

# The Snapes Go on Holiday

*by ancientgirl*

\*COMPLETE\* Severus and Hermione celebrate their twelve years of marriage. Too bad for Severus she invites the gang to come along too.

## The News

*Chapter 1 of 24*

\*COMPLETE\* Severus and Hermione celebrate their twelve years of marriage. Too bad for Severus she invites the gang to come along too.

I haven't been feeling too creative lately. All of this holiday stress plus some RL garbage has me all bogged down. But I did manage to get something down for a Christmas fic. Updates may not come as quickly as I usually get them out, so I hope you will all be patient with me.

I hope you enjoy this.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks as always to the lovely June for all of her help.

### Chapter 1

It would be Severus and Hermione's twelfth wedding anniversary just one week after the New Year. Hermione was due some time off from work, and decided that it would be a nice opportunity to take her husband away for a real celebration of their anniversary. Usually they had a quiet dinner together in their bedroom. The children would spend the night at Harry's home in Godric's Hollow. He and Ron were roommates and loved taking care of their friend's kids. But this anniversary, Hermione had something big planned.

Severus and Hermione had begun seeing each other one month after she graduated from Hogwarts. She'd run into him in a bookstore, and they began discussing new theories she had read in Potions Weekly. As their conversation ran long over some tea, they discussed her newly acquired position as senior editor at a small publishing firm over lunch. When that conversation ran long yet again, they decided to have dinner together, where they discussed Severus' foray into some independent researching he had taken up over the summer holiday away from Hogwarts.

They both knew they were in for it when they realized they had spent their entire day together and still wanted to be in each other's company. Their one day together quickly turned into one night, then another day and night, and so on and so forth. Soon the new school year started, and Hermione had her nineteenth birthday and moved into Severus' rooms at Hogwarts.

The war ended shortly before Hermione graduated. After which Severus had sold his small home down Spinner's End and purchased a larger home just outside of London. When he and Hermione married, they together found the home of their dreams. The new home had four bedrooms and a spacious master bedroom with connecting master bath. A large attic served as his library/study, and the cellar was his lab. There was a good sized garden in which Severus could grow his own potions ingredients. During the summer holidays, they lived in their home; and when school began, they both moved into Severus' rooms at Hogwarts.

After four years of marriage, Severus and Hermione had their first child, a son they named Odin Zeth Snape. Eleven months later they had a daughter, Sage Andalusia

Snape. Ron often kidded that Odin was barely out of the oven before Hermione began to stuff it with more buns. Hermione just rolled her eyes, thinking only Ron would compare having children to making food.

When Minerva took over the Headmistress position from Albus, Severus had been elevated to the position of Deputy Headmaster. Minerva had felt no desire to move all of her things to Albus' rooms, so she offered Severus and his family the larger rooms. With Severus as the second-in-command, Minerva and Albus — who was semi-retired — often went on holiday, as they knew that things at Hogwarts would run smoothly while they were gone.

It was now early December. Today in London, Hermione had lunch with several colleagues visiting from her firm's sister company in Germany. One of the older wizards, Count William Heinrich, owned a castle in Bavaria that he had restored several years prior. When he had purchased it, the castle was in ruins. Being a castle now owned by a wizard who knew how to apply Muggle-repelling charms, it looked to be in ruins still, the same as Hogwarts. No one ever approached, as it was well situated near the mountains. He offered Hermione the use of his entire castle, which had dozens of rooms, and all the elves for her holiday.

Hermione was ecstatic. She had seen photos of the castle as Count Heinrich began restoring it. She couldn't wait to tell Severus and their children. When she finished her lunch, she went back to her office and set about the task of sending out invitations. She wanted this to be not only a celebration of their twelfth anniversary, but a Christmas and New Year's celebration as well. This would be an anniversary to remember.

Hermione knew Severus would be in his office, so she decided to tell him her news there. As she entered, he was sitting at Albus' old desk, with several parchments spread all about the desk, cursing under his breath.

"Imbecile," he said as he looked at the parchment in his hand and smirked. "I should just let him make this potion. I haven't seen Poppy reattach an arm in years." His face then darkened. "Hmm...then again, it might be my arm he blows off." He made a swift yet elaborate mark with his quill and laid the parchment down. As he reached for another, he noticed Hermione had walked in. He smiled.

"Hello, love," said Hermione as she reached the desk, then bent down to kiss him.

"You're home early," he stated.

"Oh, Severus. I have the most wonderful news," she said excitedly as she sat on his desk.

Severus leaned back in his chair and placed his hand on her knee. He loved when she sat on his desk to tell him of her day.

"Well, what is it? I'm quite busy you know," he said gruffly. His voice sounded harsh, yet his eyes gave him away.

"Oh, stop that, you know you can't wait to hear," she teased as she lightly tickled his chin. "How would you like to spend the Christmas holidays in Count Heinrich's castle in Bavaria?"

Severus' eyebrows shot up. He'd seen the photos Hermione had brought home during the renovation of the castle. Count Heinrich had an extensive library, not to mention the largest private potions lab in Europe. A man could get lost amongst the many cauldrons and beakers in that lab.

"How did you manage that?" he asked as he stood.

"Well, he was in London today, and I had mentioned to him that our anniversary was a few days after the New Year. He offered us his castle for several weeks. Won't it be fun? I can leave a day ahead of the school closing for the holidays, so that I can get everything ready for us and everyone else." Hermione hugged him and turned to leave.

Severus' hand wound around her wrist and pulled her back.

"Everyone else who?" There was an ominous chill creeping up his spine. He hadn't felt anything like that since he'd accidentally seen the Dark Lord wearing a calypso outfit while doing something he later found out was called The Macarena. "Wait, let me sit down, and should I pour myself a drink?" He sat heavily on his leather chair.

"Severus, you act as though you're going to keel over and die over what I tell you," said Hermione as she placed her hands on her hips.

"I bloody well may want to die after I hear who I'm going to be spending a two-week holiday with," he said.

"I invited the gang, of course. Harry, Ron, Ginny, Neville, Albus, Minerva, and I'm still waiting on Hagrid to let me know if he's coming, too."

"The gang," he sighed heavily. "I'd sooner face the Spanish inquisition." Severus knew he was in for the worst holiday in existence when Hermione invited practically everyone in their circle — rather, her circle of friends to join them and their children.

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I hope you enjoyed the start of this.

## Settling In

Chapter 2 of 24

The gang is finally at the castle, but things don't run as smoothly as Severus would like.

It may take me longer to post updates for this story than it usually takes me. The holidays have a choke hold on my muse. But slowly, I'm twittling away. I hope you can be patient with me.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thank you as always to June. Your suggestions are always appreciated.

## Chapter 2 – Settling In

Much to Severus' dismay, everyone Hermione invited, with the exception of Hagrid, accompanied the Snape family on their holiday. Hagrid would spend his Christmas holidays with Madam Maxine, who had invited him to stay with her in her small chateau in France. Hermione even brought along her cat, Crookshanks, who in Severus'

opinion couldn't die fast enough.

Severus decided he would spend as much time as he could exploring Count Heinrich's castle. The grounds were quite expansive, and with any luck he would only have to bear his unwanted guests during meal times.

On the first day at the castle, things went fairly smoothly, with the exception of Ron walking into the wrong room. Hermione had never seen Severus so angry. It was lucky for Ron that Severus had been walking out of the shower and didn't have his wand. Unfortunately, Ron couldn't get the image of the naked former professor out of his head, so it was necessary for Harry to Obliviate him.

After the first day, things calmed down. Feeling that Severus wasn't having as good a time as she'd hoped, Hermione decided a family picnic near one of the lakes in the forest would be just the thing to relax her husband.

Severus readily agreed. Some time with his family alone would be just what he needed. The family of four walked together into the forest. Odin and Sage were never allowed to go into the Forbidden Forest near Hogwarts; and they were enthralled by the trees all around them. As they approached the lakeside, Hermione began to unfold the large blanket she had in her arms.

"Why don't we sit over there next to the water?" she asked as she looked at the children and Severus.

"That would be nice," said Severus as he followed her. He placed the basket of food on the ground, and walked to the edge of the water.

The lake was gorgeous. There was a chill in the air, but not so bad that they would be uncomfortable. While it should have been snowing, the Count preferred his lands free of the bitter winter. At great expense, each year he employed several old wizards to keep the snow from his lands via spells and incantations. The old wizards would travel to his property just before the winter holidays, and spend several days setting up charms and spells to keep the snow at bay. It was quite an elaborate undertaking, but to Count Heinrich, it was worth it.

Severus looked at the snow-covered mountains. That was the one thing the Count insisted on keeping natural. He turned slightly when he heard the children voice their hunger. His son and daughter eagerly waited for their mother to hand them the sandwiches they had lovingly prepared for this private picnic, with fresh Bavarian cheeses and meats.

"Isn't it wonderful here?" said Hermione as she breathed in the air.

"Yes, and you know what the best part is?" asked Severus.

Hermione smiled and looked around. "The beautiful lake?"

Severus shook his head.

"The mountain view?"

Again Severus shook his head.

"The fresh clean air?"

"No, the quiet. No Potter or Weasley. No Albus, no..."

"Oh, Severus, honestly. Do try to enjoy yourself. It's fun to be around our friends," Hermione admonished him and handed him a sandwich.

Severus rolled his eyes while their children snickered. He took the sandwich and began to unwrap it. As Hermione took out two more sandwiches and handed them to the children, she noticed an odd smell coming from the basket.

"What's that smell?" she said aloud.

Severus shrugged his shoulders, as he sat down and took a bite from his sandwich.

"Eww, Mummy, the sandwiches are all wet!" cried Sage.

Hermione took the sandwich from her seven-year-old daughter and smelled it.

"Oh, no. Crookshanks must have urinated in the basket!" she yelled. She didn't say it, but she knew her cat hated to be left behind, so he probably did this as revenge.

At that moment Severus spit out the entire contents of his mouth and began gagging.

"What the fuck?" he yelled, as he threw the sandwich on the ground and stood up.

"Severus, watch your language."

"Watch my language? I just had a mouth full of cat piss. What better moment in my life to NOT watch my language!"

"Mummy, everything is all wet," said Odin.

Hermione frowned and looked up at Severus.

"Well, it looks like our picnic will have to be rescheduled," she said.

Severus was leaning against a tree, dry-heaving.

"Severus, are you all right?"

He turned around and narrowed his eyes.

"No, I am not all right. This was supposed to be a quiet holiday for the four of us. Instead you invite half the Order, but I didn't complain. I allowed it. I refrained from hexing Weasley's balls off when he walked into our bedroom as I was walking out of the shower. I even allowed you to bring that furball you call a familiar with you, even though he insists on using my side of the bed as his litter box. But this is the last straw. I can't send the others away, but that demon cat goes!"

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I couldn't resist using the scene from "National Lampoons Vacation" I saw a Chevy Chase movie the other day and it reminded me of the scene in which the dog went in the picnic basket.

# A buddy for Severus

## *Chapter 3 of 24*

Severus just isn't having a good time at all. But Hermione has just the thing to help him have some fun.

As always, all canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks to June for all of her wonderful suggestions and help.

### Chapter 3 – A buddy for Severus

Severus was livid! The entire walk back to the castle he didn't speak a word, and Hermione knew that was not a good sign. He walked quickly ahead of them, mumbling curses the entire way. He could still taste the urine on his tongue. Hermione sped up, knowing she had to get to their room first. She'd thought she heard Severus saying something about an orange fur-lined robe.

"Severus, please slow down!" she yelled.

Severus stopped and turned. He looked even angrier, which she hadn't thought possible. Hermione looked down at Odin and Sage, and handed them the blanket and small picnic basket.

"Kids, why don't you take this to the kitchen and ask the elves to make you both something to eat."

With that, the children nodded and ran to the castle, thinking they would ask for Black Forest Cherry Cake, or maybe an ice cream sculpture with the tiny paper umbrellas and fruit.

"I'm sorry. You're having a horrible time, and it's all my fault," she said apologetically.

"Not entirely your fault. Your cat's incontinence is to blame for our picnic gone awry," he said, then turned and began walking back towards the castle.

Hermione trotted after him, then caught him by the arm once she caught up.

"I'll send Crooks to my parents. Will that make things better?" she asked hopefully.

Severus sighed. He would have liked for her to send all of their guests back, but he supposed that the furball would be a good start.

"Well, that's a start." He kissed her on the forehead and went back on his way.

Hermione watched as he walked alone. She thought for a moment, then decided he might have a better time if he had one of his friends here. After all, she fully realized that Harry, Ron, Neville and Ginny were really her friends. And Albus and Minerva were much older than Severus, and more like his parents than anything. The Snape children had each other. No, her husband needed a buddy of his own to play with, and she knew just the person to call.

Severus had sequestered himself in the Count's lab, thus leaving Hermione to her plotting. She went to the living room, where the fireplace was quite large and was comfortably used for flooing. First, she sent Crooks on his way. He wasn't very pleased, knowing she'd picked Severus over him. So right before she sent him through the Floo to the Grangers', even though he was stowed securely in his traveling container, Crooks coughed up a furball which hit Hermione square in her mouth, which she happened to have open at the moment. Score two for Crookshanks. After gagging, and barely keeping herself from throwing up her breakfast, she took a handful of Floo powder and prepared to throw it into the grate for her second task.

Before she could throw the powder in, Ginny walked into the living room.

"How did the picnic go?" she asked. Ginny sat on the couch in front of Hermione. The only Weasley daughter had grown into a beautiful young woman. At thirty, she recently broke up with her third boyfriend in less than a year. Ginny was looking for Mr. Right. Unfortunately, most of the men she dated were looking for Mrs. Right Now. While she occasionally went to dinner with Harry and Neville, there was something still so immature about both young men. She often found herself wishing she'd find a man like Severus. Well, not exactly like Severus, but someone older and surer of himself. Not to mention, she wanted to know what a wizard with experience was like in bed. Being best friends, Hermione and Ginny often talked to one another about their sex lives. And from what Hermione had told her, Ginny definitely wanted an older man.

Hermione looked at Ginny, and placed the Floo powder back in its glass container.

"Well, remember when I told you Crooks was using Severus' side of the bed as his personal sandbox?"

Ginny smiled and nodded.

"Today, Crooks went from peeing on the bed to peeing in our picnic basket."

Ginny gasped.

"Oh, no!"

"Oh, yes."

"Where is Crooks?" asked Ginny.

"I just sent him to my parents' home for the rest of our holiday."

"I'm guessing Severus also isn't too happy about all the extra company either, is he?" Ginny knew that their former Potions professor didn't like having too many people around during his holidays. After spending nine months of the year surrounded by dunderheads, he valued his alone time. Ginny understood that feeling; growing up in a small home with six older brothers made her value her own privacy.

"I'm afraid that's my fault," Hermione admitted. "I wanted for all of us to be together during the holidays. My parents were too busy with their practice, and I thought it would be nice to have a houseful of friends. I didn't even think about what Severus may have wanted. Now he's miserable." Hermione once again took a handful of Floo powder and smiled. "But, I think I have a solution. I'll just invite one of his friends to spend the holiday with us."

"Hermione, he doesn't have that many friends. Actually, I don't think I've ever heard him talking about anyone other than..." Ginny's eyes almost popped out of their

sockets. "You're inviting him?"

"That's right."

"Wait, let me just go to my room. I need to fix my hair. Oh, and I've nothing decent to wear." Ginny ran out of the living room, hell-bent on making herself look like anything but a frumpy red-haired spinster.

Hermione smiled. She knew of Ginny's infatuation with the older Malfoy and realized this might be just the thing to do, for both Severus and Ginny. She looked toward the fireplace and threw in the Floo powder.

"Lucius Malfoy's estate."

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I couldn't resist getting Lucius in on the fun. I hope you enjoyed this chapter.

## Lucius Arrives

*Chapter 4 of 24*

Lucius gets an invitation to spend the holidays with the Snapes. When he arrives at the castle, he sets his sights on a very pretty redhead.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thank you to June for all of her help and suggestions.

### Chapter 4 – Lucius Arrives

Lucius was sitting in his study reading. He'd been sulking all day, and quite frankly, he was sick of himself. He remembered a time when he had been a very visible wizard. Visible in the sense that he enjoyed being seen and fawned over. But, ever since the death of his wife, Narcissa, he felt that none of the things he once enjoyed mattered anymore. He had loved his wife, but not to the extent that his life meant nothing without her; as surprising as many people would find it, Lucius always enjoyed being a husband. He had taken care of his wife. He had spoiled her. He loved treating a woman like she was a queen; it made him feel strong, masculine, virile.

He knew it would have been easy enough for him to find someone to occupy his time, but he wanted more than just a warm body in his bed and a living accessory to adorn his arm while walking through Diagon Alley. His marriage to Narcissa Black had been planned by both of their parents while they were still young. In time he grew to love her, but he could never honestly say he was "in" love with her. No, this time he wanted to fall in love. He wanted someone that hadn't been chosen for him. He could have any woman he wanted. The only problem was, he didn't want any of them. Most women he came across only wanted him for his wealth. True, he was an obscenely attractive man, but he was quite certain that if he was poor and living in a cave, not one woman would want him. Looks will only get you so far.

As he sipped his cognac, his musings were interrupted when the flames in the hearth grew green and came to life.

"Lucius? Are you home?"

He recognized the voice to be Hermione Snape's. Having left his former Death Eater beliefs in the distant past, he always found it pleasing to hear from his friend's wife.

"Yes, Hermione. I'm here. I'm surprised to hear from you. Severus told me you would all be on holiday."

"Oh, Lucius. Thank goodness you're home. Yes, we're here in Bavaria, but I'm afraid the holiday isn't going quite as planned. Severus isn't having a very good time, and it's all my fault."

Lucius knew exactly why his friend was miserable. Shortly before the Snape family left, Severus confided that he would rather have spent his holiday in Voldemort's outhouse than go on their trip. Just knowing he would be stuck in a castle with Hermione's friends had him dreading the entire trip.

"I'm sorry to hear that. Perhaps I can Floo him later," said Lucius.

"Actually, I was hoping you didn't have any plans of your own for Christmas. If you don't, perhaps you can come and spend some time with us."

Lucius smiled. It happened that he didn't have any plans. Draco was on a business trip in America and had taken his wife, Cho Chang. They would be spending the Christmas and New Year holiday in New York. While they had invited him to come along, Lucius had no desire to stand in the middle of a crowded Muggle street, counting down the new year with no one of his own to kiss.

"I have no plans. I would love to join you. I just need to get some things together here, and I should be over in a short while."

"Excellent!" cried Hermione. "Thank you so much, Lucius. I'll make sure I tell the house-elves to prepare a room for you."

The Floo connection closed, and Hermione called for one of the house-elves.

"Miss called Koko?" asked the small house-elf.

"Yes, Koko. We will be expecting one more guest shortly. Please prepare the room next to Miss Weasley's."

Hermione wasn't sure if Ginny would be pleased or angry that she had placed Lucius so near her. But seeing as Ginny was in total lust over the man, Hermione doubted she would be anything but appreciative. Although she did wonder if Lucius would be interested in Ginny. It wasn't that Ginny wasn't attractive; she was smart and a great catch for any man. But Hermione wasn't quite sure if she was Lucius' type. Ginny wanted someone to settle down with; she wanted to get married and have kids.

Was Lucius even looking for a wife and children at this stage in his life? Narcissa had passed away a little over five years ago, after she'd accidentally ingested some poisonous mushrooms while in the Amazon. Lucius seemed to turn away from many of the things he once had pleasure in. He was seen only on rare occasions, when he would have dinner at the Three Broomsticks with some Ministry colleagues, or buy clothes at his favorite haberdashery.

Hermione shook her head. It was too late to go back now. Lucius was on his way. Whatever happened, she was sure it would be interesting.

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Lucius arrived a half-hour after he spoke to Hermione. As he came through the Floo, he found a roomful of Gryffindors.

“So it seems I have walked into a lions’ den,” he said playfully, then looked around the room. He noticed Harry Potter playing chess with Ron Weasley. The two young men looked up from their board and wondered what the elder Malfoy was doing there. Lucius then turned his attention to Neville Longbottom, who was having tea with a strikingly beautiful red-haired young woman.

“Well, and who do we have here?” Lucius approached the young woman with a predatory grin.

Ginny smiled back at him, hoping the warmth in her cheeks didn’t mean she was blushing.

“It’s me, Mr. Malfoy. Ginny Weasley.” She giggled like the eleven-year-old girl she had been when she first saw him. He still looked much the same. The only difference was she now saw him with the eyes of a woman — a woman looking at the most handsome man she’d ever seen. Many years had passed since her first encounter with the man standing before her. True, it was Lucius after all who had given her Tom Riddle’s diary – a Horcrux – in her first year at Hogwarts, but his time in Azkaban allowed him to reflect on many things. Lucius repented much of what he did as a Death Eater. And when Draco almost died at the hands of Voldemort himself, it was then that the elder Malfoy knew he’d had enough. He realized almost too late that Voldemort was truly insane. During several skirmishes as well as the Final Battle, Lucius stood beside Severus and helped protect and save Harry and numerous Order members. Even Arthur and Molly Weasley now approved of Lucius’ charitable endeavors on behalf of Order and Auror widows as well as many children left orphaned after the war.

Lucius hadn’t seen Ginny in several years. He looked at her from top to bottom.

“Miss Weasley, how lovely to see you. I did not recognize you. My my, how you have grown.” His eyes sparkled as he looked at her. It was as though something inside of him had come to life. He felt warmth in his chest and a fluttering in his stomach.

Harry, meanwhile, narrowed his eyes towards Lucius. It was bad enough that Neville was also there, but now he had Lucius to contend with. While Harry’s relationship with Ginny never amounted to much more than a few sporadic dates throughout the years, he felt that eventually, once he made up his mind to settle down, that he and Ginny would marry. He’d never seen Neville as much competition. Neville didn’t like Quidditch, nor was he as good-looking as Harry. But Harry’s former schoolmate was a kind and sensitive man. Women liked that in men, but not Ginny. Harry knew Ginny still liked him, just as she had liked him since she was eleven. He knew that whenever they went out, Ginny felt proud to be by his side. She would wait for him to finally decide he wanted to settle down, and then they would be happy together. In short, Harry was living with the typical self-delusional idea that most men have about the women they date: that she would wait forever for him, until he finished sowing his wild oats.

Harry was delusional, all right. He had no idea just how much.

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I needed to get Lucius in here so this chapter was mostly him, but I'm thinking next chapter will be a bit of Severus and Lucius.

## Former Death Eaters and Best Buds

*Chapter 5 of 24*

Severus emerges from his self imposed exile in the dungeons, and we find out a little of what he was really doing down there.

I'm wondering if I should put this story in a general section. This is as much a Lucius/Ginny story as a Severus/Hermione story. But, I think it could easily work if I give both couples equal time though.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks to June for all of her help and suggestions.

### Chapter 5 – Former Death Eaters and Best Buds

Harry observed Lucius speaking to Ginny. He felt uneasy as he noticed how much Ginny seemed to be enjoying her conversation with the elder Malfoy. So intent was he to eavesdrop that he didn’t realize Ron had won their match.

“Checkmate,” Ron was smiling. For a brief moment he had thought Harry would beat him, but since Lucius came into the room, his friend’s game began to suffer. Of course, being a fierce competitor, Ron took advantage. He looked up at Harry and realized the Boy Who Lived wasn’t even looking at the game board. Ron noticed Harry still looking towards his sister and Lucius.

“What’s wrong, Harry?”

“Huh?” Harry looked towards Ron. “Sorry, what did you say? Is it my move?”

“I just won. What’s the matter with you?” asked Ron.

“Nothing, I’m fine. I don’t feel much like playing anymore.” Harry stood and walked towards Ginny and Lucius.

