

Forward to the Past

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One Bad, Sad Day

Chapter 1 of 2

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Disclaimer: I own nothing but the plot.

One Bad, Sad Day

Everyone at Hogwarts knew Granger, if not personally, if not by name, then as *the bookworm*, *the Gryffindor swot*, or simply as, *oh, that one*, since at least her fourth year. Hermione Granger had no illusions as far as her popularity was concerned, not that she cared. Popularity swam somewhere along the bottom of her list of priorities, grazing the muddy ground, something best left to the likes of Lavender Brown and the Patil twins; in short, people she had absolutely no patience for.

What had begun to disturb her, however, was the realisation that her top two priorities had gradually switched places. What was formerly the number two and something to be suppressed with the utmost force she could possibly gather ever since she had finally recognised it for what it was, had sneaked its way to the number one spot. Knowledge had topped the list as long as she remembered. Even as a small child, she had been highly inquisitive and never failed to amaze her parents with both quantity and quality of questions she could think up in a single day. Suddenly, knowledge was downgraded to second place. It was highly disconcerting.

At least, she thought rather dejectedly, she had managed to keep it the world's best-guarded secret. The fact that she hissed, "*It's Professor Snape*," each time someone disrespectfully referred to her secret as *the greasy git* or *bat* was simply seen as her need to respect any form of authority *Authority my arse*. If only they knew. She shuddered at *that* possibility and forced her mind to concentrate on more pressing issues, such as convincing Harry that he was entirely too obsessed with his suspicions about Malfoy.

If only it had been mere obsession. Hermione was devastated when she learned of the tragedy that had just unfolded itself atop the Astronomy Tower *No, no, no!* she screamed internally. *Professor Snape is NOT a murderer!* She did not waste one moment of thought on such a ridiculous notion. Instead, Hermione bit her tongue every time Harry or Ron daydreamed about what they would do with their former Potions and Defence Against the Dark Arts professor if they were to come across him. Sometimes she sharply reminded them that Snape was not a priority, and could they instead, please, concentrate on tracking down Horcruxes. Other times, she blocked their nasty ideas out and instead daydreamed of being with him, sharing a meal with him, having an intelligent conversation with him. Other, racier dreams resulting in a much increased supply of blood to her face, she reserved for the nights when she was in her bed and everyone else asleep.

She tried her best to forget about him...to forget *him*. She devoted all her time to researching ways to bring down the megalomaniac that was Voldemort. She kept herself busy with staying out of the clutches of the Ministry, with staying alive. She tried to become fond of Ron; after all, he was not a bad prospect. His background might have been on the less fortunate side of finances, but she had no doubt that once the Light won and once he'd be old enough, he'd be a hero and become a successful Auror. He

might never become as scholarly as she, but she nevertheless was seeing signs that he was finally acquiring some maturity. She *almost* succeeded.

She could forgive Ron for running off, leaving her and Harry behind like a used tissue. After all, she'd known him for over six years, and his temporary regression into the toddler tantrum stage had not surprised her in the least. But when Harry told her about the silver doe, she knew instinctively whose Patronus it was, and her hard fought-for resolve to forget crumbled like long forgotten dry cake. Even though Ron had returned.

It was easy enough to keep her secret now, even easier than it had been at Hogwarts. The boys would never comprehend her; no, they would declare her unfit for society even though they already were outcasts. All she could do now was pray to whatever deity might be listening to keep him from harm, to keep him safe, and most of all, to keep him alive. She was desperately afraid for him. And herself. As long as he stayed alive, she could cling to a hope for some, albeit distant, future. When all this mess was over, she'd go and find him. Make friends with him. Well, attempt to, in any case, and then see what would come out of it.

What if he didn't survive this crazy war? So many lives had been lost already. Her entire future would burst like a soap bubble if he died. She would not know what to do except grieve for the remainder of her life. And what a sorry life it would be.

When she came across a discarded Time-Turner in the Room of Requirement, seconds before the Fiendfyre started, she quickly pulled it over her head and hid it beneath her clothing. *Never know, it might come in useful.* The thought was a fleeting one.

Then her world crashed. Seeing her secret in a heap on the floor of the Shrieking Shack look at Harry, gazing into his green eyes with that expression only the dying have, then collapsing into death's embrace, devastated Hermione like nothing ever had.

Finding Fred, Tonks, Remus, even Colin dead meant little to her. But she could cry now, at least, without arousing suspicion, although filled with guilt over using the deaths of dear friends as an excuse to mourn her secret. Only once she started, she was unable to stop. Reality crashed down on her. So many lives lost. But why him? He who had never had much of a life, despite his brilliance, his strength, his power. A highly successful spy of twenty years, one of the most gifted Potions masters in wizarding Europe, killed by a fucking snake.

As she leaned tiredly against a wall, something nestled against her chest irritated her skin. She ignored it, slid down the wall, and rolled up in a foetal position, too exhausted to think anymore.

