she did turn up one afternoon without warning, Violet politely accepted her presence. Even when after her absence Lucy did not know her, Lily hid behind Violet’s skirt and Albus, bid her a polite almost frightened hello.

This did not go down well, and Ginny accused Violet of stealing her children. “What have you done to them, they’re treating me like James used to treat his father?”

While she may have been polite Violet Cummings pulled no punches, she had not reached the age of seventy, and spent her life caring for children without knowing how to deal with juvenile behaviour. “Ginevra Weasley, think about what you are saying. Your circumstances are extraordinary ones, granted, but your children need stability and I am providing them with that. If they are treating you as you remember James treating his father, then you need to fathom the reason why and remedy it. It is not their fault and it is not mine, and I will not have you upsetting them. Please come back when you are in a better frame of mind.”

Ginny went away livid, and owled a strongly worded letter to Lucius about Violet, saying she should be sacked for insolence towards her. His reply, via his solicitor got her nowhere.

“Dear Ms Weasley,” she read, “Please refer to page twelve, paragraph twenty six in the agreement you have with Lord Malfoy entitled conduct, which states that you are to treat all members of his household with respect. Your conversation with Violet Cummings was captured by the security spells Lord Malfoy has on the nursery area. If you wish to take the matter further please feel free to contact your own solicitor. We enclose a copy of the Pensieve record of the encounter for your perusal.”

She threw the letter and the memory in the fire. “The nerve of them, bastards,” she ranted.

Coinciding with the arrival of the letter, Violet Cummings came to visit Ginny, and that was the start of Ginny’s healing. Violet knew the circumstances surrounding her appointment to Malfoy Manor, and she also knew enough about things to question whether Ginny was acting under some sort of latent curse that had been hidden in the recesses of her mind somewhere.

However, on discussion with Severus he assured her that he had already searched her mind for such a thing, the day she had initially blown up at Hermione. “I didn’t find anything.”

“Mmm,” said the matron. “Then I shall have to treat her as a teenager until she finishes growing up.” The nanny knew that Lucius had put the matter in the hands of his solicitors and apparently she had timed it perfectly, arriving just after Ginny had blown up.

It took six months of visits from Violet, but she eventually came to see that her children were reacting to her like James had always reacted to his father because she was acting like their father had. Eventually she came to the conclusion that she would have to work to get her children back to the relationship she had before her breakdown.

xox

Of course all of the greatest plans can go wrong, and as the Easter holidays approached baby Snape put a spanner in the works. Hermione woke in the middle of the night with a pain she just knew wasn’t a Braxton hick contraction. “Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god,” she cried, breathing
through her mouth. “Wake up, Sev… aahhh…. Lu, wake up, the baby’s coming.”

The two sleepy wizards sat bolt upright, and Severus, the calmest wizard on the planet went into a full blown panicky flap. “But it’s too early… you’re not due for two weeks yet,” he said in a voice very much unlike his own.

“Well, tell that to the baby,” she shot back. “Get Poppy!”

This saw Lucius tripping over his sleep pants as he tried to get his legs into them while running for the floo. “I’m fine… I’m fine,” he called from the hallway when he crashed into the side table turning the corner. However, he was certain no one heard him because at the same moment Hermione had another contraction as Severus was guiding her to the bathroom.

Six hours of pain, pushing and threats to their manhoods later, and Georgina Eileen Snape entered the world, a little under two and a half weeks early. Hermione collapsed against her wizards, exhausted, and Severus kissed her head as he reached past her to cut the umbilical cord with his wand.

Poppy handed her the crying baby and allowed them to get to know one another while she delivered the afterbirth. It was now early morning and the parlour was filled with friends and family waiting to hear the news.

The baby had her father’s scowl and a shock of black hair, and they all loved her the minute they laid eyes on her.

“Thankfully, she has your nose, angel,” Severus said, leaning forward mesmerized by her tiny flailing fingers.

“Let’s also hope that she has pet’s disposition,” Lucius snorted, stroking a finger over her tiny creased forehead, “although with that scowl I don’t give that idea much hope.”

“But once she knows she’s loved and wanted that will disappear,” Severus told them absently, not even realising what he had just admitted.

That was when Poppy took over the conversation. “Here, take this please,” she said, holding out a potion, and turning to Severus when his hand came out and took it to inspect it. “It’s just a healing potion, to seal up the raw spot in Hermione’s womb where the placenta was attached.” She looked back at Hermione, “And then we can get you up and cleaned up properly.” She looked to the baby, “While you wait, I’ll show you how to feed her which will also help with contracting your uterus back into shape.”

