

Mirrored Fascination

by Somigliana

Attraction, unfeasible in each of their minds is in actuality, mirrored.

Mirrored Fascination

Chapter 1 of 8

Attraction, unfeasible in each of their minds is in actuality, mirrored.

Disclaimer: Severus and Hermione most definitely belong to J.K. Rowling

Chapter 1: Mirrored Fascination

Hermione leant back in her chair and scrutinized the assortment of personalities that were congregated around the table. The members of the Order had gravitated into their usual coalitions whilst awaiting the commencement of another meeting.

Her gaze flittered past the usual alliances and was magnetically drawn to the only member of the Order that seemed more isolated from the social hubbub than she.

He radiated an intense aura of solitude, firmly ensconced behind his uncompromising armor of black. His head was tilted forward slightly, his pale face partially shrouded behind his customary defensive barrier of hair. His emotionless black eyes were focused on some irrelevant point on the parchment in front of him on the kitchen table. His arms were folded rigidly across his midsection in a familiar defensive pose.

She felt an inexplicable attraction to the impenetrable man. He was utterly enigmatic, persistently composed and consistently in control. He always imparted his reports with incisive intelligence, cutting straight to the crux. Anybody attempting to lure him into social conversation was summarily rebuffed with a well-calculated sarcastic invective.

Hermione appraised his face covertly; sharply angled cheekbones framed a strong nose and baleful eyes that generally surveyed the world with varying degrees of disdain. Hermione sighed softly as she confirmed her notion that, of late, she had become increasingly aware that Severus Snape was unmistakably masculine.

She shifted her gaze away from him and onto an equally irrelevant point on the kitchen table. She shied wistfully away from her unfeasible thoughts and allowed the lewd banter and snorts of laughter from the raucous group of young men seated beside her to induce a tiny, indulgent smile at their boyish antics.

Severus extracted himself from his mindless reverie. The ceaseless din that he had shuttered from his mind invaded instantly-- an auditory assault that chafed his frayed nerves and launched a clenching wave of irritation coursing through his weary form.

His gaze was magnetically drawn to the only member of the Order that was, for once in her life, as quiet as he.

She presented a refreshing visage of youthful beauty to his jaded mind, firmly out of reach to one as world-weary as he. Her head was tilted forward slightly, her face partially obscured behind her customary riot of curls. Her soulful brown eyes were focused on some irrelevant point in front of her on the kitchen table. Her hands rested gently in her lap as she slouched in her chair in a familiar relaxed pose.

He felt an inexplicable attraction to the guileless young woman. She was annoyingly confident, frustratingly intelligent and consistently seeking approval. She always reported flawlessly, albeit with reams of supplementary information. She smiled softly and chatted engagingly with anybody attempting to lure her into social conversation, although he noted that that she had become increasingly withdrawn of late.

Severus appraised her face covertly; rosy cheeks framed an appealing nose and expressive eyes that generally surveyed the world with varying degrees of curiosity. Severus sighed softly as he confirmed his notion that, of late, he had become increasingly aware that Hermione Granger was unmistakably feminine.

He shifted his gaze away from her and back onto that irrelevant point on the parchment. He shied wistfully away from his unfeasible thoughts and allowed the lewd banter and snorts of laughter from the raucous group of young men seated beside her to induce a disparaging sneer at their boyish antics.

Author's Note

This is the result of my fascination with creating a mirrored story from each POV.

Mirrored Meetings

Chapter 2 of 8

Attraction, unfeasible in each of their minds is in actuality, mirrored. Chapter 2 - A mirrored inquisition.

Chapter 2

Mirrored Meetings

Disclaimer: Severus and Hermione definitely belong to J.K. Rowling.

The meeting was eerily silent, for once. The attention of each member of the Order was focused intently on her. Hermione felt the heavy weight of their scrutiny and resisted the urge to squirm in her chair. She stared back levelly at Minerva McGonagall, leader of the Order.

"Where are Harry Potter and Ronald Weasley, Miss Granger?" The question was clipped, the tone accusatory.

Hermione closed her eyes and sighed heavily. She wished that she *did* know where they had disappeared to. She had waited for them at their pre-arranged location, a coffee shop deep in Muggle London. While waiting for her two cohorts, she had written out her research notes and wondered about Severus Snape. Could she have been *that* wrong about the man? She had admired him deeply and had trusted him implicitly.

The agreed upon time had passed with no sign of them. They had not sent her an alarm signal. She had surmised that they had stumbled upon an important lead, and followed it without her, typical. But, she wasn't about to disclose that little bit of information to the Order; Harry had stressed the importance that their quest remain undisclosed. Hermione still couldn't fathom why Albus Dumbledore would have insisted that their search for the Horcruxes be kept secret. Surely they would make better headway with help?

Hermione answered truthfully, "I don't know where they are." She bit her lip and waited for the inevitable recriminations.

An incredulous huff of disbelief echoed through the room. "That's a record," snorted Fred.

George must have felt the need to echo his twin, yet again. He added condescendingly, "Yeah, Hermione. Since when don't you know the answer to a question?"

Minerva McGonagall whipped her head around to glare at them. "You two will be quiet. If you have nothing intelligent to add to this meeting, then get out."

They ducked their heads to their chests in an amazing display of synchronicity, apparently remorseful. Hermione smiled bitterly; as if those two would ever be ashamed of their behaviour.

McGonagall noticed her smile and snapped, "This is no laughing matter, Miss Granger!"

"No, ma'am." Her tone was appropriately demure and contrite.

"I would also like to know the nature of the task that Albus Dumbledore assigned Harry during the course of last year."

This time, she had to lie. "I don't know that, either."

McGonagall's lips thinned. "You were allowed early membership to the Order meetings last December, for the express reason that you are our direct link to Harry, the pivotal person in this war. You are supposed to aid us with his protection. Find them, Miss Granger. I need to know what they've been up to." She stood and exited.

The rest of the Order followed, leaving Hermione alone. She slumped forward and rested her head on her arms. She was tired; the double role that she fulfilled, as an Order member and a Horcrux hunter, was taking its toll. Harry and Ron weren't helping matters, running off and leaving her to face the Order by herself. It felt wrong, lying to McGonagall and the Order. They were all on the same side, weren't they?

