

Lest we Forget

by Lady Dragonsinger

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none

Chapter 1 of 1

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It had been an ordinary morning. She had opened the envelope addressed to her that the owl had brought with the morning mail run to all the Ministry offices. It was the end of the month, and she was planning to work on reports that were due, but Hermione had been in an odd mood for most of May.

Twelve years ago, so many things had changed for the wizarding world when the Battle of Hogwarts resulted in the defeat of the Dark wizard, Voldemort. It was, as an American president had once said of another day many many years ago, a day that would live in infamy but also with a fame of its own. 2 May 1998. Yet, oddly enough, it seemed to be distorted now. Instead of quiet remembrance, everyone seemed to hit the various pubs like the Three Broomsticks, The Hog's Head, and The Leaky Cauldron to party and raise a few or more.

It frustrated Hermione to no end because she had been there and seen the horror and destruction it had cost to gain the victory, to gain the freedoms the wizarding world now had. She wondered how anyone could want to party and carouse instead of quietly remembering those who had been lost for the cause.

Hermione opened the card and frowned. There was no signature, just a note saying. "Remember and learn." She barely had time to read it when she felt the familiar tug of a Portkey and was on her way to, well, somewhere. The destination was unknown to her though the sender knew exactly where she would end up; however, when she did, she remembered to prepare herself for the landing that would occur.

Picking herself up off the grass and brushing off her clothes, Hermione blinked and tried to figure out where she had ended up. Looking around, she could see nothing but grass and white stones. Wait, there were flags. In front of each white stone were small flags placed into the ground. Hermione began walking through the grass and reading each the engraving she discovered was on each stone. PFC, Lt, Sgt, Ssgt... Ranks were preceding each of the names engraved into each and every stone. Looking at the flags, Hermione realized she had ended up in the States though not sure where.

Hermione walked for a while until she spotted someone near one of the white stones and made her way toward where he stood, head bowed. Approaching, she was not sure if she should speak up or if he would prefer to be left alone but the decision was settled when the elderly man looked over at her. He was frail and thin, hair white as snow and dressed neatly in trousers and short sleeve shirt. A cap on his head bore the insignia of a branch of the services. "Morning," he greeted her gently.

"Uh..." Hermione hesitated, "Morning."

"Have a family member buried here?" he asked in a kind voice.

"No. No, I just.. Well, I'm traveling and sort of lost my way and ended up here, wherever I am," she replied, her accent making it clear she was definitely a stranger to these parts.

The old man smiled and pointed. "Here is one of the National Cemeteries," he began to explain and then went on to tell Hermione about how these were set up for the burial of soldiers and veterans of the various wars that the country had fought.

"Do they always have flags on the graves?" she asked.

"No," he told her with a sad smile. "The flags are put on for this weekend, Memorial Day weekend."

Hermione had read about that in some news articles recently. It was 'the official start of summer' to the Americans. "But," she began, "if it's Memorial Day, how come everyone is having picnics and barbeques and having fun?" Yes, this was beginning to sound a bit familiar to her and now, Hermione was wondering if perhaps Muggles were no different from Wizards about forgetting the true meaning of a day.

The old man just smiled. "Because they are free to do so," he said very simply and, when she looked confused, explained. "Those of us who serve in the military do so because we believe in the freedom that this nation stands for. It's okay for them to have a good time this weekend because that is why we served so they would be free to not have to worry about it. Sometimes, someone just says thank you, but we didn't do it for the thanks. We did it because we believe in what we were standing for."

Hermione thought about his words. Wasn't that the same reason all of them had stood up to Voldemort? Because they believed in what they were fighting for? Was it that important that people sat around mournfully every year on the anniversary to show they supported what had been done? She smiled at the old man and leaned over to hug him. "Well, thank you for serving even if it wasn't for my country," she told him.

"You're welcome," he told her, adding "Thank you for your sacrifices, too. Oh, you might want to head that way," the old man said, pointing off in a direction. "There's a gazebo and a redheaded young man waiting for you there to help you find your way back home."

"But, how did," she began to ask, blinking with surprise at the old man's words, but then realized that the figure before her was fading out. A ghost! He had been a ghost all along.

The fading ghost grinned, "Former Seaman First Class, Stephen Martin at your service, young lady." With that, the old man was gone.

Hermione made her way in the direction the old man had indicated, a bit wiser than before she arrived.

Based on two prompt from MuseAmusement: The first being: a greeting card, a Portkey, a garden gazebo, and the second is The anniversary of Voldemort's defeat has become more about drunken revelry than remembering the fallen. That is, until two Hogwarts students take their history lessons to heart and decide to do something about it.

Dedicated to those who have fought for freedom anywhere.