Hermione was awoken by something scratching acutely against her collarbone. Disoriented, she sat up and looked around. A few sconces and a few floating candles were lit, just enough to see a few sleeping forms and, to one corner, the fallen. She was in the Great Hall. Voldemort was dead. She was alive.

Oh, no. No. No. Severus Snape was dead. And they hadn't even returned to the Shrieking Shack to recover his body! That thrice-damned *thing* scratched her again. Irritated, she reached inside her clothes and, grabbing it, remembered the Time-Turner she had hurriedly put around her neck yesterday.

A Time-Turner!

Suddenly feeling hopeful, Hermione stood up. Damn, that floor had been uncomfortable. Sleeping in that horrid tent half the winter had been sheer luxury compared to the last few hours. Hermione stretched several times in the hope of getting all the kinks out of her body. It sort of worked, and her mind started whirling. *I need a place where I'm alone so I can think...*

Her feet carried her almost automatically until she reached the doors to the library. Ah, yes. Madam Pince wouldn't be here at this ungodly hour, even if she was still at Hogwarts. All Hermione knew was that the old hag wasn't one of the bodies in the Great Hall. She felt immense relief flooding her as she realised that the library felt *home*. She entered and headed to one of the tables facing the door and surrounded by floor-to-ceiling bookshelves.

First, she'd have to test the Time-Turner. It would do no good if it wasn't in working condition or worse, irreparable. She stood up from the table, moved around behind a bookshelf where she had a view of the table she'd just sat at, and very carefully turned the Time-Turner a fraction to the left.

Hermione didn't have to wait long before the door opened and she saw herself move towards the table. She silently moved behind another bookshelf in order to remain unseen and waited until her other self at the table stood up and moved behind the first shelf to disappear, disintegrate, or maybe melt with her current self.

Immense relief flooded her as she returned to the table. The Time-Turner seemed to be working just fine. There was hope yet. What she needed now was a plan.

A/N: Grateful thanks Southern Witch for the beta.

Hope on the Horizon

Chapter 2 of 2

Hermione does what she does best.

Disclaimer: Only the plot is mine. Neither bucks nor quid nor Euros nor any other currency are made from this, honestly.

Hope on the Horizon

Harry's arrival at the library startled Hermione out of her concentration. "Harry. What are you doing here?"

"Looking for you. Ron and Ginny went home with the rest of the Weasleys, so I said I'd stay behind and see if I can find you," he said. "What are you doing?" Then he grinned.

"Researching."

"Researching." He'd said it at the same time as her, and his grin widened. "Of course. What else would Hermione Granger be doing a day after the fall of Voldemort..." Then his eyes drifted to the Time-Turner. "Hermione?"

She was not quite able to meet his eyes. "Just saying, mate, you might as well try and save more than one life, you know? It would be kind of pointless going back in time to save one person if you can save more," he said casually, causing Hermione to swing her head up and look straight at him.

"What are you saying?" Her voice was no more than a whisper.

Harry drew a chair out and sat down, a deep breath escaping him. "You want Snape to be alive."

Hermione stared at him. "How... how do you know?"

Harry grinned again. "Grant me *some* brain, Hermione," he said tartly. Then he continued in a normal voice, "I've had my suspicions for a while that you aren't quite in love with Ron. Yeah, I know, you made a fuss when he came back to the Forest of Dean, but your heart wasn't really in it, was it? Anyway, yesterday, after we left the Shrieking Shack, I thought you were more upset about Snape's death than anything else that has happened combined. And I remembered how you always corrected us when we didn't refer to him in a respectful way. With Slughorn, you couldn't give a rat's arse what we called him. In fact, I'm pretty sure I remember you referring to him as *walruss* once." He looked at her evenly.

Hermione put her head on the table and groaned. "And I was so bloody sure that nobody...nobody...would ever guess!" The sudden realisation that Ron's language had coloured off on her made her shudder even more than Harry's conclusion.

Harry patted her shoulder. "It's okay, honestly. Thinking about it, I'm not even surprised. If you could coax some decent manners out of Snape and if you could Banish a good portion of his sarcasm, he could end up a really decent guy. Not just a good guy. We know he is that already. But yeah... At least he matches you in intelligence."

Hermione snickered. "Oh, no, I'd miss his sarcasm!" Then, when Harry's words connected with her brain, she threw him an incredulous look. "Where is Harry Potter and what have you done with him?"

Harry shrugged. "I guess we've all done some rapid growing up lately."

Hermione nodded emphatically, ignoring the inkling that having a silly, obsessive crush on a former teacher...dead teacher...was everything but mature.

"It's a brilliant idea, Hermione," Harry assured her. "Do you want help with it?"

Hermione, feeling somewhat ashamed that she'd never taken into account the possibility of saving more lives than just Snape's, sighed. "I have a vague plan, but nothing detailed yet. What I do have, though," she looked smug now "is a Time-Turner I hopefully tweaked according to this ancient text to go back approximately six months. Other than that, I don't know." She shrugged. "I don't know if six months is enough to convince Snape to prepare for a snake bite, let alone prepare any potions he might need. I don't know much about snakes, and I know nothing about magical ones like Nagini..."