Both Severus and Lucius watched in delight as Hermione learned how to feed Georgina. Poppy taught her the shielding spell to stop her nipples becoming sore before she got used to the routine and both of them seemed to be quicker learners. Once she had the baby happily feeding Poppy cleaned up the room ready for visitors.

Once the baby was fed, Poppy washed and dressed her, and asked Severus and Lucius to help Hermione to shower while she did so. “You are lucky there was no actual damage to the birth canal, but you will still have some discharge from your uterus; that is normal, use either a shielding charm or a Muggle method for a week or so.

Hermione nodded and rose on very shaky legs, but her wizards were beside her and they helped her into the shower. A wave of Lucius’ wand and they were all naked, and they got in together. Lucius held her against him while Severus washed her, and they both spoke softly to her telling her how
proud they were of her.

When they got back to the bedroom Poppy had it cleaned up and there was no evidence that a birth had just taken place at all except for the sleeping infant in the pretty white crib. “If you need me for anything, I’m only a floo call away, dear, but I’m sure Violet will be able to answer any of your questions.”

“Thank you, Poppy,” Hermione said, pulling her into a hug.

“You need a rest now, dear. You’ve worked really hard all night, and she ran her wand over Georgina once more and then Hermione and when everything was normal she bustled out the door.

Severus and Lucius had just got Hermione back into bed when Violet knocked on the door and smiled at the scene before her. “The children want to know if they can see their sister now.” She looked at the shocked looks on the three adults and added, “Their words not mine.”

Lucius laughed, “I guess they know more than they’ve let on.” He turned to Hermione, “Are you up to visitors?”

“Yes, we need to foster that family feeling,” she said, brushing at a tear that had suddenly appeared at the thought that they were indeed forming a family.
Chapter Summary

The triad solidify their marriage and our story concludes tying up the loose ends

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer:-
I neither own nor earn anything from this story. Harry Potter and his world are the intellectual property of JK Rowling and associates.

A/N:- Well dear friends, here we are, finally at the end of the story. I know that this conclusion has been a long time coming, and for that I apologise. I must admit that real life and family illness is much to blame, but I also have to say that I became really bogged down in what to include and what to leave out of this chapter once I decided that it would be the last one.

I have really enjoyed telling this story and reading your opinions and views and once again I thank everyone who has helped to make this my most popular story, thank you. I am happy that so many people have read and enjoyed it. Well, on with the last chapter…

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Thirty Six – The Years That Followed

It didn’t take long for the threesome of Hermione Granger, Severus Snape and Lucius Malfoy to become a rock solid family and extended family. They became a true triad, and this was a state of affairs that all three of them wished to make a permanent thing.

Therefore, once she had recovered from Georgina’s birth Hermione started putting her considerable research skills into finding still existing laws that would enable them to be publically bonded and married to each other in the eyes of the British wizarding public.

The other reason for wanting to make their relationship a legitimate marriage was that for some time Lucius had been receiving overtures from the Slytherin factions on the Wizengamot for him to take a more political role in things. In short that wanted to sponsor him as the next minister of magic, as Shacklebolt had worn his welcome out with more people than just Severus and Lucius. It appeared that there was a growing movement of people becoming critical of Kingsley’s handling of the Harry Potter problem and his general nepotism, and he was becoming very unpopular within the ranks of the Wizengamot and not only with Slytherins.
Hermione and Severus thought that Lucius would make a splendid minister and even though the next election was still years off they instantly threw their support behind him, and to this end Hermione started her research.

The Malfoy library proved to be the best source of references, not only did it have detailed martial records of the entire pureblood population—triad arrangements only tended to happen in pureblood society—but it had a surprise installed for Lucius. A participant in a successful triad had been one Hyperion Malfoy who had from 1731 until his death in 1756 had maintained a successful and legal triad relationship with a witch and another wizard.

To his companions surprise Lucius laughed when he heard this. “And he was still shot in a duel over someone else’s witch,” he told them between bouts of laughter.

“How do you know that?” Hermione wished to know.

“Because I’ve met my kinsmen. Hyperion haunts one of the little used parlours in the west wing.”

“Well, lead the way then, he will be able to tell us what we need to know,” Hermione declared.

Looking up from his work, it was Severus’ turn to laugh. “So, you’re just going to march up to a Slytherin—especially one who is two and a half centuries old—and demand that he tell you what you want to know?” One of his raven eyebrows rose in question as he spoke.

That took the wind out of her sails. “Oh! Umm, yes… I guess not.”