The meeting was silent, as always. The attention of each member of the Death Eaters was focused intently on him. Severus felt the heavy weight of their censure and maintained his ramrod posture. He stared back openly at Tom Riddle, the Dark Lord.

"Where is Harry Potter, Severus?" The question was clipped, the tone cold.

Severus resisted the urge to sigh. He wished that he *did* know where the brat had disappeared to. He had followed Hermione Granger to a coffee shop situated in Muggle London. He had watched her surreptitiously, taking the opportunity to admire her from a distance. She had written out reams of notes and stared into space, apparently lost in thought. He wondered what she had been thinking about.

Harry Potter and Ronald Weasley had never arrived. Hermione had not seemed particularly concerned. She probably had a good idea of where they may have gone, but he

wasn't about to disclose that fact to the Dark Lord; Dumbledore had stressed the importance of maintaining his cover shortly before his death, and Severus felt compelled to protect Hermione from any undue attention. He knew that they were searching for Voldemort's remaining Horcruxes. They had not made much progress yet. His own, independent search had not yielded any results yet either.

Severus answered truthfully, "I don't know where he is." He glanced calmly around the table and waited for someone to challenge his statement; one of them was always stupid enough to do so.

A snicker echoed through the room. "Yeah, right," wheezed Amycus.

Alecto must have felt the need to echo her twin, yet again. She jeered, "Yeah, Hell's gonna freeze over; Snape doesn't know the answer to a question."

Voldemort tilted his head towards them and narrowed his crimson eyes. "You two will be silent. If you do not heed my words, then I will make sure that you will never have the chance to say anything, ever again."

They nodded stupidly, apparently understanding their precarious situation. Severus sneered inwardly; as if fuckwit and halfwit would ever have anything intelligent to say.

He must have missed the vermin's smirk at the reprimand, because Voldemort hissed angrily, "Would you like to test my patience, Wormtail?"

"No, my Lord," Pettigrew whispered, twitching nervously.

"I would also like to know what Potter has been up to lately, Severus."

This time, he had to lie. "I don't know that either, my Lord. He hides his tracks well."

Voldemort's lips thinned. "You were assigned the task of following Potter because you, of all my followers, know him best. He is the only remaining thorn in my side in this war. Find him, Severus." An unspoken 'or else' echoed in his voice. Voldemort stood and exited.

The rest of the Death Eaters followed, leaving Severus alone. He drummed his fingers on the table and allowed his shoulders to slump slightly. He was tired; the double role that he fulfilled, as an apparently loyal Death Eater and a Horcrux hunter, was taking its toll. His efforts would be more effective if somebody on the other side knew of his unwavering loyalty, but who would believe him now?

Author's Notes:

Here is the continuation to a little piece that has been nagging me for expansion. I finally got tired of its whiny voice and gave in.

Thank you very much to Rhiannon for beta'ing! Your insight was highly appreciated.

Mirrored Tranquillity

Chapter 3 of 8

Chapter 3: A moment of peace and quiet

Chapter 3

Mirrored Tranquillity

Disclaimer: Severus and Hermione most definitely belong to J.K. Rowling.

Hermione sat in the drawing room of number twelve, Grimmauld Place. She sat comfortably with her feet curled up under her, reading a very engrossing romance novel about a writer and her quest to make her handsome agent fall madly in love with her. Perhaps she was enjoying it far more than she necessarily would have under more normal circumstances, because it was so disconnected from her current reality, a blissful escape. The wan autumn sunlight streamed in feebly through the double-glazed windows, lighting the homely room with a honeyed glow. Dobby and Kreacher had been exceptionally busy of late—Harry was of the opinion that the busier Kreacher was kept, the better—and all the rooms were spotless.

She was taking a much-needed break from research while Harry and Ron were out on their continuing search for the elusive Horcruxes. Three months had passed since they had left Hogwarts, and their search had been fruitless thus far. The frustration and anxiety of carrying out and keeping their secret weighed heavily on all of them at times. They had some nerve-grating moments, but their friendship was established and tested. Hermione trusted Harry and Ron implicitly.

She finished the chapter, laughing softly at the unlikely antics that the writer had employed to attract her agent's attention. If such antics *did work*, and you snagged your man, he would invariably disappoint you in some way. She sighed, trying not to think of her failed attempt at a romance with Ron. She stood up to pour a cup of tea from the delicate tea service, ever-present on the dresser. She noticed the new *Daily Prophet* on the dresser as well. She decided that she might as well catch up on the news now; it would not do to be uninformed, no matter how intensely the misinformation annoyed her. She moved slowly to sit back down, sipping her tea and scanning the headlines.

She glanced at the main picture on the top half of the front page and flicked past that immediately; some idiot photographer had snapped them during a much-needed grocery shopping expedition. She looked anxious and annoyed in the photograph, an accurate reflection. The article would invariably include some blather about threesomes and speculate wildly about the perceived incompetence of Harry Potter. She skipped to the lower half of the front page, where she stopped to gaze at the familiar photograph of Severus Snape: Wanted Criminal. She touched the sneering photograph lightly and sighed. Before she could think too much about the man that occupied her daily musings far too often, she heard the front door open with a bang.

"Hermione!" Ron's excited shout was three octaves higher than usual. "Hermione, we've found it!"

Severus sat in the living room of his home on Spinner's End. He sat comfortably with his long legs stretched out in front of him, reading a very intriguing theory about coercion magic. Perhaps he was enjoying it far more than he necessarily would have under more normal circumstances, because it was his own research, disconnected from his current reality as a spy, a welcome escape. The threadbare curtains shut out all sunlight that could have warmed the stark, shadowed room. It seemed that

Wormtail was neglecting his duties again—Severus continued to delight in treating the disgusting little man like a glorified maid—a thin layer of dust covered most surfaces.

He was taking a much-needed break from brewing while Draco and Peter were out working on the task that he had assigned them. Unknowingly, they were aiding in his search for the one Horcrux that he knew the young Gryffindors would never find. In the three months since he had fled Hogwarts, his search had yielded nothing. He was close though to discovering where *she* had hidden it. The frustration and anxiety of directing the search and keeping his secret was detrimental to the atmosphere in the house. He was more easily annoyed now, his temper hair-trigger. Draco's continued whining and Peter's sycophantic grovelling irritated him immensely. He would rather live alone, but conceded that he required their unwitting help. There was absolutely no hint of friendship between the three men, and he spoke only to give terse commands. Severus didn't trust Draco or Peter at all. In fact, Severus trusted nobody but himself.

