

Painted Domain

by beaweasley2

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Thank you, slytherinlaurel, for the quick beta read.

Harry stood in the Headmaster's office, staring at the painting of an empty chair of what should have become Headmaster Severus Snape's portrait in the frame next to Dumbledore's.

"Back again, Harry?" Dumbledore asked.

Harry hung his head. "Yes, sir." He looked up at the face of someone he'd considered akin to a grandfather. Well, that was before he'd learned the truth behind their relationship. Be that as it may, Harry still considered Dumbledore a mentor. "I had just thought that with all I've been able to do for him, his portrait would've come to life, that's all."

Dumbledore smiled. "Ah, Harry. You've done more than you know. Do not think that you've failed. You have exceeded my every expectation. I'm very proud of you, my boy."

"Thank you, sir," Harry replied and leaned against the desk. "I just wish... How are you, sir?"

"I'm hanging around, my boy," Dumbledore said with a twinkle in his eyes. "I hear that congratulations are in order."

Harry blushed. "Yeah, our second. We're going to name after you and Professor Snape. Albus Severus Potter."

"Harry, I'm honored. I'm sure Severus would be, too," Dumbledore replied, obviously very pleased.

"I just wish I could talk to him, you know. Tell him... say I'm sorry," Harry said, looking down at his hands.

Dumbledore's expression turned into a sympathetic smile. "I'm sure he knows."

Hermione yawned and stretched, straggling from her bed as the morning sun started to brighten her room. She quickly dashed for the loo to do her morning routine. Traipsing into the main room of her flat, she glanced at the large portrait that hung over the sofa. Its occupant had his back to her, but that was all right. He was still with her.

"Good morning," she said as she walked to the kitchen to prepare her breakfast tea and heat a lemon scone. "Did you sleep well?"

"I find that I don't need much sleep," he stated gruffly. "You, on the other hand, overslept."

She smiled at him. There were two panoramic size pictures that hung in her flat. The one in her personal study/potion lab was one she'd commissioned depicting two large rooms, a fully stocked potions lab and a library with thousands of books on the shelves. An open door in the potions lab showed innumerable potions ingredients which filled a walk-in pantry. The library had huge windows and an open door which gave a view of a lovely garden out back and, on the far left, another open door that hinted at a bedroom.

In her living room over the sofa was the rear view of the home she'd commissioned for him, depicting the garden of a stone farmhouse full of fruit trees, shrubs, flowers, herbs, both magical and mundane, a brook, several benches, and a fountain. The panoramic paintings had cost her the large monetary honorarium that had come with her Order of Merlin, First Class, but they were worth every Galleon and Sickle, in her opinion.

He turned and surveyed her appearance. "Are you staying home today, then?" Severus asked, crossing his arms.

Hermione smiled. "Yes. I have that potion to finish, the paper to write on its creation, crediting, as you know..." she said with a wink, "... your research and initial trials, of course, and a report for work that I can do from home. Our Potions book, *Advanced Potions and Draughts*, is back from the editor, and I need to review it with you as well to make sure I got all your annotations down right."

"Don't get cheeky with me, Miss Granger." Severus scowled at her.

"I wouldn't dream of it," she replied, crossing the room to answer the peck of an owl on her window. *Daily Prophet's* arrived."

"Any more ridiculous articles about me?" he asked off-handedly as Hermione scanned the paper.

"No... oh, wait," she replied, plopping herself on the sofa. "Your Order of Merlin was approved—First Class at that! I guess Harry came through for you after all." She read the article to him. "Did you want me to thank him for you?"

"Don't be absurd," he sneered derisively. "So, I'm stuck with you all day then?"

She stretched her legs out on the sofa, straightened her dressing gown, and adjusted the throw pillow to get comfortable. "You could always go to your other portrait at the castle if you want to avoid me, but yes, it's you and me until seven."

He crossed his arms belligerently. "It's a chair. All I got was a bloody green armchair with carved snakes on the armrests and a curtain. No, thank you." She could hear him approach by the sound of his boots on the painted path of his domain. "What's happening at seven?"

"I'm having dinner with Harry," she replied, summoning her tea. "I should warn you, the girls are all coming over Saturday for tea."

"Oh, lovely," he sneered.

She set her teacup on the coffee table. "You could visit with Minerva, you know."

"Dumbledore invades my space to *talk*," he grumbled. "If Minerva needs me, she can call me." He tried to lean forward to look at the paper she was reading.

"Did you want me to read the paper aloud?"

"If you must," he said indifferently.

Hermione smiled and began reading the first article on the front page about the new personal and family broom regulations the Wizengamot had recently passed.

Found a prompt that said, 'Harry is disappointed that Severus never showed up in his portrait in the Headmaster's office. Why?' But I cannot recall where or from whom. Anyway, it tickled my fancy tonight.