

They Are As Legion

by Darkrivertempest

What is the price of peace? Some things are worth more than others, and Draco Malfoy will finally understand the value of selfless love—that is, if he survives.

The Mission

Chapter 1 of 1

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Written for the 2010 Draco Big Bang Fest. This fic is based loosely on the tale of *Thirteen Ghosts*, as well as several legends and first-hand accounts concerning the area of Athens, Ohio. Fathomless thanks go to my betas: ssddgr, dusty273, and imbloodyenglish. Thank you for putting up with me and my weirdness. Many thanks go to my Brit-picker, lady_of_clunn, who wrote with me all day on the Saturday before our rough-drafts were due. Eternal special thanks go to blackoberst for providing the incantation/spell in chapter five and the Latin translation. I promise you didn't forfeit your soul.

In the end, there was a lot less carnage than one might have expected.

Severus Snape flexed his fingers, thinned his lips, and narrowed his eyes at the letter in front of him, hating the mocking scrap of parchment that demanded his attention. The actions connected to the missive caused him to dwell on those memories and what brought him to this, here and now.

In a moment of previously unheard of pure courage, Draco Malfoy had turned his killing curse upon his aunt instead of the ailing Headmaster, the green pulse sending her over the stone parapet of the Astronomy tower. That decisive turn of events had allowed for Severus to dispatch the remaining Death Eaters and whisk Dumbledore, along with Malfoy, to safety in an undisclosed location before more of the Dark Lord's servants could happen upon them.

Now, five years later and with aching joints, which were a result of a magical backlash from one of Dolohov's spells, Snape lounged in his leather winged-back chair and scowled at the parchment lying on his desk. He wanted to ignore it, but, given the circumstances if he did, it would not bode well for the world...Wizarding and Muggle alike.

Rubbing at the faded Dark Mark, he sighed heavily. Had he foreseen the events that happened by dispatching Bellatrix, he would've killed Dumbledore without waiting for Malfoy to decide whether he had the bollocks or not to do such a thing. The final battle had been many months later and he still cursed the Headmaster for withholding information as was his wont to do. That fateful morning, he'd escaped an Avada Kedavra flung at him from a newly initiated Death Eater desperate to prove their worth, stopped by accident by none other than Ronald Weasley. It'd been poor luck, really, as the ginger fool had inadvertently stepped in front of the curse meant for Snape. Watching the boy fall, he'd been caught off guard by one of Dolohov's specialized hexes that affected only those that had Muggle blood in their veins. Being that Severus was a half-blood, it hadn't outright killed him, but he wished it had on most days.

It was a wonder how Granger had ever survived the curse when she was disarmed with it during the Department of Mysteries skirmish, seeing as she was Muggle-born. The reaction to his spell had caused Severus' muscles to be in almost constant state of spasm, and a highly potent potion was the only thing that allowed him any modicum of relief or ability to function somewhat normally. He sometimes idly wondered if the Death Eater hadn't enhanced the curse just for him. On days when the potion needed to be strengthened, Snape considered that dying would've been preferable to the pain coursing throughout his body, and cursed the idiocy of the redhead that had distracted him.

Of course, Snape had had to fulfil his Unbreakable Vow to Narcissa Malfoy, though he'd done it on *his* terms. Once Draco and Dumbledore had been secured, he'd sent out his Patronus with instructions for the Golden Trio to follow it to their location, as he'd wanted reliable witnesses and plenty of memories, should a Pensieve prove necessary.

Compared to the excruciating pain of his curse, Dumbledore had died peacefully and quietly, surrounded by the trio, Malfoy, and Snape, but not before having extracted an oath from each of them. As he'd drawn his last breath, Dumbledore had charged them to protect their world by any means necessary and upon pain of losing their magic if they did not comply. With the Unbreakable Vow appeased, he'd then colluded with them to bring about the downfall of Voldemort. The alliance had been tenuous at best. After all had been said and done, Severus had been reinstated as Headmaster, Voldemort destroyed by Harry Potter, and Ron Weasley a victim of his own bumbling.

"You wished to see me, Headmaster?" Harry Potter asked quietly, drawing the dark man from his dark thoughts.

"Take a seat," Snape grunted, pointing to one of four chairs positioned in front of his massive oak desk.

The two men waited in tense silence until another former student appeared, floating into the chamber with her calm demeanour. She never bothered with a question about her summons, instead setting herself next to Harry to await the others.

