

Fear of Capture: A Love Story

by Verus Lumen

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Afternoon Tea

Chapter 1 of 1

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Hermione Granger was beginning to believe that he actually was guilty of all those charges. At first, she had been so sure, despite Harry's outraged protests, that Professor Severus Snape had committed those various crimes for the sake of the greater good. But now, given all this fresh information, she wasn't so sure.

It was easy for her to dismiss Albus Dumbledore's death, despite the pain it caused her. It was an obvious necessity if Professor Snape was to continue his role as a Death Eater without suspicion. His running from the school grounds was yet another necessity.

She had had something of a falling out with Harry and Ron - they hadn't agreed on several things, including the role of Severus Snape. So, the boys were off finding the Horcruxes. She was fine with that - it was a job that needed to be done in any case. Her last real conversation with the boys had been in October.

But she had a strange feeling that there was somewhere she needed to be as well. And so she left the boys to their business and began to track the only one who truly confused her. It was now deep into December, with snow falling so heavily as to create a sea of white.

Severus Snape was sitting down to afternoon tea.

"Mark - seventeen paces. I can feel him here," Hermione whispered, pressing the electric device closer to her ear. She spoke into a tiny microphone, completely devoid of any magical qualities.

She had learned that the best way to track Professor Snape would be through Muggle means, of which he hadn't an inkling.

"Copy that, Hannah. We'll bring the car around. Do you think you can grab him?" Matthew responded, trying to mask his California accent.

"No. Don't come. I'll call you when I'm done. For now, go to Position D."

"Yes, ma'am." Hermione could sense, perhaps through her magic, that Matthew had already left the area. Satisfactory, as none of her Muggle associates knew what she truly was.

She avoided using magic when she could, but Snape would not have enough warning to run at this point. She pulled her wand out from the little holster she had created, strapped to her leg.

She whispered a little spell underneath her breath and the hidden staircase beneath the snow was revealed. Now for the hard part.

She dug for two minutes using a shovel and a pickaxe. The snow had hardened into sheets of ice above the little door that led to Severus' hiding place. He must not have left his warded rooms for ages.

Finally, she hit something with a small thud - the door. Quietly, she removed the snow from its latch and hinges, closing it behind her as she climbed down. Somehow, from a memory that wasn't quite hers, she knew which direction to go.

Hermione turned into the kitchen area, from which the faint smell of tea was emanating. A small spoon clattered on the wooden floor, and Hermione pointed her wand to the space of air between herself and the stove.

"Show yourself, Severus Snape," she commanded using the muffled voice her mask provided.

Another clatter from the direction of the stove, but she knew better. He had moved towards the door she'd entered in and had attempted a diversion by means of wandless magic.

She pointed her wand toward the door and said quietly, "Petrificus Totalus."

Yet another muted thud and Professor Snape's body suddenly appeared, rigid, on the ground.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Snape," Hermione said, tucking her wand into her sleeve.

No response.

"Do you have any questions as to my intrusion?" she asked. When he didn't respond, she suddenly remembered he couldn't speak.

So she looked around in his underground cabin and located some tweedy-looking rope. Grunting somewhat, she bent down to tie up his hands and feet, which she then tied together so that his wrists were tied to his ankles behind his back.

"Finite Incantatem," she murmured, nearly laughing at the incredibly silly and childish spell she had used to subdue him.

Snape eyed her from the floor, unable to move much.

"Who sent you?" Snape spat, resolving not to wriggle too much so he wouldn't appear ridiculous.

She glared at him through her goggles - he had yet to see her face, and she would prefer to keep it that way. "I sent me."

"Have you come to kill me?" he asked, somewhat matter-of-factly.

"Perhaps. But most likely later," Hermione said, contemplating her wand.

"That always means 'no'. I assume you've been sent by Dumbledore," he said, eying her boots.

"Albus Dumbledore is dead, as you well know," she said, her voice rather shaky. His innocence seemed to be impossible at this point.

He rolled his eyes and clunked his head back onto the floor. And lay there.

"Professor Severus Snape," she said, attempting to elicit some response. She knew that somehow, he carried an answer. She needed to know.

"Yes?" came a voice from behind her, causing her to shriek. The body on the floor suddenly transformed into a dog, panting on the floor.

Hermione wheeled around, shock evident in her eyes, even through the tempered plastic of her snow-goggles.

Her gasp was muffled by his hand on her lower face, covering what would be her mouth and nose if her mask wasn't in the way. He slammed her head and upper body very quickly, and very hard, into the corner of his kitchen table. A very loud thud later, she lay sprawled on the floor. To his surprise, she was still conscious.

"S-stop. Professor..." Hermione whispered, clutching the back of her head. She could feel the warmth of blood oozing slowly out into her hair. Her scalp was tender and bloody.

"No. Whoever you are, you came down here knowing full well that I'm a murderer. Who sent you?" he asked, kicking her ribs once, and he attempted to kick her again before she caught his foot in her hands. She slowly twisted it until his ankle forced him to bend his knee and swivel backwards, where she tried to choke him into submission with the rope she had used to tie up his transfigured double.

He elbowed her in the face and her goggles flew off, revealing a set of familiar brown eyes. He glared at her, still unable to recognize precisely who she was.

Hermione fell back onto the floor, covering her left eye with her hands. She was crying or bleeding, but it was wet and warm. She suspected it was a little of both.

"Who sent you?" Severus repeated, rubbing his throat with his hands - he had come very near to choking.

"I already told you. Now lie down and let me tie you up!" Hermione screamed, somewhat disoriented by the massive blood loss from the back of her head. Her hair was a stringy mass of blood and curls. Her step faltered and she accidentally slammed her shoulder against his kitchen wall, slowly sliding down the edge of it. Severus noted the streak of blood that followed her descent.

"I have a better idea," he said, coming at her slowly. Her vision went dark, but the last image in her head was a set of deep, black eyes, devoid of any emotion.

A/N: This fic is only HBP compliant, as I posted the first chapter a very long time ago. I have since decided to continue it without a first chapter rewrite. However, I have had it beta'd by the very sharp and accommodating Farzana. Her suggestions really improved the original first chapter.

Constructive reviews are appreciated. Thanks for reading!