

Where in the World

by sandlapper

After the Final Battle, Severus Snape was killed, or was he...

ONE

Chapter 1 of 3

After the Final Battle, Severus Snape was killed, or was he...

A/N - Again, just dabbling, not owning. My fab beta, peskipiksi, comes through once more!

Ten long years had passed in the windowless cell. No light, no sounds, except for the ones made by the figure wrapped in a long, thin robe. There was no magic here in the bowels of Azkaban. Special wards and wood, metal and stone created a magic free zone. With or without a wand, anyone trapped here would be cut off from their innate magic. Add to that the heavy iron collar and cuffs magically welded onto the prisoner's throat and wrists, along with the death mask welded around the prisoner's head, and a virtual hell had been created. Magic couldn't even flow through the body, leaving an empty space deep inside. Ten long years of nothing but the sound of water dripping and creatures scuttling had left a mark on the solitary figure. The only contact with the outside world were the daily drops of food through a sort of dumb waiter. Food was placed in a small box and dropped to the cell. The box was then raised again by means of a long rope. Then one day the food was not eaten. At first, it was assumed that the prisoner was rebelling again. After two weeks, and the detectible smell of decay coming from the dumb waiter, the decision was made to visit the chamber and dispose of the prisoner's remains.

Aurors Harry Potter and Ron Weasley, along with the newest Minister of Magic, Arthur Weasley, made their way down into the bowels of Azkaban. The long, dark corridor stank of disuse and neglect. The walls and ceiling dripped with dank water and the sporadic light generated from torches sputtering in the cool air. The three men shuddered at the sounds of scurrying feet and grasping cobwebs, each one hoping that nothing would find its way onto them as they made their way through the dark. No one braved conversation, an unspoken dread of summoning something unknown into their presence weighed heavily on each heart. Silently, they made their way down the corridor to a heavy English oak door. The only way to open the iron-reinforced door was a large brass key currently in the pocket of the group's leader. A harsh, scraping sound spilled through the narrow hall as the key was inserted into the keyhole and turned. Nothing happened.

"I'll need that oil can after all." The whisper sounded like a scream in the haunting silence that had so far accompanied the trio.

The hand holding the oil can trembled in response to the unexpected comment. Several clicks later, the can was handed back to its keeper and the key inserted once again. After several moments of working the key side to side, enough of the rust coating the mechanism came loose, and the lock popped free of its housing. The key was returned to the pocket it came out of, and now-empty hands grasped the large iron ring embedded in the oak door. After much working, the humidity-swollen wood shuddered out of the door frame and scraped open slowly, the noise again echoing and shouting down the corridor.

"Well, let's get this over with. I'm ready to get out of here," Ron Weasley muttered to his companions.

The others nodded, and then they moved forward into the final corridor.

"I can't believe this place is being used," Arthur said. "I can feel the absence of magic and I must say, it is almost painful."

Harry snorted. "No one knew about this place except a few of us Aurors. And I agreed with Mad-Eye anyway: Snape deserved worse. If they weren't going to kiss him this is the next best thing."

Arthur shook his head softly. "Harry, I know you didn't like the man, but nobody deserves this." He sighed and looked to both Aurors. "What was done here was as bad as anything the Death Eaters ever did. A complete removal of magic, complete solitude, no light or sounds. It is horrible. I'm having trouble reconciling this vindictive side yours with the side of you I know and love. What you and your group did was EXACTLY what we fought this war against."

Again Harry made a rude noise. "Snape murdered Dumbledore. He's lucky I didn't just murder him in return."

At this Ron interjected, "I agree with Harry, Snape deserved what he got and I'm glad to be a part of it. Now let's get in there and burn the body and go home. I just know there are spiders in here!"

Arthur sighed sadly, but refrained from saying anything. Everyone had been told that Severus Snape had been assassinated by a junior Death Eater after he had been tried and found guilty under duress and been set free. It happened right outside of the courtroom and no one had bothered to question that fact. Why would Kingsley Shacklebolt or Mad-Eye Moody lie after all? For that matter, why would Harry or Arthur's own son lie? Becoming the Minister of Magic on the sudden death of Kingsley had opened up some secrets that Arthur was now wishing he had no part of. Now, he had to try to keep two of his best Aurors from desecrating a dead body and to decide whether or not to let others know of this turn of events. He knew the boys ahead of him wouldn't agree with his thoughts, and Arthur didn't look forward to the clash he knew was coming when they reached the end of the corridor.