"I'm glad to see that scar is healing," he whispered to Luna Lovegood, his gaze directed to just below her ear where a long, pink line ran to below her collarbone.

"Would it overtax you to remain quiet?" the Headmaster snapped at them, never raising his eyes to his former students.

"Harry!" A girlish squeal erupted in the room as Hermione Granger appeared and enveloped her best friend in a tight hug.

So much for the silence, Severus thought, continuing to peruse the letter before him. He contemplated telling the three companionably chattering to get the bloody hell out of his office, but the directive on the parchment taunted him and prevented him from doing so. Now, if only one more deigned to show his face...

"You know, it's damned inconvenient to roll out of bed this early, Severus," Draco Malfoy drawled as he stepped into the room, rubbing his eyes and squinting against the weak sunlight filtering into the room.

All conversation halted, and a sneer grew across Snape's lips. "Ungrateful whelp!" The words were a growl, which he accompanied with a glare at the blond man. "Sit!"

Once they were seated, Snape held the parchment aloft and muttered, "*Amplifico*."

The yellowed paper grew ten times its size, and the lettering became visible to the four who began reading it. Of course, it would be Granger who would ask the first question, insufferable know-it-all swot.

"Isn't it dangerous to Apparate over such long distances, sir?"

"What's the matter, Granger? Afraid you'll splinch that enormous brain of yours from your body?" Draco sniggered.

Her brows drew together a pinched scowl. "I was more worried that certain parts of your anatomy would be irreparably forked."

Harry snorted, but Snape slammed his palm down on the wood expanse, startling them. "When you cease acting like imbecilic children, I'll explain the details!" he said with a snarl that bared his crooked teeth.

Even Malfoy quieted from the unexpected outburst.

"Now, I do realise that while you are no longer students of Hogwarts, you are, in fact, emissaries to the Wizarding world, for all intents and purposes," Snape grouched, standing up. "You agreed, may I remind you, to serve out Dumbledore's wishes in rebuilding the Wizarding world." He looked pointedly at Luna, then turned his attention to Harry. "The only reason Miss Lovegood was included in this little gathering is because of your inability to keep your mouth shut, Potter."

In a moment of frustration, just before Voldemort had been vanquished, Harry had confided in Luna all that had happened the night Dumbledore had died. She'd taken it as serenely as usual, nodding her head and continuing on. However, it had caused her to be bound to the same oath to keep the Wizarding world safe that the other five had taken, with her none the wiser. When the smoke had cleared and the battlefield...littered with their friends' bodies...had come into view, guilt had risen in Harry's chest, making him finally tell Luna that she was now responsible for helping them protect and rebuild, or she'd be stripped of her magical powers. She'd just shrugged her shoulders and told him that she had planned on doing that, anyway... and wasn't it nice that the oath fell parallel with her plans?

Snape swivelled and grabbed a long cord with a steel ring tied to the bottom. Pulling down a projector screen, he tapped the fabric until a map appeared.

"To the uneducated masses, this is..."

"America," Hermione blurted out, unable to stop herself.

Whipping his wand in her direction, Snape cast a silencing spell on the brown-eyed girl. "*Terminus Dissero*."

Hermione whimpered and tried to pry off the metal plate now painlessly riveted to her mouth. Harry moved to help her, but Luna laid a hand on his chest and shook her head. "He'll release her when he's done presenting," the blonde girl advised.

"The first sensible thing any of you have blathered yet," the Headmaster intoned snidely.

"I think it's an improvement, myself," Draco observed. He instantly found himself in much the same predicament as Hermione.

Snape looked at Harry and Luna. "Will you remain silent, or do I need to make further adjustments?" Both shook their heads in the negative. "Good. As I was saying, this is the United States." He pointed specifically to a heart-shaped area. "This state, in particular, is called Ohio."

Hearing no flippant comments, probably due to the two most vocal members having been silenced, he continued. "Minister Floohart has asked that a contingent of researchers from the Wizarding world be sent to investigate the paranormal happenings that seem to be highly concentrated in this area." His wand highlighted a section in the middle southeast of the state.

Narrowing her eyes, Hermione seethed behind the metal mouthpiece, her curiosity overwhelming in its intensity. Draco examined his nails, knowing full well that his former Head of House wouldn't remove the gag until he was good and ready.