Lucius had been leaning over her shoulder looking at what she’d found and he now pulled her out of her chair and up against him. “Don’t worry, I know how to deal with him,” and he proceeded to dance her out of the library and down the hallway with her laughing merrily. “Are you coming, Severus?” Lucius called as they disappeared up the hallway.

The Potions master grumbled and made a couple more amendments to the parchment he was writing on, but got up and followed them smiling at their antics, and also showing that his complaints were good-natured. “Yes, I’m coming, but I also want to get back to my submission for the St. Mungos board for the end of business.”

Now Severus had finished at Hogwarts he was enjoying his freedom, but the challenge set by research was a big lure to him, and he was currently vying for a prestigious contract.

“It won’t take long, Sev,” Lucius said, light heartedly, “and it will give pet the direction for her research, won’t it, love?” and he pulled them to a stop and cast an affectionate look upon the woman in his arms before kissing her smiling lips.

This gave Severus time to catch up, and they both took in the woman they adored, her milk-laden breasts rising and falling sharply after her exercise. Lucius smirked, and gathering both his lovers to him he apparated them to the little used western corner of the manor.

Hermione noted as they started to walk that even this little used area was clean and dust free regardless of its lack of use. The house elves were very thorough where they were confident to go into the rooms, even unused areas. Unlike the threats in Abraxas’ rooms Severus and Lucius had told her about when they first returned to the manor, and she shivered slightly. Looking around she remembered that these particular rooms had been Lucius’ grandmother’s rooms and he’d told her that she had been a gentle lady, and the decorations were very feminine. She was brought back from her thoughts by the sound of Lucius’ voice.

“Hyperion, you scoundrel, are you here?” he called as they entered the parlour.
“Ah, the current lord of the manor,” the silvery figure who had just swept through the picture above the fireplace said. Then his astute eyes took in Severus and then landed on Hermione. “Oh and with such delightful company,” and he offered Hermione his hand.

Knowing it was polite to accept a ghost’s hand even if it did feel like being grasped by ice water, the Gryffindor witch extended her own.

Hyperion reverently placed his lips on her knuckles and kissed them as his eyes leered at her. “Is this your esteemed lady, my lord?” he asked Lucius without looking away from Hermione.

“She is the greatly esteemed lady of us both,” Severus offered waspishly, wrapping his hands around Hermione’s waist in an act of possession.

Understanding dawned on the face of the ghost and he laughed. “A triad, a long honoured tradition,” the ghost replied. “My apologies, dear sir,” and he bowed his head slightly to Severus.

Lucius went to stand behind them, with a hand on each of their shoulders. “In fact both of these good people are my partners, as I am theirs,” he stated.

The ghost’s eyebrow rose. “Then a true triad, are you also by chance, pure-blood, half-blood and muggleborn?”

“We are,” Hermione stated defensively, but was surprised by the ghost’s reply.

“Oh!” Lucius gasped, slightly taken back by his kinsman’s opinion as well.

“Do not look so surprised, Lucius, this family has not always been pure-blooded bigots. I believe the rot only set in two generations ago.” He motioned around the room. “Your grandmother was a potent but gentle woman, and we had some wonderful conversations, but why do you think she never left these apartments?”

“I’ve never thought on it,” Lucius admitted.

“Andromeda Malfoy was a powerful witch, but she disagreed with her husband’s, your grandfather’s, opinions on blood purity. This was her prison, the locket she wore, did you ever see it?” He watched Lucius nod. “It was given as a present, your grandfather gave it to her in…” the ghost raised his eyes to the ceiling and tapped his middle finger on his chin in a thinking poise. “Nineteen sixty six, I believe.” His eyes then turned to the three listening. “However, as soon as he put it on her she found that it was also to be her jailer, your grandfather had had it spelled to contain her magic and she couldn’t take it off.”

“That’s barbaric,” Hermione all but yelled.

“It was an effective way of silencing her regardless,” the ghost replied coolly, taking offence at Hermione’s tone.

“It’s wrong,” Hermione defended angrily, and started to draw her wand.

“Unfortunately these things happened more often than we’re told about,” Severus said quietly, trying to placate her. “I have similar stories my mother told me,” he added as he glanced at Lucius.

Lucius stepped in between the ghost and Hermione. “As do I,” he agreed, with a scowl on his face at
the look of pure devilment now evident on his relative’s pale face, he’d forgotten what a delight this ghost had in taunting people he disagreed with.

