

Unremembered

by Elegant Mess

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Chapter 1 of 2

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Severus awoke in a foul temper. His head felt as though it were splitting in two. As he became more aware, he realized three things simultaneously. First, he could not see for the bandages covering his eyes and the top of his head. Second, two delicate hands were holding his hand, anxiously. And last, he was not in his own bed, in fact by the feel of it he was in one of the beds in the Hogwarts hospital wing. As he stirred, someone spoke.

"Severus, are you awake?" an unfamiliar female voice asked anxiously.

"Obviously," he sneered. "POPPY!" he bellowed. "POPPY!" he shouted again.

"Severus, Severus, please calm down. What do you need? Madam Pomfrey is busy, but I can help you with whatever you need," the female voice said gently.

"What I need is for Poppy to get Dumbledore and McGonagall in here so I can determine how to best rectify this situation," he growled as he attempted to remove the bandages. Quick hands gently stilled his irritated motions.

"Please, Severus, your wounds haven't completely healed yet. If you'll be still, I'll go see if Madam Pomfrey has finished her rounds yet. I'll also see if Minerva can come as well." His hands returned to his lap as he nodded. He heard the rustle of fabric as the woman left to seek Poppy and McGonagall.

As he lay back and waited for the woman to return with Poppy and McGonagall, he began to contemplate how he had arrived in this mess in the first place. The last thing he could recall was a young man with red hair placing something in the potion he was brewing and then a tremendous explosion. His memory of the event, however, seemed fragmented and fuzzy. He was pulled from his musing as he overheard the frantic whispering of two women as well as the sound of two sets of footsteps approached his bed.

"Severus, I'm so glad you're finally awake. Here, I imagine you have quite the headache, take these two vials of potion," Poppy Pomfrey instructed as she pressed the vials into his hand.

"The first one is for the pain, and the second is for the swelling," she explained as he quickly downed the two vials.

"Now, tell me, how do you feel?" Poppy asked gently.

"How do you think I feel? I'm sitting here waiting for you, being placated by someone I don't even know!" he snapped as he heard a muffled sob from somewhere on his right. He would have rolled his eyes if they weren't so completely bandaged.

"I know there was a potions explosion, but I am truly at a loss as to what what happened before or since that explosion." He tried to calm himself as he heard the muffled

sobbing become weeping.

"Who, are you? And why are you crying? I'm the one who is bandaged and lying in a hospital bed! Poppy, just tell me what the bloody hell is going on here!" he snarled. The weeping abruptly stopped as the unknown woman sat heavily in the chair beside him.

"Poppy, just get Dumbledore and McGonagall in here so that I can get this whole mess sorted out," he growled. At the mention of Dumbledore's name, both women gasped loudly.

"Did you just ask for Albus?" Poppy whispered. A third set of footsteps approached his bed.

"Did I stutter? Who else would I have asked for? He is the Headmaster!" three female gasps came as he growled.

"Severus? Tell me exactly what you remember," Minerva McGonagall asked calmly.

"Well, hello to you too, Minerva. I'm doing fine, thank you for asking," he spat, sarcasm dripping from every word. Then with a heavy sigh he began to explain what he could recall. "My memory is disjointed, my assumption is that comes from the head injury. I was in my lab brewing some potion... I can not recall what I was working on precisely. I know that I turned around to pick up the next ingredient from the table behind me. As I turned back I saw out of the corner of my eye a redhead reach up over the counter and drop something in my cauldron right before it exploded."

He took a ragged breathe and continued getting louder as he went. "Minerva, I am tired of those damned Gryffindor first years of yours screwing up nearly every potion I work on. They're even invading my personal lab now! I swear that if you don't get those damned Weasley twins under control, I will cease simply taking house points and giving detentions, and I shall hex them both to Merlin myself!" With every word his blood pressure and volume had increased until, at the end of his rant, everyone from the Astronomy tower to the dungeons could have heard him. He lay back, panting from the exertion of his tirade.

Madam Pomfrey bravely spoke first. "Severus, you've been unconscious for nearly three hours and you have at the very least a concussion. You sound very confused, please lie back and try to relax, you've worked yourself into quite a state," she said trying to calm him.

"Three hours, or three years it doesn't lessen those Weasley twin's culpability for this situation... Minerva, I demand that you have Dumbledore expel which ever one of those brats is responsible for that explosion! I could have been killed! Where is Dumbledore? Why isn't he here yet?" Severus asked angrily.

"Severus, what is today's date?" Minerva asked anxiously

"YE GODS, WOMAN! What the bloody hell does it matter what today's date is?" he raged.

"I need you to humor me Severus. And actually it matters quite a lot," Minerva spoke softly.

With a great heaving sigh, he growled, "It is Tuesday, March 6, 1990."

There came a small whimper from the woman in the chair beside him and then a heavy thump as the woman fell to the floor. With all the fuss over the date, he began to contemplate the meaning of it all. He proceeded to ignore them all as he attempted to figure it all out. Of course, the lack of information only added to his growing frustration.