"It seems our American counterparts have investigated the locale and found nothing but useless drivel and occultist folklore, further perpetuating the unstable situation," Snape explained while he paced slowly, his hands behind his back. "The American Wizarding Society wishes to break ground in this area and build a 'Midwest' branch of their operations due to the extensive ley lines that populate the region, but the 'incidents' that are occurring greatly hinder their progress."

"Sir?" Harry posed hesitantly, waiting to see what his former Potions professor would do.

He merely arched a brow and pursed his lips. "I suppose if Miss Granger cannot speak, you'll do it for her, is that it?"

"No, I have my own questions."

Due to a private stipulation, Severus was prohibited from telling them much of anything with regards to the assignment, but he could at least point them in the right direction. Walking to the nearest bookcase, he perused the titles until he found the one he wanted, pulled it off the shelf and let it fall on his desk in a dusty cloud. "I know how well Miss Granger loves her research; I would hate to deprive her of such a pleasure." With a flick, he released Draco and Hermione, pulling on the screen to let it fly into a curled state. "Any answers you seek will have to come from here, as I have better things to do with my time."

"Why us four?" Hermione huffed as soon as she was free.

Draco sneered. "Because we're all so obviously well-suited."

Trying to hide his smirk, Snape nodded. "In a manner of speaking."

"I was not in the least bit serious."

"Be that as it may, you four possess certain abilities that your counterparts do not."

"What?" Harry asked, looking between his friends and Malfoy.

Snape eyed Hermione. "I'll leave that to Miss Granger to deduce. As I said before, I'd hate to deprive her of the only thrill she gets in life."

"That was uncalled for," she spat, though she snatched the book from his desk.

"When do we leave?" Luna interjected before another verbal battle began.

Laying the parchment on top of his desk, Snape crossed his arms and glared. "According to the letter's post-script, which you were not privy to read, this correspondence will become a Portkey in five hours, allowing time for you to gather your things and return here." He looked at each one in turn, hesitant to impart the last bit of information due to the restrictions. "If you complete this task..." He trailed off, rubbing his left temple to ease the tension headache that had started to throb there as his pain potion began to wear off. "If you complete this task, then I'm in a position to release us all from Dumbledore's oath...but only if you return."

"That's not at all a reassuring way of putting things, Headmaster," Luna pointed out. "You could have phrased it differently."

He scowled fiercely. "I'm so sorry to upset your delicate sensibilities, Miss Lovegood, but seeing as I had no choice in the matter of whether you were to go or not, I thought to spare you any surprises. Pardon me for expressing concern, it won't happen again, I assure you."

"What exactly are we dealing with here, Severus?" Draco asked the question on everybody's mind.

"I don't remember giving you leave to call me by my given name, boy!"

The blond man stood, matching Snape for height. "Oh, come off it!" He glared mutinously. "If our lives are at stake, I think we deserve the right to know the risks."

"I agree." Hermione echoed his sentiments.

"Dear Merlin in Avalon," Snape swore. "Did Granger actually agree with Malfoy?" He looked at the ceiling. "I'm waiting for a thunderclap to let us know the world is going to end."

"That's funny," Luna sniggered. "Personally, I think it's all that unresolved sexual tension between them that makes Hermione and Draco argue, Headmaster. Irritating at times, but amusing to watch and it helps their relationship grow."

Everyone just stared at her.

Both aggrieved parties protested... loudly.

"I am *not* trying to make anything *grow* on Malfoy Junior here!"

"Miss Buck-toothed Brainiac? Are you serious?" Draco scoffed. "Of course not. I mean, consider the source! Trelawney has nothing on Lovegood's dystopian outlook."

"Buck-toothed?"

"Junior? Granger, there's nothing junior about me."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "You're a right prat, you know?"

"I'd say takes one to know one, but that would be an insult to my sex!"

"*Enough!*" Snape shouted, his voice reverberating off the stone walls.

Draco finally seated himself while Harry inquired about expenditures. "Sir? Are we to be reimbursed for this trip?"

"I've been told by Kingsley that, should you finish this mission with satisfactory results, your recompense would be...*substantial*."

"But I don't need..."

"Malfoy, finish that sentence and I'll reveal some rather unsavoury details of your current situation," Snape said in warning, looking down his nose at his former prized pupil.

"Slytherin git," Draco muttered under his breath.

"Have no doubt."

"How long are we required to research the area?" Hermione asked as she sought to open the book, filing away the information about Malfoy and his *situation* for a later time.

"You have a month to evaluate and report your findings, as well as any possible solutions to the American Wizarding Society."

Draco paled. "A bloody month?"

