

Remembrance

by Pennfana

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Chapter 1 of 1

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"I don't understand why we have to do this *outdoors* on such a miserable day," Betty Weasley grumbled to Cassie Malfoy as they sat on the hard wooden bench of the stands on the Quidditch pitch with the rest of the students and staff of the school. Nearly every other witch and wizard in the British Isles were present as well. It was a rainy and windy day, and although various warming and rain-shielding charms were very much in evidence, there was hardly a person there who wasn't feeling the effects of the bad weather. Those few who had fought in the war, in remembrance of their fallen comrades and friends, wore black arm bands emblazoned with a flying phoenix on their left arms.

Cassie glared at her friend. "I would have thought that you, of all people, would have gotten the point of doing this long ago. Your great-grandparents all fought in that war, too, and they weren't much older than us when they did it. *They* likely didn't care what the weather was like when they were fighting for their lives!"

"So did most of yours," Betty pointed out.

"True," she replied. "But for most of the war my Great-Grandfather Draco was on the side that eventually lost, and he told me once that although he'd believed in the ideals very deeply once, when it came time to actually fight for them, he turned out to be unmotivated to do so. He'd started questioning those ideals by the end of the war. His part in the whole affair wasn't something that he was proud of, and I believe he regretted it to the very day he died. Great-Grandmother Astoria stayed out of the whole thing." Cassie winced.

Betty sighed. "Sorry, Cass, I didn't mean to be that tactless. I just don't understand why people can't move *on* with their lives! The Second Wizarding War ended a hundred years ago. What's the point in paying a tribute to all the death and destruction? Voldemort's been dead for a long time now. Most of the people who fought in that war are gone, and the few that are left probably won't be alive for much longer. Even Great-Grandma Neeny isn't looking at all well these days, and you *know* how lively she usually is."

"There is no dignity in referring to Hermione Weasley, one of the major heroines of the war, as 'Neeny'."

"It was her childhood nickname, apparently," Betty murmured. "You have to admit that 'Hermione' is a bit difficult to pronounce when you're two years old."

"Try 'Cassiopeia' when you're that age," came the grumbled reply. "In any case, Betty, that's precisely *why* we do this every year. The time before Voldemort's second defeat was one of the darkest times that the wizarding world has ever known. When we have this ceremony every year, we do it in memory of all of the people who died in the conflict, and to honour the people who fought and died so that Voldemort wouldn't rule forever. People, incidentally, like your great-grandparents. What they went through he sacrifices they made those things shouldn't be forgotten. And maybe if we keep the memory alive, they might not happen to us again."

Betty was silent for a moment. "I find that difficult to believe. There've been wars ever since there've been humans. There will always be people who want to seize ultimate power for themselves and to force other people to believe what they believe. We're a violent species, Cassie. Memorial ceremonies dedicated to wars that ended before most people were born will not change that."

Cassie nodded. "That's true. But I have to believe that remembering helps. Otherwise, it seems like the people who died fighting Voldemort would have died in vain."

"Maybe they *wouldn't* have died in vain anyway," Betty mused. "After all, they did what they set out to do. We're here because of it now. What we do with our lives is up to us. I don't think that remembering will stop us getting into other wars, but maybe you're right, saying that it's got some value, if only because we should be thankful for the things that they did." She paused, smiling ruefully. "But I still don't see why we have to hold the ceremony outdoors when the weather is so terrible."

Cassie raised an eyebrow. "Would you *really* want to try to fit nearly the entire magical population of Ireland and the United Kingdom into the Great Hall?"

Betty chuckled and turned to face the pitch, where the Commemoration Ceremony was finally starting. "Good point."

Author's Notes: This was inspired by a memorial service on Remembrance Day overember 11, also variously known as Armistice Day or Veterans' Day that I attended last year with my father, several of my aunts and uncles, and my paternal grandparents. My grandparents live in a small town, and the students at the elementary school there were present for the first part of the ceremony. I started to wonder (as I usually do on Remembrance Day) how long it will be before those kids understand exactly what it is that they're seeing. It's not meant to be a cynical thought; personally, I was probably about eleven or twelve years old before the whole thing really *clicked* for me. And it also made me think about how it still breaks my heart that war is still glorified and that people are still dying in conflicts all over the world. I thought of the things that some of my classmates said about Remembrance Day when I was in high school. (Betty Weasley's early remarks were heavily based on something that a friend of mine once said to me when we were about fifteen. In many ways, some of Cassie Malfoy's responses are very much my delayed response to that.) And I thought...perhaps this could make a decent fic.

I set this a full century after Voldemort's final defeat because I thought that time in the wizarding world would be roughly comparable to the amount of time that's passed since World War II. There are still quite a few people alive who remember that war, but with every passing year, there are fewer of them, and World War II is slowly becoming a matter of historical record, not lived experience.

Although this was complete by November 15, I decided to hold off on posting it until May 2. Not only would today be an appropriate day to post it, but holding back on posting it for several months gave me time to refine it and make sure that it said what I really wanted to say, and I hope that it's been worth the extra time. :)

Incidentally, I've always wanted to give Hermione a nickname that wasn't as obvious as "Herms" or "Mione" specially the latter, as (if I recall correctly) it only appears in canon when Ron's trying to talk to her with his mouth full, and I doubt she'd appreciate a nickname that came from such a disgusting display of bad manners. "Neeny" seemed to be the only way to go on that one it was either that or "Erma", and despite my longtime fondness for the writings of Erma Bombeck, I didn't think that it was quite embarrassing or cute enough for a childhood nickname. :)