He finished the chapter, snorting with disdain at the unlikely conclusion that the obviously deluded author had reached. If the idiot's method worked at all, and your target was rendered susceptible to your will, the effect would invariably fade within hours. He sighed, trying not to despair at the obvious lack of insight into the mechanics of spell weaving. He stood up to pour a cup of tea from the chipped tea service on the table, first cleaning the cup meticulously. He noticed the new *Daily Prophet* on the table as well. He decided that he might as well peruse the news now; it would not do to be uninformed, no matter that the propaganda angered him to near boiling point. He sat back down and sipped at his tea as he scanned the headlines.

He glanced at his picture on the lower half of the front page and flipped the paper over immediately. It was the same photograph that they had been using since Albus' death. He knew that he looked condescending and angry in the photograph, an accurate reflection. The two-line article beneath the photograph would invariably appeal to the public to watch out for the evil, Dark wizard. Skipping to the upper half of the front page, he stopped to gaze at a new photograph of Harry, Ron and Hermione. He watched as her tiny likeness bit her lower lip, and he sighed. Before he could think too much about the woman that occupied his mind far too often, he heard the front door open with a squeak.

"Sir," Draco's smooth drawl was self-satisfied and accompanied by a satisfied smirk. "Sir, I think I've found it!"

Mirrored Morning

Chapter 4 of 8

Hermione and Severus struggle to motivate their companions in their continued quest to find Voldemort's Horcruxes.

Her eyes drifted open. The enticing aroma of frying bacon and the echoes of spirited laughter drifting up the stairs indicated that she'd slept later than usual. She groaned and pulled her sheet...soft cotton scented with apples and sunshine...over her head, closing her eyes for a moment.

Sighing softly with resignation at the inevitability of facing the day, she slipped off the bed to stand on the shaggy rug that covered polished floorboards and yawned open-mouthed. It had been a while since she'd slept quite that well; largely due to the enormous sense of relief she'd felt yesterday when Harry and Ron had returned with a Horcrux in hand.

She gazed out over the back garden as she dressed slowly, lingering absentmindedly over each button. A soft smile graced her features momentarily as she admired the colourful, cheering summer flowers before it faded and a frown wrinkled her forehead.

She chewed her inner cheek and thought about their status quo. Three Horcruxes...in addition to Voldemort himself...remained. The high of yesterday's triumph had already faded for her. The anxiety returned in full force and concern laid siege to her mind. Renewed tension crept up her spine and settled in her shoulders.

She moved downstairs, gathering her hair into an untidy ponytail as she stepped into the kitchen. Harry and Ron looked up from their scrutiny of the golden cup when they heard her footsteps. Hufflepuff's cup had taken pride of place at the centre of the kitchen table during their celebratory dinner. They both grinned at her, looking impossibly boyish and carefree. "Morning, boys," she said, unable to resist smiling.

"Morning, sleepyhead," said Harry, waving at her, spatula in hand. He turned back to the stove to turn the bacon. "Breakfast is almost ready."

"Oh, good, I'm starving." Ron peered over his shoulder excitedly and Hermione rolled her eyes. Ron was always starving. He was starting to develop a little paunch too, from the continued snacking that he did, now that they were out of school.

Hermione sat and stared at the cup, wondering where bloody Voldemort had hidden the rest of the Horcruxes. She smiled absently at Harry when he put a plate of bacon, eggs and toast before her. "Thanks, Harry." He really had been a good sport about cooking. Ron was useless, and she hated it, so Harry had assumed that responsibility.

"We need to find a way to destroy the soul that's trapped in there," she said pointedly between bites, "and we need to find the other Horcruxes. Any ideas yet?" She looked up expectantly.

Ron rolled his eyes. "Hermione, give us a break." He shovelled another enormous forkful of food into his mouth. Hermione felt a bit nauseous and looked at Harry instead. He was the more responsible one; he'd back her up. Harry feigned ignorance.

Turning back to Ron, she glared at him as he swallowed his mouthful down with pumpkin juice. "Do you think that Voldemort is going to give us a break?" she said snidely.

"Ah, come on, Hermione, obviously we don't think that," Harry complained. "But we've just found the cup, and we just want a rest." He gave her a guilty look. "Ron and I are going to play Quidditch at the Burrow today with his brothers. You're invited too. They're having a picnic or something."

Hermione stood, pushing her chair away from the table. "Well fine, you do what you want...I am going to carry on with my research." Ignoring their protestations of innocence, she stomped upstairs and into the study that she'd set up. She slammed the door behind her loudly.

Didn't they realise that it wasn't a game? You couldn't just switch a war on and off. And why was she always the one to have to remind them that they had work to do. She'd thought that after Dumbledore's death, Harry would be slightly more focussed, but he seemed to have lost that intense edge after a few weeks.

"There's bloody three more Horcruxes plus Voldemort left," she muttered as she tugged the desk drawer open to retrieve a quill. "And what do Harry and Ron want to do? They want to play sodding Quidditch."

"Wrong, Miss Big Brains. There are TWO Horcruxes plus Voldemort left," sneered a haughty voice from behind her, causing her to start and slap a hand to her chest with surprise.

His eyes snapped open. The nauseating stench of burnt toast and the echoes of spiteful bickering drifting up the stairs indicated that he'd slept later than usual. He groaned and pulled his sheet...stiffly starched, worn cotton reeking of mothballs...over his head, closing his eyes for a moment.

Muttering with resentment at the inevitability of facing the day, he crawled out of bed to stand on the threadbare rug that covered the age-worn floorboards and sighed wearily. It had been a while since he'd slept for more than three hours, largely due to the enormous sense of foreboding and pressure he'd felt since after Dumbledore's death when Pettigrew and Draco had taken up residence. But, they'd been useful yesterday, returning with a Horcrux in hand.

He glanced out over the back garden, and then dressed quickly, concentrating on fastening each button. A slight frown crossed his features when he saw the overgrown, neglected flowerbeds, and it intensified so the deep lines on his forehead were wrinkled.

He traced his lower lip with one finger and thought about his status quo. Three Horcruxes...in addition to Voldemort himself...remained. The satisfaction of yesterday's acquisition had already faded for him. The anxiety returned in full force and concern laid siege to his mind. Renewed tension crept up his spine and settled in his shoulders.