"You have some other business to be about?" Snape questioned, his tone laced with threat.

"No... *sir*," he mocked.

"I thought not." Resuming his seat, the dour wizard stared at the four sets of eyes that were looking at him curiously. "Well? Your time began expiring the moment I said 'Portkey'," he barked. "I suggest you make the necessary arrangements."

Luna demurred with a polite smile and left the room. Harry pulled Hermione to the side, and engaged her in a heated conversation, while Draco approached his fellow

Slytherin.

"What did you say to the Ministry that allowed the rest of my probation to be commuted?"

"Merely that you were the best apprentice that I'd encountered and that your expertise would be an asset."

Malfoy said nothing to the contrary, only nodding, since false modesty really wasn't his style. "And the conditions I must fulfil?"

The Headmaster's eyes snapped to his. "Complete the required task," he hissed low, sliding a pouch to the blond man, "and your family's assets will be fully restored."

A frown creased his brow as a previous insecurity gripped him. "What if I can't complete... the task?"

"Let's just say I won't be there to clean up your mess this time, Draco."

Straightening, he smiled wanly. "Understood, sir." With a look over his shoulder, he noticed that Potter and Granger were still having a greatly animated discussion and clutched the leather bag in his fist, feeling the contours of several phials within the satchel.

"Malfoy," Snape said softly, "take a portable Pensieve with you." He directed his gaze to the item in the younger man's hand. "You'll know when to use them."

Glancing at the bag, Draco nodded and, without another word, left the chamber, presumably to head back to his quarters in the dungeon.

"You may waste the Ministry's time, Mister Potter, but you may *not* waste mine," Snape bellowed to the bickering pair, causing them to startle. "Go as you are or leave to pack, those are your options."

"Yes, sir," Harry mumbled, dragging Hermione with him to the door.

"Sir, may I keep the book?" Hermione pleaded, clutching the tome to her chest like a lover, as her best friend tugged on her sleeve.

"Could I stop you, Miss Granger?"

"Well, I thought... I mean, I just wanted... uhm... no," she finally finished, knowing full well if she wanted the book she'd do anything to obtain it.

Snape waved the Gryffindors away, sighing in relief when his office door snicked shut, falling back into his chair and pouring himself a healthy dose of Ogden's finest from his private stash. He then raised his glass and saluted the door through which his former students had left.

"Death's road we all must go."

~*~

"Why in Merlin's toenails would they want to build a centre of operation here?" Draco asked no one in particular as he studied the remnants of a lengthy tunnel nearly hidden by the foliage.

Staring off to her right, Luna shook her head, her body shivering in response to the energy enveloping the place. "I don't think this is where the AWS wants to break ground. I believe the Portkey has been tampered with."

"How do you know?" Hermione shucked off her backpack and searched for the map Snape had provided them, courtesy of Minister Floohart.

"Our destination point was supposed to be..." Luna glanced at her notes and frowned. "In the centre of the pentagram, near Wilson Hall." Looking up, she watched as the treetops swayed in the gentle autumn breeze, leaves scattering around her ankles. "That's miles away from here."

"There's some kind of writing on the face of the tunnel," Harry told the group and they all narrowed their eyes to read the eroded script. "Moonville."

"Never heard of it," Draco stated absentmindedly as he began searching for a way up the steep grade, throwing his own rucksack to the side so he wouldn't topple from its weight. Except for the Pensieve...which had a magic of its own...he couldn't shrink its contents due to the restrictions in place for this particular trip, and he thought it damned inconvenient that he was forced to dress and act like a Muggle while in the area. Wasn't it enough that he had to respond with, "How high?" when the Ministry asked him to jump?

"You've never heard of any of the cities on this map, Malfoy," Hermione taunted him.

Not to mention that being saddled with the likes of the infuriating know-it-all, the dozy chit with moon-eyes, and the bloke who irritated him the most, was getting on his very last nerve. He turned and advanced on the Muggle-born. "Listen here, Mud...erm, Granger." He stumbled over the insult, trying for once to play nice, because he didn't want word of his behaviour getting back to the Ministry. "At least I know Athens is a..."

"Vortex of spectral and ethereal energies," Harry whispered harshly as he moved closer to the group, his wand at the ready.

"Potter," Draco hedged, snatching his pack from where he'd thrown it, "what are they?" He quickly joined the other three as they huddled together.