"Six months ago or thereabouts," Harry mused, "we were in the Forest of Dean. Snape needs to be informed that you're coming to him to help him live. Or to stop him from dying. He will never believe either of us."

"Not unless I'm prepared to use Veritaserum. Or let him use Legilimency," Hermione said.

"Good idea. So you start off by what? Sending Phineas' portrait with a message to him?"

Hermione thought of that possibility for a moment before discarding it. There were too many risk factors involved. She shook her head. "How would I do that? I have to make sure I don't see myself when I go back in time, and I had my bag always with me. The risk is too great."

Another hour, and they had developed a rough plan. There wasn't much point planning out any details...Hermione would have to see how, when, and where she'd be able to give warnings to Tonks, Lupin, Fred, and Colin. She was not happy about so many unknowns, but it was better than leaving Snape dead by far.

They took a short break raiding the kitchens to find some food. Hogwarts might have received its share of war injuries, but it did not stop the house-elves from being their usual efficient selves.

On the way back to the library, Harry stopped Hermione. "Hang on. Let me get something. I'll meet you in the library. Won't be long."

He returned to the library a few minutes after Hermione, slightly out of breath. "Here," he said, throwing the Invisibility Cloak on the table, "you'll have use for that when you go into the snake pit!"

Hermione beamed at him. "Thank you so much, Harry! I'd never have thought of that!" She hugged him fiercely. Then her face turned a sheepish expression when she held up a second wand.

Harry gasped. "The Elder Wand! How...?"

"I Summoned it, how else." Hermione rolled her eyes. Did he think she'd quickly Apparated into Dumbledore's tomb itself?

"Right. I'll wait another half hour here. If, for whatever reason, you don't manage to come back here now, I'll be back around lunchtime tomorrow, alright? I'll spend the night at the Burrow."

"Okay."

Another hug, and Hermione rotated her Time-Turner, leaving Harry behind in the library. If all went well, he'd only have to wait a few minutes to see her again. For her, it would be six months or so before she would see her best friend again.

Headmaster Severus Snape did a double take when he entered his private chambers. The headmaster's living space had revealed some pleasant surprises, but the aesthetic pleasure of a silvery otter floating somewhere above the low coffee table had so far not been one of them.

"Who are you and what are you doing here? Do you not know this place is controlled by Death Eaters now?" he growled. It was a good thing that the headmaster's private space was the best protected and best warded area of the entire school, he thought. If any Death Eater had been with him there now, the latest copycat of Muggle Adolph would not have been pleased to see a Patronus. Not that any one of the dunderhead Death Eaters trolling about the school was likely to recognise a Patronus...and the Dark Lord wasn't around to witness...but still.

"Professor Snape! I've returned from the future. Today is the 30th of June 1998, and, sir, "...the girl's voice hitched..."you died yesterday. Vol...your Dark Lord set Nagini on you in the Shrieking Shack because he thought you were the owner of the Elder Wand. He's dead himself now, but that doesn't help your fate."

He recognised that voice. An image of an eleven-year-old girl with a bird's nest for hair, maniacally waving her hand in front of his eyes, silently screaming, "Pick me, pick me, I know the answer!" floated to the front of his mind.

The headmaster used the Granger girl's pause in her speech to sneer. "Naturally, Miss Granger. And the earth is flat." What the hell was the girl on about?

"Sir, please!" Her voice sounded pleading now, as if in answer to his comment. "Please believe me. I don't want you..." her voice hitched again, "...dead. Nor the others. I will be atop the Astronomy Tower at midnight tonight. If you think it's safe to meet with me, please be there, and I'll give you any information you require." Her Patronus slowly dissolved.

Why am I not surprised it's the know-it-all who managed to send a message with a Patronus? And from the future, no less. Then he frowned.

Fuck. I haven't even lived yet. And death by snake bite? I don't fucking think so. He replayed her message in his mind. Others had died, too. Then he rolled his eyes. Of course. The youngest Weasley had probably died, and that interfered with her marital plans, so she'd decided to change his fate. That had to be it. He decided to forget the Patronus visit and retreated to the sofa with the latest copy of *Ars Occulta* and a glass of Ogden's, glad that another day was over.

Damn, fucking conscience! The closer midnight approached, the more terror visions of Miss Granger being found by the Carrows entered his mind. She'd be mince meat within seconds. Damn those idiot Death Eaters. He hadn't even noticed how bad language had snaked its way into his vocabulary, which had, until recently at least, been his pride. Dealing with the Carrow twins for hours every day seriously impacted its elegance. Just about every other thought started with *fuck*. Although it might be proof of sheer frustration of the physical kind.

He sighed, got up, and put a few Disillusionment charms on his person. Then he left the comfort of his chambers and headed to the Astronomy Tower.

A/N: I Imperioed Southern Witch to beta-read. Please forgive me. But you wouldn't want to read it without her skillful hand at grammar and punctuation.