

Prisoners of Azkaban, Probationary Diaries August 2009, Prisoners #19-09-1979 and #09-01-1960

by JunoMagic

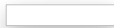
Hermione Granger's and Severus Snape's diaries in August 2009.

Prologue

Chapter 1 of 42

Hermione Granger's and Severus Snape's diaries in August 2009.

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Prisoners of Azkaban, Probationary Diaries August 2009, Prisoners #19-09-1979 and #09-01-1960

oooOooo

Prologue

I still remember the last time I touched a book. A parchment. A quill.

Even after more than eleven years I still remember.

After more than 135 months.

After 587 weeks.

After 4,109 days.

...I can't calculate the hours in my mind, but they have been long and dark and cold since then.

Since May 1, 1998.

Severus presented me with a bouquet at breakfast that morning: rowan, whitethorn, furze, a sprig of juniper. He didn't tell me what it was; he liked to challenge his little know-it-all. And he knew that nothing soothed me as quiet hours in the library.

We were all on edge—living on our nerves, tight-rope acrobats over frayed nets of fragile friendships, our safety net a web of spider's silk, sticky with suspicion, woven above a vast abyss threatening to swallow us whole.

And the whole world with us.

My radials and spirals have turned into squares and lines.

Thirteen rough-tough squares to the window. Seven uneven squares to the door.

No bears, though; just thirteen squares to a dead wall, seven squares to a locked door, thirteen squares to a barred window, and seven squares to a narrow cot.

And lurking between those squares and lines: *memories*.

The scent of new parchment in the library. Severus' aftershave—the spicy-sour tang of freshly mown grass, of herbs and flowers and morning dew, all just a kiss away. Harry in the Shrieking Shack. The choking smell of life-blood spilling from his torn throat, the glittering scent of silver memories pouring from his mouth, eyes, nose, ears... the stink of his bowels, released in death. Ron crumpled, discarded, just an afterthought, even in death.

And that last list I made, of hawthorn, rowan, furze, and juniper.

Of my Beltane's bouquet and what it meant.

Hawthorn—the wishing-tree, the crown of thorns that Jesus bore, and the torches that light the nuptial chambers of the wizarding world since Roman times.

Rowan—bright orange berries, life in the death of winter, its wood for protection and good fortune and a peaceful death.

Furze—*"When gorse is out of bloom, kissing's out of season"*, or so the saying goes; painful, then, that he gave me a twig with but one closed bud, and no blooms at all. Beneficial against snake-bite and scarlet fever. A symbol also for new love and fiery passion.

Juniper—its oil used for mummification in ancient Egypt, its wood burnt to cleanse foul air and protect against Evil, its berries consumed to get rid of unwanted bastards.

A message of death and despair, of life and of love.

Had we been victorious, had Voldemort been vanquished, Severus Snape would have waited for me, would have waited to be crowned May Lord to my May Lady.

Thirteen squares for the length of my cell.

Seven for the width.

Invisible letters fill each square. Names of the fallen, one per square. Thirteen by seven, seven by thirteen. And I pace, pace, pace.

It is July 31, 2009, in Azkaban.

Prologue Banner

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Aranel Took for brainstorming and beta-reading.

Further notes:

- # The banner is a collage of Creative Commons picture from polanri, andydoro, and ново. Hermione is Natalie Portman from "V for Vendetta". Severus is Alan Rickman.
- # The information about the properties of the various bushes, shrubs, and trees mentioned in this chapter hails from <http://web.archive.org/web/20071111014542/www.the-tree.org.uk/> and from <http://www.bardwood.com/woods.htm>
- # The allusion to bears in connection with lines and squares refers to the poem "Lines and Squares" by Alan Alexander Milne. With that I have finally filled in a prompt Dickgloucester gave me for my ElJay Drabbling Christmas 2008. (I hope you like it, Dicky!)

1-Aug-09

Chapter 2 of 42

Hermione's diary for August 1, 2009.

Banner for August 1

August 1, 2009

My hands feel as if they've never grasped a quill before.

But even after eleven years or 135 months or 587 weeks or 4,110 days, I still know how to write.

And I *must* write, because this is one of the conditions for my new life. Each day I must write in this diary. Where I am, what I did.

The quill is filled with everlasting Veritas serum. The ink is my blood, drawn from letters etched into my hands. Each day they will cut deeper into my flesh.

My blood is glistening in the sunset like liquid rubies.

The cuts hurt.

I love this pain.

P.

For pardon.

For probation.

This morning, the door to my cell opened.

But the door of my cell does not open on Saturdays.

It opens on Mondays. Not to provide food, or to take care of necessities. There are a Charmed plate and mug for the one, a Charmed chamber pot and jug for the other purpose. Once a month, those Charms are renewed.

The door opens solely to ascertain if the prisoner contained in the cell is still alive.

...the stench of a decaying corpse probably isn't bad after just a week in the cold climate of Azkaban.

The door *never* opens on Saturdays.

But it did.

Two guards dragged me from my cell.

No one has touched me in eleven years—135 months—586 weeks—4,108 days—since that door closed behind me on May 3, 1998.

I don't know what scared me more. The grip of their hands around my arms. Their warmth pressed against me. Their breath on my neck. Or the sound of my voice, when I was trying to scream, scream, scream—and all I could do was whine.

A human being shouldn't sound like that.

I shouldn't sound like that.

But while I wailed and cried a lot in the first year, and talked and muttered more in the second and third year, I have been silent for a long time now.

They ripped off my prison rags. Maybe leaving red welts on flesh grey with grime was more satisfying than a spell.

Thank Merlin I stank.

Naked, they shoved me into an empty cell with a drain at its centre. Before I could catch my breath, they started casting *Agua mentis* at me.

Afterwards, they hauled me into yet another cell. This time with one desk and two chairs, the surprising accessory of a caseworker of the DMLE...and a pile of clothing and other things.

The clothes I wore on May 2, 1998.

Jeans, t-shirt, sweater. Trainers.

But there was only one sock.

And no underwear.

oooOooo

These are the conditions of my pardon and probation:

1. Within one month, I must find a place to live.
2. Within one month, I must find a job.
3. Within one month, I must find a wizard or witch of good repute to vouch for me.
4. And I must write a page in this diary every day.

I am writing.

oooOooo

A/N: DMLE ~ Department of Magical Law Enforcement.

Many thanks to my beta-readers Aranel Took and Ayerf. You're the best!

August 2, 2009.

Chapter 3 of 42

Severus' diary for August 2, 2009.

Banner for August 2

August 2, 2009

When I saw you, I knew my messages hadn't reached you. The humiliation, the pain, the blood, the sores—all in vain.

They Charmed off your hair.

Well.

That was to be expected.

They put you in those ridiculous Muggle things you used to wear. You look lost in them now. Like a child in the clothes of her mother.

You hesitated towards me, arms half-raised, hands almost reaching.

I expected you to babble (a deluge of your dear, excited burbling: "You're not dead, you're not dead!"). And tears, yes, of course I expected tears. Hysterical tears or quiet, desperate, blissful tears. Tears to kiss away with a grand gesture, whispering against your sweet lips, your soft cheeks, that I didn't die, that I didn't die, not in 1980, not in 1998.

That I will not—that I *cannot* die as long as you shall live .

But you did not cry.

You let your arms sink down.

You stood very still and looked at me.

Your eyes, your mind, an open book.

(Never mind what I told Potter; I could always see what you were thinking. Maybe because you never bothered to hide it—not when you wished for my approval as a child, not when you wanted my attention as a teenager, not when you offered your heart to me as an—*before* you ever had the chance to become an adult.)

But today you looked at me a woman grown.

A woman broken.

And you said, in a voice so hesitant and husky it couldn't possibly be yours (I wouldn't have recognised your voice without you standing before me, a misbegotten sparrow instead of Gryffindor's most unruly lioness), you said:

"Your name is in the square below the window."

"—the middle square, four out of seven—"

I saw the square.

There were ninety-one squares in your cell. Ninety of them the rough granite of Azkaban bedrock. One of them smooth and soft, from eleven long years of caresses.

Foolish, foolish girl.

"Your name," I said, "*is* everywhere."

And that is true; it seems to be my one weakness that while I cannot be courageous for myself, I can carry a torch for others to my death and beyond. First Lily, then Albus; now you.

We stared at each other.

"What now?" you asked.

Vehemently, I flung the Portkey into the grey-black floods of the North Sea.

"We fly," I announced.

Finally the grand gesture I'd planned for (eleven years, too many months, weeks and days to contemplate).

Like all my grand gestures, it failed.

That it wasn't fatal I have to thank you for. You, and your fear of flying.

And Fate, of course, who's still not done with me.

(...or you, it seems, my poor little lynx.)

And the lighthouse keeper of Bound Skerry, who found us when we fell from the sky on Grunay, an uninhabited island in the Out Skerries group, the easternmost part of

Shetland.

Nominally, at least, of Scotland.

...of home.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Aranel Took and Mia Madwyn for beta-reading.

3-Aug-09

Chapter 4 of 42

Hermione's diary for August 3, 2009. !!! WARNING for graphically gruesome description of Bellatrix killing Crookshanks !!!

!!! WARNING for graphically gruesome description of Bellatrix killing Crookshanks !!!

Banner for August 3

August 3, 2009

Yesterday's entry is complete gibberish, the handwriting nearly illegible.

But I did manage to write down what I did and where I am.

Seventeen minutes before midnight I jerked awake from a nightmare, fearing I had forgotten my daily entry. The pain that pulsed in my hands was bliss.

Then the thought struck me it was just a dream that I roused Severus long enough for him to write his entry. I stumbled from the sofa, tore off his blanket, grabbed his hands.

Only when I saw the bloody letters etched into his hands I collapsed, weeping hysterically.

I had barely fallen asleep again, when the conviction gripped me that I was still in my cell, that Severus was just a name in one of my squares, not the man holding me tightly.

I screamed and shrieked and babbled and only quieted when he told me that it cannot be a dream because no dream could possibly contain Draco Malfoy, Hermione Granger, and Severus Snape in one and the same bed. Especially a Draco Malfoy with a sun-burnt, weather-withered face and a shaggy, unkempt beard as long as Albus Dumbledore's used to be.

That made sense to me even in my unhinged state and I fell asleep once more.

This morning I am calm.

But I fear that the last eleven years have left me less than sane.

I keep counting the squares on the flagstone floor of Draco's living room on the fourth floor of his lighthouse-home. The way they get cut off by the round walls bothers me. That there would be 256 of them without the stairs bothers me.

I keep thinking of the squares in my cell. There were not enough of them. My list of our dead held 95 names, including animals and magical creatures, and I only had 91 squares. I left out the animals in the end. I put them in the corners. But it pained me. Dear Fang. Brave Mrs Norris. Faithful Hedwig. And my Crooks. My poor Crooks...I can still *hear* the heel of Bellatrix' boot grinding his skull into a pulp of brain, bone splinters and bits of blood-drenched fur.

With Severus and Draco alive, I would have had two more squares to fill with names.

But that would have left two corners empty.

It bothers me that there are no corners here.

We'll stay here on Bound Skerry for a few days, though.

Draco says we need time to adjust after eleven years in Azkaban. He'll bring us up to date concerning events in the Muggle and the wizarding world. And feed us properly; he promises he cooks a wicked fish stew.

That Severus doesn't protest bothers me.

He withdraws into himself for long periods of time. One minute he's talking to Draco—the next he's staring off into space for an hour. It is Occlumency, and Severus insists it has kept him sane all this time.

But I have seen Draco look at him.

He, too, wonders: *How sane?*

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Ayerf for beta-reading.

4-Aug-09

Chapter 5 of 42

Severus' diary for August 4, 2009.

Banner for August 4

August 4, 2009

You have become strange in Azkaban. You keep counting the tiles of the floor and the cracks in the wall, whispering under your breath. At first I couldn't understand what you were saying. But then you looked at me suddenly and said very clearly:

"*Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore*, born August 31, 1881, in Mould-on-the-Wold, died June 21, 1997, on the Astronomy Tower, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. His name was in the square below yours because you almost died for him."

I flinched so hard at hearing his name that Draco came to me, laying a gentle hand on my shoulder.

"It wasn't your fault, Severus," he said. "You threw yourself in the way of a curse to save him. You almost died in Hermione's arms that night. If it is anyone's fault, it's mine. I've never seen my father angrier than that night, when I declared my allegiance to the Order for the first time.—And besides, he would have died anyway."

"We all die *anyway*," I sneered, although his words soothed me.

"It wasn't your fault either, Draco," you interrupted with the barest hint of your old bossiness. "Just *vv—His*."

But then you shuddered, cringed and cowered, your head lowered, counting off tiles again and the names of the dead. Fear gripped me—have you become my own Ariana in those eleven years? Mad and strange and sweet and scared?

...I must have drifted away then. To the place I built for us inside of me. Our little white house nestling safely into that sheltered cove (because you liked Shell Cottage so much). With rambling roses always in full bloom and kittens playing in the sunshine. Four orange, like your beloved Crooks, and one black as coal...

When I came back to myself, it was late in the afternoon.

I fear I have become strange in Azkaban, too.

Draco put tea and papers on the table—the Prophet and the Quibbler.

Lord Voldemort is dead.

He died—how ironic!—on June 21, 2009, after ruling wizarding Britain as "Lord Protector of Magic" for eleven years.

Lord Voldemort died of a

progressive lactose-intolerance that one fine day resulted in deadly anaphylaxis.

He had one mug of Nagini's milk too many.

...Lucius Malfoy is "Minister for Magic" now. "Minister", not "Lord Protector".

Bellatrix Lestrange is dead, too.

A hemorrhagic reaction of unknown origin.

Have we been set free just be caught and killed? Who is responsible for our tenuous toehold in a life of freedom? Who is reading these pages, drenched in blood, truth, and insanity?

Draco doesn't know—he hasn't been to the mainland in seven years.

"We need a plan," you said. "I must make a list."

I could have kissed you for that.

(I did kiss you for that.)

"You can't stay here," Draco warned. "They don't know I'm still alive."

We froze, you and I.

But it was I who pulled out my diary and held it out to Draco.

"They do now," I said.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Ayerf for beta-reading.

A few further notes:

I am aware that normally "milking" snakes refers to their venom. This is not an error, but a part of the plot.

The ink splodges are not random.

This AU!Voldemort is not *quite* the psychopath & sociopath from canon; instead he has much political acumen. Keeping the survivors of the Final Battle alive gained him more than a blood bath—thus Hermione and Severus were incarcerated and not killed.

5-Aug-09

Chapter 6 of 42

Severus' diary for August 5, 2009. Please note: this chapter contains "diverse" sexual situations according to the story's rating.

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Banner for August 5

August 5, 2009

Even as a bearded hermit in his exile, Draco has proven the name of Malfoy inescapably linked with decadence.

There is only one bed; but it is situated on the sixth floor of the lighthouse. At least ten feet wide and ten feet long it doesn't take up room—it is the room. The view of the islands is magnificent: scattered crags and cliffs frame flecks of grey, green, brown. The sea (that I always heard but never saw through the window-hole high in the wall of my cell) is enormous.

And the sky is immense.

On low ledges under the windows, thick white candles circle the bed. From the ladder leading to the topmost floor, where the beacon is housed, white valances of mosquito nets drift to form the bed-head.

When I saw it first, revulsion rose in me. I was about to scoff at this *pleasure-dome* Draco created, to scorn his hedonism, his sybaritic abandon (here, at the end of the world), when I saw his face.

When I saw him (here, in this bed), night upon moonlit, candlelit night.

Alone.

I experienced a strange sense of kinship with him then. Many nights in many years I, too, lay in a large, lonely bed, yearning for green eyes long dead and gone.

What sets us apart is his treasure of green eyes closing against the onslaught of orgasm.

What sets us apart is his burden of green eyes closing against a flood of blood.

Lily never belonged to me; neither in life, nor in death.

...last night I watched you, as you lay down. Rail-thin, with nothing but brown stubble on a knobby head, you're a stick-figure-drawing of the witch you were. Adrift in the sea of Draco's sheets and Draco's blankets, you floated away from me. While your whisperings washed over me in waves (Professor Babbling, Katie Bell, Regulus Black, Sirius Black, Amelia Bones, Susan Bones, Terry Boot, Lavender Brown...), I, too, withdrew, and was gone before you reached Cho Chang.

I went to bed in our small white house, in the bedroom above the back-garden with its grassy lawn and apple trees. I donned the sage-green nightshirt you bought for me, (now soft from many nights of sex, and many days of sunshine—billowing freshly laundered in the breeze). I spooned your full figure and buried my face in your spicy curls.

Sighing, you reached for me. Soon your nightgown joined my shirt on the ground. After years of marriage, I know your skin, your flesh, your depths as my own. When we moaned and moved as one, sensations swelled, ripened to lust. Pain and pleasure mingled, and I stilled within you, ready to *burst*—

and I *shoved* into you, *hard*, into your tight, hot cunt, held your hands, cradled your brittle body, inhaled your sweat, sour from years of prison-dirt—

and the most *fucking-sweet* pressure on my prostate pushed me, propelled me, *threw* me forwards—

We cannot stay here.

Tomorrow Draco will take us to Hogsmeade.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Ayerf and Mia Madwyn for beta-reading.

6-Aug-09

Chapter 7 of 42

Hermione's diary for August 6, 2009. Please note: this chapter contains "diverse" sexual situations according to the story's rating.

Please note: this chapter contains "diverse" sexual situations according to the story's rating.

Banner for August 6

August 6, 2009

The first time can be excused; we were not ourselves, or rather, even less than we normally are now—the wine, the past, the pain—

The night overshadowed the day.

To the point I couldn't bring myself to put it in writing. Today I feel I must.

I'll never forget Severus' empty eyes when he—well, started *fucking* me. He touched me in all the right places, in all the right ways, and my body, touch-starved as it must be (after eleven years or 135 months or 587 weeks or 4,112 days, or—Draco did a *Calculus* spell for me—then around 98,699 hours), my body responded willingly. More than willingly. *Wantonly*.

But he never looked at me.

Even when Draco embraced him, he didn't react, and I know this is not his usual inclination—although he has endured the touch of men before.

Only when he climaxed, he returned.

Just in time to hear Draco moan Harry's name.

I froze—my heartbeat still pounding in my ears from my own orgasm. Even wandless, Severus is a dangerous man.

Nothing happened, though.