After her experiences, discrimination and mistreatment were hot issues with her, and she was ready to defend her statements. “And these are the people we’re worried about appearing proper in front of, people who easily sat by while things like this happened and while I was victimised by a so-called war hero. Neither of those idiot boys would have lasted to see the final battle had it not been for people like us looking after them, and what thanks do we get. You two stayed away for ten years until things died down, and I was persecuted for my trouble.”

Hyperion was ignoring Lucius and Severus’ displeasure and was still watching avidly, his eyes alight with mischief. “Firecracker, isn’t she?” he commented, not knowing the circumstances.

Lucius turned on him quickly. “I’d zip it if I were you, you do not know the state of affairs and our Hermione is a very powerful witch who shouldn’t be angered. She has a few spells that could make your afterlife decidedly less than pleasant,” he warned, as he saw Severus still trying to soothe their angry love as her displeasure turned to pain at the deeds perpetrated on her and this made him bristle further. “Perhaps if you two start back, I will find you after I’ve gained the information we require,” he added, and watched Severus nod his understanding.

Severus guided the angry Hermione from the room. Her anger was still—even after all their coaching and care—heavily laced with distress at what had happened to her, and this still made her very highly strung and emotional. Both men had resigned themselves to the fact that that might never change, and they would always support and protect her from it as best they could. It was getting better, she was learning that she would no longer be victimised, but the plight of others set her off just as easily as what had happened to her, and as she dissolved from anger to tears Severus held her close and comforted her. No one could blame her for any of it she had suffered too much before they’d returned.

When he came back with the information they needed, Lucius found that neither of his partners were in the library so he went looking and found them in their big bedroom with Georgina. Leaning up against the door frame he watched them. Severus had his back to the door, watching Hermione feeding their baby. Lucius was in no doubt that the raven-haired wizard knew he was there, but he kept quiet and just watched the now calm witch holding the eyes of her child with her own as the infant suckled.

Without warning she glanced up from Georgina and looked from Severus to Lucius. “I hope you know exactly how much I love both of you. Do you realise that this last year has been the most fulfilling year of my life so far?” She detached Georgina from her breast and brought her up to her shoulder to burp her.

Their little girl was almost two months old now and was a joyous addition to their family. Lily and Albus both doted over her as they did Lucy, and as Albus put it. “I’m a lucky big brother having three little sisters now.”

In answer the Hermione’s statement Lucius meandered into the room and curled his arms around Severus’ waist as he murmured to both of them. “Being with you two is the most content and settled I’ve ever felt. I know without a doubt that at last I am home.”

The wizards watched Hermione glance up and smile at them both and then use her nipple to tease Georgina’s mouth to open wider so she would latch on correctly, and they both sighed at the picture of bliss before them.
“You did the right thing to centre her once more,” Lucius whispered into Severus’ ear.

Severus turned and smirked at him. “I know of no better way to calm our Mya than to have her
spend time with her baby, and our dear one conveniently required feeding when I took Hermione
to the nursery to get her. We came in here for some privacy, I still cannot be completely at ease around
all the others and I wanted to watch Mya breastfeed Georgina.”

Lucius nodded against Severus’ shoulder. “I know you still find it a little confronting, but you are
doing very well with it, Sev,” he praised and leaning around he captured his lips. They set a leisurely
pace as they started kissing while Hermione watched as she finished feeding Georgina.

“You three are my family,” the dark man stated before giving in to Lucius’ kisses.

Hermione cast a gentle gave over them both, but commented, “Nice to see that you two have found
an occupation while I’m busy,” she giggled quietly after some time, and glancing down she noticed
that Georgina had stopped feeding and was now dozing.

Their eyes returned to her and they both smiled, and Lucius murmured, “We thought you might like
the show,” while he continue to litter the skin of Severus’ neck with open mouthed kisses.

“Mmm,” she commented, and started edging towards the side of the bed trying not to wake the baby.

Seeing Hermione getting up and feeling Lucius’ hand sliding around towards his crotch, Severus
pulled away gently. “I have one thing to do before the end of the day, now you’re here to be with
Mya I want to go and owl my submission off to meet the deadline. I’ve finished bar a few minor
details, so I won’t be long.” Giving them both a lingering kiss and the baby a tender peck on the
head he headed back to the library.

Lucius shed his clothes as he watched Hermione easily settle Georgina into her crib for a nap and
adjusting the wards so that Violet could get in from the hallway but not through their room. Of
course Severus could get in when he returned, but only the three of them had access to their room
when the locking wards were in place.