For his part, Neville watched the two quietly. Even though Lucius had come to the side of the Order, there was always a dangerous quality about him that Neville felt uneasy about. The tall blond always seemed imposing to him.

“Lucius,” Harry said as he extended his hand and Lucius shook it.

“Harry, how nice to see you.” Lucius remembered that there were others in the room. “Neville, Ron.” He bowed his head slightly toward the others, then turned his attention back to Ginny.

At that moment, Hermione came into the room.

"Lucius, welcome." Hermione welcomed her guest graciously, with a kiss on the cheek and a warm hug. "I'm so glad you came. Maybe now Severus will emerge from the Count's labs and spend some time with the rest of us."

"Well, you above all people should know that Severus loves tinkering with his potions. I'll see what I can do, however, if you point me in the right direction."

Hermione summoned Foofoo, the head house-elf, and asked him to take Lucius to the labs. Before he walked out of the room, Lucius took one last look back at Ginny. As he left the room, Ginny took hold of Hermione's arm and let out a breath she didn't even realize she was holding.

"I can't believe he actually came," said Ginny enthusiastically.

Harry, of course, didn't notice the gleam in Ginny's eyes, and thought she said it more in disbelief than anything.

"I didn't know you invited Lucius to come along," Neville said to his hostess.

"I hadn't at first, but I thought Severus might like to have someone his own age around," answered Hermione.

"Yeah, I'm sure they're reliving the good old Death Eater days," said Ron as he popped a small tea sandwich in his mouth. Blank faces met his gaze. "Oh, like I'm the only one who thought that."

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Lucius was led to the dungeons of the castle, which were actually very undungeon-like. They were incredibly well-lit and decorated in bold colors.

"Master Snape is in this room, sir. Is there anything more?" Foofoo asked.

"No, thank you." Another change in Lucius was that now he was quite gracious to house-elves. His own were free and very happy to be in his service.

Foofoo disappeared, and Lucius knocked on the wood door.

"Who is it?" called Severus.

"Lucius." He waited a few moments, then heard footsteps approach. The door opened and he was pulled inside quickly.

Severus looked out into the hallway, first left, then right. He then closed the door.

Instead of finding several sets of cauldrons bubbling wildly, Lucius found what Draco called a media room. Lucius himself did not own a television, or any other type of Muggle electronic apparatus, save a laptop computer, which Draco insisted he have so that they could communicate easier and faster by Internet.

"I thought this was some potions lab," said Lucius as he approached a fifty-inch plasma television.

"It is. But yesterday I went to that bookcase near the table to look for a book I needed. I noticed a book which seemed out of place, and when I went to take it out, the entire back half of the room transformed into this."

"So while your family is upstairs enjoying their holiday, you are sitting down here moping watching that?" asked Lucius as he pointed to the television. There was a woman with an odd looking metal object that looked like a large needle. She was manipulating something that looked like yarn into a hat. Behind her was a sign – *Knitting for Dummies*.

"I tried to be part of the group, Merlin knows I tried. But the first day we were here, Weasley walked into my room and saw me naked."

"Which Weasley?" asked Lucius.

"The one who flies for the same team."

"Please tell me you don't mean Ginny," said Lucius.

"No!" yelled Severus as he rolled his eyes. "It was Ron. He thought my room was his. Then the day after that, Four-Eyes drank too much brandy after dinner and threw up all over my lap when I was wearing the new trousers Hermione purchased for me in Harrods. As though that in itself wasn't bad enough, he tried to help me clean it up, and instead of saying *Scourgify*, he pointed his wand and said *Stupefy*. My penis wouldn't work for two days. And you don't even want to know what that furball cat did this afternoon."

Lucius was laughing so hard he had tears running down his cheeks. Severus scowled at his friend.

"I'm sorry, Severus. It is quite funny. I don't blame you for sequestering yourself, though. But you need to get out of here."

"Hang on, what exactly are you doing here?" Severus finally realized how unexpected it was for Lucius to be present. "Not that I mind. It will be nice to have another Slytherin around."

"Hermione invited me to spend the holiday with all of you. Draco and Cho are in America, so I thought why not. I'm glad I came. I had no idea that Miss Weasley had grown into such an attractive woman."

Severus raised an ever-inquiring brow and smirked.

"Yes, she is quite pleasant to look at."

"Oh, you think so? Does your wife know you think her best friend is pleasant-looking?" said Lucius playfully.

Severus chuckled. "I love my wife very much, and I think she is the most beautiful woman in the world. But I do still have eyes." Severus noticed Lucius smiling as they spoke about Ginny.

"Are you perhaps interested?" asked Severus.

"Most definitely. But, I know she and Harry are an item. Besides, I may be too old for her taste."

"Well, for one thing, I have it on good authority that she is not seeing anyone seriously, and that includes Harry. And two, said authority also states that Miss Ginevra Weasley may be looking for an older man."

Lucius smiled, looking much like the cat that ate the canary.

"Really, now? I have a feeling this is going to be quite an interesting stay. No wonder Harry took such an interest in our conversation. I doubt very much he is going to like having competition."

Now it was Severus' turn to smile. Things were turning around for the Potions master. Watching Harry and Neville try to impress Ginny with Lucius around would be very entertaining.

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I hope you enjoyed this chapter.

## Severus Comes Out Of Exile

*Chapter 6 of 24*

Severus is finally out of the dungeons.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thank you to June for all of her help and suggestions.

### Chapter 6 – Severus Comes Out Of Exile

Severus and Lucius walked up from the dungeons together. Lucius was bringing his friend up-to-date on his son's dealings.

"So it seems that you may be a grandfather soon, then?" asked Severus

"Yes. Can you imagine me, a grandfather?" Lucius laughed. It was certainly a hard thing to picture. The man who once dressed as a Death Eater in Voldemort's ranks, would soon dress up as Father Christmas for his grandchildren. As odd as it sounded, Lucius found he liked the idea very much.

"I don't even want to think about that yet," Severus said, inwardly shuddering. "My children are too young for me to think of that."

As they got to the main floor, they were met by Odin and Sage.

"Uncle Lucius! What did you bring us?" cried Sage as she ran to Lucius.

"Sage, that's quite rude, young lady," scowled Severus.

Lucius merely laughed. "It's all right, Severus. As it happens, I did bring them a little something. But, they must promise to be patient, and I will let them have their gifts after dinner."

Odin and Sage frowned. At age eight and seven, neither child was very patient, but it seemed that they had no choice.

"Oh, all right," agreed Sage, as she hugged Lucius. Odin took his turn, then the two children ran off. They knew they would be able to talk Albus and Minerva into conjuring some pony for them to ride around the property.

"Um...Severus, I was thinking. Why were you watching a knitting show?" asked Lucius.

Severus smiled.

"Knitting keeps my fingers nimble," Severus replied, quirked his eyebrows. "Women like nimble fingers."

They both laughed and walked towards the large living room, where the rest of the gang was gathered.

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The evening passed quickly. Harry and Neville practically sprinted to the dining room behind Ginny, as both wanted to take a seat next to her. For his part, Lucius only smiled. He would have his moment with Ginny.

The Count's dinner table was square, which allowed for easy conversation. Hermione was pleased to see Severus socializing again, as he happily argued with Lucius and Albus regarding new theories on how the Dark Arts could be used for good rather than evil purposes. Hermione and Minerva discussed new Transfiguration articles they planned on writing together, and Ginny tried to keep herself from being split in two. Ron entertained Odin and Sage, telling them about Fred and George's new product ideas they were developing to sell at Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes.

After dinner, the group split up. Albus and Minerva took the Snape children and walked through the gardens, pointing out the constellations easily seen in the sky. Hermione and Severus disappeared with Lucius into the library for a nightly brandy, while poor Ginny was stuck with her brother and two would-be suitors. As Ginny longingly looked towards Lucius' retreating form, she wondered if she would ever get a moment's peace from Harry, Neville and Ron.

As the day grew late and everyone was in their respective rooms, Lucius began to formulate a plan. He'd been discussing with Severus ways to get Harry and Neville away from Ginny long enough for him to spend some time with her. Severus assured him he would help. Actually, Severus said that even if he had to place the two young men in a body bind and hang them upside down in a rather suspect room in the dungeon, Lucius would have time with Ginny. Lucius saw a glimmer in Severus' eyes as he spoke. He knew Severus almost wished he could do just what he had said, even if it was a bit obvious for a Slytherin.

In their bedroom, Hermione climbed into bed and suspiciously eyed her husband.

"Severus?" she asked as she lightly ran her finger across his chest.

Severus opened one eye and looked at her. *'Don't tell her anything, Severus, no matter what she does to you,'* he thought.

"Yes?"

"What were you and Lucius whispering about in the library earlier?"

"Oh, just wizard talk," said Severus, as Hermione's fingers traveled from his chest to his navel.

"What kind of wizard talk?" Hermione kissed Severus on his neck, just where she knew he liked it. She had told Ginny earlier that evening that she would try to get as much information about Lucius as she could. Hermione knew Lucius somewhat well, but she didn't know what he would be looking for in a woman. Seeing Severus and Lucius earlier that evening, speaking in hushed tones, Hermione knew they had to have been talking about more than just Quidditch and Dark Arts.

'*Damn her*,' thought Severus. Hermione was sucking on his neck. If she kept that up he'd confess to being Voldemort's wet nurse, just to keep her from stopping.

"Oh, you know. The usual. Quidditch and the Dark Arts."

Hermione immediately stopped touching him.

"What did you stop for?" asked Severus.

"Severus Snape, you know very well you weren't talking about that," she said in a huffy tone.

Severus pushed himself up on his elbows and looked at her.

"Well, why is it so bloody important for you to know, woman?"

"It's not important, I was just curious, that's all."

"All right then. What were you and Ginny whispering about before dinner?"

Hermione opened and shut her mouth several times, before she answered.

"Witch talk."

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Not much going on in this chapter, nice and quiet. But there is more coming. Severus isn't out of the woods yet, and Lucius has his sights set on Ginny.

## Christmas Fun

*Chapter 7 of 24*

Severus and Hermione get a moment alone, and Lucius makes a move on Ginny.

I've made an attempt at smut in this chapter, so hopefully it's not too bad and you will enjoy it.

All canon characters belong to JKR

Thanks as always to June whose help is more than greatly appreciated.

### Chapter 7 Christmas Fun.

Two days passed and much to Lucius' disappointment, he was still unable to get Ginny alone. Severus did indeed attempt to place a body bind on the two young men, but each time he went to reach for his wand, Hermione would eye his hand suspiciously, as though she knew just what he was up to.

On Severus' suggestion, Lucius joined him in the mornings down in the dungeons so that his fingers could also become nimble.

It was now Christmas morning, or had been for several hours. The Snape children were playing with their magical toys, while Albus and Minerva watched. Everyone else began to plan their day.

Severus invited Hermione on a private picnic. Knowing that Crooks was far away, and making sure he oversaw the picnic basket being prepared, the food never leaving his line of vision, Severus knew that this time things would turn out better.

He met Hermione in the courtyard beneath their rooms. They walked hand-in-hand into the woods, happy to have some time alone. Instead of going to the same spot of the terrible first picnic, they decided to go a bit further, which turned out to have an even more beautiful view of the mountains. While the Count's charms and spells kept the snow at bay within the castle's boundaries, they had to cast warming spells over themselves, so that they wouldn't need to bundle up against the cold.

"Severus, this is gorgeous," said Hermione, as she wrapped her arms around his waist from behind.

Severus dropped the basket and kissed her.

"The view is spectacular, isn't it?" he stated.

Hermione moved to face him and kissed him.

"And so...private." Hermione wiggled her eyebrows suggestively.

"Are you suggesting..."

"Strip!" Hermione attacked him like a woman who hadn't seen a man in several years. They toppled over and fell to the ground. Severus fell on his back while Hermione began to unbutton his shirt. Between having guests, and Severus' incident with the *Stupefy* spell, they'd hardly had any time to have sex. Forget foreplay and making love at this point, Hermione needed some throw-down heavy-duty animal sex.

"Just rip it, rip it off me!" yelled Severus as he began to pull Hermione's jumper over her head as she straddled him. "No bra, Mrs. Snape?"

His own shirt came open, as buttons flew everywhere. Hermione reached down and quickly unbuttoned his trousers; much to her joy, Severus wore no boxers today. She took hold of his cock and began stroking him fast.

"Ah, slow down, I don't want to finish before we start." Severus pushed her long skirt up to her waist and was rewarded with a lovely view of her V-shaped patch. "No knickers either, Mrs. Snape?" He loved it when she was hungry for him.

Hermione squeezed him, eliciting a hiss of pleasure from him. She positioned herself just above his now weeping cock and slid down slowly.

"Oh, Severus, that feels so good." She moaned as she slid her hands around his shoulders.

"Mmm...I missed this." Severus shrugged out of his shirt and cupped her breasts. He squeezed them lightly, before he leaned down and took her taut nipple in his mouth.

Hermione arched into him and began rotating her hips, grinding herself into him.

"Lie back, Severus; I need more, I need faster, harder," she said breathlessly.

Severus gave her nipple one last nibble and lay on his back. He pushed his trousers further down. The grass felt good on his back. The sensation of the cool grass and his wife's warm body above him was like heaven. He grabbed hold of her hips and began to thrust hard into Hermione. She leaned forward and met each thrust enthusiastically. Severus looked into her eyes and remembered the first day they met after she graduated from Hogwarts. He knew the moment he'd seen her at that bookstore that she would be his wife.

"I love you, Hermione. I love you so much," he said. He felt himself on the verge of orgasm. It had been days since they were close like this, much too long for both of them.

Hermione caressed his cheek with her soft hands.

"Severus, my love," she said as she felt tears forming in her eyes, knowing that had she gone back to that small bookstore that summer day looking for her handkerchief, she would never have run into him. It was fate that had brought them together that day, and she thanked the fates each and every day.

Severus' thrusts were coming faster and faster. He placed his thumb on her clit and rubbed it gently.

"Don't stop, oh please, I'm so close," Hermione threw her head back and grabbed his hands, holding them tight against her hips as though she would float away from the pleasure she felt.

He felt her walls constricting all around him, milking him to his own completion.

He sat up, still holding her to him tightly. He felt her heartbeat against his chest and held her to him tighter. Finally, he felt her hands relax their hold, as her breathing slowed. They held each other for several moments, then Severus fell back to his former position on the ground, as Hermione lay on his chest.

"Now THAT was spectacular," said Hermione as she smiled and lifted her head to look down at him.

"Magnificent," Severus kissed the tip of her nose, "Much as I would love to stay like this all day, I think we should get our picnic started and perhaps continue this later at the castle?" Hermione giggled and stood up. Severus sat up and watched her fix her skirt and look for her jumper. He leaned forward to grab his trousers and pull them back up, when he noticed something odd.

"Hermione," he said.

"Yes?" She looked back at him, wondering what he was staring at on the ground.

"Does Count Heinrich import plant species from other parts of the world to his forest?"

"Yes, he had plants brought in from all over. He uses them for his potions. Why do you ask?" She wondered.

"Oh, no reason. By the way, we'll need to forget about the picnic today."

"Why?"

"I need to get back to the castle."

"What for?"

"For the balm I'll need to slather on my arse, BECAUSE I'M SITTING ON POISON IVY!"

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In the meantime, Ron and Neville decided to go into the small Bavarian village a few miles away from the castle, and bring back some of the sweet treats Bavaria was known for.

Lucius was able to follow Ginny out into the gardens. He hadn't spotted Harry since the green-eyed pain in his arse went up to his room, so Lucius decided now was a good chance to talk to the young woman.

Ginny was sitting on a bench in a small enclave, just near a pond to the side of the gardens. Lucius walked towards her quietly. He watched as Ginny gazed at the koi fish swimming around one another in the pond.

"Good morning, Miss Weasley," he said. Ginny jumped slightly. Noticing this, Lucius was quick to apologize. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to startle you."

"No, it's all right. I thought I was alone." She smiled.

"If you prefer, I can leave you to the fish." Lucius hoped she would not allow him to leave.

"Please, stay. I'd love some company, Mr. Malfoy." She mentally berated herself, knowing she was blushing and hoping he would not notice.

Lucius was very observant, as he did notice her blush. He sat next to her, leaving a bit of space between them.

"You may call me Lucius. May I call you Ginny?" he asked.

"You can call me anything you want. I mean, well, not anything. You can't call me harpy or a banshee or anything." *'Oh no, I'm babbling,'* thought Ginny.

"And I don't really like my name Ginevra, well, I do, but I don't like to be called that." *'Merlin, stop me, I can't help it, he's going to think I'm crazy!'* Wondering what had gotten into her, she finally managed to get her mind and mouth working in the proper order ... think first, *then* speak.

"I'm sorry, oh no, I must sound like a babbling idiot to you," she said as she covered her face with her hands and quickly stood to leave.

Lucius stood and caught her, then turned her to face him. He smiled softly, and cupped her face with his hand.

"I do not think you are a babbling idiot. In fact, Ginny, you quite take my breath away." Just as he was leaning his head down to kiss her lips, he heard the last thing in the

world he wanted to hear at that moment.

Harry's voice.

"Ginny! Are you out here?" cried Harry from a distance.

Lucius stopped, and Ginny's closed eyes opened. The desire in her eyes evident to him.

"Would you join me for lunch at noon?" Lucius asked quickly.

Ginny sighed.

"Harry asked me to go flying with him at that time," she said, sounding disappointed.

"Tea, then?" asked Lucius hopefully.

"Neville," she said, rolling her eyes in disgust. The two young men had managed to manipulate all of her free time. At that moment she vowed that would change. Ginny decided that Lucius was someone she wanted to get to know better, and if that meant brushing off Harry and Neville, then so be it.

"Another time, then." Lucius gracefully took her hand and kissed it, then turned and walked away. *'This will not do,'* he thought as he walked past a smiling Harry. He bowed his head politely and continued walking. *'That's right, smile all you can now, Potter. You'll be frowning soon enough,'* he thought.

Lucius was a patient man. He would let Harry and Neville run themselves ragged vying for Ginny's attention. Judging by the look in her eyes when she had told him of her plans with the younger wizards, she was growing tired of their attention. She would come to him soon enough.

"What did Lucius want?" asked Harry once he caught up with Ginny.

"Honestly, Harry, can't I even have a conversation with someone without you badgering me about it? We were talking," she shot back angrily. It was all she could do to keep from hexing him. She had been so close to kissing Lucius. For days she had felt his lips on her own whilst she slept. This would have been her moment to see if they felt as soft as they did in her dreams, and Harry had ruined it.

"All right, don't get your knickers in a twist, I just wanted to know what you were doing with the old man," said Harry defensively. He knew the minute Ginny narrowed her eyes at him that it was the wrong thing to say.

Something inside of Ginny snapped. She balled her hand in a fist and swung at him with all she had. Instead of grabbing her fist and stopping her, his instinct kicked in and Harry ducked. Ginny's hand connected hard with the wall behind him.

"OW!!! Shit shit shit shit!" Ginny grabbed her hand and drew it to her chest, and fell down on the ground. "Damn you, Harry Potter! What's the matter with you?"

"Me? You just tried to punch me!" said Harry.

"Yes, I did! You're a man, aren't you? Can't you take a punch from a girl!" Tears were falling down Ginny's face. Her hand hurt like hell. She was sure there were several broken bones.

Harry bent down to help her up, only to be swatted away.

"Don't touch me, leave me alone," she snarled at him.

"Fine, I'm only trying to help."

"You should have thought of that before you ducked."

"You aren't serious? So you're saying my having a bloody nose would have made you feel better." Harry watched in confusion as Ginny got up and walked away.

"Yes!" she said over her shoulder as she stalked off.

"Well, do you still want to go flying later?"

Ginny stopped and turned. With her good hand, she allowed her own nimble fingers to give him the answer.

"Right, maybe tomorrow," Harry said to himself.

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I hope you guys enjoyed this chapter. I'll have more up soon.

## Ginny confesses love, Lucius eavesdrops and Severus is itchy

*Chapter 8 of 24*

The chapter title says it all.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks to June for all of her help and great suggestions.

**Chapter 8 – Ginny confesses love, Lucius eavesdrops and Severus is itchy.**

Ginny was able to get temporary relief for her injured hand thanks to Albus. The old wizard was the greatest wizard alive, but there was some magic even he left to the experts. When Ginny came inside from the gardens, Albus waved his hand over hers and the pain dissipated a little.

"I'm sorry, Ginny. But it looks like you have several broken bones. I think Severus will agree with me in that they should heal without the aid of potions."

Minerva transfigured her scarf into a proper sling, and they waited for Severus and Hermione to come back from their picnic. Severus would be able to give her some pain relief potions so that she would not have too much discomfort. Neither Albus nor Minerva needed to ask Ginny what happened, as they had been in the gardens taking a mid-morning stroll together and had witnessed the entire scene.

They were happy to see Lucius pursuing the young witch. Much as they loved Harry and Neville, they knew that both wizards were still too immature for Ginny.

Upon their return, Hermione immediately sent Severus to their room, as she turned towards the dungeons to look for the balm he needed to relieve his now maddening itch. Luckily for Severus, he always made it a point to return the Count's lab to its lab-like state whenever he was not there.

"Hermione," called Minerva from the living room.

Hermione heard her call and went inside, where she saw Ginny with her hand wrapped up.

"What happened?"

"Ginny's had ... uh...an accident," said Albus. "Hermione, I know you assisted Poppy in the hospital wing at Hogwarts sometimes, so perhaps there is something you can do for Ginny." He smiled at Minerva, and the two excused themselves as they left the room.

"What on earth did you do?" asked Hermione as she carefully looked at her friend's hand.

"I tried to punch Harry," said Ginny.

Unbeknownst to either witch, Lucius was on his way to the study when he heard them talking. Deciding that eavesdropping would be in his best interest on this occasion, he quietly hid behind a suit of armor and listened.

Hermione laughed, "What has Harry done now?"

"Oh, he just made me so angry. It's bad enough that both he and Neville have been driving me crazy and not allowing me a moment's peace, but Harry spoke quite rudely about Lucius," said Ginny, as her cheeks flushed red with anger.

"But Harry gets along well with Lucius. What was he saying?"

"He called Lucius an old man," huffed Ginny

Lucius narrowed his eyes. *'That little shit,'* he thought.

"You shouldn't let Harry get to you like that, Ginny. You know he's just jealous of Lucius."

"I know, but he just made me so angry! Especially since it was because of him I had to turn Lucius down. Hermione, Lucius wanted to spend time with me. Can you believe it? You should have seen how handsome he looked this morning. Not that he doesn't look handsome at any hour, but oh Merlin, that hair shining in the sun, those eyes, those lips. Ugh, and Lucius was so close to kissing me when stupid Harry started calling out for me in the gardens." Ginny was fuming by the time she finished talking, while Hermione's jaw was practically dragging the floor.

"Wow, I'd be angry too, if I missed a chance to kiss the man I loved for the first time," said Hermione.

"How did you know I love him?" Ginny covered her mouth quickly, as though it were Pandora's box and all the world's evils would come flying out.

Lucius was so surprised at Ginny's words, that he leaned forward to try to hear better and almost pushed the suit of armor over.

Hermione smiled and pointed her finger accusingly at her.

"Aha! See, I knew it. Ginny, that's wonderful. You've been crazy about Lucius for so long."

"You don't think it's dumb of me? I mean, I barely know him, but at the same time, when I looked into his eyes, it was as though we were meant to be together. It was as if I saw myself in his soul."

"I don't think it's dumb at all. Look at Severus and me. The day I saw him at that bookstore, I knew I had to spend my life with him. Ginny, when he said my name that first time, it was as though I was listening to the most beautiful song being whispered in my ear."