After breathless, paralysed minutes we disentangled ourselves and spent the rest of the night as far away from each other as possible, and the following day, too, mostly occupied with simple domestic tasks. We bathed; first in cold, cliff-sheltered sea water, then in a hot tub in Draco's kitchen. Draco and Severus cut off their beards and shaved. Draco cooked. Severus and I wrote our diary entries. His has ink-splatches—*Veritaserum*—

[Here the quill has slipped from the line; the writing continues in the middle of the next line, disorderly, frantic]

one two three four five six seven eight nine ten eleven twelve letters

And when the sky blushed with dusk, we climbed the spiral staircase again. Standing in front of the bed, we stared at each other.

The sunset is *golden* here.

(I can't remember if that's normal or extraordinary; no sunlight ever reached my cell.)

We looked as if drenched in Felix Felicis.

That night, we made love.

And I am writing this down now so I will never forget: Even after eleven years or 135 months or 587 weeks or 4,113 days in Azkaban, *dan* still love.

I can kiss and be kissed.

I can caress and be caressed.

I can smile and be smiled at.

I can cry and dry my lovers' tears.

I can love and be loved.

Maybe, in time, I will even remember how to live.

This morning, Draco took us to a wandmaker on the Orkney Islands, on Eynhallow. Master Manannan Lear uses driftwood. His cores are magical flotsam and jetsam, and apparently his mother's hair. At least that's what he said when he thrust two wands at us. "Them's for ye. Mither's hair. Ye need it." Obviously he doesn't subscribe to Ollivander's philosophy of wands choosing their wizards. Severus' wand is ash, mine is elm.

Afterwards, Draco Apparated us to Scotland. We're in Hogsmeade now, in a small upstairs chamber at the Three Broomsticks.

We have wands.

And 25 days to find a home, a job, and someone to vouch for us.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Ayerf for beta-reading and to Juniperus for helpful suggestions and hand-holding.

Further notes:

OBVIOUSLY both Severus and Hermione are resisting the Veritaserum in the quills.

Eynhallow is the Holy Isle of the Orkneys; Muggles think it is abandoned (<http://www.orkneyjar.com/history/eynhallow/index.html>)

"Manannan Lear" is an allusion to Manann-n mac Lir, a sea god of Irish-Celtic mythology

"The Mither o' the Sea" is Orcadian folklore, the benign force of the summer sea, granting life to every living thing, bringing warmth to the oceans and calming the storms. See: <http://www.orkneyjar.com/folklore/mither.htm>

The new wands: according to Norse mythology, the first humans were formed out of two pieces of driftwood, an ash and an elm. Elm is sacred to the Great Goddess and symbolises, among other things, healing, rebirth, and the passage from one life to the next. Ash is the wood of Yggdrasil, the Tree of Life, for protection, balance, justice, and the marriage of opposites. Sources: <http://www.bardwood.com/woods.htm> and <http://www.2020site.org/trees/>

7-Aug-09

Chapter 8 of 42

Hermione's diary for August 7, 2009.

Banner for August 7

August 7, 2009

The first shock was breakfast: *Hannah Abbott* served it! She was not on my list; but after eleven years or 135 months or 587 weeks or 4,115 days or—the *Calculus* spell works well with my new wand—around 98,760 hours after Voldemort's victory, I can't know who's still alive, even if they *were* on my list of the living.

...if I'd *had* a list of the living.

I remember Hannah. I can still see her on February 14, 1998. At breakfast. In the Great Hall. Eleven years or 138 months or 598 weeks or 4,192 days ago she was a plump, pink-cheeked girl kissing Neville Longbottom for Valentine's Day until he blushed redder than the roses he gave her. Now he's dead, and she's a thin, worn-down woman with weary eyes. Her right cheek is marked with a purple curse-scar. Her left cheek is branded with a faded version of the Dark Mark, the letters H and B for "half-blood" curling in black ridges over her cheekbone.

Hannah has taken over the Three Broomsticks after Madam Rosmerta died during a routine Control of the local Death Eater squad. The Prophet claimed it was just a heart attack, according to Hannah.

I expect her heart *did* give out.

Hannah was helpful. Draco had some papers; but living as a recluse, he's not up to date concerning the rules and regulations of the wizarding world in 2009.

Since we're on probation, she is not allowed to let us stay longer than three nights.

But Miss Violet Puddifoot—Madam Puddifoot's niece—rents out rooms, too.

Madam Puddifoot's square is in the second column from the left, thirteenth square from the window. I never knew her first name. Hannah told me. She was Isobel. She died when Death Eaters attacked Hogsmeade on February 14, 1998. Eleven years or 138 months or 598 weeks or 4,192 days ago.

Thus we have almost a week here, where at least the names of the shops are still familiar, even if not much else is.

We must register our wands at the Death Eaters' office today, and turn them in for inspection once a month. *Priori Incantatem* will be cast on them. Every spell we cast will be registered and *Traced*.

But we do not have to be branded like Hannah. Minister Malfoy abolished that law on June 27, 2009. A month, nearly six weeks, or 41 days, or 984 hours ago.

I wonder why they didn't brand us. Severus says they likely forgot about us. For eleven years or 135 months or 587 weeks or 4,114 days or 98,736 hours.

Why did they remember us now?

We got our wands registered and looked at the bulletin board of the post office. With Draco's galleons we can afford three houses listed for sale. Then we went to the apothecary—my left hand is inflamed. No luck; Murtlap's Essence is a forbidden substance now.

But I don't mind the pain.

It means I am alive and almost, *almost* free.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Fliewatuet and Mia Madwyn for beta-reading.

Further notes: They used Severus' Muggle money (money the prison guards didn't recognise as money—h/t Potions Mistress for that idea, with many thanks!) to pay for their room at the Three Broomsticks. Draco gave them galleons he doesn't need (living in the lighthouse the way he does) for buying a house.

8-Aug-09

Chapter 9 of 42

Hermione's diary for August 8, 2009.

Banner for August 8

August 8, 2009

After breakfast we wanted to see the owner of one of the three houses we can afford.

Amrita Agan lives outside the village, at the lakeshore.

Hogsmeade has grown in the last eleven years or 135 months or 587 weeks or 4,115 days or 98,760 hours or—calculating minutes is futile and leaves me frantic, my heart racing. But time is fleeting. Only 23 days are left of our probation. Or 552 hours or—*no*. That way lies madness.

So—Hogsmeade has grown, but it has not flourished. Shops are closed. Rooms are for rent, houses for sale. When we left, Hannah broke up the first brawl of the day, throwing the louts out. Their marks proclaimed them half-blood and Mudblood. Their breakfast was a bottle, shared in a corner.

Hannah says they haven't much to do besides drinking and fighting. Not many half-bloods still own a business; Mudbloods are not allowed to do so. Few employers are willing to hire half-bloods, or worse, Mudbloods. When we stepped outside, a beggar cowered in front of Honeydukes—the letters "MB" nearly hidden by an unkempt beard.

Who will give *us* a job? We may not be branded, but there's no hiding the fresh incisions on our hands, marking us prisoners on probation. And some at least will still remember our names...

On the way to Amrita Agan's house we passed the Shrieking Shack.

Where Voldemort seemingly—

[The quill has slipped from the line again here; the writing continues in the middle of the next line, messy.]

one—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight—nine...letters—

—the Shrieking Shack, where He triumphed, is now a memorial, a museum, a small café, a little shop. Postcards and souvenirs. Toy-snakes, child-sized Death Eater masks, buttons flashing the Dark Mark.

Severus had one of his episodes there. He froze and disappeared into himself, leaving only a shell behind. Almost an hour—58 minutes and 27 seconds—he just stood and stared. At what? I can't tell, and he doesn't say.

I remained at his side and pretended to be fascinated with the memorial stones. Marble markers bear the names of *their* fallen.

Our dead have a memorial only in my mind.

Middle column, third square from the window: Harry James Potter.

Next to Harry, of course: Ron Bilius Weasley.

When we reached the lake, it was my turn to freeze. In the distance Hogwarts beckoned. My first home in the wizarding world. Curious that Azkaban should be my second.

And my third?

I still don't know. When we started down the path, something rustled in the high, dry grass to our left and right, like small animals running towards us, and the Patil twins jumped out of the reeds!

"You shouldn't be here," Parvati said.

"And you mustn't go there," Padma warned.

Suddenly a voluptuous woman (dark skin, black hair) glided down the path and stopped a few feet from the twins. With cold black eyes she stared at us.

"So your little protectors have found you already," she whispered, her voice low and sibilant. "Heed them well."

With that, she moved past us.

Severus shivered.

oooOooo

9-Aug-09

Chapter 10 of 42

Severus' diary for August 9, 2009.

August 9, 2009

Thanks to Hannah Abbott and the Patil twins, we now know much about the wizarding world of 2009. (The Muggle world must wait.)

The Patils seem to be part of (or at least in contact with)

. Or what remains of it today. But they won't give any details. You and I, we have become symbols—as such we must be protected (or die martyrs). But we are also a liability. On probation, under suspicion. Throughout the afternoon, both Patils watched us closely. That is reasonable; eleven years in Azkaban have our sanity hanging by a thread. You and I both know it.

(I wonder if *they* know what happened in the Shrieking Shack.)

At least they could tell us why there were no Dementors in Azkaban. The Dementors have become guards of the wizarding world, "protecting" us against Muggles and Mudbloods.

They can't get in. And we...we can't get out.

When you realised what this meant, you started counting floorboards. But there are too many, some of them obscured by furniture, and they are not square. That confused you, and you clung to me, shaking.

Parvati Patil is an Auror now. I wonder how deeply the Ministry and Hogwarts are infiltrated by

. They knew about the Portkey (though not about the conditions of our probation) and went looking for us at its destination, Muggle London. (So they must have connections to the DMT at least, if not to the DMLE.)

Still, I think it was good I threw the Portkey away; Draco's lighthouse was already overwhelming after Azkaban, even homely Hogsmeade is still a challenge for both of us. In Muggle London we wouldn't have lasted a day.

Padma Patil teaches Arithmancy; she's also Head of Ravenclaw. Professor Sinistra has been made Headmistress. Alecto is Deputy and Head of Slytherin, Amycus head of the Department for Magical Education. Attendance for pure-bloods is compulsory. Formal magical education is not available for half-bloods and Mudbloods.

You snorted at Padma's explanation of the Blood Laws: Only direct offspring of Muggle/magical liaisons are defined "half-blood". Finer percentages of mixed heritage are ignored—for the sake of economy.

Gryffindor House has been abolished.

You didn't cry over that. But you stopped counting. You just rocked back and forth, keening.

This news should taste of sweet satisfaction—to see the House of my childhood tormentors destroyed. But now that nothing is left of them in this world, there is no glee, just bitterness.

I want to leave now; the herb-garden of our small white house beckons with its peaceful scents and humming bees. Yet I must stay if I want to hold you. And I still have questions—while you remain silent.

But the Patils refuse to say why we must stay away from Madam Agan. She is dangerous; that is all we need to know.

They've promised to do all in their power to help us fulfil the conditions of our probation, though. Starting with the address of a house that will be sold to us.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Ayerf for looking this over.

Further notes: Unless I say explicitly that someone is alive, you may assume they are dead.

DMT ~ Department of Magical Transportation

DMLE ~ Department of Magical Law Enforcement

Just like the slips of Hermione's quill and the subsequent counting fits of letters, Severus' splodges of Veritaserum-ink(!) are still not random.

10-Aug-09

Chapter 11 of 42

Hermione's diary for August 10, 2009.

August 10, 2009

I have not dared to write down many details yet.

Spelling everything out in my blood and Veritaserum would make it real, wouldn't it?

And that scares me. To find everything *is* real—only to have it snatched away when—*if*—we fail to fulfil the conditions of our probation—

But now...I shall attempt a list. Just three items.

1. Bathtime: A real toilet. With toilet-paper. A shower with magically unlimited hot water. Home-made soap frothing into soft foam. Clean underwear and fresh clothes. No fleas. No lice.
2. Breakfast: Two cups of hot tea. One egg, the yolk creamy. Three slices of warm toast without maggots, but slathered with yellow butter and sweet strawberry jam.
3. Severus: Alive.

—And scowling at the parchment Padma and Parvati gave us last night. An address and directions. The Lake House belongs to Natalie McDonald, who emigrated to America after the war. Now she wants to sell it. Padma and Parvati have promised it's ours.

We set out right after breakfast. Just like yesterday, we left Hogsmeade behind. But today we turned left at the Shrieking Shack. A few minutes later, we passed the boat landing. I was relieved that mist obscured both landing and lake. The thought of Hogwarts hurts. When we reached Hogsmeade Station, the sun broke through white clouds, though the air remained humid with a promise of rain. We had to take a break there; we're not used to walking anymore.

To our surprise we discovered that the Hogwarts Express runs four times every day now, stopping at several stations between Hogsmeade and London. While Padma and Parvati have told us much, they never mentioned such small changes, having long since grown accustomed to them. Yet those changes shock us.

It's as if time *stopped* for us when the gates of Azkaban closed behind us on May 3, 1998, and *only started* again when those gates opened once more on August 2, 2009.

I know that eleven years or 135 months or 4,109 days or 98,616 hours have passed between those two dates.

But I cannot comprehend what that means.

A few yards behind the station, on the road to Hogwarts, a crooked wooden sign bid us turn right for the Lake House. We entered a narrow lane, sheltered by hedges left and right—hawthorn, hazel, furze, and rowan. The path led us northwards, onto the ness. Moments later, the track dipped down to a western cove.

Down by the water, nestled in a dell, its gardens surrounded by low field-stone walls, a white cottage waited for us.

Two windows (with 16 small rectangular panes each) frame a green door. From the slate roof three large dormer windows greet (with 48 little panes each). A shed with a separate entrance and three windows (four panes each, twelve panes altogether) is attached to the kitchen.

Inside, Natalie McDonald's former house-keeper and a lawyer waited for us.

We paid with Draco's money and signed with our blood.

We have a home now.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Mia Madwyn for looking this over.

Further notes: I use the map by Charles Mize for this story, <http://www.hplex.info/images/maps/hogwarts-map-cm.jpg>. A picture of the cottage (though the location is wrong) may be found here: <http://img.chooseacottage.co.uk/Property/186/400/186146.JPG>

11-Aug-09

Chapter 12 of 42

Severus' diary for August 11, 2009.

Banner for August 11

August 11, 2009

It seems we have acquired...a domicile that should satisfy authorities in so far as the conditions of our probation are concerned.

It should...irk me that we had to depend on connections of the Patil chits to acquire a place of residence. It ought to...humiliate me that we had to take charity from Draco to pay for our home.

But—there is no vexation, no sense of degradation.

Perhaps a faint feeling of relief; maybe a slight touch of annoyance.

Possibly a hint of glee. After all—albeit in a round-about manner—the Minister for Magic himself (my dear old friend Lucius Malfoy) has paid for our house.

You stand and stare and count the window panes. Three times sixteen the dormer windows; two times sixteen the ground floor windows; three times four the ones in the shed where my potions lab will be.

You break my heart.

And I? I stare at this cottage that should be the house of my dreams—after Spinner's End!—after Azkaban!—Merlin help me! And I compare it to the house of my delusions, of my hallucinations, that small white house where I have lived with you, where I have loved you, for more than eleven years now.

This house is situated on the north-western edge of the headland beyond Hogsmeade Station; a perfectly ridiculous place to build a house. We can just hope the midges-

repelling-charms will hold. And *both of us* could do without that view.

My house was at the coast benefitting from the warmth of the Gulf Stream and the endless freedom of the Atlantic Ocean. There were no midges. Nor flea. Nor lice.

This house has a green door and shutters.

Satin-green, you whisper.

But the door of *my* house was red. I painted it for you, the Muggle way. A Gryffindor door for my Gryffindor girl.

At least both houses are white.

There is no orchard here. In fact, there's nothing left of the gardens at all but weeds. Long since they have succumbed to neglect. Gardens don't take kindly to even a year of disregard. And from what the Patils told us, this land has been untended much longer.

I try to remember Natalie McDonald.

She was a child under my care; I *ought* to remember her.

But I don't. The faces blur together—their flesh stripped away—their skulls glaring at me, accusing me—

I swore to protect them. *All of them*.

Suddenly you turn to me. You stare at *me* now, with those huge brown eyes of yours. As if you can hear what I think. (I wouldn't put it past you.)

"Natalie lived," you say.

For a moment panic grips me, and I hang suspended, helpless, between two worlds: a cottage at the lake, with a green door, satin-green shutters, and neglected gardens—and a small white house in a sheltered cove, with a bright red door, and an orchard of apple trees.

Then I'm falling, falling—

and when I open my eyes, I'm kissing you.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Mia Madwyn for looking this over.

Further notes:

"satin-green shutters"—a textual allusion to the song by Chris de Burgh

"falling, falling"—can be interpreted as a textual allusion to the song by Alicia Keyes

Natalie McDonald—was Gryffindor student three years below Harry; in real life, she was a nine-year old Harry Potter fan who died of leukemia after writing a fan letter to JKR. JKR created her character to honour her. She is the only real person to appear in the series, apart from Nicolas Flamel. (Source: Wikipedia/Nel, Philip (2001). J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter Novels: A Reader's Guide. Continuum International Publishing Group. p. 25. ISBN 0826452329.)

12-Aug-09

Chapter 13 of 42

Severus' diary for August 12, 2009.

Banner for August 12

August 12, 2009

Moving in took us approximately ten minutes. Even that only because you fussed over how our one change of clothing should be arranged in the wardrobe, and over placing our soap, toothbrushes, and toothpaste *just so* in the bathroom.

The comb is mine.

You don't need a brush yet for the dusting of stubble on your head. When I run my fingers over your scalp, you bristle. Like coarse old velvet.

(I only managed to keep my bare inch of oily spikes because both guards were afraid of me. Small wonder; the dunderheads never passed their potions OWL. They didn't dare come close enough to Charm my hair off entirely.)

I am writing this late at night, in the kitchen by candlelight, while you lie upstairs. Asleep, I hope, adrift in happy dreams.

After we put our things away, you cornered me.

"Let's celebrate," you said. In the tone that once made Potter, Weasley *and* Draco jump. "For one night," you said, "let's pretend everything is as it should have been."

I must have gaped like a fool.

You drew your wand. Although it's driftwood, bleached and twisted, it's beautiful. You pointed it at your head—and suddenly your curls were back. A mess, a riot, a cloud.

Another wave, and my hair touched my shoulders again. You took some license with it, though. Sleek, not oily. Feathery, not stringy.

Next came our hands—another Glamour. The stigmata of our imprisonment vanished.

"For one night, just for one night," you whispered, "let us pretend."