The key Harry had used on the first door also fitted the iron-bound door sealing Severus Snape's cell. Another generous use of the oil can eased the opening of this door too. The fetid smell of decay hit the three men full force as they opened the door. Luckily, Arthur had known enough to bring perfumed handkerchiefs to tie over their noses to try to combat the worst of the odour. Harry stepped forward into the cell and used his torch to light the ones he knew were in the cell, but had remained untouched since they had initially forced Snape into the cell. Mad-Eye had stated quite clearly that if Snape loved the dark he would have it, and they doused the flames, leaving the man in total darkness. Ron followed Harry into the cell, and the two made their way to the corner where they stared at the corpse lying on the mouldy pallet in the corner.

"The straw and cloth ought to burn well enough," said Harry as he pulled a Muggle lighter out of his pocket. "Time to finish what we should have done years ago."

A flick of his fingers and Harry lit the lighter and held it to some straw he had bundled together. Just as he started to drop the flame, Arthur yelled at him to stop.

"Harry, you're better than this. Stop now before you do something you later regret."

Harry turned a violent shade of red. "Stop?" he roared. "You want me to stop? This is the man who killed my family and Sirius and Dumbledore. He deserves to burn and anything else that I want to do. I HATE HIM!"

Even Ron stepped back from the manic light in Harry's eyes as he spat the words toward Arthur.

"As Minister of Magic I ORDER you to step back and allow us to do our proper job. If you don't, I will remove you as an Auror. You saw the memories, Harry. He gave them to you and you KNOW he was a spy. Even Hermione tried to convince you of his innocence... and that is why she left and never came back."

Arthur took a deep breath and continued. "Harry, it is way past time for you to let go of all this hatred. You have alienated friends and family because of this. You are no better than what you think of Severus Snape if you continue this path of vengeance. You Aurors and Kingsley may have kept the treatment of Severus Snape a secret, but if this continues, I WILL put an end to this secret even if it means I violate the Unbreakable Vow I took."

Harry looked as if he had been slapped when Arthur said that. He stepped back from the remains and lowered the torch he had intended to use on his most hated adversary. He closed his eyes and opened his mouth to speak when Ron suddenly blurted, "Bloody Hell, Harry!"

Harry started and looked at Ron. "What?"

Ron just pointed at the corpse, swallowing hard. "Do you see what I see?"

Harry stared, stunned at Ron's question, only to be floored when he heard Arthur say, "Sweet Merlin, that is NOT Severus Snape!"

TWO

Chapter 2 of 3

After the Final Battle, Severus Snape was killed, or was he...

Ten years earlier...

"Harry, I can't believe you. Why are you pushing to have Professor Snape kissed?" Hermione Granger paced furiously back and forth in the library of number twelve, Grimmauld Place. "You KNOW he helped us... Everything he did was at Professor Dumbledore's request."

Harry stared mutinously at Hermione. "I don't care! He is the reason my parents are dead, and HE KILLED DUMBLEDORE!"

Hermione threw down the book she had been clutching convulsively in her hands. The loud bang startled the occupants of the room, and Hermione stalked towards the door. "If you do this, Harry, you undermine everything we have fought for. As one of those "Mudbloods", I can't forgive you for this. Professor Snape saved every one of our lives, and he saved my grandfather, the only family I have left. What you are doing is something Malfoy would do... think about that."

That said, Hermione burst into tears and looked at Harry, then Ron and Ginny, who were standing silently by the window. "If we allow the professor to be kissed, or even to languish in Azkaban, we are no better than Voldemort getting rid of the people he had a grudge against. It is wrong, and I won't be a part of it." Hermione took a deep breath and continued, "If you do this, then I am leaving... for good. My grandfather is still recovering from Bellatrix's Cruciatus Curse, and I don't know if he will ever be completely well."

Hermione closed the door behind her, not even giving the other three a chance to respond to her ultimatum. She knew it was harsh, but they hadn't fought and died to destroy evil, only to continue with business as usual. And now her grandfather needed her. As she walked away from the library door, Hermione heard the sounds of furniture being blasted, and things breaking. Maybe Harry and Ron would grow up and things would be OK.

Two days later found Hermione in a panic. George Weasley had been helping her work on extending the effects of the Lucidity Potion to use on Mr. Santiago, Hermione's grandfather. Bellatrix had left him seemingly empty with extended usage of the Cruciatus Curse and a variation of the Confundus Charm. The usual Lucidity Potion worked

to make her grandfather understood, but because he was a Muggle, it only lasted for about fifteen minutes, maximum. The last time they had actually talked, he had tried to tell her something, and Hermione was desperate to find out what her grandfather had been so anxious for her to know. Without a working potion, Mr. Santiago only spoke occasionally, and that was only to repeat the word 'apples'.