Surrounding the four were about a hundred beings, slowly closing in on them, varying degrees of malice etched on their faces. Some wore outdated clothing, and some had barely a stitch covering the pale expanse of their skin. The four stood back to back, creating a circle and facing each direction, wands out.

"Are they Inferi?" Hermione murmured, her eyes darting around, trying to study exactly what they were dealing with.

"No," Harry clarified, "Inferi are basically Zombies. These look a little too... erm..."

"They're ghosts," Luna supplied, though she made no move to lower her stance. "But unlike ones I've ever encountered before."

"Do you encounter ghosts often?" Hermione asked in a shrill voice, turning her attention in several directions. "I mean, we encountered them daily at Hogwarts, but these look a little..."

"Brassed off," Harry finished for her, sending a non-verbal hex at the being closest to the edge of the clearing. It flowed through the spirit and ricocheted off the tree behind it with no effect to the advancing ghoul.

"If we look at this logically, there has to be a perfectly acceptable explanation as to why these paranormal ectophantasms feel they are displaced." Hermione gripped her wand tighter when her fingers became sweaty.

"Shut it, Granger!" Draco snarled, firing his own curse at the crowd, only to have the same results as Potter. "We're here to get rid of their spectral arses, not start a group therapy session due to afterlife abandonment issues."

"You're an unmitigated prick, Malfoy!" she hurled back at him.

"Fight later, guys!" Harry roared, turning his head to glare at the two covering his back. He didn't know whether to feel safe that he had two powerful people protecting him, or nervous that they might start hexing each other willy-nilly. "We've got a job to do."

"There's so many." Draco peered into the eyes of the bedraggled soul nearest him. "They look corporeal to me, Lovegood... are you sure they can't hurt us?"

"Normally, I'd say yes, but this isn't a normal situation, so your guess is as good as mine." She tried several complex spells to disperse the crowd into smaller, more manageable groups, but like with Draco and Harry's efforts, nothing happened. "Definitely not a normal situation."

A train whistle rent the air in an unearthly scream, startling the group and the ghosts alike. A single lamplight originating from the opposite entrance of the tunnel caught their attention, the beam swinging from side to side, while the sound of a locomotive's steam pistons became louder.

"We might want to move," Hermione warned, staring at the misty image of tracks under her feet which began to vibrate.

Draco glanced down. "Brilliant, Granger. Our options are being crushed by the approaching train or being molested, possibly mortally so, by a bunch of malcontent apparitions."

"You forgot the Sasquatch," Luna informed them, pointing to an area past the ghost horde.

"Kumquat?" Draco tried looking over his shoulder. "Gods, what is that stench? Did one of you forget to bathe for a month?"

"Shut your gob, Malfoy." Harry's voice was a growl, as he tried to shift the group to their left. "I don't see anything, Luna."

"It's gone now, but it could be advancing through the vegetation."

"Cheery thought." Hermione panicked; the train's approach was louder and almost upon them.

Draco, who was facing the tunnel, started backing up, hooking his arm with Hermione's on his right. "The lantern light is getting closer."

She turned her head and followed his gaze. "Is that the conductor?"

"No one's holding it."

Hermione's hairs stood on end. "We need to leave this area now!"

He didn't need to be told twice. Wrapping his arms around Hermione's body, Draco side-along Apparated to a different location, leaving Harry and Luna to stare dumbfounded after them.

"Bloody typical Malfoy!" Harry shouted to the thick air, his voice echoing off the tunnel walls.

"Hold on," Luna warned the bespectacled man before she repeated the same procedure, flinging them both to an uncharted region.

Three seconds later, all was quiet in the place they'd vacated, a light breeze the only thing stirring the dead leaves.

~*~

"If you don't let go of me this instant...Oof!"

"What?" Draco looked at Hermione irritably. "You said you wanted me to let go of you."

"I didn't think you were going to dump me in the middle of..." Her voice trailed as she took in her surroundings, shuddering involuntarily.

They were inside a dilapidated building, white paint peeling off the walls and fading sunlight filtering through the dirty windows that stretched nearly from floor to ceiling. The air was dank with mould and stale with disuse. Pieces of broken furniture were scattered throughout and several groupings of graffiti littered the walls.

She scrambled to her feet and dusted off the dirt on her jeans from where he'd dropped her on the filthy floor. "Where are we?"

Glancing around the room, he muttered, "I'd say *Hell*, but I wouldn't know the difference since you're still here."

"Bite me," she shot back.

He looked her over. "No, thank you. You may give me some Muggle disease or something equally horrible."