Let us pretend that Potter was not killed. That you did not use Potter's death to

that

the Dark Lord



Let us pretend we won the war.

Let us pretend...

That you finished your seventh year in peace. That I could fulfil the promise I gave you with my Beltane posy. That I courted you while you apprenticed with a master of your choosing; Minerva, probably.

Let us pretend...

That I wooed you, and that you said yes. That we got married in the chapel at Hogwarts, with Minerva conducting the ceremony, and all our friends in attendance. That I brought you here after the reception.

I carried you over the threshold.

And now—

Now we are alone.

Husband and wife.

You turn to me, in your glorious crimson gown. I trail your cleavage with my finger tips, while you tug impatiently at my black robes.

We tumble into bed laughing, breathless with bliss.

Everything is as it should be.

Naked, you are slender and delicious. Not a shy blushing virgin, but wicked and wanton, my greedy, beautiful, Gryffindor girl.

Just like you should be.

When I kiss you, my heart soars.

And when I take you—

The candle is almost burnt down. Time to go back to bed. I've done my duty, written my entry. I must return to you now and hold you as tightly as I may.

It's not all right. And it shouldn't be like that.

But we'll take what we can get.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Mia Madwyn for looking this over.

13-Aug-09

Chapter 14 of 42

Hermione's diary for August 13, 2009.

Banner for August 13

August 13, 2009

Severus never came back to bed last night.

I woke alone, curled up in a corner of our four poster bed. As far away from the door as possible. Waking alone was...difficult. I—cannot say how long I cowered, counting the four posts of our bed over and over and over again. Getting out of bed wasn't any easier. I—cannot say how often I crossed and re-crossed the space between windows, wall, and door, counting the floorboards, again and again and again, although I really wanted to leave the room. And I knew I could leave the room. Rationally. I knew I was in our bedroom. In our house. But—

When I finally made it downstairs, I found Severus sitting in the kitchen, staring at a burnt down candle, his diary in front of him, his right hand resting in a puddle of bloody ink.

I must have screamed.

He dropped the quill, jumped up, spun around. And blinked at me with the dazed confusion of someone woken from deepest slumber.

"Why didn't you come back to bed?" I asked.

"But I—" he started. Bewildered, he looked from me to the desk, taking in the candle stub, the diary, and the bloody ink on the table, slowly drying into a brown, flaky crust.

"—I did come to bed," he muttered.

"I kissed you good night," he whispered. With a slow, unsteady gesture, he raised his hand. "I sketched our rune on your forehead to keep you safe, to ward off nightmares..."

I shook my head. "Not here," I said. "Not here."

We left it at that.

The rest of the morning we spent outside, working in the garden. The house came fully furnished; so we have tools, and even some old packages of seeds. Though it's too late in the year to sow anything but sunflowers. They take well to Growing Charms and should brighten up our September.

...if we're still here then, that is.

Although it's the wrong time of the year for gardening, it felt good to be outside. To move, to breathe, to go inside—to have a drink of water, or to eat an apple—and then to come back outside. A...remarkable experience. Exhilarating.

Around noon I began to feel uncomfortable, though. Edgy. I couldn't tell why. My skin crawled. When I looked at Severus, he was just as tense—although much better at hiding it.

"How about something to drink?" I suggested.

"Good idea," he agreed. A raised black eyebrow indicated that he saw straight through my strategy.

In the kitchen he didn't wait for my question.

"Someone's watching us," he said. "I can't tell who, or how. But I'm certain of it."

"Evil? An enemy?"

He paused—shook his head—shrugged. "I'm not sure. It—" He frowned at his instinctive choice of words. "*Whoever* it is feels...different. Not friend or foe. *Alien*."

We did not go back outside. But the disturbing presence remained...until the Patil twins arrived to check on us.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Mia Madwyn for looking this over.

14-Aug-09

Chapter 15 of 42

Severus' diary for August 14, 2009.

Banner for August 14

August 14, 2009

The Patils' visit met neither your nor my expectations.

You hoped they would offer to vouch for us, and that they would go through your lists, confirming deaths, verifying survivals.

I already knew they wouldn't do that. Clearly, they are much too

to vouch for us. And I hoped that Padma would have the sense not to cater to your **obsession**.

I understand your need, believe me. (I have my own lists to keep me awake at night.) But I do doubt your capability of confronting the facts at this time.

...perhaps I should apply this insight to my own disappointment.

I wanted facts as well, and got none.

I tell myself they are wiser than Albus Dumbledore not to trust prisoners on probation with any

details. Your lecture about war- and prison-induced paranoia (delivered *ex tempore* with footnotes, side notes, and addenda) reassured me concerning your mental state and—loath as I am to admit that—it was not completely without merit. Yet this lack of information leaves me uneasy.

Their unwillingness or inability to provide clues for the riddle of our release is worse, though.

I fear we were only set free to serve as decoy.

As do they.

Once already our futures were sacrificed for the Greater Good. Save your breath for that lecture. I agree: It was not completely without merit.

Yet we both know we will not survive a second time.

And I promise we won't have to.

One way or another.

Enough of that; that was yesterday.

The Patil chits cannot provide jobs for us. Hogwarts doesn't employ half-bloods or Mudbloods. And we must not get closer to the Ministry than we absolutely have to.

So this morning we went looking at the bulletin board in the post office. Jobs for ex-inmates of Azkaban aren't advertised in the Prophet, not even in Goyle's Quibbler.

I set out looking into a career as a professional de-gnomer or ghoulish washer, with the option of trying my luck as a day-labourer collecting bat guano, unicorn dung, or squid shit tomorrow. You marched off to try your luck as window charmer, garbage vanisher, and owlery cleaner.

At noon lack of success led me to the Three Broomsticks. Four sickles, six knuts for a soup—I needed something fortifying before asking Aberforth for help.

A decision I regretted when I spat a mouthful of uncut cabbage back into lukewarm water thick with grease drops and tasting of soap.

"If you wanted me dead," I asked Abbott, "why wait to poison me now?"

She snorted, and shocked me for the second time. "I've always liked your sense of humour, Snape.—I hear you're looking for a job."

I only nodded. (A dunderhead would have figured that out by now; albeit a Hufflepuff, she never was a dunderhead.)

"If I recall correctly, you were a fair hand at cutting, chopping, and stirring?" she asked snidely.

"Possibly," I spat. "Why?"

"I'm looking for a soup-cook." She smirked.

...but I have a job now.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Mia Madwyn for looking this over, and to Annie Talbot and Aranel Took for discussing possible jobs for ex-inmates of Azkaban.

15-Aug-09

Chapter 16 of 42

Hermione's diary for August 15, 2009.

Banner for August 15

August 15, 2009

Again no luck finding a job.

Though it went better than yesterday. I didn't freeze in the middle of the sidewalk (yes, there is a sidewalk in Hogsmeade now, properly paved), caught by lines and squares like a little fly in an enormous spider's web until Severus found me late in the afternoon.

Today I managed to reach the bookshop. "Pince's Books". The proprietor is one Inigo Pince. I wonder if he's related to the late Irma Pince (second column from the right, thirteenth square from the window, right where my pillow would have been if there was such a thing in Azkaban). He certainly has her vulture-sharp looks and volatile temper. Maybe a nephew? Madam Pince told me once that the books were her children, so I assume she had none of her own. (Except the books.) I did not get a chance to inquire; Mr Pince does not employ ex-prisoners. Not even to vanish the contents of his latrine, and much less to come close enough to his precious books to Charm the windows.

Even that short glance at the books through the dirty windows from outside—Mr Pince never invited me in, but preferred to interview me on the sidewalk, a spectacle for all passers-by—was painful. Not as painful as thinking of Harry, or Ron, or even of Madam Pince. But the sight of all those tomes, hardcovers, paperbacks, neatly arranged on shelves and tables caused a dull ache to spread through my body. I have not held a book since before Azkaban. Eleven years or 135 months or 589 weeks or 4,124 days or 98,976 hours I have not held or read a book. There was no time for reading books at Draco's. And while our new home came fully furnished—including dishes, pots, pans, pillows, sheets, and even garden tools—, the shelves in the living room are empty.

I admit I enjoy the pain of the blood quill for the sake of a page of new parchment under my fingers every day. For the pure joy and sweet agony of writing, of forming letters—every day more evenly, more easily. But my left hand is getting worse; weeping pus, never scabbing over before I pick up the quill again. I know Severus worries how I'll be able to find any job that way, with handicap piled upon handicap...

Still, I'm not giving up. Not until I'm back in my cell.

After cleaning windows at the bookshop fell through, I went back to the post office, counting houses and fence posts and doing my best to ignore the flagstones of the sidewalk.

The post mistress allowed me to demonstrate my talents at Cleaning Charms in the Owlery. Contrary to what I would have thought eleven years or 135 months or 589 weeks or 4,124 days or 98,976 hours ago, that does take skill. You must not disturb the roosting owls, but scour everything to perfection all the same.

I am supposed to come back tomorrow.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Fliewatuet and Mia Madwyn for looking this over.

16-Aug-09

Chapter 17 of 42

Hermione's diary for August 16, 2009.

Banner for August 16

August 16, 2009

Last night Severus brought me soup for a late supper, left-overs from his job. His soup of the day was Mulligatawny soup—something most patrons of the pub had never heard of, much less tasted. Still, judging from Severus' smirk, it was a success. His reasoning seems sound: onions most finely chopped, not mutilated; carrots, parsnip, and potatoes perfectly diced, not butchered; evenly sliced, spoon-sized pieces of lamb, not meat randomly torn apart. I thought his soup tasted of paradise. Severus, however, had no appetite. Naturally; he spent the whole day keeping a full pot of it bubbling steadily on the hearth of the pub.

I would like to think that he enjoyed his first day at work. But I am more than satisfied to hear that nothing went wrong.

This morning, I returned to the post office, trying not to get my hopes up.

Not surprisingly, what hopes I may have nourished in the 18 hours since I left the post office yesterday, were snuffed out as soon as I took one look at Madam Clif-Wyrt's face today. I must say, though, that the elderly witch in charge of Hogsmeade's mail seemed honestly sorry that she's not permitted to hire an ex-inmate of Azkaban for even the most menial of jobs.

Her pity, however, does not change the fact that I still have no job.

When I left the post office, I collided with Madam Agan. Without the warning from Padma and Parvati, I might have thought her kind: She caught me and stopped me from falling. When she realised that her touch was uncomfortable to me, she released me at once. Then she noticed the inflamed wound on the back of my left hand. She showed no disgust. Instead, she offered her help, in form of a rare potion. But she did not press the issue, just left it at an open invitation to drop by—I know where she lives, don't I?

But I must admit, the way her hard, black eyes focused on me, made my skin crawl. And when she gazed at the bloody, inflamed incisions on my hands, the tip of a pert pink tongue slid over her lips in quick, greedy movements that did not seem quite...normal. Or human, really.

Of course I'm not a good judge of what is and what is not normal or sane at the moment.

I should have kept going then, should have gone and knocked at every door of every shop in Hogsmeade, asking for a job.

...but I couldn't. *Just couldn't.*

I'll come back tomorrow.

At Hogsmeade station, I had the second unexpected encounter of the day: I met Millicent Bulstrode.

The last time I saw her was right after I shoved her cat out of the way of a stray killing curse. I never knew if either of them survived the battle, much less that she knew I had survived. If you can call imprisonment in Azkaban "surviving".

She was strangely cordial.

...I invited her for tea.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Mia Madwyn for looking this over.

Further notes:

There are a million recipes for Mulligatawny soup. I looked at this one: http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/database/jennysmulligatawnyso_71379.shtml

"clif wyrt" is an Old English name for beggar's button or burdock/cocklebur.

17-Aug-09

Banner for August 17

August 17, 2009

Today I cooked Cullen Skink. It was the perfect day for it; cool and rainy, with fog hanging over the loch most of the day. The weather only brightened late in the afternoon.

Cooking is soothing work, even though the kitchen of the Three Broomsticks is a busy place, with a full cook, his assistant, and a dumpy little witch helping out with Cleaning and Stirring Charms milling about.

Minerva adored that soup, if I recall correctly. Albus used to tease her about that. How she loved it best in cat-shape, lapping it up as soon as it cooled down. I couldn't say. She never trusted me enough to let me see her like that—playful, kittenish...*human*. Not even after I nearly died trying to protect Albus on the Astronomy Tower. Though I assume I mustn't blame her. I failed, after all.

Like I always failed in my life.

...*when it mattered most*.

Like I failed Lily. Although I became Dumbledore's spy with the stroke of midnight on my seventeenth birthday, I did not manage to win her love or protect her life.

Like I failed you. You were just a child when you were caught up in this war. Barely an adult when I declared my doomed love for you, when you

Him. And it

Just as Potter promised.

—I may have won your love. And you *did* survive. But what about your *life*?

Your youth and your sanity are gone.

You just picked at your food again tonight, although you're already toothpick-thin. Another day over, and still no job or someone to vouch for you. (Or for me, for that matter.) Though the guests at the Three Broomsticks do seem to like their soup now. Well, they don't know who's cooking it. I dare say the popularity of cheap liquid luncheons would dwindle phoenix-quick, should *that* ever get out...

After supper we talked about Madam Agan. She seemed helpful yesterday, yet she scared you deeply. And I clearly recall my own discomfiture in her presence. She appears to be a beautiful—if reserved—Indian woman. With such a background she could easily possess a draught that could heal your hand. Perhaps the Patils' warning is just some sort of power-play among witches of a shared cultural background.

Bloody mongooses.

Of course they refuse to give any details to back up their warning. And Hannah couldn't tell me much about Agan, either; the woman showed up in Hogsmeade a week after Bellatrix' death, two weeks after Voldemort's death.

She is a mystery.

I never liked mysteries.

I was weary to my bones tonight. And I admit, I longed for the peace of our other cottage, where you enjoy the meals we cook together, even the pudding. Where the only conditions that rule our lives are those of haphazard Highland weather.

We went to bed together.

But when I held you and kissed you and drew our rune on your forehead, I could not tell where I was.

Here, or there.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Mia Madwyn for beta-reading and sage advice.

Further notes:

A recipe for Cullen Skink is here: http://www.rampantscotland.com/recipes/blrecipe_cullen.htm

Obviously, the Animagus form of Padma and Parvati is a mongoose.

18-Aug-09

August 18, 2009

What a strange day today has been. Not the day as such; it was a perfectly normal Tuesday in the Scottish Highlands in August. Heavy rain with bright spots later in the day. But my day, today as I experienced it, has been strange. Very strange.

On my lap a kneazle-kitten with tiger stripes and leopard spots is purring. I've called him Schrödinger.

Not because I understand the problem of Schrödinger's cat, but because I remember my father trying to explain it to me. It is an experiment with a cat in a box. At one point the cat in the box is dead and alive at the same time. Until you open the box.

I am that cat.

I am dead and alive at the same time.

And I am afraid that I will remain in that box forever.

Schrödinger is one of three gifts Millicent Bulstrode gave me today. She came to tea today, just as she had promised.

It was awkward.

We were not friends, before. In fact, in terms of childhood relationships, we must be considered arch-enemies. We even got into a catfight once, complete with name-calling, hair-pulling, pinching, scratching, and hissing.

Strange, how that memory makes me smile today.

When we got to the point where two women who meet for tea or coffee compliment each other on their outfit or physical appearance, I was at a loss. I wasn't good at this game before.

And now...

The years have not been kind to Millicent. She was always a *.big* girl. Ron used to make fun of her, calling her fat and frumpy, a hag, all kinds of nasty names. Now I can see that she was simply born to be a woman of generous curves. This bony, haggard look does not suit her at all.

She broke the silence first, her tone wry: "You make a great wraith, Granger. Do you think I can blow you away if I try hard enough?"

Upon which I retorted: "I'm sure you'd be a great valet stand. Or perhaps a scratching post?"

We stared at each other.

When we were children, this would have been the moment to draw our wands. Today, we started laughing.

After we finally calmed down, Millicent put a crate on the table and gazed at me with a solemn expression. "I'll always remember how you saved my Tigger. And him just a cat, not even a half-kneazle as your Crookshanks was."

She opened the box.

"I'm a licensed breeder now," she added. "Cats and Kneazles. This one's the runt of my spring litters."

Then she scowled. "He's yours."

That was the first gift.

We sat down, had tea, talked. Millicent narrowly avoided being branded a half-blood. Thanks to her mother's second *—pure-blood—*husband, blood magic, and Dark adoption rites that leave her eyes dead and empty when she talks about her past.

"Therefore I can vouch for you," she announced. "And I will."

That was the second gift.

Her third gift was a book.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Mia Madwyn for looking this over.

Further notes:

The entry on Schrödinger's cat at Wikipedia is here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schr%C3%B6dinger%27s_Cat

I probably understand it even less than Hermione, but the description of that thought experiment fit her situation so perfectly I couldn't resist.

"tiger stripes and leopard spots" is a literary homage to T.S. Eliot, who described a cat with such markings in his poem *The Old Gumbie Cat* (<http://oldpoetry.com/opoem/25633-T-S--Eliot-The-Old-Gumbie-Cat>).

19-Aug-09

Chapter 20 of 42

Hermione's diary for August 19, 2009.

August 19, 2009

Millicent stayed for a supper of Scotch Broth to discuss who might vouch for Severus. The resulting list is short. Most Slytherins unlikely to hex him on sight are either half-bloods, and thus excluded by law, or dead. His best bet might be Blaise Zabini and his wife Gabrielle, née Delacour. Millicent gave us their address. Owling them was my first task today. Madam Clif-Wyrt still feels guilty about the job; she let me send that owl free of charge. And when I lingered before the bulletin board, she watched me with pity in her eyes. I appreciate her sympathy. But I need more than that. Her good will won't keep me free.

When I left the Owl office, Madam Agan was waiting for me outside, her face hidden by the hood of her cloak. She did not seem to employ an Impervius Charm, although it was raining Crups and Kneazles.

"You need help," she said.

I wanted to shake my head and move past her. She frightens me. Worse, she scares Severus.

But I could not; it was true: I needed help. I couldn't move my left hand anymore. Severus' poultices and Healing Charms only kept the blood poisoning from spreading. How could I work like that? Even with magic, you need two hands for most jobs—especially the kind I might be allowed to do.

Agan produced a vial. "For your hand," she said.

I wanted to take it home, so Severus could analyse it. But she wouldn't allow that. What choice did I have?

I held the swollen lump of my hand out to her.

Swiftly, she poured the liquid over it. The last drops she sprinkled on my right hand. I barely glimpsed the substance. Milky. Pearlescent. A split second of almost-recognition—I've seen this before!—then it was gone, absorbed by the wounds—

—and I gaped at a hint of scars, letters faded into illegibility.