"HERMIONE! WHERE THE BLOODY HELL IS THAT BALM!?" yelled Severus from the top of the stairs.

"The balm! I totally forgot. Ginny, please just let me deal with Severus, and I promise I'll help you with your hand." Hermione turned and began to walk out of the living room.

"Balm? What happened to Severus?"

Hermione turned, "Believe me, you do not want to know." With that, she exited the room. Lucius crouched down and moved himself closer to the base of the suit of armor, to keep from being seen. He waited for Hermione to walk past him before he stood again.

His opportunity had come at last.

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Hermione rushed down the stairs to the dungeons and hurriedly walked into the lab. She looked on the shelves at the bottles already there. Finding what she needed for both Severus and Ginny, she ran up to her husband as fast as she could.

"I'm here, love, I'm here," Hermione said as she found Severus lying on his stomach with his head on his pillow. She could tell he was fighting the urge to scratch his very cute ass.

"What took you so long?" he asked as she came into the room.

"Ginny's broken her hand. I was looking at it. I'm sorry, sweetheart. Here, let Mummy make your bum bum all better." Hermione leaned forward and kissed her pouting husband on the forehead. Severus whimpered as she rubbed his bare bottom with a thick cooling balm.

"Oh, that feels soooooo good," Severus was finally able to relax. He'd been fighting the urge to scratch himself for what seemed like hours, but had only been about twenty minutes. He was holding his ass so tight that if someone had shoved a lump of coal in his asshole, a diamond would have emerged.

"Why, for Merlin's sake, would the Count import poisonous plants from America? Those plants have no use in any worthwhile potion."

"I suppose we're done with the picnics, then?" asked Hermione.

"My dear, unless you have planned to Oblivate me of this entire experience, I would count picnics out for a very long time."

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Okay, I know, poor Severus just doesn't seem to catch a break does he? He's just so much fun to torment. I'll have to do something totally fantastic for him to make up for all of his trouble.

I hope you liked this chapter. Thanks for reading.

## Severus freezes and Lucius makes his move

*Chapter 9 of 24*

Severus and Hermione go on a little sleigh ride and Lucius decided to make his move. Lucky for him the Snape children are on his side.

It's January 9th and our favorite Potions Master's birthday!

Happy Birthday Severus Snape!

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks as always to June for all of her wonderful suggestions.

**Chapter 9 Severus freezes and Lucius makes his move.**

Lucius stood behind the base of the suit of armor, thinking. Ginny was in the other room, and much as he wanted to go to her, he needed to think on what he had heard earlier.

She told Hermione that she was in love with the blond wizard. It was a revelation that changed everything for him. He first saw her when she was an eleven-year-old red-haired freckled girl. What he saw when he stepped out of the fireplace several days ago was a beautiful woman, whose flame-colored hair hinted of a fiery passion he found himself wanting to experience.

When Hermione had Flooed him to invite him to Bavaria, he'd been sitting in his favorite leather chair, drinking and feeling sorry for himself. He wanted to be happy again, to live, to experience life with the same gusto he once did. Ginny was the woman who would bring him out of his self-imposed exile from the world.

As Lucius began to step away from the suit of armor, he heard Neville and Ron coming through the door. He would have to wait yet again to approach Ginny. As he retreated to his room, he hoped the boys would do something stupid in front of her. He had a feeling they would.

Ron and Neville walked to the living room with several bags of candies, cream-filled pastries, and cakes. Ron immediately noticed his sister's hand.

"What's happened to your hand?" he asked.

"I've had an accident. I'll be fine. Hermione's going to have a look at it," Ginny said simply, not wanting to go into the details, especially to her brother.

Ron merely shrugged and turned to walk to the kitchens with his prized sweets. Neville approached Ginny and sat next to her on the couch.

"Are you in much pain?" Neville asked, as he reached out and took her hand in his.

"Ow!" Ginny drew her hand back quickly. "Yes, quite a bit, Neville," she snarled.

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As the afternoon turned into evening, dinner was left by the wayside. Everyone had spent most of the day munching on snacks provided by the house-elves. Severus and Hermione decided to see the area on a sleigh ride with Albus and Minerva, as the sun was setting.

"Albus, since we are going to go beyond the Count's property, we should cast a warming spell around us," Severus said as he drew his wand. He was about to cast a warming spell, when Albus raised his hand to stop him.

"Now, Severus. The fun of taking a sleigh ride is covering ourselves with these lovely blankets," said the older wizard as he moved a thick blanket over his and Minerva's legs.

Hermione smiled and pulled Severus back, knowing he was seriously close to telling Albus he'd lost his mind.

"Severus, this is romantic. We can cuddle up," Hermione said as she took a blanket from their feet and wrapped them both with it. "There, see? Isn't this nice?" she said as she placed her hand on his crotch.

Severus smiled and looked at her.

"I suppose cuddling up wouldn't be a bad thing," he said.

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Ron had eaten too much candy and cake; he was now in his room, nursing the stomachache to end all stomachaches.

Lucius, in the meantime, paced in his room. He knew that Ginny was in the library with Harry and Neville. Somehow, Lucius needed to get the two suitors away from what

he decided earlier would be his future wife. Thinking the best thing to do was make his presence known in the library, Lucius gave himself one last look in the mirror. He wore a pair of black trousers and an olive green silk shirt. His hair was held back with a tie the same color of the shirt. He hoped Ginny would like the relaxed-looking Lucius.

As he walked out of his room, he noticed Odin and Sage walking down the hall. Suddenly, an idea struck him.

"Children, might I have a word?" He smiled as the two Snape children happily ran towards him.

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Severus and Hermione returned from the sleigh ride, desperately in need of some hot chocolate. Albus had insisted on them not using any warming spells. He had wanted them all to get the full effect of the beautiful winter night air after they'd gone past the borders of the Count's property. Severus suspected that Minerva had cast a warming spell on herself without Albus' knowledge. She was the only one who ever seemed to pull anything over on the old wizard. The pair dropped Hermione and Severus off at the castle and went off to continue the ride on their own.

"Can you believe how cold it was out there?" asked Hermione as she walked quickly to the kitchen.

Severus followed her closely and began to undo his cloak.

"That weather could turn the sun into a Popsicle." Severus went to the cupboard and found two large mugs, as Hermione opened the icebox and looked for the milk.

"Albus had to have had some sort of warming spell on his robes," argued Hermione as she poured milk into the mugs with the melted chocolate, then heated up the mugs with her wand.

"Well, Minerva did," answered Severus as he stared into his steaming cup of chocolate.

"You're kidding?" Hermione put her hands on her waist and narrowed her eyes. "No wonder she was all smiles." She noticed Severus looking at his mug as though it were a pensieve.

"What's wrong, love?"

"You forgot the marshmallows."

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Back in the library, Ginny had chosen to sit at the window seat. She looked out into the night sky. The moon was full and bright. There were a few clouds moving slowly across the mountains. Behind her, Harry and Neville sat playing Muggle Scrabble. Every once in a while, Harry would look over Neville's shoulder at Ginny. He hadn't spoken to her since early morning, and wondered if he should attempt conversation.

As Harry was contemplating his next move with his would-be girlfriend, Neville stood and walked to the tray on the table with tea.

"Ginny, would you like some tea?" asked Neville.

She smiled and nodded. Hermione had bound her broken hand, and Ginny was in need of some painkillers. Hermione had also given her some tablets the Count had in his lab, which were natural.

"Tea would be lovely. Thank you, Neville."

Neville poured Ginny a cup of tea and walked towards her. As he approached, he failed to notice one of the children's toy centaurs lying on the floor, and he tripped. The teacup flew up in the air and landed on Ginny's lap.

"Bloody hell, that's scorching hot!" yelled Ginny as she threw the cup off her lap. She stood and reached for the wool throw laying on the chair next to her and started wiping the tea from her skirt.

"Oh, no! Ginny, I'm sorry." Neville was beside himself. The last thing he wanted to do was add to her misery. "I tripped; I should have been more careful."

"Here, Ginny. I'll clean that up for you," Harry pointed his wand towards Ginny, only to have her stop him.

"NO! No, Harry. I really don't want any accidental spells hitting me," Ginny said, as she remembered the Stupefying Charm that Harry had hit Severus with.

"That was an accident; I was drunk," Harry said in his own defense. Before he could say any more, Odin and Sage came running into the room.

"Harry, Harry, come quick, we found a Quidditch room in the dungeon." The children ran to Harry and began pulling at his arms. Harry, at hearing the word Quidditch, immediately perked up his ears.

"Quidditch room? What do you mean?" he asked.

"There's an entire room in the dungeons with a bunch of stuff," said Odin excitedly.

"Come on, Harry, you've got to see!" Sage pulled on Harry's sleeve until he began to follow them.

Lucius was looking on from behind the tapestry in the hallway. He had spent the last hour in the dungeons creating a room, which any Quidditch fan would have loved to spend eternity in. It had everything. Team and player statistics, trophies, brooms belonging to famous players, and balls used in the first Quidditch games thousands of years ago. Thanks to his laptop, which was also connected to the Wizardnet, Lucius had been able to make a copy of the world's largest collection of Quidditch memorabilia, that was housed in the International Museum in Dublin. Harry would be gone for hours.

The Snape children were eager to help Lucius as well; they made sure the items were in the right place, making it look like the room had been there for years. With a few promises on his part about taking them to the British Museum, he made sure that Odin and Sage would keep Harry away from Ginny.

Lucius could now turn his attention to Neville, whom he would see to himself. All he needed to do was look at him, and the young wizard would run screaming like a banshee. As Lucius came out of his hiding spot, Hermione and Severus came walking from the kitchens.

"Good evening, Lucius," said Severus. "Are you on your way to the library also?"

"Yes, I thought I would do a bit of reading. I've heard Count Heinrich has a very old collection of dark arts manuscripts."

"You two and your dark arts," Hermione said as she rolled her eyes. She knew, once a dark wizard always a dark wizard. The two Slytherins couldn't help it. It was a subject that fascinated the both of them. Luckily, they had no inclination to practice any of the spells they read about. She joined them in walking towards the library, hoping Ginny was also there.

As they walked into the library, Severus immediately set to the task of taking down the Christmas tree they had put up in there. There were three decorated trees in the castle. The largest one, which was over fifteen feet high, was in the living room. The smallest one was in the study; that one was five feet high. And the last one was the

seven-foot tall pine in the library. Hermione had originally wanted every room to have a tree, much like her own home, but the castle had far too many rooms.

Hermione only briefly stood next to Ginny and asked her how her hand was. Once Ginny answered her, she smiled and walked toward the fireplace, where she picked up a book she had set on the table next to the leather chair the night before.

Severus, upon Hermione's subtle suggestion, asked Neville to help him with removing the tree's decorations. This gave Lucius the opportunity to make conversation with Ginny.

"I'm very sorry about your hand, Ginny," Lucius said. "Is there anything I can do to help you?"

Ginny smiled and stared into his eyes. There was newfound warmth in them now that she had not noticed before. She wanted ever so much to kiss him senseless, as she'd been thinking about their last meeting all day. But much to her dismay, they were not alone in the room.

"There isn't much that can be done," Ginny said. "I just have to wait for the bones to heal. I'm all right though, thank you. The only problem is I've hurt my wand hand, so I'll not be hexing anyone for a while." They both laughed, and Lucius sat down across from her on the window seat.

"I am going to have a difficult time with my hair," she admitted. "I'll have to ask Hermione to braid it for me before she goes to bed."

"I can do that if you like." Lucius smiled, and she felt her stomach take a flying leap off of a non-existent cliff inside of her.

"I wouldn't want to be any trouble." Ginny didn't want to sound too anxious, and hoped her shaking voice didn't give away her nervousness.

"No trouble at all. Here," he said as he stood and moved to her side. Lucius took hold of her shoulder and moved her so that she would have her back to him. Ginny lifted her legs and sat facing the window.

"How is it that you know how to braid hair?" she asked.

"I used to do this for Narcissa before she went to bed." He wondered if knowing he used to do this for his late wife would bother her.

"Of course. I sometimes forget you were once married. I'm sorry." She bit her tongue, thinking she'd somehow made him remember having lost the love of his life.

"It's all right, Ginny. I have moved on." He smiled as his hands went from her shoulders to her head. His fingers lightly massaged her scalp. Slowly, he gathered her long red hair into his hands. He moved the silken strands through his fingers, and when he looked up their eyes met in the reflection of the window.

"I loved my wife, Ginny. I took care of her in every way. It was my pleasure to make her happy. But that was a very long time ago," he said as his eyes bore into hers. "It would be my pleasure now, to make you happy."

As Lucius and Ginny spoke quietly in their little corner of the room, Severus and Neville were nearly done taking down the decorations. To Severus' great joy and surprise, their task had gone with no incident whatsoever. He thought, as he placed an ornament on the table, that perhaps Neville had learned to control his clumsiness.

At that very moment, Neville ... who was behind the tree ... got his foot caught in a string of popcorn garland. He fell forward slightly before he caught his balance. Unfortunately, the tree was already on its way down.

Severus turned back towards the tree and stopped. He saw a tree coming at him. His face looked stunned, as the seven-foot tall pine tree came down full-force on top of him.

"Oh no, Severus," Hermione jumped off the chair and ran towards her husband.

Neville stood paralyzed in his spot. Lucius and Ginny turned quickly to see the huge tree on the floor, and Severus' robes spread beneath it.

"GET THIS DAMNED TREE OFF OF ME!" yelled Severus, as the tree shook on top of him. He was desperately trying to reach for his wand. Seeing this, Hermione ran and grabbed the wand, knowing her husband wanted nothing more than to cast a Killing Curse on Neville where he stood at that moment.

Sensing it was time to make a hasty retreat, Neville decided to cut his holiday short.

"Um...Hermione, I think I should probably be going home. I...I...uh...should go look in on my Gran." He then took a handful of Floo powder and walked into the fireplace. "I'll send for my things."

Lucius, who had his wand at the ready, levitated the tree and moved it to a standing position.

"Where is he! I swear, Hermione, I'll do it this time, Azkaban be damned."

"Severus, it was an accident. Please calm down."

"Calm down? Oh, right, easy for you to say. You don't have pine needles in every crevice of your body and tree sap all over you."

"Come on, then." Hermione took her very angry husband by the hand and began leading him out of the room. "Let me help you clean up. Maybe a nice hot soak in the tub will relax you, hmm?"

As they left, Lucius cast a concerned look at his friend, then turned to Ginny.

"Where were we, my dear?"

Ginny wrapped her arms around his neck and raised herself on her toes.

"Here," she said, and she kissed him.

As the Snapes relaxed together in their tub, Hermione asked Severus where he hurt the most.

"Here," he said, pointing to the corner of his lip, and she kissed him. He'd had a very good day. He managed to get rid of Neville and finagled some time for his old friend with Ginny. It was almost too enjoyable, tripping Neville with the garland.

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I'm winding this story down. Ginny has already made up her mind and so has Lucius. And I think Severus has had enough torment. I hope you all enjoyed this chapter. Thanks for reading.

# Anything You Ask.

*Chapter 10 of 24*

Harry is lost in a world of Quidditch, Lucius and Ginny get some alone time, and Hermione reassures Severus.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks as always to June for her wonderful suggestions and all of her help.

## **Chapter 10 Anything you ask.**

As predicted, Harry was in heaven. The moment he walked into the dungeon room that Lucius had converted into a Quidditch shrine, Harry lost all track of time. Odin and Sage directed him to several points of interest while they were there, but after two hours even the children decided that Harry was on his own, and they left him to go look for their parents.

"Did you see his eyes?" asked Sage as they walked up the stairs from the dungeon.

"They were downright scary. He looked like Ron when he walks into Honeydukes," answered Odin.

They emerged in the hallway near the grand staircase and decided they needed a snack. As they passed the living room, they noticed their Uncle Lucius kissing Ginny.

"Ewww," they both cried simultaneously. Lucius and Ginny immediately broke apart and stared at the two young Snape children, who began giggling and running down the hall. "They're getting as bad as Mummy and Daddy," Sage was heard to have said.

Lucius looked down at Ginny and smiled.

"I've been wanting to do that for a long time," she said, as she herself smiled.

"Well, I am very happy that you took the initiative. I find myself with constant interruptions every time I try to...make my move." He laughed and kissed her again.

Ginny wound her arms around Lucius. Forgetting her broken hand, she tried to grab his shoulders and gasped in pain.

"What's wrong?" asked Lucius; he worried he may have hurt her somehow.

"My hand. For a moment I forgot it was broken, and I tried to grab your shoulder." She leaned close to his ear and whispered, "I can't get close enough to you."

Lucius laughed.

"My dear, if I were any closer to you, I would be behind you." He tried to sound nonchalant, but his voice was thick with need. "I want you, Ginny. I've wanted you from the moment I arrived here and saw you."

"You have?" She'd always thought him unattainable; he was only someone to look at from afar and dream about. Ginny knew that he'd rarely appeared in public since Narcissa passed away. She also wondered if he had shared his bed with any other witch since then as well. She hoped he hadn't.

Lucius took hold of her good hand and lead her from the living room. They walked out to the hallway, and he looked around. He wanted to make sure they were alone and that no one saw where they were going. Satisfied that they would not be seen, he continued to lead Ginny to the stairs. They walked up quickly, and then he pulled her along to his room. Before going inside, he looked at her and smiled. He opened his door and motioned for her to enter.

Ginny felt a fluttering in her stomach as she walked past him and entered his candlelit room. She turned back to him as she shut the door and warded it. He'd taken the tie from his hair, and it now hung loosely around his shoulders as he walked slowly towards her. Ginny backed away from him as he walked towards her.

"You are the first woman since Narcissa passed away to make me want again, Ginny."

Ginny felt the bed behind her knees, and she stopped.

Lucius reached out and wrapped his arm around her waist, as he caressed her cheek with his other hand. "I need you, Ginny. Please, tell me you want me?"

"Yes," she breathed, "oh, yes. I want you very much, Lucius."

That was all Lucius needed to hear. It had been so long since Lucius had felt the softness of a woman's skin against his skin, and Ginny felt glorious to him. Ginny felt the urgency in his kisses as she began to unbutton his shirt. Lucius stopped kissing her and picked her up. He placed her gently in the center of the bed and lay next to her. He slowed his kisses, as he began to unbutton her blouse. As he kissed her, he felt the wetness of tears and lifted his head to look at her.

Ginny sat up and crossed her arms across her chest.

"I...I'm sorry, Lucius. But I can't do this," she said.

Lucius sat up; he lightly took hold of her chin and moved her head to face him.

"Did I do something, say something? Tell me, Ginny, so that I may correct what I have done," he pleaded. He wasn't sure why she was crying, but he knew that if he had something to do with it, he needed to make it up to her immediately.

"It's me. I'm not looking for some one-night stand." She turned her body away from him, not wanting to face him as she decided that now was the time to tell him everything she felt about him. "You may as well know, I'm in love with you. I have been for quite some time. I've seen you on a few occasions, but I was too afraid to even speak with you. I couldn't bear to know this would be the only time I would ever have you."

"Ginny, look at me, please," said Lucius from behind her.

She turned back to face him, steeling herself for rejection. Men usually ran when women told them they were looking for something permanent and stable. After all, how long had she known Harry and Neville? They knew she was looking to have a family of her own. That's why they kept stringing her along they were getting as much bachelorhood before making a commitment. Having been without a wife for so long, Lucius no doubt would not want to give up his freedom now, not for her.

"I suppose I shall have to get used to this nasty habit you Gryffindors have of jumping to conclusions." He smiled brightly, hoping she'd heard his use of the future tense in his sentence.

Her room was empty. There was a fire dwindling down to the embers, and a candle next to her bed that was also almost out completely. He wondered where she could be. There was no one in any of the rooms downstairs. He briefly looked out into the garden and wondered if she might be outside. As he turned to leave her room, he thought he heard a muffled laughter coming from what he thought was a closet door.

What Harry did not know was that this "closet door" was in fact the door that adjoined Ginny's and Lucius' rooms. Neither Ginny nor Lucius had bothered to open the door before because, oddly enough, even they thought it was just an extra closet. Rarely do rooms inside homes actually adjoin, so it was understandable that the door went virtually ignored. But now, Harry walked toward the door and put his ear against it. There were voices and more giggling coming from the other side. He took hold of the doorknob, and quickly opened the door and walked in. What he saw was the last thing he ever thought he would see.

Ginny, his girl, straddling Lucius Malfoy!

"What the hell is going on here?" yelled Harry.

Ginny, whose face had been buried in Lucius' neck, spun her head and gasped.

"Harry!" She quickly covered her naked chest with her arms and moved off of Lucius. Lucius pulled the sheets over himself and covered Ginny with his body as she moved behind him.

"Really, Harry. Where are your manners?" tutted Lucius.

"Manners?" Harry's eyebrows shot straight up.

"Yes, Harry. Manners and an opposable thumb are what keep us all from sitting in trees and throwing feces at one another. I would have expected a knock at the very least."

"I'm having a nightmare; this can't be real. I'm standing here getting a lecture on manners by the man who's shagging my girl."

Ginny's head popped up over Lucius' shoulder. "Your *girl*?" she said. '*Of all the gall!*' thought Ginny.

"I beg to differ, Harry. I am most certainly not shagging your girl. Ginny is no girl." Lucius turned and looked lasciviously at Ginny, then turned back to Harry. "She is quite a woman."

Harry was horrified. He didn't know if he should hex Lucius right there on the spot or ... well, no, he couldn't hex Lucius, he didn't have his wand with him. He decided no hexing, but he could still be horrified.

"This is too much. I can't believe you would do this to me, Ginny! And with him!" Harry pointed at Lucius. "Why, he's old enough to be your father!"

"Harry Potter, don't you dare say another word." Ginny took the pillow that was behind her and covered herself up. She leapt out of bed, and walked up to Harry and grabbed him by his shirt.

"Now you listen to me, and you listen good. For over fifteen years you have strung me along. A date here, a date there, but never any more than that. Every so often we go to a Ministry function, and every so often we have sex; well, I'm tired of it. What did you think? That I'd be sitting at home knitting you jumpers, waiting for you to decide you've had enough of the bachelor lifestyle? How long was I supposed to wait, Harry? I'm thirty years old! Another five years, Harry? Ten? Twenty? How long, Harry?" she let go of his shirt and backed up slightly as the tears in her eyes now threatened to fall.

"No, I won't wait anymore." Ginny turned and looked at Lucius, who had been quietly listening to her tirade. "I'm in love with Lucius, and he is in love with me." She turned back to Harry. "I've never been in love with you, Harry. I suppose I just thought you were the best I could do. And you had no problem letting me think that, did you?"

Harry bowed his head. While he didn't agree totally with everything she'd said, he had to admit, she was right about the last accusation.

"Now would be a good time to leave, Harry," said Lucius quietly.

Harry looked at him and then at Ginny. Anger and pride taking over, he shook his head and laughed.

"Fine, but don't come crawling back to me when he gets tired of you. I hate you, Ginny. I'll never forgive you for this." He turned and walked out of the door he came through, slamming it in his wake.

Ginny stood rooted to the spot. She felt Lucius wrap his arms around her waist and kiss her shoulder.

"He is angry; he didn't mean it."

"I know, but it still hurts." She turned and nuzzled her head against his. She knew that Harry's words were meant to hurt her, but he had succeeded in planting the seed of doubt in her mind about Lucius. What would she do if Lucius grew tired of her?

"He's wrong you know," said Lucius. Ginny looked at him confused. "I will never grow tired of you." He took his cane and pulled out his wand. After making sure he warded the door Harry used, he replaced his wand in its casing and pulled Ginny back to bed.

