

# Second Chances

*by luvsev*

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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Dark times, very dark times; a world under control of a maniac with dreams far worse than imaginable. There's nothing anyone can do; even the most powerful in the inner circle admit it wasn't the best idea to support this madness. No one has freedom or the things he'd promised. Everything was a lie, but it's as he wants it.

He has the magical world at his feet, though no one dares beg for mercy any longer; Dementors roam free, taking as they please. The once crowded streets are empty and smell of death; not even flea-bitten, deranged rats dare scamper aboveground. Fires lit in random, rusting rubbish bins curl heavy grey smoke in the air to mask the scent of rotting flesh. Even perfume would do nothing to affect the stench. Inner city buildings have fallen into disrepair...the mark of a war-torn city: broken, jagged windows, structural cracks, crumbling bricks that have fallen to marred pavement, gaping holes in the roads, and nowhere to seek protection from the elements. An earthquake would have wreaked less havoc. Darkness has encroached, and the sun refuses to shine and provide warmth.

Wizards and witches everywhere are too afraid to venture out, and the ones who fancy themselves brave act foolishly and disappear, never to return. People assume they know where the missing souls go; they believe the missing to be dead. Oh, no, death would be a blessed reprieve, and the Dark Lord grants no boon. His command is law, and everyone must bow before him.

Capture. Torture. Servitude. Similar pattern every time, though the method varies. His grunts, the ones who truly believe in his pure-blood, one-race-to-rule-them-all fanaticism, do the dirty work by spreading poison throughout Europe. They force their way into countries that have not yet fallen. There, the war rages on. They have precious freedom for which to fight, though soon they'll realise they can't win. It's only a matter of time before they will kneel to despair.

The one who was destined to defeat this monster has been stripped of his magic; his best mate lies with the rest of his family in their garden, unmarked. They wouldn't have wanted to live through this; no one does. Only three have escaped: the girl, Longbottom, and Lovegood. The latter two are in America, gathering troops. Hermione has been spirited away by an unlikely ally: Lucius Malfoy. How he keeps her hidden, one can only suspect. Maybe the Dark Lord knows and doesn't care, or perhaps... It's all supposition.

Wandering the streets alone during these times is unwise; alas, some make the trip, as it's obvious to see. The increase in Inferi is one way to tell. The other is the staggering form of a cloaked man with a burnished silver mask upon his face, obscuring his identity from view. He seems shocked to be out... or sickened by the stench and the tableau in front of him. He soon straightens, then scurries off like a frightened mouse, his dusty, greying robes billowing out behind him. His head turns, eyes darting from one alleyway to another, ensuring no one has followed him. The man comes upon an unscorched stretch of wall. He stares at it, seemingly willing the bricks to separate, and they do. A hole appears, only tall enough for a toddler to enter. A faint murmur, and a girl in rags...a wide, filthy strip of nearly threadbare material covers her pert breasts, and she wears a torn skirt that sits just past her navel and falls but an inch from her knees...appears from within. She is barely recognisable: a smudged pale face, haunted chocolate-brown eyes, and once wildly curly hair is all but matted to her head reveals her identity. She smiles weakly, emerging. I wonder what has become of Hermione Granger when she gazes in my direction, as if she knows someone is there. She believes I am but a spectre. And maybe I am. She looks away as he takes her shaking hand in his to help her to her feet. She is unsteady, as if she's been crouched for far too long. He guides her along at a slow pace, neither of them speaking.

As they disappear behind a white stone façade, only one word is hissed, "open". I follow moments later, beyond three sets of gilt doors, into a splendid front room. The marbled floors are cleaner than anything I've seen in months outside of the manse. I hurry along, my dragon hide boots shuffling. I stop at the end of a long corridor and see streaming light, unfettered by evil, past one half-open door. The first rays of golden sun? Or fabricated light... Magic.

Hurried voices sound.

'To see you properly is a dream,' he whispers.