He moved downstairs, tucking his oily hair behind his ears as he stepped into the kitchen. Pettigrew and Draco looked up from their scrutiny of the bronze box when they heard his footsteps. Ravenclaw's Horcrux had been temporarily hidden in the kitchen cupboard last night after dinner. They both looked guiltily at him, looking absolutely pathetic. "I should have known," he sneered, unable to resist scowling at them.

"Morning, Professor," said Draco, hastily rising and smoothing his robes. He turned to the toaster to retrieve the toast. "Breakfast is ready, sir."

"Oh, good, I'm starving." Peter peered over his shoulder excitedly and Snape rolled his eyes. Peter was always starving. He was starting to develop a little paunch too, from the continued snacking that he did, now that he was out from under Voldemort's constant supervision.

Severus sat and stared at the box, wondering where bloody Voldemort had hidden the rest of the Horcruxes. He nodded absently at Draco when he put a plate of baked beans and toast before him. "Beans again, Draco?" He really was a most unimaginative cook. Peter was useless, and he hated it, so Draco had been handed that responsibility.

I need to find a way to destroy the soul that's trapped in there, he thought to himself between bites, *and I need to find the other Horcruxes.* "Any progress on finding the cup yet?" He looked up expectantly.

Peter avoided his gaze. "Give us a break, Snape." He shovelled another enormous forkful of food into his mouth. Severus felt a bit nauseous and looked at Draco instead. He was more afraid of him; he'd give him an answer. Draco feigned ignorance.

Turning back to Peter, he glared at him as he swallowed his mouthful down with milky tea. "Do you think that the Dark Lord is going to give us a break?" he said snidely.

"Ah, come on, Professor, obviously we don't think that," Draco whined. "But we've just found the box, and we just want a rest." He gave him a pleading look. "The rat and I are going to play torture-the-Muggle at Aunt Bella's today with the rest of the crowd. You're invited too. They're having a revel or something."

Snape stood, pushing his chair away from the table, knowing that they'd just pretend to work if he insisted that they continue with their search. "Well fine, you do what you want...I am going to carry on with my research." Ignoring their chastised looks, he stalked into the living room and through into the study that he'd set wards on to keep Peter and Draco out. He slammed the door behind him loudly.

Didn't they realise that he was in charge? True, they did not know the true nature of their task, but he'd stressed that it was a secret mission from Voldemort, top secret. They were not even to talk of it to the Dark Lord himself. And yet, he always had to remind them that they had work to do. He'd thought that after Dumbledore's death, Draco would be absolutely petrified and obedient, but he seemed to have lost that shadowed look after a few weeks.

"There's bloody three more Horcruxes plus Voldemort left," he muttered as he tugged the desk drawer open to retrieve a quill. "And what do Pettigrew and Malfoy want to do? They want to play with sodding Muggles."

"Wrong, Severus Snape. There are TWO Horcruxes plus Voldemort left," sneered a haughty voice from behind him, causing him to freeze in place, his eyebrows raised in surprise.

Mirrored Mind Shifts

Chapter 5 of 8

Attraction and events are mirrored.

Her lips were parted, and her eyes struggled to keep focus as she wrote. Her customarily neat and rounded handwriting was markedly less neat and rounded as she drew a wavering line through 'Ravenclaw/Gryffindor artefact' and penned 'Ravenclaw's jewellery box' next to it. 'Slytherin's locket – R.A.B.' received an amendment to its line: 'Regulus Arcturus Black'.

She set the quill down and pulled a sheaf of pages closer, gathering the hastily scrawled notes together and tapping them on the surface of the desk before laying them next to her list and quill. Her fingertips were inked-stained and ached now, but she did not register the slight discomfort.

Her mind still meandered dazedly through its paradigm shift, struggling to synchronise itself with her new awareness. She was exhausted, although it was scarcely midday—a warm, bright strip of sunlight on the worn floorboards behind her told her that it was a perfect day outside.

She ran her hand over the intricately detailed notes—in places the ink was blotchy where she'd written furiously—and marvelled at the beauty of the complex magic. The heading at the top of the page read, 'A spell to destroy a Horcrux'. It was amazing work, she realised, from an amazing mind. She'd always known that Severus Snape was brilliant. Number matrices and runic permutations littered the pages; it would have taken her years to figure that level and complexity of magic out, no matter how highly she thought of herself. He was a Master Arithmancer, too, in addition to his other skills.

She pushed her chair back and stood, swaying slightly on her feet now. She gazed at the washed-out background of the portrait, but neither its sarcastic inhabitant nor the shimmer of a portrait-to-portrait communication portal was evident. It was just that—a blank, faded painting now.

I can't believe that I believe him she thought dazedly as she walked towards the door, reaching her hand out to almost touch the surface of the painting, her eyes faraway, her mind's wild oscillations slowing in amplitude, slowly adjusting.

As she stepped from the doorway into the passage, she missed the hint of a blur of paint at the edge of the portrait. If she'd looked closely, she might have seen a patrician nose and a smirking set of lips.

She walked down the passage, trailing her fingers along the banister on one side and the panelled wall on the other. The house was eerily quiet. Harry and Ron had probably stayed at the Burrow for dinner or perhaps a drinking binge with the older Weasley men. There was a lot of that these days. Some said that the alcohol numbed the harsh reality that they faced. Hermione had tried it once. The hangover had been more torturous than the drudgery of her research.

She flicked the switch of the bathroom light. She caught sight of herself in the mirror of the medicine cabinet above the hand basin and gasped, reaching a hand to her hair. It curled and tangled wildly, caught in a half-up, half-down style with her wand. *I can't believe that he saw me like this* she thought.

With that thought her mind settled, and the cold reality of her situation clinked into place. Severus Snape was her ally now. She was the only person on the side of the Light that knew the truth, the truth that would help them to defeat Voldemort.

His lips were pressed tightly together, and his eyes were sharply focussed as he wrote. He slashed a decisive line through 'Hufflepuff's Cup'. His spiky, angular handwriting amended the line, 'Slytherin's artefact', with a scrawled, 'Gold locket – Regulus'.

He set the quill down and pulled the thick notebook closer. He flicked through the pages of notes all written in his same distinctive scrawl. He set the book aside and pulled another piece of parchment closer—one covered with detailed notes, the ink still glistening damp. His fingertips were inked-stained and his throat ached now, but he did not register the slight discomfort.