"Come, let's get some sleep, my sweet kitten," he said, as Ginny snuggled next to him.

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The following day started much like any other day. The new year was drawing near, and the children decided that there should be fireworks in the skies.

"Daddy, Albus said that he's going to get fireworks from China for us," said Sage, as she jumped on her father's lap. "Can we go with him, please?" she begged.

"We promise we won't be any trouble," assured Odin, as he stood with his fingers crossed behind his back.

Severus looked doubtful. He knew that his children had the old man wrapped around their finger. Albus and Minerva had no children, and thus no grandchildren. They married only a few years ago, and had adopted the Snape children as the grandchildren they should have had.

"You promise, eh? Why don't I believe you?" As he readied himself to say no, knowing full well Odin had his fingers crossed behind his back, Hermione walked out with Minerva and Albus by her side.

"It's all right, Severus. Minerva and I are going as well. There are some manuscripts we want to look for in Tianjin." After being assured that both women were going, he allowed the children to go along. They left just after lunch.

Severus decided to take in the cool day and sat outside at a table overlooking the castle's gardens. He spotted Lucius and Ginny from a distance. He knew that they had been together the previous night. Not only had Lucius come to breakfast with a huge grin on his face, but Ginny could not stop blushing, and Harry had a perpetually constipated look about him. Yes, Lucius definitely had made his move.

As he watched his friend and Ginny talking to each other, Ron and Harry joined him, unfortunately. He sighed heavily, and picked up his Potions Monthly and started to flip through the pages, hoping to find something interesting.

Harry and Ron sat at the table along with Severus.

"I just don't get it," said Harry.

"Hmm?" Severus looked over to Harry.

"I said, I just don't get it."

"Get what? Be specific; considering your grades when you graduated, that could be any number of things," said Severus.

"I don't get what she sees in him." Harry waved in the direction of Lucius and Ginny.

Severus looked at the two in the garden, then back at Harry.

"You're kidding, right?" said Severus.

"No. How could she want to be with him?"

Severus looked at Ron, who shrugged, then back at Harry.

"All right. I can see you are as oblivious as a jellyfish," Severus said. "For one thing, look at Lucius. I have never been attracted to men, and I am as heterosexual as one can be. However, if Lucius asked me to go a round with him in bed, even I wouldn't say no."

"You've got to admit, Harry, Lucius is gorgeous," added Ron. Harry and Severus looked at him. "Hey, I'm not the one who just said I'd go a round with him in bed. I'm just saying."

Harry furrowed his brow, and crossed his arms.

"Okay, fine. But I know how to treat a lady, you know."

"Oh, really?" Severus put down his magazine and turned towards Harry. "By keeping them waiting, and thinking all they want to talk about is Quidditch and you?"

Harry rolled his eyes.

"Look at them. They're all over each other," Harry said with disgust.

"Harry, they're just holding hands," said Ron. While Ginny hadn't said anything to him, he knew the instant they both showed up at breakfast together that something happened between them. While he felt bad for Harry, he knew that his friend had been stringing his sister along for quite some time. Ginny wanted to have a family and wanted a man to love her. As much as he loved Harry, Ron knew that his friend and Ginny would never be happy.

"Well, we never did that, not really." Admitted Harry.

"Perhaps that is why she is holding hands with Lucius and not you," said Severus.

Harry looked at him and Ron. He was going to argue, but found he had nothing to stand on. He and Ginny never did hold hands, not like she and Lucius were now. Harry looked at the couple and saw Lucius do other things he had never done.

Lucius held Ginny's hand. He smiled at her as he stared into her eyes. He picked a flower from the ground and traced her face with the petals. He kissed her cheek, and caressed her hair. He looked at her like...like there was nowhere else in the world he would rather be than standing along side her now. Harry tried to remember the last time he told Ginny he loved her, and realized he never did.

"I...I think I'll have a fly to the mountains. I'll be back in a few hours." Harry got up and walked back into the house.

Severus looked at Ron, who was looking at the couple with tears in his eyes.

"Don't cry, Ron. He does love her, I'm sure of it. He will take care of her," said Severus, hoping to reassure the redhead.

"That's not why I'm crying."

"Then what's wrong?"

"Well, Lucius was a good catch. I don't suppose Ginny would share?"

Severus stiffened. *'I knew it'* he thought. "Uh, no, I don't believe so. And if I were you, unless you want your balls hexed into oblivion, I wouldn't broach the subject with Lucius."

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I thought about having Ginny give Harry more of a dressing down, but I figured she wouldn't want to bother with him any longer. She's got Lucius now, and Harry is a non issue to her.

And yes, I've got a thing with Severus suspecting Ron is gay all the time. I figured this time out, his suspicions should be correct.

## Grasping at straws

*Chapter 12 of 24*

Harry is getting desperate and will do anything to get Ginny.

I'm thinking I may really need to move this from its current section. But I'm not sure how. This has gone from just a Severus/Hermione story to something totally different. But hopefully you all don't mind that.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks for June for her suggestions and her help.

## Chapter 12 – Grasping at Straws.

As Lucius and Ginny walked around the garden, Harry made his way to his room. He'd been cooped up inside for too many days, playing chess with Ron and trying to get Ginny's attention. He was so wrapped up in his own needs that he didn't realize his campaign of keeping Ginny for himself was lost, even after he'd seen them in bed together. He found his Firebolt Omega and launched himself from the balcony of his room. As he flew above the castle he looked down at the two figures walking towards the castle, then directed his attention to the mountains, thinking that a little fresh air might help him see things in a better light.

Lucius and Ginny walked towards the table where Severus and Ron were sitting.

"So, did I hear correctly this morning, or did Albus decided to forgo the fireworks for this weekend?" asked Lucius.

"No, it seems that we will be ringing in the New Year with bells and whistles, as Hermione would say," said Severus.

Ron looked towards Ginny and Lucius, who were holding hands still.

"Ginny, I got an owl from Mum this morning," Ron said. "She wants to know if we are going to come by for New Year's. If you want to stay here, I'm sure she'd understand, but I think I might go spend a few days with them." Ron stood up. After watching his sister with Lucius, he decided Ginny might want to spend time with her new admirer without the worry of her brother watching her every move. Ron really was happy for her. He only hoped Harry would follow his lead and leave the castle on his own accord.

Lucius smiled, then turned to Ginny.

"If you wish to spend time with your family, Ginny, you go on." He hoped she would say no and stay with him.

"It's not every day that one gets to ring in a new year in such a beautiful castle. I can visit my parents afterwards. I'd like to stay." She squeezed Lucius' hand, then looked at Ron. "I'll Floo Mum later and let her know."

Ron nodded and walked into the castle.

Severus was relieved. With Neville gone and now Ron soon to be making his way home, Harry was the only rain cloud left in his otherwise perfect holiday sky. Severus didn't mind having Albus and Minerva around. They were good company and didn't mind taking care of the children, allowing himself and Hermione some private time. He always liked spending time with Lucius; and now since Lucius and Ginny were together, it would be nice to have another couple to do things with.

While he didn't hate Harry, Severus knew that the young man was desperately trying to hang on to his youth. Harry was a war hero, as was Severus, but it was different for him. Severus had been well into his late thirties by the time the war got in full swing and eventually ended. He was ready to move on with his life. He wanted to put the war behind him, and – quite frankly – had never been very comfortable with all of the attention his Order Of Merlin gave him.

But Harry – well, Harry had been barely nineteen when the Dark Lord finally was defeated. Harry became the darling of the wizarding world. Everywhere he went, people wanted to meet him. Women wanted to be seen with him. He had been offered a job at the Ministry, and practically anything he asked for he was given. While he didn't take advantage of his position, every once in a while Harry would accept little things here and there. The women constantly seeking him out was great for his ego. And it was always nice to have the best seats at Quidditch matches or a brand new broom every year, given by manufacturers touting that the great Harry Potter flew on their broom. Harry was now in his early thirties, and the Golden Boy image he was so desperately clinging to was slowly slipping away. Sadly though, he seemed to be the only person who didn't realize it.

Severus hoped that perhaps Harry would see that it was time to grow up. Ginny choosing to be with Lucius may have been the kick in the pants Harry needed to finally accept that he was now an adult.

As the afternoon turned into evening, the others finally came back from their trip to China. Odin and Sage immediately ran to their father, eager to show him all of the magical fireworks they found.

"Daddy, this one turns into a Phoenix," said Sage, holding up a large box.

"This one is a snake! It slithers all around the sky!" yelled Odin as he waved his box in front of Severus.

Severus smiled and listened intently as his children excitedly told him of their day. Hermione watched happily. During her student years at Hogwarts, she could never have imagined that the stern Potions master could be such an attentive father. But she was happy to have been given the opportunity to find out.

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Three days passed quickly. Lucius and Ginny were growing increasingly closer, and Harry increasingly bitter. Ron left for the Burrow that morning. The redhead tried to convince Harry to go with him and spend some time with his family, but Harry couldn't pry himself from the castle.

Harry briefly thought about trying to slip Ginny a love potion, but he had never been very good at potions, so he nixed that idea. Then an idea hit him. Lucius was a former Death Eater, but due to his help and work with the Order before the fall of Voldemort, he had been given a pardon. One of the stipulations, however, was that Lucius had to describe in full detail all of the raids he had participated in. Harry could get his hands on that document. He thought that if he could show Ginny just what kind of a man she was in love with, then perhaps there was a chance with her. He smiled and began to write his note to his Ministry contact. Ginny would be his before the end of the day

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Just before dinner, Severus had been standing near the front gates of the castle. He'd spotted some rare plants he wanted to research when he got back home. After picking some leaves, he walked back up the stone walkway and noticed Hedwig flying towards Harry's room with a large package attached to her legs. That in itself wouldn't have been odd; however, the package was bright yellow with a large purple letter on it. Severus knew this to be a Ministry package – only the Ministry used that kind of packaging, so completely obvious. His naturally suspicious mind began to wonder just what Harry was getting from the Ministry that would be so important as to interrupt his holiday.

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I'll have more this week. I hope you all enjoyed this chapter. Thanks for reading.

## The Truth About Lucius

Harry has gone too far this time.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thank you to June for all of her suggestions and help.

### Chapter 13 The Truth About Lucius

Dinner was still an hour away, so Ginny decided to sit in the library and do some reading. As she picked up the book she had left on the coffee table the night before, she smiled. Lucius was in his room using his laptop to talk with Draco; he'd told her that he wanted to share the good news with his son. When she had laughed at him, saying that they hadn't done anything to merit sharing, Lucius scoffed and said: "Nonsense. I'm in love, and that is enough for me to shout it from those mountains outside my window."

She sat silently on the small couch near the window and tucked her legs underneath her. She was so happy that she felt it was too good to be true, and that any moment she would wake up from this dream.

Ginny had no idea how close she was to having her world crumble.

Upstairs, Harry opened the package Hedwig returned with. He smiled when he saw the transcript of Lucius' confessions of Death Eater raids he had participated in. As Harry opened the document, he sat down. He was so engrossed in what he was reading, that he didn't notice that his every move was being watched by two pairs of curious little eyes.

"What's he got there?" asked Odin as he looked through the small eye holes of the portrait.

"Quiet, he'll hear you," said Sage as she elbowed her brother against his ribs.

Odin rolled his eyes.

"Not before he hears you, Sage. Lower your voice and stop poking me."

The two children looked on as Harry read through the papers.

Harry smiled as he read the accounts of Lucius participating in raids on Muggle homes. There were even some passages in which he described a Death Eater revel.

"If this doesn't convince Ginny that Lucius is no good for her, nothing will," Harry said out loud.

Odin and Sage looked at one another from behind the walls.

"What do you suppose he meant by that, Odin?" asked Sage.

Odin shook his head.

"I don't know, but I have a feeling it's not good."

Harry took his wand from the night table. He hurried out of his room, holding the closed transcript. He made sure there was no one in the hallway, and he cautiously walked downstairs.

The children had no way of knowing what Harry was about to do. They resumed their exploration of the newfound passages.

Harry reached the bottom of the stairs without being seen. He found Ginny in the library, but hid behind the same tapestry where Lucius had hidden behind several days prior. With a wave of his wand, the transcript disappeared from Harry's hands, and then reappeared on the coffee table in front of Ginny. He waited several moments, hoping Ginny would look up from her book and see it.

After an excruciatingly long ten minutes, Ginny set down her book and noticed the odd transcript. She cocked her head to one side and furrowed her brow. She hadn't remembered seeing anything else on the table when she sat down.

Harry smiled as she picked it up and opened it.

To her shock, Ginny realized that she was holding the transcript of Lucius' confession to the Wizengamot. She remembered well the day her father, Arthur Weasley, came home and told the family that Lucius had given his account of all of his dealings as a Death Eater. Her father said that the records were sealed, and only someone with permission from the Minister of Magic, and a strong stomach, could ever open those files.

"How did this get here?" she whispered. She looked at the cover, *'Set it back down, Ginny,'* she said to herself. She knew Lucius wasn't that man anymore. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. *'If I don't look, I'll always wonder.'* Ginny set the transcript on her lap and began reading.

Seeing this, Harry quietly slipped from behind the tapestry and made his way back to his room, his mission accomplished.

An hour later Lucius walked downstairs to look for Ginny. He hoped she would still be in the library. As he walked into the room, he saw her standing in front of the window. The sun had just set, and the sky still had the glow of the sun in the horizon. He walked quietly so as not to disturb her, then quickly wrapped his arms around her small waist. Ginny jumped and pushed herself away from him.

"I'm sorry, love. I shouldn't have sneaked up on you like that," said a smiling Lucius. His smile faded as he realized she'd been crying. "Ginny, what's wrong?" He took one step towards her, and she instantly back away.

"I...I'm fine. I just..." She let out a ragged breath and began to cry, "I can't...I can't talk to you right now, Lucius."

"Ginny, tell me what's happened." Lucius reached out to take her hand, but Ginny recoiled.

"Please, Lucius. I can't talk to you right now. I...can't even look at you. I'm sorry...I just..." She turned and ran through the French doors and into the gardens.

"Ginny!" Lucius cried out after her. He stood for a moment, staring at her disappearing form. *'What just happened?'* he wondered. When he last saw her she was happy, he was happy, everything was fine. And now, she couldn't even stand being touched by him, let alone be in the same room with him. He turned and walked to the couch, then looked down. There on the coffee table he saw something he never thought he'd ever see again. He saw the transcript of his confession to the Wizengamot. This information was supposed to be locked in a vault in the Ministry of Magic, yet there it was. He grabbed the transcript and walked out of the library. He had a feeling he knew how Ginny got hold of this.

Lucius walked to the dining room, where the rest of the houseguests were already sitting. As he walked in, everyone looked and followed him as he stopped in front of

Harry and threw the document on top of his plate. Soup fell all over the table and on Harry's lap.

Harry quickly stood and began to wipe the hot soup from his lap.

"What's the matter with you?" yelled Harry.

"You fucking bastard," said Lucius through gritted teeth.

Hermione stood and walked to where the children sat.

"Go to the living room, kids."

"But Mum, we haven't even started eating," protested Odin.

Severus walked towards his children and pulled their chairs back.

"Go on, I'll have Foofoo take you something."

By the time the children exited, Lucius and Harry were circling each other.

"Harry, Lucius, what's happening?" asked Albus.

Lucius looked Albus' way. "I'll tell you what's happening. This fucking brat showed Ginny the supposedly sealed transcript of my confession." He looked back at Harry. "What were you thinking?"

"I didn't show Ginny anything. I don't know how she got hold of that," said Harry.

"Oh, please, give me some credit. You think I don't know you're jealous of Ginny and me? How convenient for this to show up here, now."

Minerva approached the two men.

"Harry, what have you done?" asked the older witch.

Harry looked around the room. Everyone was looking at him with accusing eyes.

"I haven't done anything. I don't know how that got here. But what does it matter? Ginny deserves to know the truth about you," said Harry.

"I would have told her everything she wanted to know, in time, and in private. You had no right to do what you did to throw the information at her without warning, without any concern for her feelings. I've paid for what I did. I'm still paying. You had no right! I'm not that man anymore!" yelled Lucius.

"A leopard doesn't change his spots. You just don't stop being a Death Eater," said Harry, moving closer to Lucius.

"Harry, how can you say that?" said Hermione, as she approached Harry. "How prejudiced you are, not willing to give anyone the benefit of the doubt. You're unwilling to accept that a person can become so much more than what they were in the past, if only given the chance to change. You're a sad pathetic man, Harry."

Severus looked at Hermione and shook his head. He knew for certain the moment Lucius threw the document on Harry's plate that what he'd seen earlier were Ministry documents. He only wished he'd known at the time what those documents were.

"Listen to me, Harry, and listen good," Lucius demanded. "If you've ruined my future with Ginny, then what you read in that transcript will pale in comparison to what I do to you. If she is lost to me, you'll find out first-hand just what kind of a Death Eater I really was."

Harry visibly trembled as Lucius turned and made his way out of the dining room. Severus followed him, hoping he could calm his friend down. Hermione stood next to Harry. Albus and Minerva looked at the young man, with disappointment.

Harry turned towards Hermione, who turned away from him. Not giving him a chance to answer for what he had done, Hermione walked out to search for her friend. Harry looked at Albus and Minerva.

"I have never been so disappointed in anyone as I am with you today, Harry." Albus took Minerva by the arm, and they also left. No one seemed to want to be in the same room with Harry. As he saw himself alone, Harry began to feel that even he didn't want to be alone with himself. He started to wonder if he'd gone too far.

As Severus sat in the library trying to console Lucius, Hermione walked out into the garden. She whispered a tracing spell and followed a wispy form until she finally found Ginny. The redhead was sitting in the small alcove where she'd almost kissed Lucius the day she broke her hand.

"Ginny?" Hermione approached her as she sobbed quietly. "Ginny, please talk to me."

"Hermione," Ginny said as she threw her arms around Hermione and began to cry. "He...Lucius did the most horrible things." Hermione rubbed her back as she spoke. Ginny pulled herself away and wiped her eyes. "Hermione, I've lost him. I don't know if I can ever see him the same way again."

Hermione caressed Ginny's cheek and leaned her forehead against hers. She smiled, and then looked at her friend.

"Oh, Ginny. You have no idea how much I know about your pain."

It then occurred to Ginny that Hermione was the only person who could know what she felt at that moment. Severus had been a spy for so long, that it was hard to remember sometimes he too had once been a Death Eater.

"You know, I turned Severus down the first time he asked me to marry him."

"What?" Ginny's eyes almost bulged out of their sockets.

"I told him that I couldn't marry a man who couldn't share his secrets with me. He told me that if I knew all the things he'd done, I would never want to look at him again." Hermione took Ginny's hands in hers, and they sat back against the wall of the alcove.

"I said, 'Severus, you aren't the same man who did those things. That man no longer exists. I love you no matter what you did in the past; it's the man you are today that matters to me.' Like you and Lucius, I knew some of what Severus had done, but I wanted to know more and to have him know my secrets, too."

Ginny looked at Hermione as she spoke, hoping that her friend's words would give her the courage to overcome her slowly breaking heart.

"After about a week he finally told me. I...oh, Ginny, I was horrified. I couldn't even look at him. I didn't know if I could accept the things he'd told me he did. Then my own words came back to haunt me. I had told him that his past didn't matter to me." Hermione looked at Ginny, "He really wasn't the same person any longer. He's regretted so much of what he did, Ginny. His work for the Order is what kept him from ending his life so many times. His only comfort was knowing he was atoning for his sins by trying to overcome Voldemort."

Hermione sat on the edge of the stone bench and looked back at Ginny.

"None of us is perfect, Ginny. Neither Lucius or Severus can take back what they have done. But they've learned from their mistakes. They can try to make up for things; they can try to redeem themselves. That's what we are for them. We are their redemption. Everyone who seeks out redemption deserves it. Don't take his away from him; give Lucius a chance, Ginny."

Ginny thought for a while. She knew a lot about pre-Hermione Severus and that he had a bad past, but he was now a wonderful husband and father. Ginny had seen him with Hermione and his kids; he had changed so much over the years. He was still a hard man to deal with sometimes, but he was more even tempered. He was more patient and more open with his emotions. He even put up with Crookshanks. If Severus could change, why couldn't Lucius.... Ginny stood and began to walk towards the castle. She stopped briefly, and Hermione stood at her side.

"This is going to be hard, Hermione."

"I know, but it will be worth it, I promise."

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I'll have a bit more Severus and Hermione in the next chapter too, as well as a bit of the kids.

I hope you enjoyed this chapter

## Coming to terms

*Chapter 14 of 24*

Ginny thinks things out and Severus and Hermione catch the kids with something they should not be looking at.

Thank you to all of you who have taken the time to read this story and review it. I'm very pleased you are enjoying this.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thank you to June for all of her suggestions and help.

### Chapter 14 – Coming to terms

Severus looked out through the French doors of the library, hoping to see Hermione and Ginny walking towards the castle. Lucius sat behind him on the couch, with a drink in his hand.

"I should have said something sooner," said Lucius.

Severus continued to stare out the window.

"No, Lucius. Don't blame yourself. You would have told Ginny in time." Severus turned and walked towards Lucius. "It was difficult for Hermione to accept my past, but we worked through it. I thank every god in existence every day for giving me the chance to love such a remarkable woman. Ginny is remarkable as well," Severus said as he placed his hand on Lucius' shoulder. "Everything will work out."

The French doors, opened and both men turned their heads. Hermione came in alone. Lucius stood and walked towards her.

"Where is Ginny? Is she all right?" Lucius asked, concerned.

Hermione smiled sadly.

"She's fine, she went up to her room," Hermione said.

"She despises me, doesn't she?" asked Lucius.

"Just give her a bit of time, Lucius. It's not an easy thing to take in."

Lucius ran his hand through his now loose hair and laughed weakly. "And here I thought I could start over again, be happy, love. What a fool I was." He quietly walked out of the library and up to his room. He wanted to go to Ginny, but he knew that Hermione was right. He would give Ginny time and hope that she would forgive him his past.

"What do you really think?" asked Severus as he approached his wife.

"She just needs to think on things. She loves him, Severus. That's why she was so hurt. I think they will be fine."

"Come, let's go see to the children. It's nearing their bedtime." Severus took Hermione by the hand, and they both walked to the living room.

When they arrived, Albus was sitting next to the fire, looking into it as though the flames were about to speak to him at any moment. Minerva had gone to bed. She had been so disappointed at Harry's actions towards Ginny and Lucius, that she developed a headache. Not wanting to take any potion for it, she decided to sleep it off.

Severus and Hermione looked around the room but didn't see either Odin or Sage.

"Albus, where are the children?" asked Hermione.

"They finished their supper and went to bed," said Albus as he continued to stare into the flames.

Severus and Hermione walked out of the room. Before they reached the stairs, Severus stopped abruptly. He found it odd that his children should go to bed of their own accord. They often complained about having to go to bed so early. To his horror, he realized they might have gone back to the dining room.

"The transcript," said Severus, alarmed. He turned and ran towards the dining room, with Hermione running closely behind him. They stopped at the archway opening to the dining room and saw their children, sitting at the table and looking through the transcript.

“Odin, Sage, give me that. You shouldn’t be looking at that!” Severus walked in and quickly snatched the document from the table. Hermione gasped as she realized her children had been looking through Lucius’ accounts of his actions as a Death Eater, some of which involved their father.

Odin looked sadly at Severus as Sage spoke.

“Why does Uncle Lucius hate us?” asked their daughter.

“Why would you say that?” asked Hermione as she sat next to Sage, while Severus sat on the edge of the table next to Odin.

“In these pages, it says that Uncle Lucius hates Muggles and Mud...Mudbloods.” A tear fell down Odin’s cheek as he spoke to his father.