I stood inside the narrow dry column of my Impervius Charm and stared, at my hands, at her.

"Why?" I asked her. "Why are you doing this?"

Agan ignored my questions. "You are looking for work," she stated.

That must have been obvious to the most casual observer. I nodded.

"You should try the Tower House."

"The ancient western gatehouse of Hogwarts," she added, "beyond the edge of the Forbidden Forest.—An old witch lives there who cannot leave the house. Maybe she needs more assistance than her house-elf can provide." With that she turned and disappeared into the alleyway next to Scrivenshaft's on the other side of the street.

Writing this, the blood-quill cuts my skin with clean and clear incisions. I barely feel the pain. I *am* certain I've seen the substance in Agan's vial before. But based on my description and its effects, Severus does not recognise the potion.

Maybe Padma and Parvati are wrong, and Amrita Agan doesn't mean us any harm. Tomorrow I shall go to the Tower House. Perhaps there I shall find out more.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Ayerf for looking this over.

Further notes:

A recipe for Scotch Broth may be found here: <http://www.scottishrecipes.co.uk/scotchbroth.htm>

The western gatehouse is my own invention.

While the substance in the vial is canon, its chemical composition and effects are not. Also, in canon Hermione never saw the substance.

20-Aug-09

Chapter 21 of 42

Hermione's diary for August 20, 2009.

August 20, 2009

I am—*Oh, Merlin!* I have no idea what to write! I—*Oh, God!* How can I feel happy and as if my heart is breaking *at the same time*? I am hysterical. I am laughing and crying. Severus just sits next to me, stunned, and keeps transfiguring leaves into tissues, so this entry won't be completely unreadable.

Padma and Parvati must know! Why haven't they told me—us?!?! How could they keep that from me???

...Severus says because they probably were afraid I'd react just the way I do.



I must concede he has a point. *Bloody man, always so reasonable.*

But I am supposed to write down what *happened*, not how I feel. (Given that I write with my blood and Veritas serum, that's almost impossible, though. Even for Severus.)

Despite Severus' misgivings, I set out for the western gatehouse this morning. (He only allowed me to go because I demonstrated several times that I can Apparate back to our cottage safely.) I used the Point Me spell to find my way and *Limites Revelio* to stay beyond the boundaries of Hogwarts. Padma said the wards are deadly now.

—It wasn't easy. To approach Hogwarts, on the road that Harry, Ron, and I took all those Hogsmeade weekends—



...I...I cannot remember how many there were...

I left the road before the gate. Staying at least ten metres or 32.8 feet or 10.9 yards from the grounds, I turned left—west—and started walking. To my right—to the north—stretched the Forbidden Forest, the one corner on Hogwarts Grounds. Dark and gloomy in the rain. Fog obscured the hilltops and wavered in the wood. I kept my wand out and thought of Alastair Moody. "Constant vigilance!" he barked at me before the Final Battle, to cheer me up. The curse that killed him hit him right between the eyes.

Milly can't remember that day clearly. It has faded into nightmares.

For me it happened yesterday.

The shed.

The snake.

How it—*hesitated* before it attacked Harry. How they stared at each other, how he shouted at it in Parseltongue...

...how it struck him. Ripped out his throat.

How he—how he tried to give us his memories—



I started counting my steps. Numbers are safe. Memories not. When I reached 3,936, the gatehouse lay before me. I was halfway up a hill, looking down. I checked and re-checked the wards, before I approached it. But everything was clear. The gatehouse doesn't belong to Hogwarts anymore.

A house-elf opened the door.

Blue eyes, not green like Dobby's. Dressed in immaculate emerald tartan. Including slippers. A free elf?

"Come in," the elf chirped. "Annie Maddock has been expecting you."

I followed the elf.

She led me into a cosy sitting room.

In a rocking chair in front of a bay window, completely immobile, a soft tartan blanket spread over her knees, sat Minerva McGonagall, staring vacantly off towards the hills.

She is paralysed and out of her mind.

But she is alive.



oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Fliewatuet and Mia Madwyn for looking this over.

Further notes:

The ink splodges in this chapter are different from Severus' smudges. In this entry, the splodges look as if some kind of liquid dripped on the ink before it dried. Perhaps tears.

"Limites Revelio" means something like "Show the Borders". It's a variety of the Revelio spell.

The western gatehouse looks something like this (minus the surrounding countryside; it's not that close to the lake): <http://img.chooseacottage.co.uk/Property/677/400/6776.JPG>

Annie Maddock is apparently a canon house-elf and once belonged to the Lovegood family.

21-Aug-09

Chapter 22 of 42

Severus' diary for August 21, 2009.

August 21, 2009

We've made the frontpage of the Daily Prophet.

What surprises me is how long it took them.

They more than made up for the delay with those new techniques you marvelled at when we stayed with Draco: wizarding photographs that don't move randomly but show a scene chronologically.

In colour.

With sound.

They caught you frozen on the sidewalk, paralysed by your squares and lines.

And me sweating over a pot in the kitchen of the Three Broomsticks.

Predictably, there was not a single order of my cock-a-leekie soup today. You just shrugged and said that you don't mind eating it all week. After eleven years in Azkaban, I don't, either. But how long will I keep my job if no one will eat my soups? And Blaise Zabini has owed his regrets; he cannot vouch for me. His position is precarious due to his part-Veela wife. Lucius may not be Voldemort, and Gabrielle's beauty alone should secure her and her husband's freedom, but Lucius hasn't been in office for a hundred days yet. And they have three young children. The risks they dare take are limited.

However, they did promise to do everything for us that is within their powers.

You say that's something.

But you're—*euphoric*.

Schrödinger is purring on your lap, and you've been to visit Minerva again today. Tomorrow Padma has promised to take you to Hogwarts, and Milly has already filed the paperwork to vouch for you. I don't think I've seen you count anything yet today! And whatever it was that Agan poured over your hand—it has worked. The cuts are clean now, and for the time being at least, they scab over quickly...which is more than I can say for my own wounds. I have been reduced to wearing Muggle band-aids.

...that you threaten to adorn with little lions. A suggestion that should annoy me and delight me.

But I am weary.

When I walk towards our cottage each evening, I find it hard to concentrate on its green door and satin-green shutters. Somewhere, just a breath, just a blink away, is another door painted Gryffindor-red that promises peace...solace...

Instead, we gulped down a bowl of cock-a-leekie soup, and you Apparated with me to the former western gatehouse of Hogwarts.

My first impression: How can she be so small? But even in human form, she seems no more than a kitten, curled into herself.

I forced myself to enter her mind.

Her eyes are wide open.

Yet shut.

(Like mine were, I expect, most of these eleven years in Azkaban.)

In Minerva's mind I found:

Content dreaming in front of the fireplace. Paws twitching due to dangers past, mice caught, masters escaped from. The joy of juicy meat, thick gravy, chunks of cheese. But also the bone-deep, chilling ache of loneliness. Perhaps, after eleven years, only the very marrow of her bones still recalls that she once was human, that she once fought for the Light.

She needs you.

But so do I.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Mia Madwyn for looking this over.

Further notes:

A recipe vid for cock-a-leekie soup is here: <http://video.stv.tv/bc/scotland-recipes-20080530-scottish-recipe-cockaleekie-soup/>

The cat on the banner is a Creative Commons cat by faeryboots.

22-Aug-09

Chapter 23 of 42

Hermione's diary for August 22, 2009.

August 22, 2009

————— I don't want to write today.

Not because of the pain, but because it *hurts*.

I understand now why Severus didn't want me to go. Why Padma and Parvati were reluctant to oblige me.

When Fawkes created Dumbledore's tomb, he created a white mausoleum with a colonnade at the front. Four columns, one for each House. Each base and capital adorned with the symbols of that House. Badger, lion, raven, snake.

Now—twelve years or 145 months or nearly 631 weeks or 4,415 days or around 105,960 hours after his death, only one broken column and a heap of rubble remains.

I could still make out the animal at the base of that one column. Its head has been blasted off, but its small paws and fat tail still wrap around the ruined pillar faithfully. The white marble of the shattered shaft is covered in graffiti, most of them green Vs in circles.

Voldemort's victory?

Voldemort victorious?

That he

[Here the quill drops to the next line, the writing is messy, the writer's hand must have been shaking.]

...only two small letters. One. Two. Breathe in. Breathe out. One. Two. Live—

[Again the quill slips. The next letters are larger, printed, clearly written very slowly, painstakingly.]

in the end...that doesn't seem to matter when I look at the remnants of Albus' grave.

—Padma took me to Hogwarts today.

Alecto went to London for the weekend. Apart from her, none of the staff who'd object to my presence are currently in residence. But since term starts on September 7, they will be back soon. This was my only chance to see Hogwarts again for a long time.

Of Hagrid's hut nothing remains.

The Quidditch pitch has been renovated. It is much larger than I remember it, the décor green and white and silver.

The Deputy Headmistress lives in splendour in what was the Gryffindor tower, eleven years or almost 136 months or 590 weeks or 4,130 days ago.

I only cried in the library.

Padma and I had tea in her office on the fifth floor. She has a beautiful view of the lake; with omnioculars you can even see our cottage.

She finally relented and went over my list with me.

The only names I included erroneously were Severus, Draco, and Minerva.

But there are seven names I missed, people I knew well enough that I would have wanted to remember them. I assume I could have included them by distinguishing between bottom and ceiling corners. Or—

But that is not necessary anymore. I've written them all down now, on the final pages of this diary. In alphabetical order.

—Padma was not pleased when I told her of my meeting with Madam Agan and of my visits with Minerva McGonagall.

"You don't know what you're doing," she told me. "You have no idea. *Stay away from Agan.*"

But she promised to assist me concerning Minerva.

Minerva has been placed under life-long house-arrest. The DMLE is in charge of her affairs. To be appointed her assistant, I have to be approved by the department.

Severus came home with a huge pot of Bouillabaisse tonight. He refused to talk about work.

That means it's not going well.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Ayerf for looking this over.

Further notes:

Dumbledore's tomb. I choose to interpret the scene in chapter thirty, "The White Tomb" in "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince" as actually *being* Fawkes: "Bright, white flames had erupted ... White smoke spiralled into the air and made strange shapes: Harry thought, for one heart-stopping moment, that he saw a phoenix fly joyfully into the blue, but next second the fire had vanished. In its place was a white

marble tomb ..."

Wikipedia has a great entry with a gorgeous picture for Bouillabaisse.

DMLE is still the acronym for Department of Magical Law Enforcement.

23-Aug-09

Chapter 24 of 42

Severus' diary for August 23, 2009.

Banner for August 23

August 23, 2009

Hannah cannot afford to lose money with her soups of all things. Cheaply produced, consumed in large quantities for lunch, sold again as starters at night, they are meant to bolster the precarious balance of a half-blood's business revenue in hard times.

I have tipped the scales now, and she can't afford that.

We both know this. But naturally, true to her foolishly faithful Hufflepuff nature, Hannah won't consider the obvious solution.

I cooked Hairst Bree today. Harvest Brew or Summer-in-a-Pot. Meat and vegetables are at their freshest, their colours at their brightest—white, orange, brown, green. The broth is heavy with flavour.

But you know what it means that I brought another huge pot of soup home tonight.

I must make a decision.

It may tip the scales, and we cannot afford that.

At least we have another week before we must present ourselves in London, until we must prove we have met the conditions of our probation.

You say: "Miracles do happen."

(Where, where in Merlin's and Mithridates' name do you find this faith, even now, after eleven years—*er bloody 136 months or fucking 590 weeks or hellish 4,131 days?*)

I could not bring myself to reply.

(Although there is one miracle I believed in. And it did, in fact, happen.

—*You, of course.*)

Instead I sat down at the kitchen table with you and went through the papers you need to owl to the DMLE in order to become employed as Minerva McGonagall's assistant.

These forms make the conditions of our probation appear child's play.

(Which is an interesting observation all on its own, it seems to me.)

Padma, however, has produced the necessary recommendation from Minerva's healer at St Mungo's within a day. It seems the Patil chits are not without useful connections after all.

But what of their warning? What of Agan?

She has helped you twice now.

Why, I wonder. Why are the Patils so scared of her? And why do I feel as though I ought to know her, when I don't? —I am quite certain I have never seen this woman before August 8, when we met her at the lake.

The explanation could be simple: Agan may have been one of Voldemort's inner circle, risen to prominence only after you and I were incarcerated, but after eleven years an enemy of long-standing fear and hatred to both Patils.

As I've stated already: she is a mystery, therefore I disapprove on principle. Worse, I fear we won't have world enough nor time to solve it.

Am I making an error of judgment if I choose not to dwell on that now? I've made mistakes before; each of them has cost me dearly. Yet...when I look at you now, how you frown at your diary and pout at the pages, all I want is to distract you from your duties.

I want to fuck you.

You.

Rail-thin, stubble-headed, stubborn, bloody brilliant Hermione.

Without any doubt about where I am and who you are.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Mia Madwyn for looking this over.

Further notes:

A recipe for Hotch-Potch or Hairst Bree may be found here: <http://www.soupsong.com/rhotchpo.html>

Mithridates: Mithridates VI of Pontus, who fought not just one, but three prominent generals of the late Roman republic (Sulla, Lucullus, and Pompey the Great), and who is legendary for immunizing himself against poisons by consuming small amounts of them on a daily basis.

"... world enough nor time" refers, of course, rather lamely to "His Coy Mistress" by Andrew Marvell.

24-Aug-09

Chapter 25 of 42

Hermione's diary for August 24, 2009.

Banner for August 24

August 24, 2009

This morning I walked to Hogsmeade with Severus. At the Three Broomsticks he turned right to enter the kitchen through the backdoor, while I walked past the pub to the Owl office. On the pub's front door I noticed the remnants of a graffiti. "Prison bait" it said.

I owled off my application to be employed as Minerva McGonagall's assistant to the DMLE. Madam Clif-Wyrt wished me luck.

Outside Madam Agan waited for me. Although it wasn't really cold, perhaps 17°C, she was wrapped in a thick cloak. I approached her. (If she wanted to kill us in broad daylight, she could have done so already.)

"Thank you," I said, showing my hands. The cuts are deep, but clean. She nodded, a strange, swaying gesture—she's very tall. Looking at her closely today, I realised her eyes aren't black, actually. Her pupils are huge, the iris reduced to a circle, that's all. Her eye colour is amber, almost golden. Disconcerting, but beautiful.

"And for sending me to Minerva McGonagall," I added.

Again, Agan silently inclined her head.

"Why are you helping us?" I asked. "You don't know us at all!"

She ignored my question. Instead she inquired: "The Prophet writes today that the Minister's son is alive after all. He is the one that He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named loved, is that so?"

Shocked, I exclaimed: "Voldemort loved Draco?!?"

She jerked backwards. "No. Not the Lord Protector. He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named." She swallowed convulsively. "*Harry Potter.*"

That made me laugh.

And when I stopped laughing—cry.

Agan just stood and watched me.

At last I calmed down. "Yes," I replied. I realised that I miss Draco. How strange. Eleven years or—*eleven years ago*, Draco and Harry may have been lovers, but Draco and I were less than friends. "Yes," I repeated. "They were lovers."

Agan nodded again. Then she turned wordlessly and glided away. I shivered—had I endangered Draco by answering her question? But it is all over the papers, not exactly a secret anymore...

The afternoon I spent with Minerva.

I talked to her.

Eleven years or—she asked me to call her Minerva before the Final Battle. I remember how self-conscious I felt. I don't think I managed more than once or twice. ~~Now~~—eleven years or nearly 136 months or 590 weeks or 4,132 days later—it is easy.

I believe Minerva enjoyed hearing my voice. Annie Maddock is affectionate and well-spoken for a house-elf, but her ways of expressing solicitousness are naturally different from a human's.

After feeding Minerva her dinner (leftover Hairst Bree), Annie hovered her upstairs into her bedroom. She told me to let down Minerva's hair and to brush it. Now silver streaked with black, it's still beautiful and silky. I counted the brush strokes. Gentle murmurs. Soothing strokes. One hundred.

Afterwards, I stood with my hands on her shoulders, lost in thought. That's probably why I didn't recognise the sound right away.

I'm sure I heard it, though. Very softly, and only for a moment.

But Minerva purred.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Ayerf for looking this over.

25-Aug-09

Chapter 26 of 42

Banner for August 25

August 25, 2009

I told you this morning that I have resigned from my job. You were not surprised. But I could see what you were thinking without Legilimency.

"How Gryffindor."

Living with you for eleven years—even just in dreams—has changed me.

...Six days of probation remain.

We have a house. (A nice house at that; even though you insist on a green door.)

You have found someone to vouch for you—the documents lie safely warded in your desk. Tonight Blaise and Gabrielle will Apparate from London to discuss your job application. Their owl arrived late last evening. Like the Patils, like Hannah, they are indeed willing to do what is within their power.

But all of their power is limited.

I have lost my job, and there is no one to vouch for me.

Azkaban has become a dark temptation.

Don't you see, Hermione?

I could return to the silence of my cell. I could return to dreaming through the twilight of my imprisonment. I could return to where I cannot see the shadows of the past or the future.

I could go back to a world where the sun always shines warm upon our faces as we sit on the bench next to our Gryffindor-red door, where the rain falls forever soft upon our gardens, where you never count days or weeks or months or years, because we are together, and we are happy, and everything is as it should be.

But I will not. I will not

However... the Dementors have become the prison guards of the whole wizarding world, and I cannot produce a Patronus anymore, so I

Besides, you need me.

...I fear for Draco after your latest encounter with Agan.

I must admit that—as you put it—if she wanted to kill either of us in broad daylight she truly had sufficient opportunity to accomplish that. However, the mere fact that she did not cast the Killing Curse on us at first sight, does not necessarily imply she means us (or Draco) no harm.

We have not been in touch with Draco. It seemed safer that way. But now, we worry.

...Worrying about Draco inevitably leads me to consider Lucius.

We were never enemies. Not even after my treason and Draco's betrayal. Even in the Shrieking Shack, when he cast Cruciatus on me and put me in chains, I saw no hatred in his eyes. Satisfaction, yes. Rage, yes. But also regret. And...*fear*.

Lucius signed our release papers.

Eleven years ago he could not have resisted the chance to flaunt his power over my life and my death. Today? Not even a statement in the Daily Prophet.

Enough of that.

You've been watching me as I write—choosing to wait for good news to put down in your diary, whereas I prefer to get this chore out of the way before bad news arrive.