She was working on a breakthrough, when George popped in the door, panting wildly. "Her... Her... Hermione," he gasped between breaths. "I ran up... three flights of stairs... just to let you know..."

With that, George collapsed on the stool next to Hermione and dropped his head down, fighting to catch his breath. She conjured a glass of water and warned him to drink slowly. "OK, George, what's so wrong that you had to kill yourself to get up here to me?"

"Overheard my brother and Harry talking. They've got a plan with Kingsley and Mad-Eye. If Snape doesn't get sentenced to the Kiss, they're going to take him during the transfer. Heard Harry say something about a mask and collar that keep a bloke from doing magic. He told Ron that it's very painful, but it's an easy way to take him out. It sounds like they are planning on killing Snape."

George took a breath and another drink of water, and Hermione fell back onto her own stool, her mouth open in shock.

"George, that is positively EVIL! Are you sure you heard them right? I am going to give them another piece of my mind, but I need to finish this first; I think I've got it this time. Professor Snape would have known what to do to fix this draught..."

Suddenly, Hermione burst into tears. George had never such harsh sobs coming from anyone, and he was rather scared to try to comfort her. Instead, he took the potion she had been working on and told her he would give it to her grandfather. Hermione nodded, but continued to cry. Suddenly, warm arms were around her, and a voice penetrated her grief. "Hush; hush, mariposita; your Papa's here now. Hush, hush."

Hermione nodded and hugged her grandfather close. The familiarity of his smell, and his voice whispering to her finally calmed the distraught girl. "Oh, Papa, I thought I would lose you too!" she sobbed.

"Listen to me; I don't know how long I have to talk to you, but I do know that I don't have long. If I start to slip away, give me more of your medicine so I can tell you what you need to know."

"Papa, we don't know what kind of damage that might do to you."

"Hermione, it doesn't matter, only you and your Professor matter. And, of course, your good friend here. I've heard everything around me, but I couldn't get out myself to talk to anyone. If your friend is right, we must act soon."

Hermione and George looked at Mr. Santiago in shock. Both of them were wondering what they could possibly do to stop the wrong that was being planned.

Mr. Santiago looked at George and asked, "Are you willing to get Hermione to a safe place, even if it means you don't see your family again?"

George looked between Hermione and her grandfather and thought about the grief he carried at the loss of his twin, and how it was getting harder and harder to make it through the day. The fact that the potions work had become a lifeline wasn't hard to admit. "Yes, I haven't got anything here anymore. The joke shop isn't the same without Fred, and until I started working with Hermione, I confess I was thinking about joining my brother."

George dropped his head, afraid to look into Hermione's eyes. He should have known that wouldn't affect the way she saw him; Hermione wrapped her arms around him in a big hug.

"We'll start again together," she said.

Mr. Santiago smiled and nodded. "Bueno; you two will like where you are going."

George looked at the man with a frown. "Yeah; about that... where ARE we going?"

"I never did find out why you were at Mum and Dad's," Hermione added. "I am so sorry you got caught up in all of this."

Hermione's eyes welled up with tears as she thought about her parents' deaths at the hands of the Death Eaters, and her beloved papa getting caught up in the middle of everything.

"Mariposita, I came here to settle some property on you. Your parents and I had just come from finishing the paperwork when those men attacked. Now you have a place to go to get away from here. And, I am thinking that you might want to take a few strays with you, if I remember how you are correctly!" Hermione's grandfather gifted her with a warm, knowing smile.

"Papa, I love you and I will do everything I can to fix you..."

"You don't worry about your old papa, dear, I am an old man, and I miss your grandmother very much. I was almost sad that your professor saved me, but at least I got to talk to you again and get you sorted. There is a green leather bag in your father's study. All of your papers and your passport are in it. Now, I feel that medicine is wearing off and I am going to lie down."

"This is a bad idea. What if we get caught?"

"George, shut it, will you? Your whinging is what's going to do us in... We've been planning this for two days, and as long as you stay calm, we'll be fine." Hermione led the way down the corridor. "Just follow my lead and everything will be OK."

She shuddered as she said this, knowing that things could easily go downhill fast. It didn't take long to visit the holding cell Snape was in, because the Aurors weren't allowing much in the way of visitation. Ten minutes was all that Hermione was allocated, and then she and her grandfather were unceremoniously pushed out. Hermione simply glared at the Aurors and grabbed Mr. Santiago's arm as he stumbled out of the cell.