His mind was clear, but he was still trapped in suspended disbelief of certain facts. He was struggling to reconcile the truth with his own searing sense of guilt. He was tired, but he did not know what time it was. His secret study let no outside light in, and the dim lights provided no indication of the passage of time. Glancing at the clock he was surprised to note that it was close to midday.

He ran his hand over the text of the notes. In places, the writing was cramped, and he had to lean closer to make out what was written. He marvelled at the complexity of Muggle Chemistry and Biology. The heading at the top of the page: 'Ideas for killing off some comrades'. It was amazing that even though he'd attended Muggle school before Hogwarts, he'd never bothered to continue studying Chemistry. He'd been too awed by the magic, too enthralled by the promise of power.

He'd always known that Hermione Granger was intelligent. Chemical symbols and balanced equations spelt out untraceable ways to improve the odds of victory on the Light side—seemingly natural deaths, she'd said. Voldemort knew the tracers for his supposedly untraceable poisons, unfortunately.

He pushed his chair back and stood, stretching his arms upwards for a brief moment. He gazed at the washed-out background of the portrait, but neither its delightfully sardonic inhabitant, nor the shimmer of a portrait-to-portrait communication portal was evident. It was just that—a blank, faded painting now.

I can't believe that she believes me he thought dazedly as he walked towards the door, reaching his hand out to almost touch the surface of the painting. He would never have allowed his mind to dare hope, to dare imagine.

As it was, he would have never approached her alone, would never have spoken with her had it not been for the interference of the missing portrait inhabitant. As he stepped from the doorway into the living room, he missed the hint of a blur of paint at the edge of the portrait. If he'd looked closely, he might have seen a patrician nose and a smirking set of lips.

He walked upstairs after opening the hidden staircase behind the bookshelves. The house was blissfully quiet. Pettigrew and Draco had probably stayed at the Lestranges for dinner or perhaps a drinking binge with the older Lestrangle men. There was a lot of that these days. Draco said that the alcohol numbed his inhibitions, made the punishments from their Lord easier to bear. Severus did not dare try it—there were too many secrets in his mind to protect.

He flicked the bathroom light switch on. He caught sight of himself in the faded, cracked mirror above the hand basin and grimaced, sneering at himself through thick, oily curtains of black, shoulder-length hair. *What does she see when she looks at me?* he thought.

With that thought realisation clicked, and he realised that he truly cared what another person thought of him. But no matter her personal feelings about him she believed him anyway. Hermione Granger was his ally now. She was the only person on the side of the Light that knew the truth, the truth that would help them to defeat Voldemort.

Mirrored Momentum

Chapter 6 of 8

Chapter 6 - In which progress is made.

Holy cow! He was right.

It wasn't that Hermione didn't trust Severus Snape. The outcome of the Horcrux-destroying Spell was just something that had to be seen to be truly believed.

The remains of Hufflepuff's Cup, Ravenclaw's jewellery box, and Slytherin's locket lay in a molten pool of swirling gold and bronze on the kitchen table, still bubbling gently in the centre. Acrid, black smoke unfurled in suffocating wisps from the ex-Horcruxes. Shimmering rivulets of metal snaked an inexorable path towards the edge of the table.

Hermione grimaced and clamped her hand over her nose and mouth before waving her wand to freshen the air and then flicking a charm to cool the metal.

She'd peered at the solidified dull gold mass and had started to smile triumphantly when the kitchen door banged open.

"What the hell happened?" Harry demanded.

"I killed Voldemort," she said, gesturing towards the hunk of metal. "Well... three-sevenths of him anyway." She grinned. "Do I get to be three-sevenths of a Chosen One?"

Harry ignored her joke, still scowling. "How did you do that?"

"Research," she said succinctly, hoping to cut off further questions about the intricacies of the issue. She wasn't ready to admit where she'd obtained the details of the spell from.

"Well, I'm not cleaning up that mess," Harry said darkly. "And you should have told Ron and me what you were doing."

Hermione frowned at him. Lately he'd been taciturn and withdrawn, spiralling into moody depression the longer the war dragged on. And since they'd found the last two Horcruxes—Slytherin's locket under Kreacher's mattress and the Ravenclaw jewellery box in a place agreed upon by Severus and Hermione—his attitude became increasingly grim.

He was, however, right about one thing. "I'm sorry, Harry. I should have told you what I was doing this morning." Secrets and lies were intertwined with daily life now. She kept Severus and Phineas a secret, but it was all too easy to lie to her friends about other things, she realised with slight horror.

Harry grunted in reply.

The war had worn roughly against the ties of friendship that bound the Trio. That Ron was visiting his family without them this morning was telling. Living in such close proximity had introduced a chafing familiarity to their daily interactions. Quirks that had been amusing at first were annoying now.

"Oh, come on, Harry! We've made real progress," she said, ignoring his eloquent acceptance of her apology. "There's just Voldemort and Nagini left!"

"I suppose," he said, sighing.

Hermione Banished the charred metal, and she winced at the dark scarring left on the kitchen table. "I should probably have done that outside," she said wryly.

Harry snorted softly and slid into a chair, rubbing his face tiredly. "So what happens now?"

Hermione flicked the kettle on, and she dropped tea bags into cups. "Make Voldemort come and get us," she said thoughtfully. "There's nothing holding us back now. We can end this soon, Harry!"

Harry looked sceptical. "Do you honestly think that's going to work?"

"We don't really have another choice, Harry." The distinct fragrance of bergamot swirled into the air as Hermione poured boiling water into each cup.

She put his cup of tea down in front of him and touched his furrowed brow with a fingertip. "You've managed to shut him out so far. He won't see us coming. We just have to map it all out carefully."

Harry blew onto the surface of his tea, narrowing his eyes against the wafts of steam. He sipped carefully, swallowed, and then took a deep, fortifying breath. He exhaled loudly. "So," he said slowly, "we lay a trap... and I'm the bait." He smiled for the first time in weeks. "He won't be able to resist—the more public the better for him to gloat, yeah?"

She smiled delightedly and raised her tea cup in a silent toast to victory. "Exactly, Harry."

Merlin's staff! She was right!

It wasn't that Severus didn't trust Hermione Granger. The outcome of injecting a human being with a syringe full of potassium chloride was just something that had to be seen to be truly believed.