Now let us see how we can while away this rainy afternoon.

"Perhaps in bed?" I smirk.

...and you smile.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Mia Madwyn for looking this over.

Further notes:

The passage that describes Snape's dreams contains literary allusions to the poem "Dreaming Through the Twilight" by Christina Georgina Rossetti and to a traditional Irish blessing.

You can read the poem here: http://www.cs.princeton.edu/~rywang/mm5/fire/singles/dream_twilight.html

And the blessing is here: http://thinkexist.com/quotation/may_the_road_rise_up_to_meet_you-may_the_wind_be/151618.html

Happy!Hermione in this chapter's banner is Minnie Driver.

26-Aug-09

Chapter 27 of 42

Hermione's diary for August 26, 2009. Please note: this chapter contains "diverse" sexual situations according to the story's warnings.

Banner for August 26

August 26, 2009

—write this—

Yes...exactly...every single word.

Write it down! Yes. Just like that.

Ex-cell-ent.

No, write that DOWN. Down.

What am I doing?

You said you didn't know what to write. So I'm helping you. I'm giving you dictation.

...there's nothing in those rules that says it's not allowed. You must write every day; you must use the blood-quill; you must write where you are and what you did.

That's all.

So: Hermione Jean Granger spent August 26 at home. To be precise, she spent the day in bed. In the ridiculous four poster bed that has been squeezed into the first floor bedroom of the Lake House in Hogsmeade, Scotland—

and she was not alone.

She is not alone now.

Because I, Draco Abraxas Malfoy, and Severus Snape, are in bed with her.

While Hermione Granger lies naked on her stomach, her nipples just touching the sheets, and fills her diary with truth and blood, I kneel next to her and slowly lick the fresh blood from the quill cuts on the back of her left hand. While Severus Snape sits with his back against the headboard and watches my naked arse. And, dare I make you write that? My wicked little tongue, as it flicks over your skin, slides in glistening trails up your arm, over your shoulder, down your back, to your arse—

—*Pervert!*

Didn't I say that you're to write only what I say? But I'll indulge you.

Pervert!

Yes!

That's what my father screamed at me when he discovered the truth.

But you called me and Harry that, too, once or twice.

Don't cry, love.

You had little reason to trust me. And we were—

—*less than friends.*

Yes.

I don't even know if we are friends now. Certainly we are more than friends: lovers in adversity. But also less than friends because friendship is a sane relationship. Which we are not.

Don't start counting floorboards now. You're proving my point.

Very well.

But let me count for you.

Let me count...

How often I kissed you today. How often Severus kissed you. How long we held you, seconds, minutes, hours. How often you moaned in our arms. How often you gasped as he or I or both of us entered you. How often we fucked. How often we made love.

I arrived in time for breakfast and a thorough scolding.

—*You shouldn't have come, Draco. It's dangerous!*

Of course it is. But you both need looking after. Dear me, Severus can scowl again? That must be a good sign.

...will you look at that! I've made you smile.

I'm not in as much danger as you think. Your diaries told the Ministry that I'm alive and where I live on August 4. The Snatchers could have grabbed me every day, every night, every hour since then. They didn't.

And we had to celebrate! You've fulfilled the conditions of your probation, Hermione! You have a house, a job, and someone to vouch for you.

—*But Severus doesn't.*

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Ayerf for looking this over.

Further notes:

As he explained, Draco dictated this entry to Hermione. But the italicized lines that start with an em-dash are her reactions, which she wrote down as well.

27-Aug-09

Chapter 28 of 42

Severus' diary for August 27, 2009.

Banner for August 27

August 27, 2009

That bloody berk. *Draco*. Shows up for breakfast yesterday. The *one* ally of Harry Potter who was never apprehended and never imprisoned Apparates to Hogsmeade in broad daylight to visit the most infamous ex-prisoners of Azkaban without employing even a Disillusionment Charm.

Waltzes into our kitchen. Asks how we are. And when he discovers that you have fulfilled the conditions of your probation, he proclaims a party and proceeds to drag us into bed for an orgy that lasts all day and most of the night.

Well.

He *is* a Malfoy.

(And both of us went willingly.)

...He is no more sane than you and I. How could he be? The Chosen One loved him. He dropped his disguise for Draco. The Boy-Who-Lived became the Boy-Who-Died to save his lover's life.

Still, in my bitter waking hours at Azkaban it would have been a comfort to know that he succeeded. That another life entrusted into my care was spared.

—I know.

I know.

I was never as angry at Harry as in those final moments of his life. When I believed his love had not saved, but killed all of us.

Now, eleven years later, I realise that maybe he

Maybe there was no other way.

At least, in the end

Though none of us, neither you nor I (nor Harry or Draco) thought that

In any case, I have forgiven him.

Both of them.

A relief—a respite—I did not expect. But that way, I can give him—and you—both of you—my blessing.

...considering who I am, that term is sacrilegious.

Not my blessing then.

But certainly my approval. And my gratitude.

It is logical. It is the best, and, as matters stand, the only solution.

You will have your life.

I shall have my death.

And both Draco and I will have *you*.

(In a way.)

...You and Draco are still asleep, curled around each other like kittens in a basket. Scrawny grimalkins, comforting each other—and thus, myself. So I mustn't sneer. Particularly since I'm the scarecrow who woke ensconced between you. Extricating myself from your embraces was quite the slithering feat.

If not Slytherin enough.

Here comes Draco.

...I don't know if Draco lost all Slytherin subtlety during that decade in his lighthouse, or if his tactics have become truly devious now.

He shouted at me until you came running. Then he shoved my diary at you.

You took it, but you didn't read it. (You have always respected me.)

I nodded.

You have the right to know.

...Your reaction would have been the ultimate joy of my life once. Now it destroys all my hopes.

You *cannot* be without me.

You—crumbled. My mind shuttered, I waited for Draco to comfort you. Neither his endearments nor his embrace helped. You rocked back and forth; your eyes empty; your mind counting something I cannot fathom.

Suddenly you stopped.

"I understand," you said.

We went back to bed then. What else was there to do?

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Mia Madwyn for her support and for looking this over.

28-Aug-09

Chapter 29 of 42

Hermione's diary for August 28, 2009. Please note: this chapter contains "diverse" sexual situations according to the story's warnings.

Banner for August 28

August 28, 2009

Tonight I can write without Severus holding me in his arms.

Tonight I can write without Severus whispering each word to me.

Tonight I can write without Draco embracing and kissing *both of us*.

This evening, Schrödinger is enough.

The kitten is on my lap right now, kneading my thighs, purring his spots off. In just twelve days he has grown in size, substance, and personality. He'll be a formidable Kneazle one day.

—I almost collapsed after the torture of last night's entry. When Severus took the book from my hands and Draco put the blood-quill away, I was barely aware. When Draco pulled me into his embrace, I was floating. Only when Severus entered me, only when his rhythmic strokes pushed me deeper and deeper into Draco's arms, I felt heavy again. I was here. I was human once more.

Afterwards I lay in languid lassitude and watched Draco making love to Severus.

Severus needs to be held, too.

And I...I cannot be his anchor in this turmoil, because I am here *and* there. I tear his heart apart between what is, and what should have been.

..."Hogwarts, A Revised History" lies on the table before me.

I cannot read it.

The blurb promises to reveal the true history of this renowned institution of magical education, from Salazar Slytherin to Voldemort Lord Protector of Magic. The table of contents shows that it is not the book I remember, not even in a revised version. The chapters about Dumbledore and Harry are missing.

Oh, Merlin, how I *miss* Harry.

During the last years in Azkaban, I often felt very quiet. Not "at peace". Never that. But inside, I was calm. They were all there with me, in a way. Each name in its square.

Now I feel as if I've lost them all over again.

To have Severus and Draco and Minerva back—

It's agony.

Seized by a whirlwind, I am tossed about by the storm like a leaf. At the best of times, I am a kite flung up into the sky. At the worst, I lock myself up in the pantry, or in the loo. I try to think of the quiet within me. And I count and count and count. Tiles, floorboards, Severus' Charmed soup tins, diary pages, days, hours, heartbeats.

...This morning something strange happened.

I came down to breakfast to find Severus alone with Draco's subscription of the Prophet. Draco, he told me, had gone for a walk. I stepped outside to look for Draco. At last I spied him at the lakeshore. But he was not alone. Next to him stood a woman I recognised instantly: Amrita Agan! When Severus and I told him about our encounters with Agan and the Patils' warning, he insisted that she only introduced herself as a distant neighbour for politeness' sake, nothing more.

Somehow I doubt that.

They left at noon. Draco Apparated home, I think. And Severus is making preparations for—

[Here the quill has slipped, and the writing continues in the next line, each word painstakingly, perfectly printed.]

One, two, three days.

Until

the

end.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Mia Madwyn for looking this over, and for her idea how to begin this entry.

29-Aug-09

Chapter 30 of 42

Hermione's diary for August 29, 2009.

Banner for August 29

August 29, 2009

I'm still at the Tower House as I write this, although it's late at night.

There's so much I want to write, so much I—

I *will* write what I *must*.

Where I am.

What I have done.

I'm not at home yet because it's Soup Night at the Three Broomsticks.

Hannah came knocking on our door late this morning, during the lull between breakfast and lunch. Her jaws set, her chin thrust forward, she marched into our kitchen and plunked an armful of parchments on the table.

"Martyrdom isn't my thing," she announced. "But I'll be damned if I let the bastards win who killed the first lad that kissed me."

Her documents prove that even if the Three Broomsticks will lose all guests due to the identity of Hannah's soup cook, she can last at least one year until bankruptcy.—Until after the DLME will have reviewed our cases to ascertain we still meet the conditions of our probation.

"Tonight's the first ever Soup Night at the Three Broomsticks," Hannah added, turning to Severus. "Advertised with posters in Hogsmeade, Diagon Alley and Knockturn Alley. Trouble is, I have no soup cook."

She crossed her arms under her breasts and faced Severus with a fierce expression on her face.

Severus, arms crossed in front of his chest, stood and scowled at her.

He abhors pity—*sympathy*—

For each and every "kindness" ever extended to him, he has paid with a pound of flesh. And interest carved out of his soul.

He fears favours.

And fools.

...especially faithful fools.

(He is one himself; faithful to the point of foolishness, for all his snide snappishness.)

(That's how I fell in love with him. When I discovered he was trying to heal Albus after the headmaster's hand was cursed—and not kill him, as Harry believed.)

Severus glowered at Hannah.

"Barefoot Broth," he declared at last. "Mussels Soup.*And* Cheddar Soup."

Hannah nodded. "We'll have Rumbledethumps, too. And Topsy Warlock for pudding."

They left for the pub; I took Schrödinger and Apparated to Minerva's house.

Severus has his job back, but how can he find someone to vouch for him in just two days, in just—? When even his Slytherins have deserted him?

We—

But we mustn't give up. Not until—

And for that, we are—

Another surprise: Amrita Agan was here this afternoon.

Schrödinger and Minerva hissed at her.

I pointed my wand at her.

She fixed her unblinking gaze on the wand. "Do you realise what powers this wand possesses?" she asked me in her soft, sibilant voice.

I couldn't help myself. I shook my head as if hypnotised.

Suddenly she swung her head towards Minerva. "It *could* heal the pussy cat," she hissed.

She smirked. "It can reveal my secrets."

"...when the time is right," she continued dryly. "Tomorrow you *must* go for lunch at the Three Broomsticks."

"—I invite you to tea for Tuesday," she added, before she slid away and disappeared without waiting for my reply.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Mia Madwyn for looking this over.

Further notes:

You can find the recipes for the soups and other dishes mentioned in this entry here: http://www.best-scottish-tours.co.uk/scottish_food/scottish_food.html

30-Aug-09

Chapter 31 of 42

Severus' diary for August 30, 2009.

Banner for August 30

August 30, 2009



[This entry, headed by many splodges and smears of bloody ink, is written as a formal letter, complete with letterhead and salutations.]

To whom it may concern,

With deep regret I must inform you, my dear distant but dedicated readers, that this chronicle of blood and truth must come to its conclusion tomorrow. But today, Sunday, 30 August 2009, I am pleased to confirm once more the whereabouts and dealings of prisoner #09-01-1960 in exacting blood-drenched detail.

After a breakfast of scones and tea at my home—to be precise: at the Lake House, Hogsmeade, Scotland (the joint ownership of Miss Hermione Jean Granger and Master Severus Snape has been duly registered with the Wizarding Estates and the Magical Registry Office at the Department of Magical Law Enforcement on 10 August 2009)—I left the house and walked to my place of employment—again, to be precise: the public house "The Three Broomsticks" in Hogsmeade, Scotland (the signed and sealed contract of my employment was forwarded to the Magical Employment Office by the pub's proprietor Hannah Abbott on 14 August 2009)—to attend to my duties as soup cook, namely, the preparation of broths, brews, chowders, consommés, potages, sauces, soups, stocks, and stews.

Three traditional Scottish soups graced today's menu: Hairst Bree, Cullen Skink, and Barefoot Broth.

As you will discover delightedly when perusing the Monday edition of the Daily Prophet, multitudes of guests enjoyed all three soups so much that the Three Broomsticks will be added to the "top ten" of wizarding locals—thus most likely ensuring my profitable employment for the foreseeable future, and far beyond the revision of my rehabilitation one year hence.

I worked all day but for two brief interludes.

The first, when a most distinguished patron requested my presence in the guestroom.

The second, when an extremely uncomfortable irritable bowel movement required my presence elsewhere.

After closing time, I returned home to eat a quick repast of leftover cheddar soup with my fiancée. Subsequently, we retired to our bed chamber, where we commenced carnal relations of utter abandon and complete satisfaction.

Tomorrow, Monday, 31 August 2009, at 11 o'clock, we, the prisoners on probation #19-09-1979 and #09-01-1960 will present ourselves at the Parole and Probations Office of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement in the Ministry of Magic.

My fiancée has already provided documents to prove her gainful employment as personal assistant to Minerva McGonagall—contract sealed and signed by the Honourable Chairwizard of the Wizengamot Committee on Parole and Probation on 26 August 2009. Likewise, the documents avowing and affirming that Millicent Bulstrode, a witch of good standing among the magical community of Britain, will vouch for her rehabilitation, and her willingness and ability to adhere to the remaining conditions of her parole have already been submitted to and approved by the Parole and Probations Office on 21 August 2009.

Tomorrow I myself shall be accompanied by a wizard of excellent standing and impeccable repute among the magical community of Britain who is willing to vouch for me and my conduct for as long as the most excellent members of the Committee for Parole and Probations on the Wizengamot think it necessary to supervise my rehabilitation. Therefore I politely request that the case witch or wizard of prisoner #09-01-1960 to prepare the necessary documents in advance.

Not much remains to be said.

The forced revelations I bled on these pages have cut deep. Indeed, pardon the pun, they've cut to the quick. I trust therefore you will forgive me if I don't express any regret that these confidences and confessions will not continue.

Yours

most faithfully

Severus Snape,

Master of Potions,

Soup Cook at the Three Broomsticks,

Formerly Prisoner of Azkaban #09-01-1960

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Ayerf and Mia Madwyn for looking parts of this chapter over. All remaining mistakes are mine.

August 31, 2009: Hermione

Chapter 32 of 42

Hermione's diary for August 31, 2009.

Banner for August 31

August 31, 2009

[This entry is written in black ink; the writing is noticeably clearer and straighter, not as cramped and frantic as the other entries.]

After we left the Ministry of Magic with our papers properly signed and sealed, we went to Diagon Alley. It is much bigger, noisier, and dirtier than I remember. We found a stationery—Quill, Book, and Candle—and bought a set of new quills, two pots with indigo coloured ink.

We Apparated home after that. At the moment each step of wandering around Diagon Alley still means missing names, dead faces, painful reminders. I expect we'll go back in a few weeks or months. We have become used to the Hogsmeade, after all. Eventually, we'll feel at home in Diagon Alley again, too.

Now we're sitting at the kitchen table, with the open ink pots standing at the centre, the quills spread out to choose from.

The ink smells of alcohol and almonds, with the bitter-sharp aftertaste of resin scraping the roof of my mouth. Inhaling the dusty, feathery scent of the new quills makes me sneeze.

Our blood-quills have been destroyed this morning. Before our eyes. The quills will never draw blood from our veins again. We don't have to write another word in these diaries. I know Severus will not continue his diary. But I haven't decided yet.

Vile as they were—I do not believe them wholly evil.

Within the blood-drenched lines of our entries we couldn't hide from the pain. And we could not conceal our agony. Our pain poured onto those pages along with our blood.

And somehow...*now*...my memories, my fears, my hopes: everything that was before, everything that will never be again—does not torture me the way it did.

When I look at all that blood now, at the list of the dead that I squeezed on the last page and the inside of the cover at the very back of the diary, when I think of my cell, of all those squares and lines, of the long years of silence, it is very strange.

I still feel strangled. That painful pressure still stabs through my forehead. Nausea still makes my stomach twist and churn. My eyes are still burning.

But... I can feel my heart beating. And I can breathe through my tears.

Writing our daily entry has become a ritual.

We have reminded each other to write. We have woken each other to write. We have held each other while we wrote, whispered words to each other when there was nothing left to write.

To sit down now, with our own quills and our own ink, to write about today not because we must, but because we want—

This is power.

Magic.

Severus hasn't picked up a quill yet. He is watching me as I write this. His black eyes sparkle and his short black hair is tousled. A slight smile softens the harsh lines that ravage his features. That painful tension has drained out of him. He is truly just sitting there and watching me as I write, not imagining another world with a different me, not preparing desperate back-up plans...

He pretends to be angry at Draco for the risks he took when Draco went to Lucius and made that deal with him.

But even Severus cannot argue the results.

(Especially now that the Wizengamot have signed Draco's pardon.)

I believe Draco has saved four lives with his bravery.

Lucius is not the wizard I remember, and most certainly not the Minister for Magic I expected him to be. Not arrogant or proud, or even just regal. Instead he seems rather...burdened. Emaciated. Almost...humble.

He, too, has had to live with Voldemort's victory for eleven years.

And with the guilt of not knowing if he killed his own son.

I know that Draco *had* to hide, at least while Voldemort was alive. But his self-imposed exile in the lighthouse on Bound Skerry was more than that. In a way, he built his own prison there. He was his own judge and jury and executed the sentence without mercy.

Harry would never have wanted that.

Never.

It wasn't his fault that Harry was killed.