Huffing, Hermione led her grandfather back the way they had come. Kingsley Shacklebolt and Arthur Weasley were at the end of the corridor waiting for the Aurors to bring Professor Snape to his sentencing.

Hermione looked at her fellow Order members and said, "What you are doing is awful, and Professor Dumbledore would be ashamed. I came to pay my respects to the professor, and brought my papa since he wouldn't be alive without Severus Snape's help. I am appalled at the condition he is in. Have you no mercy at all?"

Both men flinched at her tirade.

"I also wanted to let you know that I am leaving. Papa needs to be away from here where I can help him recover, and I am not sure I will ever be back. Minister Shacklebolt, I am severely disappointed in you; Mr. Weasley, thank you for everything you have done for me. Goodbye." Hermione turned on her heel and walked away from both men.

George was also feeling the pressure to leave and spoke to his father, "Dad, I need a new start, and Hermione has offered me a place to stay with her. I don't know when I'll be back, but I do love you and Mum."

Before Arthur could react to his son's announcement, Hermione, George, and Mr. Santiago were Portkeyed away. Kingsley and Arthur stood in silence until their musings were interrupted by Mad-Eye Moody.

"Here's the scum for sentencing."

No one paid much attention to the fact that Severus Snape was muttering under his breath as he was led into Courtroom Ten, and thus to his fate.

Ron looked at Harry. "What did the git say?"

Harry just shook his head. "I don't know; something about apples."

THREE

Chapter 3 of 3

After the Final Battle, Severus Snape was killed, or was he...

A/N Thanks, peskipiksi, you have been awesome as I tried my hand at more than a one-shot!! Thanks to everyone for reading and reviewing...

The warm Argentinean sun beamed down on the figures working in the orchard. It was a beautiful summer day, well suited to beginning the harvest of fragrant peaches. Later in the summer, apples and pears would be harvested from the modest orchards that nestled in the western part of the Rio Negro province. A good portion of the crop was crated up and shipped off to markets both domestic and worldwide. This provided a good living for the handful of people living on this remote plantation. The rest of the crop, the bruised and damaged fruits, held a special interest for the owners of Dos Mariposas fruit plantation and winery. From these fruits, so often overlooked and thrown away, were made the most delightful of cordials and wines. They were hand crafted and nurtured 'til ready for bottling, then sent out into the world a transformed creation.

Severus Snape wandered through the warehouse that held the small number of wooden barrels full of Dos Mariposas' finest and oldest vintages. As he mused on the thoughts that ran through his mind, he systematically checked different casks for readiness. He worked his way through to a small rack at the rear of the room. This one held only fifty small casks, each filled with aged brandy flavoured with the fruits of the plantation he co-owned. After tasting a sample from the test cask, he drew another small serving and quickly made his way out of the warehouse to the main house and office. A rare smile graced his face as he thought of the excitement that his wife would show when she tasted the results of their first attempt at flavouring and aging brandy.

When he reached the office, he found Hermione staring out of the French windows overlooking the lush patio garden. It wasn't until he drew by her side that he realized she wasn't enjoying the view; she was crying silently as she stared into the distance.

Severus quickly placed the small glass on the nearby desk and gathered Hermione into his arms, rocking her slowly as he whispered, "What's wrong, my love?"

Hermione turned into his chest and began to sob. After a period of tears and questions, she finally calmed down enough to answer.

"George sent an owl. You know Arthur was made Minister of Magic recently. Well, he found out something horrible." At this point Hermione broke down again and gestured wildly towards her desk and the scroll lying on the blotter.

"I can't..." she sobbed. "I can't; just read it..."

Severus nodded, sat in Hermione's chair and took the scroll off the desk. He bent his head to read, his lips moving silently as he read the missive from George.

