

Circus Caper

by *astopperindeath*

A series of nightmares leaves Hermione wishing for a more ridiculous solution.

Chapter One

Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: This is not my own property; JK, Scholastic, and Warner Bros. own the HP Universe. I'm not making any money, either.

AN: Eternal thanks to my beta, debjunk. Any errors left in this piece are entirely my own doing. I blame irishredlass69 and droxy (indirectly) for this one. The bunny started hopping with a series of comments and responses here on one of her drabbles. Also, you might want to listen to this starting between drabbles 7 and 8: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8vINCq_IAI.

The nightmares started when their relationship had become official. Both agreed that their relationship would have enough problems early on, between the age difference and their own personality quirks, without the additional stress of telling other people. But Hermione was too honest for that—the guilt of keeping something this big from her best friends was eating at her psyche. And nighttime was the one time of day her brain was relaxed enough to let the stress win.

The nightmares always began the same way. In her dream she would be awoken by a bang coming from the fireplace. And then...

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"Severus, what was that?" she would ask, attempting to rouse him.

"Nothing. Gosleep," he would mumble, sleepily.

Their fire would glow green, and the Lucius Malfoy of her childhood would appear, spotless and unruffled, despite his entrance via Floo. In quick succession, Bellatrix Lestrange and Fenrir Greyback would appear as well, the former staring at her maniacally, the latter licking his lips and looking at her as if she were a tasty treat.

Severus, however, would blissfully continue sleeping through the entire ordeal—which *should* have clued her subconscious into the fact that she was still asleep, but it never did.

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"Now what do we have here," Lucius would purr. "A Mudblood in our Prince's bed."

She would stare at him defiantly, which was the wrong answer. Her Muggle-headed, dream-self never thought to summon her wand.

"Look at the Mudblood, Lucius. Thinking it has the *right* to be with one of the Dark Lord's *chosen*!" With a crazed scream, Bellatrix would then cast a volley of never-ending *Crucios*.

Hermione would bite the inside of her cheek, willing herself not to cry. It wasn't until Greyback would advance upon her, his teeth becoming more wolf-like that she would begin to scream.

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Severus would rouse her, awakened by her screams. He would wrap himself around her, asking what was wrong. Each time, she would tell him she'd had a nightmare, but she couldn't remember the details. He would attempt to sooth her, but generally would quickly fall back asleep. And she would lay there awake for the rest of the night thinking.

While she agreed in theory that their relationship needed to remain a secret for now, her heart clearly was worried about public reaction. She knew telling her friends wasn't an option just yet, but she had to stop these dreams!

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It was a simple plan. As a child, her father had always told her that the way to conquer nightmares was to recognize a nightmare when one was having it and to concentrate hard enough to manipulate the results. Her recurring nightmare as a child was falling—falling off a cliff that would result in her waking up on the floor. Before long, she had been able to cause her dream-self to have the ability to fly, negating the terror of the dreams. Eventually the dreams had stopped happening. She hadn't had nightmares in decades; she hoped her technique wasn't rusty.

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That night, the dream started the same way. A split-second after the "thump" from the fireplace, she summoned her wand and, pointing it towards the fireplace screamed, "*Riddikulus*". She knew the Death Eaters weren't boggarts, but nightmares might as well be dream-boggarts, so it was worth trying.

The fireplace glowed green, and Hermione gripped her wand, waiting to cast all the Dark curses she'd been too afraid to try casting when awake. This was her dream; she would be in control no matter what.

Nothing could prepare her for the treat her subconscious was about to give her. Absolutely nothing.

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Instead of Lucius, Bellatrix, and Greyback calmly walking out of her fire, she heard an effeminate screech and several muffled curses. It seemed as if the Death Eaters were stuck inside her chimney! Slowly, like clowns coming out of a clown car, the trio rolled out onto the hearth.

It was more like clowns in a clown-car than she ever could have realized. Her giggle woke Severus, who shot up and grabbed his wand. Hermione began sniggering uncontrollably.

"What in the bloody fuck is going on, Hermione?"

"Just you watch," she replied. And with that, she began humming circus music.

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Much like boggart-Snape had appeared to be confused in Neville's grandmother's clothes all those years ago, boggart-Malfoy was equally perplexed by his situation. Red clown shoes and an oversized clown-suit adorned his body. But the best was his hair. Raising a hand to his hair, he shrieked, as he realized it had become tight, synthetic curls, in a rainbow of colors.

The gigantic smile painted on his face was what did Hermione in. She laughed so hard, she snorted, a feat normally accomplished only when she had been drinking.

Severus blinked repeatedly. Even dream-Severus knew this situation was intensely comical.

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It became even more comical when Bellatrix and Greyback stood up. Bellatrix, in all her haughty glory, had been reduced to the bearded lady. With crazed energy, she began trying to rip the beard off until she realized it was actually growing out of her face. Greyback was the strong man, his lycra singlet doing very little for his figure. Even Greyback knew he looked completely absurd.

It was seeing the former that finally elicited uproarious peals of laughter from Severus. The trio continued looking baffled as Hermione raised her wand.

"*Riddikulus!*" And with a pop, the three were gone.

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She awoke to Severus leaning over her, attempting to rouse her.

"What's wrong? Why are you laughing?"

"Just a dream, Severus. Go back to sleep, love." Not having to be told twice, he curled around her and promptly began snoring softly.

Hermione didn't sleep again that night. If one had wonderful images of Death Eaters as circus characters in your head, he wouldn't sleep either. It was far more difficult than she imagined to keep from waking Severus as giggles continually threatened to overtake her.

She never had the nightmares again. Though a ridiculous part of her wished she had.