That day... The chapter title in "Hogwarts, A Revised History" calls it "The Final Battle". But it was not a battle. It was a carnage. Curses firing off every which way, rebounding, ricocheting...By the time we ended up barricading ourselves in the Shrieking Shack it was all over.

None of us expected to survive. None of us believed that we would be able to escape. Certainly none of us imagined that Voldemort would begin his reign as "Lord Protector of Magic" with "Acts of Magical Mercy" (as the chapter following the account of "The Final Battle" is titled).

But he did. At least he did not kill us. He allowed us to...continue to exist. If not *tdive*.

And now?

Now *He* is dead.

We are alive. We are in love. We are free.

We have won.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Mia Madwyn for looking this over and for a very constructive discussion.

Further notes:

One more chapter and an epilogue will follow.

August 31, 2009: Severus

Chapter 33 of 42

Severus' diary for August 31, 2009.

Banner for August 31 - Severus' entry

August 31, 2009

My last lines in this diary are—as I know the last words in my life once shall be—for you.

You are, have been, always will be, my own divine messenger, my own female Hermes: The bringer of dreams, you have watched over my inner night. The patroness of boundaries, you have guided me from life to death and back again.

Like the God you are named for, you are an interpreter of hidden meanings.

...and the only one to ever know my heart.

Giver of grace, guide, giver of good things, keeper of my heart—

my own Hermione.

oooOooo

A/N: Many thanks to Mia Madwyn for looking this over.

Further notes:

The allusions to the Greek god Hermes in this drabble are based on actual mythology, with the second to last line an allusion to the Homeric hymn to Hermes.

Now only an epilogue remains to be posted.

Editors' Notes: I. Preface

Chapter 34 of 42

Editors' notes of the 2159 facsimile edition of carefully selected entries from the probationary diaries of prisoners #19-09-1979 and #09-01-1960.

WARNING!

Proceed at your own risk!

An "Epilogue of doom" awaits you—

...in other words, an epilogue written in the form of academic editors' notes.

If such pseudo-historical geekery is not your thing, you won't miss anything by skipping it!

~ This epilogue, and the whole story, is dedicated to Annie Talbot for her birthday 2009 ~

banner for epilogue

EDITORS' NOTES

I. Preface

With this facsimile edition of carefully selected entries from the probationary diaries of prisoners #19-09-1979 and #09-01-1960 we honour both the 150th anniversary of Severus and Hermione Snape's release from Azkaban prison and the 30th anniversary of their deaths in 2129.

The purpose of this publication is to make accessible two of the fundamental and most poignant sources for a period of painful transformation in the wizarding world in a single, definitive volume.

Due to its sensitive and extremely personal character, this material has never before been made available to the public. That this book could be published at all we owe to the most gracious permission of the current head of the Malfoy-Snape family, Scorpius Malfoy-Snape, Minister for Magic.

The aim of this project has been to present these extraordinary sources with absolute accuracy and authenticity. In the diary entries themselves, editorial comments have therefore been kept to an absolute minimum.

At the same time one of the utmost concerns in preparing this publication has always been to not exclude the average witch or wizard from an understanding of and appreciation for this authentic evidence of—and in—troubled times. The nature of the sources as private diaries—with their limited, sometimes skewed perspectives, their natural breaks and omissions—, as well as the circumstances of their creation, necessitate further notes. For this purpose, the second part of this book offers editors' notes with annotations and clarifications of the diary entries, and with additional explanations of still not widely known or acknowledged historical facts, as well as their political context. Thus the evidence presented in the diary entries may be more easily intelligible to a wider audience.

Nevertheless, it must remain the reader's task to draw their own conclusions, and, finally, to pass their judgment based on this raw testimony of two extraordinary lives devoted to the freedom of the wizarding world and the liberty of us all. A critical bibliography has been added to this work to aid the interested reader with further investigations.

The words of the ancient wizard Tacitus summarise the ultimate goal and highest hope for this publication and its intended contribution to wizarding history:

"...to let no worthy action be uncommemorated, and to hold out the reprobation of posterity as a terror to evil words and deeds."

oooOooo

A/N:

Many thanks to the beta-readers of this epilogue: Juniperus, Machshefa, Sc0ffy, and Aranel Took.

An illustrated CSS3 version of this story and the epilogue can be read at my website (<http://juno-magic.fancrone.net/blog/harry-potter-fan-fiction/prisoners-of-azkaban>). You can also download the story as pdf, epub, and xhtml there.

Editors' Notes: II. Arithmantic and Occlumentic obfuscation in the diary entries

Chapter 35 of 42

Editors' notes of the 2159 facsimile edition of carefully selected entries from the probationary diaries of prisoners #19-09-1979 and #09-01-1960.

oooOooo

II. Arithmantic and Occlumentic obfuscation in the diary entries

During the thirty-one days of their probation, Severus and Hermione Snape both developed unique methods to resist the influence of the Veritaserum in the blood-ink of their quills, what experts from the Department of Mysteries call "obfuscation"—to render obscure or unintelligible by magical means.

In the course of the eleven years of her imprisonment, Hermione Snape's talent for and interest in Arithmancy turned into a fixation on numbers, figures, and counting. It was this obsession, St Mungo's experts agree, that saved her mind during her extended solitary confinement. Her probationary diary clearly shows how she harnessed this borderline-psychotic habit to suppress incriminating information that inevitably crept up again and again in her entries. Every time her quill slipped and the flow of words is interrupted by a sequence of figures—most often counting letters in surrounding words, but sometimes also lines, or days, or other items—can be interpreted as an instance of successfully suppressed confessions.

Severus Snape, on the other hand, employed his superb skills as an Occlumens not only to build an imaginary life that helped him survive confinement in Azkaban, but also to resist the pressure of Veritaserum to provide further evidence for his and Hermione Snape's involvement in Voldemort's death. With the very rare exceptions of splodges and smears caused by fat, sweat, or tears, magical particle analysis shows that all of those marks occur during periods of full Occlusion, when he would not betray his cause by thought, speech, or written word.

Based on complex arithmantic-divinatory interpretations an attempt has been made to extrapolate the meaning hidden in these entries by Arithmancy and Occlumency. While the results of this method are generally reliable and accurate, it should be noted that, like all arithmantic and divinatory methods, the following must not be seen as the presentation of facts.

Nevertheless, it is the hope of the research team that the strictly chronological explanations of the obscured parts of these documents will further illuminate the material.

oooOooo

Editors' Notes: III. Annotations for the individual entries

Chapter 36 of 42

Editors' notes of the 2159 facsimile edition of carefully selected entries from the probationary diaries of prisoners #19-09-1979 and #09-01-1960.

oooOooo

III. Annotations for the individual entries

31 July 2009...Hermione Snape's diary

This first entry in Hermione Snape's diary was added in retrospect. Written in black ink on the fly-leaf of her diary, it can be dated at some time in winter 2009/2010.

"No bears, though; just thirteen squares to a dead wall, seven squares to a locked door, thirteen squares to a barred window, and seven squares to a narrow cot..." The enigmatic comment about bears refers to a poem by Muggle author Alan Alexander Milne who was a favourite with Hermione Snape during her childhood.

For the symbolic and magical meanings of Hermione's Beltane bouquet, we recommend *Bardwood's Dryads and Magical Properties of Wood* and Anna Fraser's *The Tree*.

1 August 2009...Hermione Snape's diary

The probation of Hermione and Severus Snape actually consisted of five conditions, which were more or less standard probations procedure at the time of their release:

1. Within one month, they had to find a place to live.
2. Within one month, they had to find employment.
3. Within one month, they had to find a wizard or witch of good repute to vouch for each of them. This condition excluded both half-bloods and Muggle-borns, as well as anyone listed as suspect of any illegal act with the Department of Magical Law Enforcement.
4. During that first month, they were also kept under extremely close observation by the Ministry.

As a standard surveillance procedure, a Trace and Anti-International-Apparition wards were put on their wands when they registered them with the local Death Eaters' office.

However, they were also forced to keep the probationary diaries published in this facsimile edition.

Each day, Hermione and Severus Snape had to use Veritaserum bloodquills to write a page about where they were, and what they were doing in their blood and without being able to write anything but the truth. Each word written in the ensorcelled diaries was instantly transmitted to the Parole and Probations Office in the Department of Magical Law Enforcements, where it was read and recorded by caseworkers.

Also, with each completed page, the letter "P" was etched deeper into the backs of their hands. At the end of the month those scars could not be removed by magical or Muggle means.

The orders for this unusual method of observation have been found in the archive of the Ministry of Magic, but they are only sealed, not signed. Who was responsible for these orders remains unclear. However, it must be assumed that both the head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement Abbadon Yaxley and the head of the Parole and Probations Office Dolores Umbridge were at least aware of the probations conditions imposed on Hermione and Severus Snape.

5. Finally, after one year had passed, the Parole and Probations Office would review their case to ascertain that they still met the basic conditions of their rehabilitation (a place to live and a regular occupation). Only after that year, they were allowed to apply for international Portkeys, the Anti-International-Apparition wards were lifted from their wands, and they were given a password to be able pass the Dementors guarding the borders between the Muggle and the wizarding world.

We do not know why Hermione Snape left that condition off her list. It seems likely, however, that a revision date a year hence seemed simply too much for her to grasp at this point in time.

2 August 2009...Severus Snape's diary

*The humiliation, the pain, the blood, the sores...all in vain...*This refers to Severus Snape's frequent attempts to send word to Hermione through the Azkaban guards and how he "paid" for services they never rendered.

"Your name is in the square below the window."

"...the middle square, four out of seven..."

The placement of names in Hermione Snape's cell in Azkaban:

Hermione Snape does not seem to have followed any logical pattern when she first filled in the names of those she presumed dead in the squares of her cell's floor. When asked about it later, she said: "I started with Severus. For him I chose the one square that most often was touched by the rare rays of sunshine reaching my cell. Others, I added due to their connections...Albus, Harry, Ron, Draco. Or the Black-Tonks family. Some purely by instinct. The rest were filled in as randomly as they were killed."

*"Vehemently, I flung the Portkey into the grey-black floods of the North Sea. "We fly," I announced..."*Self-levitation is one of the most arcane secrets Severus Snape learnt in his time as spy. Already talented on a broomstick, he excelled at this feat. However, in this case he overestimated his strength. He only turned towards the distant shore of the Shetlands because Hermione was so very much afraid of flying. That decision saved both their lives when they plummeted from the sky on Grunay.

3 August 2009...Hermione Snape's diary

Hermione Snape's half-kneazle Crookshanks is an often overlooked casualty of the fight in the Shrieking Shack on 2 May 1998.

The lighthouse of Bound Skerry.

4 August 2009...Severus Snape's diary

Obfuscations explained:

"Lord Voldemort is dead."

He died...how ironic!...on 21 June 2009, after ruling wizarding Britain as "Lord Protector of Magic" for eleven years.

[Longer than anticipated; I'll have to grant him that]

Lord Voldemort died of a **[curse-activated]** progressive lactose-intolerance that one fine day resulted in deadly anaphylaxis.

He had one mug of Nagini's milk too many.

[Thanks to Potter's low-level lactose-intolerance; how ironic.]

...Lucius Malfoy is "Minister for Magic" now. "Minister", not "Lord Protector".

Nagini's milk:

In 1997 Severus Snape managed to acquire a sample of what Voldemort called "Nagini's milk". The magical constituents analysis the Potions Master conducted yielded a surprising result. Although the pearlescent, milky substance contained various unidentifiable magical components, its main agent were casein protein micelles and lactoglobulin...carbohydrate lactose. Or, in other words: milk.

Narcissa Malfoy:

Narcissa Malfoy...Draco Malfoy's mother...is not mentioned in this (or any other) entry because she had already passed away during Draco's seventh year at Hogwarts, succumbing to the effects of a badly cast and broken Unbreakable Vow.

Bellatrix Lestrange:

Bellatrix Lestrange was killed by Nagini on 4 July 2009. (Her husband, Rodolphus Lestrange, was killed 2 May 1998.)

5 August 2009...Severus Snape's diary

This first, half-dreamed sexual encounter constituted the beginning of a polyamorous relationship that lasted with more or less intensity for the rest of their lives.

6 August 2009...Hermione Snape's diary

Obfuscations explained:

"His has ink-splotches...Veritaserum... **[he Occludes so he must not write the truth; but the blood and the ink keep flowing, they drip, and form those splodges, while I...I rely on numbers once more, to keep from saying too much...]**"

The new wands:

Muggles believe the Holy Island of Eynhallow to be deserted. In truth it is the home of a small, secretive wizarding community. Master Manannan Lear's wands have always been rare and extraordinary. As a Selkie-sorcerer, he uses exotic materials like driftwood and cores harvested from sea-creatures, or magical flotsam and jetsam.

"Mither's hair" refers to the hair of a great sea-serpent that is revered as a sea-goddess ("mother of the sea") in Orcadian folklore. She is the benign force of the summer sea, granting life to every living thing, bringing warmth to the oceans and calming the storms.

According to Norse mythology, the first humans were formed out of two pieces of driftwood, an ash and an elm. Elm is sacred to the Great Goddess and symbolises, among other things, healing, rebirth, and the passage from one life to the next. Ash is the wood of Yggdrasil, the Tree of Life, for protection, balance, justice, and the marriage of opposites.

It is undisputed that merely possessing those wands had healing effects on Severus and Hermione Snape.

ibid., 7 August 2009

The wizarding money Severus and Hermione Snape had with them when they were sent to Azkaban was stolen to the last Knut. However, both of them also had Muggle money with them, Severus Snape a considerable sum. Luckily, the Azkaban guards never realised what those papers with those strange immobile pictures were and returned the full sums when Severus and Hermione Snape were released.

That way, Hermione and Severus could pay for room and board at the Three Broomsticks, and, after acquiring a house with the galleons from his inheritance that Draco gave them, continue to pay for food and necessities until they found paying jobs.

The Bloodmarks Legislation:

Bloodmarks were introduced in January 2000 and abolished in July 2009. Theoretically, these laws also applied to all magical prisoners incarcerated in Azkaban. The reason why Severus and Hermione Snape were never Bloodmarked has never been discovered. By now the most likely...and perhaps in its own way most devastating...explanation is that they were simply forgotten.

ibid. 8 August 2009

Obfuscations explained:

On the way to Amrita Agan's house we passed the Shrieking Shack.

"Where Voldemort seemingly... **[won by killing Harry, when in truth Harry's very death prepared Voldemort's own demise]**

...the Shrieking Shack, where He triumphed, is now a memorial, a museum, a small café, a little shop. Postcards and souvenirs. Toy-snakes, child-sized Death Eater masks, buttons flashing the Dark Mark."

The reaction of Padma and Parvati Patil to Amrita Agan:

Padma and Parvati Patil believed that Amrita Agan was Nagini, and as human witch and snake Animagus much more than just his pet, therefore deadly and dangerous. This impression was only heightened by the instinctive reaction of their own Animagus form...the mongoose...towards snakes.

9 August 2009...Severus Snape's diary

Obfuscations explained:

"The Patils seem to be part of (or at least in contact with) **[the Order of the Phoenix]**. Or what remains of it today. . .

(I wonder if *they* know what **[really]** happened in the Shrieking Shack.)

. . .

Parvati Patil is an Auror now. I wonder how deeply the Ministry and Hogwarts are infiltrated by **[the Order of the Phoenix]**."

Padma and Parvati Patil were indeed jointly the heads of the Order of the Phoenix at that time. The Order had infiltrated both Hogwarts and the Ministry, but their number and influence was only slowly rising after Voldemort had killed or imprisoned nearly the whole Order and all its direct supporters in 1998. They also had no idea about what really happened in the Shrieking Shack...their concern for Severus and Hermione Snape's safety was based on assumptions regarding the timing of Voldemort's death and their release from Azkaban.

10 August 2009...Hermione Snape's diary

The Lake House, seen from the east (picture from 2158).

11 August 2009...Severus Snape's diary

Natalie McDonald was a Gryffindor three years below Harry Potter. After Voldemort's victory she emigrated to the United States of America and never returned to Britain.

Ibid. 12 August 2009

Obfuscations explained:

"For one night, just for one night,' you whispered, 'let us pretend.'

Let us pretend that Potter was not killed. That you did not use Potter's death to **[activate components of his immune system]** that **[killed]** the Dark Lord **[eventually.]**

Let us pretend we won the war."

The state of Hermione Snape's hair:

If hair has been Charmed off completely, it cannot be re-grown magically. Using a potion or a spell would have rendered Hermione permanently bald. Her shaved head set Hermione apart at first glance during her probation and made it even more difficult for her to fit back into wizarding society, which has always valued long hair of head and beard. This casual cruelty of authorities can be regarded as typical for Voldemort's reign and at least the first ten years after Voldemort's death.

13 August 2009...Hermione Snape's diary

The presence both Severus and Hermione Snape felt that day was Amrita Agan watching over them.

This incident serves as an excellent example of Severus Snape's heightened senses. He could not see, smell, or hear Agan. But he sensed her presence and her true nature, "alien"...not human.

14 August 2009...Severus Snape's diary

Obfuscations explained:

"I already knew they wouldn't do that. Clearly, they are much too **[involved in the Order of the Phoenix]** to vouch for us. And I hoped that Padma would have the sense not to cater to your obsession.

...

I tell myself they are wiser than Albus Dumbledore not to trust prisoners on probation with any **[incriminating]** details."

15 August 2009...Hermione Snape's diary

Inigo Pince is indeed a distant relative of Irma Pince, a cousin's son on her father's side.

Ibid. 16 August 2009

Excellent magical recipes for all soups mentioned in the probationary diaries may be found in *Goody Gostelow's Sovereign Recipes and Remedies*; this is also the book Eileen Snape used when she taught Severus Snape how to cook when he was a child.

Hermione saved Millicent Bulstrode's cat in the early stages of the Final Battle, shortly after the Death Eaters had breached the wards of Hogwarts and had entered the Great Hall.

17 August 2009...Severus Snape's diary

Obfuscations explained:

"Like I failed you. You were just a child when you were caught up in this war. Barely an adult when I declared my doomed love for you, when you **[activated your curse on]** Him. And it **[worked]** Just as Potter promised."

Meeting Amrita Agan:

Severus Snape remembered the Animagus form of the Patil twins from before the war. One of his suspicions concerning Amrita Agan at that time was that she was a Death Eater whose Animagus form was a snake, which would have explained the particularly fierce attitude of the Patils towards her. But the fact that he felt he knew Amrita Agan from before, although he could not remember her face at all, never stopped bothering him.