As she locked the door behind her, Hermione turned to find Lucius waiting for her. He gently
pushed her blouse from her shoulders. “Come,” he murmured. “I need you in our bed,” and he was
removing her bra while peppering her face with kisses. Wriggling her hips she shed her own shorts
and stood before Lucius in nothing but see through red knickers which he pushed down to pool at
her feet.

She watched him perusing her body and she shivered deliciously as a spike of arousal shot through
her in response to his eyes on her. Since she’d had Georgina, she didn’t quite look the same, but she
knew that neither Lucius nor Severus were complaining about that. The once light, rosy pink flesh of
her nipples and nether regions had darkened to a more intense shade, and her wizards agreed that it
was like she’d deepened in life somehow through her struggle to bring their daughter into the world,
and they told her repeated they were both intensely proud of her.

Despite having just emptied her breasts feeding Georgina, Hermione felt milk starting to leak from
her as she became more aroused by Lucius’ kisses and his hands caressing her body, and she
moaned softly.

Lucius noticed the thick, pearly-white liquid gathering on her nipples and he licked his lips and
reached forward for her hand to pull her onto the bed. “Kneel here between my legs, my beautiful
girl.” He didn’t take his eyes off her as she complied, and he watched her placing her hands on his
shoulders.
She knew what he wanted, she had done this for both of her men, and Hermione shivered deliciously as Lucius’ hand cupped her breast and she moaned quietly as his mouth closed around the nipple.

This stirred her in a way that Georgina never would and she took it as a wonderful—albeit temporary—by-product of breastfeeding her baby. After a moment she slid her knees further apart opening her legs more in invitation for him to stimulate her further.

Hermione had healed well after Georgina’s birth, and the three of them had been almost back to normal now for a couple of weeks, but Lucius knew at the moment that she needed to feel loved and pampered nothing more, his needs could wait for another time.

Lucius smiled with his mouth full of delicious breast, and slipped his other hand down over her belly ghosting through the curls that she had decided not to shave anymore and into the moist heat between her legs. Sucking heartily he slid two fingers inside her and set his pace to match what his mouth was doing.

Hermione closed her eyes and threw her head back as pleasure started to build within her. Then she felt the other side of the bed dip and she knew that Severus was back. Smiling she didn’t open her eyes, even as she felt the second tongue gathering what had escaped from her other breast while Lucius had been concentrating on his side.

Severus’ mouth closed around the neglected nipple and one of his long fingers joined Lucius’ ministrations, circling her clit as he sucked.

They were both watching her face as they brought her to her climax and Severus was the first to speak as she shuddered and groaned. “You’re so beautiful,” he whispered, watching as she collapsed into Lucius’ arms and leaning across he captured her lips.

“Yes, and she loves us doing this so much,” Lucius replied, while she and Severus kissed, he then helped Severus to lay her sated body between them.

Snickering gently, Lucius kissed her forehead. “Our sweet, beautiful, pet,” he murmured once they had her settled between them. “Sleep, we’ll be here with you.”

Severus kissed the other side. “Yes, you’re tired you need a rest. Remember, even though you feel well, Poppy said it would take a lot longer to be truly recovered.”

Hermione smiled sleepily at them both. “I love you both,” she murmured and closed her eyes as she was indeed tired.

xox

The trio went from strength to strength, and after much hard work and planning from all of them, the next spring the three of them held a small ceremony to celebrate the inclusion of Lucius into the Snape marriage.

It was a fine day and the ceremony was held by the lake on the Malfoy estate, half way between Malfoy Manor and Wood Cottage.

After searching throughout England for someone who knew the specific binding ceremony for their situation, in the end the threesome imported a celebrant from America to perform the ceremony.

The laws had been hard enough to trace even with Hyperion’s help, but finding a celebrant proved impossible. Triads were far more common amongst the more progressive American magicals so that was where they searched. After what the ghost had said about their union being blessed, they wanted
to get it right and also make the day to be the best it could be.

The day dawned perfectly and at three o’clock in the afternoon Hermione, Severus and Georgina walked from Wood Cottage. Hermione wore a lacy cotton gown with a light frothy veil that wafted in the breeze around her and with her head adorned by a garland of pink roses. Because it was an outdoor celebration Hermione also wore ballet flats so she was comfortable.

Severus carried their daughter in one arm with his other arm occupied by Hermione, and both men had decided that it would be a low key affair and they were dressed similarly to Hermione and Severus’ midsummer wedding.

Lucius then approached from the manor. He was carrying Lucy and had Lily by the hand with Draco next to him and James and Albus in front.