"She's fainted!" Minerva exclaimed softly to Poppy.

"Well, it's no wonder, with the strain and concern she's been carrying, as well as her condition," Poppy moved past Minerva to tend to the other woman.

"Her... condition? Poppy, are you saying...?" Minerva sputtered softly.

"Oh, yes, well, I'm certain she wouldn't have wanted you to find out this way. I'm sure she meant to tell you herself... Of course I only confirmed this morning," Poppy rambled on as the two women worked to move the third into the bed beside Severus. The two of them continued to twitter softly like mother hens over the third. And Severus was fairly seething in his own bed.

"Will you to stop twittering over that simpering little chit and explain to me what the bloody hell is going on here!" Severus bellowed.

"Poppy, do you think he is healed enough to remove the bandages now?" Minerva asked.

"Let me do a quick diagnostic spell and we'll see," Poppy said softly. They were all quiet as he felt the gentle probing of the medi-magic and heard the soft swishing of her wand. "Well, isn't that curious!" Poppy exclaimed.

"What?" both Minerva and Severus asked.

"Hold on... You'll see..." Poppy said as she unwrapped his head slowly and carefully. Severus tried to blink to focus as the bandages came away from his eyes.

"Oh, dear...", whispered Minerva...

Hermione Awakens

Chapter 2 of 2

Hermione awoke with the thought: He's lost seventeen years!

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Hermione awoke with a groan. Her first clear thought was, 'Seventeen years, he's forgotten seventeen years!' Then she heard Minerva whisper, "Oh, dear..."

"WHAT?" Severus bellowed. Hermione gingerly rolled over on her bed so that she could see him and gasped loudly.

"Merlin's beard! What's happened to him?" she asked Poppy.

"Where is my wand?" Severus rolled to his side, floundering with bleary eyes, and found his wand on the table beside his bed. Pointing in the witches general direction, his

voice low and icy, he said, "So help me, if one of you does not tell me what is going on right now, I will start firing curses, Azakaban be damned!"

Again the mediwitch bravely spoke first. "Severus, now, we're all a little confused at the moment, but if you'll allow me go into my office for a few items, I believe that I can answer some of your more immediate questions. However, I do need you to lower your wand. Please?"

Severus nodded curtly and, as he lowered his wand to his lap, Poppy hurried back to her office. Severus looked up at a very pale and tired looking Minerva, as his eyesight finally cleared.

"Minerva, you look even more worn out than usual. We need to tell Dumbledore to ease back on your responsibilities. He's stolen your youth and propelled you into old age early! Or perhaps that is the fault of those reckless Weasleys!" he commented drolly. Minerva continued to stare at him, shock written all over her features, and remained completely silent.

"I take it by your shocked silence, that my previous poor looks have now gone beyond the point of no return," he half mumbled to himself. Finally Poppy returned with a copy of the *Daily Prophet* and some other items he could not see.

"Severus, look at this calendar. Today's date is June 19th 2007. You are forty-seven years old. Look at this copy of the *Daily Prophet*. Three days ago you were interviewed by Rita Skeeter about your most recent advancement on the Wolfsbane Potion. And now look in this mirror," Poppy demanded.

His reflection stared back at him, mocking him. He looked no older than the thirty years that he thought he was. However, with all the evidence that Poppy had presented him with he had no doubts that he should be much older. Confronted with all this information, he began to think about all the possibilities of what could have happened. He was so wrapped up in his own contemplations that he ceased to pay attention to the witches around him.

Hermione reached out and quietly took Minerva's hand. Shaking the older woman out of her state of shock, Hermione softly asked, though in her heart she already knew the answer, "So... this means he doesn't remember me... at all?"

Minerva turned and spoke softly to her former student. "No, my dear, I don't think he does."

Poppy stood over Severus. "Now if you're willing to be quiet and still for a few moments, I can do a few more in-depth diagnostic scans, and we might know a few more answers to all of your questions." Still caught up in his own thoughts, Severus merely nodded. All four of them were quiet as the mediwitch began her diagnostic scans.

Hermione attempted to extricate herself from the bed. Minerva realized what she was doing and leaned over silently and helped her. Hermione stood, still feeling a bit off balance. However, with Minerva's assistance she walked over to and sat in the chair beside Severus' bed. She sat in mute silence (truly a rare thing) as Poppy performed her scans.

She watched as he lay back on the bed, his eyes closed, his raven black hair splayed out on the pillow behind him. The silver streaks that had started at his temples were now noticeably absent. The hard lines and wrinkles that had given his face such character were now considerably lessened. He appeared about twenty pounds lighter. He looked far less severe in his youth. In her opinion, Severus, had always been a fairly good-looking man, and now with his youth returned he was even more so.