Severus sighed deeply. He’d always planned on telling his children some parts of his past. They deserved to know the truth about their father’s past, but he never thought he would be doing it so soon; they were only seven and eight years of age.

“That’s what we are, isn’t it, Daddy?” asked Sage.

“No, don’t you call yourselves that ever again!” said Hermione, as she smoothed down her daughter’s hair. “Your blood is just as good as any pureblood’s, and there isn’t anything wrong with it.”

“Children, when your Uncle Lucius and I were young, we did many foolish things that we wish we could take back. He doesn’t hate you. What you read was something said by a man you have never met.”

“I don’t understand,” said Odin.

“It is hard for even adults to understand. But one day, when you are a little older, we will explain it to you. You will both be attending Hogwarts together. That’s a few years away. I promise, before you go away to school, I will tell you these things I have kept from you.”

“Why can’t we know now?” asked Sage.

“Because, I want you to love me for a few more years yet,” answered Severus.

“We’ll always love you, Daddy, no matter what!” yelled Odin and Sage as they lunged at their father, hugging him tightly.

Severus looked at Hermione with a sad look in his eyes. His children were smart. He hoped that when the time came, they would understand and forgive him.

“Hey, what about me?” asked Hermione, as she tried to lighten the mood. “I need a hug too.”

The children turned and hugged their mother, and allowed their parents to walk them to their rooms. The children still seemed bothered with what little they had managed to read, so their parents allowed both children to sleep in the same room that evening.

As Severus and Hermione left their children tucked into their beds and shut the door, the two smaller Snapes began plotting.

“I can’t believe what a butt Harry is,” said Sage angrily.

“I know. We saw Harry open that thing; he said he wanted it to convince Ginny that Uncle Lucius is no good for her. I’ll bet he put it someplace where Ginny would find it. Did you hear all the nasty words Uncle Lucius was saying to him? And he told Harry he was jealous,” whispered Odin. They had overheard the conversation after their parents told them to leave the dining room.

“Harry wants to ruin everything. If Uncle Lucius is sad, then he won’t take us to Disney World!” yelled Sage.

“Shh...Harry won’t do anything,” said Odin, quite sure of himself.

“He’s got to go away.” Sage looked to her older brother. “Do you have a plan?” she asked.

“Not yet, but we’ve got to get Harry away from here. We’ll take that passage we found to the dungeons tomorrow. I’m almost sure one leads to the potions lab. There’s bound to be books in there with plenty of ideas.”

“Odin?”

“Hmm?”

“Do you think Mummy and Daddy would be angry if they found out we had anything to do with Harry leaving?”

Odin turned to his sister.

“What makes you think they’ll find out? We’re Snapes. We never get caught.”

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Thank you for reading. I hope you enjoyed this chapter.

## Decisions

*Chapter 15 of 24*

Harry thinks on things, Ginny and Lucius make up and Severus and Hermione rethink things.

Thank you to those of you who have taken the time to review this story so far. Your comments bring me much happiness. I appreciate your kind words.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks to June for all of her help and suggestions.

## Chapter 15 Decisions

Ginny lay in bed, staring at the ceiling. She had heard Lucius enter his room almost two hours earlier. Every so often she would look over at the door that connected their rooms.

She'd had plenty of time to think on what Hermione said to her in the gardens. It was true that Lucius had done many terrible things, but it was also true that he spent much of the last few years making up for his past actions. There were many witches' shelters across Europe that had been opened due to substantial contributions Lucius had given to establish a haven for the widows of wizards who had fought in the war. Many of these shelters had connecting orphanages. In the wizarding world, Lucius was seen as a philanthropic figure. He had even lobbied many of his friends in the Ministry when Arthur Weasley ran for the position of the Minister of Magic, which he won in a landslide election.

At her father's inauguration ceremony, Ginny saw Lucius in the crowd. She was alone then, as at the time Harry was seeing Cho. She briefly laughed now at the memory, realizing the irony of it all. Cho had married Draco a few years after that function, and now here Ginny was, in love with another Malfoy.

She had spent the better part of that evening trying to avoid several suitors who only wanted a connection with the new Minister, and she was about to leave the inauguration festivities when Lucius approached her. Even though he had proved to be a great help in defeating Voldemort, and he had worked with the Order for months, she was still wary of him. As an adult, she realized the Horcrux had needed to be found and destroyed, and she had reconciled herself to her role. But she'd not forgotten that it was he who slipped Tom Riddle's diary into her bucket at Flourish & Blotts and Lucius had then been on the other side.

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"Miss Weasley, might I have a word?" asked Lucius politely. Ginny looked around, as though seeking out assistance, but she saw no one about who she could signal for help. She realized how silly she was being as if Lucius would do anything nasty at her father's inauguration and smiled tentatively at him.

"Certainly, Mr. Malfoy." Lucius smiled at her, and she blushed. As her childhood memories came back to her, she remembered how she used to dream about him as a young girl. He was so handsome to her then, and even more so now.

"I wanted to apologize to you for what I did in regards to Tom's diary when you began your schooling at Hogwarts. Please, believe me, I had no idea what would happen. I didn't realize you would have to die for Voldemort to regain his footing in our world."

She looked into his sparkling blue eyes. *'How blue they are,'* she thought as she lost herself in their depths.

"I hope that you can some day forgive me for my misdeeds towards you," continued Lucius. He noticed she seemed flushed, and he thought perhaps she was nervous. "Miss Weasley, are you ill?"

"No, I'm not. Well, it is a bit stuffy in here. I forgive you. I know you were a different man back then." She smiled at him and allowed him to see her to the door.

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Ginny sat up on her bed. She had forgiven him so easily then at the inauguration. She knew he'd done unspeakable things, yet she realized then for the first time he had changed. He had made it a point to go to her in private and ask her forgiveness for the diary incident; he didn't do it in front of her father, the new Minister, and Lucius and Draco had already been exonerated. He was so sincere when he apologized. How could she not forgive him now? She was sure that in time he would have opened up to her and told her about his past.

She swung her legs over the bed and walked quietly to the door. She pressed her face against it and tried to listen for any sign that Lucius might be awake. She heard nothing. She turned the knob and opened the door. His room was dark, except for a candle burning on the night table next to the bed. Lucius lay sleeping on his side, facing the door. Ginny crept towards the bed, then carefully pulled back the comforter and slipped in bed next to Lucius.

He stirred slightly, as she touched his cheek lightly with her fingers. His eyes slowly opened, and he reached his hand out to touch her lips with his fingertips.

"What dream is this, that saves me from my troubled sleep?" he said as he traced her lips. "Ginny," he whispered.

Ginny took hold of his hand and kissed the tips of his fingers, then his palm.

"This is no dream, my love," she said.

Lucius smiled and wrapped his arm around her waist to pull her to him. He held her close, allowing himself the pleasure of taking in her scent. She smelled of the oriental spiced perfume she loved to wear. This was no dream; he knew she was real as he felt her soft skin against his own, and her heart beating against his chest.

He pulled back slightly from her and looked in her eyes. "I would have told you everything, Ginny. Why did you read it?"

"I'm sorry. I should have given you the chance to tell me. I just..." She sighed heavily. "I just didn't know how to ask you. I knew I should have just left the document alone, but it was there, and I thought, if I don't look I'll always wonder. And then I wondered, what if you never wanted to tell me? I don't want us to keep secrets from each other. Hermione tells me that sometimes Severus still has nightmares. I want to help you, the way she helps him to deal with those memories. I suppose I thought that if I knew what your secrets were, I could help."

"You help me just by accepting me. I don't know what I would have done if you never wanted to be near me again," admitted Lucius, as his hands now stroked her back.

"At first I didn't know if I could, but I've seen how much you really have changed. You started when you switched sides and helped the Order. You've helped so many people who lost loved ones in the war widows, children, even some of the Muggles affected by curses. And then that day you came to me at my father's inauguration and apologized. That's when I really truly realized you were a different man. I forgave you then. There is nothing to forgive you for now. I'm the one who should ask forgiveness, for not believing in who you are now, to think that you could still do those things."

Lucius chuckled and lightly scratched her back, making her shiver.

"I would never hurt you; you know that, don't you?" he asked as he kissed her cheek.

"Yes, I know that. Well, unless perhaps I asked you to hurt me just a little bit." Feeling that it was time to move on, and leave the events of the day behind them, Ginny threw her leg over Lucius' hip.

"Just wait until I get you in my dungeons, my sweet kitten."

A few doors down, Harry had spent the rest of the evening in his room, thinking on what he had done. Part of his brain was telling him he'd gone too far, yet another part told him he hadn't gone far enough. It was thoughts like these that made Harry often wonder if there wasn't a small part of Voldemort still inside of him.

Deciding he would go down to the kitchen and make himself something to eat, he put on a robe and left his room. While he originally only meant for Ginny to see the transcript, he didn't realize that his thoughtlessness now threatened the happiness of his hosts.

As Severus and Hermione lay in bed, cuddled against each other, Severus found sleep hard to come by.

"Hermione, are you awake?" he whispered.

"Yes. I can't stop thinking about what the kids may have read before we found them," she answered, and then sat up.

Severus sat up next to her and rubbed her back as he noted her shivering.

"I know we agreed to tell the children about my past once they were a bit older, but I think what happened this evening warrants a reevaluation of our original agreement."

"You're right, Severus. They're bound to have questions. And school will be starting soon. You know how they like to talk to the students sometimes while they are walking to classes. What if they ask any of them they know about Death Eaters?"

"Perhaps we can attempt another picnic before the new year. Crookshanks is gone, and I will make sure to keep my pants on," he said as he wiggled his brow at her.

"Oh, stop," Hermione laughed and leaned back down, taking him with her. As he stared down at her, she pushed the hair from his face.

"We can give them a short and somewhat edited version of my past. Allow them to ask some questions and go from there. Maybe we can ask Lucius and Ginny to join us, if they've made up by then."

"I'm sure they are working things out as we speak." She kissed her husband, and they proceeded to work a few things out for themselves.

When Harry reached the kitchens, he found that all he was in the mood for was a glass of milk. He poured one for himself and started to walk back to his room, but was stopped by a faint light in the living room. He approached slowly and quietly, and saw that there was someone sitting in the large high back leather chair facing the fireplace. He heard a heavy sigh, and then a low tired voice spoke to him.

"Is there something you wish to tell me, Harry?" Albus did indeed sound tired. The old wizard was troubled. He loved Harry. It hurt him to no end that the young man was wasting his life. It hurt him even more to know that it was Harry who had arranged for Ginny to find Lucius' transcript. He knew the moment Harry denied it. Legitimacy was not needed; he could see it in his eyes.

Harry walked further into the room and sat in the chair across from the old Headmaster.

"I didn't want to hurt Ginny. I just wanted her to know the truth."

Albus scoffed, "Yes, but it was not your truth to tell. Not only did you take a document from the Ministry without the expressed permission of the Minister of Magic, but you used the document in a malicious way, Harry. Why?"

Harry was about to speak when Albus raised his hand to stop him.

"And don't tell me it's because you are in love with her and she deserves better. Because right now, Harry, in my eyes you don't seem to make the cut."

"You wouldn't understand, Albus," said Harry, as Albus shook his head.

"Harry, you are thirty-two years old. It is time for you to grow up, and be a responsible wizard. You are not a nineteen-year-old anymore. I'm not saying you need to get married and start having children, but take some action and move on with your life. Ginny is no longer a part of your future, Harry; she has decided to move on and stop waiting for you. Accept it and allow her to be happy." Albus stood and looked down at his former pupil. "You had your chance, Harry, and you allowed it to pass you by." Albus turned and left Harry alone, and staring into the fire.

Harry bowed his head and wondered what had become of his life. Where had he gone wrong?

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Thank you for reading this, I hope you enjoyed this chapter.

## Don't mess with Uncle Lucius

*Chapter 16 of 24*

The mini Snapes put their plan into action.

Thank you all for your continued interest in this story. I hope you are still pleased with the way its going.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks to June for all of her help and suggestions.

### Chapter 16 Don't mess with Uncle Lucius.

It was now Thursday morning. Saturday was New Year's Eve, and Count Heinrich's houseguests would most probably all be leaving on the following day to begin to ready themselves for the remainder of the school year. So everyone wanted to use these remaining days to the fullest.

Harry had fallen asleep on the living room couch, but had managed to get up to his room before the sun came up. After what he had done, he thought it best to keep his distance from the rest of the household. Briefly he wondered if he should just leave. It was not like the Boy Who Lived would have to spend New Year's Eve alone. Just as fast as the thought came into his head, another pushed it away. He needed to be around to pick up the pieces when Lucius messed up. He was sure Ginny would never accept the things the elder Lucius had done. Harry decided he needed to stay a while longer.

What he didn't know was, he would most likely be waiting for a very long time to pick up the pieces of Ginny's broken heart. Just a few doors down, Ginny was lying in Lucius' arms. His body was curved and snuggled up against hers. They had only fallen asleep less than half an hour earlier. While all of their prior couplings had been gentle and slow, Ginny showed Lucius she didn't mind letting loose, very very loose.

Albus and Minerva were already up and ready to start the day. The older wizard only slept five hours a night and took catnaps through the course of the day. It kept him rested and kept his mind always fresh and clear. Having spent the better part of the last fifty years with him, Minerva had grown accustomed to Albus' schedule. They crept

down the stairs and began to walk the gardens. They were only going to be there a few more days, so they decided to take morning walks in the gardens and watch the sunrise. It would mean missing breakfast for the rest of the time, but they could easily take something to eat with them. They did not have the opportunity to do these things at Hogwarts, at least not during the school year.

Severus and Hermione were still asleep. Just before they finally drifted off, Severus instructed the elves that he and his wife would be having breakfast in bed. He was happy to hear that they weren't the only couple having breakfast in bed. Knowing that these house-elves were gossips, as most were, Severus asked which couple. They informed him that the older couple had taken something with them to the gardens, and the other young couple was taking their breakfast later that morning in the Sir's room. Severus smiled and went back to bed. He would give Hermione the good news when she woke up.

And yet a few more rooms down the hall were the innocent babes the angel-faced, doe-eyed, ever-curious children of Severus and Hermione Snape. The babes looked so peaceful as they slept, which was a lovely sight. However, anyone wanting to see this today would have been sorely disappointed, since the two were now awake and up to their devilish little arses in potions and charm books.

Odin and Sage Snape had woken up even earlier than they did on Christmas morning. The tunnel they had found the day before did indeed lead into the potions lab. Their father had warded the laboratory's door, and they had been unable to get in before. The tunnel, however, wasn't part of the ward; it led directly to a half-open bookcase, which served as the door of the potions lab from the tunnel.

When the children ordered breakfast earlier, the elves informed them that neither their parents, Ginny, Lucius or Albus and Minerva were having breakfast in the dining room. The siblings breathed a sigh of relief. Now they could stay and further their research and not be missed. They did find out, however, that Harry would probably be the only one to come to breakfast. If they were lucky, they could find something before Harry came down to eat.

"Odin, we can't poison him," said Sage. "I think that might be taking it a bit far."

"We're not going to kill him, dummy. We'll just make him wish we had," answered Odin. He read through a passage about Veritaserum. The siblings were far advanced when it came to Potions and Transfiguration. But many of the more difficult potions they knew nothing about. Odin smiled as he read about the effects of the truth serum.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed, and then held up the book for his sister. Both their reading levels were far above average, the advantage of having two bookworms as parents.

Sage read the passage and grinned.

"Oh, that's perfect!" she laughed loudly. "Can you imagine?"

Odin stood and placed the book on the table behind him.

"I wouldn't want to be Harry after he drinks that," said the young boy.

"Right, now all we have to do is get it into Harry's pumpkin juice." Sage put down the book she was looking at, and stood next to Odin.

"We'll need to distract the elves; you know what gossips Dad says they are. They might see us and tell," said Odin as he stroked his chin, just like his father often did when thinking out a solution to something.

"Oh, leave that to me. Come on, let's look for a bottle in the storage closet and get to the kitchens.." Sage grabbed her brother by the arm and dragged him to the small closet.

They laughed as they searched for the potion, while wondering if they could still use the media room they found as blackmail. It was obvious that their father wasn't making potions or doing research down in this room like he had told their mother.

Agreeing they would save the information for a later date, when they really got into trouble, they set to the task of finding the Veritaserum. After looking for almost twenty minutes, Odin found a bottle with the name of the potion. He uncorked it and took a sniff. It was odorless, just as the description in the book said. The bottle was also the required dark blue, as the potion lost its potency if too much light were allowed to penetrate it. The bottle's top was made of gold, because it was the only metal that the potion could come in contact with, and any other stopper would absorb some of the ingredients and make the potion lose potency as well.

"Here, I've got it. Come on," Odin said as he jumped down from the stepladder, and they ran back up the tunnel stairs. They made their way to the kitchen, where there was one house-elf busily making Harry's breakfast. The rest of the elves were either scrubbing the floors, cleaning the pots and dishes, or polishing the silverware.

"Wait here," Sage whispered, then walked into the kitchen. She stopped in the middle of the kitchen and sighed heavily.

"Can anyone tell me where I can find a scrubber?" she asked loudly.

The house-elves turned to her and gasped.

"Why does Miss need a scrubber?" asked a frightened elf.

"I'm bored, so I want to clean my bathroom," answered the girl. She knew that the Count's house-elves were obligated to not allow her to do anything that smelled of work. As she expected, there was a collective shudder across the room.

"No, we is cleaning it, Miss. You mustn't do that," said Kooki, wide-eyed.

"No, I can do it. Then maybe I'll clean my room, too."

"Please, Miss, let us; we love serving young witches." Kooki looked at the rest of the elves, then they all popped out of the room.

Odin rushed into the kitchen and opened the bottle over Harry's pumpkin juice. He needed to be careful. The correct dosage was three drops, which would last several hours, according to the book.

"Oh, no, Odin." Sage, who had been standing at the door, turned and whispered loudly over her shoulder, "He's coming, Harry's coming."

Not wanting to get caught, and not having the proper time to carefully measure out the drops, Odin shook the bottle over Harry's glass and quickly hid inside the pantry. Sage crawled behind the large butcher block next to the stove.

Harry strode into the kitchen and looked around. It struck him as odd that the house-elves weren't around, but it seemed they had left his breakfast prepared. Not thinking anything of it, he walked to the counter and made himself a plate of eggs, bacon, and toast. Then he grabbed the glass of pumpkin juice and left for the dining room.

The kids came out and slowly walked to the door leading to the dining room. They peeked out and saw Harry sitting at the table and eating.

"Three drops, right?" asked Sage.

"Well, yeah, sort of," answered Odin.

Sage turned to him. "Sort of?"

"Three drops really, really, really big...drops." Odin smiled weakly, wondering just how many drops he had put into Harry's juice, how much juice Harry would drink, and

how long the Veritaserum would be in his system.

"Uh-oh." Sage looked at her brother. "Fasten your broom belts, folks; it's going to be a bumpy flight."

\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*

I took the line in "All About Eve" in which Betty Davis says "Fasten your seatbelts folks, its going to be a bumpy night," as my inspiration for Sage's reaction.

I hope you enjoyed this chapter. Thank you for reading.

## Did I just say that out loud?

*Chapter 17 of 24*

Harry's woes are just beginning as the Veritaserum takes effect.

Thank you to those who have taken the time to review this. I appreciate your comments.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks as always to June for all of her help and suggestions.

### Chapter 17 Did I just say that out loud?

Harry finished his breakfast and decided he would fly around the area for a while, to relax. He thought that he should be back by lunchtime, as he expected Ginny might need a shoulder to cry on.

Odin and Sage scurried to their rooms. They both decided that they would be careful and act as though they could not possibly know how to find a bottle of Veritaserum in the castle, much less know the potion's uses and just how to use it. There was no way they would take the blame for anything Harry did or said.

As the morning trailed on, the rest of the houseguests finally emerged from their rooms.

Everyone was assembled in the living room and relaxing, each aware they only had a few more days left in Bavaria. Severus and Hermione were showing the children simple spells and transfiguration techniques. Knowing their children's penchant for mischief, both Severus and Hermione decided their children need not have their own wand for several years more, at least until it came time for them to attend Hogwarts. On several occasions the children showed signs of wandless magic, but they were still years away from being able to use it effectively.

On the other side of the room, Ginny was speaking with Minerva regarding the possibility of doing some part-time work at Hogwarts. Ginny was a Charms Mistress; and Professor Flitwick had a sick mother he would be attending to on and off, as he and his siblings were taking turns caring for the old witch. Ginny and Lucius hadn't really discussed any future plans yet, but she was hopeful that there would certainly be a future for them together one day. Ginny was very interested in Minerva's offer to take over for Filius the days he was taking care of his mother.

Ginny's work at the Ministry was slow going. Being the daughter of the Minister of Magic didn't keep her from having a dull position. Perhaps Lucius would support her, which was something Harry never would have done. Harry was the type who would want her to stick with her boring job, just so that she could work in the same place as him, so that when he got bored at his work he could come and waste time bothering her. She sometimes wondered why Harry took the job of Ministry Director of Public Affairs, but Harry loved the spotlight. Why wouldn't he have taken the job?

Lucius was sitting next to the fire with Albus. They decided to take each other on in a game of chess. Both men so far had proven to be very formidable players.

As everyone relaxed, Harry, having flown directly to his balcony, came downstairs from his room. He reached the bottom of the stairs and noticed everyone was in the living room. It didn't escape him that Ginny was sitting far away from Lucius and in a very intense discussion with Minerva. *'No doubt Minerva is consoling her,'* thought Harry.

He tried not to look like he was gloating, as he didn't know if the rest of the group was still upset with him for what happened with Lucius' not-so-sealed transcript, something that he still had not admitted to bringing there. Harry walked into the room, having of course been spotted by everyone by now.

While no one had mentioned what happened the evening before, in their own minds most believed that for the sake of getting along things should be left alone for the time being. Lucius had briefly thought of hexing Harry on first sight, but stopped himself; for fear that Ginny would probably be upset. Ginny and Harry had been friends for many years, and she had been in love with him at one point. Lucius didn't want to risk her feeling sympathetic towards her ex if Harry's balls were hanging from the chandeliers.

Ginny decided to ignore Harry for the most part, as did Minerva. Minerva was still felt upset and betrayed. The fact that Harry, one of her favorite students, one of her favorite people, would do such a deed was something that she would find hard to forget and he was a Gryffindor to boot. It was enough to have her stomach in knots.

Albus thought much like Severus and Hermione. They knew that Harry was in need of a rude awakening, but this might not be the time or the place to give it to him. They would simply allow things to go on as they were.

As for Odin and Sage, well, they just hoped that neither one of them would give the other up for a lesser sentence, once the adults figured out what happened to Harry.

When Harry walked into the room and was met with silence, Severus decided to break the ice.

"Good morning, Harry."

"Good morning, Severus," Harry replied. He looked around the room for a place to sit, not too close to anyone in particular. He settled into a soft big cushioned chair.

Albus looked over his glasses at Harry. He wondered if his talk with the young man had done any good.

The old wizard smiled and asked, "And how are we feeling this morning, Harry?"

"I've no idea how you are feeling, but I'm a bit constipated," Harry said, then stopped and blinked several times. *'Where did that come from?'* he wondered, as everyone's

head shot straight up and towards him.

*'All right, so the talk may not have worked,'* thought Albus. "Well, perhaps you can request a bit of prune juice from the elves before bedtime this evening. Unclogs the pipes, as they say." Albus turned back to his chess game. He looked at Lucius and shrugged his shoulders.

Lucius furrowed his brow; he found rudeness such as Harry's incredibly distasteful. Thank goodness he had saved Ginny from the uncouth buffoon.