The children young and older were dressed in the same styles and were involved because not only were the three adults bonding, but they were forming an entire family, so their bonds with the children would be strengthened by their participation in the ceremony as well.

The little girls worn delicate garlands of flowers in their hair, pretty white, pintucked cotton dresses and Lily threw rose petals along the path from a little basket Albus held for her as they processed along.

The participation of the Potter children in the ceremony was not designed in any way to lessen Ginny’s claim on them as their mother, but Lucius had legally adopted them and wanted them to share in the family experience. Although Ginny would not be present—as she had not been invited —she surprisingly had no objection to them being involved.

Hermione hoped that this meant that she wanted the best for her children, but then Lucius, ever the Slytherin had picked his moment to ask her carefully, just before he signed the cheque for her monthly allowance, and she had agreed.

Today however, it was all about them, and Lucius cleared his thoughts as he approached Hermione and Severus.

As the three adults and their children drew nearer to one another those watching the ceremony could see arcs of power palpable in the air between them and the atmosphere became charged with magic.

When all three were in front of the celebrant, Severus handed Georgina to Draco and Lucius did the same with Lucy. Albus and James stood in front of Draco with Lily.

Having rehearsed the ceremony before hand, each of them knew what to do when prompted. Standing facing one another each raised their wand hand with their wand held by their thumb across their palm and formed their raised hands into a triangle where each hand was touching the other, and the jovial old celebrant, whose name was Vernon Antwhistle, spoke to the group as a whole.

“Today two will become three and a new family will be born, it will be the intent of their magic that will bind them securely, this is a silent ceremony after the declaration and it is bound strongly by magic so I will ask all grown witches and wizards here to concentrate with these people.”

As he finished speaking he placed his wand tip at the apex of the joined hands and crossed wands and nodded to them after he’d murmured a spell.

Severus was first to speak. “Hermione, I who love you with all my heart,” he said looking at his wife. “Knowing this fact is fundamental to me, I have also found room there in for Lucius.” His gaze shifted to the blond wizard. “Lucius Abraxas Malfoy, I Severus Tobias Snape welcome you to our
union,” and a golden band wound around their joined hands.

Hermione repeated what Severus had said to her and then the same to Lucius, this time a rose gold coloured band entwined with the first.

Then it was Lucius’ turn. “Severus Tobias and Hermione Jean Snape, I love you both as my own flesh, and I willingly accept admittance into your sacred union.”

A third band of shining silver wove through the other two and the intensity grew. A steady light started to wash over them. Then the tendrils of the light arced out from their joined hands and recognise the children.

Draco was first, his father’s silver light enveloped him strongly and became green tinged as his maternity was recognised. The light then shifted adding James, and it became a strong silver once more before tinging purplish.

This continued until all the children were recognised in the varying tinges of silver light, and finally Georgina being the youngest was added to the family in vivid gold and rose coloured light.

Then to everyone’s surprise a wisp of silver light circled and caressed Hermione’s stomach as well and became rose tinged. It was then she knew she was carrying a child and that child was being recognised as Lucius’.

Before the rays of light faded completely two more shafts of rose coloured light appeared momentarily on Hermione’s abdomen, one tinged with gold and one with silver, but then they disappeared.

There were no words spoken after the binding, and had anyone cared to notice the three adults all now wore a trinity of the three colours in the form of a ring. All those present understood the reverence of the commitment being made by the three adults and how the children were being included either by means of birthright, as in the cases of Draco and Georgina, or by binding adoption like, James, Albus, Lily and Lucy, and it was an awe inspiring sight.

Wedding guests and carefully selected members of the media then shared an outdoor feast at tables set out under the willows by the lake. It was of true medieval proportions.

Later, Vernon explained to Hermione, Severus and Lucius that the two lights that appeared and then left are souls yet to come, and he congratulated them on the soul who would arrive within nine months.

“But I thought that if I was breastfeeding…” Hermione stated, confused.

Vernon laughed happily. “You are muggleborn, remember you are equal parts of both heritages, and I believe that this is what has happened here.” He grinned at the three of them. “It’s wonderful, isn’t it?”

All three agreed that it was.

“Now, go,” the old American encouraged. “Express that love I have seen encompass so many today. All your children are safe and have gone home with their carer, you must to, consummate your love,” he told them.

“Wood Cottage?” Lucius questioned looking at his lovers.

“Yes, Violet will know where we are if she needs us,” Hermione stated, “and I expressed earlier for
Georgina should she need it through the night.”

“Well let’s bid our guests good night then,” Severus added.

“Thank you, Vernon,” Hermione said, “You have made me a very happy witch.”