18 August 2009...Hermione Snape's diary

Schrödinger's cat is a thought experiment concerning a cat that is put into a sealed box wherein the cat's life or death was dependent on the state of a subatomic particle. Until the box is opened, the cat has exactly the same chance of being alive and dead: 50%.

The Kneazle Hermione Snape called Schrödinger remained her faithful companion for twenty-three years. It particularly enjoyed sleeping in boxes.

The book Millicent Bulstrode gave Hermione Snape had been her favourite book at school. However, this particular edition was *Voldemort's Hogwarts, A Revised History*, and Hermione Snape needed several days to be able to put her emotional reaction to this into words.

Ibid. 19 August 2009

Like Millicent Bulstrode's case, the marriage of Blaise Zabini to Gabrielle Delacour presents yet another instance of secret resistance to the ideals of Voldemort's reign. Naturally in both cases very personal interests were at stake, but the fact remains that they subverted Voldemort's laws and principles.

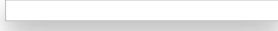
Amrita Agan treated Hermione's inflamed hand with "amrita", naga's milk, also known as "elixir of immortality".

Ibid. 20 August 2009

The splodges and smudges in Hermione Snape's entry on 20 August 2009 do not represent any intentional obfuscation. Detailed analysis show that those marks were

caused by tears and mucus dripping on wet ink.

Minerva McGonagall was the victim of numerous curses during the Final Battle that eventually shattered the connection between her mind, soul, and body. Due to her infirmity, her wealth, and her pureblood status, she was not imprisoned in Azkaban but sentenced to life-long house arrest. Annie Maddock, the house-elf that was formerly attached to the Lovegood family was assigned Minerva McGonagall to take care of her.



The Tower House (picture taken 2156)

"*Limites Revelio*" means "Show the Borders" (of a property). It is an obscure version of the Revelio spell used by owners of large properties.

21 August 2009...Severus Snape's diary

It has never been discovered who leaked the details concerning the whereabouts and occupations of Severus and Hermione Snape to the Daily Prophet. Rumour has it that it was either Aberforth Dumbledore or Mundungus Fletcher, both of whom survived the war against Voldemort unscathed and miraculously unprosecuted.

22 August 2009...Hermione Snape's diary

Obfuscations explained:

"Voldemort's victory?"

Voldemort victorious?

That he

[died at long last.]

[That my curse...made up of Muggle medical knowledge and arcane magic... was ultimately successful, that we managed to fulfil Albus Dumbledore's mission]

in the end...that doesn't seem to matter when I look at the remnants of Albus' grave."

In the anthology *Memories of Harry Potter* (Hermione Snape, ed.), Draco Malfoy relates Harry Potter's description of Albus Dumbledore's funeral: "Bright, white flames erupted, white smoke spiralled into the air and made strange shapes. And then I saw a phoenix fly off into the blue sky. The next second the fire had vanished and in its place was a white marble tomb."

23 August 2009...Severus Snape's diary

Mithridates:

Mithridates VI of Pontus, who fought not just one, but three prominent generals of the late Roman republic (Sulla, Lucullus, and Pompey the Great), and who is legendary for immunizing himself against poisons by consuming small amounts of them on a daily basis.

"... *world enough nor time*" is a quote from the old magical poem *His Coy Mistress* by Andrew Marvell.

24 August 2009...Hermione Snape's diary

"He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named"...before 2 May 1998 "He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named" was a euphemism for Voldemort, just as "The-Boy-Who-Lived" was a title bestowed upon Harry Potter. After Voldemort won, Harry Potter's name was decreed taboo and he became either "He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named" or "The-Boy-Who-Died".

Today, just as Hermione Snape already believed in her second year at Hogwarts, when she famously said, "Fear of a name only increases fear of the thing itself", both Voldemort and Harry Potter are referred to by their real names once more.

25 August 2009...Severus Snape's diary

Obfuscations explained:

"But I will not. I will not **[give up without a fight no matter the cost...even be it casting an Unforgivable]**

However... the Dementors have become the prison guards of the whole wizarding world, and I cannot produce a Patronus anymore, so **[cannot simply escape into the Muggle world]**

Besides, you need me."

The inability to produce a Patronus must be attributed to the effects of incarceration. Later in life, Severus Snape's Patronus turned into a Kneazle with tiger stripes and leopard spots.

26 August 2009...Hermione Snape's diary

Draco's interpretation is correct. The Parole and Probations Office informed the Minister for Magic as soon as Draco's name was mentioned in the probationary diaries. But Lucius Malfoy chose not to act on this information.

After eleven years of near certainty that his son was dead...spontaneous Apparitions resulting from instinctive attempts to escape emotional turmoil end, in the vast majority of documented cases, with life-threatening and often deadly Splinching...Lucius Malfoy was content to know that Draco was alive. That was more than he had hoped for a long, long time.

27 August 2009...Severus Snape's diary

Obfuscations explained:

"Now, eleven years later, I realise that maybe he**[saved us after all]**

Maybe there was no other way.

At least, in the end **[the curse worked and Voldemort died]**

Though none of us, neither you nor I (nor Harry or Draco) thought that **[it would take more than eleven years for him to die]**

In any case, I have forgiven him."

Expecting that he would be sent back to Azkaban, Severus Snape briefly entertained the option of giving Hermione into Draco's care. Due to his Occlumency, Severus Snape knew that he could ensure a comfortable death for himself. However, when it became clear that Hermione refused to live without him, even though she understood his motivations, Severus abandoned that notion and devised an alternative plan of escape for both of them.

28 August 2009...Hermione Snape's diary

Obfuscations explained:

"Somehow I doubt that.

They left at noon. Draco Apparated home, I think. And Severus is making preparations for...

[our escape, should we not, through some miracle or other, both be able to fulfil the conditions of our probation]

Severus Snape's plan for their escape was more than daring. He intended to use the Imperius curse on Minerva McGonagall to make her free her house-elf. After that, he intended to bind the house-elf to himself and to order it to take Hermione and himself to another continent, where they would abandon a magical life and hopefully remain undiscovered for the rest of their days.

Should that plan fail, he had procured a fast acting, deadly poison that would grant him and Hermione certain escape from all attempts to bring them back to Azkaban alive.

When Amrita Agan met Draco at the Lake House, she did not just introduce herself to him. She told him that he could safely return to his father, who had grieved for him for eleven years and was more than ready to forgive him all past and future transgressions.

29 August 2009...Hermione Snape's diary

Hannah Abbott's offer to bankrupt her business for the sake of Severus Snape's freedom has been rightly praised as one of the outstanding examples of Hufflepuff loyalty.

Thankfully, she never went bankrupt. Today the Three Broomsticks belongs to her grandson Neville Abbott and is still counted among the top ten wizarding public houses of Britain.

30 August 2009...Severus Snape's diary

Many experts have tried to interpret the splodges in Severus Snape's entry for 30 August 2009 over the years. But to this day these marks only yield an (understandably) undecipherable emotional turmoil that cannot be put into words.

The name of the most distinguished patron who requested Severus Snape's presence in the guestroom, as well as the name of the wizard of excellent standing and impeccable repute who would vouch for him the next day, he omitted on purpose.

As Hermione Snape later said: "It was the day when he got his smirk back."

31 August 2009...Hermione Snape

This entry is written in black ink; the writing is noticeably clearer and straighter, not as cramped and frantic as the other entries.

Draco Malfoy's deed of bravery:

On 28 August 2009 Draco did not Apparate back to Bound Skerry, but to London. He met his father and they reconciled. In return Draco asked his father to save Severus Snape from Azkaban by vouching for him in person.

Lucius Malfoy...who still regarded Severus Snape as a friend...agreed. On Sunday, 30 August 2009, he Apparated to Hogsmeade. Accompanied by reporters from the Prophet and the Quibbler, he went to the Three Broomsticks where he ostentatiously enjoyed a soup for lunch.

And on Monday, 31 August 2009, Lucius Malfoy waited for Severus and Hermione Snape at the Department of Magical Law Enforcement.

He kept the promise he'd given Draco and vouched for Severus. Although their friendship never grew as close again as it had been in their youth, Severus Snape's and Lucius Malfoy's enmity ended that day and they remained on cordial terms until Lucius Malfoy's death on 13 April 2053.

oooOooo

A/N:

Links in this entry to further references:

The poem "Lines and Squares": http://www.winniethepoohbear.net/poem_lines.php

Wandlore: <http://www.bardwood.com/woods.htm> and <http://web.archive.org/web/20071111014542/www.the-tree.org.uk/>

Eynhallow: <http://www.orkneyjar.com/history/eynhallow/index.html>

Manannan: http://www.monstropedia.org/index.php?title=Manannan_mac_Lir

Orcadian folklore: <http://www.orkneyjar.com/folklore/mither.htm>

Natalie McDonald: http://harrypotter.wikia.com/wiki/Natalie_McDonald

Scottish recipes: http://www.best-scottish-tours.co.uk/scottish_food/scottish_food.html

Schrödinger's cat: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schr%C3%B6dinger%27s_Cat

Additional notes for the editors' notes

Editors' Notes for 16 August 2009...Hermione Snape's diary:

The book by Goody Gostelow is from Mary Stewart's novel *Thornyhold*.

Editors' Notes for 22 August 2009...Hermione Snape's diary:

Harry's description of Albus Dumbledore's burial is based nearly verbatim on the relevant passage in chapter thirty, *The White Tomb, of Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* by Joanne K. Rowling.

Editors' Notes for 24 August 2009...Hermione Snape's diary:

The quote "Fear of a name only increases fear of the thing itself" is originally an Albus Dumbledore quote from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, chapter 17. In the movies, however, it is Hermione who gets to say this line, in Flourish & Blotts at the beginning of *Chamber of Secrets*.

Editors' Notes: IV. Hermione Snape's lists of the fallen

Chapter 37 of 42

Editors' notes of the 2159 facsimile edition of carefully selected entries from the probationary diaries of prisoners #19-09-1979 and #09-01-1960.

IV. Hermione Snape's lists of the fallen

The list Hermione Snape kept in Azkaban prison was comprised of 95 names, three of which were survivors because she did not know they had lived (Draco Malfoy, Minerva McGonagall, Severus Snape).

[list with 95 names]

At the very back of her diary—squeezed between the back cover and the last page—Hermione Snape wrote down a revised version of her list after Padma Patil went over the first version of her list with her on 22 August 2009.

[list with 97 names]

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A/N: If you really want to read the lists, you can do so here:

<http://juno-magic.fancrone.net/blog/harry-potter-fan-fiction/prisoners-of-azkaban/prisoners-of-azkaban-3/4>

Editors' Notes: V. What really happened in the Shrieking Shack

Chapter 38 of 42

Editors' notes of the 2159 facsimile edition of carefully selected entries from the probationary diaries of prisoners #19-09-1979 and #09-01-1960.

V. What really happened in the Shrieking Shack

Although extensive Pensieved memories of Draco Malfoy, Minerva McGonagall, Severus and Hermione Snape are available and have been analysed individually, and by numerous experts many times over, their evidence remains inconclusive.

As Scorpius Malfoy-Snape wrote in *My Father's Lives and Loves*: "What really happened on that fateful day must, I think, remain obscure. It was too much. In a single day the history of the whole wizarding world changed forever. In mere moments some of the brightest lights of that time were forever extinguished. Such momentous events cannot possibly be reduced to a simple explanation of 'what really happened'."

Of course, that has not kept survivors or descendants, neither lay-witches nor experts, from searching for just that explanation.

The interested reader should avail themselves of the opportunity to see an abridged copy of the Pensieves of Draco Malfoy, Minerva McGonagall, Severus and Hermione Snape at the Shrieking Shack museum, as well as the reading recommendations listed in the relevant section of the appended bibliography.

Within the scope of this book, a brief summary must suffice to put the narrative of the diary entries into perspective.

On 2 May 1998 Voldemort and his Death Eaters attacked Hogwarts in order to apprehend and kill Harry Potter and thus bring about the end of Sybill Trelawney's prophecy. Among them was Draco Malfoy who had taken over Severus Snape's task as spy for the Light after Severus Snape's true allegiance was revealed during the battle on the Astronomy Tower on 21 June 1997.

The battle raged on for most of the day, until Harry Potter, Hermione Snape, Severus Snape, and Ronald Weasley barricaded themselves in the Shrieking Shack in order to set up a desperate back-up plan in motion that was developed by Hermione Snape.

Eventually, Voldemort, accompanied by Nagini and his most loyal Death Eaters broke through their defences and entered the Shrieking Shack. In this moment of crisis, Draco Malfoy dropped his disguise and joined the battle openly on the side of Light. This act, meant to provide the necessary moment of surprise to overpower Voldemort, backfired badly when Harry Potter leapt to the defence of his lover.

At this point Severus Snape was reduced to defending a now immobile Hermione Snape. Draco Malfoy and Ronald Weasley were forced to fight nearly the entire inner circle of Death Eaters, most notably, Lucius Malfoy and Bellatrix Lestrange, leaving Voldemort and Nagini to Harry Potter.

Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that not one surviving combatant saw the debilitating curse that left Harry Potter helpless on the floor, so that Voldemort could order Nagini to attack him and end his life.

What Voldemort did not anticipate was the brilliant back-up plan that Hermione Snape had devised with the help of her Muggle parents, as well as with the assistance of Severus Snape and Luna Lovegood.

The pertinent literature concerning the creation and execution of that curse fills libraries by now. In the context of the probationary diaries the briefest of explanations will, however, serve.

Unbeknownst to himself for most of his life, Harry Potter suffered from low-level lactose intolerance. Because Voldemort had used Harry Potter's blood to regain a physical body, he shared enough of Harry Potter's genetic make-up to be susceptible to the same condition. Since—even in his regenerated form—his main source of sustenance remained Nagini's milk, the probability for Voldemort to develop serious physical reactions due to lactose-intolerance were significantly higher than for him to acquire a propensity for suffering a deadly anaphylactic shock from the sting of a wasp, for example. Based on the research of Lyra Lovegood—who had experimented with self-Transfiguration of molecular and sub-molecular structures before her tragic death—Hermione Snape was able to instil and intensify Harry Potter's lactose-intolerance in every single cell of Voldemort's new body. Once she cast the curse, Harry Potter's death activated it. After that, Voldemort's demise was just a question of time and diet.

During their probation, Severus and Hermione Snape naturally had to take pains—and literally did—to avoid mention of anything that would incriminate them beyond their recorded sentences as traitors and terrorists. Especially since they could not, at this point, know the events that had led to their release from prison.

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Editors' Notes: VI. The mystery of Amrita Agan

Chapter 39 of 42

Editors' notes of the 2159 facsimile edition of carefully selected entries from the probationary diaries of prisoners #19-09-1979 and #09-01-1960.

VI. The mystery of Amrita Agan

The mystery of Amrita Agan is the unwritten story behind the diary entries of Severus and Hermione Snape. (To fully grasp the complex and tragic story of her life, the reader is urged to consult her autobiography, *A Milkmaid's Tale*.) But in order to gain an understanding of Amrita Agan's involvement in the release of Severus and Hermione Snape, it is first necessary to understand *what* she is.

That Amrita Agan is not what she seems to be, a beautiful, regal Indian witch, both Severus and Hermione Snape realised instinctively. But in August 2009 no one...not the Minister of Magic nor the heads of the Order of the Phoenix...knew what she was, although a few...among them Lucius Malfoy, as well as Padma and Parvati Patil...were aware of who she had been before she moved to Hogsmeade.

Amrita Agan is a naga.

She belongs to a rare group of magical Asian snakes that can take human form.

Naga are extremely strong and their poison is deadly. It is, therefore, not surprising that there are accounts of human wizards and witches enslaving naga in order to use them as weapons in their feuds from long before our time.

In human form they still show many characteristics of a snake: Especially their movements, and the shape and colour of their eyes, betray their fundamentally inhuman nature.

Legends tell of the naga's access to what is called "amrita", the elixir of immortality. Those accounts vary. Some stories report the snakes stealing the ambrosia, others describe them saving, or creating it. Reality is more prosaic: the legendary life-giving substance known as "amrita" is nothing more and nothing less than a naga's milk.

A naga's powers are manifold: apart from the by now well-documented properties of their milk (*Milk of Inhuman Kindness* by Honey Silk), they can bring rain and bestow fertility...a fact illustrated by Hermione Snape's entry for 19 August, as well as by the birth of her first child, Adriana Amrita Snape, the following year.

For the sake of her life-giving milk, Voldemort trapped Amrita Agan in her snake-form and enslaved her with a Parseltongue version of Imperius, which is infinitely more powerful than the ordinary version of this spell. He called her "Nagini"... "female naga"...and kept her at his side as pet, cattle, and weapon in one, forcing her to commit and suffer unspeakable atrocities over the years.

Apart from Voldemort (and possibly Peter Pettigrew, who was charged with "milking" Amrita) only Harry Potter ever knew what and who Nagini was.

And he discovered her secret only in the final moments of his life.

Unfortunately, his memories, which must have contained this information, dissolved on the floor of the Shrieking Shack. We are thus left with only Amrita Agan's report for this part of the story, a fact which has given rise to uncounted conspiracy theories, from claims that Amrita was Voldemort's willing lover to the idea that Voldemort turned into Nagini when he died.

The truthfulness of Amrita Agan's story, however, has been validated beyond any doubt by the famous Parselmouth and certified Indian snake-charmer Abhay Sandilya.

According to Amrita Agan, Harry Potter realised she was only Voldemort's slave when he lay helplessly cursed on the floor of the Shrieking Shack. His final thoughts were of forgiveness, of love for Draco Malfoy and his friends, and a promise.

He promised Amrita that he and his friends, first and foremost Severus and Hermione Snape, would set her free. Harry Potter knew he was about to die. Uncertain how long it would take the curse of Hermione's devising to unfold and aware of what Voldemort's apparent victory must mean, Harry asked Amrita for help.

His request was simple.

Should any of his friends survive Voldemort's death, Amrita was supposed to aid and assist them in any way she could.

To understand what happened next...after Voldemort died due to an anaphylactic shock induced by Amrita's milk...it is important to be aware of the longevity of naga. Amrita Agan was very young when Voldemort ensnared her...only a little over three hundred years old. But naga easily live 2,000 years or beyond. Therefore, it is no surprise that the local Muggle populace have long revered them as divine and immortal beings for centuries.

Thus the eleven years that passed between Harry Potter's promise and Voldemort's death appeared to be just a short span of time to her.

As soon as Voldemort was dead, she took human form...something that Voldemort had denied her throughout her captivity.

She invented a name for herself, a combination of the substance she was enslaved for and a simplistic anagram of her true nature, turning "naga" into "agan".