The children looked at one another with wide eyes. They had been curious to see just how the potion would work. Oh yes, they had read the description in the book, but they hadn't dreamed things would be this good.

Harry sank back into his chair, hoping he and everyone else would forget what had just happened. He briefly wondered about Obliviating the lot of them, but thought better of it. He'd already accidentally hexed Severus' cock a few days after their arrival, and he was now persona non grata in the castle. The last thing he needed was another thing to go wrong, since there was no telling which of the group would wind up hexing him.

A large black owl tapping at the window broke the tension in the room. Severus stood and opened the window to allow the bird inside. It immediately flew to Lucius, who was smiling. Earlier that morning, Severus asked Lucius to invite Draco and Cho to spend the remainder of the holidays with them. Thinking it would be a good opportunity to celebrate his happiness with those he loved, except Harry, he decided to Owl his son. Lucius knew Draco would say yes; indeed, Draco had Owled him and told him he'd missed Europe, and would most probably be coming home sooner.

"Is that from Draco?" asked Severus.

"Yes," Lucius said as he looked to Severus and Hermione. "He and Cho will be arriving here just after lunch."

"That's wonderful," said Hermione. "I haven't seen them since classes began."

Minerva had always liked Cho, who had been a good Quidditch player when she was at Hogwarts. Then Minerva remembered that Harry and Cho had briefly dated. Deciding perhaps she would try to talk to him, Minerva spoke.

"Harry, didn't you and Cho used to date after you both graduated?"

Harry turned his head and looked at his former Transfiguration professor. "We never dated, just fucked." He stopped, shocked at his own declaration, he looked around the room. There was a collective gasp, as he wondered if there was a spell for the ground to swallow you up.

Severus and Hermione immediately covered the children's ears, while Albus's spectacles fell off his nose. Ginny stood as her jaw dropped halfway to the floor. Lucius was seething over the crude mention of Draco's wife, and Minerva was hyperventilating.

"Harry Potter, that was the single most rude thing I've ever heard come from your mouth!" cried the older witch.

"Harry, she's Lucius' daughter-in-law. You apologize to him," said Ginny angrily.

"I'd rather eat my own shit than apologize to him," said Harry as he rolled his eyes, not believing he couldn't just shut up.

"How fortunate for you then that you are constipated, or I'd be serving it up to you myself," Lucius said as he approached Harry with murder in his eyes.

Severus saw this and stood, placing himself between the two men. He looked at Harry and noticed his eyes seemed glazed over.

"Harry, what the devil have you been doing? You're acting as though you're on something." Severus wondered if perhaps Harry had spent the morning gathering or purchasing some wacky weed in Amsterdam.

"I'm not on anything. I don't know what's the matter with me. I feel strange. Like I have to..." Harry stopped. He was going to tell Severus that he felt compelled to answer with complete honesty at every question.

"Like you have to what?" asked Albus.

"Like I have to tell the truth." Harry immediately looked towards Lucius. "You son of a bitch. You put Veritaserum in my pumpkin juice this morning, didn't you?" yelled Harry.

Hermione looked at Odin and Sage, and told them to go to their room.

"But Mum," whined Odin.

"Mum nothing, go! The both of you." Hermione shoved them both towards the door.

As they walked out of the room, they looked back and saw Lucius laughing. They then ran to the panel that opened up to the tunnels. They could just as easily hear from behind the walls.

"Are you deranged? Just where would I get Veritaserum?" Lucius smiled evilly, "Don't answer that. You might say something like you yourself keep a vial of it up your anal crevice, or something similarly disgusting."

"I'll bet you're loving this," said Harry.

"Harry, why would Lucius feel the need to slip anything into your pumpkin juice? You aren't trying to hide anything, are you?" asked Severus, knowing full well that it had been Harry who produced the document of Lucius' confession.

"Well, of course I'm trying to hide something!" Harry yelled as he threw his hands up in the air. "All right, that's it," Harry said as he turned and walked towards the archway. "I'm going to my room."

"To do what?" yelled Lucius from behind him. Lucius felt the need to embarrass Harry further.

"To go wank off!" yelled Harry back. "Fuck!"

Lucius turned to the rest of the group, and smiled. "I was hoping he would say something like that."

# Be afraid, be very afraid

*Chapter 18 of 24*

Draco and Cho arrive and the kids are up to no good.

Thank you to all of you that have taken the time to read this as well as review. I appreciate all of your comments.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks to June for all of her help and suggestions.

## Chapter 18 Be afraid, be very afraid

Harry reached his room, intending to do just as he had told Lucius. But once he closed the door, he realized he had no desire to wank off; considering how angry he was, he might just rip his dick off by accident. He couldn't believe he'd ingested Veritaserum. In his head he tried to think of how Lucius could have gotten the potion in his drink that morning, but couldn't figure out how he'd done it. No matter, it was done.

Right now, Harry had to figure out what to do. He wasn't sure how long he would be under the influence of the potion. For all he knew, he would be under this torment for hours, even days. He could avoid the others for the remainder of his stay, or he could just go home but he found that he didn't want to do either. Now it was personal. If Lucius wanted to make him look like an idiot, then two could play at that game.

Feeling the need to work off the tension he felt, Harry decided to throw caution to the wind and give it a go, so he walked into the bathroom. Maybe a good wank would clear his head.

"A good wank, and I'll figure something out," he said.

As Harry closed the door of his bathroom, Odin and Sage who were standing on the other side of the wall looked at one another.

"All right, what in the world is a wank anyway?" asked Sage.

Odin shrugged. "Beats me."

Downstairs Lucius was still laughing, as was Severus. Albus had a smile on his face, and the women were scowling and standing with their arms folded.

"What?" asked Severus innocently, as he noticed his wife's arched brow.

"I don't suppose you would know how that Veritaserum got into Harry's pumpkin juice," asked Hermione.

"Honestly, I don't. But now that I think about it, it's a brilliant idea," answered Severus.

"Severus, it isn't fair to put that into someone's drink without telling them," said Ginny.

Lucius walked towards her and placed his hand on her shoulder.

"I suppose it was fair for Harry to send away for my transcript and just conveniently place it where you would find it?" he asked her.

Ginny looked at Lucius in disbelief.

"That was Harry's doing?" Ginny looked at the others. By the looks on their faces, she knew they some of them were just as surprised as she was. "But, how? Harry needed permission from my father to get those, and I know Dad wouldn't allow those sort of documents to leave the Ministry, ever."

"We don't exactly have proof," said Hermione. "But Severus saw Hedwig delivering a Ministry package to Harry's room last evening. We're pretty sure it was the transcript."

Ginny bowed her head and sighed deeply. "Oh, Harry."

Lucius pulled her close to him and walked with her to the couch. Ginny had lost too many tears over Harry the last few years, and she vowed she would lose no more. It would be easy to forget all she had gone through with Harry, knowing that now she had a man like Lucius to love. Still she felt betrayed, and she felt the need for the comfort her new lover was giving her now.

Albus turned to Severus.

"Much as I hate to see this happening to Harry, I think perhaps this may be the thing he needs to grow up," Albus spoke tiredly.

"I agree. Harry's suppressed his feelings for so many years. He's been stagnant, not wanting to admit to himself that the world and those in it move on. Now, he has no choice but to face the truth, not just from us but from himself," Severus said. He knew very well that Veritaserum not only worked to the advantage of the person asking the questions, but it worked to the disadvantage of the victim. Harry's inner voice would also succumb to the potion.

As the afternoon rolled on, Harry stayed alone in his room, thinking of Quidditch. It seemed to be the only thoughts that didn't attack him personally.

The rest of the group sat companionably in the living room, waiting for Draco and Cho to arrive. At three o'clock, the Floo rumbled slightly as it always does before guests arrive, and Draco and Cho walked through with several bags in tow.

"Draco," Lucius greeted his son with a warm hug, then turned to his daughter-in-law and hugged her as well.

Severus and Hermione walked toward the couple and greeted them, as did Albus and Minerva.

"I'm so happy you could both come," said Severus.

"Thank you for inviting us," Draco said. He'd grown into a carbon copy of his father. They both looked so much alike, that sometimes in public people had to do a double-

take to decide which Malfoy they were seeing. He'd grown out of his bratty nature and become a fine businessman and husband.

As handsome as Draco was, Cho was just as beautiful. Her dark hair cascaded down her back, catching the light with every strand. She wasn't as tall as him, but they fit together nicely, and the contrast of their looks made heads turn.

Hermione and Minerva took Cho's bag and walked with her towards the stairs.

"I haven't seen you in ages," said Hermione.

"My dear, you are positively lovely, just as I remembered you," chimed Minerva.

"Thank you, Minerva. We do have quite a bit of catching up to do, Hermione." Cho walked up the stairs with the two witches, while the men and Ginny stayed in the living room.

Albus decided to take a walk in the gardens. They were so beautiful, he thought of making a miniature copy of them for Minerva and himself to enjoy once they got back to Hogwarts.

After the women and Albus had left, Severus realized that his children were missing. Thinking they were no doubt up to something, he took his leave.

"If you will excuse me as well, I've just noticed my children have mysteriously disappeared. And for some reason that makes me nervous."

"Severus, nothing can happen to them here," said Lucius.

"Lucius, it's not them I'm worried about; it's us."

Just as Severus turned to leave, Lucius grabbed his arm. Lucius remembered that when they were in Hogwarts as students together, Draco didn't get along well with Ginny, or any other Gryffindors. Wanting his son and his...his what? Girlfriend? Lover? Future wife? Well, wanting his son and Ginny to get along, the thought of leaving them alone together might be a good idea.

"I'll help you, Severus. Perhaps your children are in the dungeons. They... ah...helped me with a project down there a few days ago and seemed to know their way around quite well." Lucius turned to Draco and Ginny. "We'll be back shortly."

Severus nodded, and both men walked away.

Draco and Ginny eyed each other carefully.

"Weaselette," said Draco with distaste.

"Ferret," countered Ginny.

They both stared at one another for several long moments, then burst out into laughter. Draco closed the distance between them and threw his arms around Ginny.

"How are you, love?" he asked.

"I'm wonderful," said Ginny.

It had been a great secret, but Ginny and Draco had dated for several months before they amiably separated, when he got involved with Cho and she with Harry (again).

"So," said Draco as he pulled back and looked down at her. "You and my father?"

Ginny smiled and blushed.

"Now I see where you get your charm," she said as she pushed away from him slightly and turned towards the fireplace. "I hoped you wouldn't be upset." Ginny turned back around and faced him.

Draco smiled sadly at her.

"When my mum died, I never wanted my father to be with anyone again. I know they loved each other. But I also know he didn't love her like he loves you. I've known for some time that my parents' marriage was arranged when they were young. But there were times when we were happy as a family. Thanks to Cho, I realize that he needed someone too." Draco approached her and took her hand.

"He has told me he loves you so much, Ginny, and I'm happy for him. You will take care of him, won't you? Because believe it or not, he needs that more than you do."

Ginny smiled and nodded. He was right.

Seeing a very sappy moment approaching the horizon, Draco decided to revert to his former self.

"Just don't expect me to call you 'Mummy,' Weasley."

She giggled, only to stop and look at Draco in horror.

"What?" asked Draco alarmed.

"Thank Merlin we never...you know," said Ginny.

Draco's eyes went wide.

"Oh, gods! Ginny, I don't know when I've ever been so happy to NOT have slept with someone. Look, no one knows we dated..."

"And nobody needs to know. It might make Lucius and Cho a little uncomfortable."

Agreeing to keep mum about their former relationship, they walked out of the living room together.

As Lucius predicted, Odin and Sage had indeed wandered into the dungeons. Not satisfied with how little Harry suffered, they mutually decided that it was time to, as the Muggle chef Emeril says, "kick it up a notch." Sage was flipping some pages in a newer looking spells book, when she came upon something that could prove to be quite interesting.

"Odin, look," she said as she looked up from the book to her brother. "If this doesn't want to make him leave, nothing will."

Odin looked at the spell and smiled.

"I wonder if he will take requests."

It just so happened that the spell Sage found caused the victim to break out into Broadway show tunes. It was called "*Concentio hilaris*" or the "Singing Gay" spell.

Yes, this would be an interesting evening. Chances were that Harry would still be under the influence of the Veritaserum. That coupled with the new spell would prove to be quite a show.

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I hope you enjoyed this chapter.

## What's with Harry's hair?

*Chapter 19 of 24*

The kids aren't done with Harry just yet.

Thank you all for reading this. Your comments make my day. I appreciate you sticking with it. I hadn't planned on making this story so long, but its sort of got a mind of its own.

All canon characters belong to JKR

Thanks to June for all of her help and suggestions.

### Chapter 19 What's with Harry's hair?

Odin and Sage just barely got out of the dungeons without getting caught. It was lucky for them that they heard their father and Lucius approaching, so they and were able to get to the tunnels quickly. After a bit of searching, they spied Harry in the gardens, where they could observe Harry from behind some bushes. Sage pointed her wand towards Harry and whispered the spell she and her brother had found earlier. They watched, Harry seemed to shiver slightly as he looked around. Thankfully they had a cloaking spell on themselves.

They waited. And they waited some more. Finally they looked at one another.

"I don't think it worked," said Sage, as Harry continued to sit on a stone bench and read something that looked like a Quidditch book.

"Did you do it right?" asked Odin.

"I'm fairly certain." Sage looked at the book once more.

"Well, he's not doing anything," Odin pointed out.

Sage rolled her eyes. "Thank's for the news flash Rita Skeeter."

"No need to get insulting, I was just thinking out loud." Odin looked at Harry, then the book. "Maybe he needs... um...oh, what's that word Dad uses... Oh, Harry needs some sort of stimulus."

Sage crinkled her nose. "Like what?"

"I don't know," sighed Odin. They sat staring at Harry for almost fifteen minutes. Finally they decided their spell hadn't worked.

"Back to the dungeons, I suppose," said Odin.

"We haven't got time. Supper will be served soon, and you know how Daddy gets when we've gone missing for a long time. He doesn't trust us, you know."

"Sage, I don't even bloody trust us. Come on, let's go. We'll figure something else out in the morning." Odin and Sage left the bushes and walked back into the castle.

Harry sat on the stone bench, wondering why he couldn't get a tune out of his head. It was something he'd never heard; yet he felt an overwhelming desire to break out in song. He shook his head, thinking perhaps he should get out of the sun.

As supertime rolled around, all of the guests fluttered to the dining room. Everyone had paired off; even the kids were sitting next to one another. Harry walked in as the odd man out. He thought for a moment he would be bombarded with questions, but luckily no one bothered with him. He quietly sat at the farthest end of the table, next to Odin and Sage.

The house-elves served surf and turf mini filet mignons with lobster always a favorite no matter who was around. The group ate in companionable silence, until Draco decided to break the ice break the ice with a jackhammer, that is. Lucius had informed Draco of the incident with his transcript, as well as the Veritaserum that Harry seemed to have ingested. Draco wondered if the Veritaserum had worn off yet.

"So Harry, how do you like working for the Ministry?" Draco asked.

Harry's fork stopped midway to his mouth.

"Most of the time, I'm bored out of my skull. But it keeps me in the public eye, and I love the attention and special favors my celebrity status offers me, especially favors with girls," Harry said through gritted teeth. He knew Draco was trying to embarrass him, and he hated the fact that he was at a disadvantage.

"Favors? Interesting. I'll bet lots of people do you favors, both in and out of the Ministry." Draco smiled. "Anyone do you any favors lately?"

Harry was seething. He knew Draco was goading him on, and he couldn't do a damned thing about it.

"Yes, Draco. It happens I recently asked someone to do something for me." Harry couldn't help but cringe.

Seeing that dinner was going to turn into a sparring match between the two younger wizards, Severus decided to deflate the situation and prevent Draco from asking about his source for the transcript. Severus wanted to spend the last few days at the castle quietly. He suspected Harry had indeed asked someone for a favor and that was how

Lucius' transcript had shown up at the castle. He was so sure of this that, unbeknownst to anyone, Severus had Owled Arthur Weasley that morning. In his note, Severus gave the Minister of Magic enough information to enable him to investigate the matter and find Harry's source. While Severus didn't want to be the cause for Harry being fired, since Harry was still Hermione's friend, what Harry did was serious. Who knew how many other people in the Ministry of Magic were giving out information such as Lucius' "sealed" records. But it was Arthur's task to perform, not Draco's.

"Harry, if you are so bored working at the Ministry, why don't you just do something else? What would you rather be doing? Quidditch? Wine, women, song?" Severus took a stab at his potato and brought the fork to his mouth, taking a bite of his favorite vegetable.

Suddenly from across the table, Harry burst into song

*Sodomy*

*Fellatio*

*Cunnilingus*

*Pederasty*

Severus immediately began choking on his potato and needed to be assisted by Hermione's slapping him on the back. Albus and Minerva's wine came out their noses. The others also stopped eating and stared open-mouthed at Harry, as he now stood up and began to dance around the table.

*Father, why do these words sound so nasty?*

Sang Harry in a child-like voice as he cocked his head innocently and batted his eyelashes.

Odin and Sage looked at one another wide-eyed. And here they thought the spell hadn't worked. Their only problem was they had no idea what Harry was singing about.

*Masturbation can be fun!*

*Join the holy orgy!*

*Kama Sutra everyone!*

Harry twirled around the room hopping around as though his feet were on fire.

"Harry!" yelled Severus. One bad word was enough that morning, but now the Boy Who Annoyed was rattling off enough bad words to fill an encyclopedia. "Merlin's hemorrhoids, Harry, what is happening with you?"

Harry stopped mid-twirl and looked at Severus.

"Isn't it obvious? Dancing is happening to me!" said Harry angrily.

Hermione noticed Severus' face getting red, and saw the vein in his neck begin to throb. She stepped up next to him and placed her hand on his shoulder.

"Harry, you're acting a bit... um...odd."

"Odd? If only odd was all he were acting like," said Lucius. Ginny squeezed his thigh under the table. The last thing she wanted was for Harry to try to blame Lucius for his odd behavior again.

"Maybe you were out in the sun too long. That late afternoon sun sometimes is worse than the morning sun," said Albus as he laughed nervously.

"Why are you acting like this, Harry?" asked Ginny.

*She asks me why*

*I'm just a hairy guy*

*I'm hairy noon and night*

*Hair that's a fright*

*I'm hairy high and low*

*Don't ask me why*

*Don't know*

*It's not for lack of break*

*Like the Grateful Dead*

*Darling*

Harry spread his arms then began to shake his head as he started dancing again.

The entire group stared at him in shock.

*Gimme head with hair*

*Long beautiful hair*

*Shining, gleaming,*

*Streaming, flaxen, waxen*

Harry messed his hair with his hands as he sang on.

*Give me down to there hair*

*Shoulder length or longer*

*Here baby, there mama*

*Everywhere daddy daddy*

Severus looked towards Lucius and pointed at Harry.

"Did you do this?" Severus mouthed his question.

Lucius looked at his friend and shrugged.

"I didn't do anything," Lucius mouthed back to Severus.

*Hair, hair, hair, hair, hair, hair, hair*

*Flow it, show it*

*Long as God can grow it*

*My hair*

*Let it fly in the breeze*

*And get caught in the trees*

*Give a home to the fleas in my hair*

*A home for fleas*

*A hive for bees*

*A nest for birds*

*There ain't no words*

*For the beauty, the splendor, the wonder*

*Of my...*

Harry's words faded as he danced out of the room mid-song.

Everyone remaining sat quietly and looked at one another. Then Draco remembered something he'd seen while in New York.

"Hang on, he's singing something from Hair," Draco said as he looked at Cho. "Remember that old Muggle musical we saw just before we left. You weren't feeling well and missed a few songs while you were in the restroom." Draco started laughing. "He's performing Hair!"

Severus looked towards Odin and Sage, who seemed to be abnormally quiet. This was their doing, he was sure of it. Just what were his two little snakes up to?

~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*

The songs Harry sung were from the musical "Hair." The first is called "Sodomy" and the second is the theme song, "Hair."

I hope you all enjoyed this chapter. And, btw, I'm not done with Harry.

## Chapter ? 20 ? A corset, a lesson and permission.

*Chapter 20 of 24*

Harry is still under his spell, the kids get a lesson and Lucius gets permission.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks as always to June for all of her wonderful suggestions and all of her help.

### **Chapter 20 A corset, a lesson and permission**

Friday morning dawned, and all the guests were up early.

Albus and Minerva were joined outside for breakfast by everyone else. Well, not everyone Harry was mysteriously missing, as were the Snape children. Hermione got up to find out what her children were up to, but Severus stopped her.

"Let them sleep, Hermione. The holiday will be over with soon enough, and then we can get them back on their schedule," Severus said. After breakfast, he would go to their rooms and get them out of bed himself.

As they all ate and chatted, the women decided to go into the small Bavarian town not far from the castle, to get some special things for their New Year's celebration on the following day. Hermione wanted to buy some cakes and chocolates for dessert. Also, a day out with the girls might nice.

After the group finished eating, Hermione, Cho, Ginny, and Minerva left via carriage into town. That left the men. Draco had brought along his laptop and was showing

Albus the wonders of the Wizardnet. Severus and Lucius were at the other end of the table finishing their coffee. Harry was still in his room, and the children well, they were somewhere within the castle.

The prior evening, before they went to bed, Hermione had asked Severus where he thought Lucius and Ginny were going as a couple. Hermione loved Ginny like a sister, and she knew the redhead's relationship with Harry these last few years had been strained. Ginny wanted to fall in love and get married; she wanted a family of her own. Hermione asked Severus to talk to Lucius and find out just what he had in mind with her friend.

Normally, Severus would have told Hermione they should mind their own business, but in this case he himself was curious not so much for Ginny, but for Lucius. After Lucius lost Narcissa, he became withdrawn and cut himself off from the world. But ever since Lucius came to the castle and became involved with Ginny, Severus noticed the old Lucius slowly emerging. His friend was smiling again.

Severus and Lucius sat at the other end of the table. Severus took a sip of his coffee and set his cup down, then looked over at Lucius.

"Well, this has certainly been an interesting holiday, hasn't it?" said Severus.

Lucius smiled and looked over to Severus.

"Immensely."

"Ginny is a wonderful woman. Have you made any plans to continue your relationship beyond this holiday?" asked Severus.

"Ginny is a remarkable woman. She brought me back to life, Severus."

As the two men talked, Severus noticed something in the sky.

"I hope to continue with Ginny, but I want to do this right." Lucius noticed that Severus was looking towards the sky. He looked in the same direction and saw a dark object.

"What is that?" asked Lucius.

"It looks like an owl, but it's coming in too fast," said Severus.

"Good lord, it's...it's coming straight at us." Lucius looked on in horror.

"Watch out!" yelled Severus as all the men shoved themselves away from the table and hit the ground.

The owl came from the sky at an incredible speed. It landed at one end of the table, crashing into the laptop Draco was showing to Albus. Then the owl slid across the length of the table and landed in the bushes. After they were sure nothing else was coming at them, the men slowly got up from the ground.

"Fucking hell, what was that?" yelled Draco as he helped Albus stand. The older wizard's glasses were bent out of shape, and his beard had pieces of grass in it.

Severus stood and walked cautiously to the bushes. As he got close, the owl's head popped out of the bush. It crawled out of its leafy cushion and extended its leg towards Severus. He took the note from the owl's leg and unrolled it.

"It's from Arthur Weasley," he said as he looked at Lucius. "It's for you."