Vernon patted her arm and then shook the extended hands of both wizards. “You’re very welcome, good night, friends.”

xox

Hermione, Severus and Lucius bid good night to their guests and Lucius charged Draco with making certain everyone went away happy, and arm in arm the three of them walked the moonlit path to their hideaway.

The whole day had been so charged emotionally for all of them and especially throughout the binding ceremony the power coursing through them had left them on the edge of arousal for the remainder of the feast. Now as they were finally, blissfully alone that latent feeling was starting to spill over.

As they walked the two men were touching and caressing Hermione, and once they were in the woods completely she pulled them to a stopped and sandwiched herself between them. “I need you both,” and she was running her hand up and down Severus’ hard length while rubbing her backside against Lucius’.

Severus captured her lips in a heated kiss, and she freed him from his trousers but continued to push back against Lucius. Still being wedged between them she moaned into Severus’ mouth as she felt Lucius rucking her skirts up.

“Oh, you cheeky thing,” he murmured, leaning forward and kissing her neck when he discovered she was bare under her dress.

Severus already knew she had little on under her dress and he also skimmed a hand between them to experience that. He groaned as he’d navigated the front of her dress to be greeted by her unencumbered warm wetness.

As Severus’ fingers explored her she pushed further back against Lucius, her message obvious, and he complied without hesitation rubbing his himself up and down her wet flesh and then sinking into her welcoming heat.

Hermione kept her hand on Severus’ erection, stroking it until her mind started to give in to the pleasure they were bringing her and her grip went slack. Moments later her muscles clenched around Lucius and the situation drove him over the edge.

Lucius unashamedly emptied himself into her with a shout, not caring that he had only lasted moments. As he staggered back to rest on a tree he saw her turning and offering the same to Severus. The raven-haired wizard walked them forward until she was against Lucius before he took her from behind as well. Severus lasted only a short time longer than Lucius had, and he felt Lucius’ arm pulling him close, and also pulling Hermione off to the side so he wouldn’t fall on her.

By the time Severus was spent Lucius had recovered enough to pull them both close. He explored both their mouths one after another and then apparated them to their destination where they all gratefully sank down onto their bed still kissing and touching one another.
After a time they went quiet for a moment and that was when Hermione touched her stomach and looked at it in almost awe. “We’re going to have another baby. Oh, isn’t it wonderful?”

“Yes,” Severus agreed magnanimously. “Well done, Lu. Georgina will have another brother or sister.” He patted Lucius on the arm and leaning across offered him a kiss before looking back to Hermione. “This will make us a true triad.”

She smiled and nodded, but also yawned. “It’s been a wonderful day, thank you both, but I’m very tired,” she told them.

“Yes, you need to rest, but first we wish to make you comfortable,” Severus said, glancing at Lucius.

A wave of the blond man’s hand and they heard the bath starting to fill, and almost immediately the scent of sandalwood and roses wafting through the bathroom door.

Hermione felt Severus removing her dress and once she was naked scooping her up bridal style. She happily snuggled into him and allowed him to carry her.

When they arrived in the bathroom they found Lucius already waiting for them, standing in the tub ready to take her from Severus while he undressed, and between them they cared for their witch.

Hermione for her part settled between them knowing she was home. Afterwards they dried her and settled her back into bed between them. The fact that she had fallen asleep with a smile on her face while they cared for her told them that she trusted them completely and it made them both very happy.

xox

During the next year many new opportunities were opened up for the trio, and Severus in particular received the research grant from St. Mungos. The one he had applied for when Georgina was two months old.

Infertility had become a large problem in the wizarding world. It seemed that they had finally realised that an inbred pureblood society was a bad thing because many pureblood couples were now unable to conceive without help, and although Draco and Astoria had not had any trouble many of their peers had been unable to have children.

St. Mungos had turned to Britain’s Potioneers for answers. Severus’ submission had won the grant with a combination of wizarding and muggle research to back it up, and once the wedding and honeymoon was over he started researching the topic in earnest.

Lucius on the other hand became a sort of ambassador for inter-blood marriages. This coming from the staunch head of a notable pureblood family made other formerly bigoted purebreds take a lot of notice of him, and a great deal of change was the result.

Georgina had just celebrated her second birthday when Severus began the testing phase of his infertility potion, and he had quite an arsenal of couples wishing to become test subjects.

Then four months after Georgina’s second birthday Hermione had her second child. Hillary Jean Malfoy, who was born in almost identical circumstances to her sister.