Dear Hermione,

I know it has been a while since I've contacted you, but I am enjoying my travels so far. I finally returned home to the Burrow when I heard about Kingsley, and Dad being chosen as his replacement. But that isn't why I am writing. I need to know if I can let my dad know where you are. Hermione, I can't believe I have to tell you this in a letter, but your grandfather has been alive all this time. I know that wasn't the plan; Moody and his bunch didn't execute 'Snape' like we thought they were going to; they kidnapped him. And, yes, Harry was in on it. He and Moody changed the plan after they snatched 'Snape' as he was coming out of the courtroom. We missed it by less than fifteen minutes. They were in and out of the sentencing that fast. We were lucky we didn't get caught. But they hid him away in Azkaban, and no one ever knew. He was cut off from magic, but they were feeding him potions every day in his food. I suppose they wanted to make sure that he didn't get ill and die on them. Only reason Dad knows now is because he's the Minister, and there was an Unbreakable Vow involved. I don't know what else to say, but your grandfather died a week ago. That's how they found out Severus is still alive. Dad realized who it was when they went to retrieve what they thought was Severus' body. Hermione, Dad really wants to make this up to you by bringing Mr. Santiago home. We also understand if you can't see him -- Dad or your grandfather. I think Dad wants to know what has been going on all this time too. Harry and Ron have been suspended from the Auror Office for their part in this, and I've already told them that I wouldn't give up your location for anything. Of course, they sort of figured out that you at least know where Severus is, but Dad told them that they couldn't do anything about it. He made sure an official pardon was filed for Severus, so everything is fine there. I don't think that Harry will ever let it go, but as long as you stay where you are, you are both safe. Let me know what to do, Hermione... I owe you everything. And tell Severus I'm sorry we couldn't tell him how we got him away from the Ministry.

Love, George

Severus dropped the letter with a sigh then leaned back in the deep, leather chair. He pinched the bridge of his nose between his fingers and tried to wrap his mind around what he had just read.

"Oh, Hermione; what have you done? And WHY? Why did you do this just for me?"

Hermione rubbed her eyes and moved over behind the desk. She knelt on the floor beside Severus and took his hands in hers.

"How could we NOT save you? You gave up everything and did everything for all of us, while we treated you horribly and never gave you our trust. When we found out the truth, I couldn't stand by and let them destroy you because of hatred. That's what we fought against. What we died for..."

"But your grandfather? Why would you sacrifice him? I can't bear the thought of him taking my place," Severus interrupted.

Hermione squeezed his hands tighter as he tried to pull away from her. "No, you have to listen to me. This was Papa's plan. He only came to England to sign these orchards over to me. My grandmother had just died from a long illness, and Papa found out he had Alzheimer's disease. He was slowly losing his memory, and he was putting his affairs in order." Hermione's voice caught and she paused before taking a breath and continuing. "I think he was going to kill himself, and when the Death Eaters attacked, he was left like you saw him... empty."

Severus nodded, and some of the tension leached out of him as he grasped Hermione's hands more firmly, letting her know that he wasn't letting go now.

Hermione continued. "You know I managed to create a potion that allowed us to talk for short periods of time, and he worked out this plan. Of course, we thought that they were going to kill you, and Papa was willing to die. And I swore I would never talk about it. You were so ill when we got here; George and I thought you were going to die. I don't know how you survived as long as you did before your trial." Hermione began sobbing again, and Severus pulled her up into an embrace.

"I can't believe that anyone would go so far for me..."

"I have to bring him home, Severus; they tortured him for ten years; I have to bring him home."

"We will, my dear. I promise you that he will be buried here where you can be near him again."

Hermione suddenly looked up into Severus' face. "I love you; I don't regret one moment of our time together; I don't regret marrying you and I don't regret following my papa's plan. I know he would have done this even if he had known what would happen to him. Please don't ever think I regret you or us. I am sorry I never told you everything about your escape, but George and I swore to Papa we wouldn't."

"I love you, Hermione, and I am selfish enough to not regret anything between us either. I do regret that I never got to know your papa and that he didn't get to see your children grow up. Now, I have a suggestion."

With that, Severus stood and pulled Hermione up beside him. The glass he had set on the desk was still sitting there, glowing amber in the sunlight that streamed through the open doors.

"Taste this, my dear. Our first aged fruit brandy."

Hermione swirled the liquid and took a small taste. A luminous smile graced her tear-stained face as she savoured the fruits of their labours.

"This is wonderful," she said.

"I agree." Severus smiled back at his wife. "I think we should name this brandy after your papa. We will remember him for giving us back everything we had lost."

"That's brilliant." Hermione tapped her finger on the side of the glass in her hand. "Why not just call it Dos Mariposas Santiago Reserve Brandy? That way it's a part of all of us. He always called me mariposita, you know: his little butterfly. And when we came here after everything that happened, that's what I felt we were: butterflies coming out of a cocoon. It would have been Tres Mariposas if George had stayed."

Severus and Hermione stood together in the door and watched the sun set on an eventful day. So much had happened, and so much more was to come, but they had each other, and for now that was enough.