

When All is Said and Done

by Veronica Faux

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Chapter 1 of 1

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"I should thank you, Albus. I heard you pleaded on my behalf to the Confederation."

"I do not believe the Dementor's Kiss is a fitting punishment for any crime."

"I may deserve it."

"Many would agree with you."

"It's of no consequence. In retrospect, I think you've arranged a far better punishment. If the masses could appreciate irony, they'd find this quite enjoyable. Congratulations."

"I take no pleasure in this."

"No... I'm sure you don't. You may even grow to regret your compassion."

"Compassion is a strength. I won't regret it."

"Oh, you will... in time. There are worse things than death. Will you visit me when I'm in my cell?"

"Maybe."

"I suppose you enjoy such hurtful elusiveness? But I daresay I deserve your hatred."

"I do not hate you, Gellert."

"You should. It would make things simpler."

"Simpler is not always better."

"Suit yourself. I'm aiming for simpler."

"Oh...?"

"You had a choice, Albus. You didn't have to be the one to come for me! It would have been easier to have just passed on what you knew to the Aurors. Have you any idea how it hurt to see *you* on the battlefield? You can't expect me to forgive you."

"You *forced* me to do this. I begged...begged!...you to forget your goal."

"My goal? It was once ours."

"I was naïve."

"How convenient! It must be a comfort to have gullibility to fall back on."

"I realised my mistake."

"I should have realised mine... then maybe I would never have lost to you."

"I wondered..."

"Don't be so vain, Albus. After all that I'd done to achieve *our* goal, do you think I'd let your new-found wisdom ruin it? You stood before me as my enemy, and as much as it pained me, I treated you as such."

"And in that we have a shared understanding."

"You betrayed me, Albus. Do not dare to tell me you know what that pain is like."

"It must be a comfort to hide behind your own pain, Gellert, blinding yourself to what others suffer. You think I have no idea what it is to feel betrayed? You used my plans to further your gains. Do *you* have any idea how it 'pained me' to see my theoretical and vile strategies being used on our own kind?"

"Oh, Albus, you're a snake in lion's fur! Your hurt wasn't so great that you didn't wait to see if they would have worked before hunting me down."

"How dare you!"

"I dare! Now you dare to admit you enjoyed watching your plans being put into action. A part of you revelled in how close you could have come to winning it all, didn't it?"

"They were never supposed to be used!"

"But look at what I accomplished! If you had had the courage, we could have changed the world."

"It would not have been for the better... for the Greater Good. It was foolish to have thought otherwise."

"You're hiding behind a pathetic excuse. You should have had the courage to see it through. Now, we will never know."

"I didn't come here to argue or to discuss fanciful follies."

"Why did you come?"

"I can't explain what prompted me to come."

"That's probably the only honest thing you've said."

"Don't bait me, Gellert."

"I have nothing else to do...you're leaving?"

"I have nothing else to do."

"Ah... so you do hate me."

"Goodbye, Gellert."

"Albus! Albus..."

ooXoo

"I didn't expect to see you again."

"It wasn't my intention to visit."

"What changed your mind?"

"Your wand."

"You mean the wand you have aimed at me now?"

"My apologies. Is that better?"

"Slightly. I'd still prefer it if you weren't here. It's taken me quite some time to forget the world out there...you're ruining the mood."

"May I sit?"

"Ha! You are trespassing and you're worried about manners?"

"I didn't want to trouble the guards with this matter."

"So you flew in through my window... how romantic! And don't glare so. None of my other delusions do that, so why should you?"

"Am I a delusion?"

"You must be... although the others weren't quite so grey and old."

"Time weathers all."

"Even my memories? Maybe that's for the best."

"Are you...? Maybe."

"Why are you so dejected? You're just an illus...you are an illusion... aren't you?"

"I wish this all was an illusion."

"Albus, I..."

"Please stay seated."

"Why?"

"Please, humour me."

"Ah... you're nervous. How can I harm you, Albus? I have no wand, and I do not have the strength to cast wandless magic. I am an old man: old, decrepit and more dead than alive."

"You are wrong, Gellert. You can harm me more deeply than I thought possible."

"You have grown to regret your compassion, haven't you? Do you wish to twist time and go back all those decades, allowing me to die at the lips of a Dementor? Or maybe... maybe you wish to show me mercy now?"

"You will serve out your allotted time, Gellert."