Peter Pettigrew's rotund body was slumped over the kitchen table, his silver hand still twitching spasmodically. His legs were splayed unnaturally beneath him. A nauseating stench festered in the air. The disgusting mess of death-loosened bowels seeped sluggishly through his trousers.

Severus grimaced and clamped his hand over his nose and mouth before waving his wand to freshen the air and flicking a charm to Vanish the mess.

He'd peered at the corpse and started to smile triumphantly when the kitchen door banged open.

"What the hell happened?" Draco demanded.

"Peter Pettigrew died," he said, gesturing toward the body. "Well... he certainly looks dead anyway. I have not yet confirmed." He shuddered at the pool of saliva leaking from Pettigrew's gaping mouth and gingerly placed two fingertips against the clammy, flabby neck. "No pulse," he said, wiping his fingertips on his sleeve fastidiously.

Draco was still scowling. "How did it happen?"

"Heart attack," he said succinctly, hoping to cut off further questions about the intricacies of the issue. Finally the traitor had paid for his crimes, and Severus felt not a twinge of guilt.

"Well, I'm not cleaning up that mess," Draco said darkly. "He wasn't even supposed to be here this morning."

Severus frowned at him. Draco had been taciturn and withdrawn lately, spiralling into moody depression the longer the war dragged on. And since Voldemort had disciplined his parents—a highly public humiliation—his attitude became increasingly grim.

He was, however, right about one thing—Peter was supposed to have been on *Potterwatch*. Not that any of the Death Eaters had been successful in that endeavour yet.

"Yes, you're right, Draco. I believe he returned for a change of clothing." He gave the olive green excuse for a suit a distasteful glance. Secrets and lies had been intertwined with daily life for decades. Hermione and Phineas were merely a new secret. Lies came without effort and deception was a daily duty.

Draco made a soft noise of acceptance.

The war had changed the relationship between the two men. Living in such close proximity had introduced an uncomfortable familiarity to their daily interactions. The longer their imposed habitation wore on, the more Draco wore on him. Severus was disgusted to realise that he actually felt sorry for the young man.

"Oh, come on, Draco! He was an abominable house mate," he said dryly. "You'll have the bathroom to yourself now."

"I suppose," Draco said, sighing.

Severus Banished the body with a Dark Spell that was standard in the basic arsenal of each Death Eater. "He should have had the decency to die elsewhere," he said darkly.

Draco snorted softly and slid into a chair, rubbing his face tiredly. "How are we going to explain this?"

Severus opened a kitchen cupboard and retrieved two glasses. "The Granger girl's cat ate him while he was on *Potterwatch*," he said thoughtfully.

Draco looked sceptical. "Do you honestly think He's going to believe that rubbish?"

"I doubt He'd believe Peter died of natural causes." Severus poured a generous amount of Firewhisky into each glass.

He put Draco's drink in front of him and touched the young wizard's shoulder with a pale finger. "Don't worry about it," Severus said, "it's not your problem. I'm going to alter

your memories so that you have no recollection of having seen the body." He'd Obliviate this conversation, too.

Draco swallowed his shot of Firewhisky in one gulp, narrowing his eyes with the easing burn. "That makes it easier for me, but not for you, Severus." Draco took a deep breath, exhaling loudly. He smiled slightly for the first time in months, wonder flickering in his dulled grey eyes. "You... you can fool him, can't you?"

Severus smiled sardonically and raised his glass in a silent toast to deception. "Exactly, Draco."

Mirrored Measures

Chapter 7 of 8

Chapter 7 - Preparations for the final confrontation

Harry Potter Snapped Up!

Ms. Skeeter wore exquisitely cut, fuchsia robes in this year's highly fashionable raw silk and a pair of very chic Merlin Blanksy shoes. Her trendy glasses with chic tortoiseshell frames gave her a decidedly authorly air as she sat down on the well-appointed, elegant loveseat to discuss her latest writing endeavour.

Harry Potter: The Golden Child, Ms. Skeeter's new book-only awaiting one final chapter until publishing-will include a ten-page photographic centrepiece of the Golden Boy.

"In addition to exclusive copies of childhood photographs, Harry," and Ms. Skeeter winking with the air of one personally familiar with the famous young wizard, "has consented to a private photo shoot just for my book."

Unfortunately for those eager to catch a glimpse of the recently elusive Mr. Potter, Ms. Skeeter is remaining graciously tight-lipped about the date and location of the photo shoot.

"Oh. I can assure you that it will be a most memorable location," was her only comment.

"Ugh. The *Daily Prophet* seriously needs a new editor," Hermione muttered.

"Are you sure that's clear enough, Hermione?" Harry asked. "It's a bit vague about where we're going to be. I know he's a Slytherin, but isn't that cutting the subtle edge a bit fine?"

"It's fine. One of Rita's cameramen is a Death Eater," she said, waving a hand. "We just had to make the fact that you would be doing the photo shoot public so that Voldie wouldn't get suspicious. You know how Rita loves to brag about that sort of thing. And anyway, it's probably best not to have too many onlookers at Godric's Hollow. It'll be safer that way."

"Okay, then." Harry nodded, and he ran a hand through his hair. He looked tired, Hermione thought. This couldn't be over for him soon enough. He deserved to live a blandly normal life, although Hermione despaired of him ever getting that lucky; he was living his parents' legacy.

Ron snickered at the photograph accompanying the excruciatingly written article. "Well I hope the photographs come out better than this one."

Harry's smile was pained at best, and his gaze shifted to the cauldron in the corner of the kitchen. Insubstantial wisps coiled upwards towards the high, narrow window where they diffused lazily into the light.

~oOo~

Severus looked faintly nauseated by the disgustingly flowery drivel that had slipped past the dunderhead of an editor.

"Are they stupid?" Draco asked incredulously. "Surely they know the Dark Lord is just waiting for an opportunity like this?"

"Nothing changes," Severus said acerbically. As far as bait went, it was vintage Potter. "It's a typically arrogant blunder," he said dismissively. "Potter loves the limelight. Even mortal peril wouldn't keep him from his adoring fans." Half-truth mingled in acidly with half-lies.

"Okay, then," Draco said, and he ran a hand through his hair. He looked drawn and tired, Severus thought. Perhaps one too many Obliviates lately. Witnessing torture at the Death Eater meetings wasn't child's play either. He deserved to live an easy, unprejudiced life, although Severus doubted that Draco's life would ever be the same again; he was living his parents' legacy.