Life was now flourishing for the Granger-Snape-Malfoy family, but it didn’t finish there for them. Once Severus had ensured the safe passage of the next generation for all the couples on his list he turned his mind to making a potion that would produce twins to boast the population.
He made some modifications to this potion once it had been tested, and in its final form it allowed both Lucius and Severus to fertilize one of Hermione’s eggs in a potion induced double ovulation. This meant that three years after Hillary and with the aid of his special potion and midsummer celebrations, those last two wisps of light came into being. Twins Sebastian Richard Snape and Claudius Augustus Malfoy arrived eight and a half months after the midsummer celebrations.

This time even Ginny came to call with the well-wishers. Over the years since the breakup, things had gone from open hostility between Severus and Ginny to strained civility. One thing Severus Snape excelled at was holding on to the principle of an issue and also honouring those he esteemed, and of course the fact that Ginny had hurt Hermione stuck in his mind.

From Lucius’ point of view that whole deal with Ginny was still very awkward. However, as it reached the point of Hermione’s final pregnancy they finally seemed to be able to spend time together with the children without it erupting into nastiness.

They were never going to be as close as they had been, but they could now have family picnics together without it turning into a heated argument. Most of the animosity was on Ginny’s side after all her outburst had only been a cry for help. She had been emotionally stunted by the controlling magic that Harry had used on her for all those years, and they had needed to see that.

The only cure for it was time and appropriate treatment, and Severus regardless of his views about her personally had also gone out of his way to help. There were certain mind enhancing potions that could be utilised and he happily brewed them for her. Lucius—through Violet—made certain that she took them, and they helped her mature as she always should of. In fact Lucius even allowed the children to stay in France with Ginny during holidays if they wished to, as long as Violet went along.

However, the greatest benefit to Ginny was her freedom, and once she realised that she had it, she settled into exploring it in her own way.

Severus’ main sticking point in the whole business was that he maintained that she should not have listened to, or been so easily led, her mother. However, even he came to see as the years went by that in her under-developed state of mind, it was only natural for her to listen to her mum, and take it out on the nearest thing, which unfortunately had just happened to be Hermione.

Privately Lucius agreed with him, and he was careful that the two witches were both kept happy when they were all together. Mind you, nothing got past Severus’ eagle eyes and Ginny knew that Severus would quickly retaliate if there was any trouble.

xox

The year Albus and Frank both entered Gryffindor and Adela Malfoy, Scorpius’ sister became the first Ravenclaw in four hundred years in the Malfoy family, another very special event took place. The wedding of Bill Weasley and Penelope Clearwater, and this was a whole family celebration. It had been a long and bumpy road for them both, but they looked incredibly happy as they were joined in wedded bliss in the tiny church in Ottery St. Catchpole.

This event also marked a milestone for Ron, he had been tentatively accepted back into the family fold after going back to live with Charlie, and now he had met a Romanian wizard at the dragon sanctuary, and Bill and Penelope’s wedding was their first public outing as a couple.

Boris had messy black hair and clear green eyes, and Ron appeared to adore him. Every one suspected quietly that Molly had been a little disappointed that Ron hadn’t miraculously become straight, but if she was, to her credit she never said anything. Molly Weasley had realised—with the help of her long-suffering husband—that what had broken Ginny and Lucius up was how Ginny had
reacted to what she had told her.

It was also suspected that Molly never did understand Severus, Lucius and Hermione’s relationship either, but she wisely kept that opinion to herself on that matter as Lucius had the authority to stop her from seeing her grandchildren.

Another thing that happened as time went by was that the last remnants of the Notice-me-not spells and enchantments disappeared from Hermione and Molly seemed to reconnect with her tentatively. No one was ever certain why Molly was so effected by the enchantments, and none of them could work out why she had acknowledged Hermione the night Severus saved Ginny, and yet she could be influenced so much as to say things against her to Ginny just before Ginny and Lucius broke up.

Severus’ theory was that strong emotion overcame the spells, that is, Molly had been very upset that night at the Burrow, yet she should have been almost as upset the day she came to find Ginny after the attack in Diagon Alley. All they could put it down to was a mystery that perhaps they would never know the answer to.

xox

There was something else important that happened at the same time and Albus Potter started Hogwarts, Lucius became the leader of the British wizarding community when he was elected minister of magic in a landslide victory.

This happened just after his former wife Narcissa had married the then current minister Kingsley Shacklebolt, so Lucius finally got his revenge on his ex-wife as he replaced her deposed husband, with Hermione and Severus and all their children standing around him.

Mind you, how that came to be, is entirely another story.

-// Finis\-