Lucius swallowed hard. He knew he would eventually have to confront Ginny's father about their relationship, but he didn't think it would be this soon. There was of course the added pressure of Ginny's father being the Minister of Magic. Still, he'd always known Arthur Weasley to be a fair man. However, Arthur was there the day Lucius gave his testimony and the records were sealed. Arthur knew the atrocities Lucius had committed as a Death Eater. Lucius took the note and read it:

*Lucius:*

*I would like to speak with you this afternoon regarding an urgent matter.*

*I will be waiting for you this afternoon at the Burrow. I hope 2:30 p.m. is fine. Everyone will have gone out for a few hours and I will be alone.*

*I shall expect you here promptly.*

*Arthur*

Lucius folded the note and looked at Severus.

"It seems you aren't the only one who wants to discuss Ginny with me today. Arthur wants to speak to me on an urgent matter. Ron must have told him about Ginny and I," said Lucius quietly.

Severus smiled and patted him on the shoulder.

"It was inevitable." Severus saw a look on Lucius' face he had rarely seen worry. "Arthur is a smart man, Lucius. He knows you have changed."

"Yes, but would you want your daughter to marry an Ex-Death Eater?" scowled Lucius.

"Marry?" Severus blinked, then smiled.

"I haven't asked her yet, but yes, I would like to marry her. I only hope her father accepts that. Please don't say anything to Ginny; I want to tell her about this myself when I get back from the Burrow." Lucius was unsure of what would happen there. Indeed, what man would allow his daughter to marry an Ex-Death Eater? Especially after having heard about the atrocities committed from said man's own mouth.

The men all walked inside followed by Albus and Draco who were still seeing to their own things. Albus fixed his glasses and decided to do some reading. Draco sat on the couch and tried to fix his laptop, using his wand. Lucius went to his room to get ready for his meeting with Arthur. He decided to wear something casual, not wanting to look too menacing to his hopefully future father-in-law, while Severus went to wake up his children. Severus wondered if he should knock on Harry's door, but decided against it. Not knowing exactly what was happening to Harry, Severus decided to let him have some private time.

Severus knocked on Odin's door. He waited but there was no answer. He opened the door and walked into the boy's room, only to find the bed empty. He narrowed his eyes, then walked to Sage's room. There he found that his daughter was not in her bed either.

"*What are they up to?*" he wondered to himself. As he turned to walk out the door, he took a quick glance at the mirror next to the bureau. The wall across the room seemed to be out of alignment somehow. Severus walked to the wall and realized it was a hidden door. "*What the...*" he thought. Severus opened the door and stepped through. It was a tunnel of some sort. The first thing he noticed was that it ran in two directions, to his right and to his left. He decided to go left.

"*Lumos,*" he thought, and the tip of his wand lit up. He quietly followed the tunnel until he saw two pinpricks of light ahead of him. He got closer and noticed that the wall next to him had holes in it, letting through light from the other side of the wall. Severus bent down slightly and looked through the holes.

It was one of the guest's rooms. Severus wasn't quite sure whose it was, and decided to keep walking, until he saw Harry. But oh, how he wished he hadn't.

Harry came into his range of vision. He wore a red corset with black frills along the edge. His garters were black, as were his hose and stiletto heels. And the cherry on top of the cake was that Harry also wore heavy eye makeup and dark red lipstick. Apparently, his strange behavior from last night still had not worn off, and Severus wondered if someone had cast a spell on Harry. At least, that's what he'd hoped after seeing him dressed in that manner.

*I've been making a man*

*With blond hair and a tan*

*And he's good for relieving my... ..tension*

*I'm just a sweet transvestite*

*From Transexual, Transylvania.*

*I'm just a sweet transvestite. (Sweet transvestite)*

*Sweet transvestite*

*From Transexual, Transylvania.*

*So - come up to the lab,*

*And see what's on the slab.*

*I see you shiver with antici... pation.*

*But maybe the rain*

*Isn't really to blame.*

*So I'll remove the cause. (chuckles)*

*But not the symptom.*

It was quite possible a counter-spell might need to be found. *'Pity I don't know the spell or counter-spell,'* thought Severus as he smiled and turned away.

He continued to walk down the tunnel. He seemed to be going down on an incline. He marveled at the construction of the tunnel. It was wide enough for a normal-sized person to walk through comfortably. The inner walls were also very cool and smoothly cut. Severus finally reached the end of the tunnel and saw he was in the dungeons, specifically in the potions lab. To his amazement, the wall of shelves was a door. Just as he was about to push the door open further, he heard voices.

"No, we can't do that one," he heard Sage say.

"Well, why not? It looks like it might be fun to watch," argued Odin.

"Fine, but can you pronounce that first word? Because I know I can't," countered Sage.

"All right, all right. Don't you ever get tired of being right?" Odin complained to his younger sister.

Severus walked quietly to where his children were sitting side-by-side as they pored over a book, and stopped behind them. He crossed his arms as his shadow enveloped both Odin and Sage.

"Oh, for goodness sake, why did you turn the torches off? I can't see." huffed Sage.

"And how do you propose I did that? I've been sitting next to you since we came down here," snapped Odin. They both looked at each other, then down at the shadow. Ever so slowly, their heads tilted up.

"Uh-oh," said Sage.

"Umm...hi, Dad. We...we just thought we would have a look at some books. You know how much we love to read," said Odin.

"Oh yes, I do. Especially," Severus leaned down and took the book from their hands, then turned it over to read the cover. *"A Spell a Day Keeps The Houseguests Away, by Martha Stuartman."* Severus looked down at his children, then opened the book to the page they were trying to read.

*"Navigium asinus,"* Severus read aloud, then looked down at his children. "Are you trying to give Harry diarrhea?"

"He did say he was constipated," said Odin, trying to look concerned for Harry.

"We promise to leave Harry alone, Daddy. Please don't punish us. We can't pronounce the words anyway."

Severus felt the corner of his mouth twitching. So, his suspicions were indeed correct. His children were making Harry's stay at the castle miserable. What they were doing was wrong, and he knew he should punish them by making them scrub cauldrons for a month when they got back to Hogwarts.

"I should punish you. You both have been extremely disrespectful towards Harry."

"But Daddy, it was his fault Uncle Lucius was so sad. We saw Harry with those papers in his room." Sage covered her mouth quickly, realizing she'd said too much.

Severus looked at his daughter and without her feeling it he broke into her mind. He saw the incident she had just spoken of, from that day he was gathering some ingredients. As he suspected, the package delivered to Harry was from the Ministry, and it was Lucius' transcript. He looked at Odin, then back at Sage. He knew that they were both afraid of being punished. And while they deserved to be disciplined, he knew they had only done what they did because if Harry's injustice towards someone they loved. He knelt down and took out his wand.

"Now watch closely, and repeat after me: *Navigium asinus.*"

Later that day, Lucius stood outside. He decided to Apparate to the Burrow instead of going via Floo to see Arthur. He was wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and didn't want to get it full of Floo powder. Lucius had always been a vain man, but today he wanted to look good. He needed to make a good impression. While he and Arthur already knew one another, he still felt it important to look presentable and put his best foot forward. He would do anything to have Arthur's acceptance of his relationship with Ginny. It was important to have his blessing; Lucius was old-fashioned when it came to courtship.

Lucius Apparated to the Burrow. He was greeted at the door by Arthur Weasley.

"Arthur," Lucius said as he extended his hand, and both men shook. "How have you been?"

"I've been well, thank you. Come in, come in." Arthur stepped aside and allowed Lucius to enter. They walked to the living room and sat in two large chairs in front of the fire. Even though Arthur was the Minister of Magic, he found it hard to leave his home of so many years. He and his wife still lived in their modest home, where all their children were raised. Arthur poured a glass of firewhisky and handed it to Lucius. Both men sat quietly for a few moments.

"I suppose you are wondering why I've asked you to meet me here," asked Arthur.

"Yes," Lucius said as he took a sip of his drink, then set it down. "I can assure you, Arthur, that I love Ginny very much. It was my full intention to come to see you after the holiday."

Arthur looked at Lucius in confusion. "Ginny? You're in love with Ginny?"

"Why yes, of course. And with your permission I would like to ask you for her hand in marriage." Lucius saw Arthur was beginning to turn white as a ghost.

"Marry? Ginny?" Arthur said as he leaned forward and fell in a dead faint.

Lucius immediately moved towards him and helped him sit back up. He shook Arthur slightly, not wanting to use the Ennervate spell. The last thing he needed was for someone to walk in and see him, a former Death Eater, pointing a wand at the Minister of Magic.

"Arthur, Arthur, wake up."

Arthur slowly came to, and looked at Lucius. He then reached for the drink he'd left on the table and drank it down in one gulp.

"I'm sorry, I'm fine, really. I just...well. You surprised me, that's all."

"Didn't you summon me here because of Ginny?" asked Lucius.

"No, I asked you here because of Harry. I've found out who gave him your transcript," said Arthur.

Lucius sat back in his chair, thinking he was the one who might faint now. Judging by the other man's reaction, he got the feeling Arthur wasn't too crazy about his request for Ginny's hand.

"Look, let's get this business out of the way," Arthur said. "Severus sent me an owl with his suspicions. I made an inquiry and found out that one of Harry's old classmates, Dean Thomas who works in the records department, sent him your transcript. It's well within your rights to press charges and demand that they both be relieved of their Ministry jobs. If you decide not to press any kind of charges towards either or both of them, then I can guarantee you that they will at least be suspended without pay for an entire month."

Lucius listened to Arthur. The fact that the two men would be suspended from their jobs for a month without any wages was enough. He had worked things out with Ginny. While he had hoped to tell her of his past on his own time when he felt their relationship was strong enough, he felt good that things were now out in the open.

"No, I will not press charges. A month of lost wages should be enough to teach them a valuable lesson," said Lucius. He emptied his glass and set it on the table.

Arthur nodded, relieved at Lucius' decision. An unrepentant Death Eater would have pressed charges, if not worse.

"Now, as to the matter of Ginny," said Arthur. "She's my only daughter, Lucius. When you have a daughter, you feel differently towards her. Your love for her is different than your love for a son. Sons grow up; they get married and become part of their wives' families. But daughters well, daughters belong to us forever. She's my little girl, and I still feel that I have to protect her."

Lucius felt a knot in his stomach begin to form.

"You remember I was there when you gave your testimony to the Wizengamot." Arthur stood and began to pace. "I had nightmares that night. I never believed wizards could do such things to each other."

"Arthur," Lucius said, as his voice trembled.

"Please, let me finish." Arthur placed his hands behind his back and looked out the window. "I didn't trust you for a long time. When you came to us, I thought it was a trick. But Severus assured us you had changed sides, and I decided to give you the benefit of the doubt." He looked back towards Lucius. "You proved to be a great help in the defeat of Voldemort. The shelters you set up for the widows and orphans left behind that was a great thing. I never liked you much, Lucius. But Severus and Hermione swore by you, and one day, I realized I respected you. You're a fine man, I see that now. If you want to marry Ginny and she wants you, then I give you my blessing."

Lucius couldn't believe it. He stood and shook Arthur's hand, then hugged him.

"Thank you, Arthur," said Lucius as he smiled widely.

"I know you'll take good care of her." Arthur felt his eyes tear. He knew how Ginny had suffered all these years waiting for Harry. But now, here was a man who loved his daughter and wanted nothing more than to make her his wife.

"I give you my word, she will never want for anything."

~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*

I hope you enjoyed this chapter. I think Harry has had enough don't you?

The spell Navigium asinus translates into Leaky ass. Yes, you knew it would eventually come to that, sorry.

Also, the song Harry was singing was part of "Sweet Transvestite" from Rocky Horror Picture Show.

## Revelations and preparations

The New Year is fast approaching and the gang is preparing.

Thank you to those who are still sticking with this story. I've got just a few more chapters to go, so I'm winding it down.

I hope you enjoy what's to come.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thank you to June for all of her wonderful suggestions and all of her help.

## Chapter 21 Revelations and preparations

Before Lucius went back to the castle following his meeting at the Burrow, he made a stop at Gringotts, as he needed something from the Malfoy family vaults. After he found what he needed, he Apparated back to the castle.

Severus and the children were in the living room, as was Albus. Draco had gone into the village looking for Cho; he decided he wanted to explore the grounds of the castle and wanted to do it with his wife. Before Draco left, Severus pulled him to one side and warned him about any outdoor foreplay, and made sure the young wizard was aware that there was poison Ivy scattered about the grounds. Severus shivered when he thought back on the day he and Hermione had their romantic interlude in the forest, and he found out the hard way about the Count's love for importing plant species from other parts of the world. Severus had spent the longest hour of his life waiting for Hermione to get him the cream for his itch. That kind of torture he wouldn't wish on his worst enemy.

Harry had come downstairs from his self-imposed exile. While in the dungeons with Odin and Sage, Severus found out what spell his children had performed on Harry and made them reverse it. It was simple enough and was done from their little spot behind the walls. Severus informed them that they needed to take that spell away before they hit Harry with the new spell. They agreed that the Veritas serum had worn off by this time.

"A spell on top of a spell sometimes means that the spells will counteract one another. Also, if one is hit with too many spells at once, it can be detrimental to their health," Severus had said to his two future Slytherins.

So there was Harry, sitting by the fire, reading The Quibbler. All was quiet, as Hermione, Ginny and Minerva came into the room.

"Hello, everyone," said Hermione cheerfully. She walked towards Severus and kissed him on the lips lightly, then kissed her children on the cheek.

"Did you ladies have a good time shopping?" asked Lucius.

Ginny smiled and nodded her head.

"You'll never guess who we saw in the little bakery in the village," said Minerva.

"I'm afraid to ask," Severus said glumly. He could feel the hair on the back of his neck begin to stand on end.

"Luna Lovegood," said Ginny.

"Who?" asked Severus and Lucius at the same time.

"Luna Lovegood. She went to school with us," said Hermione as she looked at both men. She rolled her eyes towards Severus. "I'm sure you wouldn't remember her; she was in Ravenclaw. She was a bit..." Hermione stopped, not wanting to speak badly of Luna.

"Off her rocker," finished Harry as he sat reading.

"You seem to enjoy her newspaper, though," added Minerva.

"Well, it's a far cry better than the Daily Prophet. I'll have to give her that. She certainly has made it into worthy reading material," admitted Harry. He'd always thought Luna was a bit of an odd one. But, in some ways, she made more sense to him than most people. He admired the way she had taken over the paper and made it into a respectable publication. But he would never admit that to anyone.

"What is she doing here in Bavaria?" asked Albus.

"It seems she's on holiday as well. I invited her to come and celebrate the New Year with us on Saturday," Hermione smiled and looked towards Harry, who still had not looked up from his paper. "She was very excited to know you were here as well, Harry."

Harry said nothing; he simply stared at his paper and sighed. At this point he thought the last thing he needed was Looney Luna making goo-goo eyes at him. His wounds were still fresh from his break-up with Ginny. *'Break-up?'* he wondered, then snorted to himself, *'Face it, Harry, you weren't even a real couple.'*

It was beginning to sink in to Harry, that perhaps what Ginny was to him was just a security blanket. She was something ... rather, someone he could always come back to, someone who would never turn away from him. Only now he realized, as he looked at Ginny and Lucius out of the corner of his eyes, there was no more security. She belonged to Lucius now.

The rest of the day went by without incident. Friday was spent as a day of preparation for the party. Hermione met with the house-elves and made sure she instructed them on what to prepare for dinner on Saturday evening. She gave them the cakes and other sweets they had gotten in town on their trip without the men. Severus, in the meantime, made sure to instruct the elves on the fireworks display to be held in the evening as well.

Odin and Sage kept a covert eye on their subject, Harry. Unfortunately he was always within view of others. They didn't want to perform the diarrhea spell on him while anyone else was around, since they didn't have much experience using a wand. It would not do to hit an innocent bystander. The Veritas serum had been simple, in that all they had to do was make sure to put it in Harry's drink. The *"Concentio hilaris"* spell was also simple. For that, all they had needed to do was add a few extra ingredients to an existing potion, mix it into Harry's shampoo. That proved to be easier than the Veritas serum. This time Odin was the look-out, as Sage did the dirty work. Harry was taking a stroll in that gardens on that day. But this new spell was hard. Their father had managed to make them a small wand by using a branch he found in the forest. It was simple, but effective for what they needed it for. Of course, the unregistered wand and the lesson on how to use it came with a warning.

"If you are caught," Severus had said, "and you take me down with you, know that I will make it so that you, your children, and even your grandchildren will be scrubbing cauldrons until you are all old and gray."

With that, he handed his children the small makeshift wand, listened to them recite the incantation, and left them to it.

Dinner that Friday evening proved to be an interesting experience. As they all sat at the table, everyone began to notice a strange odor coming from Harry's direction.

Not wanting to be rude or embarrass Harry any further, they all kept their mouths shut. That is, until Harry's body began to emit strange noises.

At one point, something that sounded like a low horn came from Harry's side of the table. Everyone stopped.

"Severus," said Albus quickly.

Severus looked up from his soup, and dropped his spoon.

"Yes, Albus."

"I was thinking perhaps we should allow the seventh years a few more liberties during the next school year." Hoping their discussion would divert attention from Harry, Albus tried to draw those at the table into the conversation.

Another low blow horn.

"Well, certain students, of course, Albus," added Minerva, as she also hoped to deflect the attention from Harry.

"Mummy, something smells," said Sage.

"Hush, darling. Eat your soup," said Hermione.

Harry felt the rumbling in his stomach. He'd been trying to keep the noise to a minimum, yet knew that he was failing miserably. The only reason he was still sitting down was he knew the minute he stood up, his ass would start spewing not only more gaseous fumes, but chunky bits as well; he could feel them. He didn't want to draw more attention to himself, so he did not cast an odor containment spell.

Odin sat next to his sister, giggling. Draco and Cho attempted conversation with Ginny and Lucius, but nobody seemed to want to open their mouths, due to the foul odor.

Taking pity on Harry, Hermione stood and walked towards him. She leaned down and whispered in his ear.

"Harry, are you feeling well?" she asked.

"Yes, but I've got this...this diarrhea. I don't know what's going on," said Harry in distress.

Hermione looked over to her children and began to suspect that they'd had a hand in this. She quirked her eyebrow and looked in their direction.

Odin and Sage, who were both giggling, now sat silent and stone-faced.

"Well, I do happen to know that you can Apparate within this castle. So if it will make it any easier for you to get to your room, then why don't you just do that."

Breathing not only a sign of relief but also of fresh air, Harry nodded and Apparated to his room.

Hermione walked to her children. She looked down at their innocent faces and leaned over.

"I think we should have a talk. Come with me, you two." Odin and Sage looked at one another, then at their mother. They didn't dare look towards their father. They knew that if there was even a smidgen of suspicion from Hermione in his direction, they were dead.

As it was, Hermione did indeed get a confession out of them. But to their credit, they didn't throw their father under the proverbial bus. As their punishment they would have to tell Harry what they had done to him in front of the rest of the guests. But that wasn't enough for their mother's ire. As a further punishment, they would clean their own rooms for an entire month, thus giving the house-elves at Hogwarts time off for other duties.

Luckily for Harry, their spell and makeshift wand hadn't packed much punch. Within two hours he was on his way back to Constipation Avenue.

As the evening died down, Severus and Lucius sat in the study, drinking brandy. It was late now, and most of the other guests were in their rooms.

"How did your meeting with Arthur go?" asked Severus. Ginny and Hermione still did not know that Lucius had been to the Burrow.

"Arthur found out who gave the transcripts to Harry. It was a friend of his that he attended Hogwarts with."

"I assume they will both be reprimanded severely?" Severus knew Arthur wasn't the type to fire people even when their actions merited such punishment. But the man was fair, and Severus knew that Harry and his friend wouldn't just get away with a slap on the wrist.

"A month without pay or benefits," Lucius said as he took a sip of his brandy. "I gather that will embarrass them and put a sufficient dent in their pockets to make sure they cease from such foolishness in the future."

Both men nodded and remained silent for several minutes.

"Severus, how did you propose to Hermione?" asked Lucius. His marriage to Narcissa had been prearranged by both their parents. There was no need to go about proposing then. But Lucius knew that things like proposals were important to some women, especially if they had been waiting for a while. He wanted to do something special for his future wife, something she would remember for the rest of her life.

"I knew Hermione wouldn't want something elaborate. She likes simple, yet stylish things. I ran into her a month after she graduated." Severus had a dreamy look in his eyes. He loved thinking back when they first met as something other than professor and student.

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*July had just reared its head as Severus walked down the quiet streets of Aldwych. There was a small bookstore, invisible to Muggles, just within the circular street. He often found odd rare books with ancient spells and potions. It was his little secret. This was a place he could go to, where he didn't have to worry about being recognized by anyone.*

*He walked into the shop and did what he usually did. He walked to the "New Arrivals" table to see if there was anything of interest. After perusing the books there, he would begin to walk up and down the aisles. On this particular day he stopped midway up one aisle as he noticed a woman leaning against the shelves. She wore a long brown skirt and a cream-colored blouse. He admired her shape as he studied her from head to toe. Her brown hair had light auburn streaks in it, and was tied back with ribbon the same color as her blouse. As he approached her, he could smell her perfume. He closed his eyes as he took in her scent, wanting to remember it forever.*

*"Excuse me, but may I pass?" he said politely. The woman turned and to his utter shock, it was none other than Hermione Granger. Only this Hermione Granger looked nothing like the one who'd graduated a month before. She was positively beautiful.*

*"Professor!" she cried. "What a surprise. I didn't think anyone knew about this shop." Hermione smiled as she held the book in her hands tightly.*

*"Miss Granger, you literally took the words right out of my mouth. I've been coming here for years, and you are the first acquaintance I have ever seen in this store." Severus secretly wondered why he was smiling as he spoke to her.*

*"You too?" Hermione's eyes opened wide in surprise. "I found this place two years ago, over the summer. I'm always the only person here. How lovely to see you." She'd hoped he would not pass her by and continue walking. Having graduated the previous month, she'd hoped he might want to spend a few moments talking with her, now that she was no longer a student.*

*"Perhaps then this is fate." He couldn't believe he had just said that.*

*Taking this as her cue, Hermione decided to take a chance.*

*"Well, perhaps we can tempt fate a bit more and have some coffee?" She held her breath until he spoke.*

*"It's rather late in the day for me to drink coffee," said Severus. He noticed her crestfallen face, then smiled. "But tea would be nice."*

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"When I decided it was time to propose to her, I took her back to the little bookstore. I asked her to marry me next to the shelves she'd been leaning against when I saw her that day."

Lucius smiled. He knew Ginny was the same way. She didn't like elaborate things. She would appreciate something simple, but something that came from deep inside of him. Thanks to his old friend, he knew now just what he would do.

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I had to end Harry's suffering. I didn't see the point in going on any further. Besides, even I was beginning to feel sorry for him. I do plan on something nice for him to make up for it though.

I hope you enjoyed this chapter. Thanks for reading.

## It's time to move on

*Chapter 22 of 24*

The children apologize, and Harry decides its time to move on.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thank you to June, for her suggestions and adding a few extra interesting tidbits. I appreciate all of your help.

### **Chapter 22 It's time to move on.**

It was now New Year's Eve. The house-elves were scurrying about, preparing the castle for the celebration that evening.

Breakfast was served outdoors in the gardens, as it had been the past several days. They all ate in silence, enjoying the sight of the surrounding mountains, and taking advantage of their last days at the beautiful castle. Before everyone got up to go about their day, Hermione cleared her throat and looked to her children.

"Odin, Sage, isn't there something you would like to say to Harry?"

The two Snape children stood and walked to Harry, with their heads bowed.

"We're sorry, Harry," said Sage.

"It was us that did those things to you," Odin confessed as he looked at Harry.

At first Harry was a bit confused, then it dawned on him that his tormentor had not been Lucius at all: it had been the seven- and eight-year-olds in front of him.

"You did all that to me? Why?" asked Harry.

"Well, you were being a butt," Sage said as she looked at Harry, then she turned towards Lucius and Ginny's direction.