Then she set out to find ways to fulfil her promise and help Harry Potter's friends.

First she killed Bellatrix Lestrange...for the simple reason that she remembered seeing Bellatrix kill Hermione Snape's half-kneazle. Next she revealed herself to the new Minister for Magic, Lucius Malfoy, and forced him to release Severus and Hermione Snape from prison.

Lucius Malfoy, however, only knew that Nagini was now Amrita Agan and that she wished Severus and Hermione Snape released from Azkaban. He had no idea why. Having more than enough on his mind at that time, he simply passed the matter on to the Department for Magical Law Enforcement and the Office for Parole and Probations.

It is there that the (ultimately correct) theory was developed that Severus and Hermione Snape knew something about Voldemort's death. The conditions for their probation were drafted so they would betray their secrets and fail to meet the requirements for their rehabilitation. At this point in time...while Lucius Malfoy had already implemented first revisions and reversals of some of Voldemort's policies...there was no widespread reprobation of Voldemort's regime, nor a broad movement towards an abolition of his laws. Therefore the investigation of the circumstances of Voldemort's and Bellatrix Lestrange's deaths were still a priority for the Department of Magical Law Enforcement.

But the Department for Magical Law Enforcement did not know about the existence of Amrita Agan.

After murdering Bellatrix and engineering Hermione Snape's and Severus Snape's release, Amrita Agan moved to Hogsmeade and began to search for others who had supported Harry Potter in the Final Battle and who might aid her goal of helping Severus and Hermione Snape.

While in Hogsmeade, she ran afoul of Padma Patil...one of the heads of the Order of the Phoenix, and mongoose Animagus. Together with her sister, Auror Parvati Patil, who shared her sister's Animagus form, Padma Patil quickly connected the dots and realised that Agan must be none other than Nagini. However, in spite of their Indian background, neither of them suspected Nagini's true nature. Instead they assumed that they were dealing with a human witch whose Animagus was a giant snake.

The Patils' suspicions along with Agan's inability to understand the customs and culture of human witches and wizards in Britain made it much more difficult for her to keep her promise to Harry Potter and help Severus and Hermione Snape.

Nevertheless, she did her best. She would have sold them a house adjoining her own, she healed Hermione Snape's inflamed hand, and she helped her discover Minerva McGonagall's whereabouts. Faithfully, she consumed Severus' soups every day he worked at the Three Broomsticks, even though the taste of anything but fish caused her nausea and severe stomach pains. She ascertained that Draco Malfoy would not be in any danger were he to return to his father and ask him to vouch for Severus Snape. She healed the damage Hermione Snape's body had sustained in Azkaban, ensuring that she would eventually bear five healthy children.

And last but not least, she recognised the power of the core of Severus and Hermione Snape's new wands.

Hermione Snape describes how they acquired their new wands in the entry of 6 August 2009:

"This morning, Draco took us to a wandmaker on the Orkney Islands, on Eynhallow. Master Manannan Lear uses driftwood. His cores are magical flotsam and jetsam, and apparently his *mother's* hair. At least that's what he said when he thrust two wands at us. "Them's for ye. Mither's hair. Ye need it." Obviously he doesn't subscribe to Ollivander's philosophy of wands choosing their wizards. Severus' wand is ash, mine is elm."

As explained in the annotations for Hermione's entry for 6 August 2009, the core of the new wands was made from the hair of one of the great sea-serpents of the Atlantic Ocean. One of the wands' special properties was that Severus and Hermione Snape were able to reveal the true nature of snake-creatures, from simple garden snakes to Animagi, from naga to basilisks. They did so for the first time when they visited Amrita Agan on 1 September 2009 and finally uncovered her secret.

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A/N: Additional notes for "The Mystery of Amrita Agan"

A Milkmaid's Tale...the title of Amrita Agan's autobiography is, of course, an allusion to Margaret Atwood's *A Handmaid's Tale*.

Milk of Human Kindness...is a quote from William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: "Yet doe I feare thy Nature, It is too full o' th' Milke of humane kindnesse."

My naga lore is based on a variety of sources, online and offline. Wikipedia is a good starting point if you're curious.

Editors' Notes: VII. The later lives of Hermione Snape, Severus Snape, and Draco Malfoy

Chapter 40 of 42

Editors' notes of the 2159 facsimile edition of carefully selected entries from the probationary diaries of prisoners #19-09-1979 and #09-01-1960.

VII. The later lives of Hermione Snape, Severus Snape, and Draco Malfoy

The years following their release from Azkaban prison, Severus and Hermione Snape spent much as their probationary diaries already suggest: Hermione Snape worked as Minerva McGonagall's assistant, while Severus Snape stayed on as soup cook at the Three Broomsticks.

On 20 March 2010, Hermione and Severus Snape were married in a quiet ceremony on Eynhallow, and 3 May 2010 their first daughter, Adriana Amrita Snape, was born.

Apart from that life-changing event, the year after their release from Azkaban prison was spent quietly. They lived at the Lake House, with Draco Malfoy a frequent guest. Free days and holidays were spent at the lighthouse of Bound Skerry.

The review of their rehabilitation 31 August 2010 passed without difficulties.

Since Amrita Agan had yielded her secret to the power of their new wands, Severus and Hermione Snape spent most of their free time discovering and mastering the powers of their wands. As Amrita Agan had already told them, a core made from the hair of a great sea serpent creates a wand with extraordinary powers, especially for healing spells. At the pinnacle of their powers, when they had achieved complete mastery of their new wands as well as of their own talents, they were able to cast the most powerful spells of healing the wizarding world has seen since the days of Hildegard of Bingen.

(Concerning that particular area of interest, *Healing the Wizarding World* by Muriel Mugwort is considered the seminal monograph on the topic.)

The first task they set themselves was, of course, to heal Minerva McGonagall. It took them over a decade to disentangle the curses that had struck Minerva McGonagall and to make her shattered mind and soul whole again. Only by 2020 were they finally successfully able to heal their old teacher and friend. While Minerva McGonagall remained frail of body and fragile of mind, she was able to enjoy her remaining years in full possession of her mental faculties until she passed away, 21 March 2038.

The healing of Minerva McGonagall is often interpreted as the conclusion of both Hermione Snape's and Severus Snape's own healing processes. Certainly it was a first and vital step of a long journey of magical (self-)discovery.

Hermione Snape's primary genius lay in spell-creation. That talent, already obvious during her school-days*, even before she devised the curse that killed Voldemort, truly blossomed in the complex healing spells she invented for the sake of Minerva McGonagall. After this achievement, it is not surprising that Hermione Snape was invited to join the Department of Mysteries, where Amrita Agan had already worked since 2010.

(An excellent title to discover the young Hermione Snape is *Hermione Snape...The Early Days* by Rosa Bulstrode. Of Hermione Snape's time in the Department of Mysteries we naturally know almost nothing, though it can be assumed that she was involved in several sensitive and significant spell-creation projects.)

Hermione Snape's appointment as Unspeakable coincided with Padma Patil succeeding Aurora Sinistra as Headmistress of Hogwarts, School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Under Headmistress Patil, Hogwarts was restored to its former glory. At the beginning of the new school year of 2010/2011, Gryffindor House was re-established. Once more all students with magical abilities were welcome at Hogwarts, no matter their background, be they pureblood, half-blood or Muggle-born. But in the following years, Headmistress Patil truly revolutionised magical education by adding a "special needs" programme for squibs and offering summer courses to non-magical siblings and close-blood relations.

The first new teachers she recruited in 2023 were Severus Snape, who returned to Hogwarts to teach Potions, and Draco Malfoy, who joined the staff as Professor for Magical Ethics and Philosophy.

When Padma Patil stepped down as Headmistress of Hogwarts 2049 in order to become the Headmistress of the famous Siddhartha School of Sorcery in Lumbini, the board of governors unanimously voted for Severus Snape as her successor.

Once Severus Snape took office, Hermione Snape left the Department of Mysteries to join her husband's staff as Hogwarts librarian, an occupation that allowed her substantial free time to conduct private research and write, eventually publishing an astonishing number of forty-two books and numerous articles and essays.

As Headmaster of Hogwarts, Severus Snape continued all programmes implemented by Padma Patil, and added some of his own, most notably the establishment of the Minerva McGonagall College of Magic in 2058.

What Headmaster Severus Snape is best known for, however, is his Sorting Reform. Before his 2050/2051 reform, Hogwarts students were only Sorted once...before they started their first year. Already Albus Dumbledore criticised this tradition, saying: "...I sometimes think we Sort too soon..." Severus Snape himself was convinced that the early and immutable Sorting encouraged the inflexible ideology that led to Voldemort's reign.

Since 2050/2051, students are not Sorted into their Houses once and for all, but are re-Sorted every year. Now innate talent, individual choices, and the development of skills and character determine a student's House on a yearly basis. While a few students remain in one and the same House...and even fewer are Sorted into each House at least once...most students belong to at least two different Houses during their time at Hogwarts. Additionally students may also remain Unsorted, if they are of age, or if their parents wish it. Since 2054 the living quarters of the Unsorted students have been in the attic above the Great Hall.

For more than ten happy years Draco Malfoy, Severus and Hermione Snape lived together at Hogwarts, until the death of Lucius Malfoy in 2053.

In 2054 Draco Malfoy decided to run for office and was elected Minister for Magic 19 September 2054.

Lucius Malfoy had done much to lead Britain back into the International Confederation of Wizarding Communities, but much remained to be done what a wizard of his generation and background could not achieve.

Draco Malfoy, however, turned out to be the leader the magical community of Britain had been waiting for. As the pureblood son of a Death Eater, lover of Harry Potter, hero of the war against Voldemort, and respected partner of Hermione and Severus Snape, he was the symbol of a new era in wizarding Britain, a time of reconciliation and renewal.

When asked about his motivation, Draco Malfoy always responded simply: "Harry always did what he could. I can do no less."

His new office, a burden of heavy responsibilities and many duties, inevitably influenced his relationship with Hermione and Severus Snape. Although in their hearts and minds they remained one family until the day they died, for many years the time they actually lived together diminished to just a few weeks a year.

Only in 2099, when Severus and Hermione Snape retired, and Draco Malfoy stepped down as Minister of Magic (to be succeeded by his son, Scorpius Harry Malfoy-Snape), the harmony and happiness of the early days of their polyamorous relationship revived.

Draco Malfoy and Hermione and Severus Snape spent the last thirty years of their lives where they had set out together after the Snapes' release from Azkaban prison: the Lake House in Hogsmeade and the lighthouse of Bound Skerry.

Cooking soups remained Severus Snape's hobby for the rest of his life, and he won regional and international soup cook outs with terrifying regularity, the last being the "Hogsmeade Christmas Smash" of 2127.

All her life, Hermione Snape was a dedicated Kneazle keeper. Although she never achieved the Animagus transformation, her post-prison Patronus eventually appeared as a Kneazle with tiger stripes and leopard spots...looking exactly like her husband's Patronus. This is considered a clear testament to the impact Millicent Bulstrode's gift of the Kneazle Schrödinger had on both their lives.

At the end of her life, Hermione Snape possessed the largest collection of editions of *Hogwarts, A History* in the world. It is now housed in a special library at Hogwarts and open to visitors on every Hogsmeade weekend.

Draco Malfoy's free time was spent either with the Snape family or at the lighthouse on Bound Skerry. Today the lighthouse keeper is Hermes Severus Malfoy-Snape.

Hermione Snape had five children together with Severus Snape and Draco Malfoy.

Adriana Amrita Snape, born 2010

Hermes Severus Malfoy-Snape, born 2015

Minerva Luna Snape, 20202074 (Minerva Luna's death of cancer in 2074 was by far the greatest tragedy in the later years of Hermione and Severus Snape's lives.)

Albus Lucius Snape, born 2020 (His daughter, Minerva Dramione Snape (born 2074) succeeded Rose Bulstrode as Headmistress of Hogwarts in 2124.)

Scorpius Harry Malfoy-Snape, born 2028 (Minister for Magic from 19 September 2099 to 21 September 2159.)

Severus and Hermione Snape died peacefully in their bed on 1 September 2129, surrounded by their loved ones: Draco Malfoy, their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchild.

Hermione Snape's last recorded words were: "Nearly 153 years or 1,833 months or 7,967 weeks or 55,769 days or 1,338,456 hours. And now, eternity."

(These figures denote the length of time Hermione Snape judged herself to be in love with Severus Snape. From 23 December 1996 when she discovered his secret efforts to cure the cursed Albus Dumbledore to the day of her death and beyond.)

Severus Snape's last words were "My own Hermione", just as he had predicted in his diary 31 August 2009.

Draco Malfoy died in his sixth floor bedroom at the lighthouse on Bound Skerry 1 August 2133. As he requested, he died alone. But on the low ledge next to his bed he had arrayed pictures of all his loved ones, first and foremost photographs of Harry Potter, and Hermione and Severus Snape.

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A/N: Additional notes for "The later lives of Hermione Snape, Severus Snape, and Draco Malfoy"

Muriel Mugwort is a cameo of an original character from my story "*The Apprentice and the Necromancer*".

Lumbini is the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama Buddha.

"...I sometimes think we Sort too soon..."...is a quote from Albus Dumbledore in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, chapter 33, *The Prince's Tale*.

Editors' Notes: VIII. The miracle of Azkaban

Chapter 41 of 42

Editors' notes of the 2159 facsimile edition of carefully selected entries from the probationary diaries of prisoners #19-09-1979 and #09-01-1960.

VIII. The miracle of Azkaban

What the Daily Prophet coined as "the miracle of Azkaban" is regarded by experts as the most amazing feat of wandless, wordless magic of all times. It is also widely considered the most profound tribute to those who suffered and died during the war against Voldemort.

When Azkaban finally closed as a prison in 2147, public interest led the Ministry to attempt to find the cells in which Severus and Hermione Snape spent the eleven years of their incarceration. While the exact position of Severus Snape's cell remains a secret, Hermione Snape's cell could be located—because it held a shocking surprise.

Engraved in the 91 squares of one cell's floor, the Ministry discovered the list of names Hermione Snape thought she had kept only in her mind.

While she correctly remembered that her frequent caresses had smoothed the tile where she put Severus Snape's name, she was—no doubt due to the fragile mental state caused by the long years of her imprisonment—never aware of what she had really done.

In a spectacular feat of wandless, wordless magic she carved the names of those she assumed dead into the squares of her cell-floor. Four additional names could be found chiselled into the corners of the room.

All names Hermione Snape mentioned in her probationary diary were found exactly in the square she described.



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Editors' Notes: IX. Conclusion

Chapter 42 of 42

Editors' notes of the 2159 facsimile edition of carefully selected entries from the probationary diaries of prisoners #19-09-1979 and #09-01-1960.

IX. Conclusion

Much has been said and written about Severus and Hermione Snape, about their role in the war, their impact on the political reformation of the wizarding world post-Voldemort, their professional achievements, and about their unusual personal life-style. No doubt much is yet to be said and written about them.

With this facsimile edition of their probationary diaries we have set out to commemorate their deeds, and to ascertain that their suffering at the hands of Voldemort himself, and as victims of a system untamed by true rule of law and recognition of basic rights, will not be forgotten by subsequent generations.

But with the authentic testimony of their probationary diaries we hope for more:

We hope that in the future Hermione and Severus Snape may be seen not only as heroes, and as the icons of their time they have become, but that they may be glimpsed as human beings—struggling for their lives and their sanity, adrift between past and present, losing and holding on to hope, and never, *ever*, abandoning their love for each other.

"Look to this day! For it is life, the very life of life. For yesterday is but a dream and tomorrow is only a vision. But today well lived makes every yesterday a dream of happiness and tomorrow a vision of hope."

—Kalidasa

Amrita Agan

(Department of Mysteries, Ministry of Magic),

Cuthbert Binns

(Professor for History of Magic at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry),

Minerva Dramione Snape

(Headmistress of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry).

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...oooOOO FINITE INCANTATEM OOOooo...

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banner for author's notes

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Most references for this story already appear in the story itself. However, some additional credits seem appropriate to me.

Banners and Illustrations

All banners for this story are based on a collage of Creative Commons pictures. The prison cell is based on a picture by polanri. The flagstone floor is created from a picture by andydoro, and the barred window with the sun shining through is by нѠвѠ. Natalie Portman from "V for Vendetta" is the stubble-headed Hermione of August 2009, Minnie Driver is happy!Hermione from Severus' dreams, and perhaps, one day, in the future. Alan Rickman is Severus Snape, though after eleven years in Azkaban no longer with shoulder-length black hair.

The images with a weighted word clouds of the chapter's most significant words are "Wordles", all created at wordle.net.

The image of the lighthouse on Bound Skerry is based on a Creative Commons Attribution photograph by Mike Hackston.

You can look at all banners, Wordles, and other illustrations for this story in my gallery: "Art for Fanfic: Prisoners of Azkaban" (http://juno-magic.fancrone.net/gallery/main.php?g2_itemId=18574)

CSS3 version and additional downloads

A CSS3 version of this story and downloads of this story as pdf, epub, and xhtml may be found at my website: <http://juno-magic.fancrone.net/blog/harry-potter-fan-fiction/prisoners-of-azkaban>

Thank you again...

Writing *Prisoners of Azkaban* as a realtime diary!fic in August was an incredibly intense experience. Without the help and support from my beta-readers and fandom friends, I wouldn't have been able to create the complex work it has become.

I am indebted to my beta-readers, Aranel Took, Ayerf, Fliewatuet, Juniperus, Machshefa, Mia Madwyn, and Sc0ffy. Many thanks also go to Annie Talbot and Potion Mistress for brainstorming and helpful ideas.

Special thanks go to Mia Madwyn for cheerleading, extravagant compliments, critical discussions, and invaluable support throughout the time of writing this story.

Thank you once more, from the depths of my heart!

Also, a huge **THANK YOU** goes out to my readers—so many of whom have patiently and passionately accompanied this story. Thank you very much, and I hope you enjoy the conclusion of this tale.

...and last but not least: Happy birthday, Annie Talbot!

You're responsible for some of my happiest moments in HP fandom, you're an amazing writer, and a wonderful friend. With other words, it's almost impossible to find a fitting gift for you because it should be absolutely perfect. I'm not sure about the "perfect" part...I'm certain I've missed a typo or two (or three, or four) and that some bits of code are wonky in this web-version of *Prisoners of Azkaban*.

However, I do know that you've enjoyed this story very much. So this is my gift to you: the final completion of the story on your birthday, dedicated to you.

Happy birthday, dearest!

Yours

JunoMagic