As she appraised his physical appearance, so many thoughts coursed through her mind. First, she was quite certain, he didn't even know who she was. Second, he had lost seventeen years of his memory and fifteen to twenty years off his physical appearance. Third, his temper seemed to have lessened with age, and this younger man appeared to be, if it were possible, even more irritable than the older version.

As he continued to speculate about what had or had not happened to him, he felt as though he were being stared at. He knew on instinct that it must be the unknown woman. As he waited somewhat impatiently for Poppy to complete her scans, he wondered who this third woman must be. He cracked his eyes open a fraction of an inch and watched her through heavily-lidded eyes.

She was small, quite petite really, maybe a whole 5'4". Her chestnut brown hair fell to her mid-back in loose curls. Her cinnamon brown eyes were bright with unshed tears. She wore Hogwarts staff teaching robes. In the nervous silence she chewed roughly on her lower lip. Her face, her body language, and all her mannerisms screamed of concern... for him. He was greatly unsure of what he could have done to inspire such devotion from this lovely creature beside him.

As his eyes continued their cautious observance of the young woman, his eyes fell upon the rings on her left ring finger. He closed his eyes and lightly squeezed together the fingers on his own left hand. 'She is my wife!' his mind screamed at him. This new information left him with so many more unanswered questions.

"Well," announced Poppy, interrupting both Severus and Hermione's thoughts, "I've finally completed my scans. And while this isn't bad news, it really isn't good news either."

"Oh, out with it already!" Severus growled.

"Must you be such an arse all the time?" Minerva spat.

"Witch, if I were not bedridden right now..." Severus began.

"Will you two stop bickering long enough so that Poppy can tell us what is going on here? Please?" Hermione growled. After a moment of quiet, she turned to Poppy. "You were saying?"

"Yes, well, as I was trying to explain, because of the peculiar results of my scans, I actually did them three times to be sure. Whatever potion you were working on, in combination with the explosive ingredient, has permanently altered your age. Internally as well as externally, you are now about thirty years old. You will continue to age naturally from this point, but from the scans I'd say you've cut off about seventeen years off your body's physical age," she took a deep breath and continued.

"Now, as to the memory loss... You took quite a hit in the explosion. You have a fairly severe concussion, and as a result you are experiencing retrograde amnesia. Sometimes this can happen with a traumatic head injury. With this you have lost about seventeen years of memory. I believe, in time, your memories should return. Like I said, not really good news. Now, you have had quite a lot of stress this afternoon, and I want you to stay overnight so that I can keep an eye on your concussion. For now though, I think we should leave you to rest. I'm sure you'll 'bellow' if you need anything," Poppy finished, and taking the other two witches by the hands, she tried to lead them away.

Hermione pulled her hand back, gazed at Severus, and pleaded with Poppy, "Please, let me stay, I know he doesn't ..."

"My dear," Poppy interrupted. "I don't think that is such a good idea, he's already had so much stress today..."

"Poppy... If I promise to remain calm, can she stay?" Severus asked quietly.

Poppy turned, shock written plainly on her face and nodded. "Alright, but you need to remain calm and unstressed. Am I clear?" Both Severus and Hermione nodded. Then she placed a third vial in his hand. "I'm sure you still have many, many unanswered questions. However, you really need to rest. Please, after we leave, take this vial." Severus nodded. Then Poppy and Minerva left. Hermione sat quietly in the chair beside Severus.

They both sat in silence, unsure of what to say to the other. He watched her, again through heavily-lidded eyes, as she fidgeted in her chair. She alternately stared down at her hands and attempted covert glances at him. She seemed to be working up the courage to tell him something. She chewed on her lower lip so roughly, he thought she

was sure to cause her lip to bleed. Just before she spoke, he reached out and gently cupped her cheek, running the pad of his thumb over her much abused lower lip.

"You should not injure yourself so...," he said, his voice low and husky. Tears sprung to her eyes at the familiar gesture, and with a sob, she flung herself onto his broad chest and wept. He wrapped her in his embrace and rested his cheek on her head.

Peeking through the small windows of her office, Poppy looked at Minerva and smiled. "You know, Minerva, I think that they're going to be alright," Poppy said.

He held her for some time, as she was overcome by great heaving sobs. Slowly her sobbing became whimpering and sniffing and then, as she seemed to have cried herself out, the slow even breaths of sleep. Gently he reached between them, pulled out his wand and silently transfigured the lumpy hospital bed into a slightly larger bed. Then he, careful not to wake her, rearranged her body so she was lying peacefully beside him. He reached out and brushed out a few errant curls off her face. Then he stretched out beside her.

Remembering the third vial that Poppy had pressed into his hand earlier, he looked at it. It was a draught of Dreamless Sleep. Considering all of his innumerable unanswered questions, he knew that he was sure to get no sleep at all. He opened the vial and drank it down. As he drank it down, he tried to comprehend all that could have happened in seventeen years to bring him to this point in his life.