Harry understood. He realized that the rest of the guests suspected him of bringing the transcript of Lucius' confession, and they were right. He knew the children to be curious much so like their parents, and there was something new he found out about them as well. They were vengeful little fuckers.

"You're right. I was being a...butt." Harry smiled and hugged the two children. He forgave them. He wasn't physically hurt and his pride would eventually heal. All in all, they may have actually done him a favor by tormenting him. The time he spent alone avoiding the rest of the group had given him time to think on what he had done and how he had been living his life.

Hermione and Severus smiled. They stayed behind and finished their coffee as everyone went about their day.

"Was that part of their punishment?" Severus asked his wife.

"Yes. That and cleaning their own rooms for a month when we get back to Hogwarts." Hermione took a sip of her coffee as she observed her husband out of the corner of her eye.

"It's odd though," she said.

"What is?" asked Severus.

"Well, the *Veritaserum* was easy enough for them to find. And the *Concentio hilaris* spell was easy enough for them as well. But when they told me the last spell they used on Harry, I had to go to the Count's lab to look it up."

"You? Look something up in a book?" taunted Severus, as he feigned shock.

Hermione smiled and turned her body towards him. She began to make circles on the back of his hand with her finger.

"It seems that the spell they used was quite difficult. In fact, a wand is needed to perform it properly," Hermione whispered in his ear as she leaned forward. "Now, where do you suppose they got hold of a wand at their ages?" she asked sweetly.

Severus' face remained expressionless. Being a spy for as long as he'd been taught him a thing or two.

"Where indeed. I imagine they made one themselves. You know how resourceful our children are." He smiled, the proud father. If she was trying to trap him into giving something away, she would be sadly disappointed. While he felt badly for his children, they did deserve to be disciplined for their actions. He had not put them up to any of it; he merely facilitated the placement of the final straw on Harry's back.

Hermione knew it was futile to get any information from Severus. Deep within her mind, she knew that Harry had gotten what he deserved. The children hadn't hurt him, and he might have even learned a lesson of his own. She did have to admit, though: Harry had a great singing voice.

Lucius and Ginny were walking in the gardens with Draco. The younger Malfoy was talking to his father about their family business ventures overseas. They were very successful in the textiles market, and had several new orders from many of the fashion houses not only in Europe but also in America.

Minerva and Albus were in the study planning the rest of the school year. Meanwhile, Hermione, Severus and the children decided to make one last go at a family picnic; Severus assigned the children to watch everything the house-elves put into the food basket, even in Crookshanks' absence. The demon cat would be staying permanently with Hermione's parents, as his "incontinence" mysteriously disappeared at his in-laws house.

Harry had been in his room. He decided to begin packing his things. All the guests would be leaving Sunday just after breakfast, and he wanted to make sure everything was packed so that he wouldn't have to waste time the following day. As he was almost finished, he noticed one of his scarves missing. Thinking he may have left it in the living room the previous day, he went downstairs.

He noticed his scarf hanging off a chair as he walked into the room. Then he saw Cho standing and looking out the window.

"Oh, hi, Cho," he said quietly.

Cho turned to him and smiled.

"Hello, Harry."

"I'm just packing my things. Don't want to leave it to the last minute." Harry waved his scarf as though to punctuate he was on a mission.

"No, that wouldn't do." Cho looked uncomfortable. Their relationship had ended badly, and this was the first time they had actually been in the same room alone since she and Draco began seeing each other out in the open.

"I'm sorry about Ginny," Cho said. "I mean...I know you and she were seeing each other." Cho turned and looked outside again. "Ginny seems very happy, though."

Harry approached the window and stood next to her, but kept a good distance.

"You seem happy too." Harry laughed slightly. "Maybe I should find myself a Malfoy."

"Harry," Cho started, but stopped when Harry shook his head.

"No, I'm sorry. I just...I just don't understand why you had to marry Draco of all people," said Harry, as both he and Cho looked at the garden.

"Harry, do you remember that year I twisted my ankle before the Ministry Halloween ball?" asked Cho.

Harry looked at her. "You never twisted your ankle."

"I did. That was the year you and your Ministry buddies went off to Australia on an emergency to go surfing." Cho looked through the window at Draco and smiled. "Draco saw me at the bookstore that day and asked me if I was going to the ball. I told him that I couldn't go since I was unable to get to a healer for my ankle, and I hadn't found time to buy anything to wear."

She turned to Harry. "Draco took me to see his personal healer, who fixed my ankle. After I was able to walk on my own again, Draco offered to buy me coffee and I accepted. He was nice. He didn't seem anything like the boy he was at Hogwarts, even though you told me he was still the same ferret boy."

Harry said nothing, too embarrassed to speak. He walked back to the couch and sat down.

Cho continued to look at him.

"Do you remember my great-grandfather's last birthday party?" she asked as she smiled.

"Um...no, I...I think I was away on business," answered Harry, as he tried to remember.

Cho laughed. "Yes, business with some of your fellow Gryffindor buddies in Las Vegas, inspecting every bar and lap-dancer in town. Your friends talked about it for months." She walked towards him and knelt down in front of him. "That was the last straw for me, Harry. You had done that to me so many times, I'd lost count. I was closing the family shop early that day, when Draco came by. He wanted to buy the Muggle antique desk I loved so much. He said I sounded sad when I spoke, that my voice was different. Did you ever notice that my voice changes when I am sad?"

Harry bowed his head in shame.

"No, I never noticed," he admitted.

Cho stood and walked towards the fireplace.

"I told Draco why I was sad. He said that I shouldn't go to my great-grandfather's party sad, and he offered to go with me. He said that I should be happy and enjoy myself." She smiled and looked back at Harry, who was not looking at her, yet she saw the tears in his eyes threatening to spill.

"Draco was so good to me, all those times you left me alone with another story. More and more, he started coming by my shop. We started going out a couple of times a week. You never knew because you were never around. I know you were never serious about me, but there was a time I hoped you were.

"I fell in love with Draco probably when you were climbing the Alps with Fred and George Weasley, and then flirting with every pretty barmaid." Cho turned towards the window and saw Draco and Lucius laughing at something Ginny had said. "And now, you've lost another one, haven't you?" said the dark-haired witch sadly.

"Oh, Harry. Just because you are too afraid to face the future, it doesn't mean the rest of us have to stay behind and suffer with you." Cho walked back to Harry and reached out to him and stroked his cheek affectionately. "I loved you, Harry, and I know Ginny loved you as well. Don't hate us for wanting to be happy, to feel loved."

Cho wiped the tears falling down Harry's cheek and kissed him on the forehead. They both jumped when they heard the French doors behind them open up. Draco walked in from the gardens smiling, and then frowned as he saw his wife and Harry.

"No, Draco, it's all right. Cho and I were just talking about a few things."

"Thanks for the talk, Cho." Harry smiled and walked away.

"You okay?" he asked.

"Come on, then. Ginny's talked my father into a game of hide-and-seek." Draco laughed as he dragged his wife outside.

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I hope you enjoyed this chapter. I'll have another one up at the beginning of the week.

## Chapter 23 of 24

Thank you to all of you that have read this and have taken the time to review.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks to June for all of her help and suggestions.

As the afternoon slowly began to turn into evening, the Snape family returned from a successful picnic. They managed to have a beautiful afternoon, sans cat urine and poison ivy. As they walked back to the castle they saw a small car driving up. Hermione remembered Luna telling her she'd just discovered the fun of driving, as she saw the blond witch coming to a rather scary stop.

"Good lord, she almost ran into the fountain," gasped Severus as he held the children back.

"Well, she did say she only just finished driving lessons," said Hermione.

Severus looked down at her and quirked his brow.

"She apparently missed the stopping lessons."

Luna stepped out of her small blue Mini Cooper. She looked over at the Snape family walking towards her.

"Hello!" cried Luna.

Hermione hugged her friend and smiled.

"Luna, I'm so happy you could come and join us," Hermione backed away slightly and moved next to her children. "Odin, Sage, this is a friend of mine from when I went to Hogwarts. It's been many years since Luna has seen you."

Luna's eyes lit up.

"Hermione, they've grown so." Luna looked to Severus. "Hello, Professor."

"Seeing as I haven't been your professor in almost thirteen years, I think you can call me Severus," said the Potions master dryly.

Luna giggled.

"Oh, thanks, Prof... Severus. It does seem a little odd, doesn't it?"

Severus rolled his eyes and walked inside the castle with the children. Hermione and Luna walked behind them, talking.

Inside there was a flurry of activity. The house-elves had outdone themselves. The entire castle was sparkling, literally. It looked as if glitter had been spread over every item inside the castle, as well as in the gardens. Everything looked like one huge jewel.

Footoo showed Luna to her room, which was across the hall from Harry's. All of the guests were in their rooms now, getting ready for the evening celebration. Severus and Hermione sent Odin and Sage to their rooms for their bath, giving the two adults a little time alone for a quick bath of their own.

Albus and Minerva were already celebrating in the gardens, as they were on hand when several owls delivered dozens of bottles of champagne, compliments of Count Heinrich.

Lucius was helping Ginny button her dress, again. It had taken them almost an hour to get Ginny's buttons all done, since her lace undergarments kept distracting Lucius.

Harry had been dressed for a while. He was standing outside his balcony. He'd seen Luna driving up. While he'd never thought much of her in school, he realized she'd grown into a beautiful woman. She still struck him as being a big loopy, and he reminded himself never to get into a car with her, but it might be nice to get to know her. She would certainly be different than any of the other women he usually dated.

At nine o'clock a chime rang out throughout the castle. Dinner was being served.

Odin and Sage ran out of their rooms and down the stairs. The house-elves had promised them their favorite food tonight, mashed potatoes topped with spicy chili; and their favorite dessert, brownies topped with chocolate ice cream, hot fudge and nuts.

The adults would have a more formal meal of prime rib, roasted vegetables, salad, soup, and several of the desserts the women had brought back from the village.

Severus and Hermione walked down the hall, and were met by Lucius and Ginny as they came out of their rooms. The two couples walked down the stairs together. Draco and Cho were already downstairs, talking with Albus and Minerva.

Harry walked out of his room at the same time as Luna walked out of hers. Luna smiled shyly. She wore a copper-colored dress with a tight bodice and a full skirt. They had all dressed formally that night. Harry smiled, something he didn't even realize he was doing.

"Hello, Luna. It's been a long time," he said as he approached her.

"Harry, it's wonderful to see you. You haven't changed," said Luna.

Harry chuckled.

"Actually, I have changed," Harry said. Luna looked confused. "Never mind. Come on, let's get the evening started, shall we?" Harry placed his hand on her shoulder and guided her towards the celebration.

After they all ate, Severus and Lucius lit a small bonfire where the group gathered to talk of old times. Albus and Minerva embarrassed Severus and Lucius by talking about them during their own time at Hogwarts.

"Severus," Albus said as carefully as he could, as he was now starting to slur his words, "who was it that you accidentally transfigured into a pink bunny in your second year and couldn't transfigure back?"

Everyone's eyes went wide. It was well known that the Potions master hated foolish wand-waving, but no one knew why. They all got the feeling this might be the clue.

"I think you might have me confused with Frank Longbottom, Albus," said Severus.

"Oh, Severus. Frank Longbottom was a wonderful Transfiguration student," chimed Minerva. "I think it took us almost a week to get the poor student back to normal. Who was it?" wondered Minerva.

"I think you two have had a bit too much to drink, I don't recall doing anything of the sort," said Severus in his own defense.

Lucius laughed and looked to his friend.

"Oh, come on, Severus," said Lucius.

Severus was shocked as he looked to Lucius.

"I would think you of all people would rather I forgot that particular faux pas on my part."

"Why is that?" asked Draco curiously.

"Because I was the one he transfigured," said Lucius. Everyone started to laugh. "They had to keep me in a cage for a week so that I wouldn't hop away. I daresay I was the cutest fluffiest pink rabbit in all of Hogwarts." Lucius beamed.

"You were the only pink rabbit in Hogwarts," said Severus as he drank down the contents of his wine glass.

Time sped by and it was now just fifteen minutes before midnight.

As the group walked closer to the lake near the end of the garden area, Lucius and Ginny fell behind.

"I have an idea," said Lucius. "Why don't we watch the fireworks from that mountain up there?"

Ginny smiled.

"I think that would be wonderful. Shall we invite the others?" she asked.

"No, it is you I want to take to the top of the mountain tonight, love; no one else." He kissed her and held her tightly to him. They Apparated to the mountain area just across the lake. The castle and the gardens could be seen clearly in the distance. Lucius took his cape off, transfigured it into a large fur blanket, and spread it over the light snow. They sat down holding each other as the fireworks display began.

"What time is it?" asked Ginny.

"We have a little over five minutes." Lucius smiled. He'd asked Severus to add to the final explosion of fireworks a huge golden sprinkle of light that would reach the mountains. As midnight approached, the fireworks began to go off in a number pattern in the sky.

Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one, and finally midnight.

A huge golden fire filled the sky, and soon it looked as though sparkling chunks of gold were falling on them. Ginny and Lucius stood and looked up into the sky. The sparkling fire came down just ahead of them.

"That's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen!" cried Ginny. She smiled as she looked at the ground covered with the golden light that began disappearing, except for one spot. She noticed a gleaming light coming from a patch of ground. "There's something over there," said Ginny as she moved towards the shining object.

Lucius followed her.

As she got closer she began to wonder what could be glittering so brightly in the light of the moon. She reached the spot and bent down to retrieve the object. She picked it up and saw that it was a ring. There between her thumb and index finger she held a platinum band, with a dark stone surrounded by several other stones. It was too dark,

even with the bright moonlight, to tell what colors the stones were. She looked behind her at Lucius.

"Olive the center stone is olive in color, and it is surrounded by dark orange stones." Lucius walked towards her slowly. "The ring belonged to my grandmother. She never wore it, though. She said her hands were too ugly to do such a thing of beauty justice. When I married Narcissa, my grandmother gave it to me in private. She told me that someday I would want to give this to someone who wasn't chosen for me. I didn't understand her at the time, but I do now. My grandmother was a seer. But she used her gift rarely. That was the only time she used it with me." Lucius got down on one knee and took the ring from Ginny. He looked at it then took her left hand. "You have beautiful hands."

"Marry me?" he asked hopefully, as he held the ring poised at the tip of her finger.

Ginny's eyes sparkled with unshed tears.

"How could you ask me that and not know the answer?" she said as she fell to her knees and kissed him.

Lucius pushed the ring onto her finger and felt Ginny's arms embrace him.

"I will, I will, I will marry you!" she cried.

Back at the castle Severus watched the sky for Lucius' signal but saw nothing. He smiled as he realized what happened upon the final display: his friend had gotten a positive answer.

"What are you smiling about?" asked Hermione.

He whispered in her ear and felt her smile against his cheek.

"Oh, Severus, how lovely that must have been," she said as a tear fell from her eye.

Severus frowned and wiped the tear from her cheek.

"Do you wish I had done something lovely like that for you?" he wondered sadly.

Hermione smiled.

"You did, my love, you did."

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The stone colors I picked for Ginny's ring don't have any major significance. I love colored diamonds, olive green and dark orange in particular. I thought it would be a nice change from the emerald and rubies we are used to reading about.

I hope you enjoyed this chapter. I think there will probably be maybe one more then an epilogue.

## The holiday comes to an end

*Chapter 24 of 24*

The group goes their separate ways for a while.

This story is now finished. I want to thank those of you who have read and reviewed it. Thank you so much for your support and kind words.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks to June for all of her suggestions and help.

### Chapter 24 The holiday comes to an end

Upon their return to the castle, Lucius and Ginny gave everyone the good news on their impending nuptials. Lucius insisted that Ginny tell her parents, so they went into the living room and Flooded Arthur and Molly. The parents of the bride came through the Floo and immediately congratulated the couple. Molly was excited and hoped that Ginny would be the one to give her and her husband their first grandchild, since none of the Weasley boys seemed to be in any hurry to become parents.

For his part, Lucius assured Molly that he had no problems starting their family that very evening.

They celebrated into the night. Odin and Sage fell asleep on the couch next to Albus and Minerva. Draco and Cho kept glancing at each other smiling, as though they had some sort of secret they wanted to share, but weren't sure whether or not to say anything.

Severus and Hermione volunteered to give them an engagement party once they returned home.

Harry, for the most part, kept to himself after the newly engaged couple came back down from the mountain. He'd been sitting near the fireplace when Luna walked over to him.

"Harry?" she asked as she stood over him. Harry looked up at her. "Why are you sitting here alone? Aren't you happy about the engagement?"

"My ex-girlfriend just got engaged to a man she barely even talked to before this holiday. A man who happens to be old enough to be her father," said Harry bitterly. "Why would I be happy about that?"

Luna cocked her head to one side and studied him.

"Someone you cared about has found happiness, even if it isn't with you. That's why you should be happy." She began to walk away when Harry stood and grabbed her arm.

"Everyone seems to think I should, but no one can give me a good reason why. Tell me Luna, why should I be happy about their engagement?"

"Because, Harry. The world doesn't revolve around you, or me, or Ginny or Lucius. The world doesn't need us and doesn't care about making us happy. It's up to us to do that for ourselves. People move on, they live their lives. You didn't make her happy, so what. Deal with it. Once you realize you can't change what happened you'll be much happier, Harry. There are things we can't control. It's those things we need to let go of, and instead think about making the things we can control better." Luna looked towards the group on the other side of the room. "Look at everyone else. They are all happy for those two people. Their friends are happy, Harry. Why can't someone else's happiness be enough for you?"

Harry looked at Luna and thought about what she said. He remembered a time when he was like that. His friends' happiness meant something to him. What had happened to him, he wondered. He looked to Ginny. She glowed. He couldn't remember ever seeing her like that, and he thought she looked more beautiful at that moment than she ever had when she was with him. He then understood what Luna was talking about. He acknowledged he hadn't treated Ginny nicely, and that was his fault, but now she had someone who was ready to commit to marriage. He felt warm inside seeing Ginny happy and in love. He turned back to Luna.

"You're right. It should be enough." He looked into her eyes. He'd notice they were blue, deep blue, like the ocean at night. Deciding it was time to mend some fences, Harry walked over to Lucius. As the two men faced one another, the others stood by quietly.

"Congratulations, Lucius," Harry said as he looked to Ginny and smiled. "I hope you two are very happy, I really do. I'm sorry for everything." As he turned, Ginny moved towards him and wrapped her arms around him.

"Thank you, Harry." She kissed his cheek and withdrew from him, allowing him to shyly walk away.

Lucius took Ginny's hand and squeezed it. She turned and saw him smiling. He knew that now they would be able to begin their lives without Harry Potter's jealousy hanging over their heads.

At nearly four o'clock in the morning Arthur and Molly went home, and the rest of the castle guests retired for the night. They all slept past Sunday morning, and little by little everyone came trickling down with their bags packed and ready to go. Severus and Hermione walked into the living room with Odin and Sage in tow. As they entered, Lucius was patting his son on the back and Ginny and Cho were squealing with joy.

"Did we miss something?" asked Severus as they stopped next to the fireplace.

"Cho and I are having a baby," said Draco as she smiled widely.

"Congratulations!" cried Hermione as she moved towards Cho.

Albus and Minerva joined in the melee of congratulatory pats and hugs, along with Severus and the children, and Harry and Luna.

It was time for Luna to go, and Harry came with her down the stairs. After everyone else had gone to bed last night, they sat outside talking until dawn. Oddly enough, he felt comfortable talking to her, despite not having seen her in years. Luna always had a way of clearing things up for him. She put things in a way that made him see what a complete ass he was. This afternoon, as Harry walked Luna to her car, he realized he didn't mind things as much as he thought he would.

"Luna, I was wondering if you might want to go out sometime," asked Harry hopefully.

Luna opened her car door and looked at him.

"That would be nice, Harry. I'll be back in London in a few days. Give me a call at my office. We can have lunch," she said.

"I was thinking, dinner and maybe a movie." Harry smiled and moved slowly towards her.

"Let's start with lunch. We can make our way up to dinner. I...I'm not looking for a shag buddy, or someone who calls me once in a while because he doesn't have anything to do. I like you; I told you so last night. But I'm tired of meaningless relationships."

Harry didn't blame her for jumping to conclusions regarding his motives. His reputation preceded him.

"All right, lunch then," he said as he hugged her and kissed her cheek. "I like you too, Luna."

He stepped back and allowed her to drive away. He winced when he saw her blue Mini Cooper scrape past one of the large flower-filled urns along the side of the driveway. He mentally reminded himself never to get into a car with her if she was driving.

He returned back inside and walked into the living room, where the others were still talking about the baby announcement. While he didn't say anything more than "congratulations," he was happy to learn that Draco and Cho would be having a baby. Cho always did love children. She would be a good mother, just like Ginny would be someday.

With promises of contacting each other once they all got settled back into their daily routines, they one-by-one stepped into the fireplace and Flooed home.

It was now twelve months later.

Lucius and Ginny married in the gardens of Count Heinrich's castle. When the count found out they had fallen in love and subsequently become engaged while they spent the holidays there, he offered the castle for their wedding.

As Minister of Magic, Arthur was able to perform the ceremony, thus giving Albus the opportunity to watch a wedding for once. The entire Weasley clan was in attendance, as well as the Hogwarts staff and several Ministry officials.

Friends and family were smiling and crying as the couple exchanged vows.

Severus acted as Best Man, while Hermione was Matron of Honor. Odin and Sage cheerfully stood next to their parents, as they were ring bearer and flower girl. Draco and Cho were sitting in the front row, with their four-month-old daughter. Cho had been one month along with little Galatea Malfoy the last time she had been in the castle.

Ginny had wanted both a traditional handfasting ceremony, as well as a Muggle wedding. Lucius happily agreed, knowing that if it made her happy, it would make him happy.

Harry and Luna showed up late. As it happened, that day was their six-month anniversary of being a couple. After dating Luna for a few weeks following their return from their holiday, he began to realize that she gave him the peace and stability he was looking for, and very much needed.

No one knew which was more of a surprise, the fact that Harry had finally settled into a real relationship, or the fact that Ron and Neville were holding hands and making goo-goo eyes at one another.

When Severus saw the two young men together, he immediately insisted to Hermione that Ron had purposely walked in on him as he was getting out of the shower during their stay at the castle last Christmas. Hermione just rolled her eyes and patted him on the shoulder. Sometimes being the sympathetic wife wasn't easy.

Severus became Headmaster of Hogwarts after Albus and Minerva retired. Hermione and Minerva wrote a book on Transfiguration, which became the benchmark against which all other books on the subject were measured.

Odin and Sage went on to cause havoc in the halls of Hogwarts, as students. Of course they were sorted into Slytherin. And Hermione never discovered their secrets from the castle.

Lucius and Ginny had two children of their own, and together continued Lucius' philanthropic projects.

Draco and Cho had a son two years after the birth of their daughter.

Harry and Luna eloped. Luna had always wanted to go to Las Vegas. Harry surprised her on a Valentine's weekend, not only with a trip, but also a proposal. Unlike the last time he was there, he didn't even think of visits to bars or lap-dancers, as he and his bride had eyes only for each other. Of course he did find it amusing that there were musical revivals playing of Hair and the other for Rocky Horror Picture Show. Luckily, Luna had no interest in going to either of them.

Ron and Neville happily became godfather and godmother to Harry and Luna's first baby.

Years would pass and they still remembered the holiday they spent together at the castle. While their holiday those many years ago started out a bit shakier for some more than for others, it had ultimately given them all a lifetime of memories, which would be frequently remembered in happy conversations enjoyed around a table full of loved ones.

But Severus never again permitted Hermione to invite friends along for a holiday.

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Thank you once again for reading this. I hope you enjoyed this final chapter.