Draco poked a slim finger at Harry's photograph. "Well I hope the photographs come out better than this one."

Severus's smile was pained at best, and his gaze shifted to the cauldron in the corner of the kitchen. Green-gray smoke crawled up the wall and slid sullenly along the ceiling, hovering ominously above their heads like a dark omen.

"It's absolutely perfect," Hermione said delightedly. She felt perfectly brilliant and euphoric.

After the final stir there had been a long, anticipatory moment before golden globules began to leap up from the metallic surface to tumble in a continual, glittering juggler's dance.

"You're brilliant, Hermione," Harry said.

"Don't touch it," Hermione said sharply, and she grabbed Ron's wrist. "You'll ruin it."

The Trio stood around the shimmering cauldron, smiling faces lit in the buttery, golden reflectance.

"This is an amazingly good omen," Ron said, grinning from ear to ear.

"I can't believe I got it right. The timing was so horribly tricky, and the instructions were so ambiguous!" She slid an arm around each man-boy's waist, and the Golden Trio huddled closer around their golden miracle.

~oOo~

"It's an unmitigated fucking disaster," Severus said sourly. One of his own making, admittedly, but he hated to look like a dunderhead.

The potion sat heavily in the cauldron, its dull metallic lustre entirely unexceptional.

Amazing what one extra stir can do, Severus thought as he mentally tallied the wasted Galleons.

"Isn't it supposed to be moving?" Draco asked.

"Don't touch it," Severus said sharply, and he grabbed Draco's wrist. "It's likely toxic."

They stood staring at the cauldron, faces grim and arms crossed. Draco still looked rather bemused that Snape hadn't managed to manufacture Felix Felicis for the Dark Lord.

"This is not a good thing," Draco said, wincing at Snape's imagined punishment.

"It's not an easy potion to perfect. The timing is disgustingly tricky, and the instructions are deceptively ambiguous."

Draco uncrossed his arms, gave Snape a tentative look of pity as he fidgeted nervously, and then crossed them again.

"Well done, Hermione."

Severus' words and his accompanying smile lingered with Hermione as she prepared for what would be Voldemort's last breathing hours.

She smiled to herself as she braided her hair. A parallelogram of light fell neatly on her desk, shimmering and glittering off the minuscule bottles of liquid luck. She swallowed the contents of one bottle...a conflagration of golden hope and optimism burned through her nerves and prickled at her fingertips.

"Whatever happens, Hermione, I am privileged to have come to know you."

She could hear Harry and Ron in their respective rooms-the thump of Ron's footsteps, the banter exchanged to soothe their nerves. She smiled fondly. Soon enough their own golden confidence would make them feel invincible like this.

"Come what may, I'll see you at Stonehenge at noon."

Hermione felt a warm tug of excitement. He loved her too. She was positive about that fact now.

She fastened her leather wand brace to her forearm and flexed her arm experimentally. She slid her wand into the brace and turned to look in the mirror. She smiled, and a warrior smiled back.

She reached out a hand to touch the painting. They stood palm to palm, separated by hundreds of kilometres. So close in heart, separated by so much.

~oOo~

"Thank you, Severus."

Hermione's words and her beautiful smile lingered with Severus as he prepared for the day which would hold his darkest master's last fetid breath.

He smiled to himself as he smoothed his hated Death Eater robes. With grim determination, he swallowed the contents of a row of potion bottles. One had to be prepared to stopper death on a daily basis, after all. The mixture of potions gave him a near constant headache and made his skin and hair unbearably greasy. Better a greasy git than dead, though, perhaps.

The last of the bottles...one added to his daily dose just this once...gleamed and flickered warmly in the grey light. It had been delivered that morning in an unremarkable package via the Muggle post.

"And I'm glad to have met you, too, Severus."

The house was eerily silent. Draco was Stunned and bound. The enchantments would dissolve that evening if Severus didn't make it home. The thought took a handful of his stomach and twisted viciously, quickly relieved by a glimmer of undiluted optimism. Brooding was impossible with Felix glittering in his veins, it seemed.

"I'll see you then." Face-to-face, without a protective veneer of varnish and an unlikely and sarcastic painted chaperone.

Severus felt a golden hum of apprehension...for the first time he *knew* that she returned his regard, his love.

He slid his wand up his sleeve and turned to look in the mirror. He smirked, and a hopeful man smiled in return.

He reached out a hand to touch hers. Standing palm to palm separated by hundreds of kilometres, he'd never felt closer to another person before.

Mirrored Memories

Chapter 8 of 8

Attraction, unfeasible in each of their minds, is in actuality mirrored.

Voldemort lay spread-eagled at Harry's feet, his unseeing eyes dead and grey and cold like the February sky. An icy wind whipped down the street, and Tom Riddle's wand rolled slightly across the worn cobblestone road and came to rest in a crack.

The *Daily Prophet* would have its exclusive...Harry Potter standing motionless and stoic with his parents' memorial in the background. Ordinary wizards would raise a pint and toast the delicious irony...Voldemort slain by his own rebounding Avada Kedavra, impaled upon his own black wand. History books would write of the Chosen One and his spectacular duelling skills. The Auror Academy would implement Harry Potter's duelling style into their syllabus. Children would be seen waving replica wands and playing Aurors and Death Eaters. Arithmancers and Charms Masters would research wand angles and probability matrices for decades to come.

That two spells could clash mid-air and ricochet perfectly would never be ascribed to sheer golden luck.

In the silent heartbeats that followed, Hermione glanced up and smiled at Severus Snape. In mid-Apparition spin, he returned it with a half-smile of his own, and then he was gone.

~oOo~

Nagini lay at Severus' feet, her dismembered body twitching with remembered life as he wiped the scarlet smear of blood from his sword.

The *Daily Prophet* would have its mystery to ponder when circulation dwindled...Severus Snape: sinner or scoundrel, saviour or saint? Ordinary wizards would raise a pint and toast the delicious irony...Voldemort thwarted by his own right hand, deceived by his best-loved disciple. History books would write of the Dark Deceiver and his spectacular Legilimency skills. The Auror Academy would implement Muggle martial arts into their syllabus. Children would be seen waving replica katanas and playing Sneaky Spy. Magical theorists and historians would debate his true allegiance for decades to come.