"Afraid you'll get rabies?"

"What are *rabies*?"

"A disease. But don't worry," she said with a snort. "Only warm-blooded animals transmit it. I think we both know you're safe on that account."

Stepping into her personal space, Draco looked down his nose at her. "Just so you know... I'm *very* warm-blooded." He inched closer. "So why don't you shut that yammering trap of yours and figure out where we are."

Her cheeks flushed at his innuendo. "You should know where we are; you Apparated us here!" she said in a hiss that was equal parts frustration and accusation.

He closed his eyes in irritation, counted to five and then smirked. "Check your bag."

"What's in my..."

"Ah!" Draco snapped. "No questions. Look. In. Your. Bag!"

"I loathe you." Setting her pack on the floor, she dug around inside, quickly starting to panic when she couldn't find the book she'd *borrowed* from Headmaster Snape. "Where is it?"

Tugging his sleeves over his fingers, he extracted a heavy tome out of his own sack, the locking mechanism that kept it closed clearly broken. Carefully, he opened it, pulled out a pamphlet that had rested between the cover and end leaf, and held both the book and flyer out to Hermione.

"This is where we are," he said with a smug grin.

He'd relieved her of the precious volume that had been stuffed in a bag slung over her shoulder, just before they'd left the castle, as he'd followed her and Potter at a discreet distance while Disillusioned with them none the wiser. He'd quickly deduced she'd never been able to open the thing, and had set to breaking the heavy wards protecting it from unwanted eyes.

She glared at him. "You stole my book."

Rolling his eyes, he shook the thick volume at her. "Do you want it or not?"

Grabbing it from him, Hermione shoved the larger book back in her sack and studied the small booklet, comparing it to the room they were in. Everything was the same, including the way the light streamed in through the windows. She had to give him credit; when Malfoy thought of an Apparition point, he had every detail lined up. But then, she read the caption that accompanied the non-moving, Muggle photograph.

"You kleptomaniac dungeon troll!" she accused, flipping through the rest of the pages and scanning the floor.

"Hey!" he cried, affronted. "I got us out of that sodding mess back there, and all you can do is hurl insults at your saviour? You've got some nerve, Granger."

Folding back one of the pages, she thrust the picture in front of him. "You Apparated us to *The Ridges*!"

He blinked. "So?"

"Read it."

Grabbing the flyer from her, he began reading out loud. "The Athens Lunatic Asylum...or *The Ridges* as it is now commonly known...was a mental hospital operational in Athens, Ohio from eighteen seventy-four until nineteen ninety-three. During its operation, the hospital provided services to a variety of patients including Civil War veterans, children, and violent criminals suffering from various mental disabilities. It is best known as a site of hundreds of the infamous lobotomy procedure, as well as various paranormal urban legends."

Looking up, he glanced at her and shrugged. "And? So they cut up the nutters' brains and now they see ghosts." He handed her back the pamphlet. "There's no conclusive..."

"Keep reading."

"One particularly haunting aspect of *The Ridges* is the famous stain," he said with a resigned sigh. "On December first, nineteen seventy-eight, a fifty-four year old female patient named Margaret Schilling disappeared. She was found dead six weeks later on January twelfth, nineteen seventy-nine, in a seldom used part of the hospital on the top floor of ward N-20." Draco stopped at this point and looked around the room, bypassing Hermione's irritated glare.

"Once her body was removed," he continued, "her outline appeared impressed on the floor, revealing even her hairstyle and folds of her clothing." His gaze darted immediately to the cracked concrete floor, his eyes widening when they fell upon the white outline of a human figure clearly visible and etched into the hard surface.

"Ah..." He cleared his throat several times. "Its appearance is not scientifically impossible, because it may have been caused by the decomposition of her body in reaction with direct sunlight from the window." Draco scanned the position of the windows in correlation to the imprint, and then returned to read the conclusion. "But the stain was repeatedly cleaned, and always reappears, and can still be seen today. Some say the ghost of Margaret Schilling and others who have died in the hospital wander the halls at night."

He quickly handed back the booklet to Hermione, wiping his sweaty palms on his Muggle jeans to prevent her from seeing how bad they shook. "All right, so I didn't read up on where I was Apparating us to," he groused. "I just pictured the photograph in my mind and I took us there. Pardon the hell out of me!"

She ignored his half-arsed apology and continued thumbing through the pages until she stopped. "Wait... if we're here, where are Harry and Luna?"