"I used to think you hated me. No one could tolerate this existence for someone they loved. It was easier to think you hated me, because if you didn't, then you never loved me; now, I *know* you never did."

"That's close enough, Gellert."

"No! I could never get close enough, could I? There was always duty... Oh, how I hate that delicate prison. It's worse than this one. This one has no illusions of letting you live free; in this one, you know that you'll die lonely and cold."

"Let go!"

"It's true though, isn't it? You never let anyone in, do you? Not even me. You use duty like many others use Firewhisky, using it to dull your senses to the horror of perpetual loneliness and emptiness."

"You're hurting me!"

"I'm barely touching...oh, Merlin! What happened?"

"I destroyed a Horcrux."

"A Horcrux did that to your hand?"

"I was foolish enough to believe I could play with fire."

"It looks like...oh, Albus! You fool."

"I know. This is the price of hubris."

"And you once said that there was no crime worth dying for, yet you've put forth pride as a suitable candidate?"

"There has come a time where my death would be of more use than my life."

"Riddles! Why torment me now with riddles?"

"A wizard has cast a terrible shadow across the Wizarding world. He has twisted the fears and ideologies of a certain few and used them to spread confusion, pain and fear. He must be stopped."

"And your death would help secure this?"

"It wasn't part of the plan to die in such a way, but I will use whatever strategy I can to secure this wizard's downfall."

"And what have I to do with this?"

"I took this wand from you when I disarmed you."

"You must have quite a collection of wands by now."

"I am so tired, Gellert. Children are dying, families are being torn apart, and Muggles are being tortured, and all in his name. I was relying upon this wand to be instrumental in Voldemort's downfall."

"Voldemort? I have heard his name; it has echoed throughout this prison."

"Voldemort seeks the last of the Deathly Hallows; he seeks this wand."

"The Elder Wand is unique; it craves strength. It will not readily serve him; he *has* to defeat the current owner: *you!*"

"I intend to die by my choosing. I will not be defeated."

"If you intend to wither to nothing, then the wand can be taken from you or even gifted. Wands sense failing power and the power in a new master; they will serve the strongest, even if you have not defeated the owner in combat. How else could I have stolen the wand and still wield it?"

"Indeed. If I do not weaken and remain undefeated, then it will serve me! I have no intention of going quietly into that good night; I will die as required."

"You and your damned duty!"

"Duty has nothing to do with it! I have no desire to be consumed by this curse."

"That's almost selfish, Albus. You leave me to waste away in this cell, with nothing but my dreams and cockroaches for company, and yet you allow yourself the luxury of

an escape."

"I cannot be defeated by a Death Eater. Do you understand?"

"I understand. But what I don't understand is why you are here."

"He will come for you. When I am dead, he will come for you."

"Oh."

"I... I need to know that you'll not provide him with the knowledge to master the wand."

"In another time and place, this would be hysterically funny. Even if I wanted to help this Dark Lord, I couldn't. Torture me, would he? Ha! The Cruciatus would grant me peace. Should he attack my memories, he'd only find the cultivated madness of a man left alone with nothing but his sins. The only thing he can take is my life, and that is something I would gladly offer."

"Gellert..."

"Have a care, Albus. Wands are tricky, and they possess some unknown quality which directs them to their masters; they alone will decide when you are defeated, and that may not tally with your view on the matter."

ooOoo

"It's very bright."

"You'll get used to it, Gellert."

"He came for me, Albus."

"I know."

"Strange that I should get mercy from a Dark Lord."

"There is a certain humour in the situation."

"My heart broke when he slithered into the room. I knew you were dead and gone. It hurt."

"There is no pain here, only that which we bring with us."

"There... there are people here who may not... They..."

"They may still harbour hate for you; they may not. But this place is vast and what you make it."

"Albus?"

"Yes, Gellert."

"Why did you argue to spare my life?"

"I couldn't bear the thought of living without you."

"But you did. You spent decades without me."

"It was my punishment: my punishment for not letting you in. The Confederation never intended to give you the Dementor's Kiss; I just added my voice to theirs."

"You let me believe otherwise."

"You said it was simpler if we hated each other. I did not want to burden you further; you suffered enough."

"You hoped that I hated you?"

"It was better than duty and Firewhisky in helping me to forget the loneliness and emptiness of my life."

"So, what happens now?"

"We live the life we should have."