That a man could simply have spent a lifetime atoning for his horrifying mistakes would never be considered.

In the silent heartbeats that followed, Severus turned on his heel and lifted his head for one last look at Hermione. She was smiling at him. In mid-Apparition spin he returned the smile, and then he was gone.

Swirling quicksilver reflected in shimmering ripples on Hermione's face as she watched Harry navigate her selected Pensieve memories...a kaleidoscope of truth.

Lies and deception had their place in the past, and it wouldn't have been long before she stumbled over a tangled thread of her lies. The memories were intensely private, but they had to be shared. Harry had been Hermione's friend for years, and he deserved to know where most of their intelligence had come from.

Hermione smiled as Severus Snape's face flickered on the mirrored surface one last time before the memory strands twisted and writhed into a vortex. She stepped back to allow Harry room as the Pensieve disgorged him.

His face was paper-pale, and he pressed his lips together before he glanced up at her with haunted green eyes. "Why didn't you tell me then?"

"Because you hated him," she said simply. *And because it was easier for me to lie than to explain. Because I didn't trust you to be rational.*

Harry looked like he was going to cry. He swallowed and gazed up at the ornately pressed ceiling. "I would have wanted to know. I deserved to know."

She nodded. "You did, yes." *And I'm sorry.*

~oOo~

Fluid, silver memories swirled restlessly as he waited for Draco to navigate his carefully selected Pensieve memories. He closed his eyes for a moment, frowning, before he opened his eyes to watch his past.

Lies and deception had their place in the past. Eventually Draco would notice and examine the inconsistencies of the last few months, question Snape's motives. The memories were intensely private, but they had to be shared. Sometime since the Astronomy Tower and their subsequent flight, Draco had become important to Snape. Draco needed a nudge in the right direction anyway, Snape thought.

Severus grimaced as Albus Dumbledore's face flickered on the mirrored surface one last time before the memory strands twisted and writhed into a vortex. He stepped back to allow Draco room as the Pensieve expelled him.

Draco's face was winter-white, and he pressed his shaking fingertips to his lips before he glanced up at Severus with haunted grey eyes. "Why didn't you tell me then?"

"Because you were a child," he said simply. *And because you hated Potter and Dumbledore. Because I thought you your father's child for a time. Because I didn't trust you to be rational.*

Draco looked like he was going to cry. He swallowed and gazed up at the age-spotted ceiling. "I would have wanted to know. I deserved to know. You had no right to take my memories."

He nodded. "I thought I did." *And I'm sorry.*

Hermione was early. She sat on the grass a way back from the cordoned off barrier and watched the tourists walk around Stonehenge, taking photographs and theorising about astronomical importance or pagan rituals with wide arm gestures. Hermione smiled to herself; not even the Unspeakables knew what Stonehenge's purpose had been.

The shadows cast by the enormous stones grew shorter as midday approached, and she began to scan the milling crowd with anxious eyes. Conversation through magical canvas lent a certain familiarity with her old teacher, but there was nothing quite like the intimacy of a face-to-face meeting. The confidence she'd felt under Felix's golden spell faded as the minute hand of her watch inched inexorably towards the hour.

She glanced up from her watch to see him walking straight towards her. He was wearing dark blue jeans and a black trench coat, and his dark hair whipped around his head, licking towards the sky. He was Severus Snape, certainly, but not the Potions teacher or the Dark wizard or the brave spy. He was her Severus. Just a man.

It felt like he'd Apparated to that very spot a moment ago, although Hermione knew he couldn't have. She stood up and began to walk towards him. He mirrored her tentative smile, and her heart was beating at double speed by the time he stopped in front of her.

"Hello, Hermione," he said.

~oOo~

Severus was precisely on time. He walked past the tourists walking around Stonehenge who were taking photographs and wondering if the monument had some special significance. Of course it did, he thought. But its magical relevance had been lost to time, perhaps erased by an astute congregation of wizards who would not want that information in Dark hands.

He began to scan the milling crowd with a practiced eye. Outwardly he was calm, but his stomach was knotted and twisted. He felt like a fourteen-year-old on his first Yule

Ball date, an experience he'd not care to repeat. Hermione's face was familiar by now, but textured, late night conversations were not quite the same as facing the woman he loved.

He would never be able to explain his sense of relief when he saw her sitting on the grass a little away from the crowd. He began to walk towards her with a measured and determined stride.

She stood, and the brisk wind tugged her brown skirt around her calves as she began to walk towards him. Streamers of curly hair escaped from her braid danced like ribbons on the air. She was Hermione Granger, certainly, but not the student or the brilliant mind or Harry Potter's valued friend and advisor. She was his Hermione. Just a woman.

She smiled at him as they neared, and he smiled in return. He stopped a short distance from her, feeling uncharacteristically shy.

He felt that he should have said something profoundly more meaningful than the simple greeting that came out of his mouth, but he changed his mind a moment later when he heard her say his name with such love in her voice that he could scarcely believe it was for him.

"Hello, Severus," she said.

He was perfect. Some might say that he was too thin, too white, and too shy with his hand hovering uncertainly near his erect cock. Others might say he had too little chest hair, too little muscle, or too little sex appeal to make up for his unhandsome face.

But he was hers... The hands that reached out to touch her body were his, and the mouth that kissed hers was his, and the tongue that tasted her body was his, and his heart and mind and body were perfect.

Her fingernails dug into his biceps, and she arched her body up against his as all the sensation rushed to the centre and exploded outwards in little fairy lights of bliss.

~oOo~

She was perfect. Some might say that she was too curvy, too freckled, and too coy with her mane of hair covering her hardened nipples. Others might say that her breasts were not big enough, or that she was not lithe enough, or that she had too little skill to compensate for her shrewish temperament.

But she was his... The hands that reached out to touch his body were hers, and the mouth that pressed a kiss to his hipbone was hers, and the tongue that traced pleasure up his cock was hers, and her heart and mind and body were perfect.

He buried his nose in the curve of her throat and thrust faster and harder as all the sensation rushed to the centre and exploded outwards in little fairy lights of bliss.

My heart has found its mirrored soul.

I am home.

Author's Note:

Thanks to gelsey for checking this through for me.

The end has been a long time coming, I know. But this fic has grown with me from my very first days in the fandom. And it has been a pleasure!