'But I...I am a wreck.'

'I know. It matters not. Just that you are here,' he replies.

Something inaudible.

'Let me?'

'Too risky.'

'It's worth the risk,' his calm broken and emotion sneaking into his voice.

'No!' she challenges; her fight remains.

I hear a distinctly feminine harrumph as azure blue light streaks over her. 'Precious freedom may no longer be yours, Lu.'

'Hush. No names right now. The walls hear what you say. We have but a few fleeting moments, if Lady Fortune is to shine upon us.'

'You've never said what will happen after this.'

I inch closer to the door and look inside. They lay curled together upon a queen-sized bed, his blond hair fanned out on a white feather pillow. Hermione is clean and wearing nothing, her creamy, pale skin shining in the sunlight, a hint of a rounded breast in view. Open to Lucius's gaze, she appears comfortable with her nudity. He, too, is in a similar state of dishabille, only his unfastened black trousers remain. Her dainty hand rests upon his hip.

'You will be safer away from all of this.' He pauses to look at her, cupping her jaw. 'Trust me.'

'I do,' she whispers in return.

'Then that's all you need to know.'

'But what of Cissy, Draco?'

'They are safe.' He kisses along her jaw, and she hums in approval. 'In America, with allies, where we will be soon.'

'When?' she queries, nearly out of breath as his hand traverses in a decidedly southern direction.

'Sunset.' Lucius continues, licking her throat, then nibbling at her pulse point.

'Why so long?'

'It's only a couple of hours until they come and an hour and a half until you do.' He roughly tugs her hardened nipple.

'But...'

He looks up before taking her breast in his mouth, a smirk curling his lip. 'Has anyone ever told you you talk too much?'

Hermione laughs genuinely. It is the only happy sound I have heard in two years. Could Lucius be right: would they be free in two hours? Everyone or only Lucius and Hermione? If the latter, I will plead to join them. Before, I would not have begged for my life at the hands of the Dark Lord. I did not beg, even when lying in a pool of blood on the floor of that pitiful shack. But this is different. I am not above pleading to a friend, not when I know something better than this dystopian society awaits.

'I've...' She turns her head away from Lucius and shuts her eyes tightly, a single tear tracking down her hollowed cheek.

Lucius brushes her tear away with his thumb and kisses her sweetly, an intimate gesture only one has seen before. 'Come, now, don't cry. It was not my intention to make you cry. If it were, I could think of a much more pleasurable pursuit to accomplish that end.'

Hermione chuckles half-heartedly, a smile not quite reaching her eyes. 'I know it was not your intention. During happier times, if you could call them that, friends always told me I talked too much. Alas, it does not do to dwell.'

'Indeed.' Lucius leans in to kiss her once more; this time she relaxes, and her legs part to allow him comfortably between them.

She sighs when he resumes his attentions to her breasts, his mouth wickedly playing with her nipples, and his hand finds its way between her thighs.

I cannot bear to watch such intimacy and not long for it, so I step aside and slide to the floor, where the light begins to dim. My head and back against the cool wall, I drift into an uneasy sleep, their moans and gasps serving as a lullaby. When I finally wake, it is to the sense of someone standing over me. Groggily, I open my eyes, and indeed, Lucius and Hermione are above me. She appears bemused with her eyebrows furrowed, and he, though smirking, is impossible to tell. His expression is unreadable most of the time.

'Care to join us, old friend?' Lucius asks.

I stare at him blankly. He cannot be serious.

'I assure you, we will not be returning. You've always wanted a second chance. Here it is.'

He extends his hand for me to take. Nodding, I grab it in silent appreciation. A rapping on the window alerts us, and I look over to see Draco's worry-lined face and silver-blond hair glinting in the sunlight. He breaks into a smile with Luna at his side.

"It's time", I see Draco mouth in front of the window, and we walk forward, leaving it all behind.

*We must rebuild, but never forget those who have made this battle worth fighting.*