

To Forgive or Not

by karelia

Albert Runcorn learns a hard lesson.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: Possession is not part of my vocabulary.

Albert Runcorn stared at Umbridge, who lay spread out on her huge Ministry desk, in disbelief *How did I manage that just now?* He shook his head, and his thoughts drifted back to that fateful day mere weeks after the Dark Lord's fall that had turned his life inside out.

Unlike Dolores, Albert had begun to regret his actions during the Dark Lord's reign the moment the magical shackle the Dark Mark had held over him was severed by the madman's death.

Oh, Merlin, what have I done? What was I thinking? Thought after thought had rushed through his mind, each deed he remembered more suffocating than the previous. *How many deaths do I have on my conscience? No, no. I cannot take this.* He had been pondering various means of ending his life—not that the cell in Azkaban offered any—when a guard announced a visitor.

"You regret." Minister Shacklebolt had sounded genuinely surprised.

Albert had looked up in surprise, his face tear-stricken, not that he cared. "How can I not?" he'd choked. "I've wasted most of my life following a madman who wanted to control the entire world. I was at his beck and call without ever questioning his motives. My life is over, and I'll never get a chance to... to put things right." He'd shaken his head in utter despair, wishing Dementors were there to just suck out his soul and put an end to his miserable existence.

The Minister had patted his shoulder. "You know, Albert," he said in his deep, calming voice, "it's never too late."

There'd been something about the way the Minister had spoken. Suddenly, Albert had been filled with hope. "What do you mean?"

"Ask for forgiveness, and you will receive it."

Since then, Albert had only worked for the side of the Light. Until today.

Seeing Umbridge—a task he'd been assigned to by the Minister himself—had been strange enough. The woman was spineless as ever. She'd been Fudge's bitch; then she'd turned into Voldemort's—as a pureblood—the moment he'd taken over the Ministry. And when his reign was over, she'd followed the new Ministry's agenda to a T. Or so she thought. Except she was clueless on top of spineless and unable to squash her own agenda of suppressing the good, considering he'd just caught her in the act of holding a house-elf—a Hogwarts house-elf—upside-down by the ears as he'd walked into her office.

Albert looked at her with disbelief. *She won't learn, will she? She won't ever see how wrong she was. She doesn't even regret a thing she did during the Dark Lord's days of power...*

And suddenly, she was lying there, on top of her desk, motionless, and he had no idea what had happened. Except... He knew he was responsible for it.

"As my good friend once said, *You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. You will never abide in the truth because there is no truth in you.*

Albert saw the blood-stained sock on the edge of the desk, wondering momentarily what deeds she'd done with it, and knew what he had to do.

"May your next life be filled with love and forgiveness, Dolores," he whispered as he tightened the stretchy sock around her neck until there was no life left in her.

"Would you like to share your findings with me, Albert?" Kingsley asked in his deep, calming voice.

"Sir... I wished forgiveness upon her. And love. It was the best I could do," Albert replied. "May I ask for a more pleasant task to be assigned to me next, please?"

The Minister smiled. "Indeed, Albert," he said softly. "Indeed."

The silence grew heavy.

Albert felt a stab of fear, but not for long. He had learned to trust. Trust himself, trust Kingsley, trust his intuition. And he was proven right.

The Minister chuckled softly. "Why don't you go and spread the word about love and forgiveness amongst the Muggle world, Albert," he suggested. "The Muggles need it even more than we do, and you've done a fantastic job in our world. Now, go out and find love and forgiveness in those realms."

Albert bowed and left, ready for a new task, a new adventure, a new phase of life.

Life looked all right.

Prompt from RDHolmanTX: Albert Runcorn, Dolores Umbridge's desk, and a sock.

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